

32 Speculation: HMAS SYDNEY tallies recovered in Japan

- 32.1 In his book and before this Inquiry Mr Michael Montgomery maintained that survivors from HMAS SYDNEY had been killed by Japanese men from a submarine that fired a torpedo that sank SYDNEY. He maintained they were machine-gunned in the water and, to cover their tracks, the Japanese poured oil on the water and set it afire, thus burning any evidence.¹
- 32.2 When giving evidence in November 2008, Mr Montgomery disclosed a new piece of 'evidence' that had come to hand 'only just in the past two weeks'. It was that an Australian Navy coxswain serving in Japan after the war had been detailed to accompany a Naval intelligence officer who had visited a Japanese island where former Japanese submariners lived. The intelligence officer had returned with a sack containing a number of 'Sydney tallies'. (Tallies are the black-and-gold hatbands encircling sailors' hats.) This evidence emerged in the following questioning:

Q: You have maintained, have you not, Mr Montgomery, that survivors of Sydney may have been picked up in a Japanese submarine?

A: I'm not certain of this. There is certain evidence - there is an item of evidence which has only just, in the last two weeks, come to hand, if this is a fit moment to repeat it. It came from a Naval coxswain who was with the occupying forces in Japan soon after the surrender and he was detailed to accompany a Naval Intelligence officer, and that Naval Intelligence officer visited a township or place of residence which was known to be occupied by Japanese submariners, and he came back with a sack, and when he asked what was in that sack, he was told, "It's a number of Sydney tallies" - nametags.²

The coxswain was a Mr Jack Kendall, who had been interviewed by Professor Bruce Horsfield.³ Professor Horsfield had been working with Mr Montgomery for about two years on a proposed 'two-part television

¹ PUB.002.0001 at 0109

² TRAN.018.0001_R at 0084_R

³ TRAN.018.0001_R at 0084_R to 0085_R

documentary on the Sydney/Kormoran action⁴ and had recently told Mr Montgomery about Mr Kendall.

The Inquiry thus became obliged to investigate this allegation.

32.3 Before 20 October 1942 tallies bore the name of the ship in which the sailor was serving—for example, ‘HMAS SYDNEY’. Commonwealth Navy Order 351 directed that when existing tally supplies were exhausted ships were to order and distribute tallies that displayed only ‘HMAS’ and not the ship’s name.

32.4 Professor Horsfield provided to the Inquiry a copy of the record of his interview with Mr Kendall and gave evidence before me. According to that evidence, in early 1947 Mr Kendall transported a British intelligence officer, Capt Shortino, and an interpreter from Kure to an unnamed island. Mr Kendall had been to the island about a month before⁵ with the second-in-command of his unit. The 2IC had gone ashore, leaving Mr Kendall in the boat. On the 2IC’s return, Mr Kendall asked him:

‘What’s going on?’

...

He said something about, ‘I think it’s something’ – he never said what it was – ‘to do with *HMAS Sydney*.’ That’s all he said.⁶

When Capt Shortino and his interpreter arrived at the island in Mr Kendall’s workboat, they went ashore, leaving Mr Kendall in the boat. Later they returned, Capt Shortino carrying with him ‘this blue type of small bag with like a lanyard top on it’.⁷ Mr Kendall thought Capt Shortino had perhaps taken the bag with him when he went onto the island.⁸ When Capt Shortino returned to the boat ‘... he had something in the bag’.⁹ Mr Kendall did not ask, and was not told, what was in the bag. He did not ask because ‘we had it in the back of our mind what he was going to get’.¹⁰ He thought ‘in the back of his mind’ that it was ‘a round sailor’s cap’.¹¹ Mr Kendall agreed he did not know what was in the bag¹², and Capt Shortino took the bag with him when he left the boat on their return to Kure.

⁴ TRAN.018.0001_R at 0085_R

⁵ TRAN.034.0001_R at 0013_R to 0014_R

⁶ TRAN.034.0001_R at 0013_R

⁷ TRAN.034.0001_R at 0015_R

⁸ TRAN.034.0001_R at 0016_R

⁹ TRAN.034.0001_R at 0016_R

¹⁰ TRAN.034.0001_R at 0016_R

¹¹ TRAN.034.0001_R at 0016_R

¹² TRAN.034.0001_R at 0016_R

- 32.5 The taped record of interview given to Professor Horsfield¹³ did not tell a markedly different story, other than in the following respects:
- Mr Kendall's first visit to the island was not with his 2IC but with his commanding officer.
 - In his account of that visit Mr Kendall made no mention of SYDNEY.
 - SYDNEY's involvement derived from a 'rumour' at base that a SYDNEY tally had been found.
 - In relation to the visit with Capt Shortino, it was 'general knowledge' around the camp that he had something from SYDNEY – a SYDNEY tally.
 - Mr Kendall had contacted Mr John Samuels and recounted his story.
- 32.6 There is no mention, either in the evidence before the Inquiry or in the record of the interview, of Capt Shortino being asked what was in the 'sack' or of his responding, 'It's a number of Sydney tallies', as Mr Montgomery alleged.¹⁴ The evidence is the opposite: Capt Shortino was not asked what was in the sack, nor did he volunteer the information. Mr Kendall said he did not see and did not know what was in the sack.
- 32.7 Apart from that matter, the entire story is speculation and rumour, with no factual or evidentiary base. There is nothing to suggest that, if Capt Shortino did collect something from the island, it had anything to do with SYDNEY. There is no evidence that a cap or tally was found.
- 32.8 It is established that Japan played no part in the loss of SYDNEY. There was no Japanese submarine present with SYDNEY off the Western Australian coast on 19 November 1941. There was no way in which any caps or tallies from SYDNEY could have been collected by Japanese interests. This speculation was advanced by Mr Montgomery and told to Mr Samuels – the two being the primary advocates of the theory of Japanese submarine involvement – in an endeavour to bolster their unsustainable speculation.
- 32.9 This story has no substance whatsoever.

¹³ COI.006.0106_A

¹⁴ TRAN.018.0001_R at 0084_R

