



HMAS SYDNEY II SEARCH PRESS ROOM

HMAS SYDNEY SEARCH PTY LTD (SYDNEY SEARCH) AS TRUSTEE FOR
THE FINDING SYDNEY FOUNDATION

Latest Search Reports

13th March 2008 Report

David Mearns - Search Director, The Finding Sydney Foundation

After our early problems I am very pleased with how the search has progressed over the past couple of days. The Williamson & Associates SM30 side-scan sonar search system was selected for this project because it is one of the few commercially available sonars of its type in the world that is ideally suited to the specific requirements of this search. It can also be operated to a depth of 6,000 metres, which is well beyond our needs.

The SM30 has two transducers, scanning to either side of the towfish, that operate at a frequency of 27 kHz and 30kHz. These low frequencies (mismatched to prevent acoustic crosstalk) enable us to search an area approaching 6km in swath width, whilst still being able to detect small man-made objects like 55-gallon drums. The SM30 has been successfully used on a number of important shipwreck search projects including location of the sidewheel steamer SS Central America and the submarine USS Grunion. The Grunion website has all the details of this interesting project (<http://www.ussgrunion.com/>).

I have known Art Wright, the Party Chief of the W&A search team, for 20 years and it is good to be back at sea with him. We first met working on a landmark project for the oil and gas industry off the coast of Santa Barbara, California where we conducted the first ever pipeline route survey using a deeptow multi-beam sonar. Like me, Art enjoys search projects more than industry projects and he has been dipping into our library of books on the battle between Kormoran and Sydney.



Above Photograph - Art Wright, the Party Chief of Williamson & Associates Search Team.

Glenys McDonald - Director, The Finding Sydney Foundation (Observer)

Today I have spent much of my time in the survey room with the Williamson and Associates crew. I took the opportunity to sit in the hot seat flying the fish for a few precious moments myself. The technology is incredible. You can see exactly where you are, the precise GPS position, water depth, altitude of the fish etc, all of which is printed out and saved on computer file, where track lines and positions can be compared.

It is hard to comprehend that we are scanning 3000 meters of sea bed on either side of our track. I can recommend the leisurely pace of 3 knots, although it takes nearly a good 24 hours to complete one track run.

The work is ongoing 24 hours and night and day has become a little blurred. It does not matter out here if I go to bed at midnight or 2am. The Williamson crew changeover is a midnight and midday. David's off shift operator, Robert works a twelve hour shift commencing at 6pm, but David Mearns is on deck long hours after his shift officially ends.

John Perryman - Senior Navy Historian (Observer)

Today we completed our north-south run down line number 9 of the search box where we continued to see a mixture of sporadic geological features such as rocky outcrops and depressions as well as large tracts of featureless sea bed. Traveling at between 2-3 knots is slow going, but that is the nature of the work with the SM30 sonar equipment streamed astern of us on anything up to 9,500 metres of cable. With freshening winds we are now repositioning for further runs throughout the search area.

Historical Anecdote.

HMAS Sydney (II) had four commanding officers during her six year commission in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

The first was Captain J.U.P. Fitzgerald, Royal Navy (RN) who commissioned Sydney in England on 24 September 1935. He was succeeded by Captain J.W.A. Waller, RN in 1937, who remained in command until 16 November 1939 at which time Captain J.A. Collins, RAN assumed command. Collins was a graduate of the Royal Australian Naval College and the first Australian officer to command the light cruiser. It was under the command of Collins that Sydney captured the hearts and minds of the Australian population through her exploits in the Mediterranean theatre. Notably for crippling the Italian cruiser Bartolomeo Colleoni, and her spirited pursuit of her consort, the cruiser Giovanni Delle Bande Nere.

On returning to Australia, Collins was relieved by Captain J. Burnett, RAN, on 14 May 1941. Captain Burnett went down with his ship following the fierce action with the German raider Kormoran on 19 November 1941.



Above Photograph - Captain J.A. Collins, RAN



Above Photograph - Captain J. Burnett, RAN

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