



## INTRODUCTION

On the afternoon of 19 November 1941 the Australian light cruiser H.M.A.S. *Sydney* intercepted the disguised German auxiliary cruiser H.S.K. *Kormoran* about 100 nautical miles west of Shark Bay, off the coast of Western Australia. In the ensuing action both ships were damaged and set on fire. The *Sydney*, crippled by a single torpedo and numerous shell hits limped away to the south-east never to be seen again. The *Kormoran*, disabled by an uncontrollable fire in her engine room, was abandoned and scuttled at the scene of the action.

Although struck by several 6 inch shells, the *Kormoran* was apparently not severely damaged and the majority of her surviving crew were able to leave the ship in five lifeboats with the remainder being accommodated in three inflatable rubber dingies and several small floats. One of the dingies collapsed with heavy loss of life and it appears that those who took to the water in the small floats also subsequently perished. However over the following eight days two of the boats succeeded in reaching the coast north of Carnarvon whilst the three remaining boats and two dingies were recovered at sea. The two dingies being recovered on 23 and 24 November respectively whilst the two boats that reached the coast landed on 24 and 25 November respectively. Two boats were recovered at sea on 26 November with the final boat being recovered on 27 November.

315 Germans and 3 Chinese survived the ordeal but all 645 officers and men aboard the *Sydney* were lost with their ship. Essentially, the reason why so many men from the *Kormoran* survived was that they had been comparatively well equipped for their struggle with the sea. The boats and dingies were provisioned with food and water and the men themselves were buoyed by their success in battle; but perhaps more importantly, morale and discipline were maintained. In short, the *Kormoran* men had the means and the willpower to survive. But what then of the *Sydney*'s men? Why didn't they, or at least some of them, survive too?

Despite an extensive air and sea search no trace of the ship or her complement was ever found; although a single R.A.N. pattern Carley float and a life-belt were recovered from the sea to the north of where the action was fought. However the fact that these items were found in the vicinity of the *Kormoran*'s debris field would suggest that they were blown overboard during the action and are probably not directly related to the sinking of the *Sydney* some distance away to the south-east. Despite the fact that the *Sydney* probably capsized and sank due to a loss of buoyancy there is also a possibility that she suffered a magazine explosion. ( This aspect formed the scuttled at the scene of the action.

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survive the sinking but not their time in the water; only one man being recovered alive.

Clearly, given the alleged damage to the *Sydney* and the probable causes of her loss, there is a likelihood that very few of her 645 man crew managed to survive the sinking. However if we are to accept that there were survivors from the sinking of the *Sydney* we must also accept that their chances of surviving for any length of time in a hostile sea would have been extremely remote. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to assess the chances of survival of these possible survivors and study all known debris from the *Sydney* to see how or why they did not survive. This is not a happy story and there is no happy ending.

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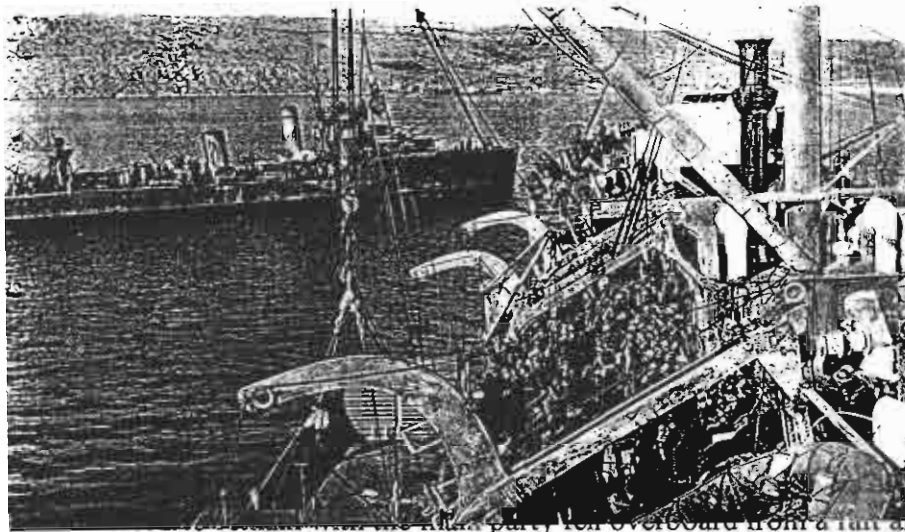
Despite the extensive air and sea search for the *Sydney* and possible survivors, very little was ever found. Although we do not know how the *Sydney* actually sank, it would be logical to assume that some members of the ship's complement would have survived the sinking. However these survivors may have had few, if any, of the ship's lifesaving appliances available to them. Without boats, Carley floats, Flotanets, and adequate provisions the life expectancy of these men could be measured in hours rather than days.

The *Sydney's* boats, with the exception of the two cutters, were stowed amidships abreast the forward funnel and on skids abreast the roundhouse which supported the aircraft's catapult. All of these boats, including the cutters which were slung from davits on the forecastle deck abreast the foremast, were constructed of wood and were particularly vulnerable to shellfire and splinter damage. Much of the *Kormoran's* 15 cm gun and 2 cm cannon fire was directed at the *Sydney's* upper decks where these boats were stowed and those not directly struck and damaged, were probably destroyed by the amidships fire that several of the German witnesses claimed was centred at the base of the forward funnel. In addition, the ship's crane, which provided the only means of hoisting the amidships boats over the side and into the water, was also likely to have been damaged or destroyed by this fire. Of the two cutters, we know that at least one of them (the port cutter) was damaged by shellfire early in the action, however the fate of the starboard cutter is unknown; although it is quite likely that it too was damaged either directly by gunfire or splinters when the *Sydney* altered course to pass astern of the raider, or perhaps indirectly by the on-board fires.

While it is possible that one or more of *Sydney's* boats survived the action and the fires, it is less likely that any such serviceable boats would have survived the sinking. As we have seen, the most likely causes of the *Sydney's* sinking were a loss of buoyancy, or a magazine explosion; and either of these would have caused the ship to founder quite quickly and may have prevented any of the boats being got away. Without boats, the survivors would have been forced to rely on the limited number of Carley floats that the ship carried. However these floats were only designed to support life for a short period of time. They were essentially only a large oval shaped life preserver and offered the occupant no shelter from the elements and often contained little in the way of provisions. Furthermore, because the internal structure consisted only of a slatted wooden platform suspended by rope netting, the craft always floated in a semi-immersed condition whereby the occupants were always wet. While a boat, or even a rigidly constructed raft such as those used by the merchant navy could keep the survivor alive for a reasonable length of time, the Carley float generally only prolonged life for three to five days. Doctor Macdonald Critchley, who during the war interviewed a number of survivors of the *Prinz Eugen*, considered that the Carley float could keep a survivor alive for a few days. The *Sydney's* boats, including the cutters which were slung from davits on the forecastle deck abreast the foremast, were constructed of wood and were particularly vulnerable to shellfire and splinter damage. Much of the *Kormoran's* 15 cm gun and 2 cm cannon fire was directed at the *Sydney's* upper decks where these boats were stowed and those not directly struck and damaged, were probably destroyed by the amidships fire that several of the German witnesses claimed was centred at the base of the forward funnel. In addition, the ship's crane, which provided the only means of hoisting the amidships boats over the side and into the water, was also likely to have been damaged or destroyed by this fire. Of the two cutters, we know that at least one of them (the port cutter) was damaged by shellfire early in the action, however the fate of the starboard cutter is unknown; although it is quite likely that it too was damaged either directly by gunfire or splinters when the *Sydney* altered course to pass astern of the raider, or perhaps indirectly by the on-board fires.

152 men on board the sloop only 34 survived the sinking to clamber aboard the small number of Carley floats and one-man rafts that had been cast off when the order to abandon ship had been given. The floats and rafts were lashed together to prevent the party being separated though provisions consisted only of a tin of salt water contaminated biscuits that was recovered from the sea, and two gallons of fresh water. Unfortunately even this was lost on the third day when the floats overturned while some men were changing positions. By this stage the effects of the heat during the day and the cold during the night were beginning to tell and some men decided to break away from the main party in order to try and reach the coast of Java, some 300 miles away. It is understood that these men were never seen again. Later in the morning one of the men who had elected to remain with the main party fell overboard from a raft and was unable to swim back. Five men dived in to retrieve their shipmate but after managing to get him back aboard his raft found that they were too weak to climb aboard themselves. This man later died as did his would-be rescuers when they became mentally deranged and swam away from the rafts. On the fifth day the remaining thirteen very weakened survivors were sighted and rescued by the Dutch submarine *K II* and taken to Colombo.<sup>2</sup>

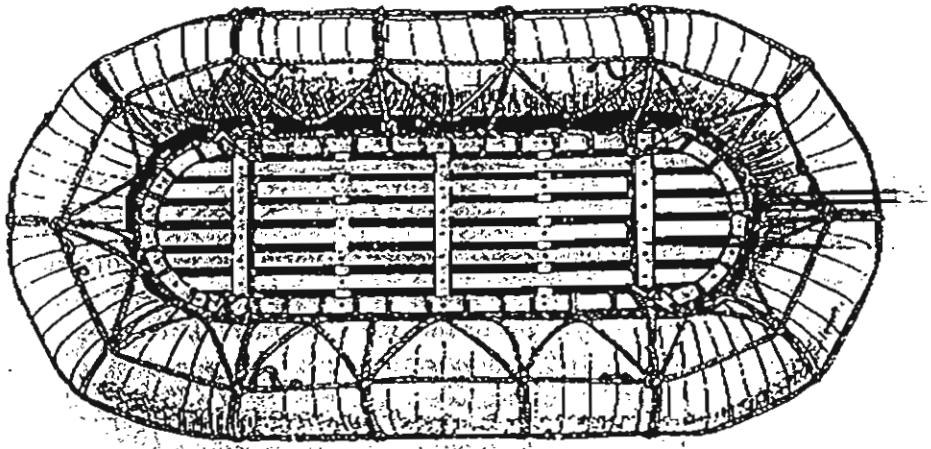
Carley floats were not normally equipped with provisions, however experience in the Mediterranean highlighted the value of at least having a supply of fresh water aboard, and contemporary photographs clearly show small containers or casks of water lashed inside the floats. It is not known if this practice was continued once vessels left this particularly hostile theatre of operations but photographs of H.M.A. Ships *Australia*, *Shropshire*, and *Hobart* taken later in the war reveal long cylindrical containers secured to their floats. These were salvaged American 5 inch cordite cases which were made of aluminium and had watertight caps. Two were supplied to each float or raft; one containing water and the other containing a small quantity of medical supplies, tins of milk, and a variety of survival items.<sup>3</sup>



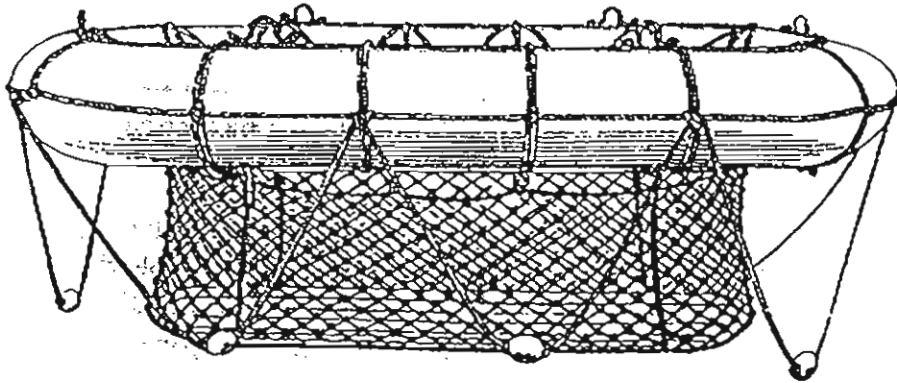
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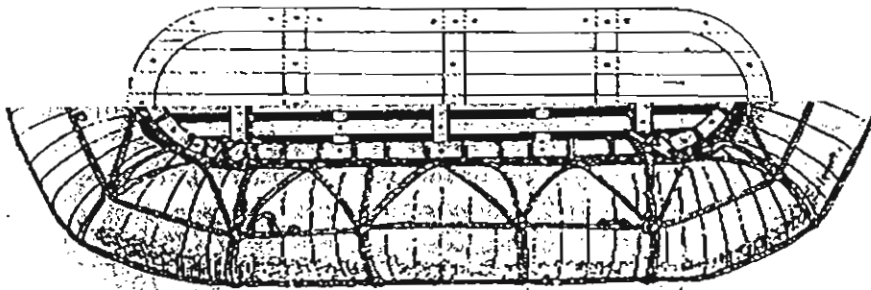
PATTERN NUMBER 20 CARLEY FLOAT



