

The Battle Site.

Detmers always maintained the battle site was 26° 32" South 111° 00" East. Was it? Today, from various sources there appears to be over 40 different positions given for the battle site. Taking this into account it seems remarkable that Battle Summary No.13 issued by the Admiralty in early 1942, gives an account of eleven actions between naval ships and raiders, giving in each a latitude and longitude. But not so for the *Sydney-Kormoran* action, it is the only one not specifically located by latitude and longitude. The only position it gives is Detmers position at the start of the battle. The fact is that in the beginning there was never any doubt at all. The battle took place 300 miles west of Carnarvon. In his book Detmers states, that after the battle they took to the boats and sailed EAST. I cannot stress this enough. He was one of the few people onboard that actually knew their exact position when the battle began. If he sailed east after the battle, then why did he end up 150 miles NORTH of the position he gave for the action. He was not that stupid. If he had sailed EAST he would have come ashore near Geraldton.

Instead, they were found in a boat NORTH of the position he gave for the battle. He knew the difference between north and east. Detmers gave the position he had put in his "QQQ" message, but it was not the battle position. When he was in the prison camp he worried about being tried as a war criminal. As a gentleman, he had fought according to the rules of war, but had given a position that may have sentenced the *Sydney* survivors, if any, to certain death. Detmers did not need to shoot survivors in the water, by giving the wrong position any chance of finding anyone alive was hopeless. Anyway, by the time the search got underway it was already too late. He made sure there was never going to be any possibility of anyone conflicting with his account of events. After all, history is written by the winners.

Some of the rescued Germans did give the 300 miles west of Carnarvon position prior to Detmers giving his position. Many had no idea where they had been or where the ship had sunk, but some did. Detmers obviously did not reveal his plans or the ship's position to many people. Some said they were astonished that they were so far off the coast when they took to the boats. One German officer recently admitted they were surprised to find they were 3 or 4 hundred miles off the coast. HMAS *Wyrallah* was one of the search vessels that looked for survivors, and G. Hermon Gill edited a series of books for the Australian War Memorial, entitled *HMAS, II, III and HMAS IV*. In an editorial in 1942, he wrote :-

"On November 19, the Australian Navy suffered its heaviest loss of the war to that date, when HMAS SYDNEY was lost, with all hands, in the Indian Ocean, after sinking the heavily-armed German raider STEIERMARK. As none of her personnel has been located, precise details of what occurred on board the Australian cruiser must remain a matter of surmise; and the story of her last action can be reconstructed only on the basis of accounts given by the raider's survivors, 317 of whom reached Australia.

SYDNEY was on patrol, and apparently was about 300 miles west of Carnarvon (Western Australia)

H.M.A.S., Australian War Memorial Publication

So initially that was the position given, and again in 1944 Gill published a story by a Yeoman (aboard the *Wyrallah* during the search for the *Sydney* survivors) in the *HMAS* series. This Yeoman wrote in his own words the following passage :

“During the next few days the ships in company picked up almost 100 sailors of the Third Reich. By this time our ship was roughly 300 miles west of Carnarvon and just south of the Tropic of Capricorn. It was in this position that our ship picked up an R.A.N. lifebelt, inflated and with its fastening tapes obviously snapped.....”

Yeoman of Signals, E.C. Reynolds, R.A.N.R.

“H.M.A.S. MK III, A.W.M. publication, 1944, page 150

I should state here that the official records do not support the above statement or position. Nor apparently does the log book of the *Wyrallah*. If the story by the Yeoman was from a sailor in a pub, I would disregard it, but the fact that Gill saw fit to put it in the War Memorial publication would seem he gave it a certain amount of credit. So twice during the war, Gill published the same position, but then Commander Dechaineaux, in a report to the Cabinet, moved the battle site a hundred odd miles north of Detmers position, which seemed to make more sense predicated on Detmers' version of events. After the war Gill undertook to write the *History of the Royal Australian Navy in World War II* in two volumes. In that history he gives the position the Germans gave and the one which the Navy and Australian Government had apparently decided to adopt. It should also be noted that each chapter of the history was vetted by the (retired) wartime Director of Naval Intelligence prior to publication.

Tom Frame writes :-

“When *Kormoran*'s radio equipment was damaged during the engagement, no message could be relayed to SKL. However, the *Beobachtungs-Dienst* (Observation Service), which was part of the German naval intelligence service, had been reading British naval ciphers at the time and was able to pick up details of the action. On 5 December 1941, a B-Dienst report revealed that the Germans were aware that *Sydney* had been sunk by one of their auxiliary cruisers off the west coast of Australia around 18 November, On 12 December, *B-Dienst* read a report on the German auxiliary cruiser and the action.

According to a report by the Australia Admiralty [i.e., Naval Board], the battle between the *Sydney* and the German merchant raider took place 300 nautical miles west of Carnarvon (Western Australia).

It appears that the German authorities knew almost as much as the Australians about the action.”

H.M.A.S. Sydney, Loss and Controversy, page 93.

Not only does Frame agree that the Germans were reading British ciphers, but that the Naval Board states that the battle took place 300 miles west of Carnarvon. However, he made no effort to extrapolate on this vital information. He appears to think that reading *Sydney*'s codes would have no bearing on the outcome of the battle. He also seems to ignore the facts that the signal states the battle took place 300 miles west of Carnarvon and the fact that the Naval

Board reported the 300 mile position and the fact that the Germans were reading signal traffic from the Naval Board. I happen to believe these facts have a decided impact on the events in November 1941. The Inquiry answered none of these important questions.

At the recent inquiry, information prepared by the Senior Naval Historian and Archives Officer, J. H. Straczek stated that the location of the *Kormoran-Sydney* initial sighting took place approximately 150 miles south west of Carnarvon, however, it should be pointed out that this is not in nautical miles and is roughly within 250 square miles of most of the other positions given by the Germans and various naval and academic writers. Little wonder there is confusion regarding the actual battle site. It would appear that the Navy is deliberately or inadvertently perpetuating this confusion because it does not want to back down from the position it took in 1941. The correct position was known in 1941. That the battle took place 300 miles west of Carnarvon and it was announced publicly by the wartime Prime Minister John Curtin on the 4th December 1941. The release of the identification of the real position twice warranted censure in an official 'Minute' from Commodore Durnford the 2nd Naval Member. Fortunately, the Navy has been unable to censor those outside of their jurisdiction, but one has to wonder why, in 2001, they are still persisting in doing this. The Catalina crews reported oil southeast of the 'battlesite', Captain Hehir of army intelligence at the prison camp gave that position in his private diary (*Vol 6, Submission No74, page 1136: "The German raider H.S.K Kormoran met H.M.A.S. Sydney 300 miles off the Australian coast.....Sydney drifted away in the darkness...."*). Gill published the position twice, once citing a first hand witness on the *Wyrallah* – yet the Captain of that Navy vessel gave a completely different story. The Germans have contradicted themselves on a number of occasions and have stated that the battle took place 300 miles off Carnarvon. Indeed, the first report from the survivors picked up by the *Trocas* gave the 300 mile position, which it is believed was confirmed by Hans Linke when he was interviewed at Carnarvon. This resulted in a search being organised by the Catalinas on the 27th November 1941 covering the 300 miles west position. In an interview with David Kennedy, the mines officer, Heinz Messerschmidt admitted to Kennedy that they were surprised to find themselves so far off the coast, (*Vol 9, Submission 66B, page 2038/9:-*

"Kennedy:how far out do you actually think you were when the engagement took place, if he wasn't too close ?

