

FINDING SYDNEY FOUNDATION
SUBMISSION
SUMMARY OF PRE SEARCH AND SEARCH
ACTIVITIES - SEARCH FOR HMAS *SYDNEY* (II)

HMAS SYDNEY (II) COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

27TH JANUARY 2009

HMAS Sydney Search Pty Ltd
atf The Finding Sydney Foundation

ACN 096 017 275

Level 3, 267 St Georges Terrace
Perth Western Australia 6000
Telephone: + 61 8 9261 7749
Facsimile: + 61 8 9261 7700



BACKGROUND

Thirty years after the second world war ended the opening of the Archives saw a marked increase in interest in HMAS *Sydney* (II) and HSK *Kormoran*, initially by family members and those living in towns on the mid west coast of Western Australia, and then spreading nationally and internationally, resulting in numerous books, research papers, theories: plausible and wild, debates, and intense and sometimes bitter arguments developing. Thankfully, some groups and individuals became active searchers and researchers setting the scene for in-water searches.

Early In-water Surveys

As a result of a Department of Mines data search in October 1981 the hydrographic survey ship HMAS *Moresby* investigated anomalies off the Zuytdorp cliffs north of Kalbarri but found them to be geological. Thereafter several more reports were examined – Sampey (1987), a report of a grave on Dirk Hartog Island, Graham (1992 from a survey dated 1977), and Sampey & Thomas (1992). These reports mainly proved to be geological in nature, or incorrect (grave on Dirk Hartog Island). During the 80s and 90s important links were forged with Western Australian companies with deep-water capacity.

Research and Earlier Searches

Many researchers commenced work in the 1990s, amongst them Professor Kim Kirsner and Assoc Professor John Dunn, Steedman, Hughes, Anderson, followed in the early to mid 2000s by others including Mearns and Hore, all the above favouring the northern area, plus others who analysed reported oral and eyewitness accounts which put the wrecks much further south around the Abrohlos area. The RAN and RAAF investigating the 'southern' areas, as did exploration and survey companies, and all found nothing. Further specialist support was provided in 1991 and later when the local remote sensing firm Associated Survey International, Aerodata Holdings and Woodside provided substantial technical and airborne sensing support.

The Finding Sydney Foundation used the Kirsner/Dunn determination of position in all its documentation and fundraising material and in 2008 the search used the Mearns position (which by then covered the Kirsner/Dunn position) for the successful search.

The Earlier Search Groups

The formation of the HMAS Sydney Trust in 1995 was led by Wayne Born and included local politicians Stephen Smith and Graham Edwards, elements of the Sydney Research Group, Kim Kirsner and Ted Graham. They hoped to perform a deep-water search in the 'Detmers area', and sought advice from deep water experts, including Don Hussong of Seafloor Surveys of Seattle who travelled to Perth and addressed a crowded meeting, outlining his company's search capability in up to 3000m of water. As its first project the Trust sought to inspect the 'Williamson' site south west of Carnarvon but this again was a natural not man-made shape as surveyed by an echo sounder in terrible weather.

Following the collapse of the Trust the HMAS Sydney Foundation was formed and included most of the former Trust members, including Ed Purnard, Graham Edwards, Ted Graham, Kim Kirsner, Don Pridmore and Karen Born. It garnered further high-level political and academic support and eventually senior politicians Kim Beazley, Paul Filling, Tim Fischer, John Panizza and Steven Smith supported the Foundation, attesting to the success of its leaders and organisers in garnering very high powered support and national interest. That group via its political connections was behind the establishment of the Parliamentary Inquiry of 1998.

This group came to a halt when Ted Graham, Kim Kirsner and Don Pridmore left in 2000. In mid 2001 its place was taken by HMAS Sydney Search Pty Ltd, a not-for-profit company. This organisation was founded following a meeting called by Ted Graham with Kim Kirsner and Don Pridmore.



THE FINDING SYDNEY FOUNDATION

Introduction

The wreck of HMAS *Sydney* (II) was found on Sunday 16th March 2008 in water depths ranging from 2220m to 2480m across the debris site some 112 nautical miles (207 km) west of Steep Point, Western Australia, sixty six and one half years after her disappearance.