"CARLEY" TYPE IN STOWED POSITION



"CARLEY" TYPE WITH PLATFORM DROPPED



"CARLEY" TYPE IN STOWED POSITION



Whether the *Sydney's* floats carried a supply of fresh water at the time of her loss is also not known, but it is clear that without water, the life expectancy of her survivors would have been dramatically reduced. Generally, without water, the survival time was reduced to three to five days however there were recorded cases of men surviving for longer periods. The official history of the R.A.A.F. medical services during the Second World War recorded that 'the survival time for a healthy, initially well-hydrated man without water in a warm to hot climate is up to ten days.'<sup>4</sup> However it is considered that for a man to survive this long, some form of fluid replacement was necessary. Normally this involved the drinking of urine or in more fortunate cases the collection and drinking of rain water. However in many cases the singular or multiple effects of injury, burns, shock, and exposure tended to reduce survival time to a few days. While there were a great number of variable factors that could govern how long a man would survive in a temperate climate once he was shipwrecked, the greatest apparent killer of an otherwise fit and healthy survivor was thirst. Without sufficient fresh water to quench their thirst many men succumbed to the temptation to drink sea water. In most cases these men were subsequently overcome by delirium, madness, and then death through accelerated dehydration.

An extraordinary tale of survival would perhaps be that of Able-Seaman Arthur Bancroft who survived the sinking of H.M.A.S. *Perth* on 1 March 1942 then endured thirty months of Japanese captivity before being shipwrecked for a second time on 12 September 1944. Bancroft and over 1,300 other P.O.W.'s were being transported to Japan aboard the *Rakuyo Maru*, when American submarines attacked the convoy in the early hours of the morning. All 1,317 P.O.W.'s aboard the *Rakuyo Maru* survived her torpedoing and entered the water with a motley collection of wooden rafts, latrines, rubber slabs and anything else that would float. By the following day, after only about 24 hours in the water, many men had become ill through drinking salt water whilst others had become sick from accidentally swallowing fuel oil, or were blinded through getting oil in their eyes. On 14 September, Bancroft and four others decided to break away from the main body as those who had drunk salt water were becoming delirious and were creating panic amongst the others. Bancroft and his party soon became separated from the main body by about four or five miles and then began collecting spare rafts and stacking them in an attempt to keep clear of the water and oil; however this proved unsuccessful. Provisions consisted of a single melon that was recovered from the sea and although Bancroft had entered the water with a full water-bottle, this was lost on the first day. As a result the only source of fluid replacement came by rinsing the mouth with salt water and allowing a small amount to trickle down the throat. On the fourth day another man was recovered in a delirious state and hopes were raised in the evening when a submarine was seen picking up other survivors. However hope faded when the submarine departed without sighting them. The fifth day passed with no further sign of help arriving and one of the party spent the day recovering the water tanks from one of the rafts, however their bad luck continued when it was found that the tanks contained salt water. Later in the night rain fell and all

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the group were still physically able to climb aboard the U.S.S. *Queenfish* unaided however the sixth had to be hoisted aboard on a heaving line.

While the rain on the fifth night undoubtedly helped Bancroft and his comrades to continue with their fight for survival, perhaps the greatest influencing factors were self discipline in not giving in to the temptation to drink salt water and even more importantly, the will to survive. These men had endured two and a half years of unspeakable hardship as prisoners of the Japanese and were perhaps mentally, if not physically, prepared for their ordeal; although Bancroft at least considered that they could only have continued for another two or three days. Even so, they had defied the odds. Only 152 of the 1,317 men who had entered the water on 12 September survived, and many of these had been rescued on the evening of 15 September.<sup>5</sup>

To supplement the Carley float, H.M. warships also carried an item called a Flotanet. They were simply rope nets made buoyant by the fitting of cork floats, and were supplied in two sizes the smaller of which could support nine men and the larger, twenty two. These nets were stowed rolled up and were quite distinctive. The available close-up photographs taken of the *Sydney* do not show these Flotanets and it is assumed that she was not carrying any when she was lost.

For personal use, every officer and rating was issued with an inflatable life-belt. This consisted of a rubber tube which was covered with fabric and secured over the shoulders and round the body by tapes. It was inflated by means of a short flexible mouthpiece, though it was recommended that this not be done until the wearer was actually in the water. However there are numerous photographs in existence that show that this recommendation was not strictly adhered to. These life-belts were worn around the waist in the deflated condition whilst at action stations and at all times when action with the enemy was imminent, although some sailors preferred to roll the life-belt up and tie it to their belt or carry it in a small 'action bag' which could be slung over the shoulder. The U.S. Navy also used this type of life preserver and they found that the practice of constantly wearing them around the waist in the deflated condition prematurely wore out the rubber. The Americans also used a kapok life-jacket that was much more practical as it's design kept the wearer's head and shoulders upright in the water. This feature permitted the wearer to conserve energy and to even obtain sleep. The life-belt on the other hand did not provide the necessary support and if one were to doze off whilst wearing one there was a very real danger of the wearer unconsciously flipping over onto his face and drowning.<sup>6</sup>

John Ross wrote of his personal experience with these life-belts in his book 'Lucky Ross' and it is noteworthy that he had no confidence in them at all. Apparently, the only practical use for an inflatable life-belt was in using it as a pillow. Perhaps providing an insight into how reliable these life-belts were considered to be was the official practice of having sea boats crews supplied with the general-purpose lifejacket. These were a reversible canvas jacket onto which was sewn pockets containing slabs of cork; although some were filled with kapok instead. One was provided for each member and many of these had been rescued on the evening of 15 September.<sup>5</sup>

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have been left alive after ten days. It is also quite possible that this was one of the influencing factors in the decision to conclude search operations on 29 November 1941, ten days after the *Sydney* was assumed to have gone down.

Apart from trying to cope with the effects of wounds, burns, shock, exposure, fatigue, and thirst, there was another element that would have taken its toll of survivors. Namely sharks and other marine life. That sharks were present was confirmed in the statements made by the *Kormoran's* survivors and in letters written while they were prisoners of war.<sup>7</sup>

By coincidence, while the survivors of the *Sydney* were possibly still struggling to survive in the waters off the coast of Western Australia, another group of men were just beginning their struggle in the Atlantic. On 24 November 1941 the light cruiser H.M.S. *Dunedin* was torpedoed by *U-124* whilst on patrol in the mid Atlantic. *U-124*, under the command of Kapitanleutnant Mohr, was enroute to the position where the raider *Atlantis* had been sunk two days previously in order to help rescue survivors when the *Dunedin* was sighted in the vicinity of St. Paul's Rocks. Struck by two torpedoes, the *Dunedin* rolled onto her beam ends, righted herself, then sank stern first with heavy loss of life. She sank so quickly that none of the ship's boats could be lowered, nor was a W/T message transmitted. Those that survived the sinking had only their life-belts and a small number of Carley floats available for life support, however to make matters worse, the sea was alive with sharks and barracuda. Many men were attacked and bitten while some simply disappeared. By good fortune the merchant ship S.S. *Nishmaha* happened upon the survivors on the 27 November. She found 72 men in all, many of whom were exhausted and delirious. The master of the *Nishmaha*, O.H. Olsen, described many of the men as being close to death, while some he said were unconscious, delirious or hysterical and lacerated with all kinds of wounds. It is not known exactly how many men had been aboard the *Dunedin*, but as her peacetime complement is recorded as being 452 it is assumed that her wartime complement was in the vicinity of 500 officers and men.<sup>8</sup>

The wartime and post-war accounts of H.M. warships being sunk generally contain little on the hardships suffered by survivors. It is not understood if these accounts were deliberately sanitised by censors or the authors, or whether it was thought that there was no need to include such information in these accounts. However one graphic account was presented to the public in 1982 by author Raymond B. Lech. His book covered the torpedoing of the American heavy cruiser U.S.S. *Indianapolis* and provided a very lucid account of how her survivors fared after their ship was sunk.

At approximately 0005 hours on 30 July 1945, the *Indianapolis* was struck by two torpedoes fired by the Japanese submarine *I-58*. The cruiser sank within fifteen minutes of being hit and of the 1,096 officers and men aboard her it was estimated that approximately 400 went down with the ship whilst the remainder took to the water in whatever they happened to be wearing. Some had kapok life-jackets, some wore inflatable life-belts, while some jumped into the water with no form of life saving apparel at all. Despite managing to transmit several reports of their predicament and

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eight men. Between them they had three rafts and one floater net. These rafts were similar to the Carley float but were constructed of kapok and covered with canvas while the floater net was basically an American version of the British Flotanet. Additionally, McVay's group managed to recover from the sea a number of useful items including a flare pistol with cartridges and a ration can of food. A water cask was also recovered though its contents were found to have been contaminated with salt water. During their first day in the water McVay's group was visited by an extremely large shark which could not be driven off and was to become a source of great anxiety in the days that followed. The second group consisted of about 150 men under the command of Lieutenant Redmayne. This group also had three life-rafts as well as two floater nets. Most of the group wore kapok lifejackets and like McVay's group managed to recover an assortment of items from the oil covered sea including several ration cans and water casks. The largest group consisted of about 400 men and was known as the swimmer, or life-preserver, group on account of the lack of life-rafts amongst these men. Additionally, this group did not have any food or water. An estimated 50 of these men died within hours of the sinking due to injuries, shock, or drowning. Where possible the life-jackets were removed from the dead so as to be of some use to those without and the corpses left to sink or drift away. Sections of this large group of men drifted apart during the hours before dawn and at daybreak three sub-groups had formed. The largest contained about 200 men, the smallest about 50, while the third sub-group comprised about 100 men. It was towards these sub-groups that the sharks were attracted due to the high death rate and the subsequent abundance of bodies on which to feed. For most of the first day the sharks apparently contented themselves with taking stragglers and corpses, however later in the day and early evening the numbers of sharks increased and the number of attacks on the living rose accordingly.

The second day saw McVay's group increase to ten when another man was sighted in a raft about 1,600 yards away. He and another group had been seen on the first day but exhaustion had prevented McVay and his men from trying to reach them. As it was it took four and a half hours to paddle to the lonely man. Redmayne's group became smaller however when several wounded men died during the night. Further bad news greeted the survivors when some of the water casks were found to contain undrinkable salt or oil contaminated water. While sharks appeared in growing numbers, there were apparently no attacks made on this group however there were problems with discipline when some men refused to obey orders and began to devour food that was supposed to be rationed. This food was predominantly Spam which was salted and only served to increase the men's thirst. The swimmer sub-groups also found their numbers depleted by dawn on the second day. The heat of the previous day combined with the unquenchable thirst that all were experiencing had driven some to suicide by drowning. Some became delirious through drinking salt water and swam away from the group whilst others were killed when fights broke out. Conditions worsened during the day as more and more men succumbed to the temptation to drink salt water. These men ~~managed to recover from the sea a number of useful items including a flare pistol with cartridges and a ration can of food. A water cask was also recovered though its contents were found to have been contaminated with salt water.~~ an assortment of items from the oil covered sea including several ration cans and water casks. The largest group consisted of about 400 men and was known as the swimmer, or life-preserver, group on account of the lack of life-rafts amongst these men. Additionally, this group did not have any food or water. An estimated 50 of these men died within hours of the sinking due to injuries, shock, or drowning. Where possible the life-jackets were removed from the dead so as to be of some use to those without and the corpses left to sink or drift away. Sections of this large group of men drifted apart during the hours before dawn and at daybreak three sub-groups had formed. The largest contained about 200 men, the smallest about 50, while the third sub-group comprised about 100 men. It was towards these sub-groups that the sharks were attracted due to the high death rate and the subsequent abundance of bodies on which to feed. For most of the first day the sharks apparently contented themselves with taking stragglers and corpses, however later in the day and early evening the numbers of sharks increased and the number of attacks on the living rose accordingly.

became disheartened and discarded their life-jackets. Most of these men subsequently drowned.