Messerschmidt: Exactly 900 metres.

Kennedy: But how far from the coast of Australia ?

Messerschmidt: Oh, I think about 300 or 400 miles. But you have the position of ...I think you must have the position got from the German naval authorities where the engagement took place.

Kennedy: Well they say it was about 120 miles off the coast.

Messerschmidt: No, No, No, No"

The Naval Historical Section in April 1998 was still not willing to admit, in the face of these assertions by so many people, that the 300 mile position was probably correct. Their answer to a personal inquiry from me regarding this, in part was as follows :-

"Generally, the Naval Historical Section is not making any

comment in relation to the Inquiry or the loss of HMAS SYDNEY until the report of the Committee is tabled. However, in this instance I will address the question you raised in the second paragraph of your letter.

Assertions that the Navy knows exactly where the battle took place or the location of the wrecks are incorrect. Apart from the approximate position offered by Captain Detmers, and perhaps other personnel on the bridge at the time of the battle, all other positions would be speculative. It should be noted that navigational accuracy in pre-satellite days depended very much on how good a fix could be obtained from morning and evening stars and midday sun.”

Private correspondence. J.H. Straczak to J. Eagles, 11 May 1998.

The above letter has been signed by J. H. Straczek, Senior Naval Historical Officer, Naval Historical Section. It is obvious that they cannot make any independent views of their own public. Whether they are being pressured is another thing, but they do not seem to be free to publish their own views on the battle and are staying with the navy version of events, according to Detmers. I wonder why he considers all other positions ‘speculative’ but gives credit to an enemy captain whose job it was to mislead his interrogators. Even the interrogators at the time thought that the Germans were lying. The above view expressed in the letter is, of course, rubbish. Detmers had been sailing around the world for twelve months and knew his position exactly. The weather was fine, sun sights and star sights had been no problem. Why then did Detmers write in his book that he sailed **east** after his ship sank when he actually went **north**. Why does the Naval Historical Section state that the approximate position offered by Detmers is less speculative than any of the others. Why then did the Navy present a totally different position to the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet, nearly a hundred miles further north of Detmers position. Was it because they knew Detmers position was wrong ! Even the publication *Lloyd's War Losses* lists *HMAS Sydney* as having been lost 300 miles west of Carnarvon....

“Sydney was in action on November 19, 300 miles from Carnarvon (W.A.) with armed merchant raider Kormoran which she sank. No subsequent communication has been received from the (sic) Sydney and search has been fruitless and it must be presumed that she is lost.”

Lloyd's War Losses, Vol 1, page 1702.

Lloyd's is considered an impeccable source of information by mariners worldwide.

In 1941, the Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, gave two different positions for the battle on the same day – one during the War Cabinet meeting on the 4th December 1941 and later that evening to the public, two positions 150 nautical miles apart. This came about, it seems, after a report by Commander Dechaineaux – having interviewed the German survivors, including the German captain submitted a report to the War Cabinet. Tom Frame writes.....

“A summary of the information obtained from the survivors recovered by TROCAS was provided by Commander Dechaineaux, who bore the responsibility for drafting the

Naval Intelligence Report, as background notes to assist in his preparation of a report for the Naval Board.”

H.M.A.S. Sydney, Loss and Controversy, page 94.

And

“Dechaineaux concluded ...

“The raiders final position was 111 degrees East 25 degrees 34 minutes South.....”

H.M.A.S. Sydney, Loss and Controversy, page 95.

In the report he included a position for the battle at 25 degrees 34 minutes South 111 East, one degree (about 60 n.m.) north of the position Detmers gave. There can be only one reason for this, and that is because Detmers said he sailed east after the battle, under a clear sky. He could not have done that and ended up to the west off Carnarvon. *Detmers had either sailed north instead of east or he sailed from a different position to the one he gave his interrogators.* He must have sailed from a different position, so Dechaineaux moved it north to fall in with the area where Detmers was picked up in the lifeboat.

Detmers later wrote in his book...

“We rowed throughout the night, and it was easy for all boats to keep to the easterly course they had been given, because the night was unclouded and all the stars were clearly visible. In addition there was a south-west swell.”

The Raider Kormoran, Captain Theodor Detmers, page 192/3.

(I have underlined the above).

Dechaineaux's report was passed to Commodore Durnford R.N. acting Chief of Naval Staff at the time and he used it as a basis for a report prepared for the War Cabinet and the Prime Minister. It was submitted to them on the 4th December 1941. The report clearly stated the position 25 degrees 34 minutes south 111 east, however, the War Cabinet changed it again and took it even further north and recorded it as 25⁰ south 111⁰ east and this was recorded in a Minute by the War Cabinet. Richard Summerrel states....

“In the context of the records of the War Cabinet and the Advisory War Council, a “Minute” was a decision. These Minutes were not a verbatim record of the War Cabinet and Advisory War Council's discussions, but rather a statement of the decisions reached. The War Cabinet Minutes were regarded as vital records.

The Sinking of HMAS Sydney – Guide 3, Australian Archives,

January 1997, pages 70/71

(My underline)

It had been a ‘decision’ of the War Cabinet, that that position would be the battle site, not that it really was the battle site. It was what they had decided on, through the recommendation of naval intelligence.

Frame

“On 4 December, the Acting Chief of Naval Staff, Commodore Durnford, attended a meeting of the War Cabinet and gave a

reconstructed account of the action. As the account presented to the War Cabinet seemed so certain and very 'matter of fact' it formed the basis of a statement issued by P.M. Curtin later that day. The detailed information provided by Curtin was appreciated."

H.M.A.S. Sydney, Loss and Controversy, page 10.

