

‘A PROMISING YOUNG OFFICER’**CAPTAIN DENIS EDWARD RAHILLY C.B.E.**
ROYAL NAVY & ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

Denis Edward Rahilly was born on the 1st September 1887 at Clifton, Bristol the son of Lieutenant-Colonel John Roche Rahilly, R.A.M.C., and his wife Maria Rahilly. He was baptised on the 5th November 1887 at St Marys Church, Hutton, Somerset. The 1891 Census records that at the age of 3 years, Denis was living with his grandfather and extended family at The Court, Hutton. The household members at The Court were Alfred H. Bisdee, grandfather aged 71 living on his own means, Sarah Bisdee aged 40 his daughter, granddaughters Eileen M. Rahilly aged 12, Dorothy R. Rahilly aged 8, Kathleen I. Rahilly aged 2, grandsons John M.B. Rahilly aged 10, Denis E. Rahilly aged 3, Alfred G. Bisdee aged 10, Alice M. Ewart aged 21 governess, Alice M.M. White aged 30 domestic parlourmaid, Annie J. Winter aged 27 cook, Louisa Wheel aged 20 housemaid, Florence H.H.B. Reed aged 20 nurse and Caroline J. Starks aged 14 under nurse.

Denis was educated at Epsom College and entered the Royal Navy as a Cadet on the 15th March 1902, at the age of 14 years. Relevant details extracted from his service record are as follows:

<u>Ship</u>	<u>Appointed</u>	<u>Discharged</u>
Britannia	13 th May 1902	15 th September 1903
Sutlej	19 th September 1903	10 th November 1903
Crescent	25 th February 1904	26 th November 1905
Carnarvon	July/August 1907	
Sapphire for Ostrich	7 th April 1908	26 th September 1908
Blenheim for Mohawk	26 th September 1908	22 nd March 1909
Dreadnought	24 th March 1909	6 th August 1910
Excellent to qualify for Gunnery	6 th August 1910	
King Alfred	15 th June 1911	
Excellent (Gunnery)	14 th September 1911	3 rd February 1913

(late RN College Greenwich for Advanced Gunnery Course – Completed 28th June 1912)

Mars (Gunnery) 2nd July 1912

Victory for HMAS Sydney 3rd February 1913 31st January 1917 (Gunnery)

President 5th July 1918

Assistant to Inspector of Naval Ordnance 1st January 1928

Inspector of Naval Ordnance Woolwich 28th March 1928

Member of Naval Ordnance Committee 1st January 1932

DINO HQ Bath 13th July 1940 – (Deputy Inspector Naval Ordnance)

Denis Rahilly's record on passing out from HMS Britannia was very good. He had been hard a working cadet, trustworthy, zealous, and considered by his superiors to be a promising young officer. On the 30th September 1903 he became a Midshipman and subsequently a Sub-Lieutenant 30th November 1906 and Lieutenant 30th November 1907. Denis was assigned in 1905 to HMS Crescent, an Edgar-class armoured protected cruiser built in 1892, as an assistant navigator and served on her for over 2½ years, based at Cape Town.

He gained first class certificates between 1906 and 1907 in Seamanship (Part I & Part II), Gunnery, Torpedoes, Pilotage, and was rewarded with a £10 prize. Whilst serving on HMS Ostrich, a Fairfield three-funnelled 30-knot torpedo boat destroyer, he was cautioned by his commanding officer for the 'loss of a gunnery manual'.

In May 1908 he passed Part II of his examination in torpedo work and three years later in September 1911 qualified as a Gunnery Lieutenant. He had been recommended for gunnery duties in 1909 and later attended the Royal Naval College at Greenwich for an advanced Gunnery course which he completed in June 1912.

Lieutenant Rahilly maintained a high standard as a young naval officer which was complemented by a succession of good reports and recommendations for advancement. A commanding officer noted that he was '... an excellent draughtsman as regards charts and mechanical drawings' and that he had a knowledge of the German language which he continued to study during the early part of his naval career.

In March 1913 he was lent by the Royal Navy to the Royal Australian Navy for a period of three years and was appointed for gunnery duties on HMAS Sydney. The details recorded on his Royal Australian Service Cards were as follows:

Record of Service

Rahilly, Denis Edward

Date of Birth: 1st September 1887. Place of Birth ~ Clifton Bristol England.

Next-of-Kin: Wife – Minnie Jean Douglas Rahilly ~ Address not given.

