

*The
thrilling story
of the
Old Emden*



PO Box 286
PORTS POINT NSW 3011

15 August 1988

THE THRILLING STORY OF THE OLD EMDEN

Circular to:

Gordon Cupit; President, OTYA (NSW Branch), Sydney

Jim Nagy; OTC Archives, Paddington, NSW

Ken White; K K White Museum, Bathurst, NSW

Barry Strahan; Perth, WA

Ex OTC Cocos Island Staff

THE THRILLING STORY

of the

OLD EMDEN

by

HANS HEINZ HARMES-EMDEN

Recently, two things have happened to re-awaken my interest in the German Cruiser, SMS Emden. First, there was the OTC Exhibition from Settlement to Satellites which displayed old Emden, along with a knife which actually came from Cocos and was made of Emden steel. Secondly, I was able to obtain a book, *The Last Corsair, the Story of the Emden* in Van Der Vat, (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1963) from Ken White in Canberra. Barry Strahan had told me about the book some twelve months ago, but I was unable to obtain a copy in Sydney.

After discussions with Gordon Cupit and Jim Nagy at the Exhibition, I decided to have an article, which was given to me by the late OTC Staff member, Johnny Lennon, while we were both on a tour of duty on Cocos in 1963, re-typed. Johnny had copied the article from one sent to the *Exiles Club*, in December, 1963, by the Author, Mr H H Harmes-Emden, as written by him for the *North China Daily News* newspaper, Shanghai in 1931.

The newly typed article is virtually the same as the one copied by Johnny. However, those who know John will remember his fascination with commas and full stops. (I do not mean any adverse criticism by this comment, but punctuation was a well known trade mark of his personality, vocabulary and correspondence). I am sure that the original did not contain all the commas found in Johnny's copy. Therefore, I have taken the liberty of amending the punctuation, in order to make the article more easily readable. I have also corrected some minor typing errors. However, I have in no way interfered with the wording of the story.

The reason for retyping the article was that the copy given to me by Johnny was hard to read. It was one of several carbon copies, typed on thin, airmail paper and photostating did little to improve its legibility. On Cocos Island in 1963, we lacked today's modern technology of word processors, high speed printers and photocopiers. In those days, all typing was done on manual typewriters and it was a laborious task to reproduce an article, such as Mr Harmes-Emden's. Hence, the gratitude of all those interested in the Emden story to Johnny Lennon for making the effort to give several people a copy of the article. A photostat of John's copy will be given, along with the retyped copy, to OTC Archives and the War Museum in Canberra.

Copied by John Lennon in 1963 and recopied by Bryan Nell in 1988

PO Box 286
POTTS POINT NSW 2011

15 August 1988

THE THRILLING STORY OF THE OLD EMDEN

Circular to:

Gordon Cupit; President, OTVA (NSW Branch), Sydney
Jim Nagy; OTC Archives, Paddington, NSW
Ken White; K R White Military Books, Lyneham, ACT
Barry Strahan; Perth WA (Ex DCA, Cocos Island)
Ex OTC Cocos Island Staff

Recently, two things have happened to re-awaken my interest in the German Cruiser, SMS Emden. First, there was the OTC Exhibition from Settlement to Satellites which displayed old equipment, similar to that which was used in the Cable Station on Cocos Island, along with a knife which actually came from Cocos and was made of Emden steel. Secondly, I was able to obtain a book, The Last Corsair, the Story of the Emden by Dan Van Der Vat, (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1983) from Ken White in Canberra. Barry Strahan had told me about the book some twelve months ago, but I was unable to obtain a copy in Sydney.

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Those of you who were on Cocos will remember that the "Emden Old Boys' Association", referred to by Mr Harmes-Emden, met at various times for a reunion and after each reunion sent a postcard to the Staff at Cocos. I remember the cards and also Mick Wood's comment, (while he was President of the Exiles Club), how the number of names decreased over the years. I wonder if any, or how many of the 1914 Emden survivors are alive today? I wonder also, if they were ever told of the closure of the Cable Station?

