

An Epic in Australian History

MA HISTORICAL
EAST ASIAN BRANCH

H·M·A·S SYDNEY

NEWS AND NOTES

Relic of HMAS Sydney

The "Daily Mirror" a Sydney publication, recently reproduced the photograph of a Carley float from HMAS Sydney, said to have been washed up on the coast of Western Australia. It is nearly two years since the gallant Sydney, blazing fiercely, staggered away over the horizon after her last fight with a German raider. Then silence, and now, after 18 months drifting in the sea, this single relic of Australia's best known fighting ship has been discovered. The woodwork of the float, it is stated, is smashed and the cork floats and metal compartments bear the marks of shellfire. The float itself has been placed in the Australian War Museum at Canberra. (The cutting from the "Daily Mirror" was received through the courtesy of Mr. S. H. Love, of Deenup, Kojonup, whose son was lost when the Sydney sank.)

remove."

THE LOST SYDNEY.

Only Relics of Famous Cruiser.

CANBERRA, Nov 8.—Among the only traces of the ill-fated HMAS Sydney ever found, a Carley life-boat torn by bullets and shell fire, has been added to the exhibits in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. An explanatory notice attached to the float states:

"Recovered from the sea by HMAS Heros while searching for survivors of HMAS Sydney, this Carley life-boat, damaged by machine-gun and shell fire, and two empty lifebelts constitute the only trace of the famous Australian cruiser lost in action about 200 miles from Carnarvon on the West Australian coast in November, 1941. She went down with all hands after sinking the heavily-armed German raider Steiermark, also known as the Kormoran."

11/11/1943



H.M.A.S. SYDNEY SINKING ITALIAN CRUISER "BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI" (OBSCURD BY SMOKE).

The Italian Cruiser endeavouring to escape the Sydney's guns turned away and put up a smoke screen. This made a difficult target, nevertheless within 15 minutes the H.M.A.S. Sydney's gunfire had taken effect.

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY OFFICERS
DECORATED:

Captain J. A. COLLINS
(who was previously awarded the
honour of C.B.)

Lt.-Commander M. SINGER, D.S.C.

Commander T. HILKIN, D.S.O.

Commander L. DALTON, D.S.O.

and

Lt.-Commander E. THRUSTON, D.S.O.



Captain J. A. COLLINS, C.B.

RATINGS AND PETTY OFFICERS
DECORATED:

Chief-Petty-Officer A. P. PRIOR,
D.S.M.

Chief-Petty-Officer S. G. SILK,
D.S.M.

Chief-Ordnance-Artificer
W. J. KEANE, D.S.M.

Chief Stoker J. N. BEAUMONT,
D.S.M.

Able-Seaman G. ROSEVEAR,
D.S.M.

Stoker E. EVANS, D.S.M.

W.A. HISTORICAL SOCIETY
KATANNING BRANCH
Australian Cruiser "H.M.A.S. SYDNEY" Sinks
Italian Cruiser "BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI."

Actual Account from British Admiralty Records.

W.A. HISTORICAL SOCIETY
KATANNING BRANCH

On 19th July, 1940, H.M.A.S. SYDNEY, with 5 British destroyers in company, attacked two Italian Cruisers off the north west of Crete. The Italian Cruisers, the BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI and the GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE, were each of gunpower equal to the H.M.A.S. SYDNEY but of greater speed. In the subsequent action, two hours thirty-nine minutes after sighting the enemy, H.M.A.S. SYDNEY destroyed the BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI by gunfire, herself suffering only one superficial hit on the forward funnel. The superior speed of the GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE enabled her to escape. The full details of the H.M.A.S. SYDNEY'S successful action are as follows:— At 7.15 a.m. on July 19th, 1940, four British destroyers, H.M.S. HYPERION, H.M.S. ILEX, H.M.S. HERO, and H.M.S. HASTY were operating under the command of Commander Nicholson in H.M.S. HYPERION, in the vicinity of the Antikithera Channel, north west of Crete. To the north-eastward, the six-inch gun cruiser H.M.A.S. SYDNEY, (Captain J. A. Collins, R.A.N.) and the destroyer H.M.S. HAVOCK, were steaming on a westerly course about 40 miles north of Crete.

At 7.20 a.m. the four British destroyers sighted two ships. Within a minute, the ships were identified as two Italian cruisers, steering south-south-east, at a range of about ten miles from our destroyers.

Commander Nicholson of the British destroyers at once reported the presence of the enemy to H.M.A.S. SYDNEY, and he swung his vastly inferior force of four destroyers round to the north-eastward in order to draw the enemy towards his supports.

The disparity of force was very great. The Italian cruisers mounted sixteen 6 inch guns, as against the sixteen 4.7 inch guns of the destroyer force. Nevertheless, the Italians did not immediately chase. They turned up to the northward, and steered this diverging course for about half an hour before hauling round to the north-eastward to chase the British destroyers.