<u>Date of Joining RAN</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Date of Promotion</u>	<u>Gazette</u>	<u>Period & Date Lent From RN</u>
1-3-13	Lieutenant	30-11-07	53/13	3 years (1-3-13)
	Lieut-Comdr.	30-11-15	19/16	Rank & Seniority Lt. 3-11-07

Special AllowancesDate

1-3-13 Gunnery – Allowance 4/- per diem

1-1-15 Senior – Allowance 1/6d per diem

£95 Extra Pay for War Service in Royal Australian Navy paid by Admiralty.

War Gratuity – Paid

Where Attached For Duty

<u>Ship or Establishment</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
London Depot	1-3-13	26-6-13	Revert to RN ~ 4-7-18 (Gaz. 2-6-1919)
Sydney	27-6-13	7-1-17	
London Depot	8-1-17	4-7-18	

Rahilly – Denis Edward (Lieutenant R.N.)

Appointed to P.N.F.¹ 3 years from 3-2-13 (Seniority 30-11-07); Order in Council No.318 (1913); Gazette No. 42 31-5-13. Page 1454.

Appointed to P.N.F. 3 years from 1-3-13; Order in Council No. 339 (1913); Gazette No.53 26-7-13; Amending previous Order in Council; Page 1760.

Promoted Lieutenant Commander P.N.F. 30-11-15; Order in Council No.14 (1916); Gazette No. 19 10-2-16; Page 254.

Appointment Terminated 4-7-18; Order in Council 16 (1919); Gazette No. 26 20-2-19; Page 327-5

¹P.N.F. ~ Permanent Naval Force

Lieutenant Denis Rahilly was appointed to HMAS Sydney in February 1913. She was one of four warships of the Chatham-class light cruisers built by the London and Glasgow Engineering and Iron Ship Building Company. The other warships in the Chatham-class were HMAS Melbourne, HMAS Brisbane and HMS Adelaide. The specification and technical details of HMAS Sydney were:-

Laid Down ~ 11th February 1911; Launched 29th August 1912; Commissioned 26th June 1913.

Length ~ 457-ft Overall, 430-ft Between Perpendiculars; Beam 19-ft-10-inches; Mean Draught 15³/₄-ft; Maximum Draught 17³/₄-18¹/₂-ft.

Displacement ~ 5,400-tons.

Machinery ~ Parsons Geared Turbines; 4 x Yarrow 3-Drum Boilers; 4 x Propeller Shafts;

Designed HP 22,000/25,000; Speed 25-knots.

Fuel ~ Coal: Normal 750-tons; Maximum 1,240-tons; Oil Fuel 200-tons.

Armament ~ 8 x BL 6-inch Mk IX Guns; 1 x 3-inch Anti-Aircraft Gun; 1 x 12-Pounder Gun; 4 x 3-Pounder Guns; 1 x 8-cwt Gun; 10 x 0.303 Machine Guns; 2 x 21-inch Torpedoes (Submerged) – 7 Torpedoes Carried.

Armour ~ Hadfield Armour: Side Belts 3-1¹/₂-inches Tapering at Bow & Stern; Deck 1¹/₂-0.4-inches (Internal Protection by Longitudinal & Transverse Bulkheads, Double Bottoms & Over Machinery and Magazine Spaces); Gun Shields 4-inch; Conning Tower 4-inch.

