

Hmas Sydney 11  
Commission Of Inquiry  
Level 18 Defence Plaza  
270 Pitt Street  
Sydney NSW 2000.

  
Pr

Subject, Commissioner Terrance Cole QC, Hmas Sydney 11

Cd, Author.

The Lost Souls & Ghosts Of Hmas Sydney 11 1941.

I wrote to the Commission of inquiry on 14 July 2008, enclosing a copy of the Lost Souls Publication for reference only. I understand that my submission was of a rather general approach and lacked detail of various basic answers that should be addressed, as why Hmas Sydney 11 was destroyed and lost with all hands in her encounter with the German Raider Kormoran in 1941.

However the actual Publication that has been selling well here and overseas has a number of valid points and documents that are worthy of notice that contain actual authenticated statements from members of the German Raiders crew still alive in Germany today, There are also a number of files that cannot be confirmed as genuine which I acknowledge within the Lost Souls Publication

It is amazing how much Documentation is available and surfaced over the sixty odd years or so since the Action between the two ships and their eventual loss. However after stating this fact, there has also been a cover up of magnitude relating to the circumstances surrounding the loss of Hmas Sydney 11 Complete Ships Company of 645 Officers and sailors, under conditions that should have had 20 or 30 % Survival rate of The Australian Light Cruisers Company.

I have quite a sound background and experience in my life time as an Engineer and licensed investigator now retired, I spent many of my younger years in British Ship Yards around the Liverpool Docklands where I was witness to numerous damaged ships, that were virtually held together by empty Oil Drum as buoyancy to support the mine and torpedo damage that occurred in Convoy protection duties in the Atlantic Ocean. It was truly amazing as to what extreme rate of structural damage and still remain afloat, that ships built in the same period of Hmas Sydney 11 could maintain Buoyancy despite the extreme damage they suffered during their Convoy Duties

Turning the line of thought to Hmas Sydney 11 and the horrendous damage inflicted on the ship, indicates from recent underwater photos of the Australian Light Cruisers sea bed images, that she was completely disabled from the first encounter. More likely, it was in the early hours of darkness on the night of 19 or early morning 20 Nov 1941. Either occurred in the hours of darkness being the night of a New Moon and total black Out

The scenario suggests a surprise encounter with the interruption of Kormorans mine laying practice run to slow down the Troop Carrier Aquitania due down from Singapore on the Early Morning of 23 Nov 1941, on the Southern Passage ( Western Off Shore Track } down the main shipping lane, North and South along the Australian Coast. Kormoran's steaming rate of knots was not quick enough to match the 25 Knot Troop Carrier if the passage track was too wide.

Kormorans Kapitan Theodor Detmer His plan was to float mines across the Eastern Track of the North-South Sea Lane in the hope that she would connect with Aquitania and slow her down to attack. Additional proof of such a move is confirmed in German Raiders Rules Of Passage. . . Mines Were Not To Be laid In The Indian Ocean, North Of The 25 Parallel off the Coast of the Australian Continent This also indicates why Hmas Sydney 11 altered her return Convey duty from the quicker Eastern Track South, to the outer Western Track South, correctly assuming that the Raider was further out to sea awaiting the arrival of the Aquitania. In hindsight, The Hmas Sydney 11 Saved the Troopship Aquitania by her Engagement and loss with the German Raider Kormoran



Page 2.

So placing this line of thinking, this fine Australian Icon prevented Kormorans action against the Troop Carrier Aquitania, This action was obviously one of wonderful loyalty to the Hmas Sydney 11 Seaman standard of protection and fine comradeship in true Australian Naval Tradition of her Whole Ships Company Without Exception.

Assessing to situation that confronted Hmas Sydney 11, It was one of complete unfortunate circumstances Beyond the control of the Ships Bridge Watch and available technology of the time. She had no Radar and relied solely on the watch to determine her progress and conduct circumstances.