The third day dawned with McVay and his group intact and relatively well off although they were still being menaced by their unwanted visitor. The sharks accompanying the Redmayne group were not so quiet however and began to attack swimmers as they drifted or swam away from the main body. The pattern of the previous day continued as increasing numbers of men were driven by the heat into drinking salt water with the now predictable results. Heightening the difficulties faced by Redmayne and his fellow officers in trying to maintain order and discipline was the mutinous behaviour of a small group of survivors on a floater net who began to steal food and water from the rafts. By now the effects of fatigue and exposure were striking down even the fittest men and during early evening Redmayne became delirious. During the night the ship's doctor, Lieutenant-Commander Haynes, who had been providing comfort and inspiration to the men in the swimmer sub-groups, also became delirious. The leader of Haynes' sub-group was Marine Captain Parke and he was fighting a losing battle in trying to keep his men under control as hysteria and paranoia took hold of many of the survivors. However all discipline and control broke down later in the day after Parke became delirious and died. His sub-group then disbanded and most became easy prey for the marauding sharks. A new sub-group formed under Ensign Moynelo and into this group Haynes was taken and cared for. Haynes found many men coming to him for help and advice even though he was in urgent need of help himself. Later in the afternoon, either realising the urgency of the situation or overcome by insanity, Moynelo and about 25 others decided to swim for help and were never seen again. By the end of the third day most men realised that it was only a matter of time before they too died and as if to reinforce the fact, the sharks returned during the night and put many out of their misery. At dawn one man was found to have been cut in half by a nocturnal visitor.

As the fourth day dawned the chances of being rescued before the sea and the sharks claimed them all must have seemed extremely remote, however at about 1100 hours, the pilot of a Ventura aircraft on anti-submarine patrol happened to look down and sighted a thin line of oil on the surface of the sea. The aircraft was being flown at 3,000 feet and it had only been by chance that Lieutenant Gwinn had looked down to see the oil which he assumed was being trailed by a submarine.<sup>9</sup> The Ventura was brought down to 900 feet in order to follow the trail to its source and a short time later Gwinn sighted a 25 mile wide patch of oil dotted with what looked like heads. Gwinn dropped down even further to 300 feet in an attempt to identify the men in the water and with no knowledge of the loss of the *Indianapolis*, ordered his radio operator to report the sighting of 30 survivors and their position while he turned the aircraft north. Six miles away he found another group of about 40 men whilst four miles further on he sighted another large group of survivors. Gwinn then ordered an amended sighting report to be transmitted, giving a more accurate position and a new estimate of 150

~~SURVIVORS. WATER FROM THE RAFTS. BY NOW THE EFFECTS OF FATIGUE AND EXPOSURE WERE STRIKING~~  
 down even the fittest men and during early evening Redmayne became delirious. During the night the ship's doctor, Lieutenant-Commander Haynes, who had been providing comfort and inspiration to the men in the swimmer sub-groups, also became delirious. The leader of Haynes' sub-group was Marine Captain Parke and he was fighting a losing battle in trying to keep his men under control as hysteria and paranoia took hold of many of the survivors. However all discipline and control broke down later in the day after Parke became delirious and died. His sub-group then disbanded and most became easy prey for the marauding sharks. A new sub-group formed under Ensign Moynelo and into this group Haynes was taken and cared for. Haynes found many men coming to him for help and advice even though he was in urgent need of help himself. Later in the afternoon, either realising the urgency of the situation or overcome by insanity, Moynelo and about 25 others decided to swim for help and were never seen again. By the end of the third day most men realised that it was only a matter of time before they too died and as if to reinforce the fact, the sharks returned during the night and put

amended report gave an indication that a large vessel had been sunk. With no reports of Japanese vessels being sunk in the area indicated, the authorities now began to request all ships to report their positions. Throughout the afternoon while the navy was confirming the locations of its ships, a relief aircraft was being organised and despatched to relieve Gwinn who had been ordered to remain on station with the men in the water. In order to provide further assistance, a Catalina was scrambled also. When it arrived on the scene at about 1600 hours the pilot, after seeing that the survivors were in a bad way and that the sharks were still active, decided to land and begin the rescue of the swimmer group. By nightfall this aircraft, under the command of Lieutenant Marks, had recovered 56 survivors including Haynes. A second Catalina arrived before dark and it too landed to begin picking up survivors. However while the crew of this aircraft saw many men in the water it was soon discovered that they were all dead. Only one man was recovered alive.

By this stage it was ascertained that the *Indianapolis* had not reported in, but it was still not understood that the estimated 150 men in the water were possibly all that remained of her crew.

At approximately 2150 hours, the destroyer escort U.S.S. *Cecil J. Doyle*, which had been diverted to the scene sighted a star shell. She illuminated the night sky with one of her searchlights and about two hours later made contact with Marks' overloaded and drifting Catalina. Shortly after midnight the first of the *Indianapolis'* former crew stepped aboard the *Doyle*; within minutes an urgent message was transmitted to the Commander of the Western Carolines reporting the loss of the *Indianapolis* and the rescue of her survivors. Meanwhile McVay and his group drifted despondently far to the north. They had seen the aircraft circling to the south during the day, saw the searchlight of the *Doyle* around midnight, and had realised that while others were being rescued there would be no immediate rescue for them. By dawn, four more vessels had arrived at the search area and had begun rescue operations. At midday the *Doyle*, with 93 survivors aboard departed the search area, being replaced by the U.S.S. *Ringness*. No sooner had the *Ringness* arrived than she was directed by search aircraft to pick up survivors from two rafts drifting to the north of the search area. This was McVay and his men.

Captain McVay was the last living survivor to be recovered from the sea, four and a half days after entering it. Of the *Indianapolis'* original complement of 1,196 officers and men only 320 were recovered alive. However four of these men later died from their ordeal. In total, 880 officers and men died as a result of the sinking and the aftermath. Exactly how many survivors were killed by sharks is not known. Clearly, the high death toll from drowning and other causes actually saved many lives, as the sharks feasted on the corpses, however it is obvious that many men died as a result of shark attack.

The losses of the *Dunedin* and the *Indianapolis* had remarkable parallels with that of the *Sydney*. All three vessels were on independent passage when they were lost, and in each instance their loss went unnoticed by the relevant authorities. Each vessel aircraft saw many men in the water it was soon discovered that they were all dead. Only one man was recovered alive.

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been involved in the search for the *Indianapolis'* survivors may provide some indication:

All bodies were in extremely bad condition and had been dead for an estimated 4 or 5 days. Some had life jackets and life belts, most had nothing. Most of the bodies were completely naked, and others just had drawers or dungaree trousers on - only three of the 28 bodies recovered had shirts on. Bodies were horribly bloated and decomposed - recognition of faces would have been impossible. About half of the bodies were shark-bitten, some to such a degree that they more nearly resembled skeletons. From one to four sharks were in the immediate area of the ship at all times. At one time, two sharks were attacking a body not more than fifty yards from the ship, and continued to do so until driven off by rifle fire. For the most part it was impossible to get fingerprints from the bodies as the skin had come off the hands or the hands were lacerated by sharks. Skin was removed from the hands of bodies containing no identification when possible, and the Medical Officer will dehydrate the skin and attempt to make legible prints. 10

Another vessel examined twenty nine bodies and found that due to decomposition or mutilation by sharks, only eleven could be identified. As the search operation concluded on 8 August, nine days after the *Indianapolis* had gone down, it is assumed that very little remained by this time. Floating bodies had been weighted down and sunk, as advanced decomposition prevented the majority of the bodies from being taken aboard and being given a proper burial at sea. One method of weighting down a body involved using 2 inch line and a weight of three 5 inch projectiles, however it is more than likely that gunfire was employed in the worst cases. Normally, decomposition (Putrefaction) of a body is retarded by immersion in water but in the case of the *Indianapolis'* sinking the process appears to have been accelerated. This was most likely due to the relative warmth of the water. The process of decomposition normally starts in the abdomen due to the action and growth of anaerobic gas-forming organisms in the intestines. The growth of these organisms causes the abdomen and then the whole of the body to bloat and swell with gases. A victim of drowning will not float until this process has occurred and in cool water this may not occur until the sixth to the tenth day. Warm water will accelerate the process and while it may be noteworthy that bodies were seen floating on 2 August, less than four days after the *Indianapolis* sank, these bodies may have been floating with the assistance of life-jackets. However it is clear that some bodies without life-jackets were found floating before the conclusion of search operations on 8 August. That the process had been accelerated due to the climatic conditions and water temperature is shown by the report that the skin had come off the hands of some bodies, and the apparent ease in which the skin from the hands of other bodies was removed in order to obtain fingerprints. This indicates that decomposition was well established and that the cutis, or true skin beneath the epidermis had become sodden and was beginning to peel, or had already done so. This process does not normally occur until about the second week after death however warm weather can halve this period. Eventually, decomposition and sodden disintegration of the tissues breaks down the flesh, turning it into slime and causing the skeletal frame to collapse. 11

In the case of the *Sydney*, we have no survivors to help explain the loss of the attempt to make legible prints. 10

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Again, this question is not readily answerable. Mainly because there are so many variables. Even if the *Sydney* sank with all hands and not a single man survived the sinking, the bodies of crew members not trapped within the ship should have come to the surface after six to ten days, if not before. If some of the crew managed to survive the sinking but not the following three to six days their bodies should also have come to the surface after decomposition had commenced; again, a period of six to ten days or possibly less if the water temperature was sufficiently high to accelerate the process. Though given that the *Kormoran* survivors described the days as warm to hot but the nights cold, it is probable that the water was not sufficiently warm enough to accelerate decomposition. If this was indeed the case the bodies of *Sydney* crew members who died or drowned during the sinking or in the days following, may not have begun to float until the eighth or the tenth day after death. As the search for survivors was abandoned on 29 November, we have a situation where the bodies may have only begun to float as the search operations were being concluded. Perhaps supporting such an scenario is the fact that though a number of the *Kormoran*'s survivors drowned whilst abandoning ship, there is no record of German bodies being found during the search. While one corpse was recovered from a small float, there is no evidence of any bodies being found floating in the water. It should also be understood that the search may not have been comprehensive enough and that floating bodies may have been overlooked; and this is a very real possibility. However there is another factor that must be taken into consideration. It is also conceivable that sharks and other marine life removed all trace of the bodies before searching ships and aircraft reached the scene.

Alternatively, we have the possibility that bodies were found but either not reported, or the findings kept quiet or even covered up. Perhaps suggesting that this latter view may have some validity is the statement made in an October 1945 memorandum by the Australian Director of Naval Intelligence, Commander R.B.M. Long. This memo was in the form of a response to a submission from the Staff Officer, Intelligence, Naval Staff Office Fremantle that a detailed account of the search for the *Sydney* be released to the press. Lieutenant Commander Rycroft believed that such an account would end speculation about possible survivors. Unfortunately his superiors did not agree and Lieutenant Commander Gill, who later was to write the official history of the R.A.N.'s role in the war, recommended to Long that the account should not be released and that nothing should be written 'unless and until pressure is brought by the Press for a Ministerial Statement.' Long concurred, and in his memorandum to Rycroft stated that 'There has now been accumulated a mass of confirmatory information which leaves no doubt that there were no survivors from H.M.A.S. "SYDNEY".'<sup>12</sup>

Whether there was documented evidence to show that there were no survivors from the *Sydney* is not known. However it is known that due to wartime rumours that *Sydney* survivors may have been picked up by a Japanese vessel, Commodore Collins, who had gone to Japan for the surrender and had been given the job of arranging entry for the B.C.O.F.<sup>13</sup>, had in September 1945 been requested to investigate such a possibility. The results proved negative, and it is perhaps noteworthy that these findings float until the eighth or the tenth day after death. As the search for survivors was abandoned on 29 November, we have a situation where the bodies may have only begun to float as the search operations were being concluded. Perhaps supporting such an scenario is the fact that though a number of the *Kormoran*'s survivors drowned whilst abandoning ship, there is no record of German bodies being found during the search. While one corpse was recovered from a small float, there is no evidence of any bodies being found floating in the water. It should also be understood that the search may not have been comprehensive enough and that floating bodies may have been overlooked; and this is a very real possibility. However there is another factor that must be taken into consideration. It is also conceivable that sharks and other marine life removed all trace of the bodies before searching ships and aircraft reached the scene.