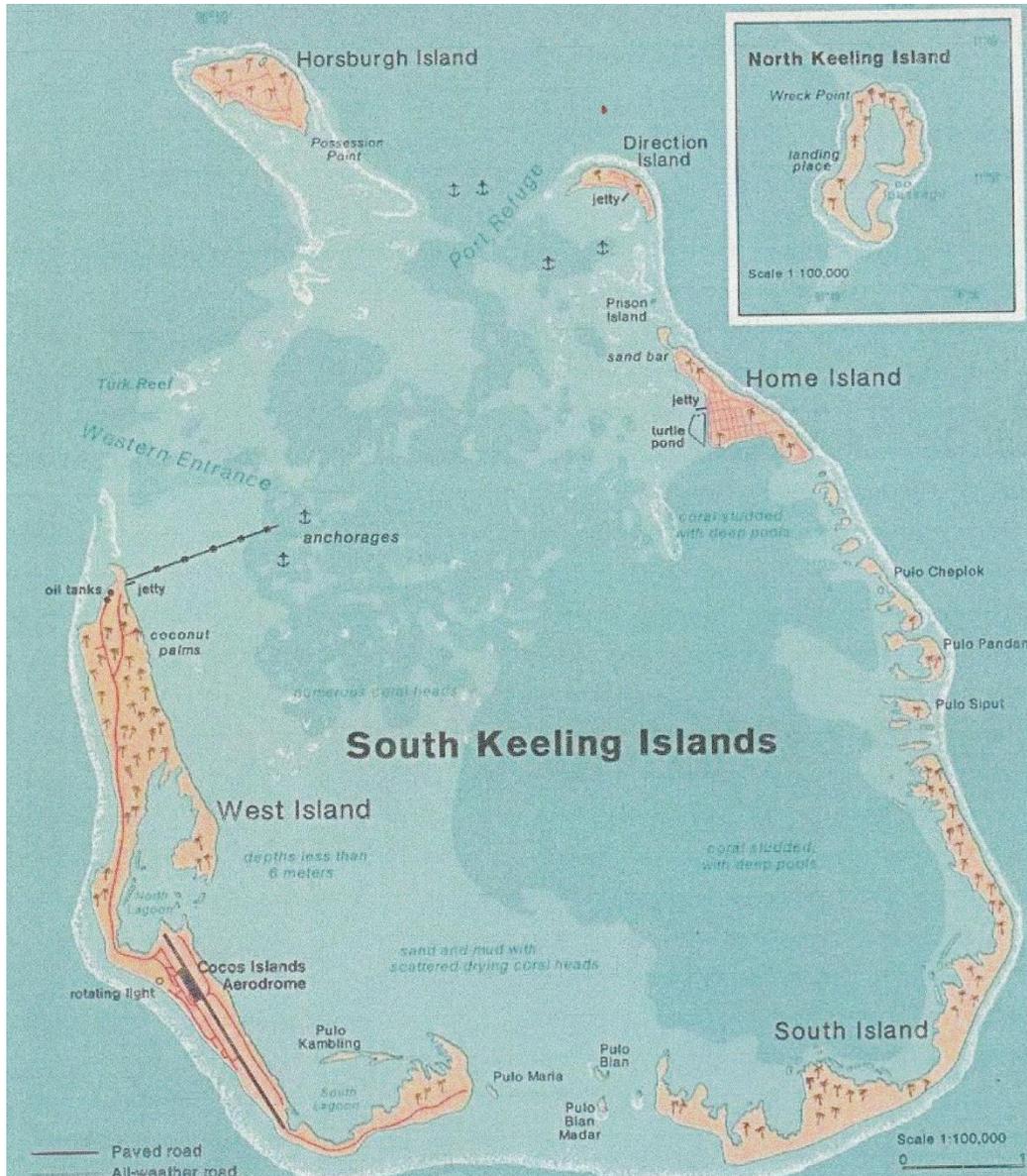
The Conning Tower of HMAS Sydney and other the warships in the class were later replaced by revolving platforms for carrying a small seaplane. Ammunition Hoists were electrically operated.

Complement ~ 376 Peacetime; 475 Wartime.

On completion HMAS Sydney sailed on her maiden voyage to Australia, arriving at Albany, Western Australia on the 19th September 1913. She undertook peacetime duties on the eastern coast of Australia until March 1914 and was then ordered to Singapore to escort two new submarines AE1 and AE2 back to Australia. They reached Sydney in May 1914. HMAS Sydney then resumed her patrolling activities in Australian waters.

On the outbreak of the First World War HMAS Sydney was assigned to the Australian Naval Squadron under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir George Edwin Patey KCMG, KCVO (1859-1935). The squadron had been ordered to protect the Australian and Military Expeditionary

Force in their capture of German colonial assets in the Pacific. During September she participated in operations to capture Rabal and Anguar Island. The following month in company with HMAS Melbourne and Admiral Patey's flag ship, the battlecruiser HMAS Australia they accompanied the first convoy of ships from Sydney carrying Australian and New Zealand troops to Egypt. They sailed along the southern coast of Australia to Albany and departed from there for Columbo on the 1st November.



During the morning of the 9th November, a SOS wireless communication from Direction Island in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands was intercepted by Admiral Patey's squadron and HMAS Sydney was detached with orders to investigate. The reason for the SOS was that the German commerce raider SMS Emden had arrived at Direction Island and had sent ashore an armed party of naval seaman.

