



The Extra Lifeboat.

The following entries are extracts from Commander Reg Hardstaff's notes that were included in Volume 1 of the Submissions to the Senate Inquiry. The recent acquisition of a larger chart has enabled me to plot these positions more accurately and I found that the track of the *LS3* that I proposed was directly through the centre of the lifeboat and raft rescues, all the wreckage found was just to the north of that line, including the German rafts with the dead German sailor that Detmers mentions broke away and was lost. This suggests that rafts, wreckage and other items found were abandoned along that track. The remarks under these entries are mine in [square] brackets. The entries are numbered here for easy reference in this article and were not numbered as such in Commander Hardstaff's submission.

First, a SWACH sitrep issued at 241401Z included items [in part] :

- (i) One lifeboat in position 24.08S 111.09E heading east.
- (ii) Two lifeboats near shore north of Carnarvon.
- (iii) Two lifeboats contained about 40 men each, third was beached, 2 men alongside it.

[Vol 1, p58]

In (i) above the lifeboat identified here at 24.08S 111.09E, heading east, has not been accounted for, it is close to the position where *Trocius* found survivors on a raft, but that was seven hours prior to this report at 240700Z and 30 nm to the east of the above position. First could the aircraft have mistaken a raft for a lifeboat, secondly could a raft have been moving east fast enough for its direction to be observed clearly. Possibly the times have been confused, but unlikely when the sitrep was made after a number of reports had been made from *Trocius* and the survivors secured onboard. Finally, the position is close to where wreckage and linseed oil was found by the *Wyrallah* several days later, which is curious.

Reference to (iii) above. What happened to the third boat ? In this report issued seven hours after the *Trocius* survivors were rescued another third boat was seen near the coast with the two beached lifeboats. One of the beached boats we know landed and there was another just offshore, but miles away. So what happened to the third boat mentioned here unless it put back to sea. There were no lifeboats containing 40 men each that were ever found only boats that were grossly overloaded. Almost every report agrees with Detmers remark that they sailed east after their ship was abandoned and every lifeboat was seen to be heading east when reported by aircraft, so how did they end up far to the north of Detmers reported site for the battle ? Because it is obviously wrong !

Then there are arguments over the weather, if the lifeboats were so overloaded the weather must have been calm with little wind and a flat sea but how did the two lifeboats get so far ahead of the others to the coast, even with sails, if there was no wind and the sea was calm. Yet one submission to the Inquiry cited evidence that there was a strong southerly gale blowing from the 21st to the 25th and finally subsiding on the 26th [Glenys McDonald, Vol 14, page3351]. That is fine for the two lifeboats that made it to the coast but the overloaded lifeboats, with 62 and 72 men in them, could not have survived such



weather unless the overloading took place after the bad weather had eased. That means that the lifeboat study done by the navy at the request of Col Whittaker cannot be valid because all of the data provided is invalid, i.e. deeply laden boats, wind strength etc.

Some of the entries from Commander Reg Hardstaff's submission in Vol 1.

1.
252248Z to 252334Z Two lifeboats sighted by aircraft in position 24°39'S 112°02'E.
and 24°14'S 112°24'E both steering east.
2.
260101Z Signal from P24 – Lifeboat course – 090Deg – position 24°39'S 112°02'E –
2248/25
3.
260121Z C P24 – position of 2nd lifeboat 24°14'S 112°24'E.
4.
260150Z NR2 P24 – 402 23°32'S 110°30'E – 0126Z
5.
260305Z P24 – 530 – Herstein – 23°13'S 110°08'E 160 – 12 – Pan Europe – 175 – 10 –
0137Z/26
6.
260425Z Pearce phoned lifeboat referred to in P24's message 2248Z is about 25 feet
broad in the beam and about 50 men Similar to those on the beach – Course 075 Deg.
Lifeboat referred to in P24's 2334Z smaller containing 20/25 men and not so broad –
course 090 Deg.
[This signal with Date/Time Group 260425Z has two interesting features – both vessels
are described as lifeboats – one containing 50 men and the other 20/25 men, sailing due
east [090 Deg]. When we look at the numbers of survivors and their distribution in the
lifeboats we see that none of the lifeboats contain these numbers, but a much larger
number in each boat, in fact, 62 and 72. There must have been another boat that hasn't
been accounted for and that boat can only have been the *LS3*. Unless I am mistaken a
boat with a beam of 25 feet would indicate a length of about 60 or 70 feet, certainly not a
27 or 30 foot lifeboat with such a beam. There was no such boat and it could not have
been similar to those on the beach].
7.
260443Z SWACH to Pearce – Gannet to locate both lifeboats reported by P24 at
2248Z/25 and 2334Z/25 and drop water containers
8.
260553Z SWACH to Pearce – Catalina to locate boats sighted in position 24°21'S
112°02'E at 2243Z and 24°14'S 112°24'E at 2334Z Alight if possible and identify
nationality of occupants – 0553Z/26