The position 25⁰ South 111⁰ East was included in the Minute of the 4th December 1941 moving it another half degree even further north and accepted, however, that evening the P.M. John Curtin made a public speech and his opening comment was ...

"HMAS SYDNEY was on patrol 300 miles west of Carnarvon shortly before dusk

Official announcement by P.M. John Curtin on radio and in a press release.

Could it be that he completely ignored the Intelligence report, the War Cabinet decision and Commodore Durnford's briefing to give a completely different position 150 miles away to the northwest. Or was he confused through knowing the real position and not cognitively processing the decided one at such sort notice. The very next day on the 5th, Durnford sent a Minute to Curtin stating there had been a leak from the War Cabinet. It was, in fact, by Curtin when he stated the 'real' position of the battle that Naval Intelligence wanted kept secret. It is possible that the Prime Minister could have thought that the position they had decided on and the 300 miles west of Carnarvon position were one and the same. It is virtually impossible for anyone to visualise a latitude and longitude and translate it into distance and bearing from a given point. Maybe Curtin thought they were the same position and let the cat out of the bag. He was told on the 5th December in a strongly worded 'Minute' of the breach of security. But then a week later the same thing happened again....
Barbara Winter

"The Acting First Naval Member, Commodore J.W. Durnford R.N. wrote to the Prime Minister on 13 December regarding breeches of security on the loss of SYDNEY....
..... Durnford was warning Curtin as clearly as protocol allowed; a member of the War Cabinet is leaking information to the Press. Top Secret defence information."

HMAS Sydney, Fact, Fantasy and Fraud, page 202.

From the dates, it is reasonable to assume that the second Minute from Durnford to the Prime Minister on the 13th was with regard to the signal from some member of the Naval Board (intercepted by the Germans as quoted from Frame previously; page 9) on the 12th December, where the Naval Board stated that the battle took place 300 miles west of Carnarvon. It seems almost everyone in the War Cabinet and the Advisory War Cabinet, knew of the real position, yet it was always to be kept secret. But did the position of the battle need be Top Secret ?

In an article published in the Naval Historical Review (March 1994) by John Date, quotes both Professor Kim Kirsner (University of W.A.) and Sam Hughes (Australian Maritime Safety Authority) where they state:

"In the first instance, they considered

positions provided by officials and historians since the engagement. According to John Curtin for example (Montgomery, 1981), the battle took place "300 miles west of Carnarvon". was the then Prime Minister of Australia just being geographically lax, for the position which he indicated was never even reached by SAR aircraft, or was he deliberately providing a false position for the benefit of his countries enemies ? Ruge (1957), who it may be assumed, had direct contact with KORMORAN survivors, provided a similarly vague position, which receives no support from other sources."

Naval Historical Review, March 1994, page 12.

Apparently Ruge (1957) too gives a position 300 miles west of Carnarvon. This area **was** searched on the 27th.

Central War Room message 26/11/1941:

Commencing 262330z (7.30 am local time)

Catalinas begin search in area 24.12 south 107.40 east, 27.00 south 109.15 east

24.12 south 109.15 east, 27.00 south 107.40 east.

Volume 1, Submission No 8, R.J. Hardstaff, Cmdr Rtd,
Air Searches 27th November (Extract) Page 65.

This area encompasses the 300 mile position due west of Carnarvon and was searched on the 27th but by then it was far too late, in fact, eight days too late. Any survivors and wreckage was by then about 200 n.m. to the northwest, *just where the Yeoman on the Wyrallah said it was found*. It is also strange that on the following day the Catalinas were given a search area closer to land in an area already adequately covered by other aircraft, instead of searching further north from the 300 mile position where the survivors and wreckage would have drifted and been driven by the wind. On the 28th the Catalinas reported *two* oil patches, not one as many claim. Linseed oil was reported 'welling up' in one of the reports for the 28th. Although the other report was included for the 28th, it was actually found on the 27th November. That oil patch was 6 nm south of the *real* battle site and was found by the *Wyrallah*. The 300 miles west of Carnarvon position certainly has convincing support from many sources *outside the control of the Navy*. Furthermore, the German position is the least likely of all. Detmers planned his attack on the *Sydney* and the position he gave was part of his plan. The only real proponents of the German position, about which not even the Germans agree, is the Navy and therefore the Government. From November 1941 to sometime in early-1942 the 300 mile position was accepted by everyone, after early 1942 the only position recognised by the Navy was the German one.

Here is a list of sources supporting or identifying the battle site as being 300 miles west of Carnarvon:

- Australian Naval Board in a signal intercepted by the Germans on the 12th December 1941 (Frame)
- German survivors on the *Trocas* gave a similar position (26° south 108° east) prior to Detmers giving his position. Frame states Dechaineaux used the above position from the

Germans in *Trocas* in his report, but still came up with 25° 34" south 111° east somehow. See Guide 3, R. Summerrell, page 70 and Frame page 95

- Possibly Hans Linke, though this is as yet unproven, I believe he did admit to David Kennedy that that was the correct position.
“Linke said that *Kormoran* did not try to mine Fremantle before the battle, which took place on a level with Carnarvon.” *Vol 9, Submission No66B*, page 2036.
- *Lloyd's War Losses* give the 300 mile position. *Lloyd's War Losses* was compiled using various sources and a list of these sources is given in *Vol 4, Submission No54*, page 694 and include Guildhall Library, London (published as *Lloyd's War Losses*), which was checked and cross-referenced with *Warship Losses, Second World War* by D. Brown, Arms and Armour Press, London; *All the World's Fighting Ships 1922-1946*, Conway Maritime Press; *Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Royal Australian Navy*, G. Hermon Gill, AWM, Canberra and *The War at Sea 1939-1945*, Captain S.W. Roskill 1954, HMSO, London and many other miscellaneous sources.
- *Britain's Glorious Navy* published mid-1942 by Odhams Press Ltd, London. Edited by Admiral Sir Reginald H.S. Bacon KCB, KCVO, DSO with a Forward by Admiral Sir Edward R.G.R. Evans KCB, DSO, LL.D. ('Evans of the *Broke*' was Rear Admiral E.R.G.R. Evans, CB when appointed Flag Officer Commanding the Australian Squadron in 1929 and was a former member of Capt R.F. Scott's ill-fated Antarctic expedition). Chapter 16 – “*The Navies of the Empire*”, page 286. Quote “Later, after destroying an enemy armed merchant raider, the *Steiermark*, she herself caught fire and went down some 300 miles west of Australia.”
- *The Melbourne Herald*, dated 3 December, 1941, states that the battle took place 300 miles west off the coast of W.A. and quotes John Curtin's speech.
- Captain John Leslie Hehir, Army Intelligence, private papers, *Vol 6, Submission No74*, page 1136. On 16th January, 1942 he wrote “16th Jan. Lt Horwood left at 9 a.m. Sgts Thompson and Caminer and Lt Yarra this evening at 6 p.m. and this is the story of the sinking of the Sydney:- *The German raider H.S.K. Kormoran met HMAS Sydney 300 miles off the Australian coast on the evening of the 19th November 1941*”.
- P.M. John Curtin. Announced the position publicly twice.
- Australian War Memorial, published it twice during WW II, and edited by the RAN historian G. Hermon Gill in the HMAS series of books.
- German Intelligence, as cited by Tom Frame.
- Yeoman E. C. Reynolds, Yeoman aboard search vessel HMAS *Wyrallah* in 1941.
- Heinz Messerschmidt, Mines Officer, in an interview with David Kennedy already cited. It is interesting that Messerschmidt stated that his job was to detonate the charges but seemed unfamiliar with the term “*Versenken*” (Scuttling) used to identify demolition charges already prepared on all of the raiders for just such a situation when the order “*Measure “V”*” was given. He said:
“I was engaged to set of fire the sinking ... the detonate.”