The SMS Emden was a Dresden-class cruiser built by the Kaiserliche Werft (Imperial Dockyard), Danzig in 1906 and built under the 1898 naval programme for the construction of

thirty light cruisers. She was the second and last of the Dresden-class to be built for the German Imperial Navy. SMS Dresden was the other warship in the class.

The SMS Emden's specifications and technical details were as follows:

Laid Down ~ 1st November 1906; Launched 26th May 1908; Commissioned 10th July 1909.

Dimensions ~ Length 338-ft 1-inch; Beam 44ft-3-inches; Draught 18-ft 2-inches.

Displacement ~ Normal 3,664-tons; Full Load 4,268-tons.

Machinery ~ 2 x Triple Expansion Steam Engines (She was the last cruiser to be fitted with triple expansion steam engines; subsequent cruisers were powered by steam turbines); 2 x Propeller Shafts.

Fuel ~ Coal – 850-tons.

Speed ~ 23½-knots; Range 3,760 Nautical Miles at 12-knots.

Armament ~ 10 x 10·5-cm (4·1-inch) SK L/40 Guns; 8 x 5·2-cm (2-inch) L/55 Guns; 2 x 45-cm (17·7-inch) Torpedoes; Capacity for Carrying 50 Mines.

Armour ~ Deck 80mm (3·1-inch); Conning Tower 100mm (3·9-inch); Gun Shields 50mm (2-inch).

Complement ~ 18 Officers; 343 Enlisted Men.

After completing her sea trials, SMS Emden was decommissioned in September 1909. Seven months later in April 1910, she was recommissioned and assigned to the Ostasiengeschwader (East Asia Squadron) at Tsingtao. Tsingtao or Qingdao was a German occupied coastal area of 213 square miles, on China's Yellow Sea, known as the Kiautschou Bay Concession between 1898-1914. It had been previously fortified by the Chinese to guard against naval attack in the 1890s. Departing from Kiel on the 12th April 1920 the Emden began a goodwill tour of South America visiting Montevideo and Buenos Aires. In company with the SMS Bremen, which was based on Germany's Ostamerikanischen (East American Station) they sailed around Cape Horn. Emden made stopover at Valparaíso, Chile, whilst the Bremen continued her voyage to Peru. In order, to be able to steam across the Pacific Ocean, Emden took aboard at the Chilean naval base at Talcahuano 1,400 tons of coal, and departed from there on the 24th June. She visited Easter Island and at Papeete, Tahiti, coaled ship on the 12th July after steaming 4,200 nautical miles. Ten days later Emden arrived at Apia, German Samoa where she joined the East Asia Squadron under the command of Konteradmiral (Rear Admiral) Eric Gähler. The squadron remained in Samoa until October and sailed from there to their base at Tsingtao.

The Emden was deployed on duties in the China Sea and visited Japan and Hong Kong. In late December 1910, Emden, and SMS Nürnberg sailed to Ponape, in the Caroline Islands to suppress a revolt. Once peace was restored, the Emden returned to Tsingtao in March 1911 for a refit. On completion she resumed her normal peacetime operations. She was sent in October to

the Yangtze river – the longest river in Asia – to protect Europeans from a violent Chinese uprising.

The following month Vizeadmiral (Vice Admiral) Maximilian von Spee (1861-1914) relieved Konteradmiral Gähler and assumed command of the East Asia Squadron.

Two years later in May 1913 Korvettenkapitän (Lieutenant Commander) Karl von Müller (1873-1923) was appointed the commanding officer of the Emden. Shortly afterwards he was promoted to Fregattenkapitän (Commander). Up until the outbreak of the First World War the Emden continued to operate in Chinese waters and the Pacific, visiting German colonies.

During the European crisis in July 1914 brought about by the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria the previous month, the Emden remained at Tsingtao. Vice-Admiral von Spee with the armoured cruisers SMS Scharnhorst and SMS Gneisenau were at sea in the Pacific Ocean and the SMS Leipzig had been ordered to relieve the SMS Nürnberg, operating off the coast of Mexico. News reached Müller that the Austro-Hungarian Empire had declared war against Serbia on the 28th July 1914 and he sailed from Tsingtao on the 31st July. On the 3rd August, two days after Germany declared war on Russia the Emden captured the Ryazan, a Russian ship and escorted her back to Tsingtao for conversion into an auxiliary cruiser, the Cormoran.

