



Commander K.Radburn
Secretary
HMAS SYDNEY II
Commission of Inquiry
Office of the Chief of Defence Force
270 Pitt Street
Sydney 2000

Dear Commander Radburn,

My previous letter dated the 14th January 2009, contained some errors, please find enclosed a corrected copy.

Aged 79, I must be considered somewhat an ancient mariner, with the expected lack of complete recall at any one time, so need to be allowed some leeway.

WATER TIGHT (W/T) DOORS.

I mentioned the doors and hatches fitted with 'dogs', they being still in use, but the Commission may require a description, for official information.

Both are made of steel, the door being an entry off the open deck, or between two compartments on the same deck level. The hatch is access between two deck levels, with an inclined companion way (an angled ladder fitted with steps, side rails or manropes for safety), attached to the under side of the hatch coaming.

The 'dogs' are lever handles, on both side of the door/hatch and secured to a through bolt which is free to turn. The inboard/lower handle is extended with a flat steel bar. When the openings are closed, and the handles turned, the steel bar engages into a wedge shaped aperture cut into the door's/hatch's steel surrounding/under side extension of the hatch coaming. This allows the door to opened from either side.

The Navy had another hatch which I am not familiar with, having only experienced it in 1956 when on a Surface Gun Shoot in HMS OBDURATE.

This was entry into the Engine Room from the Weather deck. The coaming was circular in shape, rising to about knee height. The lid or hatch top was supported on a swivel shaft, set on the forward and outside edge of the coaming, which allowed it to be swung horizontally to cover the hatch opening.

The shaft itself was set in steel tube casing attached to both the deck and the forward edge of hatch coaming. It had a spiral slot cut into both sides approximately 30cm long at mid-height, running along the vertical length of the casing. The shaft about mid length had



studs fixed horizontally, which extended into the corresponding spiral slots. Two flanges were fixed above and below the studs to keep the shaft centred within the casing, and below the lower flange was a strong spring coil which applied continuous pressure to the lower flange. The upper end of the casing was covered with a plate which may have kept another spring coil under pressure against the upper flange. This then allowed for the ease of opening the hatch. As the hatch was moved horizontally, so the studs engaged in the spiral slots, caused the lid to lift clear of the coaming, as it swung away from the hatch opening. The upper spring would ensure the lid to automatically return to position above the hatch, and ready for securing.

The hatch lid was tightened down by a wheel set in the centre of the lid. This too had a corresponding wheel on the under side, to enable it to be operated from both side. The Spindle/shaft connecting the two operating wheels, was partly screw threaded, as too was the hole in the lid through which it passed.

The locking device consisted of a steel disc attached to the axis of the spindle/shaft of the wheels, between the underside of the lid and above the operating wheels. 4 eccentric studs set into lower face of the disc, to which were attached steel bars. The end attached to the stud had a hole, and allowed free circular motion, The locking bars then extended, through steel guides attached to under side of the lid. A steel band secured to the inside of the coaming had slots cut into it, at a level with the locking bars. When the wheels were turned fully anti-clockwise the ends of the locking were exactly positioned to enter, but clear of the appropriate slot. When the wheels were turned clockwise, the locking pins engaged with the top edge of the slots until they were fully extended. Further turning of the wheels, caused the pressure on the locking bars to tighten the lid's rubber insertion, against the coaming, in a similar manner as all water tight doors.

The coaming extended to the engine room hatch, with a vertical ladder attached for access to the engine room.

In this class of ship, the Machinery/Boiler space was forced ventilated and the trunk way was air locked.

I am sorry for this poor explanation, I was only on board for some 6 hours, and during that time the ship was proceeding to the Target Area/shooting range, we were being instructed on the 4.7 inch gun, which like the 4 inch gun was supplied with fixed ammunition. We also were required to transfer the ammunition from the after Magazine to the Forward or 'A' Turret, ready use locker. (I think it was 30 shells).