Finding HMAS *Sydney* (II) and HSK *Kormoran* was clearly an outstanding achievement. A small group of ordinary Australians, on the bedrock of the work of many individuals, organisations and associations and backed by years of Australian and overseas research and expertise, worked diligently, effectively and quietly to achieve a great feat in Australian maritime history.

Background

Sydney sank with all hands west of Shark Bay, Western Australia, following a battle with the armed merchant raider *Kormoran* on 19 November 1941. The German ship was irreparably damaged and later scuttled, the majority of its crew surviving.

The total loss of *Sydney* and all of her crew of 645 young men is Australia's greatest ever naval tragedy in war, or peace and came at a particularly challenging time for the nation, as it preceded the entry of Japan into World War II by a few weeks. This tragic event faded from public view but later re-entered the public arena. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s a number of books and articles were published and some unsuccessful shallow water searches were undertaken using defence and private company assets. Several symposia were held and the Australian Parliament conducted a formal inquiry during 1997/1998, with the report being issued in March 1999. The most recent seminar was conducted by the Royal Australian Navy on the recommendation of the Parliamentary Inquiry in November 2001, the 60th Anniversary of *Sydney's* loss. None of this resolved any of the major issues and the controversy moved on to basic questions of the location of the wrecks. During the 2001 forum, argument was presented for alternative wreck positions in shallow water off the Abrolhos Islands and between the Abrolhos Islands and the mainland near Port Gregory.

Over the years it remained the hope of the many families and loved ones of those lost that the final resting place of *Sydney* would be found so that present and future generations could truly come to terms with this tragedy, learn from its historical implications and put a close to the years of mystery and uncertainty.

It was this background that inspired founding members Ted Graham, Don Pridmore and Kim Kirsner to form the view that a well researched, funded and planned search could be successful, and thus to form the company in early 2001. The founders enlisted the aid of similarly-minded persons who became directors of the fledgling company and carried its objectives forward to the success now achieved.

Formation of the Company and the Trust

HMAS *Sydney* Search Pty Ltd (ACN 096 017 275) was formed as a not-for-profit company in February 2001. In February 2003 it was appointed Trustee for The Finding Sydney Foundation. Its objectives were to find the wrecks of HMAS *Sydney* (II) and the German raider HSK *Kormoran* off the Western Australian coast, and to commemorate the crew members killed.

Throughout this report the Company and the Foundation are collectively referred to by the acronym FSF – Finding Sydney Foundation.



The Directors

The original directors of the FSF when the Deed was signed were Ted Graham, Don Pridmore, Kim Kirsner, Bob Trotter and Ron Birmingham.

The directors responsible for organising fundraising, contracts and the search phase of the project in 2008 were:

Ted Graham AM Chairman

Don Pridmore

Glenys McDonald AM

Bob Trotter, and

Keith Rowe.

Former directors Ron Birmingham, Bob King and Kim Kirsner resigned for personal reasons and their invaluable contribution is gratefully acknowledged by the 2008 directors.

The Foundation in 2008 consisted of five Australians as volunteer unpaid directors. Each has contributed much to the Foundation and, together have achieved a successful outcome.

Patrons

Patrons make a valuable contribution to organisations like the FSF where there is a strong interest in their activities from the public, corporate sector and government. FSF made considered choices and was pleased to appoint Professor Geoffrey Blainey AC, the Hon. Tim Fischer AC, and Rear Admiral David Holthouse AO, (RAN Rtd) as its Patrons.

Memorandum of Understanding with Bluewater Recoveries/David Mearns

In January 2005 the FSF and David Mearns of Bluewater Recoveries established an MOU as each recognised the advantages and benefits that would result from the establishment of an alliance to combine their respective resources and expertise for the search.

This alliance indeed proved successful and is recognised for its robust work and the resultant successful search.

FSF - Determination of the Search Area and Research

In the early stages, prior to 2003, the FSF successfully implemented a number of technical reviews and established the framework and requirements for both shallow and deep-water searches first for the *Kormoran* (considered a pre-requisite for finding *Sydney*) and then *Sydney*, including the establishment of robust technical assessments of required technologies and search planning, and budget costs for fundraising purposes.

FSF considered the German testimonies held the key to determining the search box. In particular, the work of Kim Kirsner and John Dunn, which was funded by the University of Western Australia, the Australian Research Council and the Australian War Memorial, together with the work of David Mearns and Peter Hore, was considered pivotal.