Her steaming rate of Knots would be between 20- 23 in a cruise mode situation, one Gun-turret on Stand-bye, seas moderate from the South West Warm night cruising and relaxed awaiting to a change of Watch. On the Bridge, Officers awaiting for the hours of darkness to lighten the horizon. No signs of activity on the ocean. Captain in his quarters awaiting 0400 h watch change over.

All of a sudden there is a terrific explosion from the bow area and the ship dips into the waves and loses head way as though she has hit rocks or another ship. Main Electrical Power to the Bridge Engine Room, Gunnery Control and Steerage is out. This situation brings total confusion and serious problems to the bridge control centre, due to the Main Electrical Supply Control Box Being Cut Off On Front Bulk Head.

The ship is virtually helpless in the first 15 Mins or so, She has Head -Way on of cause but no Control Within a short period of time She is completely helpless and Drifting. With 645 Officers and Ratings On board, there is serious panic and confusion.. This would be a natural impulse for sailors who are One minute safe and relaxed, and the next minute running around wondering what has gone wrong.

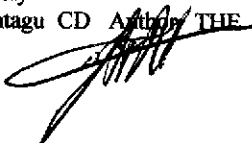
Unfortunately there is more to come, whether it was a mine that the Hmas Sydney 11 powered into. Or a Torpedo from the Kormoran. The effects were similar, personally I believe it was a mine that was being floated by Kormoran to test the flow rate, current and direction of travel when attacking the troop carrier Aquitania proposed two days later, A torpedo hit on Hmas Sydneys Bow, would have been too good a shot ( Million To One) From Transverse tubes as fitted to Kormoran. Also the explosion from the type of torpedo dispatched by Kormoran, would not have the clout or power to sever the large bow section of a light cruiser the size of Hmas Sydney. You would require a Long Lance Type as used by Japanese Submarines to knock off such a large section.

It was just bad luck on Hmas Sydney 11, Being in the same sea area as the German Raiders practice Mine Laying. After sighting the shell Damage inflicted on the Hmas Sydney 11 recently on the Ocean Seabed where she rests, It is obvious that the ship was mortally damaged early in the action And not capable of defending herself. The gun-turrets and barrels were all facing forward inline with the hull and show no signs of angle variation, The vessel was absolutely pounded before she sank Stern first. The hull and superstructure were hammered, indicating the Kormoran did not accept any form of surrender from the crew that were still alive.

The condition of the hull is a contradiction that no Survivors were rescued off the Australian Ship, Either wounded or POWs.. It is my understanding that sailors were taken aboard Kormoran and left to drown in the Raiders holding Cells (Briggs) When Kormoran Sank Two Days after Hmas Sydney 11 was lost. You not need to be a Rhodes Scholar to deduct that Australian Survivors were taken aboard HSK Kormoran and left to drown or where shot in the Ocean on the orders of Kapitan Theodor Detmers and His Senior Officers off the German Raider Kormoran.

It is 67 years since the atrocities were committed against Hmas Sydney 11 Fine Young Sailors and Commissioned Officers. It is never too late to redeem their memory and demand justice on their behalf.

Yours sincerely

John A Montagu CD  THE LOST SOULS & GHOSTS OF HMAS SYDNEY 11 1941.

6 Oct 2008

3.

Appendix to thee above introduction of events that surround the loss & eventual location of the two Ship Wreck Sites Of The HMAS SYDNEY & GERMAN ARMED RAIDER KORMORAN. It is prudent to mention the fine effort of the Fremantle Search Foundation members, that were instrumental in their endeavour to research & obtain funding from the Federal Government to complete the recent successful answer to a 66 yr old mystery. A special mention of note, must be accorded to Mr Ted Graham of Mermaid Marine. Ted & his fellow team of the Fremantle Search Foundation spent many research hours, burning the midnight oil over a long period of time on the project.

