

# Basic Detail Report

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## Title

Kapitänleutnant Hellmuth von Mücke, schooner AYESHA

## Date

1915

## Primary Maker

Lauer

## Medium

Silver

## Dimensions

Overall: 34 × 34 × 3 mm

## Name

Medallion

## History

Hellmuth von Mücke (1881-1957) was born in Saxony, Germany. He served in the Imperial German Navy between 1900 and 1919, was awarded the Iron Cross 1st Class for his time onboard the raider SMS EMDEN and would, ultimately, attain the rank of Korvettenkapitän (Corvette Captain). Von Mücke was the son of an Army captain and at the age of eighteen he became a naval cadet and served on the school ship CHARLOTTE, followed by the battleship KAISER FRIEDRICK III. He became Leutnant zur See (ensign) in September 1903 and was posted to the light cruiser NYMPHE. In 1907, von Mücke became first officer of the 3rd Torpedo Boat reserve Half-Flotilla and, a year later, the flag lieutenant to the Commander of Scouting Forces. He received command of the torpedo boat S149 in 1910, whilst simultaneously acting as flag lieutenant to the First Torpedo Boat Flotilla. In late 1913, von Mücke joined the crew of the light cruiser SMS EMDEN, which was then stationed in German East Asia Squadron port of Tsingtao, China. In June, 1914 he became the EMDEN's First Officer, serving under the captaincy of Lieutenant Commander Karl von Müller. The two men are believed to have got on well and it was the beginning of a formidable partnership of command. After the outbreak of war, the commander of the German East Asia Squadron, Count Maximilian von Spee, detached EMDEN for commerce raiding, whilst the rest of the squadron attempted to navigate its way back to Germany. The EMDEN intercepted a large number of merchant vessels in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during the first four months of the war. Finally, however, on 9 November, 1914, EMDEN was attacked and wrecked by HMAS SYDNEY. At the time that when EMDEN was attacked by the SYDNEY, von Mücke had been leading a landing party against an Allied communications post on Direction Island (part of the Cocos Island group in the Indian Ocean). Unable to return to his ship to take part in the battle, he and around fifty German sailors seized the nearby 123 ton, three-masted schooner AYESHA and

made their escape while SYDNEY was still assessing the destruction of the EMDEN. Rendezvousing with a German freighter, von Mücke and his men were transported to Yemen where they spent some time trying to persuade Ottoman officials to return them to Germany. Eventually, the weary German sailors embarked on a long and dangerous ride across the Arabian Desert. After finally reaching Constantinople (present day Istanbul), von Mücke boarded a train to Berlin. The arrival of von Mücke and his men back in Germany was greeted with widespread acclaim. His experiences, however, had clearly taken their toll on him, and he began to embrace pacifism. This proved to be an embarrassment to the German Military, and the public fame that von Mücke received proved to be short-lived. Following the rise of Adolf Hitler during the 1930s, he became a vocal opponent of the Nazi regime, and was briefly imprisoned in a concentration camp for political dissent on two separate occasions, in 1936 and 1939. After the war, he continued peace activism, opposing rearmament in 1950s West Germany. He died of a heart attack on 30 July, 1957.

SMS EMDEN was a German light cruiser, launched on 26 May 1908, and commissioned into the German Imperial Navy on 10 July 1909. As a light cruiser it was designed to disrupt merchant shipping. It was armed with ten 4.1" guns and was the last German cruiser to be equipped with reciprocating engines (subsequent vessels were equipped with steam turbines). On 31 July 1914 EMDEN left Tsingtao (a German colony between 1898 and 1914 that is now known as Qingdao and is a part in Shandong Province, China). It was at sea when it learnt of the outbreak of war on 2 August 1914. It was captained by Lieutenant Commander Karl von Müller, a shy and withdrawn man who was, nevertheless, regarded with great reverence by his crew. He spent most of his time on the bridge and comfortable chairs were placed there for him to sleep and rest in between action and emergencies. He maintained a constant state of readiness aboard his ship, adding extra lookouts after darkness and ordering gun and torpedo crews to be stationed at their posts around the clock. Also on board was the Kaiser's nephew, Prinz Franz Joseph of Hohenzollern, as second torpedo officer. It took EMDEN some time to reach its destination in the Indian Ocean, and once there its fighting career was short, lasting barely two months. On 10 September 1914 it captured her first prize, the Greek steamer PONTOPOROS. Though an officially neutral ship, PONTOPOROS was ferrying Allied coal supplies to India. To solve the dilemma von Müller persuaded the Greek captain that German money was just as good as British and that he should now consider himself under charter to the German Government. The PONTOPOROS, together with EMDEN's stalwart collier the MARKOMANNIA, would stay in regular contact with EMDEN until 12 October 1914 when the former ship was captured and the latter sunk by HMS YARMOUTH. Although its fighting career was relatively short-lived, the EMDEN quickly built up a fearsome reputation around the Indian Ocean's shipping lanes. The ship was disguised by fashioning a false funnel out of sail-cloth canvas and bamboo stakes that was capable of spewing chemically-produced smoke when necessary. Whereas the German cruiser only had three funnels, British cruisers had four and the EMDEN was now able to pass itself off as the YARMOUTH, which was also known to be in the area. It was a ruse that proved effective time and time again. On 10 September 1914, the 4000 ton passenger-cargo ship INDUS was captured and sunk en route from Calcutta to Bombay; the 6000 ton LOVAT suffered the same fate not long after. The EMDEN successfully captured and/or sunk around twenty seven ships during its wartime service. The crew often had the luxury of enjoying many of the spoils of their raids and the prisoners they took were treated well and usually set free. By late September there were known to be seven British ships, three Japanese vessels and a Russian cruiser combing the Indian Ocean in search of the EMDEN. 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 immovable. 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. Von Müller had decided to run EMDEN 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. EMDEN, wrecked but still somewhat intact, was left to disintegrate on North Keeling Island, and a visitor to the island in 1919 reported that almost all traces of the ship had disappeared.