ENEMY OPENED FIRE AT 7.26 a.m.

At 7.26 a.m. the enemy opened fire on the British destroyers. The destroyers replied, but the range of their lighter guns was not sufficient to enable their fire to become effective. The British destroyers therefore ceased fire, although they continued to be under fire from the enemy until 7.45 a.m. The enemy's gunfire, however, proved ineffective.

Immediately on receipt of the enemy report, H.M.A.S. SYDNEY and H.M.S. HAVOCK altered course to the southward to support the destroyers and endeavour to bring the enemy to action.

By 8.00 a.m. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY and H.M.S. HAVOCK had hauled round to a south-easterly course in order to gain contact with Commander Nicholson's destroyers at the earliest possible moment.

At this time, the enemy, having been out of range of the British destroyers for a quarter of an hour, apparently decided to chase the British destroyers, and altered course to east-north-east. The two British forces and the Italian force were therefore converging at high speed.

At 8.26 a.m. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY sighted the enemy, identified them as two Italian cruisers and later established that they were the BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI and the GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE. At 8.28 a.m. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY opened fire at a range of ten miles, steering a converging course in order to close the range, despite the enemy's preponderance of force, the Italians having sixteen six-inch guns against the eight six-inch guns of H.M.A.S. SYDNEY.

At 8.32 a.m., however, the enemy began to turn away, and the Italian cruisers became very bad targets, almost obscured by their smoke. Eight minutes later the enemy cruisers turned away again; a turn of more than 90 degrees. It was clear that they were endeavouring to break off the action and withdraw to the southward. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY turned to follow. Thus, less than a quarter of an hour after opening fire, the action developed into a chase. These manoeuvres meant that only the four forward guns of H.M.A.S. SYDNEY could bear on the enemy. Meanwhile the four British destroyers under the command of Commander Nicholson in H.M.S. HYPERION had made contact with H.M.A.S. SYDNEY. They had been ordered to attack the enemy with torpedoes, but this attack did not develop owing to the large turn away made by the enemy.

ENEMY CRUISER SANK AT 9.49 a.m.

The gunnery conditions during the chase were extremely difficult for H.M.A.S. SYDNEY. The enemy ships were frequently obscured by smoke and they made frequent alterations of course to throw out the accuracy of the British gunfire. Nevertheless it became clear within fifteen minutes that the gunfire of H.M.A.S. SYDNEY had taken effect. The left-hand enemy cruiser was seen to sheer off from her consort, badly hit, and to lose speed. The other Italian cruiser continued to steam away to the southward at high speed.

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY continued to fire at the damaged enemy cruiser until the range had closed to four and a half miles. It was then seen that the enemy, which had been repeatedly hit by H.M.A.S. SYDNEY'S salvoes was badly down by the bow and listing heavily. H.M.A.S. SYDNEY then ordered destroyers to finish off the crippled enemy ship, while she herself with other destroyers, continued the pursuit of the remaining Italian cruiser. The chase was continued, and the H.M.A.S. SYDNEY remained in action until 10.20 a.m. when it became clear that the enemy was making good his escape by virtue of his superior speed.

Meanwhile H.M.S. HYPERION and H.M.S. ILEX torpedoed the crippled Italian cruiser, which had been abandoned by her crew. The cruiser turned over and sank, bottom upwards, at 9.59 a.m.

ENEMY BOMBED OWN SURVIVORS.

H.M.S. HYPERION and H.M.S. ILEX then began picking up survivors from the sunken Italian cruiser, which was found to have been the BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI.

