

MR P. DAIVISON

3.9.08

Dear Sir In the Mission to Seamen at South Shields, Tyne-side, is a very small chapel with a curtain, a light and a very thick book, with the names of men lost at sea in two world wars from my town and area, and as 1 one million tons of Allied shipping were lost in the WWII to German Raiders, mostly British of the Red Sea I have some need within me to try and give some closure to all those lives, along with the loss of H.M.A.S SYDNEY II another victim!

Not forgetting that the North Sea was the front line in WWI in regards to the U. Boats and a terrible graveyards to hundreds of ships and



men.
 With regards to the
 loss of H.M.A.S SYDNEY II and
 the actions of Capt Detmers
 of the raider 'KORMORAN'
 ask this question
 as a seaman! to Reader minds
 to question Detmers actions
 in this sense.

He was the Captain of
 a German Raider thousands
 of Mile from Home on
 the edge of a Major Shipping
 Shipping Lane in broad
 daylight with nearly three
 hours to run before dark
 and he decides to enter
 and cross this Lane
 knowing he may meet
 Allied Shipping both Merchant
 and Naval which is what
 happened some days later
 in fact, I suggest if he
 had failed, he would not
 have received the IRON CROSS
 FIRST CLASS but the loaded
 pistol as was the usual
 gift of Adolf Hitler to his
 men-at-arms of failures.
 Any reader of History
 must admit that Luck plays

~~plays~~ a Reg front in war
 and Detmer carried it in
 this action, his Iron Cross
 was more comfortable round
 his neck than Richard Wiese
 I add this story of
 "BOORARA" to show that
 Germans didn't change the
 construction of their ships
 in maybe a hundred year
 and interesting that a
 Tyne side Shipyard maybe
 other Swan Hunter Dry
 Docks repaired her damaged
 Hull in the same manner
 as the Germans plated their
 Ships

This type of plating
 was used in the make up
 of Boilers and other
 vessels which at the time
 were thought to add great
 strength to these items

As with "KORMORAN"
 "EMPIRE NENE" and "SKAU GUM"
 "BOORARA" they all said
 GERMAN SPOKEN HERE! and
 every GERMAN SHIP we ever
 seen, towed, been involved
 with has carried these
 same features we described

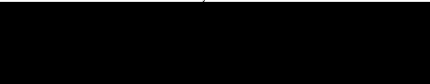
I always bring to mind
 a saying by a great
 man that half of what
 we know is not true!
 so the more we know
 the more is untrue!
 I hope we never fall
 into this pit, and pray
 my eyes have not
 deceived me!

After watching hundreds
 of Ships built on the
 Tyne over a lot of years
 I knew what a Million
 tons of Ships takes to
 build and to pore
 At the North Side
 of the Tyne Entrance stands
 Lord Nelsons fighting
 Admiral Collingwood's
 Navy if a conclusion
 is found, could not a plate
 be added to his column
 that H.M.A.S. SYDNEY II as a
 Tyne built ship joined and
 her men Honoured!

Yours faithfully
 Peter Dawson



25/01/2006

Mr. P. Davison,


Dear Mr. Davison,

Information on the German vessel S.S. *Pfalz*

You recently asked for information on this ship which was detained at Port Phillip Heads on 5 August 1914 while attempting to flee Australia just as war was declared. I enclose some information on her from two books, Jack Loney's *The sea war in Bass Strait* (1993), page 15 which also includes a photo and Lew Lind's *Historic naval events of Australia day-by-day* (1982), page 149. Loney and other sources say that the gun which fired a shot across the bows of the *Pfalz* was at Port Nepean but it is my understanding that it was part of the battery at Fort Queenscliffe. As you can see from Lind's account, this ship was renamed *Boorara* and served as a transport along with eleven other German ships which were "confiscated" in Australian ports at the beginning of the war. She had several near misses during the war and was later used to repatriate Australian troops. She then returned to service with the Australian Commonwealth Shipping Line.

Frank Brennan's book *The Australian Commonwealth Shipping Line* (1978), on pages 4 and 32 has some details of the ship. S.S. *Pfalz* was built in 1913 and launched from the yard of Bremer-Vulcan, Vesesack, Germany. She was 6750 tons gross, 4083 net and had refrigerated holds – "the finest of her type in the world" according to Brennan. After the war, she was used by the Commonwealth Line to carry frozen cargo to England, especially to Avonmouth but also to Liverpool and Glasgow, and also called at Mauritius on occasions. There was a general depression in shipping in the early 1920s and she was eventually sold to a Greek shipping line in Syra, Greece around 1926. Her name was changed to *Nereus*. I have no further information.