Since Mr Harmes-Emden divided the article by different topic headings, I have added an index to make easy reference to the topics. This will be an advantage should Gordon decide to include the article in the Veterans' Newsletter in serial form rather than in a single printing. If the article is reproduced in parts and anyone wants a single copy they can contact me at OTC Head Office or at home. My telephone number at OTC is (02) 287-5011 and at home (02) 358-5829.

Special thanks are due to OTC Staff members, Nicole Harrison, Leslie De Weert and Andrew Long for typing, printing and binding and cover design of this article respectively.

Bryan Nell

Bryan Nell

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H H Harmes-Emden
HAMBURG-Bergstedt
Kirchenheide 31

17 December 1953

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Yours

Please find enclosed copy of an article which appeared in the North
China Daily News, Shanghai, in April 1951

H H Harmes-Emden
HAMBURGE-Bergstedt
Kirchenheide 31

17 December 1963

The Exiles Club
COCOS (KEELING) ISLAND
Indian Ocean

Mr Paul Koster-Emdem, Secretary of the "Emden Old Boys' Association", sent me a copy of your letter of 4.8.63, and also some photographs showing Memorial Plate and Memorial Parade in remembrance of November 1914.

I do confess, I was deeply touched by these pictures and take this opportunity to thank you very much for letting me have these souvenirs.

Then my glance fell upon your address and it struck me what a fitting name you have chosen for your Club (Exiles Club).

I was born in Hong Kong and spent most of my life in the Far East, especially in China and India, in far out-of-the-way places; in India on Christmas Eve under a dark sweltering tropical sky with jackals howling in the nearby jungle; in China in small grey-tiled houses that were shaking under a biting cold winter storm and myself the only white man in a dirty and dreary looking place.

I shall never forget such Christmas Eves, sitting in front of my fireplace, alone, except for my Golden Irish Setter, who seemed to perceive my thoughts, sad as they were.

Exiles Club! A really fitting name for your lonely Island. Maybe you will feel somewhat cheered if you know that on Christmas Eve, thousands of miles away a man will raise his glass full of Golden Rhenish Wine and drink to the health of all of you and wishing you a happy return to your Old Country.

With Kind Regards.

Yours

N.B. Please find enclosed copy of an article which appeared in the North China Daily News, Shanghai, in April 1931.

THRILLING STORY OF THE OLD EMDEN

Shanghai Survivor of Cocos Island Battle Describes Last Fight.

FAMOUS GERMAN RAIDER'S END

Heroic Struggle of Predecessor of Ship Now in Shanghai.

The glory of the Emden, second of three German cruisers of that name, will never die. The new Emden bearing on her stem a replica of the Iron Cross awarded for her predecessor's exploits is now being feted in Shanghai.

After its successful cruise in the Indian Ocean during the early months of the world war, and its ultimate sinking off the Cocos Islands, Kaiser Wilhelm II, by special act of cabinet granted permission to the 150 surviving members of the crew to adopt as their surname that of the ship, Emden. The Present German cabinet repassed this act to propagate the name through the ages.

Mr Hans Heinz Harmes-Emden, of the Sulzer Brothers Engineering Office of Shanghai is one of fifty living survivors of the Emden. At the request of the "North China Daily News", Mr Harmes-Emden, an unassuming, middle-aged man, reviewed his experiences as engine room petty officer of the Emden during her career in Western Waters.

This is the first time most of his thrilling account of courage and hardship incidental to the sinking of the Emden has appeared in print. In his book, "The Emden", Captain Von Mueller omitted several incidents here related. None of the survivors has ever before published memoirs of life on the Emden.

TRIBUTE TO EMDEN COMMANDER.

Mr Harmes-Emden's account follows:-

To begin with, I should like to pay tribute to the commander of the new Emden now visiting Shanghai. Captain Witthoefft, who was Second Officer of the old Emden, was the most popular officer I have ever known. He was an efficient and clever leader; fine looking, human, and lacked the haughtiness that officers often assume. Because of these qualities, he was loved and respected by every man on the ship. I am sure that all those who knew him in the old days are glad to hear that he is in command of the new Emden.

The old Emden was manned by Germany's choicest men. Physical sturdiness, an unblemished reputation, and a high efficiency rating were the requirements the men met. Despite the fact that the navy enlistment period was of four years during which wages were but a few pfennings a day, and the army held forth the lure of two-year enlistment periods, more men volunteered for service in the navy than they needed.