The confluence of the above research led the Royal Australian Navy, Department of Defence and Australian state and federal governments to agree that a search area was definable and that success was technically possible, such that they all became supportive of FSF's endeavours.

Even following receipt of Commonwealth funding, the final search box was undergoing continual refinement as further information came to light.



Studies using the latest technical advances in hind casting, ocean current and meteorological data were commissioned in early 2008. Determination of the final search box was the responsibility of the offshore Search Director David Mearns.

Funding

At the time the search commenced FSF had raised approximately A\$5.3m.

Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status was conferred on the FSF in August 2004, and will remain current until 2009.

Government Grants

Sharing Australian Stories

The then Department of Environment and Heritage (now Department of Environment and Water Resources - DEWR), as part of its Sharing Australian Stories program, provided a grant of \$55,000 inclusive of GST in July 2005 to tell the story of *Sydney* to the Australian community.

Australian Government

In 2005, then Prime Minister the Hon. John Howard announced a grant of \$1.43m inclusive of GST. The background work that culminated in the successful grant was undertaken by the FSF and was greatly supported by Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison, the then Senator the Hon. Ian Campbell, Senator the Hon. David Johnston, and the Hon. Julie Bishop MP.

In May 2007 the FSF made a fresh approach to the then Minister for the Environment and Water Resources for an additional \$2.9m. In August 2007 Minister Bruce Billson announced approval of a further \$2.9m. The consequent Funding Agreement was managed by the Department of Defence via the Royal Australian Navy.

Commonwealth funding was granted by the Howard Government and the search was undertaken under the Rudd Government. The Foundation has received enormous support from the key office holders of the day, each Prime Minister, Government Ministers, the Chief of the Defence Force, the Chief and Deputy Chief of Navy, and support of the Navy and Defence staff involved with the search. It has greatly appreciated that support.

State Government Grants

The Western Australian and New South Wales Governments provided grants of \$500,000 and \$275,000 (inclusive of GST) in September 2005 and April 2006 respectively. Importantly, the WA Government grant advanced \$100,000 to enable the FSF to fund its management, research, search planning and fundraising activities.

Corporate and Individual Donations

The knowledge and networks of the directors influenced initial corporate fundraising to concentrate on the smaller oil and gas companies in Western Australia and the FSF received much needed seed funding from them, including Voyager Energy and Apache Energy and its associates. Volunteer John Begg was instrumental in raising these seed funds.

From the earliest days FSF continuously received a steady stream of small but highly significant private donations from all over Australia.

The Foundation also acknowledges a personal contribution of \$100,000 from Mr Mark Creasy.



In-kind and Pro-bono Work

FSF received substantial in-kind assistance and we acknowledge, with thanks, the donations made by those companies and individuals not acknowledged elsewhere.

The FSF Office

FSF used a small serviced office in Perth at level 3, 267 St Georges Terrace for some years. FSF directors, past and present, all volunteered their time to assist with the running and management of this office.

Website www.findingsydney.com

FSF launched and managed its Finding Sydney Appeal website [http:// www.findingsydney.com](http://www.findingsydney.com) as a portal to disseminate news and information about the search. The website catalogues the general history of *Sydney*, its loss, information on her crew and offers avenues for public donations. The website was developed by Glenfield Systems of Perth and during and after the search the website received some 17 millions hits and was freely accessed on a daily basis by the world's press to extract the great deal of information placed on the site.

The Virtual Memorial

The second major objective of the Finding Sydney Foundation was to permanently commemorate the crew of *Sydney* by the establishment of a web based 'Virtual Memorial' to enable families to contribute their stories about the men they lost so tragically on the 19 November 1941. Having found the wreck, the Foundation has now lived up to its second promise.

