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ENDURING MARITIME TRAGEDY

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HMAS SYDNEY II

WHO WAS SHE?

In 1941, HMAS Sydney II (SYDNEY) was the pride of the Royal Australian Navy fleet.

She was a 6,830 ton modified
Leander class cruiser with an
illustrious battle record.

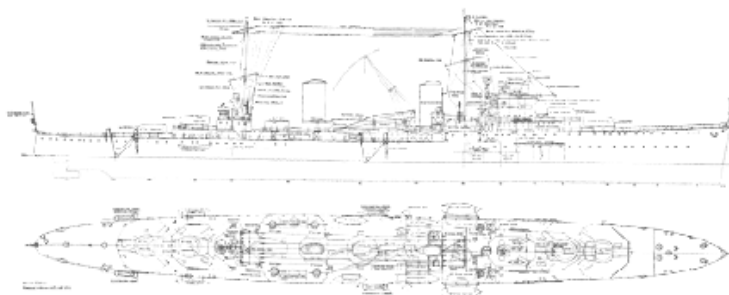
RIGHT: SYDNEY arrives at Circular
Quay, Sydney, during February
1941.



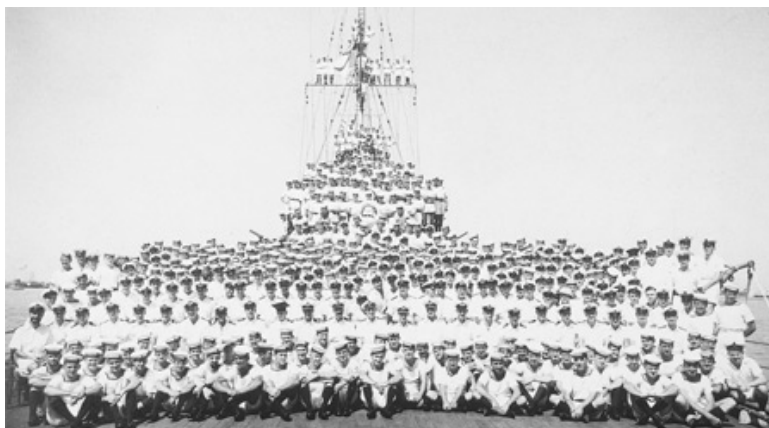
After engagements in the
Mediterranean during 1940 when
she famously sank the Italian battle
cruiser Bartolomeo Colleoni,
SYDNEY returned to Australian
waters and in late 1941 was carrying
out troop ship escort duties between
Australia and SE Asia.



above image of HMAS Sydney II available in large format, click image



please click above picture to view a larger version of the Plans of the HMAS Sydney II



ABOVE: Photograph of the HMAS Sydney II Crew from the National Archives
 click the image to open a high resolution version in a new browser window

STATISTICS

Type	Modified Leander Class Light Cruiser	
Displacement	6,830 tons	
Length	562 ft (168.2m)	
Beam	57 ft (17.27m)	
Builder	Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson Limited, Wallsend-on-Tyne, United Kingdom	
Laid down	8th July 1933 (as PHAETON)	
Launched	22nd September 1934 (as SYDNEY), by Mrs Bruce, wife of the Australian High Commissioner, United Kingdom	
Horsepower	72,000	
Speed	32.5 knots (60 km/h)	
Complement	645	
Armament	8 x 6 in (152mm) guns 4 x 4 in (102mm) guns 3 x .50 machine guns 12 x .303 Lewis Machine Guns 8 x 21 in (533mm) torpedo tubes (in 2 quadruple mounts)	
Aircraft carried	1 x Supermarine Walrus	
Commanding Officers	Assumed Command	Commanding Officer
	24th September 1935	Captain J.U.P. Fitzgerald RN
	9th October 1937	Captain J.W.A. Waller RN
	16th November 1939	Captain J.A. Collins RAN
	14th May 1941	Captain J. Burnett RAN

Further reading:

HMAS Sydney II Ship Story

<http://www.navy.gov.au/spc/history/ships/sydney2.html>

History on the HMAS Sydney II from the Navy's Seapower Centre

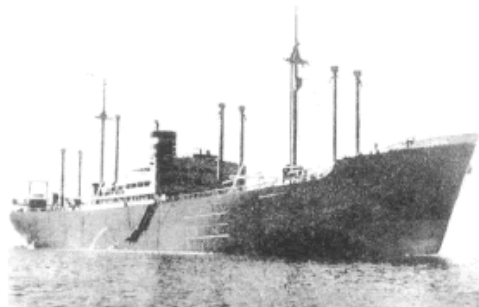
Historical Photo Gallery

View various historical photographs of the HMAS Sydney II by [clicking here](#)



WHAT HAPPENED?

On the 19th of November 1941, after handing over escort of the troop ship Zealandia in the Sunda Strait, SYDNEY was en route back to port in Fremantle.



In open ocean SW of Carnarvon, SYDNEY spotted an unidentified merchant vessel and closed requesting identification.

The HSK Kormoran (KORMORAN), a disguised German raider, eventually opened fire and a battle ensued from which neither ship survived.

LEFT: Photograph of KORMORAN issued to British warships, Oct 1941.

Further reading:

The Loss of the HMAS Sydney II

<http://www.navy.gov.au/spc/history/ships/sydney2a.html>

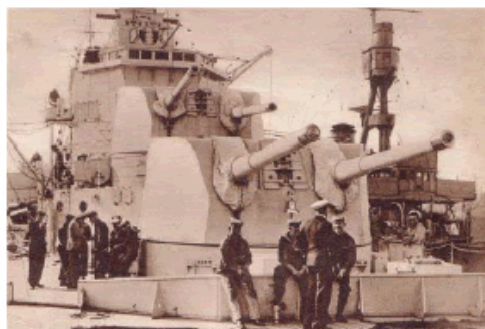
About the loss of the HMAS Sydney from the Navy's Seapower Centre

THE CONTROVERSY

For over 66 years, bitter controversy has raged over how and why SYDNEY sunk without a trace.

Many factors have contributed to this controversy - the first is that the battle took place in a remote, deep-water location with no allied witnesses.

RIGHT: Forward gun deck of the SYDNEY.



Because of SYDNEY's apparent superior firepower, there was disbelief that KORMORAN could have sunk her. In some quarters this led to suspicion of foul play.

The Royal Australian Navy said nothing initially. Government restrained the press, trying to shield the public from a collective blow to morale

The Minister for Information issued the following two censorship instructions, on the afternoon of 25 November, to all newspapers and radio stations throughout Australia:

FC756: "Pending further advice no reference press or broadcasting to HMAS Sydney".

FC757: "No reference whatever press or radio to any statements or rumours regarding alleged naval activity Australian waters".

The Royal Australian Navy then sent out non-specific bereavement letters. For decades after the war, relevant documents were not released.



Whilst the SYDNEY was lost with all hands - 645 young men, 317 of the German ship's complement of 390 were rescued.

The SYDNEY tragedy precipitated Australia's largest loss of life in a naval battle.

LEFT: Captain Theodor Detmers (2nd from right sitting) with officers of KORMORAN in Australian POW camp.

THE FINDING OF THE HMAS SYDNEY II

The wreck of the HMAS Sydney II was found by the Finding Sydney Foundation on 16th March 2008 at [26° 14' 37" S 111° 13' 03" E](#), approximately 207km (128 miles) from the west coast (Steep Point) of Western Australia at a depth of approximately 2,468 metres.

The wreck of the HSK Kormoran was found by the Finding Sydney Foundation on 12th March 2008 at [26° 05' 49.4" S 111° 04' 27.5" E](#), approximately 207km (128 miles) from the west coast (Steep Point) of Western Australia, at a depth of approximately 2,560 metres.

Further reading:

[HMAS Sydney II Is Found](#)
[Finding Sydney Foundation Media Release](#)

[HMAS Sydney \(II\) Discovered](#)
[Finding Sydney Foundation Search Diary Report](#)

[▲ top of page](#)