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been no such evidence to begin with; although Long's choice of words indicate otherwise.

By stating that there was a mass of confirmatory information which left no doubt that there were no survivors, Long implied that there was evidence to show that no one had been found alive. In other words it is possible that there was evidence of some members of the *Sydney*'s complement being found in circumstances that would suggest that no one else could be expected to be found alive. In short, bodies in an advanced state of decomposition may have been found. If this was so, it may have been considered at the time that little would be gained by informing the Australian public of the fact, and possibly of the circumstances. While grieving families may have been comforted by the knowledge that their loved one had been found, and a proper burial service conducted, the realities may have dictated an alternative course of action. Long's choice of words in his memorandum hint at such an occurrence, but if this was so, what was the purpose, or point, of covering up the fact that bodies were found?

If either German or Australian bodies were found during the search, or even after it was concluded, the condition of the bodies may have been such that their recovery was considered pointless. The effects of decomposition and/or attacks by sharks and other marine life may have made identification particularly unpleasant or even impossible. Given the probable state of any bodies found, the finders may have thought it more prudent to either sink them or simply leave them in the sea and let nature take its course. While this course of action may not have met with the approval of loved ones of the deceased, wartime censorship would have ensured that they were spared of news of gruesome discoveries and crude disposal of the bodies. However there may not have been any other option. The warm weather and limited, or lack of, refrigeration space on the searching vessels would have made the recovery of bodies for identification and/or burial ashore extremely unpleasant. Furthermore there would have been the question of where to disembark such an offensive and unhygienic cargo. None of the local ports were secure enough for the search vessels to tie up without attracting a crowd. Burial at sea would have been the only sensible option. However it must be understood that this is only speculation.

Perhaps supporting such a scenario is the theory that the lighthouse tender *Cape Otway* discovered numerous bodies as she was making her way along the coast shortly after the search was abandoned. Though again, there is no documentation available to support this claim. However while this theory perhaps cannot be dismissed solely on the grounds that there is no documentation, Mr John Dunn, a former crew member of the *Cape Otway*, and on board at the time of the alleged discovery, recalls no such occurrence.<sup>14</sup> Clearly it is important to treat all theories as theories, and to this end, any speculation about Long and a possible cover-up must remain speculation until or unless suitable documentation surfaces. While a more thorough search of archive files and private memoirs may provide this documentation and perhaps additional information on the results of the 1941 search, a reappraisal of the known documents and previous research may provide further clues as to what happened to the *Sydney*'s survivors.<sup>15</sup> service conducted, the realities may have dictated an alternative course of action. Long's choice of words in his memorandum hint at such an occurrence, but if this was so, what was the purpose, or point, of covering up the fact that bodies were found?

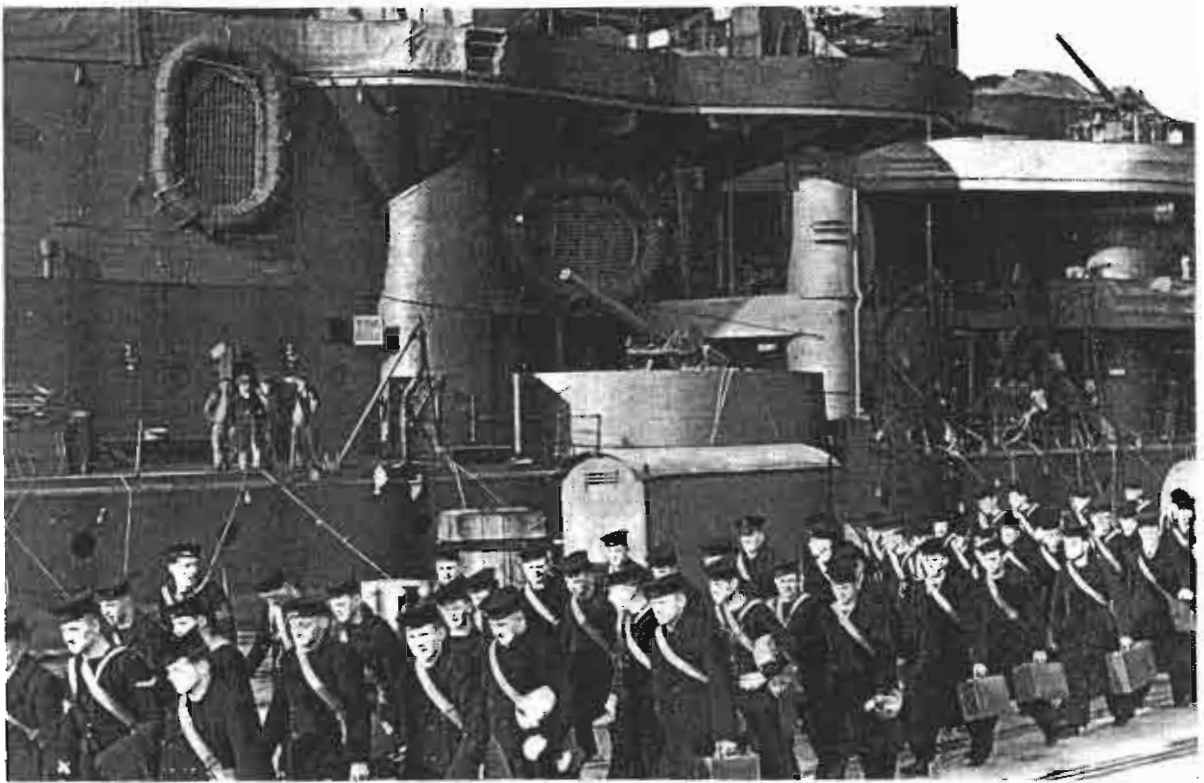
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1943. Further items not positively identified, but which may have come from the *Sydney*, were found washed ashore north of Geraldton shortly after the battle.

The most well documented of these items is the Carley float recovered on 28 November 1941 by H.M.A.S. *Heros*, and now on permanent display in the Australian War Memorial.<sup>15</sup> This float was recovered in position 24 degrees 7 minutes South, 110 degrees 58 minutes East which essentially placed it in the midst of the *Kormoran's* debris field. Given that the *Sydney* was seen to disappear over the horizon after the battle, it is assumed that the *Sydney* created a debris field further to the south-east when she sank and that her debris did not become intermingled with the debris from the *Kormoran*. This would indicate that the Carley float was probably blown off the *Sydney* during the action and that it had drifted north at about the same rate as the debris from the *Kormoran*, which was scuttled close to the position where the action was fought. A technical report was prepared in November 1993 as a result of scientific investigation of the float to establish whether the numerous holes in the float were caused by small arms fire.<sup>16</sup> These holes have always been a source of speculation that the float may have contained survivors who were subsequently machine-gunned by the Germans; thereby accounting for the numerous holes in the float and the lack of survivors. However the analysis of the float and the pieces of munitions found inside the float led the investigation team to conclude that 'the extensive damage to the float appears to have been caused by particles of shrapnel from at least one high-explosive shell detonating on or near the main structure of the ship and ricocheting into the float. There is no evidence of damage by small arms fire. Nor does the exterior of the float have any heat or burn marks to indicate that it was exposed to the fires reported to have broken out on *Sydney*.' The report also noted that 'the projectiles hit mainly from one side' and that 'the holes in the float, the projectiles removed from the float and the angles of trajectory and divergence of those projectiles is consistent with explosive shells detonating relatively near the float while the float was in a horizontal, stored position.'

The other item of interest regarding this float was the discovery of a large number 5 painted longitudinally on one side. While the research team could find no information or photographic evidence of the *Sydney's* floats being numbered, there is reason to believe that the *Sydney* did number her floats and that the number 5 denoted where this particular float was stowed. The report indicated that only close-up photographs of the *Sydney* taken prior to 1940 were examined, and this may have created the belief that the *Sydney's* floats were not numbered. While no photographic evidence has come to light to show that the *Sydney's* floats were numbered at some time after 1940, the fact that the surviving float is numbered would suggest that this did occur and that all of the *Sydney's* Carley floats were numbered at the time of her loss. Photographic evidence of other R.N. and R.A.N. warships indicates that there was a procedure adopted, apparently early in 1940, whereby all Carley floats and Flotanets were numbered. However it is not clear if this was an Admiralty or a local instruction as not all ships appear to have adopted the numbering system.<sup>17</sup> That R.A.N. warships adopted the system can be established by studying wartime photographs of the *Kormoran*, which was scuttled close to the position where the action was fought. A technical report was prepared in November 1993 as a result of scientific investigation of the float to establish whether the numerous holes in the float were caused by small arms fire.<sup>16</sup> These holes have always been a source of speculation that the float may have contained survivors who were subsequently machine-gunned by the Germans; thereby accounting for the numerous holes in the float and the lack of survivors. However the analysis of the float and the pieces of munitions found inside the float led the investigation team to conclude that 'the extensive damage to the float appears to have been caused by particles of shrapnel from at least one high-explosive shell detonating on or near the main structure of the ship and ricocheting into the float. There is no evidence of damage by small arms fire. Nor does the exterior of the float have any heat or burn marks to indicate that it was exposed to the fires reported to have broken out on *Sydney*.' The report also noted that 'the projectiles hit mainly from one side' and that 'the holes in the float, the projectiles removed from the float and the angles of trajectory



H.M.S. REPULSE in February 1940. This view shows her forward port Pattern Number 18 floats bearing the numbers 2 and 4



H.M.S. REPULSE in February 1940. This view shows her forward port Pattern Number 18 floats bearing the numbers 2 and 4

Two Pattern Number 20 (small) floats stowed horizontally on the port side abreast the forward funnel.

Four Pattern Number 20 floats stowed vertically on the blast screen on the 4 inch gun deck; two on the starboard side and two on the port side.

This was supplemented by an unknown number of floats stowed horizontally on the quarterdeck at the stern. Photographs taken between August and October 1941 show that the number and pattern of floats stowed on the stern varied between the following:

One Pattern Number 18 (large) float.

Two Pattern Number 18 floats.

Two Pattern Number 18 floats with one Pattern Number 20 float stowed inside the starboard Pattern Number 18 float.

It is possible, though not supported by the available photographs, that the Pattern Number 18 floats were removed before or during the early part of November 1941 and that two Pattern Number 20 floats were shipped in their place. War experience had shown that the large Carley floats were unmanageable and that an increased number of smaller floats was more desirable.<sup>18</sup> That this requirement was acknowledged by the R.A.N. was demonstrated on the *Sydney* by the removal of the Pattern Number 18 floats from the blast screen on the 4 inch gun deck. These two floats being replaced with four Pattern Number 20 floats. This was an understandable move when one compares the size and weight of these two patterns of float. The July 1940 amendment to the Admiralty Manual of Seamanship (Volume 1 ) lists the following data for the floats then in service.

**P.318.—B.R.67—Seamanship Manual, Volume I, 1937—  
Amendment**

(D. of N./N.L. 1903/40.—25.7.1940.)

