

Translation of parts of diary of 185
 Captain Debbner regarding the
 Sydney - Komoran Action Report.
 237

~~SECRET~~

26.10.41

NHRO
 Nil

(four figures
 omitted)

Detached KULMERLAND. Drew away to westward to effect alterations to engines. Exchange of nos. 1 and 2 engines.

Midday: sighted an American, turned away. Then effected alterations. Alterations completed by (four figures omitted). Trial run without trouble. Proceeded on agent's way, as still time before new moon. Intend to be off PERTH by then. Report of CORNWALL with convoy off Cape LEEUWIN course west. Altered course to NE in consequence. Intention: investigation of coast off SHARKS BAY.

Wednesday 19.11.

1555 Course 25, Speed 11; 26.34 South, 111 East. SSE 3 to 4, Sea 3 medium swell from SW. Very clear. Look out JANSEN reports sailing ship in sight on port bow, bearing approx. 20° true. Report corrected currently to 2 sailing ships, several vessels, 2 smoke clouds, apparently escort. Alarm. Turned away to port on to 260. Full speed ahead.

1600 Cruiser made out, identified as PERTH class, on course South. Course 250 into the sun. Approach of darkness not due before 1900. Producing large quantities of smoke ourselves. Engine room reports: No. 4 engine out of order. Speed therefore approx. 14 knots.

1605 Cruiser turns towards; range over 150 km. Approaches slowly making "NNJ" repeatedly on searchlight. Hoist signal for STRAAT. Appreciate situation and make decision.

1645 No. 4 engine running again on 3 cylinders. Speed 14 maintained; at 80 km ceased measurement with 3 metre rangefinder, for reasons of disguise, continued ranging with 1.35 metre rangefinder. Continual signalling. Cruiser approaches slowly on the starboard quarter showing narrow silhouette.

1700 Report on 600 metres QQQ STRAAT EBFS. PERTH radio repeats and requests further report if necessary.

1715 Cruiser draws away on starboard beam 90 km distant.

1725 Morse signal in (MKS): HOIST YOUR SECRET CALL. Further delay can only make situation worse. (Cruiser) stops engines, thus has not the least suspicion. Therefore

1730 Removal of disguise. Dutch flag struck, War flag flies clear from main mast. Time taken 8 seconds. Guns and torpedo given permission to fire. Enemy drops slowly astern. 2 torpedoes inclination 30, speed 14, point of aim bow and stern. Also slow alteration to 260 so as not to interfere with guns. First salvo single shot short, Gun Range 15. Second salvo. Third fourth fifth, up 400. About 4 seconds later scores hit on bridge and control position, followed immediately by full salvo from enemy, over no hits. Then approx. 2 salvos at 5 seconds interval. Hit amidships, aircraft, bridge. Correction for deflection left between forward turrets. A/A MG's and starboard 3.7 effective against bridge, torpedo tubes and A/A armament. Up to fifth salvo no reply, then "C" turret well and fast. Hits in funnel and engine room. "D" turret only two or three salvos, all of them over. "A" and "B" turrets no longer (firing). At about eighth or ninth salvo torpedo hit forward of "A" and "B" turrets. Torpedo passed short distance ahead. Stern almost completely submerged. Course 260 maintained since torpedo tubes not manned because of A/A MG fire.

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Enemy turns sharply towards. Course and speed maintained to get clear. Top of "B" turret flies overboard, further hits forward.

1735
approx. Enemy passes astern in unfavourable position for firing his torpedoes. Thick smoke caused by fire in engine room conceals enemy from the bridge. A/A Control Officer continues with stern armament range approx. 40 km. Enemy's guns pointing to starboard. His A/A is not manned.

1745
approx. Turned away to port in order to destroy enemy completely. Shortly afterwards revolutions drop rapidly, no communication with engine room. Simultaneously four torpedo tracks. Hold course because questionable whether engines would make the turn and tracks deviate well astern. Course 240. (Torpedoes) pass short distance astern. Simultaneously engines break down. LENSCH reports engine room and all fire-extinguishing apparatus completely out of order. Order to try and get at least one engine working. From

1750
approx. Gunnery control working again from forward position with whole battery at 60 km. SIDNEY course south slow speed. On fire from bridge to after funnel. Constant further hits.

1800
approx. Single torpedo at 70 km inclination 80, speed 5. Miss astern.

1825
Guns check. Last range 90 km. Shots 104 km. relative bearing 225. Rounds fired approx. 500 base fuze, 50 nose fuze. Prepare to scuttle. Lower all boats and life-saving equipment. Impossible to reach engine room; satisfied myself personally of this. No. 2 electric installation working but useless. Enemy disappears from sight at approx. 160 km. course approx. 150. Glare visible until about 2200 then occasional flickerings.

2100
approx. All life-saving apparatus lowered and cast off. Still 124 men on board including almost all officers. Such guns as are still working can thus be manned. Only small quantity of smoke in mine hold. Both boats from no. 2 hatch.

2330
approx. Both lowered, one with 59 (men). Explosive charge in port forward oil tank.

2355
Smoke increasing heavily on mining deck.

2400
Paid off. Touched off charge, last boat cast off.

0035
Mines explode. Ship sinks rapidly stern first.