Müller received orders from von Spee to rendezvous with him at Pagan Island in the Mariana Islands. Emden in company with the auxiliary cruiser SMS Prinz Eitel Friedrich and the collier Markomannia sailed from Tsingtao and arrived at Pagan Island on the 12th August. Japan had entered the war on the 13th joining the Triple Entente – (Great Britain-France-Russia) – and had sent warships to search for von Spee's East Asia Squadron. Von Spee decided to sail via South America and return to Germany with his East Asia Squadron, engaging any British merchant ships which came within range of their guns. Müller suggested to von Spee that one cruiser be detached for independent commerce raiding in the Indian Ocean, a request to which the Vice-Admiral agreed.

On the 14th August, the Emden and the collier Markomannia sailed from Pagan Island for the Indian Ocean and began a successful period of commerce raiding operations for the Germans in the shipping lanes between Singapore, Colombo and Aden. During the voyage a Dutch coastal defence ship the Tromp was stopped by the Emden to check and affirm the former's neutrality. As the Emden sailed through the Lombok Strait into the Indian Ocean, her wireless operators heard messages being transmitted by HMS Hampshire. In consequence Müller, in order to maintain the secrecy of Emden's presence in the Indian Ocean, he gave orders for a dummy funnel to be erected to disguise the warship as a British light cruiser.

In early September Emden entered the Bay of Bengal. The British assumed that the cruiser was with von Spee and his East Asia Squadron. Shadowing the shipping lanes without any success, Müller steamed towards the Colombo-Calcutta trade routes on the 10th September and captured a Greek collier, persuaded the crew to accompany him and paid them for their services! A further five merchant ships were captured, four were sunk and the other vessel the Kabinga was used for transporting the ship's crews of Emden's victims to a neutral port. Müller stopped a Norwegian ship, carried out a thorough search and then let her continue.

The Norwegians had informed Müller that Allied warships were operating in the area, and he decided to return to the east coast of India. Whilst steaming towards India he challenged an Italian merchantman but did not detain her. However, the Italians relayed a message to a British steamer who informed the British authorities of the incident.

The British immediately issued a cessation of shipping, a communications blackout and HMS Hampshire, HMS Yarmouth and a Japanese cruiser were ordered to search for the commerce raider. Two other warships patrolled areas around selected coaling stations to prevent the Emden using their facilities.

On the 22nd September the Emden entered the port of Madras at 2000 hours where the harbour was fully illuminated, ignoring blackout instructions. Emden opened fire and set alight two oil storage tanks, damaged the ports infrastructure, shelled a merchant ship and then withdrew. Two days later all shipping was prohibited by the British in the Bay of Bengal. Müller's first month of commerce raiding had severely disrupted the trading of valuable cargoes in the Indian Ocean. His next area chosen for commerce raiding was on the Western side of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where two British merchant ships were sunk, and a collier was boarded with a prize crew to supplement Emden's consumption of coal. After two more ships were sunk the Emden arrived at the Maldives archipelago in the Indian Ocean on the 29th September, where she refilled her almost empty bunkers with coal. Departing following day, Emden began cruising the shipping lanes between Aden and Australia and Calcutta and Mauritius without success. She then steamed to Diego Garcia for essential machinery maintenance and to give her crew rest and relaxation. The British personnel at Diego Garcia base were unaware that a state of war existed between Great Britain and Germany and welcomed the arrival of the Emden and her crew. Emden left Diego Garcia on the 10th October. Müller chose to conduct further operations to the west of Colombo and learned from wireless interceptions from HMS Hampshire that the collier Markomania had been captured by the British. On the 15th, Emden sank a British merchant vessel and over the following days detained five merchant ships, sinking three, retained one as a collier, and the other to transport the crews of captured and sunken ships to its next port of call.

Müller left the seas around Colombo for Malaya to launch an attack on Penang, situated on the north-west coast of the Malayan Peninsula in the Straits of Malacca.

He coaled ship in the Nicobar Islands and arrived off Penang at dawn on the 28th October.

Steaming at 18-knots with the fourth funnel erected to mask her true identity, lookouts on the Emden sighted a warship in the harbour with its lights on. The warship was a veteran Russian cruiser, the Zhemchug, which had berthed at Penang for boiler repairs. Unable to raise steam or power up her ammunition hoists, she had five rounds of ready ammunition available for her guns and one shell had been loaded into the breechblock of one gun for immediate firing. Emden closed to within 300 yards of the Russian warship and Müller ordered a torpedo to be launched and to commence firing with her 10·5-cm guns. The Zhemchug sustained severe damage although one of her gun crews replied without striking the Emden. A second torpedo inflicted further damage which was followed by an explosion which blew up the Zhemchug and she quickly disappeared below the water. Over eighty Russian sailors were killed and one hundred and twenty-six wounded, some of whom died later.

