

# Basic Detail Report

---



**00051855**

**Title**

Commemorative badge with an image of HMAS SYDNEY II

**Date**

1941

**Medium**

Celluloid badge and metal pin

**Dimensions**

Overall: 22 x 38 mm

**Name**

Fund raising badge

**History**

This commemorative artefact is of the type sold to the public to raise funds for war charities and is a precursor to contemporary styles like the Legacy pin. HMAS SYDNEY was built by Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson Ltd at Wallsend on Tyne in 1933 and launched in 1934 by Mrs Bruce, wife of the Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. Named for the Australian city of Sydney and for the first HMAS SYDNEY, which had successfully engaged the German raider SMS EMDEN off Cocos Island in World War I, HMAS SYDNEY was one of three Leander class light cruisers operated by the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Ordered initially for the Royal Navy as HMS PHAETON, the cruiser was purchased by the Australian government and renamed prior to her launch in 1934. During the early years of her operational history, SYDNEY enforced sanctions during the Abyssinian crisis, and after the beginning of World War II was assigned to convoy escort and patrol duties in Australian waters until May 1940. SYDNEY then joined the British Mediterranean Fleet on an eight-month deployment; during this time she sank two Italian warships, participated in multiple shore bombardments, and provided protection to convoys, receiving only minimal damage and no casualties. Upon her triumphant return to Australia in February 1941, the SYDNEY's crew was feted in her home port and later resumed convoy escort and patrol duties in Australian waters. On 19 November 1941, HMAS SYDNEY was involved in a mutually destructive engagement with the German auxiliary cruiser KORMORAN, and was lost with all 645 men on board. The KORMORAN also sank, with a loss of 78 of her complement of 399. The exact location of the wreck sites of both ships was unknown until 2008. SYDNEY's demise is attributed to the fact that while signalling to determine the KORMORAN's true identity she came in too close, giving KORMORAN, which was masking as the Dutch ship STRAAT MALAKKA, such advantages as total surprise and rapid, accurate fire when no longer able to pretend she was a Dutch vessel. The auxiliary cruiser KORMORAN was a German Navy merchant raider of World War II. Originally a passenger vessel named STEIERMARK, the ship was acquired by the Kriegsmarine (German Navy) following the outbreak of war for conversion into a raider. Administered by

the Kriegsmarine under the designation Schiff 41, to Allied navies she was referred to as Raider G. As the largest merchant raider operated by the Kriegsmarine during World War II, HSK KORMORAN was responsible for the destruction of ten merchant vessels and the capture of an eleventh during her 11-month marauding career in the Atlantic and Indian oceans. However, damage sustained during the battle with the SYDNEY prompted the scuttling and subsequent abandonment of the KORMORAN; the vessel actually blew up before she sank - after a fire on board, caused by one of the SYDNEY's hits, reached a storeroom full of high explosive sea mines. 318 of the 399 on board the German ship survived on life rafts or in the ship's boats and were later rescued. They were eventually placed in prisoner of war camps until they were repatriated in the course of 1946/47. KORMORAN's success against the SYDNEY is widely attributed to a number of key factors: the proximity of the two ships during the engagement, the raider's advantage of surprise and her crew's ability to concentrate rapid, accurate fire on vital parts of the SYDNEY's hull, gun turrets, bridge and superstructure. Prior to the discovery of the wrecks in 2008, the fact of the cruiser's loss with all hands, compared to the survival of most of the German crew, appeared incredulous and created controversy; it also spawned numerous conspiracy theories. Some opinions also alleged that the German commander, Theodor Detmers, had used underhand and illicit ruses to lure SYDNEY into range; others alleged that a Japanese submarine had been involved, and that the true details of the battle were concealed by Australian defence authorities through a major cover up.