When I was about 18 years old, my Guardian decided to send me for four years to a Technical College. Before leaving for it, he granted me a trip to the North Sea. When I arrived at Wilhelmshaven, I saw her just in her right mood, and she fascinated me so much that I preferred to join the navy. I refused to return and after a while my Guardian sent me his permission to enlist in the Navy. I assume that his resistance was mostly overcome by the fact that I had to pay double the fee at the college, as I had always been compelled to do since. I was born in Hong Kong and they considered me a British subject. Even when I was a Prisoner of War, the British Authorities in Malta considered for two days, whether I was a German or not.

It was only natural, that I should want to go to sea. My father and forefathers were all sailors. My brother had joined the Navy before he went down with the Nurnberg during the Battle of the Falkland Islands.

MEETING WITH THE SYDNEY

At the outbreak of the war, the Emden was stationed in the Indian Ocean. With the aid of luck and under the genius of Captain Von Mueller, we established a good record during our service there. Many ships were captured, and many sunk at our hands, while we fortunately escaped with few casualties.

The end of our activities came in November 1914, at the Cocos Islands, when, because of our unfortunate position and the expert strategy of the enemy commander, who took full advantage of the longer range of his guns and his faster speed, the Australian cruiser, Sydney, blew our ship to bits and killed or captured all but forty-nine of our crew.

I shall never forget the horror of the last two days of the Emden. We lay in a little coral-locked harbour off the Island. Early in the morning of November 9, forty-nine men, under Captain Muecke, went ashore with the destruction of the cable station, as their objective. This was easily accomplished. I remember standing on deck with the rest of the crew and watching the mast of the station fall to the ground.

Little groups of men stood on deck laughing and joking as the sun rose. Everything seemed so quiet and at peace, that everybody was happy. Although, it may seem as incredible as the stories superstitious old ladies tell, an evil premonition or disaster made me stand out, as a gloomy pessimist, among my mates. Some of them commented on my low spirits, to which I replied that the previous night I had dreamed the decks of the Emden were drenched in blood, and the familiar faces, that now smiled at my account, were twisted with pain and terror, as had happened on the many ships we had successfully fought. I told my mates, that I felt that this would be the last sunrise for many of us. Entries in my diary, made before the presence of the Sydney became known, will prove that my intuition was not a product of fancy after the encounter. I later learned, that two members of the crew had had similar dreams.

"CLEAR FOR ACTION"

My mates had scarcely turned their attention to other matters, before the look-out called from the crow's nest that a ship was approaching. At once the order rang out, "Clear for Action". We thought that this must be some old, war vessel, that we could despatch with ease. Information previously had reached us that the British Cruiser, Sydney, was conveying a fleet of Merchants ships far to the north of us. But by some strange turn of fate, the convoy had forsaken the shortest route to their destination and come a round-about way, thinking in this way to avoid us, who might be watching for them on the regular course.

We later learned that a false, fourth stack, which we disguised the Emden, had wobbled while passing another vessel, and the word was immediately passed on to the Sydney, who came to investigate.

As the mast, and subsequently the outline of the Sydney, appeared over the horizon, we at once weighted our anchor and went off with full speed to meet her. We had no time to embark our landing party but signalled them that something was wrong. They were not yet able to see our adversary.

At a distance of about 9000m. we opened fire. The second volley was well placed. The Sydney soon retired to make repairs hiding herself behind a thick smoke screen, and at the time we thought we had sufficiently scared her off to continue the completion of our objective.

Sometime later, however, the Sydney returned and, keeping well out of the range of our guns, opened fire, and soon her shells found their mark. We were helpless. The only hope to get the Sydney within the range of our guns was to deceive her by circling around and around and making unexpected loops. Our captain succeeded several times and, even at one moment, the Sydney came within our torpedo range, she was already considered a sure prey. Captain Witthoefft, being torpedo officer, standing in the conning-bridge, aiming at the Sydney, shouted the preparatory command "Achtung"!