As the Emden hastily withdrew two French warships in the harbour opened fire. A British merchant ship loaded with ammunition the SS Glen Turret had stopped off the harbour entrance to take aboard a pilot. Müller ordered his ships boat's crew to board the Glen Turret but they were recalled as a French destroyer, the Mousquet was observed steaming towards the Emden. The French warship reacted slowly to the dangerous situation and allowed the Emden to open fire first and sink the Mousquet. The Emden rescued survivors in the water and then steamed away from Penang pursued by a French destroyer which lost sight of the raider in a rainstorm. On the 30th October Müller instructed a British vessel, the Newburn to heave to and transferred the French sailors to her after each had signed a document promising not to return to war! The attack on Penang caused widespread alarm and concern amongst the Allied powers and convoys from Australia were delayed until a stronger escorting force could be assembled.

Leaving the Newburn to continue her voyage, Müller steered a southerly course to rendezvous with the collier Buresk and set a course towards his next target the British Coaling station in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. There it was his intention to destroy the wireless station to distract British warships searching for him in the Indian Ocean. On the 9th November 1914, the Emden arrived off Direction Island at 0600 hours.

Today the Cocos (Keeling) Islands are a remote territory of Australia in the Indian Ocean approximately midway between Australia and Sri Lanka and relatively close to Sumatra. Its two coral atolls comprise twenty-seven islands. West Island, the capital has an airport and a visitor's centre. A cultural museum of the Cocos Malay people is situated on Home Island and Direction Island is the northernmost island of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

With no British warships in the area, a landing party from the Emden, was sent ashore under the command of executive officer Kapitänleutnant Hellmuth von Mücke (1881-1957) with two officers, six NCO's and thirty-eight sailors armed with machine guns and rifles to put out of action the wireless station. Although the Emden was equipped with radio jamming equipment the British wireless operators on duty in the station, were too quick for the German radio operators and managed before their signals were blocked to transmit a brief message "Unidentified ship off entrance".

The transmission was intercepted by Vice-Admiral Patey's squadron who were 50 nautical miles distant from Direction Island, escorting a convoy. HMAS Sydney under the command of Captain J.C.T. Glossop – later Vice-Admiral – (1871-1934) immediately broke away from the convoy and headed at full speed towards the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. A signal from the Sydney was misinterpreted by the Emden's radio operators who had concluded that the Australian warship was 250 nautical miles from the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and would give Müller plenty of time to complete the destruction of the wireless station. Lookouts on the Emden sighted smoke on the horizon at approximately 0900 hours and half-an-hour later identified that it was a warship approaching at full speed. Mücke's landing party were still ashore and there was not enough time for them to be recalled.

The Emden opened fire straddling the Australian warship as she came within range of her guns. Müller hoped to overwhelm her with rapidly fired salvos before the heavier armed HMAS Sydney opened fire. Two shells struck the latter, one damaging her after fire control station and the other failed to explode. The Sydney opened fire to gauge the range as the Emden manoeuvred to launch a torpedo, but the former's 6-inch shells began to inflict damage on her superstructure and disabled a gun. Müller attempted to fire another torpedo as a shell from the Sydney put out of action his steering gear and hand steering equipment. Disabled the Emden could only steer by using her engines as the Sydney's shells continued to inflict severe damage on the commerce raider and fatalities amongst her crew. Müller managed to position the Emden in order to launch a torpedo at the Australian warship but Captain Glossop increased speed and turned away. A shell struck some ready ammunition at 1000 hours on Emden's starboard side which exploded, causing a serious fire. Müller again tried to manoeuvre his ship to fire a torpedo, but Captain Glossop kept the Sydney out of range. By 1045 hours the Emden's guns fell silent. With her superstructure torn apart, two funnels and her foremast shot away Müller realised his ship could no longer fight and he beached the Emden to prevent further loss of life, on North Keeling Island. He ordered the engine and boiler rooms to be flooded and the crew threw overboard the gun breechblocks, torpedo aiming equipment, signal books and confidential papers.