Kennedy; "The charges ?"

Messerschmidt: "The charges, yes"

Vol 9, Submission No66B, David Kennedy, page 2039.

- "Movietone' newsreel of German survivors coming ashore in Fremantle give the 300 miles west of Carnarvon position. Copy held by myself. Recent showing of the film on TV on the 60th anniversary of the Sydney sinking had the 300 mile position edited out. Television documentary which includes the 300 mile position part of the short film "Australian Story : The Rest is Silence" made by the ABC with Glynis MacDonald. This documentary went to air on ABC-TV on 19th March 1998. Monologue to the newsreel states: "Survivors of the German raider *Kormoran*. They solved the mystery of the disappearance of *HMAS Sydney*, 300 miles off the West Australian coast the two ships had engaged simultaneously at point blank range, each was set on fire. *Kormoran* was quickly abandoned, exploded and sank and from their lifeboats at nightfall the Germans caught their last glimpse of *Sydney* blazing from stem to stern and to disappear with all hands and without trace."
- Newspaper reports of the sinking from 1941 give the position as 300 miles west of Carnarvon, as does the survivor of the *Mareeba* in the book of his experiences entitled *Prisoner of the Kormoran*, however, he apparently obtained the position from the newspapers, after returning from internment in Germany.

Spies.

Regarding the callsign of the *Straat Malakka*, Captain Patrick Heenan is only one possible source of the callsigns being compromised. Barbara Winter stated emphatically at the Brisbane hearing in front of the Inquiry that there was no way that the callsigns could have been compromised. Her statement was absurd in the extreme. There is no possible way she could know that they had not been compromised and could certainly not give such an opinion with any credibility. (Transcript *Brisbane Inquiry*, page FADT 543/4). In the first instance, Japan had an extremely wide network of spies operating throughout the Asian and South Pacific areas. Secondly, France had been nominally allied with Britain, but once France had fallen, the Japanese moved into pro-Vichy Saigon in Indo-China unopposed. All knowledge of their codes would have been exchanged. There were reports that Germans were operating with the Japanese there (possibly between 400 to 600 ex-Foreign Legionnaires of German descent). South-East Asia was full of Japanese, Indian, German, Malays and Chinese all prepared to spy for the Japanese. As well, obtaining codes from agents in Africa where the *Straat Malakka* was operating or the Dutch East Indies where she was based, was also a strong possibility. Both of these areas were notorious security risk areas. Furthermore, we only have the Germans' statements that the *Kormoran* was disguised as the *Straat Malakka*. The First Officer of the *Kormoran*, Kurt Foerster, when boarding the *Centaur* after being picked up after the battle, introduced himself as the 'Sturman (First Mate) of a Norwegian ship. It was also reported that the *Kormoran* was disguised as Norwegian ship in a European magazine before any of the *Kormoran* prisoners had been repatriated.

The Heenan case, is a perfect example of security risk. There were a number of British personnel operating with the Indian Army in Malaya/Singapore spying for the Japanese. Indeed, RAAF aircraft attacking Japanese forces landing on the coast of Malaya were flashed the correct signal identification letter of the day thereby calling off their attacks. British Captain, Patrick Heenan, arrived in Malaya in October 1940 with the 3/16 Punjab Regiment

and was their Air Intelligence Liaison Officer. He was known to have had access to those callsigns. He was shot on the 13th February 1942 and his body thrown into Singapore Harbour. As an Air Intelligence Liaison Officer, Heenan would have had close ties with all the three military services, army, navy and air force. Another known spy was a Sgt Ross of the Indian 18th Division. Peter Elphick writes...

“The Air Liaison Section could scarcely have been bettered as a platform from which to obtain useful intelligence for the Japanese.....He would also have had access to details of the Air Recognition Strips, which allowed pilots to identify friendly forces on the ground, and to the daily changing Air Recognition Codes used by the pilots to identify friendly aircraft – the predecessors of the modern-day IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) systems.

Odd Man Out, Peter Elphick, page 183/4

It would therefore seem certain that Heenan would also have access to ship recognition callsigns as well because aircraft were patrolling the shipping routes around Singapore on a daily basis. Heenan was appointed to replace another officer killed in an aircraft crash and became second-in-command of the unit, giving him even wider access to top secret information. It was also suspected that the particular officer killed did not die by accident. As it turned out, Heenan was the leader of a ring of spies. The British allowed them to continue operating considering that it was easier to keep an eye on them and their activities. It was only after the Japanese landed that they arrested them, too late for the *Sydney* of course. (See *The Pregnable Fortress* and *Odd Man Out* by Peter Elphick). Elphick wrote :

“Australian aircraft operating from the nearby airfield scored some early successes. They made ten direct hits on one of the transports which caught fire and sank. Another transport was damaged. Initially there was some confusion among the Australian pilots because the enemy escort ships were flashing the correct British recognition signal for the day, the letter ‘K’. The Japanese may have learned the signal from their officer spy Captain Patrick Heenan, who

as Air Liaison Intelligence Officer had access to such information.”

Singapore: The Pregnable Fortress, Peter Elphick
Page 221.

An early issue of the *Naval Historical Society* journal (December, 1974) carried a very informative article by Lt/Cdr W.N. Swan RAN (*A Century of Japanese Intelligence*), regarding the spread of Japanese agents right across Asia, the Middle East – even Australia and the United States and many other countries. The writer mentions that Japanese Intelligence operatives outnumbered the 40,000 the Germans had in the field. Swan also stated, ‘*that if the Nazis taught the world total war, the Japanese taught it total intelligence*’.

