



The sinking of HMAS Sydney (II) by the German raider, known as 'Ship 41,' on 19 November 1941.

Addendum to previous letters sent out on the subject . This addendum was compiled on 14th February 2009 after further thoughts on the interviews I had with Hermann Ortmann, assistant shell loader, No.4- 150 mm gun on the HSK Kormoran

Ref, THE AUSTRALIA STATION-1941 July—Nov (page 458) 'It is probable that Sydney sank during the night of the 19 th—20 th November 1941, not only did she suffer the torpedo blow below water, but German survivors estimated that she received up to fifty shell hits on the water line. She was not observed to 'blow up.' The "occasional flickerings" just died to nothingness in the night. It is not surprising that there were no survivors.....etc,etc.

Hermann told me that his gun fired for about 10 minutes, then the guns barrel was cooled with water and fired again for another 10 minutes, " We must have fired over one hundred shells at her from No 4 gun!" and -" She must have been built tough as we could not sink her, she sailed towards the horizon doing about twelve knots. She was on fire and heading towards Perth." and- " I owe my life to Kapitan Detmers!" and he reiterated to me, " They should leave the area as a war grave and even if they did find the wrecks there would not be much left of either of them anyway, I don't know why they waste their time looking!"

When Detmers wrote the book, HILFSKREUZER 'Kormoran' in 1959 his action plan diagram was not correct and when the English version was published in 1959 the diagram was omitted. This then suggests that, as far as the Germans were concerned, it would be better if the wrecks of the Sydney and the Kormoran were never found!

As the wrecks have now been located and both filmed lying on the sea floor those that scrutinize the film will now get more positive answers as to what actually happened.

When I once again read through the English version one point stood out, that it was a surprise to Detmers that he was let off so lightly,(Ref page 153) "I wondered what had happened to the cruiser herself. She had been terribly battered, but she may have managed to stay afloat. How many of her crew had been saved, and what would they have said about me and my conduct of the engagement? I might easily find myself before a court martial!"-and-(page 157) " One day we came back from the doctor and there was a naval officer waiting to interview me , complete with a chart and papers. He turned out to have been a destroyer commander so we had something in common professionally, so we got on quite well together. He spread the chart out on the table that showed the position of the engagement as I had given it already marked. I showed him the course the Sydney had sailed, and I described how she had sailed off into the gathering dusk doing about seven knots and how at 21.00 hours, after a final flickering of flame in the distance, we had seen no more of her!"-and- (page 159)- "There was never at any time the slightest suggestion that I was to be brought before a court marshal, so obviously my conduct had been accepted as being within the laws of naval warfare. From Germany we learned that each member of the crew had been awarded the Iron Cross, second class. I already had the Iron Cross, first class, and now I was awarded the Knight's cross in addition. We were to remain in internment for two years after the war ended in 1945, but at last on February 28 th 1947 I arrived in Cuxhaven, Germany -still with my crew! In the middle of May I was released from the Munster Camp. I was the last of the ship's company to be freed." When I asked Hermann Ortmann about his getting an Iron Cross,

second class, he replied, "No, I didn't want it!"- No doubt there was some reason for him to have said this, I mean he had all those years to think about it?

So as old sailors fade away and there only a few left who were witness to this sea battle, what now? Even though only a short period of time had elapsed before the German crew raised their battle flag to the masthead and commenced firing, it was in this time that the Germans gained the advantage. What does this mean in Navy terms?

Why were no survivors picked up from the Sydney? Because they never got that chance! The two ships were too close to each other!

Should the Sydney have stayed out some 12,000 yards and used her superior gunnery to destroy the Kormoran and sent her plane to reconnoiter the unidentified ship instead? Would the pilot of the plane have been able to pierce the Kormoran's disguise. As he flew above the Kormoran he would have seen many things on her deck, a swimming pool, live animal cages, monkey's swinging from her winches and two dogs running over the hatches, a fake anti-submarine gun on her stern with a gun crew wearing British helmets and those girls wearing bandannas and waving to the pilot as he flew overhead, wow-ee! (Detmers had several items of women's clothing amongst his 'booty.') The only two items on the Kormoran that were tell-tale of her true identity were guns Nos 3 and 4.

Because there were no survivors from the Sydney, all contentious issues can be refuted by the Germans, except for one. And that one issue is- Why was the signal to "Heave to! No wireless!" not sent out to the Sydney once there was no return fire coming from her guns.? Why did Detmers fail to give the order to, "Cease fire!" and continue to shoot at any of the Sydney's crew -" that dared to show their faces to us!"- and why was there no attempt to pick up survivors? - Or was it a case of- **Do unto those in 1941 as they had done unto you in 1914!** End of story!

I trust that the above information will be of some help to those researching this sea battle,

Yours truly,
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