Captain Glossop altered course towards the collier Buresk, whose crew scuttled their ship as the Australian warship approached. Captain Glossop then brought the Sydney to within hailing distance Emden to establish if she was prepared to surrender. There was no response from the commerce raider and with her battle ensign still flying, the Sydney opened fire on the wrecked warship. The Germans quickly responded by lowering the ensign, raised a white sheet and the Australian warship ceased fire.

During the exchange of fire between the two warships, four of the Sydney's crew were killed and eighteen wounded. Emden's fatalities amounted to one hundred and thirty-four and sixty-nine wounded and the survivors, including Fregatttenkapitän Müller were taken prisoner. The injured were taken to Australia and the remainder were detained as prisoners of war in Malta. They were released in 1920.

Kapitänleutnant von Mücke and his landing party had watched the battle develop and the inevitable demise of the Emden. He gave orders for an old schooner the Ayesha berthed at Direction Island to be prepared for sea and sailed away from the island before the Australian warship arrived. They sailed to Padang in the Dutch East Indies and from there travelled via the Middle East to Constantinople (now Istanbul) where they arrived in June 1915 and reported to the German Vizeadmiral Wilhelm Souchon (1864-1946). A few days after the battle HMS Cadmus, a Cadmus-class sloop, arrived at the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to bury those who had been killed in the battle and to salvage small portable items of equipment from the Emden.

The SMS Emden had a successful three-month commerce raiding career, sailing 30,000 nautical miles, sinking two warships, sinking, or capturing sixteen British merchant ships and one Russian merchant ship, totalling over 70,000 tons. Four other British ships were captured and released, and one British and a Greek ship used as colliers. A Japanese company proposed in 1915 to repair and refloat the Emden but it was not a viable option. Four years later, she had broken apart through constant pounding by the sea and partially sunk. In the 1950s her remains were broken up by a Japanese salvage company. The Kaiser awarded the Emden the Iron Cross and in commemoration, new warships constructed for the Imperial and later German Navy bearing the name Emden were to include a large Iron Cross mounted on the bow.

Lieutenant Rahilly, the gunnery officer on HMAS Sydney would have been able to claim some credit for his part and that of his gun crews in the destruction of the Emden. Captain Glossop was aware of his gunnery lieutenant capabilities, '... as above average, zealous, very keen and energetic Lt(G) – a very fine officer'. On the 30th November 1915 Lieutenant Rahilly had been promoted to Lieutenant-Commander. Captain Glossop gave Lieutenant-Commander Rahilly a special recommendation in September 1916 having, '... conducted himself with great zeal and

ability. The care and conspicuous success with which the classes of induction have been carried out reflect the greatest credit upon him. I consider him an officer worthy of commendation and advancement'.

After having transported the captured survivors of the Emden to Malta, HMAS Sydney was assigned to the North American and West Indies Station and arrived at Bermuda on the 6th January 1915. She was deployed operationally patrolling the western coasts of North and South America until September 1916, when she returned to the United Kingdom for a short refit. The Sydney then joined the 5th Battle Squadron at Scapa Flow and later was reassigned to the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron in November. On the 23rd December 1916 Lieutenant-Commander Rahilly was accidentally injured during stormy weather, sustaining a compound fracture of his leg left and was subsequently admitted to Butlaw Naval Hospital, South Queensferry where he remained for four months. His recovery progressed satisfactorily, but he was diagnosed as unfit for service. Throughout the remaining months of 1917 he attended medical examination boards and in December 1918 he was, considered to be fit for shore duties only. He continued to attend medical boards for further examinations until the 6th October 1919 when he was placed on the retired list as medically unfit. His service reports throughout 1918 and 1919 by successive commanding officers had continued to recognise his ability and aptitude by being recommended for promotion.

Denis had married on the 23rd October 1916 Minnie Jean Douglas Dixon in St Marys Cathedral, Glasgow. She had been born at Partick, Lanarkshire on the 25th March 1891. Later the couple had one son Denis Michael Rahilly, who was baptised at St Peters Church, Bayswater, London on the 18th November 1918. In July of that year Lieutenant-Commander Rahilly's appointment in the Royal Australian Navy was terminated.