There were any number of opportunities for the Germans to have obtained the secret call sign to pass to Detmers on the *Kormoran*.

Codes.

It was *Kulmerland's* job to deliver the secret call signs and codes to *Kormoran* during that ship's re-supply operation just prior to the 19th November 1941. One of Germany's top cryptanalysts' was Wilhelm Tranow the English-speaking head of the German navy code-breaking. David Kahn goes on to explain how all of this came about...

“Owing to Tranow's ability, on the day the war started the Germans read the major British naval codes and knew the locations of the major fleet forces.”

*Hitler's Spies, David Kahn, Arrow Books,
London, 1980, page 203.*

Almost the whole success of the German OKM's success with British codes was based on the work of Tranow, who had been working on British codes since WW I and his success with British naval codes was extraordinary.
David Kahn...

“... in the 1930's (he) had at his fingertips the movements, the ports of call, and destinations of every capital ship of the major fleets of the world, especially the Royal Navy. It contributed greatly to his success. Tranow was the head of the English-language section of the German navy's codebreaking unit.”

Hitler's Spies, page 200.

Up until 1942, the Germans were not just equally as good as the British codebreakers at Bletchley Park - they were far better. Attention has been drawn to the three superencipherment tables captured from the *Automedon* and to Captain Rogge's book *Under Ten Flags* (Vol 6, Submission 36A, page 1384) to Mohr's statement from his book *Atlantis* (Werner Laurie, London, 1955) where he writes:

“We got to work on the strong room and were amazed to find that this ship had been entrusted with fifteen bags of secret mail, including one hundredweight of decoding tables, Fleet orders, gunnery instructions, and (so-called) Naval Intelligence reports.”

Atlantis, U. Mohr and A.V. Sellwood, page 114

Noted was the British Merchant ships code and superencipherment tables but there were also “one hundredweight of decoding tables” and Rogge's mention of “new cipher tables for the fleet”. Amid the papers lost with these codes were the Chiefs of Staff report, being sent to Shenton Thomas in Singapore. The loss of the War Cabinet Minutes (see *Betrayal at Pearl Harbour*, Rusbridger and Nave and “The Sinking of the *Automedon* and the Capture of the *Nankin*; New Light on Two Intelligence Disasters in World War II”, (*Encounter* magazine,

May 1985, by James Rusbridger), outlined Britain's inability to either defend or reinforce Singapore should it be attacked.

Rusbridger writes.....

“the German boarding party was led by Lieutenant Ulrich Mohr, who had an excellent knowledge of English. Forcing open the strong-room they seized some 60 packages of mail including all the top-secret post *en route* for Far Eastern Command, Singapore. Among their haul were the new Royal Navy fleet ciphers; new Merchant Navy ciphers valid from 1 January 1941; Admiralty weekly shipping intelligence summaries; and a host of other sensitive documents.”

The Sinking of the Automedon.....” James Rusbridger,
Encounter Magazine, May, 1985).

(In his book *Betrayal at Pearl Harbour*, James Rusbridger, and Eric Nave the expert Japanese linguist and codebreaker, include the following note on page 265 :-

“44. Private Correspondence, August 1984, with Colonel Brian Montgomery, author of *Shenton of Singapore* (London: Leo Cooper in assoc. with Secker & Warburg, 1984), and Hugh Humphrey, CMG, OBE, who was Sir Shenton's private secretary in 1940. After the war Brooke-Popham inquired what had happened to his copy of the Chiefs of Staff report and was told that the ship carrying it had been sunk by a submarine. Letter from Squadron Leader G.H. Wiles, Air Ministry, 15 July 1948.

Peter Elphick writing in *Odd Man Out* regarding Heenan's spying in Malaya says:-

“The *Automedon*'s movements were monitored by Italian signals intelligence units in East Africa and passed on to Kapitän zur See Bernhard Rogge, of the German armed merchant raider *Atlantis* which had no problem intercepting and sinking a vessel which had a top speed of only 14 knots. When captured documents arrived in Berlin, copies were handed to the Japanese naval attaché, Captain Yokoi Tadao who was the main liaison man between the *Abwehr* and Japanese naval intelligence. But anxious to impress the Japanese with their ability to penetrate British security at the highest levels, the Germans held back the source of the information with the result that some sections of the Japanese intelligence community believed the documents were too good to be true and must be fakes.

The success of the *Automedon* operation led the *Abwehr* to put pressure on Captain Yokoi to provide it with as much information as possible from Japanese espionage networks across South-east Asia on British shipping movements, in the hope of repeating the success of what was by any standards a spectacular intelligence coup.”

Odd Man Out, Peter Elphick, page 151.



Copies of the Merchant Navy cipher and the secret call-signs were also taken from the captured merchant ship *City of Baghdad* but I don't know if these were still in force by November 1941, however, Heenan in Singapore would have had all the latest call-signs as they were issued. All of the codes and secret documents were copied by Admiral Wenneker in Tokyo and passed to Japanese Intelligence.

These codes and secret documents had been captured by the raider *Atlantis* and the code losses were known to British Intelligence. However, they failed to inform anyone in Singapore, Australia, or New Zealand about the loss of the Chiefs of Staff report, the superencipherment tables, the fleet codes, or the secret callsigns, which they must have known had been compromised by Patrick Heenan. Sir Earle Page was sent to London to put forward a case for Australia being better informed of Churchill's decisions and accidentally found out about the loss of the Chiefs of Staff report in December 1941, a year after its loss and a month after the sinking of the *Sydney*. Furthermore, Churchill still insisted on Australian reinforcements going to Singapore where they were almost immediately processed into Japanese POW camps. As shown, the Germans were reading the British Naval Code and the British Naval Cipher as well as the British and Allied Merchant Ships Code and Frame, Winter and others have been skeptical or simply failed to thoroughly research the fact that this was happening. The German B-Dienst – the radio interception units of the Radio Reconnaissance Branch – in conjunction with 3/Skl – under the control of the German OKM – were reading these codes and had been since about 1935. These were tactical and operational messages they were reading, not strategic messages. 3/Skl maintained a continuous system of tracking merchant shipping and had responsibility for Foreign Naval movements. Between them they had all the information necessary to pass to Wenneker in Japan, to be delivered to the *Kulmerland* for *Kormoran*. Unlike the material the British sent on the *Automedon*, the German material and codes were safely delivered, along with the secret callsigns passed on by the Japanese.