I hope that this information is helpful and that you find the photograph useful. It is the only one I have been able to locate.

Yours sincerely



Tony Cavanagh

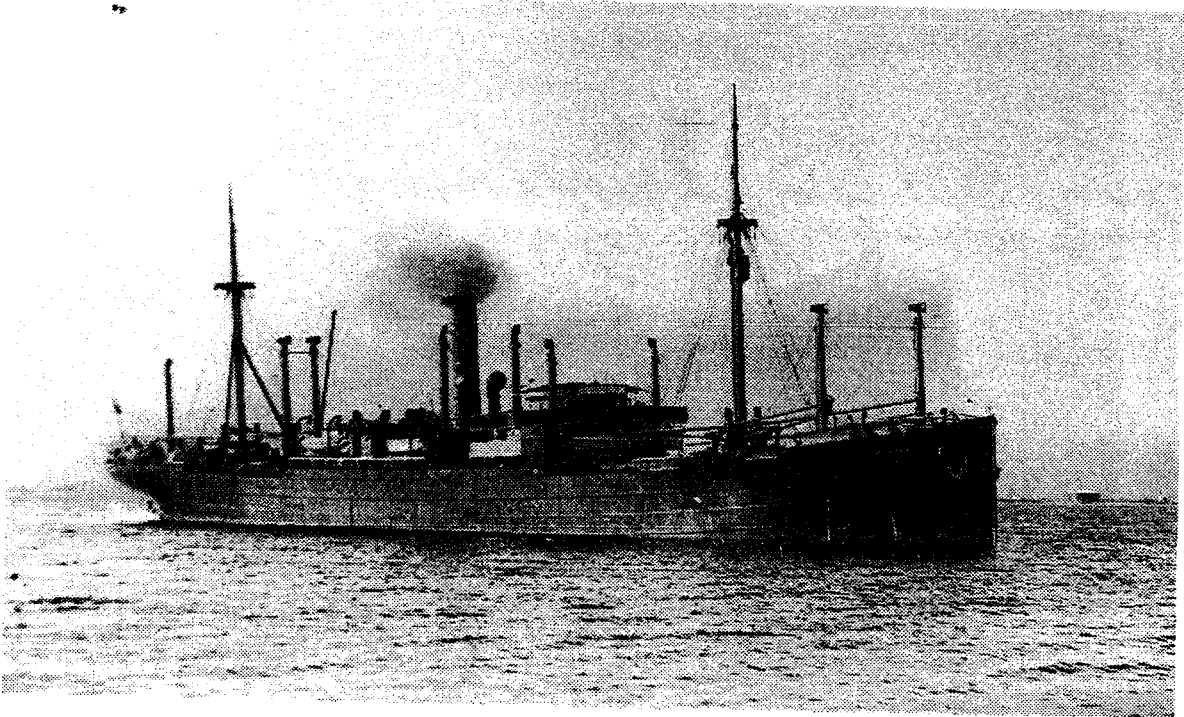
Librarian

Queenscliffe Maritime Museum

1917

In the early days of World War I the annihilation of German forces in New Guinea waters, the sinking of the cruisers SCHARNHORST and GNEISENAU at the Battle of the Falkland Islands, and the destruction of the EMDEN by H.M.A.S. SYDNEY at Cocos Island created a sense of comparative security in Australian waters.

However, the first shot fired in any theatre of war during World War I came from a gun at Fort Nepean at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay bordering the northern shores of Bass Strait, on the evening of 5 August 1914 when the German steamer PFALZ was detained while attempting to escape to sea; when a state of war between Germany and Great Britain and her Allies was about two hours old.



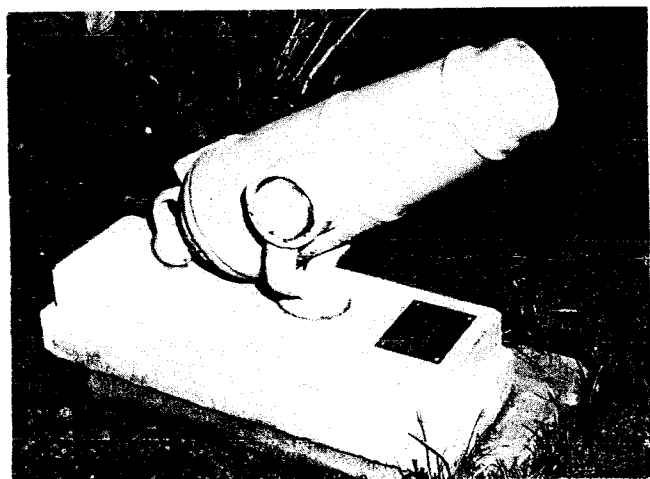
The S.S. BOORARA (PFALZ), the German steamer captured at Port Phillip Heads on 22 August, 1914 while attempting to escape out into Bass Strait. After service in the Commonwealth Line of Steamers she was sold to Greek interests in October, 1926.

