

# WESTERN AUSTRALIA: NAVAL MAIL 1842 - 1994

Western Australia has one of the longest coastlines in the world. Until 1942 naval interest in WA was protection of Indian Ocean trade routes with defence against potential threat from France, Russia, America, Japan or Germany entrusted to the Royal Navy based at Sydney, Singapore, Trincomalee and Simonstown. The Royal Australian Navy did not have a base in WA until HMAS Stirling was commissioned in 1978 and RAN adopted a Two Oceans Policy in 1987. Warships Mail Section postmark was introduced in 1994. WA Naval Mail is any mail to, from, or related to naval personnel in or connected to WA. Such mail is scarce prior to 1939 as it is mainly related to visiting ships and no specific postal markings were used. This collection contains the majority of recorded WA naval mail and is the reference collection for Haynes and Pope (1997).

The display is presented chronologically to show the changes over time to WA naval mail and supplements letters and cards with related picture postcards, photographs and documents. The display is organised as follows

- SECTION A: 1842 – 1907 Colonial
- SECTION B: 1908 – Great White Fleet
- SECTION C: 1909 – 1939 World War 1
- SECTION D: 1939 – 1946 World War 2: Shore facilities
- SECTION E: 1939 – 1946 World War 2: Operations
- SECTION F: 1946 – 1994 RAN

Number of ship visits Albany/Fremantle		
1827-99	94	88
1900-08	39	35
1908	23	3
1909-13	17	34
1914-19	25	65
1920-39	26	86



**Christmas Card ca 1920**  
Royal Australian Navy flagship  
HMAS Australia  
(scuttled 1924  
as per the  
Treaty of Washington)

HMAS Australia sailed from Portsmouth arriving in Fremantle on 28 May 1919 for a four day visit. Some men requested that the sailing be delayed so that they could entertain civilian friends and repay their generous hospitality. Captain Cumberlege RN refused and the stokers on watch left the boiler rooms. 12 men were arrested and charged with mutiny, 5 were subsequently court-martialed and gaoled. No mail is recorded from this visit.

**Reference:** Haynes, B.T. and Pope, B. (1997). *Western Australia: The Forces, Prisoner of War and Censor Mail*, Perth, Western Australia Study Group

SECTION A

CAPTAIN JOHN RIVETT CARNAC R.N.

Lieutenant Carnac joined HMS Success as First Lieutenant under Captain James Stirling on 23 January 1826. In March 1827 Success arrived in Western Australia to explore the Swan River area to assess the area's suitability for settlement. Stirling renamed Isle Berthelot as Carnac Island. Carnac was appointed Captain in 1837, Admiral in 1868.

Printed *Description of Australind*, Western Australian Company 33 Old Broad Street Old Broad Street (stamp removed), [London] 2 May 1842

6 FIVE  
MAY 9  
1842

Old Broad St

Capt. J R Carnac R.N.  
46 Devonshire Street  
Portland Place

Received by  
Australind  
The Town Clerk  
which were the  
book of Mr  
Smith & Elders.  
65 Cornhill -

## HMS HERALD 1858

HMS Herald was in Albany from 2 February to 25 February 1858. This is the only visit of a warship to Albany in the nineteenth century for which Haynes and Pope (1997, p. 655) did not record a port of origin or destination. HMS Herald was built in India in 1821 and commissioned into the Royal Navy as a 28 gun corvette in 1824. She called in at Albany in 1839 en route to the New Zealand Maori Wars. Reduced to 8 guns in 1845, HMS Herald was recommissioned as a survey vessel for service in the Pacific and Australian waters until 1859. Converted to a chapel ship in England before being broken up in 1862.

From G. Millican, Seaman on board HMS Herald, countersigned John Hutchison Command Officer, oval Albany Post Office, stamp cancelled numbered grid 14, Leicester 7 April 1858 receiving stamp, annotated G.C.A M Feby 23<sup>rd</sup> April 7/58



As no naval personnel were stationed in Western Australia until 1914, the following applied to visiting sailors as well. "Soldiers in the colony writing letters to persons beyond the seas will only be subject to a rate of one penny (1d.) upon each letter: provided the signature of the Commanding Officer appears on the envelope. (*Government Gazette*, 31-03-43). The concession was limited to letters under half an ounce on 1 January 1858.

