Basic Detail Report

00018383

Title
Remember Me: HMAS SYDNEY

Date
1914 - 1918

Medium
Silver gelatin print on paper, cord, timber, card, glass

Dimensions
Overall: 30 × 185 × 170 mm, 0.14 kg

Name
Miniature Lifebuoy

History

HMAS SYDNEY was a Chatham class light cruiser built by the London-Glasgow Shipbuilding Company, Scotland. She was laid down in February, 1911 and launched on 29 August, 1912 by Lady Henderson, wife of Admiral Sir Reginald Henderson. Joining the battlecruiser HMAS AUSTRALIA at Portsmouth, SYDNEY was commissioned on 26 June, 1913. The two vessels then sailed for Australia in July, 1913 via St. Helena, Cape Town and Mauritius, eventually making landfall at Albany, Western Australia for coaling on 19 September, 1913. In order to make their arrival all the more momentous the two ships were ordered to avoid major ports, travelling straight to Jervis Bay where the remainder of the main Australian fleet, HMAS MELBOURNE, HMAS ENCOUNTER, and three newly built destroyers were at anchor. The fleet then sailed north on the short voyage to Sydney arriving on 4 October, 1913. SYDNEY had been commissioned under the command of Captain John C. T. Glossop (1871-1934). The vessel's displacement was 5,400 tons, whilst her armament would ultimately consist of eight six-inch guns, one 13-pounder gun, four 3-pounder guns and two torpedo tubes. She was the sister ship to HMAS MELBOURNE and HMAS BRISBANE, having been completed second. The Chatham Class was a subclass to the Town Class light cruisers of the Royal Navy. Known to Australians simply as the 'Sydney' Class, the Chatham's differed by having reduced deck armour in order to incorporate newly developed belt armour. Their six-inch guns were mounted in single turrets with no secondary armament other than her anti-aircraft weaponry that would be further increased during World War I. The Chatham Class also had aircraft fitted during the war. Following a period spent in eastern Australian ports, SYDNEY proceeded to Singapore in March, 1914, to act as escort to the two new Royal Australian Navy submarines AE1 and AE2. Soon after leaving port AE1 lost all power and SYDNEY was forced to take her in tow while repairs were carried out. In fierce currents the tow rope parted and AE1 was nearly rammed by AE2, which had to take drastic evasive action. As a result of this, the helm of AE2 was found to be jammed and the two submarines started to drift out of control. SYDNEY had to cope with the situation but found that she herself was out of action as the parted tow rope had twisted itself around her