Having a background within the Engineering Investigation Business, I am rather undecided on to why the Two Wrecks took so long to locate. There was bundles of evidence supporting the approximate Locations, However once the equipment became available it was only a matter of two weeks or more to obtain a successful result I have made comment on the condition of the Hmas Sydney but do not have enough information on the German Raider Kormoran demise or true circumstances of her loss.

The Deep Ocean Photo image patterns of Kormoran indicate she did Scuttle herself, But an article of Interest in Wing Commanders Bourms surviving report nota6tion ( Pilot Officer On War--time Search Air Craft for Hmas Sydney 11 on 23 Nov 1941) Stated German Survivors in Life Boats & Raft on 0500 h 24 Deg L at S 110 deg 57mins E, rescued by Troopship Aquitania at 0500 h. Were Clean Shaven & would not have been in open Life Boats or Raft for more than 8-10 Hrs. This therefore supports research information that Kormoran went out West after Her encounter and Sinking of Hmas Sydney 11, to await the arrival of her original target being the Troop Ship Aquitania due down from Singapore on the early morning of the 23 Nov 1941 on her passage to Eastern Australia after a delay in Singapore.

The fate of Kormorans last hours after her encounter with Hmas Sydney 11 would have been very much Similar to the following Scenario. After Hmas Sydney 11 Sank stern first, the German Senior Command Would have rescued as many Sydney crew men as possible in a limited time before the hours of day Light. Remember, the Aquitqnia Troop Carrier was their main Target. Kormoran had Engine room (Machine Room) problems before she attacked & sank Hmas Ssydney. The remaining crew off Sydney still in the Indian Ocean had to be shot for operational reasons.(According to the German Senior Command) They could not afford to have Australian Sailors floating in the Indian Ocean, when the Troop Carrier Aquitania travelled down on the same route one & half days later on passage to the Australian Eastern Seaboard her destination drop of point for Australian personnel & families escaping Japanese Internment from Singapore.

Whilst awaiting out West & not fully aware if Sydney 11 had transmitted a distress signal, Kormoran Did emergency repairs to her damaged engine, an accident in her Machine Room and Stern caused Unrepairable Damage to the Raiders hull & she had to be scuttled. The time facture is not too clear, but She lost nearly all of the Machine Room Personnel, 80 odd German Sailors. This resulted in any Crew Men off Hmas Sydney, who were POWs on Kormoran being left in their holding Cells ( Brigg) & not Released when The Raider Sank In 3000 Metres of Indian Ocean Off The Coast Of Western Australia On the night of the 22 Nov 1941 .

The operational decisions that were carried out on the orders of the Kormoran Senior Command with regards to Australian Crew Survivors, cannot be excused as operational, there is no special exemptions within the Geneva Convention Laws Of Human Rights, That Allow Such Action to be conducted against Seafaring Personnel who are helpless to defend themselves under such circumstances. These collective actions by Kormorans Senior Ranks is one of World War 11 Major Atrocities, That Has To Be listed As A Major Crime & Duly Censured By The Cole Inquiry, To The Notice Of The Relevant Office Or Department Who Is Responsible For Such An Action Against The Crew whether Deceased Or Not. For Their Collective Or Singular Actions Against The Ships Company Of Hmas Sydney 11 In The Indian Ocean Off The Coast Of Western Australia, On The Night Or Early Morning Of The 19-22 November 1941 With HMAS SYDNEY 11 AND THE GERMAN RAIDER HSK KORMORAN WITH THE LOSS OF BOTH VESSELS WITHIN A TWO DAY ACTION.

No Survivors either wounded or able bodied were listed as rescued from the Hmas Sydney 11 The Entire Ships Company Of 645 Officers & Ratings Were Lost The Koromoran Survivors Listed 75 % Of Her Crew Were Saved. 78 Machine Room Personnel Were Lost When Kormoran Engine Room Caught Fire.

Yours Sincerely . John A Montagu Cd,  
6 Oct 2008