Page 280. Add at bottom of page :—

**Carley Floats.**

Pattern No.	Size.		Weight. cwt.	Life Saving Capacity.
	ft.	ft.		
17	8	12	19½	45
18	9	14	29½	67
19	5	8	7½	18
20	5	10	8½	20
Small Onazote Life-Float	6	4	—	10

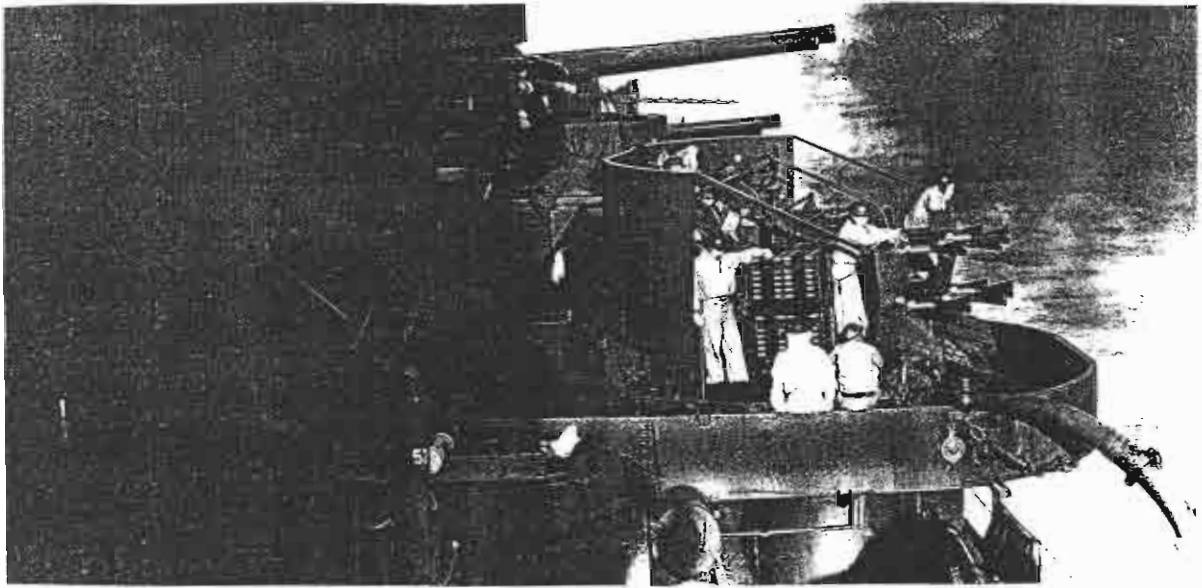
(N.L. 1903/40.—A.F.O. P.318/40.)

(Last amendment, A.F.O. P.249/39.)

7/40 (52428-2) (54240-10) Wt. 8137/2302. 5,000 1/41 Hw. G.338/10

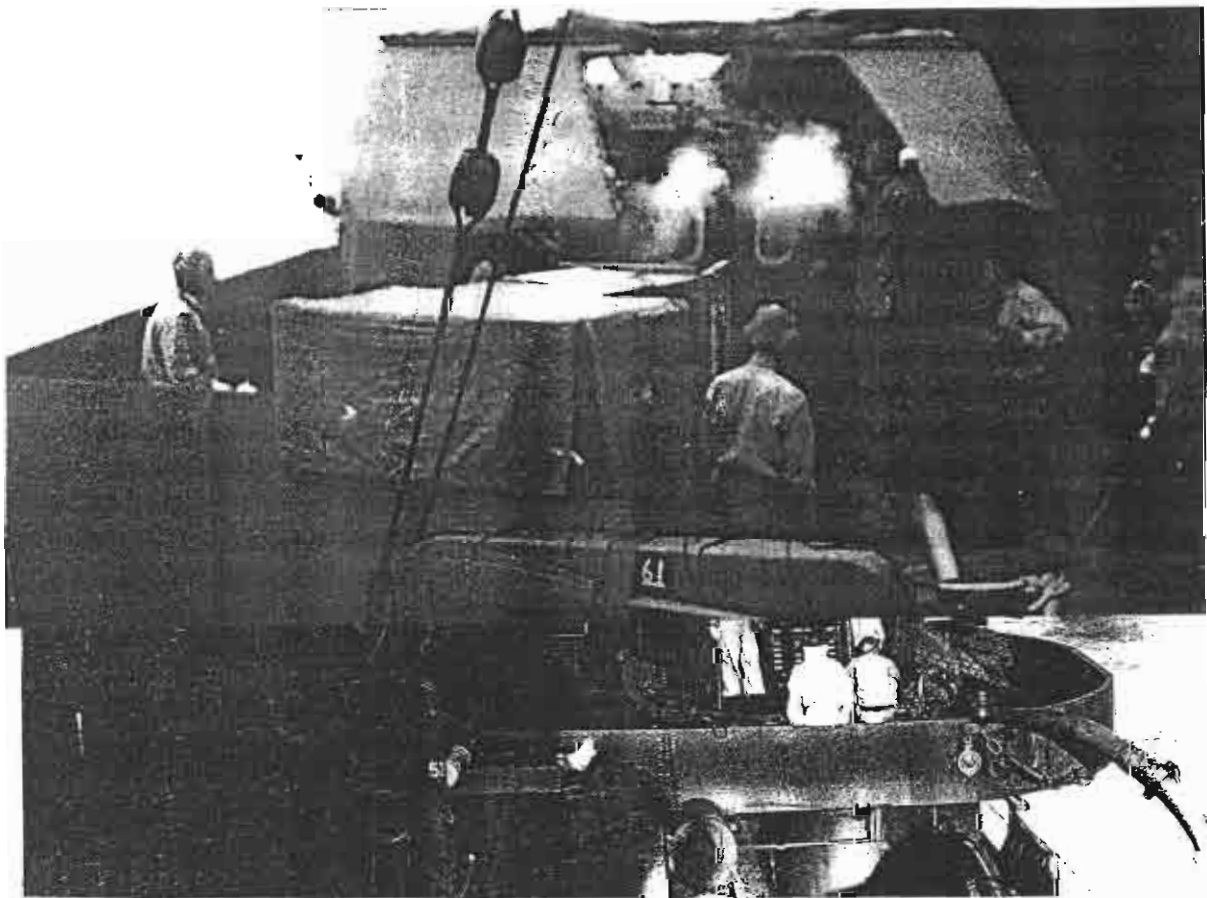
Whether the *Sydney* carried Pattern Number 18 floats, Pattern Number 20 floats or a combination of both on her stern during her final voyage is not known, but if the starboard Pattern Number 18 float.

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Above: H.M.A.S. SHROPSHIRE in September 1944. Visible in the foreground is float number 52 with what appears to be a 5 inch cordite case attached.

Below: H.M.A.S. HOBART. Her generous allocation of the smaller American pattern floats clearly shows the sequential numbering system that was adopted. The floats in the foreground are numbered 53, 55, 57, 59 and 61.

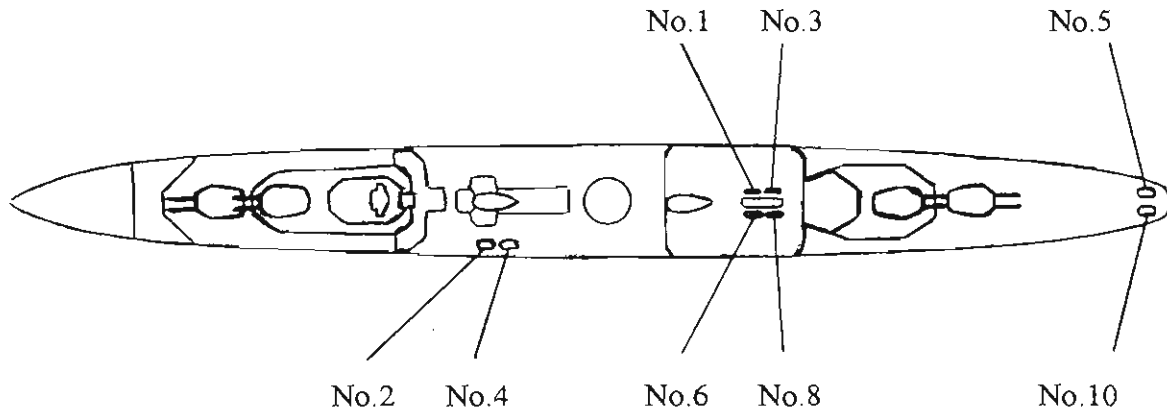


Above: H.M.A.S. SHROPSHIRE in September 1944. Visible in the foreground is float number 52 with what appears to be a 5 inch cordite case attached.

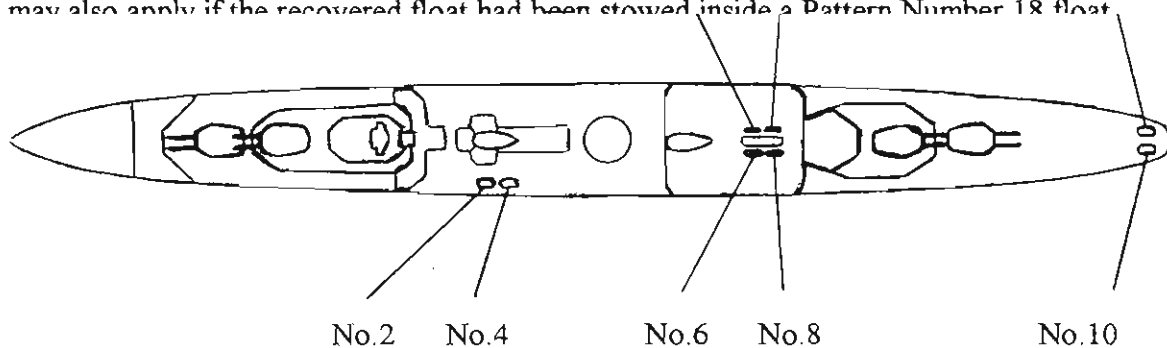
Below: H.M.A.S. HOBART. Her generous allocation of the smaller American pattern floats clearly shows the sequential numbering system that was adopted. The floats in the foreground are numbered 53, 55, 57, 59 and 61.

have been numbered 2 and 4, while the two Pattern Number 20 floats stowed on the 4 inch gun deck would have been numbered 6 and 8. Any float stowed on the port side of the quarterdeck would therefore have been numbered 10.

### DISTRIBUTION AND NUMBERING OF THE CARLEY FLOATS CARRIED BY H.M.A.S. SYDNEY IN 1941



As the Pattern Number 20 float recovered by the *Heros* still has the number 5 painted on it's side, it would be logical to assume that this float was stowed on the stern of the *Sydney*, on the starboard side. Such a position is consistent with the findings of the scientific examination of the float. However knowing where this particular float was probably stowed on the *Sydney* raises other questions that are more difficult to answer. For example, how and when did the float become detached from the ship? It has been suggested that as the float shows no sign of heat or burn marks it may have been blown off the *Sydney* early in the action and prior to the ship catching fire. While there is no evidence of the midships fire spreading to the stern, the recovery of the float from a position close to, or within, the *Kormoran*'s debris field would tend to support such a theory. Carley floats were normally anchored to the deck or superstructure, but considering the amount of shrapnel that struck this float, the anchor ropes or wires may have been severed and the float either physically blown overboard, or unshipped when the *Sydney* was torpedoed. That the neighbouring port float was not sighted or recovered raises another question that cannot satisfactorily be answered, although the fact that it probably would have sustained much more damage than the starboard float during the opening stage of the battle may provide a clue. If this was the case, it is probable that the port float was so severely damaged by shrapnel that it was incapable of floating and may have immediately sunk if it too was blown overboard. The same may also apply if the recovered float had been stowed inside a Pattern Number 18 float.