With the *Sydney*, we are concerned only with the Royal Navy tactical and operational codes and ciphers. These are the codes, which dictated *Sydney's* movements and operational status and which the German navy were reading.

These codes were not the current ones but were due to come into force in January 1941. The British Foreign Office considered a table good for only six months – by then enough traffic had been encrypted for a break into the code to be made. Therefore they changed the tables every four months. The basic code and cipher books of the British never changed during 1941. Only the superencipherment tables changed and the British used the same tables for the code and the cipher. Once stripped from the British Naval Code it could also be stripped from the British Naval Cipher. Even Hinsley in the *History of British Intelligence in the Second World War* admitted that from September 1941 the Germans were reading both codes (but fails to mention the loss of the *Automedon*). Kahn overcomes Hinsley's reluctance to admit to the fact that the whole of 1941 was compromised. In fact, the Germans were reading the British codes from 1935 up until 1943 when the British finally changed their basic code books and the Germans were unable to break back into them. In 1939 the British and Allied Navies were using Naval Cypher No1 (a 4-figure book used by officers) and the Administrative/Naval Code (a 5-figure book code used by sailors) being recoded by subtractor tables or 'superenciphered'. The Administrative code was replaced on 20th August 1940 by Naval Code No 1 (a 4-figure code). The Naval Cypher was also replaced, by Naval Cypher No2 on the same date. Hinsley states that...

“In the following months the Admiralty took further steps to improve the security of the long subtractor system, and did so to some effect. The B-Dienst’s success against Naval Cypher No2 was comparatively limited until September 1941 when, for some unexplained reason, an indicator procedure which had caused the B-Dienst real difficulty was abandoned for one which was very much weaker. From then until 1 January 1942, when Naval Cypher No4 replaced No2, the B-Dienst again succeeded in reading a good deal of the traffic in generally held tables.”

*History of British Intelligence in the Second World War,
F.H. Hinsley, Vol II, Appendix I, Part (i) page 635/6.*

The trouble was that the Germans had no trouble stripping the subtractor tables off the Naval Code because the British had too many single ships operating which gave the Germans a crib. The problem was that the British used the same tables for both the Naval Code and the Naval Cypher and so both were broken into very easily. The Germans had been reading both of these codes and the change on the 20th August only briefly set them back as Kahn notes

“.....in 1940, on 20 August, the B-Dienst suffered a setback when all Royal Naval cryptosystems changed. Naval Code, for example, became a 4- instead of a 5-digit code. The consequent blackout perhaps contributed to the OKM’s coolness to an invasion of Britain. But Tranow and his group came back fast. Making the first break into a code is the most difficult step, but in just seven weeks they had discovered the meanings of 850 code groups – 400 of the general vocabulary, 450 ships names – in Naval Cypher. By the start of 1941, this had expanded to 700 ships names ad 1,200 vocabulary words.”

Hitler’s Spies, page 205

The late Professor Frank H. Hinsley, author of *The History of British Intelligence in the Second World War* omitted information on the Far East as it was an American sphere of operations. As the Americans did not come into the war until near the end of 1941, surely the Intelligence work in Singapore and Hong Kong was worth recording in his history. He also totally omits any mention of the *Automedon* and the *Nankin*. His opinion that the Germans were only briefly successful has certainly been minimised. The captain of the *Kormoran* was not only reading *all* the British codes in November 1941 but was getting excellent information from B-Dienst on the *Sydney*’s movements which would have been included in these reports. (See *Inquiry Submission 189, Vol 18, page 4443* submitted by Jochen Franke) regarding the reports being sent to *Kormoran*.

However, even Hinsley admits the Germans were reading their codes from September 1 onwards, and even more interesting is the fact that Naval Cypher No 2 of August 1940 was not replaced after the *Automedon* loss until 1 January 1942. (Naval Cypher No 3 was used by the Atlantic convoys- the Germans were also reading it).

However, David Kahn seems far more open about German successes and British failures and considers both the British naval code and the naval cypher being read by the Germans for most, if not all of 1941. But a still more sinister fact has recently emerged from the release of information about codes. Bletchley Park, according to Hinsley, was reading the German naval Enigma from June 1941....

“Still more important was the fact that Bletchley had at last broken the naval Enigma at the beginning of June 1941 and was decrypting it nearly currently until the end of January 1942.”

(“Codebreakers”, F.H. Hinsley and Alan Stripp, page 6)

Moreover, Hinsley also states in his history of British Intelligence..

“In the spring of 1941 it made an advance in a third direction. It had broken several hand codes and cyphers of the German Navy since November 1939 – a cypher that was briefly used between Berlin and the naval attaches at Madrid, Tokyo and Buenos Aires for signals about supply ships.....”

*History of British Intelligence in the Second World War,
It's Influence on Strategy and Operations,*

Sir F.H. Hinsley, HMSO, 1998, Vol I, page 338.

So if the British were reading the German naval code and the traffic to Tokyo to Admiral Wenneker about the supply ship meeting the *Kormoran*, they did nothing about it. Was *Sydney* kept in the dark about the two ships *Kormoran* and *Kulmerland* meeting in the Indian Ocean just before *Kormoran* and *Sydney* met on the 19th November. If the British knew about the meeting - was *Sydney* directed not to interfere lest the Germans suspect that Enigma had been broken if they were both sunk at such a remote rendezvous. But, the fact remains, the Germans were just as successful at reading British codes in the early part of the war as the British boast about the reading of German ones. This is confirmed by Anthony Cave Brown, another expert author on intelligence matters who states ...

“In 1941 the Germans were breaking into so many British (and American) ciphers, and the intelligence being obtained was of such importance, the [British] casualties so great, that the German propaganda minister, Josef Gobbels, wrote in his diary: “I can only hope that this is not the case with our own secret communications as well; for if the British knew in detail about us everything that we know about them it would have very grave consequences.”

(“C”, *The Secret Life of Sir Stewart Graham Menzies*” by Anthony Cave Brown (page 336) and *The Climate of Treason* by Andrew Boyle, page 93).

So if the Germans had the merchant ships' secret callsigns, and were reading all of *Zealandia* and *Sydney*'s communications traffic, not to mention traffic from Singapore, *Durban* and the Australian Naval Board's messages and perhaps had operational radar, it would not have been difficult to trap the *Sydney*.

Anthony Cave Brown writes....

“To ensure security, the truth of Allied intentions could only be made known to an extremely small group of Allied commanders. In short, it would sometimes be necessary to mislead a friend in order to deceive an enemy”.

Bodyguard of Lies, Anthony Cave Brown,
Page 276.