"The 'Millican' cover was sold by Stanley Gibbons in London as lot 15 on 9 May 1985.... The catalogue entry refers to it as 'one of only 2 recorded.' The Study Group is unaware of a second Seaman's Letter from Western Australia..." (Haynes and Pope, 1997, p. 214) An 1858 letter to Admiral Henderson is illustrated on the same page of the catalog and it may be the second letter referred to in the description. If so, it is possible that **this is the only recorded sailor's concession letter from Western Australia.**

HMS HARRIER 1884

HMS Harrier was on slavery suppression at Zanzibar with HMS Undine and arrived Fremantle on 10 February 1884 after resupplying a steamer enroute from London to Sydney that had "run out of coals and food". "We have not had a mail from England since October last, it is at Melbourne now." They departed on 26 February to take up station at Sydney. Harrier was sold to the London Missionary Society in 1888 for service in the Pacific.

Written Perth 15 February 1884 by O.J. Knight to brother in England.



Perth  
Western Australia  
Feb 15<sup>th</sup> 1884  
— " —

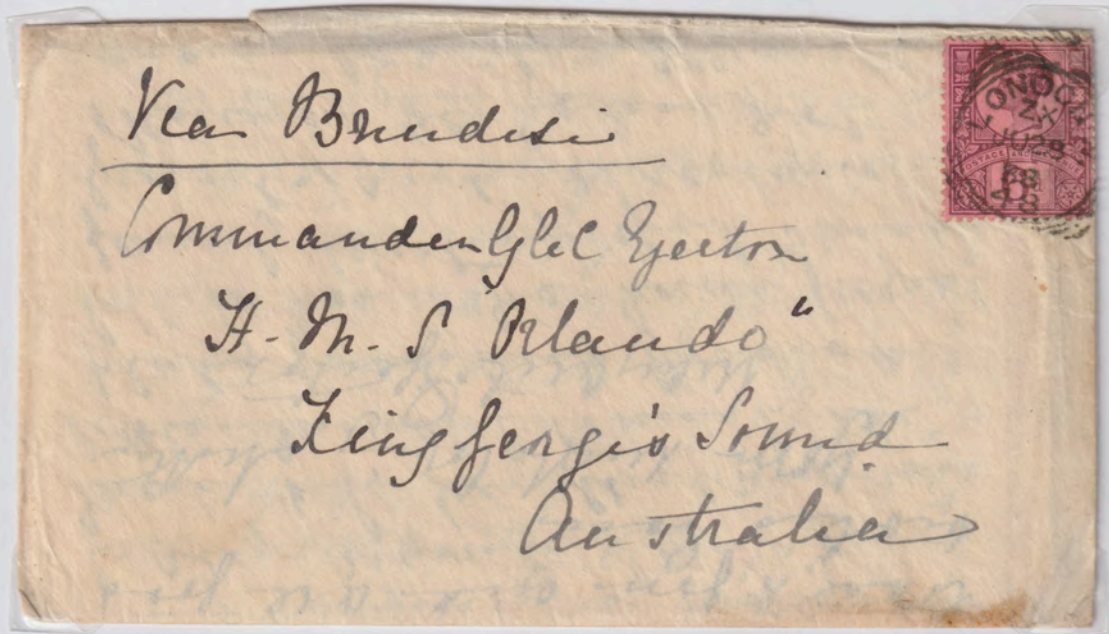
Dear Frank

I have now an opportunity of giving you a few lines to let you know how I am getting on. I hope they will find all well. We left Zanzibar on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Dec last with HMS. Osprey, Undine in company called at Mozambique left there on the 29<sup>th</sup> we had little wind

## HMS ORLANDO 1888

HMS Orlando was a first class cruiser, launched in 1886, en route from Britain to Sydney to be the flagship on the Australia Station.

George le Clerc Edgerton joined the Royal Navy as a boy in 1866, obtained his first command in 1886. After service on Orlando, Admiral Sir George Edgerton rose to the position of Second Sea Lord in March 1911 only to be summarily dismissed by Churchill in December 1911. He had a sympathetic audience with King George V in March 1912 and discussed future appointments. Retired in 1916 as Commander-in-Chief Plymouth. Letter from mother who had attempted to post a letter to each port en route.



HMS Orlando was at Albany from 11 to 18 August 1888  
London 28 June 1888

### HMS CAMPERDOWN 1891

R.C. Loftie was Government Resident in Albany from 1879. John Henry Loftie was born in Perth in 1874 (died 1940) and, as Commander Loftie, awarded the Insignia of Commander of the Order of the Crown of Italy for service during the Messina earthquake in 1908. HMS Camperdown was flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet from 1889 to May 1890 when posted as flagship of the Channel Fleet.

