


17-10-'08

H. M. A. S. Sydney 11 -
Commission of Inquiry


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Upon seeing the notice of this Inquiry into the loss of H. M. A. S. Sydney 11 on the 19th November, 1941, I hereby make a submission to the Inquiry Board concerning my recollection of occasions when we intercepted merchant ships at sea to check their credentials, etc.

I was part of the ships company on H. M. A. S. Sydney 11 for the period 14-5-'41 to 26-10-'41, having joined the ship on the same day that Captain Burnett took over from Captain Collins.

at this stage of my service with the R. A. N. I was an able seaman, had completed 15 months duty on H. M. A. S. Westralia, an Armed Merchant Cruiser, and had just finished a 6 week gunnery course at Flinders Naval Depot. This course specialized in A.A. gunnery and I was eventually rated as an A.A. B gunner after undertaking a drogue shoot on the Sydney.

My duties on board were that of Petty Officers messman and my action station was gun layer on "Y" turret.

On at least two occasions, I can remember

that we approached merchant ships, quite closely, to check their credentials, and to ensure they were friendly ships; am unable to recall the locations of these interceptions.



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Sometimes I ask myself how come I was able to witness this procedure when I perhaps should have been at my action station, locked up in 'Y' turret where I wouldn't have been able to see such happenings. It is obvious that I wasn't at action stations at the time. Perhaps we had previously been at action stations and been given the all clear while we were still close to the ships. There is a nagging belief that we hadn't gone to action stations, that the captain was of the opinion that he could handle the situation in 'cruising watch'. Was this the case when Sydney was in contact with Thormoran. Was captain Burnett fooled into thinking that the Thormoran was the Straat Malacca ~~and~~ told to him by captain Dettmers. ?

I have always been of the opinion that the German survivors account of the action was the true version of proceedings, although am not convinced if Dettmers actually lowered the Dutch flag and hoisted the German battle flag before opening fire. - Will we ever know. :-

It is hard to believe that there were no survivors from the Sydney but I feel that it was possible as the ship suffered terrible damage to the upper deck by the guns of all calibre from the Thormoran at such close range, with fires raging everywhere. The fact that no effort was made to

search for the ship for some days and for survivors for longer, could account for any survivors at the time of the sinking, to have perished.

Quite a deal has been written, in fiction I think, about the Japanese involvement in the action. If they were involved, surely something positive would have come to light by now. They were certainly capable of such a atrocity ~~and~~ as shooting survivors in the water.

After leaving the Sydney at Fremantle on 26th October, 1941, I travelled to Sydney town by troop train (5 day trip) Within a day or two of my arrival in Sydney I boarded the Queen Elizabeth, troop ship along with several thousand 9th Division A. S. F. troops. We sailed in convoy with Queen Mary and other troop ships to Suva. Whilst in convoy in the vicinity of the West Australian coast, we were escorted by H.M.A.S. Sydney II for some days, including a stop-over off Fremantle to pick up more A. S. F. personnel.

Yours faithfully
A. R. Baddeley.

A. R. BADDELEY.