The concept of this Virtual Memorial was developed in partnership with the Naval Association of Australia and in consultation with various stakeholders, including a representative of the families. It provides a unique experience accessible globally for those wanting to learn more about the human loss of HMAS *Sydney* (II) and honour the memory of the individual sailors through shared stories and images

The Naval Association of Australia began its life in 1920 as the Ex-Navalmen's Association and is the premier organisation outside of the Royal Australian Navy looking to the interests of both serving and ex-naval members. The Naval Association has agreed to manage the site throughout its lifetime and a formal agreement has been drafted to cede its ownership from the Foundation

The Virtual Memorial was launched on Wednesday 19 November 2008, timed to coincide with services all over Australia, especially the historic sunset memorial services at Geraldton, WA, and on HMAS *Manoora* at sea over the wreck site, on the first anniversary of the ship's loss since the discovery of her wreck. The formal launch was at a function held by the Mayor of Geraldton following the sunset service, in the company of representatives of the Australian and state governments, families and friends.

The website located at <http://www.sydney Memorial.com> features an Honour Roll with individual pages of information for each of the 645 men lost. Families are invited to submit stories, images and other related content to feature on each sailor's page. The memorial also features photographs and video footage of the ship and her crew, showing life onboard during the months prior to her loss.



Content of the Finding Sydney Foundation Report

The Finding Sydney Foundation's report on the successful search for HMAS Sydney (II) is shown in full on the website www.findingsydney.com

The (abbreviated) table of contents is shown below.

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- 2.0 SURVEY OPERATIONS
- 3.0 SURVEY RESULTS
- 4.0 EQUIPMENT CALIBRATIONS
- 5.0 GEODETIC PARAMETERS
- 6.0 VESSEL, EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL
- 7.0 SUMMARY OF EVENTS
- 8.0 HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
- 9.0 DISTRIBUTION

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Appendix H: ROV Photographs and Drawings

VOLUME 5

Appendix H: ROV Photographs and Drawings

VOLUME 6

Appendix I: Photographs (electronic hard disc copy only)

Appendix J: Videos (electronic hard disc copy only)

Appendix K: Sonar & Nav



Distribution of the Finding Sydney Foundation Report

The report was distributed as shown below.

Copies 1, 2 and 3:
(Note *) CMDR Fiona McNaught
 Director Navy Ministerials and Coordination
 R1-4-C070
 Navy Headquarters
 Department of Defence
 Canberra ACT 2600
 Australia

Copies 4 and 5: Ms Diana Jones
 Acting Chief Executive Officer
 Western Australian Maritime Museum
 Cliff Street
 Fremantle WA 6160
 Australia

Note *: As requested by the Commonwealth of Australia (Navy Headquarters), one of the three copies is allocated for delivery via the Commonwealth of Australia to:-

The Ambassador – Mr Martin Lutz
The Federal Republic of Germany
119 Empire Circuit
Yarralumla ACT 2600
Australia

Copy 6: Mr Ted Graham
 Chairman & Director
 The Finding Sydney Foundation

Copy 7: Mrs Glenys McDonald, AM
 Director
 The Finding Sydney Foundation

Copy 8: Dr Don Pridmore
 Director
 The Finding Sydney Foundation

Copy 9: Mr Keith Rowe
 Director
 The Finding Sydney Foundation

Copy 10: Commodore Bob Trotter RAN (Retd)
 Director
 The Finding Sydney Foundation

Copy 11: Mr David Mearns
 Director
 Blue Water Recoveries Ltd.
 Eagle House, Market Square
 Midhurst
 West Sussex, GU29 9NJ
 England



Originality of Photographs and Video imagery

The photographic and video imagery taken from onboard the Foundation's chartered vessel was in its entirety provided to the RAN as required under the Funding Agreement with the Australian Government. Prior to its provision to the RAN the material was not altered or changed in any way. The material is the copyright of the Finding Sydney Foundation and the photographs were taken by David Mearns.

Acknowledgements

The FSF acknowledges that material used in writing this summary of the FSF has come from a variety of public source materials as well as from FSF directors, past and present. Moreover, many individuals and companies contributed much to the successful search operation, by way of both donations and pro bono work.

We also acknowledge the material supplied by Dr Mike McCarthy of the Western Australian Museum relating to the background material dealing with the period pre FSF.

We also gratefully acknowledge the contributions and assistance provided by the Howard and Rudd Governments, the Royal Australian Navy and the Sea Power Centre Australia.

Directors would also like to thank their own families and friends for their support during the many years leading up to the successful search.



Ted Graham AM
Chairman, HMAS Sydney Search Pty Ltd.
Honorary Associate Western Australian Maritime Museum
www.findingsydney.com
L3 / 267 St Georges Tce. Perth WA 6000

