

The Editor
Sydney Morning Herald.
Sydney.

20/9/92.

Attention - Mr David Jenkins - S.M.H. Journalist

Dear Sir:

I read with interest your article in S.M.H. dated 17th Sept, on the circumstances surrounding the loss & disappearance of H.M.A.S. Sydney in November 1941, after an encounter with the armed German raider "Kormoran" off Carnarvon, also speculation of Japanese submarine involvement.

Of particular interest was the paragraph and I quote - "The Navy has always accepted that Sydney was lost because Captain Burnett abandoned caution and established Naval procedure, allowing himself to get dangerously close to the Kormoran. - unquote.

I would like to relate my experience of events which occurred at this time and involved H.M.A.S. SYDNEY.

In late October 1941 I sailed as an engineer in T.S.S. "Zealandia" - a troopship commissioned by the Navy on the outbreak of war - from Sydney bound for Fremantle. On board we had troops of the 8th Division A.I.F. destination Singapore. We were escorted across the Great Australian Bight by H.M.A.S. Adelaide. After taking on additional troops from Western Australia we continued the voyage still escorted by Adelaide, when off approx Carnarvon the escort duties were taken over by H.M.A.S. Sydney who provided cover to the Sunda Strait, when a British cruiser took over for the final leg to Singapore.

Whilst acting as our escort in the Indian Ocean H.M.A.S. Sydney during the daylight hours, adopted the practice of using our vessel as a decoy whilst



she retired well astern on the horizon. (Our surface speed was barely 10 knots)
 - I remember on this particular morning while talking on deck with the 11th mate & officer on watch, a merchantman approached from the opposite direction and passed close to our ship. The Sydney had by this time steamed up at full speed from astern approached the merchantman ordered a stop and required identification.

The Sydney took up a position broadside on and close to the other vessel, which prompted the 11th mate to comment that the Captain of the Sydney by his action, was exposing the ship and his crew to grave danger, should the other ship turn hostile. When the Sydney left us and steamed southwards presumably to her patrol area off the W.A. coast, we completed the voyage to Singapore and whilst tied up in port heard the news that the Sydney ~~had~~ had been lost in an action off the W.A. coast in the vicinity of Cameron.

I am now 72 years of age and the events I have described are still clear in my mind.

It would seem the circumstances outlined could have been repeated by H.M.A.S. Sydney in the case of the Kormoran, and give support to the official view on why the Sydney was lost.

I trust my information will be of interest to you as a naval writer and to the naval historians.

Yours faithfully
 F. S. Pountney
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