And

“But would the British deliberately reveal such information even at their own expense ? The answer is yes, they would and did. Deception demanded that, on occasions information concerning Allied operations be played into enemy hands in order to deceive Hitler about other, more important operations”.

Page 404.

The greater the advantage the greater the price. The British accepted that casualties – even quite serious casualties – might result from such ruses ‘de guerre’.....”

Page 404.

While the above remarks are not specifically aimed at the loss of the *Sydney*, in general it does show the attitude of the British during 1941. It is well known that, while maintaining security, Australia was never a confidante to the inner workings of the British War Cabinet. Many decisions were made without consulting Australia in any way about the movement of troops or other strategies being employed by Britain. It is pertinent, I think, that in the above statements it is about *Allied commanders* and *Allied operations* and while the *British* ‘accepted’ the “quite serious’ casualty rate, who really paid in the end ?

How the battle was planned is an easier exercise than why. The sinking of the *Sydney* would have been great propaganda for the German Navy. Especially the *Sydney*. The Japanese were reading the newspapers in Sydney and were reporting to Japan. The Japanese and the German Naval Attache, Admiral Wenneker in Tokyo were exchanging information (Wenneker was also a close friend of Richard Sorge, the Russian spy). They all knew *Sydney* had made a well publicised return to her home port after her wonderful successes in the Mediterranean. At the time she was the pride of the Australian Navy and this alone would have been enough to make her a target worth attacking.

Note that Detmers spent a considerable amount of time wandering about the Indian Ocean without really trying to intercept any ships. At the same time *Sydney* was being held up because various ports in Australia were hit by wharf strikes delaying the sailing of the *Zealandia*. Also, because of the *Sydney-Emden* association, *Sydney* became a desired target. Detmers had served aboard *Emden II* in 1927 and knew the story, as did many other high-

ranking German naval officers, including Admiral Donitz, its commanding officer from 1934. If 3/Skl had wanted someone to help them put forward a plan to sink *Sydney*, any of them would have done so.

Peter Elphick, (*Singapore, The Pregnable Fortress*) writes...

“At local level there was considerable contact between German and Japanese agents in Bangkok. The FECB report of November 1941 says, ‘It can be taken for granted that if Japanese occupation of Thailand is in Germany’s interest, any plans which have been made for this eventuality will receive the active advice and support of the German General Staff through their representatives in the country.’”

Singapore: The Pregnable Fortress, page 72.

Of considerable interest is the final message sent by the *Kormoran* to Germany. On 29th September *Kormoran* made for the rendezvous point at 32° 30” south 97° 00” east about 950 nautical miles west of Fremantle, to meet the supply ship *Kulmerland* on 16th October. The two ships moved north after meeting and the transfer of fuel, stores etc. took place to maintain *Kormoran* at sea until 1st June 1942. When they finally parted company two important things had happened. The first was that Detmers handed over his war diary to the *Kulmerland* and secondly, a signal was sent from ship 41 [*Kormoran*]:

“SUPPLY SHIP DETACHED RENDEZVOUS 17TH
DAY FOLLOWING MONTH SCHIFF 41”

HMAS Sydney, Fact, Fantasy and Fraud, B Winter, page 113.

‘Supply ship detached’ is straight forward *Kulmerland* had left the meeting place and was returning to Japan – but what of the remainder of the message ? What rendezvous on the 17th of the following month [November] did the message refer? That was the day that the *Sydney* was to rendezvous with the *Durban* to hand over the *Zealandia* near the Sunda Strait. With the wharf strikes and *Zealandia*’s unreliable speed the rendezvous time had to be amended – from then on *Sydney* would be operating alone and only then would she be able to investigate any unusual circumstance such as an unidentified radio signal. Detmers had made no effort to capture any other ships, lay mines or anything else as far as we know. Did he hand over his war diary because he anticipated the next battle to be his last ? It would certainly have been in the interests of both Germany and Japan to see the *Sydney* out of the way, one way or another, and with whatever it took to do it.

The 19th November was the anniversary of the day the German High Seas Fleet sailed from Germany into internment, 19th November 1918. Hitler insisted the French sign the terms of surrender on 21st June in WW II in the same railway carriage at Compiègne as the Germans had signed their surrender document in WW I. Another example of historical connection is that Hitler invaded Russia on the same day (June 22nd) that Napoleon had done in 1812 (with the same result, of course). The Germans have a sense of their own history and long memories.

The eerie similarities between the *Emden-Sydney* and *Sydney-Kormoran* battles is quite strange. Perhaps that is what Dr Habben (repatriated back to Germany in 1943) was referring to in the *Volkische Beobachter* in August 1944, while noting the panic caused in Australia and the similarities between the *Sydney-Emden* and the *Sydney-Kormoran* battles he wrote...

“.....the Lucky Ship’ dream and the *Sydney-Emden* tradition were finished once and for all.”

Volkische Beobachter,
Inquiry Submission 84a, page 1521/1522.

The second *Sydney* battle in the Indian Ocean was planned and executed because of the first battle with the *Emden* and the tactics and strategy were to be based on the outcome of that first battle. Australians look at the two engagements separately, but in reality it was simply the second round of an ongoing war for the Germans. If the ‘Lucky Ship’ dream was finished, a new legend had been born in its place.

Throughout the war, Australia was little more than a source of men and materials for the British. Australia had no representation on the British War Council. Churchill refused to keep Curtin and other Australian leaders informed. The RAN was under the control of the Royal Navy with Royal Navy officers holding the major positions on the Naval Board during the war. At the end of the war, Britain signed agreements on security with the United States, which included Australia whether we agreed or not. Regarding the *Sydney*, I believe that as much as possible of the documentation pertaining to her loss was destroyed at England’s behest. It was to protect security arrangements with the United States that lapses in codes and other losses of secret material during the war be kept secret. Much of this material has still not been released by the British government and probably never will be.

In *A Man Called Intrepid*, William Stevenson wrote :

“The British philosophy as “rather than have half the truth emerge, let it all be suppressed,” this based on Lord Chancellor William Jowitt’s theory that a biased history emerges unless every word of testimony is included. To achieve that ideal would require a multitude of books.”

A Man Called Intrepid, William Stevenson, page 507.

At the end of the Second World War, Britain ordered that all copies of Ultra decrypts and other information referring to cryptography be destroyed. This included all of the Commonwealth countries and her own records are still kept secret, but as well Britain and the United States seized German records after the war, Britain kept the German Navy records for thirty years before handing some of them back to the German archives. In the Dutch East Indies and in Singapore, most records had been destroyed when the Japanese had taken over so Britain’s involvement in the loss of the *Sydney* was well covered.

