

HMAS SYDNEY II COI
Statutory declaration of Mr Kenneth Tom Brown 23132



Commonwealth of Australia
STATUTORY DECLARATION
Statutory Declarations Act 1959

I, KENNETH TOM BROWN, [REDACTED] VIC, retiree, make the following declaration under the Statutory declarations Act, 1959:

1. I enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy on 01 May 39. My official number is 23132. I joined the Navy because I grew up on a farm and had never seen the sea.
2. Briefly, my career in the RAN was:
 - a. I did the three months initial training at the Flinders Naval Depot at HMAS CERBERUS;
 - b. in Sep 39 –Mar 40, I did the Signals Course at CERBERUS;
 - c. in early Mar 40, I travelled to Fremantle and joined HMAS SYDNEY on 08 Mar 40;
 - d. I left HMAS SYDNEY in Alexandria in mid Dec 40;
 - e. I then travelled back to Australia by various coasters, trains and troopship via the Red Sea, India and Ceylon. I arrived in Melbourne in Feb 41, a week before SYDNEY arrived in Sydney;
 - f. I then went to CERBERUS and did the three-month Advanced Signalman's Course;

- g. in May 41, I went to Lonsdale and stood-by HMAS BALLARAT which commissioned on 30 Aug 41. I served in BALLARAT until Sep 43, becoming a Leading Signaller in late 1943;
- h. in Sep 43, I transferred to another corvette, HMAS ECHUCA, and served on her until Sep 46;
- i. in late 1946, I returned to the Flinders Naval Depot and spent two years at the Central Receiving Station. This facility contained the main telephone from Navy Office and the Code X decoding machine which had been in use since about midway through the war;
- j. in late 1948, I served in Tarangau, New Guinea, for eight months;
- k. in mid-1949, I joined the Aircraft Carrier, HMAS SYDNEY III, for nine months;
- l. in mid 1950, I joined the Frigate, HMAS MURCHISON, for six months; and
- m. in Jun 51, I transferred to the dockyard Naval Police, based in Melbourne ports, and served for 14 years and then worked in private Industry.

My Service in HMAS SYDNEY

- 3. When I served in HMAS SYDNEY, CAPT J. A. Collins, RAN was the Captain.
- 4. In SYDNEY, my duties were always as a signaller. I would estimate that there were about 40 men in the Communication Branch – 20 odd signallers and 20 odd in the wireless operators.

Going to Action Stations

- 5. Action Stations was sounded by a hooter sound over the Public Address system and then a call, "Hands to Action Stations, Hands to Action Stations". The

Master-at-Arms would also go through the ship to ensure everyone obeyed. The ship would take no more than five minutes to change to action stations.

Location of Signals Personnel at Action Stations

6. My Action Stations position was on the Flag Deck. This was just aft of and below the bridge and immediately forward of the forward funnel. There were about six to eight (8) of us on the Flag Deck. The foot of the main mast was at the aft end of the Flag Deck and we would run our signal flags up the main mast.
7. Men on the bridge were too far away for verbal communication so they would communicate with us by voicepipe. At the front of the flag deck was the signal office and in there were about five to six (5-6) personnel. They were manning the voicepipe, a telephone, standing by to write down signals and some were runners (messengers).
8. On the Flag Deck, we also had large searchlights, one on either side. There were also small signal lamps mounted on either side. There were also hand-held Aldis lamps – one on either side, in a locker.
9. Immediately aft of the Flag Deck were 0.5cm multiple machine guns (one on either side) and I recollect that there were about two seaman manning each gun and there was probably a leading hand in charge.
10. On the Bridge, at action stations, there would be the Chief Yeoman, the Yeoman of the Watch, the Leading Signaller and two signalmen on each bridge wing, standing-by the signal lamps. The Chief Yeoman would stand-by the Captain ready to take orders to do with signals. He would be assisted by the Yeoman of the Watch and the Leading Signaller who would pass on the messages to the bridge wing signalmen or to the Flag Deck staff, by voicepipe.
11. Of the two signalmen on each bridge wing, one would operate the signal lamp and call out the responses. The other would have a note of the message to be sent and call it out and would take a written note of the response.



