

[REDACTED]
16 July 1998

24/7 Ms Joanne Towner
Secretary Defence Sub-Committee
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence & Trade

[REDACTED]
SUBMISSION No 187



Dear Ms Towner,

INQUIRY INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SINKING OF HMAS SYDNEY

Whilst my submission is not strictly in connection with the circumstances of the sinking of HMAS *Sydney*, I offer it as a counter to allegations of "cover-ups" involving the RAAF following the loss of the vessel and as an indication that the records of RAAF units involved in the searches, whilst not of major importance, do contain at least one point of interest which seems to have escaped the attention of most, if not all, interested parties to date.

I refer specifically to the reports of lights being seen over Geraldton and Pearce early in November 1941 and that this information has been used by some to lend credibility to the theory that a submarine must have been present as the existence of submarine-borne aircraft at this time is an accepted fact.

Whilst the weight of evidence no longer supports such a theory (see Ms Winter's Submission 36A, Volume 6), that lights were seen is not doubted. As soon after the sinking of the *Sydney* as 12 December 1941 it is believed that lights were again seen over Pearce as No. 25 Squadron ordered two Wirraways into the air "to intercept an unidentified aircraft, reported to have been seen flying over Pearce aerodrome at 0235 hours. Aircraft took-off at 0245 and flew at varying heights until 0430 hours. The interception was not successful." (reference: No. 25 Squadron Operations Record Book, 12 December 1941, copy held by RAAF Historical Section, Department of Defence.)

I am presuming lights were seen on this occasion as the account states that the "aircraft" was seen, as opposed to heard. Given the hour, lights would seem to have been the most logical reason that attention was drawn to the object. Unfortunately there the matter must temporarily rest, though, as any explanation of the December sighting, as with those a month earlier, remains purely conjecture. The point that I wish to make, however, is that there is clearly more to the sightings than what has been recorded to date. Perhaps there is some natural phenomena which can account for what was seen. The matter would seem to be worthy of further, separate, investigation by an interested party or parties.

Whilst the quoted passage from No. 25 Squadron's records suggests a high standard of recording, the same, unfortunately, cannot be said of the records for November 1941 of No. 14 Squadron, for reasons not known. On the other hand, however, I see no reason to believe that "entries were deliberately made to create confusion for researchers and historians" as has been suggested (Gp Capt Bourne's Submission 15E, Volume 14). If there was an attempt to deliberately falsify records of the arrival and departure of No. 14 Squadron's Hudsons, how is it that a record of the comings and goings of these same aircraft survives in the following form in the records of the host unit, No. 4 Service Flying Training School:

Three Lockheed Hudsons departed at 5 min intervals at 0415 hours. Two Lockheed Hudsons departed at 5 min intervals at 0435 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-7 departed at 0450 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-45 departed 0520 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-95 landed at 0515 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-95 departed 0530 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-30 landed at 0625 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-60 landed at 0640 hours. . . . Lockheed Hudson A16-95 landed at 0736 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-30 departed at 0810 hours. Lockheed Hudson departed at 0815 hours (A16-95). Lockheed Hudson A16-30 landed at 0918 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-30 departed at 1115 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-30 landed at 1125 hours. . . . Lockheed Hudson A16-30 departed at 1302 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-30 landed at 1343 hours. Lockheed Hudson A16-60 departed at 1525 hours. (reference: No. 4 Service Flying Training School, Unit History Sheets, 25 November 1941, copy held by RAAF Historical Section, Department of Defence.)

There is an earlier claim of a RAAF "cover-up" (Gp Capt Bourne's Submission 15, Volume 5) which I would like to also comment on. At the centre of this story is the activities of a Fairey Battle target tug aircraft said to have been seen by *Kormoran* survivors the same day as they saw the *Aquitania*. The pilot, Mr David Daly, is still alive and I contacted him after re-reading this particular submission.


Mr Daly has confirmed that his aircraft, L5779 (not L5775 as stated originally, later said to be L5570, which is also incorrect) was ordered from Geraldton to Pearce for towing duties on 23 November 1941 as indicated in No. 4 Service Flying Training School's records. The purpose of Daly's visit there appears, from his log book entries, to be to provide a towed target for the Wirraways of No. 25 Squadron, as the words "Wirraway" and "quarter" can faintly be seen on the photocopy that has been sent to me, as can part of a word which may be "attack". The probable explanation of this is that the expectation was that the Wirraway pilots would be undertaking quarter attacks against the towed target drogue. The copy of the left hand side page of Mr Daly's log book for the period 18-27 November 1941 that was provided to me is enclosed with this submission.

Whilst the passage of time since November 1941 has not been kind to Mr Daly's memory, there is no indication from his log book entries or what he has told me that suggests he was involved in anything other than "towing duties". If he did participate in searches for survivors of the *Sydney/Kormoran* encounter, neither the date nor particulars of that flight have been recorded.

In the interests of correcting some other points raised in the same submission, I wish to add that there were only two Fairey Battles in Western Australia at this time (L5778 and L5779). Both aircraft were on the strength of No. 4 Service Flying Training School, a fact which is confirmed in that unit's November 1941 end-of-month return. Accordingly, the claim that RAAF Pearce had their own Fairey Battles at this time is incorrect.

I hope my notes will be of some small assistance and, along with so many other Australians, I await the committee's findings with great interest.

Yours faithfully,


David Vincent
Aviation Researcher

ASSETS

YEAR		AIRCRAFT		Pilot, or 1st Pilot	2nd Pilot, Pupil or Passenger	DUTY (Including Results and Remarks)
Month	Date	Type	No.			
Totals Brought Forward						
NOVEMBER	18	ANGON	W2132	"	AAC CHAMPION	A1 PASSENGER TEST (S...)
"	"	"	"	"	" BURGESS	"
"	"	"	"	"	" MURRAY	"
"	"	"	"	"	" MARTINICH	"
"	"	"	W2112	"	" M'DONALD	"
"	19	"	W2148	"	" M'DONALD	I, INSTRUMENT FLYING CHECK.
"	"	"	W2042	"	" BURGESS	NI. GERALDTON - CANNA
"	20	"	W2041	"	" BUDD	F1 VIC. ECHELON CHANGE
"	"	"	"	"	" CAMPBELL	F1 OUR LEADERS
"	"	"	"	"	" CRAIG	F1
"	21	"	W2112	"	" HADDO	F1
"	"	"	"	"	" MARTIN	F1
"	"	"	"	"	" MURTON	F1
"	23	BATTLE	L5779	"	" PARKER	GERALDTON - PEARCE
"	"	"	"	"	"	" QUARTER
"	"	"	"	"	"	TOWING DUTIES
"	24	"	"	"	"	"
"	"	"	"	"	"	"
"	25	"	"	"	"	"
"	26	"	"	"	"	"
"	"	"	"	"	"	"
"	27	"	"	"	"	PEARCE - GERALDTON
"	"	ANGON	W2042	"	" HARDEY	F1.
"	"	"	"	"	" BROWN	"
"	"	"	"	"	" BUDD	"
"	"	"	"	"	" BURGESS	G1, B7. BOMBING GUNNERY RANGE

D 3210/7.37.-C.4947.

GRAND TOTAL [Cols. (1) to (10)]

456 Hrs. 65 Mins.

Totals Carried Forward