

CAPTAIN DETMEERS REPORT ON SINKING OF THE "SYDNEY"

Wednesday 19.11.41 Course 25. Speed 11. 111 East, 28.54 South.  
South-south-east 3/4. Sea Moderate. Swell from south-west.  
Visibility very good.

1555. Report from lookout JANSEN. Sailing-vessel in sight on port bow. Bearing about 20° south-west. ((?)). Corrects report continually. 3 sailing vessels. Several ships. 2 smoke-trails. Apparently escort. Alarm. Veered 260° to port. Full speed ahead.

1600. Cruiser identified as "Perth" class. Checked lying on southerly course. Course 250° into the sun. Cannot rely on dusk before 1900. Our smoke very thick. Engine room reports: No. 4 engine out of order. Therefore speed about 14 knots.

1605. Cruiser turns towards. Range about 150 HM. Approaches slowly. Flashes signal HMI continually. Hoist signal for "STRAAT." Consider situation and make decision.

1645. No. 4 engine running again on 8 cylinders. Speed of 14 knots maintained. Stopped range finding with C.M. instrument at 80 HM so as to conceal identity. Continued range finding with AX.CE.M. instrument. Continual exchange of signals. Cruiser slowly approaches astern on the starboard quarter, visible as small silhouette.

1700. Signal on 600 M. "QQQ STRAAT 115-1-263." Perth radio repeats, demands further advice if necessary.

1715. Cruiser draws away on starboard beam 90 HM distant.

1725. Further signal. "Hoist your secret call." Further delay can only make the situation worse. Cruiser stops engines, therefore completely unsuspecting.

Thereupon at 1730 identity declared. Strike Dutch flag, German colours clearly shown. Time taken to reveal identity 6 seconds. Order to stand by with guns and torpedoes. Enemy falls slowly astern. Two torpedoes. Position 80, speed 14. Point of aim, stem and stern. At the same time turned slowly to 260 so as not to interfere with guns. First salvo. One shot, short. Range fixed 13. Second salvo. Salvoes 3, 4 and 5 up four points - about 4 seconds later hits on bridge and control-tower. Immediately after full broadside from enemy falls wide. No hits. Then about two salvoes at five second interval. Hits midships, aeroplane and bridge. Bearing corrected left between forward turrets, A.A. machine-guns and starboard 3.7 guns effective against bridge, torpedo tubes and A.A. armament. Until fifth salvo no reply, then No. 3 turret opens rapid and accurate fire. Hits in funnel and engine rooms. No. 4 turret only fires two or three salvoes, all of them over. No. 1 and 2 turrets silent.

At about 8th or 9th salvo torpedo fired. Hits on forward turrets. Two torpedoes. Passed short of bow. Bow almost entirely submerged. Holding to course 260° because of torpedoes. Torpedo-tubes not manned because of A.A. machine gun fire. Enemy turns hard towards. Course and speed maintained to get clear. No. 2 turret top blown over-board, further hits forward.

About 1735 enemy passes astern to attack with torpedoes. Tactically unfavourable position. Thick smoke from engine-room fire obscures view of enemy from bridge. Continue firing with stern guns. Range about 40 HM, enemy guns trained on starboard side. Hit A.A. is not named.

About 1745 veered to port to completely annihilate enemy. Shortly after rays fall rapidly, no communication with engine room, at the same time 4 torpedo tracks. Alarmed, as doubtful whether engines

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can still turn the ship and the tracks are travelling dead astern. Course 340. Tracks pass close behind the stern. At the same time engines fail. LIMBON reports engines and all fire-extinguishing equipment completely out of order. Order to try and get at least one engine working.

Gunnery-control. From about 1750 again firing with all forward-guns on 60 HM. "Sydney" on southerly course at slow speed. From bridge to funnel on fire. Continually being hit. About 1800 a single torpedo on 70 HM, inclination 80, speed 8, miss astern.

At 1825 ordered "Cease Fire." Last range 90 HM. Shots 104 HM, ship's bearing 225. Rounds fired about ((500.242.50.XZ?)). Prepare to scuttle ship. Lower all life-boats and life-saving equipment. Impossible to get through to engine-room. Ascertained that No. 2 dynamo still working, but useless. Enemy range about 180 HM, course about 150, out of sight, glow of flames till about 2200, after that still a few intermittent flashes.

About 2100 all life-boats lowered, manned and cast off. Still 124 men on board, among them almost all the officers. Serviceable guns can be manned by them. Only a little smoke in mine-store, both boats out of No. 2 hatch. At about 2330 both lowered, one with 59 cast off. Charge in forward port oil-tank. At 2355 smoke on mine-deck greatly increased. At 2400 touched off charge, last boat cast off. At 0010 charge explodes. At 0035 mines explode, ship sinks rapidly stern first.