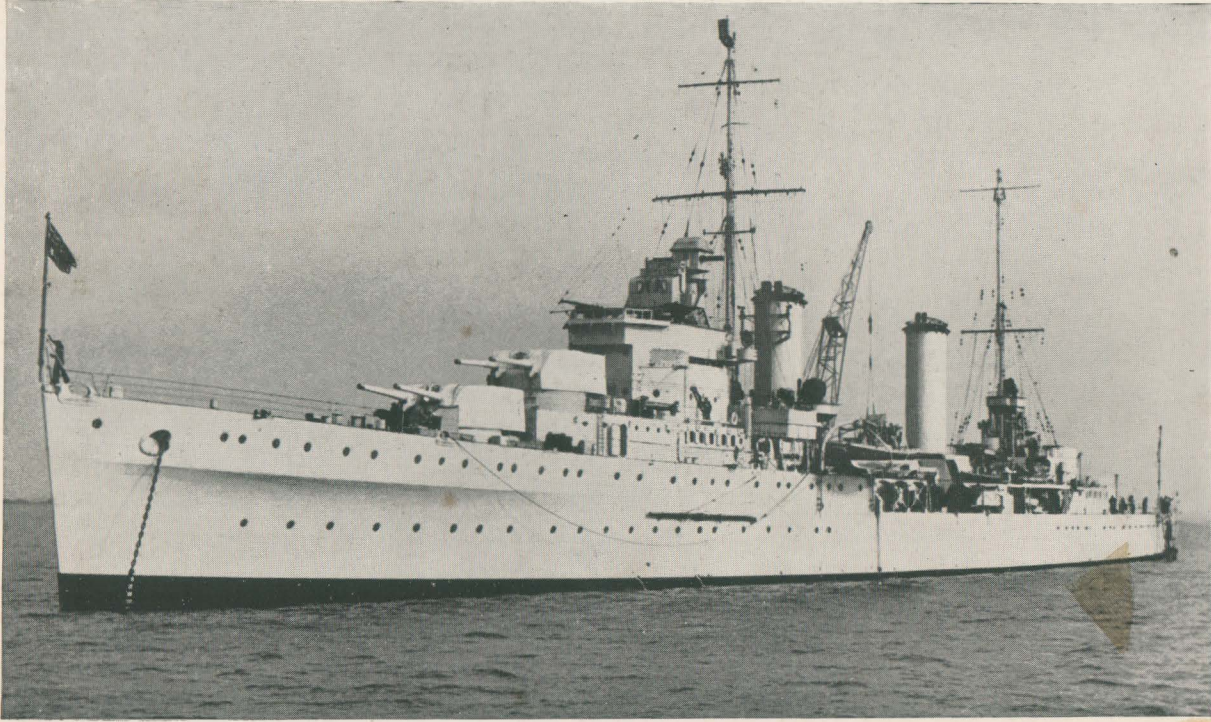
H.M.S. HAVOCK, which had been detached from H.M.A.S. SYDNEY, soon arrived on the scene and the work of picking up survivors was left to this ship, while H.M.S. HYPERION and H.M.S. ILEX followed H.M.A.S. SYDNEY to the southward.

By 12.37 a.m. H.M.S. HAVOCK had picked up two hundred and eighteen officers and men of the BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI. Six Italian Savoia bombers then appeared and carried out bombing attacks on H.M.S. HAVOCK while she was endeavouring to pick up more survivors. None of the Italian bombs hit the British destroyer, but the attacks forced H.M.S. HAVOCK to abandon the humanitarian task of picking up survivors of the BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI.



THE ONLY DIRECT HIT RECEIVED BY H.M.A.S. SYDNEY DURING ENTIRE ACTION.

Although the Italian Cruiser had guns equal in number and equal in calibre (6.6" guns) to the H.M.A.S. SYDNEY, only one direct hit registered and that in the funnel, doing very little damage.



H.M.A.S. SYDNEY LYING IN HER HOME PORT.

NEWS FROM

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY:

Action in the Adriatic.

Following are extracts from an interesting letter written by Stoker S. E. Love, of H.M.A.S. Sydney. "Some where in the Mediterranean" to his parents; Mr. and Mrs. S. H. Love, of Narrawong, Carrolup:-

"... these last few months have been quite exciting, with plenty of hard work since Greece was dragged into the war. Already we have taken several shiploads of troops and stuff to Greece, and as we sail into the harbour hundreds of people crowd the wharves and wave and cheer like mad. During the last month we have had only one day's leave, but the other night we had another smack at Mussol, which relieved the monotony a bit and made us a lot happier."

"We received an order from the C. C. to proceed north and see what we could do about an Italian convoy which had been reported between Albania and Italy, so we went. At midnight it was reported that a large number of ships were being sighted in the Adriatic. The ship was equipped with a net set by a trawler engine in shark fishing was pulled in to sea."

All ships engaged in coastal trade are to be equipped with parabolic searchlights. The course of a vessel—before they are sighted—must be reported to the Admiralty."

The Commonwealth Government has accepted a tender of £35,768 for the erection of the first section of barracks for the new military hospital, which contains two 34-bed wards.

The Advisory War Council, in conformity with the Budget compromise terms, has begun talks with the Commonwealth Bank Board and Treasury authorities on the control and use of central bank credit for the purpose of financing the nation's war expenditure.

HMAS SYDNEY.

HER LAST BATTLE.

STIRRING DETAILS.

NAZI SURVIVORS' STORY.

NEW YORK, March 2.—The Associated Press correspondent, John Moroso writes: "Details of HMAS Sydney's last battle with the Nazi raider Kormoran are revealed for the first time, having been pieced together from reports of the Kormoran's captain (Captain Detmers) and others of the 317 German survivors."