JL monogram envelope addressed to J. Henry Loftie, Midshipman, HMS Camperdown, Gibraltar. Albany 12 May 1891, Malta 4 June, Gibraltar 12 June, ? 14 June, Villagarcia Pontevedra 16 June, London 19 June, Weymouth 22 June, Castletown Portland 22 June. Readdressed to Orlando, Australia and further readdressed to Albany, Western Australia.



### HMS PENGUIN 1891

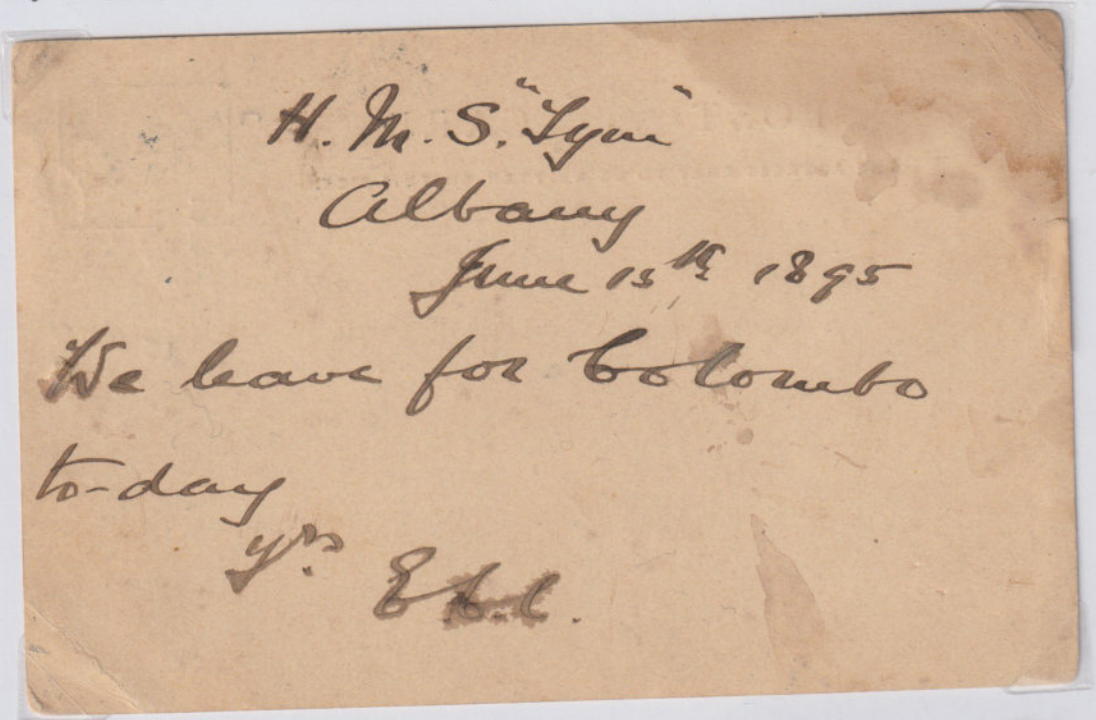
HMS Penguin, an Osprey Class sloop, was at Albany from 5 to 10 April 1891 enroute to the Northwest to undertake surveying. HMS Penguin was a RN survey vessel on the Australia Station 1890 – 1908, RAN depot ship 1908 – 1924 and crane hulk 1924 – 1960. Roebuck Bay 8 August 1891, void grid cancel, signed A. Goodson



NAVAL TRANSPORT  
HMS TYNE 1895

The usual practice of the Royal Navy was to transport relief crews for ships on the Australia Station to Colombo where they would be exchanged with the ships from Sydney. On several occasions, HMS Tamar (1885), HMS Himalaya (1891) and HMS Tyne (1887, 1895) the transport went to Sydney, calling at Albany en route. HMS Tyne was at Albany from 13 to 15 June 1895.

Albany 15 June 1895, Liverpool 16 July



## HMS ROYAL ARTHUR 1897

HMS Royal Arthur, a first class cruiser, was at Albany from 30 December 1897 to 2 January 1898 en route to Sydney to serve as flagship on the Australia Station. No other item of mail has been recorded from this visit.

Albany 31 December 1897



## SMS SAIDA 1899

*The West Australian*, 18 March 1899 recorded

On Thursday evening the commanders and officers of the H.M.S. Mohawk and (Austrian) S.M.S. Saida were entertained at a ball in the Fremantle Town Hall....