9.
260701Z SWACH to CWR (R) Pearce – SECRET – P2/26 completed 0610Z/26 Two lifeboats sighted – First 24°39'S 112°02'E at 2248Z/25 Second 24°14'S 112°24'E at 2334. 0700Z/26

10.
260850Z SWACH to Pearce – P39 to locate and identify boats sighted by P24, also 6A, 2A and 2B – Report positions and actions 0850Z/26

11.
261105Z *Koolinda* found boat in 24°07'S 112°47'E – ex-Nicoloas DL with 31 men aboard

12.
261145Z SWACH to 48FTS (R) CWR – SECRET – G2/27 One Anson to locate lifeboats in positions as follows:-
24°39'S 112°02'E steering 090 at 2248Z and Etc. (Message cancelled 262145Z.)

13.
261250Z SWACH to CWR (R) Pearce – Summary of days operations.....
.... One Hudson dispatched to locate boats and attempt to establish nationality of occupants, but failed to locate. Gannet dispatched to drop water and food to boats but failed to locate 1250Z
[This is where the “extra” lifeboat suddenly disappeared and was never accounted for or was mysteriously unable to be found. It also is the beginning of trying to cover its disappearance]

14.
261310Z Received from Pearce 26/11 – P2/26 complete and negative – 1240Z

15.
261400Z *Centaur* in position 24°39'S 112°15'E took two German lifeboats in tow and proceeded Carnarvon DNOWA 261504Z
[This entry is most interesting in that it takes care of the mysterious lifeboat spotted in position 24° 39'S 112° 15'E. However this is certainly not correct as even the Inquiry Report (page 72) as well as others, all state that the *Centaur* picked up Detmers boat at a completely different position at 24° 30'S 111° 35'E. These two positions at a long way apart and cannot be mistaken one for the other].

This boat, like the third boat (see iii) seen earlier and the boat seen at 24.08S 111.09E [see (i)] all of those lifeboats appear to be unaccounted for anywhere.]

The above entry agrees with the Summerralls' Guide 3, (page 47) that *Centaur* picked up two boats, as does Wes Olsen. Winter on the other hand states that only one boat was found by *Centaur* and is confirmed by the *Centaur's* captain. Detmers himself never

states there was more than one boat picked up by the *Centaur*. The boat located at 24°39'S 112°02'E cannot be confused with any other boat and was a firm sighting but it was certainly not Detmers' lifeboat. However, if *Centaur* collected two boats then the total number of boats and rafts is 8, 2 rafts and 6 boats, but this cannot be correct as everyone agrees there were only 2 rafts and 5 boats. The two boat number for *Centaur* probably comes about because it towed two boats into Carnarvon. These entries must have been made deliberately to cover the boat that disappeared and could not be found again. I say deliberately, otherwise it resulted in one boat being lost and abandoned together with its occupants.

The sea rescues as Winter has listed them are:

23 Nov – <i>Aquitania</i>	at 24°35'S 110°57'E, 26 men.....	Raft
24 Nov – <i>Trocas</i>	at 24°07'S 111°40'E, 25 men.....	Raft
26 Nov – <i>Koolinda</i>	at 24°30'S 111°35'E, 31 men.....	Lifeboat
26 Nov – <i>Centaur</i>	at 24°30'S 111°35'E, 62 (including 1 Chinese).....	Lifeboat
27 Nov – <i>Yandra</i>	at 24°59'S 112°22'E, 72 (including 2 Chinese).....	Lifeboat

With two boats already ashore. That means that when the '25 foot wide in the beam' boat was sighted 252248Z the only two boats still left afloat were Detmers' boat found 24 hours later and von Gosseln's boat found by the *Yandra* on the 27th. A redistribution of the crews of these boats – if the 50 (actually 51) men on the unknown boat are divided evenly between Detmers' boat and von Gosseln's the distribution would be:

Red Bluff boat	- 57 men.
17 Mile Well boat	- 46 men.
Kuhls' boat	- 31 (found by the <i>Koolinda</i>)
Nolls' raft	- 25 (found by the <i>Trocas</i>)
Other raft	- 26 (found by the <i>Aquitania</i>)
Unknown boat	- 50 men (actually 51 to make the numbers correct).
Detmers' boat	- 37 men, instead of 62.
von Gosseln's boat	- 47 men, instead of 72. Total 316 plus 3 Chinese.