As the Pattern Number 20 float recovered by the *Heros* still has the number 5 painted on it's side, it would be logical to assume that this float was stowed on the stern of the *Sydney*, on the starboard side. Such a position is consistent with the findings of

survivors. Their statements provide no evidence of any explosions on the stern of the *Sydney* that could be attributed to depth charges detonating aboard ship.<sup>19</sup> However it is possible that the *Sydney's* depth charges were jettisoned during the action, thus removing any threat of them exploding in the event of them being directly struck by a high explosive shell. It is perhaps also noteworthy that when the *Hobart* was torpedoed in 1943, the explosion damaged the rocking levers on the depth charge trap which caused four of the five depth charges to roll out of the trap and into the sea.<sup>20</sup> While this may not have occurred on the *Sydney* the possibility must still be considered because if the *Sydney* sank with her depth charges still aboard and still primed, they would have exploded when they reached their predetermined depth. Whilst at sea in daylight hours, those ships equipped with depth charges would have them primed ready for use. Normally, the depth charges would only be made safe at night or prior to entering harbour. As the *Sydney* intercepted the *Kormoran* at sea and late in the afternoon, it is quite likely that her depth charges were still primed when the action commenced. If these depth charges were still aboard or still primed when the ship sank there is a very real possibility that they would have exploded as the ship sank. Such an underwater explosion would have killed a good many of the men in the water and may also help explain why there were no survivors. This had happened to the destroyer H.M.S. *Matabele* whilst on convoy escort duty in the Barents Sea. On 17 January 1942 she was struck by two torpedoes fired by *U-454*. Both magazines exploded and the shattered destroyer sank within two minutes of being hit. As the minesweeper H.M.S. *Harrier* raced in to rescue the men who had survived the explosions and the sinking, the *Matabele's* depth charges detonated, killing nearly everyone in the water. Only three men were recovered alive and one of these died a short time later.

Returning to the recovered Carley float, there is a theory that it may have originated from the *Kormoran*, and that she may have recovered it from one of her victims. While this would explain the presence of this float in the same general area as the debris from the *Kormoran*, the fact that the *Kormoran's* logbooks do not mention any floats being captured or recovered would tend to dispel such a theory. Indicating that the float was ex-*Sydney* was the material used in the float's construction. The A.W.M. investigating team found that while the outer covering of cork and canvas conformed with standard Admiralty floats, the inside framework and buoyancy tanks were constructed of galvanised steel instead of copper. Confirming that it was of local manufacture was the discovery of the following manufacturer's logo on the steel panels:

LYSAGHT  
ZINCANNEAL  
AUSTRALIA  
PANEL QUALITY

Another difference between this float and Admiralty floats was the use of trade manufactured rope. Admiralty rope was identified to have been primed ready for use.<sup>21</sup> Normally, the depth charges would only be made safe at night or prior to entering harbour. As the *Sydney* intercepted the *Kormoran* at sea and late in the afternoon, it is quite likely that her depth charges were still primed when the action commenced. If these depth charges were still aboard or still primed when the ship sank there is a very real possibility that they would have exploded as the ship sank. Such an underwater explosion would have killed a good many of the men in the water and may also help explain why there were no survivors. This had happened to the destroyer H.M.S. *Matabele* whilst on convoy escort duty in the Barents Sea. On 17 January 1942 she was struck by two torpedoes fired by *U-454*. Both magazines exploded and the shattered destroyer sank within two minutes of being hit. As the minesweeper H.M.S. *Harrier* raced in to rescue the men who had survived the explosions and the sinking, the *Matabele's* depth charges detonated, killing nearly everyone in the water. Only three men were recovered alive and one of these died a short time later.



27 November in position 24 degrees 22 minutes South, 110 degrees 49 minutes East, and was found to be still inflated. It was noted that the securing tape was knotted but had snapped, possibly indicating that the wearer had inflated the belt prior to entering the water and that the belt had been torn off when the wearer jumped or fell into the sea. The only identifying marks found on this life-belt was OTRC 11/39, which was found stamped on the rubber tube. An alleged second life-belt was reported as having been recovered by the British freighter *Evagoras* on the same day in position 24 degrees 06 minutes South, 110 degrees 49 minutes East. It appears though that the original report of the *Evagoras*' finding was incorrect as a subsequent report dated 4 December 1941 stated that investigations had revealed that the *Evagoras* did not pick up a life-belt.<sup>21</sup> Therefore it would appear that only one R.A.N. type life-belt was recovered during the search.

At about the same time that the search was being conducted, other *Sydney* related items turned up on a beach near Fremantle. In June 1991 during a discussion with Fremantle Maritime Museum staff, Mr Tom Osborne recalled finding items of clothing amongst seaweed on the beach north of the cable station at Cottesloe shortly before the loss of the *Sydney* announced. The clothing apparently consisted of navy shirts and an H.M.A.S. Sydney hatband. Naval authorities were advised of the find and personnel were brought in to sweep the beach but apparently nothing else was found.<sup>22</sup> Mr Osborne was never given a satisfactory answer as to why these items came to be on the beach as the navy remained tight lipped about the incident, however it is possible that the clothing may have been thrown overboard and had no bearing whatsoever on the loss of the ship. Another possible explanation is that the clothing may have belonged to one or both of the two stokers who were absent without leave from 31 October until 11 November. Sentenced to 60 days detention, these two men remained in Fremantle while their shipmates steamed north with the *Zealandia*.

On or about 6 February 1942, another item that may have come from the *Sydney* was recovered. Late in the afternoon or early evening, lookouts on Christmas Island sighted what was thought to be a Japanese submarine. Examined with binoculars, the object was identified as a Carley float which appeared to be occupied. The Pilot boat was despatched to investigate and to tow the float back to the island's jetty. The sole occupant was found to be deceased and partly decomposed. The Harbour Master, Captain J.R. Smith, was of the opinion that the float was of naval pattern as it was grey in colour and the wooden decking was branded with the word 'PATENT'. He also noted that the roping attached to the float contained a red yarn running through the strands. The corpse was clad in a blue boilersuit which had been bleached white by exposure. Found with the corpse was a boot or shoe which the island doctor considered did not belong to the deceased. On examining the corpse the doctor determined that the body was that of a white male, however due to the fact that no personal effects or identity disc were found, the man's identity could not be established. It was noted that the eyes and nose were missing, probably as a result of birds, and that fish had apparently eaten away all the flesh from the right arm. The float was found on the decking of the float during the search.

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report made by Mr J.C. Baker who was in charge of the island's radio station. Although Mr Baker recalled that it had been a canvas shoe, he could not recall exactly what markings were found on it. He said that it was probably branded 'CROWN BRAND PTY 4' although he was not entirely certain about the 'CROWN' or the '4'.

The float itself was noted as having been damaged by gun or shell fire, with pieces of metal still embedded in the outer covering. What appeared to be a bullet hole was found in the wooden decking. One piece of metal that was found embedded in the kapok filling immediately below a small round perforation in the outer covering was considered to be what remained of a bullet. Other pieces of metal found in the kapok appear to have been identified as shrapnel. However it was the manufacturer's brand found on the inside framework that provided more information on the origins of the float. Captain Smith reported that the inside framework as well as the divisions between the buoyancy tanks were branded: - 'LYSAGHT DUA-ANNEAL ZINC. MADE IN AUSTRALIA INSIDE'. Although like the markings on the shoe, Mr Baker's recollection of the brand was slightly different. He recalled that the brand was 'MADE IN N.S.W. ANNEALED ZINC INSIDE' was found in two places. However of equal interest was his recollection that the float was marked with the number 2 on the outside covering; a detail that was apparently overlooked or forgotten by Captain Smith. The other observation recalled by both men was that barnacles up to one inch in length, and apparently ordinary marine growth up to six inches long, was found on the float suggesting that it had been in the water for some time.

An official inquest was apparently conducted on Christmas Island a short time after the float and corpse was discovered and a copy of the report forwarded to the Australian authorities. However this report could not be located in 1949 when the theory was raised that the float may have originated from the *Sydney*. The D.N.I. at the time, Captain G.C. Oldham, investigated the matter and working from the shipping intelligence reports that contained Captain Smith's and Mr Baker's statements, concluded that while 'the clothing found on the corpse could possibly have been that of an R.A.N. rating', and the markings on the shoe 'definitely corresponded with supplies from our stocks', he considered that because of the 'particulars given of the covering of the Carley float that the float did not belong to an H.M.A. Ship'.<sup>23</sup>

However despite Captain Oldham's opinion that the float was not from the *Sydney*, many people remain unconvinced. Most notable is author Barbara Winter. However while she asserts that the float did come from the *Sydney*, fellow author Tom Frame is more sceptical. Because of the passage of time and the sketchy information that is available it is possible that we may never know the true origins of this float and it's unfortunate occupant. However a re-examination of the available information may provide some small clue that may help in identifying the origin of the float that rightly or wrongly has now been inexorably linked with the loss of the *Sydney*.

Although Captain Smith was of the opinion that the float was of naval pattern there is insufficient evidence to prove this assertion. The simple fact that it was painted grey ~~does not mean that it came from a warship. Some merchant ships wanted done on~~ float. Captain Smith reported that the inside framework as well as the divisions between the buoyancy tanks were branded: - 'LYSAGHT DUA-ANNEAL ZINC. MADE IN AUSTRALIA INSIDE'. Although like the markings on the shoe, Mr Baker's recollection of the brand was slightly different. He recalled that the brand was 'MADE IN N.S.W. ANNEALED ZINC INSIDE' was found in two places. However of equal interest was his recollection that the float was marked with the number 2 on the outside covering; a detail that was apparently overlooked or forgotten by Captain Smith. The other observation recalled by both men was that barnacles up to one inch in length, and apparently ordinary marine growth up to six inches long, was found on the float suggesting that it had been in the water for some time.

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noteworthy that while the *Eidsvold* was a Norwegian vessel, she was not supplied with D.E.M.S. gunners and would not have been equipped with Carley floats. Other merchant ships were lost in the period in question but merchant navy rafts were of a different pattern and construction and were totally dissimilar to Carley floats.<sup>25</sup>

The possibility that the Christmas Island float was a 'navy pattern' float becomes more of a probability when we study Smith's description of the roping attached to the float. He described a red yarn running through the strands and as we have seen, Admiralty rope was identified by a colour coded yarn. The 1937 Manual of Seamanship noted that all rope for naval use was made at the roperies at Chatham and Devonport in England, and that a "Rogue's Yarn" of coloured jute was incorporated in the yarns of the rope for identification purposes. Devonport produced rope with a red yarn whilst Chatham produced rope with a yellow yarn. Trade manufactured rope was noted as being identified by a blue "rogue's yarn". Obviously, the use of Devonport rope on the Christmas Island float would suggest that it had come from a Royal Navy vessel, and the fact that the float was numbered would also support this view. Being numbered '2' would indicate that it was the forward-most float on the port side of the vessel of origin. Although these two factors, if they had been considered, should have been sufficient to indicate that the float had come from a H.M. ship, the fact that the covering of the float consisted of kapok instead of the standard cork apparently convinced Oldham otherwise. As we have seen the standard covering of Admiralty floats was canvas covered cork and even the Australian made float recovered by the *Heros* was so covered. The D.N.I.(Oldham) therefore concluded that as the Christmas Island float had a canvas covered kapok covering, it was not ex H.M.A.S. *Sydney*. However was Oldham justified in making this conclusion which was apparently based solely on the evidence that the float was covered with kapok instead of cork. The roping was clearly Admiralty rope, the number on the float suggested it had come from an H.M. ship, and the clothing found on and with the deceased occupant indicated that the corpse could possibly have been an R.A.N. rating. In addition, the brand on the inside framework of the float revealed that the float had either been constructed in Australia, or had been made from Australian manufactured galvanised steel.