The report concluded with lengthy descriptions of the dresses worn by each of the 58 ladies in attendance. SMS Saida was at Fremantle from 7 to 28 March 1899.

Ship Mail Room Perth 13 March 1899, T 10 postage due, Tolna 27 April







SMS HANSA 1901

SMS Hansa was at Fremantle from 22 to 25 April 1901 enroute to Melbourne as the German representative at the opening of the Commonwealth Parliament on 9 May. Cards numbered #1 and #2 Fremantle 1duplex 25 April 1901, Fremantle 1 25 April, SMR Perth A 25 April, Berlin 25 May.



# SMS HANSA 1901

It was a common practice for German sailors to post souvenir postal stationery cards addressed to themselves on board the warship in harbor. In this case the sailor chose the foreign 1½d rate rather than the local penny rate.

Postmarked Fremantle 6 23 April 1901, backstamped Fremantle 8 23 April.



## SMS HANSA 1901

It is assumed the stamps on this cover were arranged for aesthetic effect rather than postal necessity.

Fremantle 6 25 April 1901, SMR Perth 29 April, indistinct datestamp, Prettin 26 May



The Table below shows the recorded number of warship visits to Albany and (in brackets) the number of those being non-British warships. Many of the British ships were en route to or from Sydney to take up or leave station or to call at Galle/Colombo to exchange crews. There was little point crew on a homeward voyage writing from Albany as they would often reach Galle or Colombo before the mail.

1827-1900	102 [10]
1901-1908	31 [5]
1908 Sept.	23 [22]
1908-1914	17 [3]

NOORD BRABANT 1901

'For the first time in the history of Australia the Heir-apparent to the throne of the mightiest, and, in the truest sense, the grandest and best empire the world has ever known, is on the eve of arrival at the stately Victorian capital.... Not the least brilliant spectacle that will be witnessed on Monday will be the naval display on the arrival of the Ophir in Hobson's Bay..... The Royal Arthur, the flagship of Rear-Admiral Beaumont, is looking spick and span, and anchored within close range of her are several saucy looking gunboats belonging to the Australian Squadron.... Germany has sent two representatives, Russia, the United States of America, and the Netherlands Government one each, but South Australia has sent her whole fleet, and right nobly was the Protector behaving herself at anchor on Saturday.... When the Ophir steams through the heads on Monday morning, accompanied by her escorts, the Royal George and the St. Juno, she will be saluted with a salvo of salutes from the representatives of the various Powers.' The Register, Adelaide, 6 May 1901, p. 5

The cruiser HNMS Noord Brabant was at Albany (not Albury as reported in various website accounts) from 24 to 26 April 1901 en route from Batavia to Melbourne.

Written Albany 24 April 1901, Albany 25 April, SMR Peth 27 April, Amsterdam 25 May



Albany 24 April '01.  
 Beste Vr. Ik stel mij voor, dat je het wel aardig zult vinden van hier eene briefkaart te ontvangen, te mee daar het een overdruct is. Ik hoop dat je myne drie aangekeerde brieven uit Batavia zult hebben ontvangen. Wij zijn op weg naar Melbourne, om daar tegeroverde. Wie zijn bij de opening van het eerste parlement der geconferende Australische Staten alsook om des hertog en hertogin van York te laten bij hunne komst te N. Het lepen surj tarvelen van hollen te laken, daar het nog een keepe over van Batavia naar Melbourne, in t geheel + ja dare tenyrl wij wel twee maanden in India afwey zult zijn. Het ja en de kinderen zeer vrom vry groeten en geloof my  
 H. J. S.

## HMS MILDURA 1903

HMS Mildura was a third class cruiser serving on the Australia Station from 1890 until scrapped in 1906. She was in Fremantle from 6 January to 29 January 1903. The reply half of the 1d card is rated as Rare by Pope and Thomas (1982) Smiths Mill 8 January 1903 (ERD)



The reply half of the 1½d card is rated as Not Seen by Pope and Thomas (1982). Smiths Mill 8 January 1903 (ORD)

**Reference:** Pope, B. and Thomas, P. (1982). *Western Australia: The Postal Stationery to 1914*, Perth, Western Australia Study Group.

## IJMS ITSUKUSHIMA 1903

In 1903 three Japanese cruisers sailed from Yokohama via Batavia for a goodwill tour of Australia. They encountered a cyclone in the Indian Ocean and IJMS Itsukushima diverted to North West Cape and then to Carnarvon, arriving on 3 April. "North West Cape and Carnarvon are very poor place being very barren country, but kangaroo and emu hunting very interesting." Departed for Fremantle on 14 April and arrived 21 April. With IJMS Matsushima and IJMS Hashidate departed on 30 April for the eastern states. No other mail recorded from these ships.

