

board. Why should this have been an unexplained event?!

1. In order to be clear, it was foolish of the Sydney to go so close to an unknown ship. There is little doubt that it was the duty of the commanders of the Sydney to stop the Kormoran, ask the code and ask the Admiralty whether the Strait of Malacca was in that area, but at a longer range and at a greater speed. The closing in to 1000 metres was the greatest mistake that was made, as hits to the bridge and the artillery's main position could now be made with the first volley of all the guns and the Sydney's fire point could be destroyed.
2. The failure to deploy the ship's aeroplane and thereby not realising that the Kormoran was a highly suspicious ship should have been prevented.
3. There was no radio signal from the Sydney before or during the battle. As the Sydney was closing in, the Kormoran sent out a call for help four times, QU, QU, QU, QU, which means "We are being tracked by a suspicious ship", which would be passed on by Radio Perth. No one followed up this distress signal.
4. The 'Aquitania', a three funnelled ship, which was the first ship to pick up survivors from the German ship at 9.24 in the morning, made no report against the official radio silence. This ruined any possibility of saving survivors. The appearance of bad weather on 20 November had also cost the lives of the survivors still drifting. No search or rescue attempts were undertaken on behalf of the German survivors, because the rescuers themselves would have had to battle helplessly against the

rough sea in overloaded boats.

5. Sadly there were no survivors from the crew of the Sydney, there were no witnesses either. The statements of the 320 Germans and the 3 Chinese (they had been on board of their own free will) remained unambiguous after sharp questioning for four weeks and again before their discharge home, and these statements concurred with the actual events. And yet, doubt, rumours, conjectures and stories continued to exist, which have caused great distress and disquiet to the people of Australia and their relations, even until this day. The claims of an English author, Michael Montgomery, that the Sydney went down after it actually did and that the survivors were shot by German machine guns, are a slanderous lie. It was because of this that the plan to erect a memorial above Carnavon, to the Australian and German sailors who died, foundered on the objection of the President of Victoria, Mr Bruce Ruxton. Look at the Sydney Morning Herald of 20 and 25 July 1987 "German foul play turns Ruxton round." I myself have, along with other survivors from the Kormoran during visits in 1974 and 1978, laid wreaths in honour of the Australian dead under the oak tree in Sydney and in the Memorial Sanctuary at Victoria Park in Melbourne. My personal entry in February 1978 can be found in the condolence book there. They were heroes, who died for their countries. For what and why, we all ask ourselves today, did so many people have to lose their lives? May God stand by us and respect our freedom. I am very sorry that the fate of a four year old boy was affected and that he lost his father so early. Almost the same fate befell my son, who is now 52. His mother, my beloved wife, was terribly ill for 3¹/₂ years and died at the beginning of 1940 and I only saw my son again when he was 10.

As an old man of almost 80, I do not want to open up any old wounds, but to say how I saw this isolated battle being decided between two captains, who died fighting.

With best wishes

Johannes Schneider