Although there is insufficient information available to help explain why kapok was employed as a covering material there may be a logical reason why the Christmas Island float was so covered. If Australian made floats were constructed of steel instead of copper, it is possible that some floats had a kapok covering instead of cork. The A.W.M. report on the investigation of it's Carley float notes that three companies supplied life floats to the R.A.N. between 1939 and 1941. Although the records of these companies apparently no longer exist, it is possible that due to wartime shortages some floats were constructed with non specification materials. Supporting such a theory is the fact that the float held by the A.W.M., which is clearly a navy float, does not carry Admiralty rope. None of the rope examined by the investigating team was found to carry a coloured "rogue's yarn". While one rope was found to contain a single blue

Chatham produced rope with a yellow yarn. Trade manufactured rope was noted as being identified by a blue "rogue's yarn". Obviously, the use of Devonport rope on the Christmas Island float would suggest that it had come from a Royal Navy vessel, and the fact that the float was numbered would also support this view. Being numbered '2' would indicate that it was the forward-most float on the port side of the vessel of origin. Although these two factors, if they had been considered, should have been sufficient to indicate that the float had come from a H.M. ship, the fact that the covering of the float consisted of kapok instead of the standard cork apparently convinced Oldham otherwise. As we have seen the standard covering of Admiralty floats was canvas covered cork and even the Australian made float recovered by the *Heros* was so covered. The D.N.I.(Oldham) therefore concluded that as the Christmas Island float had a canvas covered kapok covering, it was not ex H.M.A.S. *Sydney*. However was Oldham justified in making this conclusion which was apparently based solely on the evidence that the float was covered with kapok instead of cork. The roping was clearly

statements made by the Christmas Island personnel. Apparently relying solely on their memory, all three of the men who supplied information give differing views on the state of decomposition of the corpse, the type of footwear, the brand on the footwear, whether it was one shoe or a pair of boots, the length of the barnacles, and perhaps of more significance, the manufacturers brand on the steel panels of the float. Neither of the brands remembered by Captain Smith and Mr Baker can be identified. Lysaght's were the only manufacturers of galvanised steel sheeting in Australia during the 1930's and 1940's and their range of products did not include DUA-ANNEAL ZINC or ANNEALED ZINC branded flat sheet. Early sheet products were identified by the "ORB" brand however in the late 1930's an additional brand was introduced to identify their new process of treating steel.<sup>26</sup> This was the ZINCANNEAL brand as found on the A.W.M. Carley float. Therefore it is possible that neither man could remember exactly what was branded on the steel panels and if this was so, they may have provided corrupted versions of what they saw. As both men recognised that the steel was made in Australia, or more specifically New South Wales, it is probable that the brand they found inside the float was actually ZINCANNEAL and that sheet had been made at the Lysaght works in Newcastle, New South Wales. Given that Smith and Baker may not have remembered the brand on the inside of the float correctly, there exists the possibility that they also may not have remembered what the covering of the float was made of. Although it would be hard to confuse cork with kapok, it must be remembered that we are dealing with fallible human memory, and not necessarily the product from a tree. It is therefore possible that the Christmas Island float was constructed with a cork covering and not kapok as alleged.

The condition of the corpse and the boilersuit that it was clad in are also of interest. While the island doctor could not, or did not, provide an estimate of how long the occupant had been deceased, the faded condition of the boilersuit would suggest that the corpse had been exposed to the elements for quite some time. Establishing how long the float had been adrift and how long it's occupant had been dead would help in establishing the origin of the float and the identity of the deceased. Unfortunately, the lack of detailed information on the float itself and the absence of a medical or coroners report on the body makes this almost impossible. Even the descriptions of the marine growth on the float provide us with little to work on. However Smith's claim that the barnacles were at least an inch long, would indicate that the float had been adrift for many weeks. While we do not know which species of barnacle was found on the float, it is assumed that they were either small goose-barnacles (*Lepas anserifera*) or large goose-barnacles (*Lepas anatifera*). Both species being quite common. The latter has a larger flexible stalk that can grow to eight or nine inches, although some specimens have been found that are up to twelve inches long.<sup>27</sup> They will generally attach themselves singularly or in clumps to anything floating in the sea by means of their stalk; the animal proper being encased in a shell that resembles a mussel in size and appearance. Growth rate is dependent on nutrient and as the waters around Christmas Island are quite nutrient rich their growth rate in these waters could be regarded as on the A.W.M. Carley float. Therefore it is possible that neither man could remember exactly what was branded on the steel panels and if this was so, they may have provided corrupted versions of what they saw. As both men recognised that the steel was made in Australia, or more specifically New South Wales, it is probable that the brand they found inside the float was actually ZINCANNEAL and that sheet had been made at the Lysaght works in Newcastle, New South Wales. Given that Smith and Baker may not have remembered the brand on the inside of the float correctly, there exists the possibility that they also may not have remembered what the covering of the float was made of. Although it would be hard to confuse cork with kapok, it must be remembered that we are dealing with fallible human memory, and not necessarily the product from a tree. It is therefore possible that the Christmas Island float was constructed with a cork covering and not kapok as alleged.

The condition of the corpse and the boilersuit that it was clad in are also of interest. While the island doctor could not, or did not, provide an estimate of how long

the corpse was not sufficient to force the decking underwater to its fullest extent and that the decking more or less floated with the corpse perhaps immersed in a few inches of water. This would account for the observation that the corpse's right arm was devoid of flesh, apparently being eaten away by fish. In such a position the body would have been kept moist by sea water and warm by its exposure to the sun. The boilersuit, or overall, would also have helped to warm the corpse and promote putrefaction. This process probably commencing within twenty four hours of death and being well advanced within three or four days. Given the free access of air around the corpse and the average long term temperature range for Christmas Island in February of 24.5 degrees Celsius minimum to 28.1 degrees Celsius maximum, it is also possible that mummification would have occurred in those parts of the body not directly immersed in the sea, due to the rapid drying of tissue fluids. Equally possible would have been the formation of adipocere on the immersed parts of the body; although this process would probably have taken several weeks to develop. Adipocere is basically a post-mortem change of the body fats, which turns it into a firm wax-like substance. Extensive adipocere formation can retard skeletonization and help preserve the internal organs.

In short, the body found in the Christmas Island float may have been deceased for as little as a week, or conversely, may have been floating around for several months. Without a more accurate description of the state of the body and the extent of decomposition it is impossible to arrive at a definite time frame. However while it is possible that the corpse had decomposed within a week, it is doubtful that the barnacles and marine growth found on the float would have grown to the size described in so short a time. Therefore while the condition of the corpse and the extent of marine growth was probably consistent with the required eleven weeks of exposure if they had originated from the *Sydney*, the theory that they did cannot be proven. The pertinent question though, is given that 645 men from the *Sydney* were lost in November 1941, and a naval pattern Carley float containing an unidentified corpse in naval pattern clothing materialised off Christmas Island in February 1942, why didn't Oldham pursue the matter to its logical conclusion and have the corpse exhumed for examination. Although buried in what is believed to be an unmarked grave in the local cemetery, it should have been possible in 1949 to identify the grave's location with the assistance of locals and/or surviving personnel who were present at the funeral. Captain Oldham's investigations had revealed that the corpse could possibly have been that of an R.A.N. rating so there was clearly a possibility that the corpse was ex-H.M.A.S. *Sydney*. That Oldham ruled out this possibility only on the basis that the covering of the Carley float consisted of kapok instead of cork brings into question his method of investigation and his subsequent conclusion. The fact that the float was numbered, and carried Admiralty rope, would indicate a naval origin and as the only naval loss in the region at the time was the *Sydney* 28, there is basis for the belief that the Christmas Island float was ex-H.M.A.S. *Sydney*.

If this float did in actual fact originate from the *Sydney*, the fact that it was ~~immersed in the sea, due to the rapid drying of tissue fluids. Equally possible would have been the formation of adipocere on the immersed parts of the body; although this process would probably have taken several weeks to develop. Adipocere is basically a post-mortem change of the body fats, which turns it into a firm wax-like substance. Extensive adipocere formation can retard skeletonization and help preserve the internal organs.~~

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Island float was ex-*Sydney* it is probable that it was blown overboard early in the action as the description of the float does not indicate that it was damaged or scorched by fire. The presence of a shoe, or pair of boots, that did not fit the corpse in the float would also suggest that at least two members of the *Sydney*'s crew were blown overboard at about the same time and managed to reach the Carley float. Perhaps supporting such a scenario is the fact that the corpse found in the float wore no life-belt, and nor was one found on the decking of the float. Anyone wearing an inflated or perhaps even a deflated life-belt when blown overboard would probably have had the life-belt torn off on hitting the water. This being demonstrated by the recovery of the inflated life-belt with the knotted but snapped securing tapes by the *Wyrallah*.

Returning to the issue of the shoe, or pair of boots, Mr Mike McCarthy of the Western Australian Maritime Museum has proposed that the alleged brand name may not have been a manufacturer's name at all, but the name of the wearer. While Captain Smith thought that the name on the footwear was either 'McCowan' or 'McEwan', it is interesting to note that there were two members of the *Sydney*'s crew with almost identical names; Able Seaman 22204 T. A. McGowan, and Able Seaman 21677 M.A. McKeown. Although the footwear was considered not to have belonged to the corpse, establishing the identity of the corpse may shed more light on whether Able Seaman McGowan or Able Seaman McKeown survived the *Sydney*'s sinking and either joined, or actually was, the deceased in the Carley float.

Clearly, if this unfortunate chapter is ever to be closed, the relevant authorities must have the Christmas Island corpse located, exhumed, and examined. Naval dental records, which are believed to be still on file, would prove whether or not this man was a member of the s complement and perhaps at least one person's loved ones will know that their son, brother, husband, or father is no longer 'lost'.

With the entry of Japan into the war on 7 December 1941 and their rapid conquest of Singapore and the Dutch East Indies, the vast and mostly uninhabited coastline of Western Australia became extremely vulnerable to enemy attack. With very few resources and insufficient troops to cover the whole coast, a special mobile force (S.M.F.) was established so that it could be deployed rapidly to certain areas of the coast in order to oppose any enemy seaborne landing. In April 1942, the S.M.F. was based in the Moora-Jurien Bay area, tasked with patrolling and defending the coast between the Moore River (north of Perth) and Dongara (south of Geraldton). On 5 May a patrol discovered evidence of enemy activity at Jurien Bay including the finding of a Japanese flag. Then on 13 June, near Green Islets, another patrol found a Japanese life-belt as well as a box which was marked H.M.A.S. SYDNEY.<sup>29</sup> It is unclear whether this box was considered to have come from the *Sydney* as a result of the November action or had been adrift or washed ashore for a considerably longer period of time. It is also unclear whether the box was merely a packing case with the name SYDNEY painted or stencilled on it with perhaps someone erroneously linking it to the ship of the same name.

~~However another item that could be traced to the ship was a pair of shoes~~ The Western Australian Maritime Museum has proposed that the alleged brand name may not have been a manufacturer's name at all, but the name of the wearer. While Captain Smith thought that the name on the footwear was either 'McCowan' or 'McEwan', it is interesting to note that there were two members of the *Sydney*'s crew with almost identical names; Able Seaman 22204 T. A. McGowan, and Able Seaman 21677 M.A. McKeown. Although the footwear was considered not to have belonged to the corpse, establishing the identity of the corpse may shed more light on whether Able Seaman McGowan or Able Seaman McKeown survived the *Sydney*'s sinking and either joined, or actually was, the deceased in the Carley float.

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McDonald recorded the findings of numerous interviews she had conducted with members of the community who had lived in the Port Gregory region during the war. Port Gregory is situated about forty nautical miles north of the port of Geraldton and has particular significance in that a severely damaged *Sydney* trying to reach Geraldton from the action position would have to pass Port Gregory enroute. Recovered from the beach at Shoal Point, north of Port Gregory, were four or five life-belts or life-jackets, a 4 gallon tin of cabbage, a 4 gallon tin of metholated spirits, a 150 gallon square galvanised tank containing kapok, another smaller square steel container resembling an ammunition box, some bottles, a tyre on a damaged rim, and a fired flare attached to a piece of packing case.<sup>31</sup>

The life-belts or life-jackets, which were khaki in colour and stamped with a broad arrow, were described by one man as canvas bags filled with kapok. While R. A. N. issue life-belts were blue and inflatable, the general purpose life-jackets that the sea boats were equipped with were khaki in colour and made of canvas. As we have seen, these jackets had cork or kapok filled pockets sewn onto them and to the uninitiated would probably have resembled bags of cork or kapok. In other words it is probable that what was found on the beach were four or five general purpose life-jackets of the type that the *Sydney's* sea boats were equipped with. The tins of cabbage, metholated spirits, and the larger steel container of kapok cannot be positively identified, nor can the smaller ammunition type container which allegedly contained jelly beans. The tyre, which was described as being brand new, is quite interesting though. According to McDonald, one witness recalled that the tyre was 36 x 8 x 35 inches and when fitted to a new rim was used on a Bedford or Chevrolet truck. Another witness described the tyre as being 700 x 20 (millimetres?) with a lug type pattern. The rim was bent in the middle and quite useless but the tyre was new and was used on a 1937 model truck and later a Ford tractor. Although the tyre itself cannot be directly linked to the *Sydney*, there is a remote possibility that it may have come from her Walrus aircraft. There were two types of wheel fitted to Walrus aircraft:

The Dunlop type, with roller bearings, which had rims which measured 19.0 x 3.12 inches and were fitted with 19 x 8 inch tyres, and,

The Palmer type, with plain bearings, which had rims which measured 19.06 x 3.75 inches and were fitted with 895 x 200 millimetre tyres.<sup>32</sup>

The metric 895 x 200 represents 35.23 x 7.87 inches and this size compares favourably with the 36 x 8 x 35 inch size that was given by the first witness. While the size of the tyre recovered is almost identical to that which was fitted to the Palmer wheeled Walrus aircraft, the tread pattern is unusual for this type of aircraft.