5 August

- 1864 The British Government allotted the White Ensign to the RN, the Blue Ensign to the RNR, and the Red Ensign to the MN.
- 1864 Squadron colours were abolished in the RN. Admirals of the Red, White and Blue were replaced by rear, vice and full admiral's rank.
- 1914 Disposition of ships of the RAN at the declaration of war: HMAS *Australia*, steaming north from Sydney; HMAS *Melbourne*, steaming south from Sydney; HMA ships *Sydney*, *Warrego* and *Yarra*, near Thursday Island; HMAS *Parramatta*, nearing Townsville; HMAS *Protector*, on passage from Melbourne to Sydney, HMA ships *Encounter*, AE1 and AE2, at Sydney; HMAS *Pioneer*, at Port Phillip; and HMAS *Gayundah*, on passage from Sydney to Brisbane.
- 1914 Coastal batteries at Queenscliff, Port Phillip Heads, fired the first shots of the war at the German merchant ship *Pfalz*, attempting to put to sea. The ship was taken over, renamed *Boorara* and fitted out as a transport. On 18 July 1915 she was rammed by the French cruiser *Kleber* off Mudros but survived. A German submarine torpedoed the *Boorara* off Beachy Head on 20 March 1918, but despite damage succeeded in reaching port. While under tow from Whitby to Newcastle for repairs she was torpedoed again but survived. *Boorara* returned to service in July 1919 and was employed in repatriating Australian troops.
- 1914 Admiral von Spee, SMS *Scharnhorst*, signalled the cruiser *Emden*: 'Emden detach. Good luck'. Cdr von Mueller of *Emden* replied: 'My grateful thanks for the confidence you are placing in me. I only wish you the success I myself hope to obtain'.
- 1926 Sir Neville Howse, Minister for Defence, enunciated the policy that all officers of the RAN should be Australians.

6 August

- 1698 Samuel Pepys dined with William Dampier and heard the latter's account of his voyage to Australia.
- 1699 Capt William Dampier, RN, HMS *Roebuck*, visited Dirk Hartog Island, WA.
- 1802 Lt J. Murray, RN, HM colonial brig *Lady Nelson*, discovered Port Curtis.
- 1900 HM colonial ship *Protector*, Capt W. R. Creswell, RN, sailed from Adelaide to China to participate in the Boxer Rebellion.
- 1915 HMAS *Psyche*, cruiser, was ordered to Singapore following reports that German agents were fomenting civil unrest in Burma and India.
- 1917 'When a submarine is sighted, I am going for her' — Cdr Warren, RAN, HMAS *Parramatta*, in the Red Sea.
- 1917 The German raider *Wolf* captured and sank the Australian merchant vessel *Matunga* off New Guinea.
- 1941 HMAS *Nestor*, destroyer, attacked a surfaced German submarine off Gibraltar. The submarine fired a torpedo which passed down the destroyer's length.
- 1942 The Japanese submarine RO-33 sank the merchant ship *Mamutu* in the Gulf of Papua. There was one survivor of the crew of 39 and 103 passengers. The submarine machine-gunned the survivors in the water.
- 1943 Coastwatcher Lt Evans, RANVR, rescued the captain of American torpedo boat PT109, Lt John F. Kennedy and his crew on Wana Wana Island. The future President of the USA had been rammed and sunk by the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri*.
- 1944 HMS *Loch Killin*, Lt Cdr S. Darling, RANVR, depth-charged the German submarine U736 off the French coast. The U boat was blown to the surface and jammed transversely across the frigate's stern. The submarine's crew stepped dry-shod on to *Loch Killin's* deck to be taken POW. U736 was shaken free and sunk by HMS *Starling*.
- 1945 USAF bombers dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.
- 1945 Fremantle-based US submarine *Bullhead* was sunk with all hands by Japanese aircraft in the Lombok Strait.
- 1946 HMAS *Pirie*, minesweeper, was transferred to the Turkish Navy and renamed *Amasra*.
- 1969 A pre-trial investigation into the conduct of three officers in USS *Frank E. Evans* was opened at Subic Bay, Philippines.



A swivel mortar of Dampier's era.