In fact, after the end of the Second World War, many countries were still using variants of the German Enigma machine as their main cryptographic tool (the KL7 was an example, though no longer in use) and up until more modern systems were introduced at the end of the 1960’s and early 1970’s. With the cold war it was necessary to maintain the secrecy surrounding the breaking of the Enigma machine cipher system and agreements, post-war, with the

Americans, ensured that all cryptographic information was suppressed. This is no longer the case, but Britain still has a vested interest in keeping many secrets hidden until those who survived the war are all gone.

Finally, to understand why the 300 miles west of Carnarvon position is so important in connection with Detmers position, we need to understand what Detmers needed to be able to prove to the Australian authorities that his actions were all legitimate acts of war. He never revealed his plans, simply because it appeared much better to have been discovered by a warship and have had to fight it out. Hence, his story was that there was not much damage to his ship, just some lucky hits. His ship didn't founder but was a planned scuttle with an orderly abandonment of a badly damaged ship. A common German story to salvage pride. It is an interesting point that this is mentioned by Captain S.W.Roskill, R.N, who noted ...

“It is a curious feature of post-war German naval apologists’ writings that they claim with monotonous regularity that nearly all their losses occurred through scuttling their own ships. If it comes to the preservation of service ‘honour’ one might think that to be sunk in action was more creditable yet, for example, the *Marine Rundschau* has published a comprehensive list of U-boat losses, the vast majority of which are shown as “selbst versenkt.” The implicit suggestion that the enemy had nothing to do with the losses is surely somewhat casuistic !”

The Navy at War 1939-1945, Captain S.W. Roskill, R.N.
Page 138.

There was virtually no Germans killed in battle. All his casualties were lost in the raft. He sank the *Sydney* but scuttled his own ship. He made an orderly departure from his ship before it was destroyed. He made a gallant small boat voyage keeping his crew together mostly until all were rescued. Altogether a very well told story. However, the evidence would indicate basically that most of the story is untrue.

His plan was to trap the *Sydney*, his own ship having so much engine trouble he was unlikely to complete his voyage any further and it was either scuttle and surrender or go down fighting. He chose the latter. He was able to pick the time and place to execute his plan and he had the material, i.e. the weapons, the surprise, the men, and the *LS3* to carry out his plan. He had the intelligence he required about the *Sydney*'s movements and the codes and secret call-sign which he needed to enable him to use the element of surprise. He was also receiving regular reports about the warship and merchant ship movements from his own intelligence sources.

Any superiority that *Sydney* had in weapons, Detmers was able to counter with surprise and speed and he had the experience of his motor torpedo boat and torpedo expertise to use in his plan. Some people have expressed surprise at the use of the underwater torpedo tube by Detmers, but the *Emden* had them in 1914. Even back as far as the 1905 Battle of Tsushima, the Japanese battleship *Mikasa*, Admiral Togo's flagship, had underwater tubes, which was then considered state of the art in shipbuilding. The British should have known all about underwater torpedo tubes because they had built the *Mikasa* at the Armstrong shipyard at Elswick near Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1902.



Over the subsequent years since the battle in November, 1941, the German story has become muddled, the Germans themselves are beginning to tell different versions of the story, as laid down in Detmers book, to which they often have to refer to keep their stories straight. Oddly enough, it is the Australian Navy that keeps solidly to Detmers version of events. Of all the books published about the *Sydney*, not one has looked into the codes and the call-signs, being the two basic ingredients that can explain the entire story. Some mentioned codes, but have denied it could have had anything to do with the loss of the *Sydney*, but I believe this to be a grave miscalculation. The codes and callsigns are vital evidence.

At the end of the Inquiry into the Loss of *HMAS Sydney*, the committee found that any search for the sunken ships should begin at the site Detmers gave in 1941, that of $26^{\circ}.32''$ south, $111^{\circ}.00''$ east, or about 150 nautical miles southwest of Carnarvon. In view of this I prepared a chart of the Western Australian coast showing how it was possible to come to the exact 300 miles west of Carnarvon position, simply using a compass and straight edge together with the reasoning behind each decision.

Note 1.

Leichte Schnellboote.

The *Leichtes Schnellboote* (Light Speedboat) carried by the *Kormoran* has been largely ignored by the Inquiry (no proof), however, it is impossible to ignore the LS3 because it played a large part in the story of the *Sydney*. Detmers was an ex-MTB captain and had extensive experience in command of the type as well as specializing in torpedoes.

One source quoted previously stated that the LS3 was never planned to operate alone but to be based on auxiliary cruisers and other raiders operating overseas. *"They should be able to attack other ships on their own, lay mines in areas where auxiliary cruisers could not operate or to transport raiding crews to allied merchant ships."*

Only three LS boats were used onboard the auxiliary cruisers :

"LS2 used on the Komet – scuttled 23.12.1940
 LS3 “ Kormoran – destroyed 20.11.1941
 LS4 “ Michel -- scuttled 17.10 1943”

“LS3 was given new mine gear so that she could carry four mines instead of LS2’s three, two mines supported by straps hanging horizontally above each other in two parallel shafts positioned further forward in the boat. The mines were loaded through two hatches on deck, and dropped through opening traps in the bottom by slipping the straps from the engine rook the moment for them to be dropped being indicated from the bridge by a signal light”.

The crew consisted 1 Commandant, 1 Officer, 1 Petty Officer/Engineer, Quartermaster, Boatswain, 2 men for the engine-room and a wireless operator to man the German U.K.V. marine wireless set. Apart from the mines, the LS3 carried a 20mm cannon and seven pistols.

The LS3 was 41 feet long, weighed 11 and a half tons, and was powered by a Daimler-Benz 12-cylinder lightweight diesel. The TBM mines carried aboard had been designed initially for submarine use, were magnetically activated, measured eight feet and carried a charge of 567kg of TNT.

During their interrogation information was given by the Germans about the boat, the first the Australian interrogators would have known that the *Kormoran* carried such a craft. One writer proclaimed the boat was damaged during the voyage and couldn’t be used in further operations, however, Detmers himself states that it was used when he wrote his book. As well, at the Inquiry, a naval officer (advised by the Naval Historical Centre’s Archival Officer) stated the Navy knew nothing about any LS3 at all. This is despite Admiral Crace mentioning it in his “Instructions for Interrogating Prisoners of War ex No. 41” issued in Fremantle on 30 November 1941 (NAA:K997, 1/15/2 – HMAS *Sydney/Kormoran* action, November 1941 – page 2).

“(i) When, and where, mines were laid, and any special methods employed;
 e.g. – laying from fast motor boat,”