Contemporary photographs of Walrus and Seagull V aircraft indicate that only smooth tyres were fitted. While tyres with a diamond shaped lug pattern were fitted to other types of aircraft, there is no photographic evidence to show that this type of tyre was fitted to ship borne Walrus or Seagull V aircraft. However a Stranraer aircraft on display in the R. A. F. museum at Hendon carries such diamond shaped lugged tyres.<sup>33</sup>

The Stranraer was essentially a larger twin engined version of the Walrus, built by the broad arrow, were described by one man as canvas bags filled with kapok. While R. A. N. issue life-belts were blue and inflatable, the general purpose life-jackets that the sea boats were equipped with were khaki in colour and made of canvas. As we have seen, these jackets had cork or kapok filled pockets sewn onto them and to the uninitiated would probably have resembled bags of cork or kapok. In other words it is probable that what was found on the beach were four or five general purpose life-jackets of the type that the *Sydney's* sea boats were equipped with. The tins of cabbage, metholated spirits, and the larger steel container of kapok cannot be positively identified, nor can the smaller ammunition type container which allegedly contained jelly beans. The tyre, which was described as being brand new, is quite interesting though. According to McDonald, one witness recalled that the tyre was 36 x 8 x 35 inches and when fitted to a new rim was used on a Bedford or Chevrolet truck. Another witness described the tyre as being 700 x 20 (millimetres?) with a lug type pattern. The rim was bent in the middle and quite useless but the tyre was new and was used on a 1937



If any or all of the items recovered had come from the *Sydney*, they indicate that the ship may have stayed afloat for a considerably longer period than has hitherto been estimated. Given the prevailing conditions at the time, if the *Sydney* had sunk on the night of 19/20 November, her debris should have drifted north in the same manner as the debris from the *Kormoran*. For the *Sydney's* debris to wash ashore in the region of Port Gregory she would have to have sunk considerably closer inshore. However taking into account the damage that the *Sydney* sustained it would appear unlikely that she could have stayed afloat long enough to reach a position where her debris would wash ashore. It is also odd that no other debris was found either at sea or further along the coast as it is understood that the R.A.A.F. flew over this area during their search operations whilst the army conducted sweeps along the beaches but found nothing. Specifically it would appear unusual that no fuel oil washed ashore, although there was a report of oil stains between 27 degrees South, 113 degrees 32 minutes East and the coast. This being sighted by a Geraldton based Anson aircraft on 27 November.<sup>34</sup> (This position is south-east of Womerangee Hill on the map on page 25)

If however these oil stains and the debris at Shoal Point were connected to the sinking of the *Sydney*, the fact that the debris appears to have been concentrated on only one stretch of beach while the oil had drifted to the north indicates something more than the loss of the ship much closer inshore than previously thought. The debris indicates that survivors may have come ashore; and perhaps supporting this theory is the composition of the debris. Four or five life-jackets being found close together possibly indicates that four or five men made it ashore before discarding them on the beach. If this was the case, these men may have reached the coast with the assistance of the tyre and the large tank containing kapok. The containers of cabbage and jelly beans and the bottles perhaps indicating that provisions of some sort were also salvaged and brought ashore. Additionally, the fired flare attached to a piece of packing case (which incidentally was allegedly marked H.M.A.S. SYDNEY) suggests that someone had tried to make a fire either for the purpose of attracting attention or for warmth. McDonald's research has also uncovered the possibility that a grey boat of unknown origin was also recovered.<sup>35</sup> This boat, approximately 20 feet long and covered with a tarpaulin, was apparently shrapnel damaged and was kept under guard at Lynton Station, Port Gregory. Although it cannot be established where this boat came from, or indeed when it was actually recovered, it is interesting to note that the *Sydney's* two whalers were 27 feet long. These boats were stowed on skids abreast the roundhouse which supported the aircraft catapult, and it is theoretically possible that one of these boats, in particular the starboard whaler, may have survived the action and the *Sydney's* sinking.

The obvious question though is that if survivors did manage to come ashore at Shoal Point, what became of them? While they may have disappeared without trace while trying to reach help, it is also possible that their bodies may have been found by army patrols and quietly buried with little or no ceremony. The circumstances either not being recorded, revealed, or remembered in the intervening years. That such an event Specifically it would appear unusual that no fuel oil washed ashore, although there was a report of oil stains between 27 degrees South, 113 degrees 32 minutes East and the coast. This being sighted by a Geraldton based Anson aircraft on 27 November.<sup>34</sup> (This position is south-east of Womerangee Hill on the map on page 25)

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## NOTES

- 1 Coppleson, V.M. SHARK ATTACK, Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1958, page 195  
 2 Parry, A.F. H.M.A.S. YARRA, Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1944, page 221  
 3 Walker, Allan S. MEDICAL SERVICES OF THE R.A.N. AND R.A.A.F., Australian War  
 Memorial, Canberra 1961, page 95  
 4 Ibid., page 390  
 5 Bancroft, A. & Roberts, R.G. THE MIKADO'S GUESTS, Patersons Printing Press, Perth  
 1945, pages 163 - 168 Also personal communication with A. Bancroft, August 1996.  
 6 Lech, Raymond B. ALL THE DROWNED SAILORS, Severn House, London 1984, page 83  
 7 Fremantle Maritime Museum File MA 630/81/5  
 Engineer Artificer Paul Schumann: "Five days without water and bread in rough sea, and  
 everywhere sharks in great numbers."  
 Cpl. Victor Schuettenberg: "All around us were sharks and other animals, besides a raging  
 sea."  
 Cpl. Walter Krahe: "After 8 days of worry in a boat with 72 men and little food and water,  
 and surrounded by sharks, whereby several of our comrades became delirious..."
- 8 ADM1/12272 H.M.S.DUNEDIN Public Record Office  
 9 Gwinn had actually handed over control of the aircraft to his co-pilot so that he could repair  
 a navigational antenna at the rear of the aircraft. It was while pondering how to repair the  
 antenna that he happened to look directly down and see the oil trail.
- 10 Lech, Raymond B. op. cit., pages 157 - 158  
 11 Simpson, Keith FORENSIC MEDICINE, Edward Arnold, London 1958, page 14  
 12 MP 1587/1 Sydney - Kormoran action signals etc. 1941 - 1945  
 165P  
 13 British Commonwealth Occupation Force.  
 14 Personal communication with Mr John Dunn, August 1996.  
 15 There has been some confusion over where the War Memorial float actually came from. This  
 is due to the fact that much has been written about a second float that appeared off Christmas  
 Island in 1942. The A.W.M. float was recovered from the sea about 100 miles north of the  
 action position and because of it's direct link with the Sydney was given to the A.W.M. as an  
 exhibit. The Christmas Island float was recovered but is understood to have been taken to the  
 island rubbish tip and destroyed.
- 16 Ashton, Challenor, and Courtney THE SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION OF A CARLEY  
 FLOAT, Australian War Memorial, Canberra 1993  
 17 While close-up wartime photographs of H.M. vessels are difficult to locate, the most readily  
 available published source is BRITISH BATTLESHIPS OF WORLD WAR TWO by Raven,  
 A. and Roberts, J. Page 184 depicts H.M.S. Revenge in 1940 with a Carley float numbered  
 16 stowed abaft the funnel. Page 287 depicts H.M.S. King George V being repainted in late  
 1940 with a numbered Carley float clearly visible below the S - 3, 5.25 inch mounting, while  
 page 289 depicts a Flotanet on H.M.S. Prince of Wales similarly numbered with the number  
 28. Other close-up photographs throughout the book show that many of the battleships  
 depicted, did not number their Carley floats or Flotanets.
- 18 Raven, A. and Roberts, J. BRITISH CRUISERS OF WORLD WAR TWO, Arms and  
 Armour Press, London 1980, page 318  
 19 An incident that perhaps indicates that depth charges would not explode when struck by  
 shrapnel or splinters occurred on the destroyer H.M.S. Ledbury in August 1942. Whilst  
 engaging enemy aircraft with her stern guns, a 4 inch shell fired by X turret which was firing  
 on an after bearing, prematurely exploded above X turret. The turret officer reported  
 everywhere sharks in great numbers."  
 Cpl. Victor Schuettenberg: "All around us were sharks and other animals, besides a raging  
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- 10 Lech, Raymond B. op. cit., pages 157 - 158  
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- 25 Merchant navy rafts were constructed predominantly of timber and empty drums. Square or rectangular in shape, they could not be confused with Carley floats. The merchant navy type had a solid floor of planks which helped to prolong life by providing the occupants with a relatively dry and stable platform.
- 26 Zincaneal appears to have come on the market in either 1937 or 1938. It is not mentioned in the 1934 edition of the Lysaght Referee but it is described in the 1938 Lysaght Referee as the latest development in the treatment of steel.
- 27 Dakin, William J. AUSTRALIAN SEASHORES, Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1963, page 206
- 28 Brown, David WARSHIP LOSSES OF WORLD WAR TWO, Arms and Armour Press, London 1995
- 29 McKenzie-Smith, Graham AUSTRALIA'S FORGOTTEN ARMY VOL. 1, Grimwade, Canberra 1994, page 20
- 30 Fremantle Maritime Museum File MA 630/81/4
- 31 McDonald's paper actually lists a water damaged stick rocket type parachute flare that was recovered some time during the war. The report of the fired flare attached to a piece of packing case marked H.M.A.S. SYDNEY only became known to McDonald after the publication of her paper.
- 32 These descriptions and sizes were obtained from a wartime Walrus service and maintenance manual held by the Air Force Association Museum at Bullcreek. Western Australia.
- 33 Number 3 issue of 'airextra' magazine, featuring the R.A.F. Museum at Hendon. Published by Ian Allan Ltd. Photograph on page 10.
- 34 Information supplied to the Fremantle Maritime Museum by Glenys McDonald, April 1993
- 35 Correspondence with McDonald, September 1996

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Australian Archives (Western Australia)  
K 809/1 South Western Area Combined Headquarters logbook.  
Fremantle Maritime Museum  
MA 630/81/4  
MA 630/81/5  
Canberra 1994, page 20
- 30 Fremantle Maritime Museum File MA 630/81/4
- 31 McDonald's paper actually lists a water damaged stick rocket type parachute flare that was recovered some time during the war. The report of the fired flare attached to a piece of packing case marked H.M.A.S. SYDNEY only became known to McDonald after the publication of her paper.
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## PHOTO AND DIAGRAM CREDITS

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- Page 3                    Ashton, Challenor, and Courtney op. cit.
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge and thank the following persons and establishments for their assistance in the research and preparation of this report:

Arthur Bancroft, Shane Burke, Geoff Chantler and the 'Grapevine', John Dunn, Vic Gibson, Professor John Hilton, Karl King, Dr. Kerry Margolius, Mike McCarthy, and the staff of the Fremantle Maritime Museum, Glenys McDonald, Dennis Robinson, Harley Vivian, Geoff Williams and of course my very patient wife Dale and children James and Caitlin and the still not very patient Claire