Written 13 April 1903, Carnarvon 16 April, New York 30 May, Philadelphia 31 May

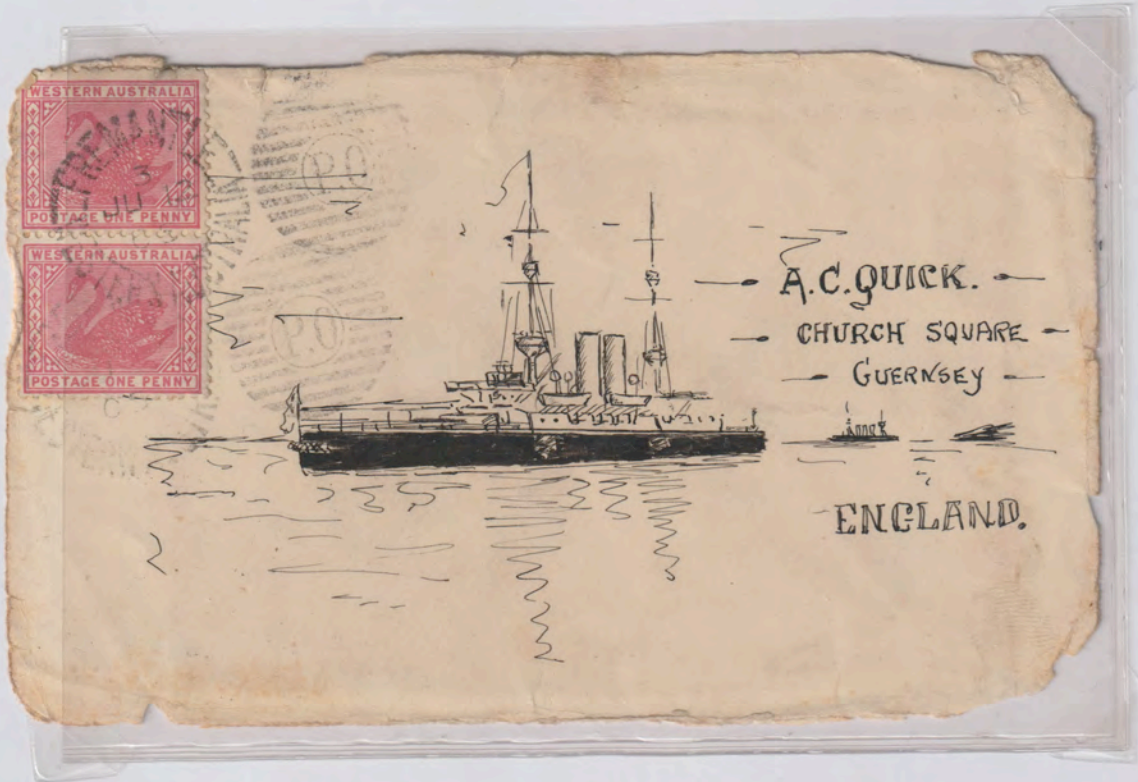


Identification of peacetime naval mail is often difficult and relies on sender's address or date of posting to a foreign address. Wartime naval mail is even more difficult with security measures to prevent disclosure of location.

## HMS CAMBRIAN 1905

HMS Cambrian was a second class protected cruiser on the Australian Station from 1905 to 1913.

Fremantle 12 June 1905



Falk PPC



## HMS POWERFUL 1905

HMS Powerful was a protected class cruiser which became flagship on the Australia Station in 1905. The visits of British warships to Fremantle and Albany caught the attention of the public such that picture postcard manufacturers produced cards and Leo Quick sent illustrated letters to his mother.

Perth 13 February 1905, Guernsey 11 March



Falk PPC  
Donnybrook 31 December 1909

SMS PANTHER 1905

Austrian cruiser Panther was on a goodwill and training voyage around Australia, calling at Fremantle and departing Albany on 3 June 1905. Foreign sailors were not entitled to postal concession and the half penny rate was for local delivery of a post card. Postmarked Albany 2 June 1905



Haynes and Pope (1997, p. 217) speculated that the writer/addressee of this card was Erminio Grodan but the card below makes clear that it was Prodan. Postmarked Melbourne 8 August 1905