My Experience in SYDNEY

12. In Mar and Apr 40, SYDNEY was engaged mainly in convoy escort duties with our base being Fremantle. We seemed to be always exercising the guns. CAPT Collins would frequently order the ship to action stations for training. We signallers exercised every day.
13. We would sometimes practice mustering at “leaving ship stations”. My muster point was in either the port or starboard waist but I cannot remember.
14. When at sea under CAPT Collins, the ship was either at cruising stations or action stations.
15. Some notable events from my time in SYDNEY were recorded in my diary and I reproduce them here:
 - a. May 18th: keeping a good lookout for submarines believed to be in the vicinity. German raider reported to be laying mines off N.E. African Coast. Arrived “COLOMBO” at 1800...”;
 - b. Oct 26th: sailed N all day (North of Crete towards Bay of Athens). Stopped a lot of merchant ships and tankers during the day – examined them for contraband. The only enemy plane we sighted was FAIT (sic) divebombers which fled when we opened fire...;
 - c. Oct 27th: Gallipoli; still heading N at daybreak and sighted the Isle of Lemnos at 0800. Passed Lemnos at 0900 this base being a big base during the last war. Sighted 2 merchant ships and a sailing ship up to date and searched them. We were then well up along the Gallipoli peninsular. We approached Cape Helles at 1030 passing the landing place of the British Forces on the peninsular. 1100 just off Cape Helles we could see the cliffs of “ANZAC COVE” with the windswept hill and graveyards in the distance...”

16. In relation to the entries for 26 and 27 of Oct 40, I note that we were sailing in company with four allied destroyers (as mentioned in the diary entry for 25th of Oct). The destroyers sailed ahead of SYDNEY, over the horizon, as a screen. The references in my diary to the encounters with merchant ships on 26 and 27 Oct are in fact references to encounters that these destroyers had with merchant ships. SYDNEY did not challenge or stop any merchant ships on either of these two days. SYDNEY did send a boat to board one of these ships, a small coaster, which had already been stopped by the destroyers ahead of us.
17. A copy of my diary has been given to Counsel Assisting the Commission of Inquiry.

Challenges to other ships

18. During my time in SYDNEY, during action stations, signals were sent by signal lamp on the bridge wings. In my memory, whenever SYDNEY encountered an unidentified ship (warship or other), she almost always went to action stations. Therefore, signals to unidentified ships were always sent via signal lamp on one of the bridge wing. The signal lamps on the Flagdeck were used mainly when we were at Cruising Stations for such things as manoeuvres with other ships.
19. The merchant ships we saw were almost always in convoys or escorted by Allied warships. In SYDNEY, I can only recall one time where we challenged a merchant ship which was not in convoy or under escort. The only time I can recall when we encountered a merchant ship was on our way to the Mediterranean and we saw a Merchant ship on the horizon. We did not come to action stations but I was on watch, on the Flag Deck. From what I understand from voicepipes, the Captain was satisfied as to the ship's identification from how it was described by the lookout checked against the Captain's identification books.
20. We challenged some warships. The challenge to a warship was simply by signalling that day's three letter challenge signal (the three letters changed every day). I think we always got the same signal back which was the correct response.

21. How the Captain would undertake the challenge depended on the circumstances and where we would happen to be.
22. We were taught and practiced the challenge and reply procedure for a merchant ship. My memory is that this was the procedure at the outset of the war. The signals were always sent by lamp in Morse code. The procedure, which may not always be in this order, was:
- a. the ship would come to action stations;
 - b. we would signal, "Show your identification flags";
 - c. if the Captain was still suspicious, he would ask us to signal requesting the secret code. We would do this by signalling the middle two letters of the four letter secret code of the merchant ship that the other ship claimed to be; and
 - d. If the Captain was still suspicious, he may ask us to signal, "What was your last Port?", "Where bound?" and/or "What cargo?"
23. In good visibility, we could signal a ship by lamp from about eight to ten (8-10) miles. With flags and a good telescope and wind (to blow the flags out), I estimate that you can read them at up to five (5) miles.
24. Most merchant ships only had short masts and we may not be able to make out their flags so we would signal the merchant ship to show their flags more clearly or to reply by light.

4in Guns

25. From my position on the Flag Deck, I had a good view of the 4in guns. At action stations, there were about six (6) men operating each of the four 4in guns. I would estimate there was an officer in charge of each gun thus I estimate there would have been in the order of 28 – 30 men stationed on the 4 in guns. I am not sure

whether, to avoid blast, the 4in gun personnel may have moved away from their guns when the main (6in) guns were firing.

Dress at Action Stations

26. At Action Stations, all crewmembers wore anti-flash hoods and gloves. On the upper decks, we wore helmets.

27. The stokers and seamen wore blue overalls, we in the communications branch wore rig of the day.

28. Officers wore their rig of the day uniform, whites in summer or blues in winter, even when at action stations. Some of the Chiefs and Petty Officers would wear their rig of the day.

29. Below deck, the ratings wore their blue overalls. The engineering officers wore white overalls which they were always wearing when we were at sea.

I understand that a person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence under section 11 of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* and I believe that the statements in this declaration are true in every particular.

Declared at Melbourne ~~26~~ on 26th of June 2008
Ken Brown

Before me

M. T. Vesper

M. T. VESPER

Barrister-at-Law

