

HMAS SYDNEY (II) FACT SHEET



STATISTICS

Type	Modified Leander Class Light Cruiser
Displacement	6,830 tons
Length	562 feet 3 inches
Beam	56 feet 8 inches
Builder	Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson Ltd, Wallsend on Tyne, England
Laid Down	8 July 1933 (as PHAETON)
Launched	22 September 1934 (as SYDNEY), by Mrs Bruce, wife of the Australian High Commissioner, United Kingdom
Horsepower	72,000
Speed	32.5 knots
Armament	8 x 6-inch guns, 4 x 4-inch guns, 3 x .50 (inch) machine guns, 12 x .303 (inch) Lewis Guns, 8 x 21 inch torpedo tubes (in 2 quadruple mounts)
Complement	645

After being laid down in 1933 for the Royal Navy as HMS *Phaeton*, HMAS SYDNEY (II) was purchased (before launching) by the Australian Government in 1934 and renamed in memory of the earlier HMAS SYDNEY (I) that destroyed the German cruiser *Emden* in 1914.

LOSS OF HMAS SYDNEY (II)

HMAS SYDNEY (II) sailed from Fremantle on Armistice Day, 11 November, 1941 to escort the troopship *Zealandia* to Sunda Strait where she was to be relieved by the British cruiser HMS *Durban* for the last leg of the voyage to Singapore. The voyage was without incident and at noon on the 17 November, *Zealandia* was turned over to *Durban* and HMAS SYDNEY (II) then proceeded back to Fremantle where she was expected to arrive on the afternoon of 20 November 1941. She did not arrive as expected and the District Naval Officer, Western Australia, reported accordingly to the Naval Board at 11 a.m. the following day that HMAS SYDNEY (II) was overdue. This did not immediately concern the Naval Board as they had been advised that *Zealandia* had arrived later than anticipated and it was assumed that HMAS SYDNEY (II) too had been delayed. There was also the possibility that she might have been diverted for another purpose and had not broken radio silence. When however, she had not returned by 23 November, she was instructed by the Naval Board to report by signal. There was no reply.

The reconstruction of events leading up to HMAS SYDNEY (II)'s disappearance relies primarily on information gathered from interrogations of German survivors from the raider HSK KORMORAN which HMAS SYDNEY (II) engaged on the afternoon of 19 November 1941. In the final moments of the battle, KORMORAN fired her last shot at 1825 at a range of about 11,000 yards. In all, she fired approximately 450 rounds from her main armament and hundreds from her anti-aircraft batteries. With the gathering gloom the form of HMAS SYDNEY (II) disappeared from view and was last seen by the Germans about ten miles off, heading approximately South-South-East. Thereafter, until about 2200, all that was seen was a distant glare then occasional flickerings until midnight at, which time all trace of, HMAS SYDNEY (II) disappeared.

Of HMAS SYDNEY (II)'s total complement of 42 officers and 603 ratings, none survived. The only material evidence recovered from HMAS SYDNEY (II) was an Australian naval type Carley life-float recovered eight days after the action by HMAS HEROS and an Australian naval pattern life-belt recovered by HMAS WYRALLAH. The Carley float is now preserved in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

THE SEARCH FOR HMAS SYDNEY (II)

The Finding Sydney Search Foundation was provided with \$4.2 million in Commonwealth funding, together with funding from the NSW and WA governments as well as private donations, to conduct a search for HMAS SYDNEY (II). SV GEOSOUNDER was chartered for the search and David Mearns was engaged as the operational search director. David Mearns is an internationally renowned shipwreck investigator who has discovered close to 50 shipwrecks throughout his career, including HMS HOOD.

The search commenced on 3 March 2008 and the wreck of the KORMORAN was discovered on 14 March 2008 about 112nm off the WA coast in 2560 metres of water. The PM publicly announced the finding on Sunday 16 March 2008. Using the KORMORAN's position as the datum to localise the search area, the search team discovered the wreck of HMAS SYDNEY (II) on Sunday 16 March 2008 in 2470 metres of water, some 12nm from the KORMORAN.

The SV GEOSOUNDER returned to the sites of HMAS SYDNEY (II) and HSK KORMORAN and captured extensive imagery using the ROV equipped with a high resolution camera.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

The Chief of the Defence Force has convened a Commission of Inquiry (COI) into the loss of HMAS SYDNEY (II), to be chaired by former NSW Supreme Court judge Terrence Cole QC. This was announced by the Acting Prime Minister on 31 March 2008 (see http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2008/interview_0156.cfm). The COI will investigate new and existing evidence in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of the circumstances surrounding the loss of HMAS SYDNEY (II). A media release will be issued to advise relatives and the public when the Commission intends to commence hearings and is ready to begin receiving public submissions. The Commission's hearings will be open to the public.

PROTECTION OF THE SITES

The wrecks of both HMAS SYDNEY (II) and HSK KORMORAN will be treated with respect and any investigation on site will only involve the collection of visual imagery. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts has declared both sites historic shipwrecks and a protection zone of 200 hectares has been established around the sites under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*. This declaration will protect these vessels, their crew and relics from damage, disturbance or removal. Under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*, there are significant penalties for anyone who engages in underwater activity within the 200 hectare protection zone. The penalty is a fine of up to \$10,000 or up to five (5) years imprisonment.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on HMAS SYDNEY (II) and the search can be found at the following links:

www.navy.gov.au/spc/history/ships/sydney2.html

www.findingsydney.com/search.asp

A business hours 1800 registration line for families of the crew of HMAS SYDNEY (II) has been established at Navy's Sea Power Centre and is now operational. The number is 1800 005 687.

Families may also register in writing to:

Director Navy Ministerials & Coordination

Navy Headquarters

R1-4-C070

Department of Defence

CANBERRA ACT 2600

This Fact Sheet last updated by Navy Headquarters, 15 July 2008.