THE SHIP DOOMED

The men at the torpedo tubes stiffened ready to loose the apparatus, when a bare second too soon, a shell from the Sydney crashed into the torpedo room filling it in a moment with water. Now we were doomed to perish. But again and again, the Emden circled around to draw nearer to the Sydney, but our speed slackened, the ship was sinking slowly gaining much water every minute.

All our gunners had been killed; no ammunition, no men left at the guns, the ship was a mass of fire and smoke. To save the rest of his crew, the Captain ran the ship ashore.

I was in the starboard engine, which had been the whole time under fire. The cranks of the engine were already beating the water to white foam, when we got the order to open the stop cocks and come up to deck. This we did, but the engine room had been so demolished by enemy's fire, that only two of the twenty men could follow the order. All others had been killed during the flight or perished in the boiling water and steam, that streamed from broken pipes. I, and an old warrant-officer, were the fortunate ones.

I was saved from being scalded to death while opening the stop cocks, by a flow of oil from an open faucet. For a minute, I would work and then run back for a shower of cool oil under the faucet.

My clothes were blown from my body. I was not conscious of my nakedness, until I reached for something in my pocket. I was embarrassed, when I found I had neither pockets nor garments.

Through a hole, I crawled onto the deck on the portside. Shells were still bursting everywhere. Through the smoke and flames, I saw huge waves coming on and sweeping the deck. I thought we were just disappearing beneath the waves. Others apparently thought the same, for they jumped over board to get free from the sinking ship. I was about to follow them, when something, maybe my good angel, caused me to stop right in the jump, to turn around and to walk through smoke and flames to the starboard side. There I came upon Captain Von Mueller, who was caring for the wounded. The smoke cleared away a little and we saw, crying with joy, and forgetting everything around us, our flag was still flying from the mast. At this moment, a bleeding sailor stumbled forth from his damaged gun and shouted; "Three Hurrahs for the Captain!"

Scarcely had the cheers died away, when the man fell down on the deck, silent for ever.

BLOWN OVERBOARD

Shells were still bursting everywhere. Our own shells' concussion blew many of us overboard. Three times I pulled a friend from the water, but he fell in a fourth time, I learned later, and was drowned. I myself was blown over the side, but managed to grasp a rope dangling from the mast, now shot down to a position even with the water.

Later, I became unconscious, overcome from the picric acid of the shells. I was lying in front of the conning-tower, when I was awakened by the sound of bursting shells.

The Sydney had returned, in the late afternoon and opened fire again, because we had answered her signal to surrender.

I saw Captain Von Mueller ordering the survivors to take protection behind the armoured tower while he remained in front of it.

There he stood out clear against the horizon, tall and motionless, calmly facing the flashing guns of the Sydney like a firing squad.

I could not help thinking that he was determined to share the fate of most of his men. But strange to say, though shells were bursting around him, killing and wounding many who had taken cover, he stood there untouched.

Fate refused to allow him to die with his men and ship.

FLAMES AND WAVES

On the second day, the surf was even higher than on the first. Things on board became worse, the ship was still burning, huge sea gulls were continually attacking us, there was no fresh water, the wounded suffered terribly, so I decided to jump over board to establish connection with the island to get the wounded ashore. I asked Captain Von Mueller's permission and I shall never forget his look, when he wished me success.

Under the guidance of Captain Witthoefft everything was carefully prepared. A long rope, which I was going to carry to shore, was fastened to my body and armed with a huge knife as protection against sharks, I jumped over board, into the crest of an oncoming wave.

A whirlpool, which had its centre just below the bow of the ship dragged me deep down under the keel of the Emden. When the speed slackened, I saw the pool had at least a diameter of 10 feet. Further, I saw that the Emden was pinched between two coral reefs stretching fingerlike out from the island, and this surely caused the large whirl.

I was not alone. Just opposite me, quite as helpless as I, was whirling a big shark, his white belly showing towards me. Then there was a moment of no movement. The water slowly began to rise filling the base of the pool, I heard a breaker thunder. The pool was filled with a strange green light. It had been closed by the waves. Then with tremendous force, the water like a gigantic fountain rose from the base of the pool, and flung me straight up. The keel of the Emden was passing like a red line before my eyes.

In this moment, I had the feeling of being lost. I saw the huge shark being flattened against the bow of the ship, and now was my turn, I felt.