rudder rendering the vessel immoveable. When going to the submarines' rescue she was unable to turn and very nearly rammed them. Captain Glossop ordered all three vessels to anchor until morning when a diver was put over to free the SYDNEY's rudder. AE1 was taken in tow once more and the flotilla got underway bound for Darwin. The flotilla entered Sydney harbour on the 24 May, 1914, where they were welcomed by the entire Australian fleet. SYDNEY spent the remainder of the pre-war months in Australian waters. On 3 August, 1914, SYDNEY was joined at Townsville by the destroyers HMAS WARREGO and HMAS YARRA before proceeding north to form a unit in Admiral Patey's Pacific Squadron. Following the outbreak of war the following day, SYDNEY operated in New Guinea and Pacific waters, taking part in the brief Allied campaign against the German Pacific possessions and carrying out a series of punitive patrols. Highlights during this period included the capture of Rabaul (the capital of German New Guinea) between 9 and 11 September, 1914 and the destruction of the Angaur Island (now part of Palau) Wireless Station on 26 September, 1914. In October, 1914, SYDNEY and her sister ship MELBOURNE detached from HMAS AUSTRALIA and returned to Australia to form part of the escort for the first ANZAC convoy. This consisted of thirty eight transports carrying 20,000 men and 7,500 horses. The escort consisted of SYDNEY, MELBOURNE, the British armoured cruiser HMS MINOTAUR and the Japanese battlecruiser IBUKI. The convoy left Albany, Western Australia on 1 November, 1914. It was timed to pass some fifty miles east of the Cocos Islands on the morning of 9 November, 1914. At 0620 on 9 November, wireless operators in several transports and in the warships picked up signals in an unknown code, followed by a query from the Cocos Island Wireless Station asking 'What is that code?' It was the German cruiser SMS EMDEN, ordering her collier BURESK to join her at Point (sometimes called 'Port') Refuge (part of the Cocos Island Group). After some debate between the vessels over which of the escorts should be dispatched, it was decided that SYDNEY, as the warship nearest to Cocos, should be sent. Detaching itself from the convoy at 0700 SYDNEY was able to exceed her designed speed, arriving at Cocos at 0915 and spotting EMDEN some seven or eight miles distant. At a range of 10,500 yards, EMDEN opened fire and SYDNEY was soon under heavy fire. SYDNEY was, however, faster and better armed than her German opponent and by 1115 EMDEN lay wrecked on North Keeling Island, although it continued to resist. SYDNEY then left the scene to pursue the BURESK and, having forced the collier to be scuttled by its crew, returned at 1300 to secure EMDEN's surrender. Four members of SYDNEY's crew had been killed, whilst twelve had been wounded. Captain of EMDEN, von Müller, had decided to run the ship aground on North Keeling Island in a bid to save his crew members who were still alive. Captain Glossop estimated that SYDNEY had scored around a hundred hits on the EMDEN by the time it ran aground. 134 of the EMDEN's crew were killed in the battle. Some of the German survivors were sent to Australian POW camps but the majority, including Müller, were imprisoned on Malta. On 15 November, 1914, SYDNEY arrived in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and from there was ordered to proceed to Malta where it arrived on 3 December. It was then ordered to Bermuda to join the North American and West Indies Stations for patrol duty. For the next eighteen months SYDNEY was engaged in observing neutral ports in the Americas, mainly in the West Indies with Jamaica as a base, and off Long Island and Squadron Headquarters at Bermuda. SYDNEY finally left Bermuda on 9 September 1916, arriving in Devonport, England, on 19 September, and from there proceeded to Scotland for refit. On 31 October, 1916, SYDNEY was temporarily attached to the 5th Battle Squadron at Scapa Flow, Scotland. On 15 November, she sailed for Rosyth, Scotland, where for the remainder of the war SYDNEY's duties were confined to routine North Sea patrols. On 4 May, 1917, while on patrol between the Humber Estuary

and the mouth of the Firth, SYDNEY fought a running engagement with the German zeppelin L43. After both combatants had expended all of their ammunition to no avail they reportedly parted company on good terms. In August, SYDNEY was fitted with the first revolving aircraft launching platform to be installed onboard a warship. On 8 December, a borrowed Sopwith Pup was successfully launched from the SYDNEY's platform in a fixed position. It was the first aircraft to take off from an Australian warship. Nine days later the Pup flew off the platform while it was turned into the wind; the first time an aircraft had been launched from such a platform in a revolved position. Early in 1918, SYDNEY took onboard a Sopwith Camel as a replacement for the Pup. On 1 June, 1918, as British forces entered enemy controlled waters, two German sea planes were sighted by SYDNEY at 0933, diving towards HMAS MELBOURNE. Both planes dropped bombs although no hits were scored. The SYDNEY's Sopwith Camel was launched at 0955, together with the MELBOURNE's at 1000 to find and engage the German planes. MELBOURNE's pilot Lieutenant L. B. Gibson failed to locate the enemy sea planes and soon returned. SYDNEY's pilot, Lieutenant A. C. Sharwood, on the other hand, pursued the Germans for nearly sixty miles before he was able to engage them, shooting one of them down and being forced to bail out himself when he failed to relocate the SYDNEY. Sharwood's claim of one enemy sea plane having been shot down was not recognized by the Admiralty on the grounds that there was no independent corroboration. SYDNEY was present at the surrender of the German Grand Fleet on 21 November, 1918. It sailed from Portsmouth on 9 April, 1919, for the return passage to Australia. Other than visits to New Guinea in 1922 and New Caledonia and the Solomons in 1927, SYDNEY spent the remainder of its seagoing career in home waters, serving as flagship to the Australian Squadron from September 1924 until October 1927. She paid off at Sydney on 8 May 1928. On 10 January 1929, she was delivered to Cockatoo Island, Sydney for breaking up.