Although not specifically mentioned on his service record it is probable that his medical retirement referred to active service at sea as he was retained by the Royal Navy as a retired officer for shore duties. Two months after being retired he joined the Inspection Branch of Naval Ordnance in which he had a very successful career and promotion. His appointments to the Naval Ordnance Branch was extended on a bi-annual basis from 1925. He became Deputy Inspector of Naval Ordnance in the Inspection Department at Newcastle and assistant to the Chief Inspector of Naval Ordnance in December 1927, having been promoted to Commander (retired) in September. The following year he was transferred to Woolwich as Inspector of Naval Ordnance. He was briefly in February 1931 confined with abdominal complications in Chatham

Naval Hospital. On the 1st January 1932 he was appointed a Naval Member of the Ordnance Committee and promoted Captain (retired).

He continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s to have regular medical examinations confirming that he was only fit for short duties. In 1935 The President of the Naval Ordnance Committee recommended him for the award of a C.B.E. – Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. Two years later Captain Denis Rahilly's name appeared in the 1937 Coronation Honours List – London Gazette 11th May 1937 (Page 3085) – for the award of the C.B.E., (Military). He was invested with the decoration at Buckingham Palace on the 10th August 1937.

Captain Denis Rahilly C.B.E., R.N., was retained for service on the outbreak of the Second World War with the Naval Ordnance Department. He was retired on the 13th July 1940 due to his First World War leg injury and poor health after 38 years' service in the Royal Navy. He had fulfilled over a long career the expectations of his early commanding officer's recommendations by his good conduct and expertise in naval gunnery and ordnance. Denis spent the remaining years of his life living in retirement with his wife Minnie in Weston-super-Mare, Somerset. He died at The General Hospital Weston-super-Mare on the 25th November 1966, aged 79 years. Minnie died also aged 79 on the 28th September 1970.

In 1917, four of the SMS Emden's 10.5-cm guns were removed from the wreck. One is displayed as a memorial in Hyde Park, Sydney, a second and other large items at the Royal Australian Naval Heritage Centre situated within the public access area on the northern end of Garden Island Naval Base, Sydney and the third at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Her ships bell as well as other artefacts are in the possession of the Australian War Memorial. The fourth gun was removed by the British and taken back to the United Kingdom but its location is ambiguous.

The HMAS Sydney I – SMS Emden Memorial is a heritage listed naval ships gun and memorial unveiled on the 23rd December 1917 in Hyde Park, Sydney. The gun is mounted on an octagonal Bowral trachyte base. It is inscribed in gold lettering on the north, east, south, and west faces with the details and purpose of the opening of the memorial, the names of those killed and wounded on HMAS Sydney in the Battle of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and the names of the officers serving on the warship. Listed amongst the latter is the name of Lieutenant D.E. Rahilly.

In the Memorial Chapel of St Katherine's Church, Exbury, Hampshire is a lectern manufactured of turbine blades from HMAS Sydney. The small brass plate attached to the foot of the lectern is inscribed:

Presented To
 Forster Memorial Church Exbury
 By L. Randerson, Melbourne
 Australian – 1930
 Made In Australia From The
 Turbine Blade Of H.M.A.S Sydney

The connection with Australia and the lectern most probably is through Lord Henry William Forster of Lepe GCMG, PC, DL (1866-1936) who was a conservative Member of Parliament 1892-1919, financial secretary to the War Office in 1915 and Governor General of Australia 1920-1925. The memorial chapel built between 1927 and 1928 has a magnificent recumbent bronze figure of Lieutenant Alfred Henry Forster, 2nd Dragoons (Royal Scots Greys) who died of wounds received in October 1918 at a London hospital on the 10th March 1919. His ashes are interred under the altar in the church. Whilst he was in hospital he met the sculptor Cecil Thomas OBE, FRBS (1885-1976), who was also a patient, and they became firm friends. Lord Forster, who was the donor of the chapel and his wife commissioned Cecil to design the bronze figure of their younger son. He also designed the effigy of the Reverend 'Tubby' Clayton in All Hallows By The Tower Church, in London. The bronze effigy of Alfred was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1924.



Lectern In The Chapel ~ St Katherine's Exbury

A few weeks after the outbreak of war Lord and Lady Forster received the tragic news that their elder son 2nd Lieutenant John Forster, 2nd Battalion, King's Royal Rifle Corps had died on the 14th September 1914. He is commemorated on the La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre Memorial in France.

There is a bronze portrait of him erected on the chapel wall overlooking his brother's effigy. The chapel is also dedicated to the men from Exbury who lost their lives during the war.

Placed on the lectern is a framed photograph of HMAS Sydney II Memorial at Geraldton, Western Australia.



Framed Photograph On The Lectern In St Katherine's Church Exbury, Hampshire.

Roger Coleman

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