

Basic Detail Report



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Title

German seamen standing at ease on deck of KOLN

Date

May 1933

Primary Maker

Samuel J Hood Studio

Medium

Emulsion on glass

Name

Glass plate negative

History

The K-class light cruiser DKM KOLN - named after the city of Cologne - was commissioned into the German Navy in January 1930 and spent the pre-war years as a training ship. It was during this time that KOLN undertook a one year world cruise departing 8 December 1932 and returning - to a personal welcome by Adolf Hitler - on 12 December 1933. The cruiser's war service included operations off Portugal, Spain and the North Atlantic, mine laying in the North Sea, participating in the invasion of Norway and convoy duties between Norway and Denmark. The KOLN was sunk by a British aircraft attack at Wilhelmshaven, Germany on 3 March 1945. The sinking took place in shallow waters and the gun turrets remained operational and above water; and used against enemy troops advancing on Wilhelmshaven. KOLN was scrapped in 1946. As part of its 1932-33 international voyage the cruiser visited Fremantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, Hobart and Sydney between 11 March and 17 May before heading to Japan and back to Germany via the Suez Canal. In Australia the officers and crew attended luncheons and dinners, hosted VIP and general public visits to the ship, played various competitive games, visited local attractions, and the band played at a number of functions. The cruise was intended as an unofficial visit although courtesy calls on various government officials were made. Newspapers across the country reported the activities of the ship as it visited each port. Whilst the majority of Australians were pleased with the visit and warmly welcomed the Germans, some were uncomfortable having former enemies on their doorstep. The following extracts provide examples of the interest in the visit. The Mercury, 6 March 1933 "GERMAN CRUISER VISIT TO AUSTRALIA. When the German cruiser Köln arrives at Sydney on May 6 she will have on board several naval cadets, who were rescued from the German training ship Niobe, which foundered in the Baltic Sea in July last year, causing great loss of life. The Köln is to remain at Sydney for 10 days, the object of her cruise being the training of cadets, of whom there are 70 on board. The cruiser is of 8,000 tons displacement, and has a length of 169 metres. Her complement comprises 23 officers, two officials, 153 non-commissioned officers, 321 ratings, and 70 cadets. She is armed with nine 15 centimetre guns, two 8.8 centimetre guns, two

machine guns, and four torpedo tubes, and has a maximum speed of 32 knots. The Köln was launched at Wilhelmshaven in May, 1928. Captain Schniewind, the commanding officer of the Köln, was in charge of a torpedo boat during the war. Under an arrangement between the Commonwealth Government and the German Government the visit of the Köln will be regarded as unofficial, to reduce expenditure. The usual courtesy calls will be exchanged, however. The Köln is to make a visit to Hobart." The Cairns Post, 24 March 1933 "GERMAN CRUISER AT ADELAIDE. March 22. The German cruiser Köln arrived at the outer harbor at dawn to-day, flying the old Imperial German flag, which replaced the Republican emblem nine days ago, under instructions from the Hitler Government. Australian naval officers boarded the cruiser and officially called on Commander Schniewind, who later lunched at Government House." The Adelaide Advertiser, 23 March 1933 "LIKE HOME WELCOME" Officers Entertained At Dinner Captain Schniewind has had so enthusiastic a welcome in this State that at a dinner to the officers of the cruiser at the South Australian Hotel, last night, he said he was unable to express himself adequately in English. He spoke in German, and said that there could be nothing more pleasing than to receive a reception as he and his officers had done. They had come to a strange country, but had received as warm a welcome as if they had arrived in Germany. Captain Schniewind said he was pleased to see the manner in which the Germans who migrated to Australia had stuck to their task. They had been made to feel that South Australia was their home. Captain Schniewind replied to the toast of "The Visitors" proposed by the chairman (Dr. H. Basedow), and proposed the toast of "Australia." The officers of the Köln preceded the drinking of the toast of "Australia" with three cheers in German. Dr. Basedow said that the visit of the cruiser was entirely educational. Among the crew of 550 were about 70 cadets doing a university marine course. They were being taught by experts. Captain Schniewind was an expert in torpedo work, his chief officer (Captain Bruch), an expert in aerial service, and the chief engineer, a high class submarine man. When the vessel had completed its trip it would have covered 50,000 miles. "I hope that the visit will lead to lasting friendships between the members of the crew and persons in the Antipodes," he said. "Captain Schniewind has said that although he is in charge of a war vessel he has come to Australia with a message of friendship." Mr. Whitford who took the place of the Premier (Mr. Richards), supported Dr. Basedow. He said the visit indicated that the Germans wished to be friendly with Australia. Australians wished to be friendly with Germans." The Canberra Times, 5 May 1933 "GERMAN CRUISER Diggers Decline to Join Welcome SYDNEY. Thursday. Officials of the Returned Soldiers' League have refused to comment on the league's decision not to take part in the ceremonial during the visit of the German cruiser Köln. Some of the returned men expressed the view that the proposed wreath offering at the Sydney cenotaph on Sunday was following too closely on the Anzac Day commemoration ceremony when the Cenotaph was banked with flowers by relatives of the soldiers whose lives were sacrificed in the war with the Germans." Sydney Morning Herald, 8 May 1933 "THE KÖLN German Cruiser Arrives. The German cruiser Köln arrived in Sydney on Saturday morning, and was greeted by a salute of 21 guns from Garden Island. In token of friendship she flew a White Ensign as well as the German flag. She berthed at Circular Quay. Ceremony was observed as the official courtesies began. Captain Schniewind (who wears the Iron Cross of the 1st and 2nd classes) early left the ship to call on the Governor, the Chief Justices of the Commonwealth and of the State, the Lord Mayor, Mr Weaver (representing the Premier), and the senior naval and military officers. Returning he was piped on board with the guard formed and bugles sounding. "There is no political meaning in our visit," said Captain Schniewind, in an interview. "In Italy, in Madras, and at the

Australian ports, I have found no trace of hostile feeling engendered by the war. It is as if all were anxious to say: 'It is gone, it is forgotten, let us finish it.' In Madras we felt uncertain at first, for the Emden bombarded the oil tanks there. Yet we had a truly hospitable reception from both English residents and Indians. In Australia the Köln has enjoyed a hearty welcome at each port we have quickly found friends, not only among Australians of German descent, and the sailors have been able to make many motor trips and excursions." Captain Schniewind was on the Far Eastern station in 1909-11. During the war he saw all his service on destroyers. His second and third ships were mined. There was a special interest for Captain Schniewind in a meeting in Australia with a British naval officer who remembered a destroyer engagement in the North Sea in which both of them had fought. It was curious for each to learn "how it had been on the other side." " The Mercury, 17 May 1933 "SYDNEY Farewell to Cruiser The German cruiser Köln left Sydney this morning in continuation of her goodwill tour, and was seen away by thousands of persons, most of whom had done their best to dispense hospitality to members of the crew. It was rather an embarrassing visit, for it came into collision with a natural feeling of diffidence on the part of the returned sailors' and soldiers' organisation, with the anniversary of the sinking of the Lusitania, and with the treatment of Jews and the rattling of sabres in Germany. But officers and crew were diplomatic, and they found many persons who did not see in them any responsibility for the anxiety their country is causing throughout the world. Before his departure the captain of the Köln expressed gratitude and appreciation. The wharf was crowded when the cruiser sailed, and the sturdy young seamen carried away many mementoes, and, let us hope, pleasant memories of New South Wales."