A far more evenly distributed arrangement and far more likely. I believe the mysterious lifeboat which seems to have disappeared was the *LS3*. The other question is why the Archives have made such an obvious blunder in allotting two rescued lifeboats to the *Centaur* unless it was to cover up the missing boat.

When the boat was sighted at 252248Z the Germans realized a vessel would soon appear to collect them. It was then necessary to turn around and head south to meet von Gosseln's boat and unload some of the men. It then went north to meet Detmers boat and unloaded the remainder. These were the two most heavily loaded boats of all and at the same time the two closest to the position 24°39S 112°15E. The *LS3* was then disposed of and sank just north of Detmers position where the linseed oil was found to be 'welling up'. The only explanation for this episode is the use and disposal of the *LS3* before it was found and taken by the searching navy ships. This raises another point and

that is, where the oil was found by the searching ships and where I propose the *LS3* finally sank. At that point some wreckage was found, identified probably as a dog kennel but it was not recovered. It is very possible that this was part of the fake superstructure on the *LS3*, which broke away when the *LS3* sank. I proposed that the *LS3* had been disguised as an Australian patrol vessel and flying the White Ensign with a fake superstructure to give a more Australian appearance.

None of these positions and reports for the lifeboats are really obvious until they are plotted on a chart then it becomes clear that the entire thing just does not add up, someone has fudged the results.

The Third Lifeboat.

Looking into the mystery of HMAS Sydney's loss in 1941.

There seems to be more evidence that there was a third lifeboat ashore on the coast north of Carnarvon where the other two lifeboats came ashore. Following some information I received from Western Australia the following would seem to prove the case:

250020Z SWACH – P2/25 Aircraft reported 2 lifeboats on coast – one 40 miles, one 50 miles north of Carnarvon and Carnarvon authorities informed. (Sitrep No1)

Signals at 250125Z and 250153Z, both identified two lifeboats north of Carnarvon.

250612Z SWACH to CRO (R) Pearce – P1/25 completed. Three ships boats sighted in position 25.52S 111.09E. One forty miles one fifty miles north of Carnarvon, Aircraft on track ????? did not carry out search. Gap lines filled by P2/25 -0545Z/25.

250631Z SWACH to Pearce – Obtain by signal from pilot of aircraft description of boats on beach at Carnarvon.

250730Z SWACH – Pilot of aircraft reports, both boats on coast north of Carnarvon dark brown. Northern boat 2 masts, 0.5 miles from shore containing about 40 persons. Southern boat on beach with 2 men standing by wearing navy blue trousers. (Sitrep No1)

251000Z Position as follows:

- (a) TROCAS to be met by WYRALLAH to put guard on board
- (b) Sightings during forenoon (i) lifeboat heading E – position 24.08S 111.09E (ii) 2 lifeboat on shore north of Carnarvon about 40 men in each – a third beached 2 men alongside (iii) RAAF and ARO at Carnarvon temporarily dealing with survivors (iv) Visibility during search 1- 8 miles (v) Two Catalinas due Fremantle tomorrow (Wednesday) (Sitrep No2)