HMAS SYDNEY II, 4" Guns.

I feel, because of the Zone in which SYDNEY was operating was free from possible Air Attack, the Ready Use ammunition lockers adjacent were empty, with the possible exception of 'Star Shells' which would have been used in conjunction with night surface action.

This is confirmed by the lack of additional heavy explosion during the action with KORMORAN, and proved by the recent under water photographs of the wreck.



KORMORAN, scuttling charge.

I stated 'Detmers boat would have had to depart from KORMORAN before 2300'. This throws doubt on the actual laying and setting scuttling charges, The sooner these charges were exploded, the safer the survivors would have been.

To sink the ship. The charges would have had to be placed against the ship's side and between bulkheads separating two cargo holds. While the 'International Convention' requires the Loaded ship to be able to stay afloat with two adjoining spaces holed, I feel with the additional damage in the Engine Room space, there would have been sufficient ingress of water to sink the ship.

The damaged holds would have quickly filled. Although the main affect would have been to sink the forward end, and lifting the stern, the mean sinkage amidships would still be considerable. A ship of KORMORAN's size would have a Tons Per Inch Immersion (TPI) of about 50 tons. The ingress of water would have been at least 3000 tons, or approximately 60 inches, (5 feet), which would be sufficient sinkage to place the Engine room's damaged side, below the surface of the water.

Had this occurred, KORMORAN would have sunk, the fire extinguished, removing all danger from explosion.

Saturday, 24th January SMH,

Michael Montgomery's continuing argument about the near approach to RAMBI (Merchant Ships), only confirms what I have already stated to the Commission in one of my letters, the occasion of Cruisers approaching close to merchant ships was more common than was led to believe.

For the immediate past number of years, RAN and other Nations' Warships have been stopping and boarding merchant ships in the Persian Gulf. It is the only positive way to identify and check a ship for contraband.

The ships sunk at a distance during WWII, were nearly always identified as probable raiders/supply ships. Any wrongful sinking would be well and truly hidden, if reported at all.

The remarks about the Christmas Island body were contrary to that of the original description, in particular, the teeth, which was, "He had perfect teeth". This led to some number of persons claiming relationship, all of which were copied into the Hansard Report of the Parliamentary Inquiry. Other description was, "Some damage to the soft tissues", but nothing of wounds. Further, the original site of burial was other than that of disinterred skeleton, leading to the suggestion, there were two bodies.

I have on several instances stated, "The drift and set by swell, wind and current, would have caused the raft to land on the Australian Coast, as far south as NW Cape, and if not, then under influence of the diurnal tide and wind, possibly reached further North or a



remote island ”.

The description of the skeleton by Dr Donlan may well fit that of an outback stockman. These men handled heavy weights, and squatted while resting in the shade, with their backs against a shed or tree, when having a smoke and chat.

Gold fillings in its teeth in 1941 would point to a person of some wealth, both UK and Australia had been through an economic depression, those who did not care for their teeth, were inclined to have bad teeth, which were eventually removed and replaced with dentures, when they eventually returned to full employment. But gold fillings were popular with Eastern Europeans, (prisoners in extermination camps had their gold fillings removed, before being interred or incinerated), also, dental clinics in Singapore and Hong Kong were renowned for their cheap efficiency, which points to the remains being from a person who lived for some time in the Far East, where there too, people are inclined to “squat in the shade”.

Personally I have no other objective in the findings of the Commission, other than it be the truth, and as a retired professional seaman the more I deduce the facts that are coming to light, the more I realize, the Germans did not tell the whole truth, but ‘painted it’ to cover their errors, by throwing doubt on the actions of SYDNEY

For your interest, I am enclosing a copy of the story of my experience at Portland Roads in 1967.

For your information, I was in Melbourne last week so unfortunately unable to attend the Commission’s Meeting. During March, I shall be in the UK.

Yours sincerely

Bonnie J Muller

27th January 2009