



The Naval Historical Society of Australia

ABN 71 094 118 434
Patron: Chief of Navy


CORR.001.0297_R

The Secretary
HMAS SYDNEY II
Commission of Enquiry
Level 18
Defence Plaza
270 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

12 August 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

The attached letter has been received by The Naval Historical Society.

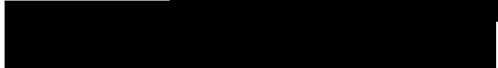
As the subject matter refers to aspects of the SYDNEY/KORMORAN battle the letter is passed to the Commission of Enquiry for information.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Martin
President
Naval Historical Society

ENCL: Mattiske letter dated 2nd July 2008

David and Dee Mattiske,
Email 

Wednesday, 2 July 2008


The Editor,

Naval Historical Review,
The Boatshed, Building 25,
Garden Island 2011
N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

There are some aspects of the Sydney / Kormoran battle which may be worth further exploration.


The position of the Kormoran is now stated as 26.05'49.4 S, and 110.04'27.5 E. (1) On page 455 of Royal Australian Navy, 1939 – 1942 is a chart which gives an approximate position of say, 26.40 S, 110.33E. Therefore the position recorded in the official history is approximately 35 to 40 nautical miles south west of the actual position.

Presumably, G Hermon Gill's information was derived from the official records of the interrogations of the German prisoners. Hermon Gill writes of Sydney, "the story of her last action was pieced together through exhaustive interrogation of Kormoran's survivors. No room was left for doubt as to its accuracy." However, he also states of the position when sighting occurred, "at 3.55 pm approx. 150 miles south west of Carnarvon." Surely Detmers or the Kormoran's Navigator, or Officer of the Watch would have known their position with far greater accuracy than "approx. 150 miles," etc.

Hermon Gill's starting point determines the final position of Kormoran. So a fair question is whether our interrogation of the Germans was as thorough and efficient as supposed?

The following question is how did Hermon Gill arrive at his starting point on the chart?

Secondly, were the Germans deliberately misleading their interrogators and if so why?

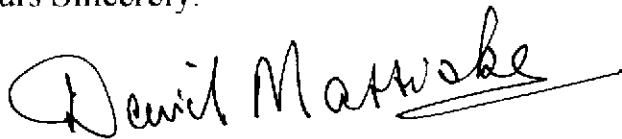


Another interesting point is that Hermon Gill states on his chart, "mutual sighting at approximately 12 miles." An efficient lookout manning the Evershead Bearing Indicator can see a mast and superstructure before the hull comes into view. We can presume that Sydney saw Kormoran coming on, then altering course to port and immediately following on the course outlined by Hermon Gill. When nearing Kormoran Sydney asked "what destination?" Kormoran replied "Batavia."

This poses two questions. Firstly, a strange ship that on sighting you immediately turns away more than 90 degrees and runs must be considered with the greatest suspicion. Secondly, having turned away, the ship now says her destination is Batavia, which of course is north, not in a ~~west~~ "sou" westerly direction. Why did not this arouse extreme caution and unmitigated suspicion?

Sadly the finding of HMAS Sydney still does not throw any light on the question of how she got into such a vulnerable position. There are still questions to be answered.

Yours Sincerely,



David Mattiske.

(1) From "Australian Warship," issue no 42 (2008)

PS Regards to John Herdman.
