

XXXX

# The truth about *Sydney*

*Sydney* conspiracy theorists  
should crawl back into the  
bilges, says Tom Lewis.

**Above:** Without doubt the most chilling find in the debris field was the presence of five of *Sydney*'s life boats. Note *Sydney*'s official badge. All photos courtesy of the Finding Sydney Foundation.

Lieutenant John Perryman lays the commemorative wreath.



**I**t is time for the conspiracy theorists who have advanced ridiculous ideas about the sinking of the *Sydney* to do the decent thing, admit they were wrong, and stop their malicious and hateful stories.

The finding of the *Sydney* and the *Kormoran* has established the truth of the fight: that the light cruiser was effectively lured within a fatal range and then surprised with a shattering bombardment which halved the Australian ship's firepower, killed her command team, and was accompanied by a massive torpedo strike which started her sinking by the bows.

Idiotic stories of bodies buried on the WA coast; surprise strikes by the *Kormoran*'s motorboat; revelatory documents within British archives, half-witted accounts of Japanese aircraft carriers on the seabed, and wayward Japanese submarines with mad captains firing against the *Sydney*—all are made even more redundant by the revelation that the Germans told the truth. But already we hear of authors planning to 'reveal' more tales alleging mass graves and Japanese involvement. The curiously named 'End Secrecy on Sydney' group also has had something to say about submarines: curious in that everything possible has been released over the years, unless alleging lack of evidence is evidence. Doubtless soon the other purveyors of half-baked dark deeds will be putting out more of their trash.

The Germans' account has held together for 66 years. Most of them have gone to their graves stalwart in their story.

The *Kormoran*'s people said the action took place in a certain location—intrepid shipwreck hunter David Mearns looked there—and he found the German auxiliary cruiser.

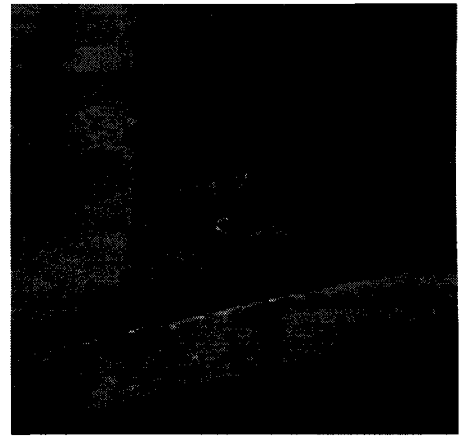
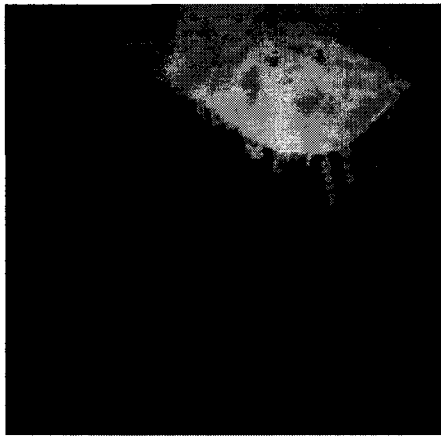
The *Kormoran*'s crew said they wired their ship's mines to blow her up and hasten her scuttling. The undersea sonar pictures have shown she is in several pieces—a depiction consistent with such a detonation.

They said the Australian light cruiser—on fire from stem to stern—went off in a southeasterly direction. The wreck of the *Sydney* was located 12.2 nautical miles to the southeast of the *Kormoran*.

The survivors' accounts—I personally searched every one of them last year—said with only a few exceptions that the *Sydney* did not explode. Her wreck

*Sydney*'s inverted bow was the first major find within the debris field.





is in one piece, with the bow blown off. This tallies with the story of the torpedo hitting the cruiser in the forward part of the ship, and the fact that the rest of the ship is together shows there was no final explosion.

The bow damage suggests a good reason why there were no survivors. *Sydney's* ship's company—all naval servicemen trained in a disciplined fighting service—would have been fighting fire and flood together, as well as manning their guns. When the action was broken off they still had these first two problems to cope with, and they would have battled hard until the end to save their ship. A sudden collapse of yet more watertight compartments would have meant a quick death plunge beneath the waves, and almost all of *Sydney's* people would have been trapped inside the ship.

For those on the weather deck, the smashed and useless lifeboats and floats, pounded into pieces by the relentless fire from at least 150 of the 450 six-inch shells fired by the *Kormoran*, would have meant they were left helpless in the water. Wounded, cold, and without hope of salvation—*Sydney* was not overdue and the search did not start for some time—they had no chance of being found and would have soon joined their comrades in death.

Yet some people will not let the matter rest. Like the Roswell flying saucer theorists, they have discovered there is a dollar to be made by publishing foolish and ill-

One of *Sydney's* 21-inch quadruple torpedo tubes lying upside down on the sea bed. Two torpedoes remained in their tubes.



**Above left:** *Kormoran's* 5.9-inch gun in the forward hold pointing to starboard and aft of the beam.

**Above centre:** The simple flap designed to conceal *Kormoran's* above-water torpedoes shown here on the starboard side in the open position.

**Above right:** The letters 08KO painted in white on the hull just beneath the bilge keel identifies the wreck as HSK8 *Kormoran*.



considered accounts of how the Australian ship met her end. But they are illogical, wrong, and easily dismissed. The 1999 federal Parliamentary Inquiry did an excellent job of considering all such theories, and found nothing in them. But in the meantime even more have emerged, alleging conspiracy actions that would involve hundreds of servicemen and reams of paperwork. But no such people and no such records have been found.

But the conspiracy merchants are not dissuaded; some even persist in accompanying their 'new' evidence with the old stories. Some have even fabricated 'evidence' in a desperate effort to strike at the 'authorities' who, they say, have concealed matters for years. The faked 1981 logbook found on a beach was just the first of many falsehoods. But somewhere out there, say these persistent people, are scores, if not hundreds of people who did dirty deeds, and have remained quiet about them for decades. Hardly convincing.

These theorists might consider what they are doing with their allegations. They are bringing harrowing images into the minds of the family and friends of those who went down with the *Sydney*. They are also alleging illegal, unethical, and even criminal behaviour by legions of faithful servicemen and women, WWII politicians and government workers, and the same cohorts of people from other countries too. They should be ashamed, and they should be silent.

---

*Dr Tom Lewis published 'What the wreck of the Sydney may reveal' some months before the vessel's finding. He dismissed the Sydney's involvement with the Japanese submarine I-124—sunk outside Darwin harbour—in Sensuikan I-124, one of his six history books.*

**Above:** Sonar image showing the entire wreckage field of *Kormoran* when first located on March 12, 2008. The object at the top of the screen with the dark acoustic shadow to its immediate right is *Kormoran's* bow broken just aft of the bridge superstructure. The bright mass to the left and below the bow is the main debris field created as a result of the catastrophic explosion suffered by *Kormoran* when her cache of mines detonated. The object at the bottom of the screen is a large piece of unidentified hull structure measuring 31m x 25m x 12.7m high, which gives a good idea of the scale of the wreckage.