"The Kormoran was cruising at 10 knots 300 miles west of Carnarvon on November 11, 1941, when she sighted the Sydney. The raider turned into the sun and increased her speed to 15 knots. Sydney, approaching from starboard, signalled the raider to hoist signal letters. The raider hesitated, then hoisted the letters 'QI' belonging to the steamer Straat Kalakka. The Nazis used the apparent inefficiency of their signalling to lure the Sydney into a close beam attack. The raider's gun crews fired at Sydney and the Sydney was asked for further identification."

"The raider was parallel to the Sydney and the Sydney's gun crews fired at her. The raider dropped her plates and the Sydney's gun crews fired at her. The raider's gun crews fired at Sydney and the Sydney was asked for further identification."

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TRADE and FINANCE.

Colonial Mutual Life.

New business written by the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society in 1942 amounted to £9,265,821, and not £2,265,821, as stated in this column yesterday.

Midland Fat Stock Sales.

Good pens of heavyweight weathers were scarce at the fat stock market yesterday.

Nazi Flag Hoisted.

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"... these last few months have been quite exciting with plenty of hard work since Greece was dragged into the war. Already we have taken several shiploads of troops and stuff to Greece, and as we sail into the harbour hundreds of people crowd the wharves and wave and cheer like mad. During the last month we have had only one day's leave, but the other night we had another smack at "Musso," which relieved the monotony a bit and made us a lot happier.

We received an order from the C. in C. to proceed north and see what we could do about an Italian convoy which had been reported between Albania and Italy, so off we went. At midnight it was reported that a large number of ships was in sight. Several enemy destroyers opened fire on us and let go their torpedoes. One salvo from the Sydney, which finished a destroyer, was sufficient, and they all fled. We then swung our

big guns on the bombardment we turned havoc-making south for the fleet, leaving behind a trail of battered ships, some in a sinking condition and others a mass of roaring flames, visible for miles across the dark waters. We had wiped out an entire convoy only a few miles from the Italian coast and close to a powerful enemy naval base. The next day, in an attempt to even things, a squadron of Italian bombers attacked us, but we never gave them a chance to get near the ship. Our A.A. fire was deadly and some of them were hit "on the wing" and crashed in flames into the sea. It gives you quite a thrill to be standing on the deck watching a formation of enemy bombers circling around trying to get into position to drop their "eggs," and to see our A.A. shells bursting among them. Then suddenly one will break formation and dive towards the sea a mass of flames, the crew not even having a chance to bail out. On the following day, waves of enemy raiders again attempted to bomb us, but we drove them off, several of the planes being brought down by direct hits. Before now you will have heard how planes from one of our aircraft carriers bombed the Italian naval base of Taranto and badly damaged three battleships, two cruisers and two A.M. ships, right in their own harbour, reducing the Italian battleship strength by one-half. I say "Hats off" to the pilots of our Fleet Air Arm, they deserve everything we can give them.

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"The Kormoran was cruising at 10 knots 300 miles west of Carnarvon at 4 pm on November 11, 1941, when she sighted the Sydney. The raider turned into the sun and increased her speed to 15 knots. The Sydney, approaching from starboard, signalled the raider to hoist signal letters. The raider hesitated, then hoisted the letters PKQI, belonging to the steamer Straat Kalakka. The Nazis used the apparent inefficiency of their signalling to lure the Sydney closer and she came abeam at 10.15 pm 100 yards distant and asked for further identification.

Nazi Flag Hoisted.

"When the ships were parallel the raider dropped the plates concealing her guns and hoisted the Nazi flag. Four 5.9 guns were fired without warning and the shells struck the Sydney's bridge, apparently killing most of the officers. The Sydney responded furiously, a 6-inch gun salvo hitting the raider's engine-room and fuel tanks and fire spread over the Kormoran.

"As the battle went on at point-blank range a torpedo hit the Sydney 20 feet from the bow, apparently crippling her forward guns. Shellfire blasted the Sydney's scout-plane. Four torpedoes from the Sydney missed the Kormoran and 1 from the Kormoran missed the Sydney. The dying Kormoran stopped as the Sydney, burning amidships and settling by the bow, drifted off to the south-east and disappeared over the horizon at 11 pm. She was not again seen by the Kormoran, which blew up at midnight. The battle had lasted half an hour.

Kormoran's Armament.

"The Kormoran, resembling a harmless Dutch merchantman, sank 9 Allied ships before meeting the Sydney. She carried 6 5.9 guns stowed in the holds and raised hydraulically, 6 torpedo tubes and 6 anti-aircraft guns, also an Arado 196 plane. The United States navy is using the battle as a lesson to teach sailors to be careful when investigating strange ships. Their policy is: When in doubt shoot first and talk afterwards."

[Nothing was heard of the Sydney or her crew after she disappeared from the sight of those on board the burning Kormoran. Survivors from the German ship landed near Carnarvon and others were picked up by ships at sea.]

WITH COMPLIMENTS FROM

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