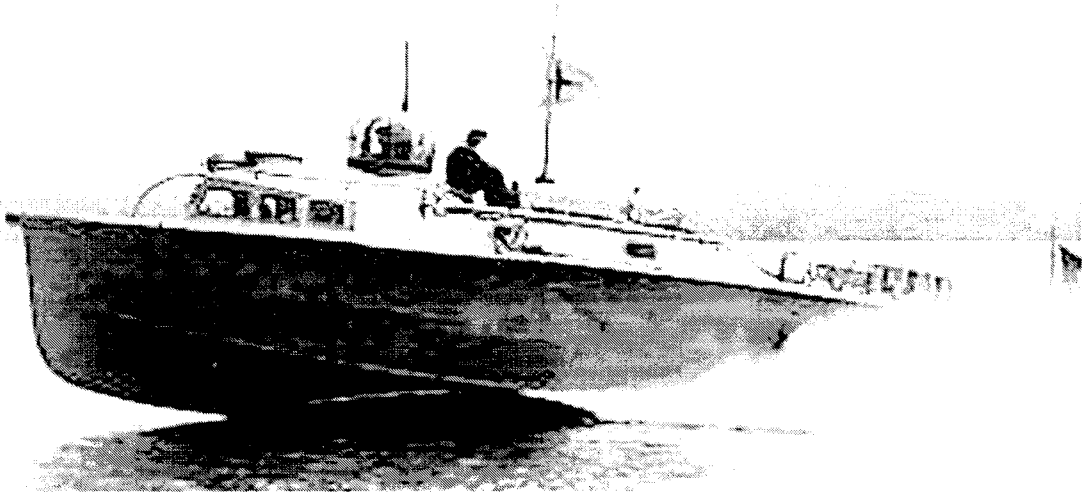
251115Z SWACH to CWR (R) Pearce.... (extract)...All boats are brown, Two contained about 40 men each and third was beached. Two men were seen alongside it (Although not specifically identified the two men could have been the only two outside the cave on one of the beaches)

251430Z - 2 lifeboats ashore 50 miles north of Carnarvon

(Reports now indicate only 2 boats ashore – third boat no longer being reported.
251525Z Germans reported as being about 120 in number).

260425Z Pearce phoned. Lifeboat referred to in P24's message 2248Z is about 25 feet broad in beam and about 50 men. Similar to those of beach – Course 075 Deg. Lifeboat referred to in P24's 2334Z is smaller containing 20/25 men and not so broad – course 090 Deg.

It appears that at some time during Tuesday 25 November three boats were reported north of Carnarvon, two were ashore but one boat didn't land. It also appears that of those that landed, an estimate was made of the total of the three boats, numbered at approx 120 but the two boats where numbers are reported, was approx 40 in each boat leaving another 40 in the third boat. In actual fact, 103 landed. So what happened to the others and the remainder of the men. It seems that the LS3 towed two boats to shore but by landing all of the men it would be obvious that they could not have all fitted into two boats. The actual numbers were 57 in one boat and 46 in the other of those that landed. Roughly 50 were left in the third boat (see the final message previous page). It must have been very hard to take 50 men back out to sea to redistribute them into two other boats (Detmers and von Gosseln's boats). The last mentioned boat disappeared and was never found. That there was actually a third boat present off the coast north of Carnarvon is indicated by the remarks of Fritz Englemann when he visited Australia. Englemann claimed he landed at Red Bluff but denied he came ashore in Meyers boat.



The LS3 was more than capable of towing lifeboats and carrying 50 or so survivors. What some people don't understand is having a range of 300 miles means that it has an endurance for 600 miles, range means 300 miles from the ship and return, but its endurance – from A to B without having to return doubles that range.



If Meyers boat was the only one found at Red Bluff it seems there must have been a third boat as reported which went back out to sea after leaving behind as many people as they could easily account for in just two boats. The third boat then met von Gosseln's boat on 26 November and unloaded some more into Detmer's boat where the remainder were taken aboard. It is very likely that Detmers was in the LS3 and went back out to sea with the others transferring to a lifeboat to show the example he expected the others to follow. The third boat (LS3) was then destroyed leaving an oil slick on the surface as reported by a Catalina on the 28th. The boats belonging to Detmers and von Gosseln were the two most heavily loaded of all but could not have survived in the reported weather conditions if they were that overloaded for the entire period since the *Kormoran* sank. This extra boat that was moving about redistributing survivors among the boats can only have been the LS3.

After circulating the above information, I received an email from a friend in Western Australia who has spoken to one of the German crew members visiting Australia some time back. This German stated that he landed in one of the boats on the W.A. coast at Red Bluff. When they indicated that he must have landed in Meyer's boat he denied it. Then they said it was Meyers' boat that landed at Red Bluff on Wednesday 26th so he must have been in that one. Once again he denied he had landed in Meyers' boat so how did he land unless it was from a third boat. Then, of course, there is the report that one of the searching aircraft sighted a third boat near the landing sites of the two boats that came ashore but then must have put back to sea again. This mystery has not been investigated before but the third boat in question can only have been the *LS* boat. If that is the case then the whole story of the escape from the *Kormoran* and the subsequent open sea voyages of the lifeboats must be in question.

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