

RE THE H.M.A.S. "SYDNEY".

Dear Mrs. Lilywhite,

Miss Biggins asked, with one of her last letters, to send you a report of the fight

"SYDNEY-----CORMORAN"

So I will endeavor to tell you things how I saw and lived them through.

At first I should like to ask you to judge these lines quite humanly as I do it and not at all from enemy to enemy. Already as prisoner of war, I read many reports about our fight in Australia but as you may imagine they all were founded on suppositions and very often they were not all true.

Miss Biggin who was nursing me during my stay in the infirmary, knows what kind of man I am so I mean you can trust on my words with which I only wish to make you free of this worrying doubtfulness. But of course criticism of my report is left to you.

On the 19th. November 1941 "Cormoran" approached the Australian Western coast in order to put mines to the harbour of Perth. About 4 pm. going from south to north along the coast we observed a sailer righthand behind us, in about 10 miles distant which drew near to us. Quickly approaching more and more the sailer was recognised by us as an unknown cruiser of the Australian "Cityclass" At this moment we, on the Cormoran were alarmed i.e. every man to do his duty on his battle station. I myself had to stay on the bridge so that I was able to observe all; about half past five pm. the cruiser was in a three miles distance. At first the two ships were moving. The cruiser asked for the name of the Cormoran from where he came and to which port he went. At that time our name was "Straits Malagga" and we went under the Dutch flag (This is a stratagen used by English and as well by the Germans) after formalities the cruiser asked for our secret signals and was righthand of the Cormoran about 1 mile distant. As we did not possess these signals and before all it changed for the name Strait Malagga every month the Dutch flag was put off, the German flag was hoisted at the fight mast and our commander, Captain Detmers, gave orders to fire; the fight lasted about $\frac{1}{2}$ of an hour and then was stopped by our C'der after the guns of the cruiser had been brought to silense.

The cruiser as well as our ship burned in full blaze by the shots and each of the two ships had now to do with himself. After our Commander had seen that it was impossible to go on he ordered to sink the Cormoran, now we had to be very busy to get our wounded men and food into the boats and put this into the water.

During this time we saw the cruiser disappear behind the horizon burning and we supposed that she would slowly arrive at an Australian port on the 20th November a.m.

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The Cormoran after all had left her exploded as it was dark and we could not see far into the small lifeboat we cried in the direction where we had last seen the cruiser disappear. The sea was rather rough and we waited there in the near because we supposed that a plane or an Australian man-of-war would come but none of both appeared and so we took our course to the Australian coast with our boat. Sixty-two men in it, however, we did not reach the coast but after 8 days the Australian steamer "Century" took us over then we came ashore in Fremantle as P.O.W's only hearing that the cruiser with which we had the battle was the Sydney.

The Sydney as the Cormoran had suffered very heavy damage and both were lost of course. When the fight began the Sydney was only 1 mile distant from the Cormoran. The Sydney had long range guns while we had old guns of the last great war which were very short, therefore the Sydney wanted more time to practise shooting, furthermore the Sydney would never have supposed that a German man-of-war in the form of a merchant ship would appear at the Australian coast so the Sydney was very much surprised which of course was an advantage to us and we had already damaged the Sydney before he began to fire. After shooting a torpedo at the Sydney which hit badly, the cruiser intended to ram the Cormoran and was also shooting 4 torpedoes on us which however did not hit because we turned our ship into the same direction as the Sydney and the the fight was finished.

~~I herewith would like to state my report and hope~~
that it is of some evidence for you.

Today after the lost war for Germany, I am not interested in telling big stories but I wanted to give facts.

I hope that you kindly will confirm the receipt of this letter. With regretting to the loss of your husband and kind regards to you.

I am,
Yours faithfully,

OTTO WINDROTH. (signed.)