When I regained consciousness, I was far away from the Emden amidst the boiling water of the surf. About 200 yards away was the shore. I swam towards it, but strangely, every time a wave was coming on, I was pushed below the surface, instead of thrown up. The rope had been caught by the reefs and I was tied as to a buoy. At last the rope broke, and I reached the tide of the surf, but it was impossible for me to overcome the backwash. I tried again and again and gave up.

Down I went. Two times, three times, all was peaceful. I saw the blue sky, the white beach with palms moving gently in a breeze. I really felt quite happy. Then suddenly, I shot straight up into the air, was caught by a breaker, and thrown ashore and back to life.

I am sometimes inclined not to call this strange incident "Luck!"

I was just going peacefully to rest, but providence cheated me.

My explanation is that like a drowning rat, I had convulsively stretched my legs, my right foot hit a rock and out of the water I shot.

AWARDED THE IRON CROSS

For this I was awarded the Iron Cross First Class. My friends told me later, that as they watched me from the deck of the ship, they considered my life worth nothing.

At length, I was joined by comrades who had been blown off the ship and managed by clinging to empty ammunition boxes to be washed ashore. The sights of suffering were terrible. Armless and legless men lay dying on the beach as the tide rolled over them. Helpless men called in vain for water, and then, maddened by thirst gulped down big mouthfuls of salt water. Those of us, who could walk, tried in vain to stop their drinking brine. Even the Second Medical Officer, in his madness, drank himself to death with salt water.

Then, we were faced with the problem of removing the wounded out of the glare of the burning sun. Most of us had not a stitch of clothes on, and we realized that exposure to the rays of the hot sun would be fatal. We, who were able to do so, dragged the rest into the shade of rocks and trees.

One tree in the neighbourhood bore coconuts. For half an hour, we ineffectually tried to climb forty feet to them. Eventually, I succeeded in reaching the fruit, and threw down a half hundred. It is a good thing, I had the foresight to throw four of them clear for myself, because my mates had unthinkingly begun eating every one. I shared mine with those who were too weak to come to the tree.

MADNESS OF THIRST

I remember, that in my madness, brought on by thirst, I was visited by the apparition of a big glass of Weiss Beer; cool and foaming over the side of the glass. This elusive glass of beer evaded me, and I chased it until I finally fell unconscious to the ground. The water that we condensed and kept in tanks on the ship, often roughly cursed by crew, now came into my dreams.

When I awoke, I found that little vermin had fixed themselves to my skin. They bit painfully and had to be dug out with a sharp twig. Large birds, were descending on us and with sharp hook beaks were tearing away parts of the flesh of those, who were too weak to resist. In my fear and rage, I killed several dozen of these birds, and we found it necessary to maintain two guards to beat them away from the wounded.

Roaming through the brush looking for something to eat and drink, I came upon a large breeding sea bird. Up into the air it went, a snow white bird, six feet wingspread, leaving a big egg on the white sand. When I took it in my hand, it cracked all over and somewhat surprised, I put it back into the nest, and I witnessed one of nature's great wonders. A small beak broke through the shell, which then burst into two halves, and then there it was lying in the sand, a large green coloured helpless bird, crying weakly for its mother. I gazed and gazed. As a city boy, I had never seen that before. Meanwhile, the old bird, which had been circling around my head, gently swooped down and drawing nearer towards me, protected with its right wing its little one from the burning sun. At last it sat down on the nest just in front of me.

NATURE'S MIRACLE

And now imagine! On a remote island somewhere in the Indian Ocean, on a small patch of white sand, in the midst of a thicket, sat a snow white bird guarding its little one, against the burning sun and against a so-called white man kneeling before it, who was yellow tinted by gunpowder and bruised all over his body, and half mad with thirst. It needed only one grasp to take hold of about 40lbs of fresh meat, but I could not do it, because the Bird's eyes looked at me so full of confidence. I forgot everything around me, cowered and mused about the queer ways of life.

Some time later, I again searched the bush, and came upon some full grown sea gulls not yet fledged. They were all lined up on a branch. When I passed them, they were crying for food. Me and food! That made me wild. I grasped the biggest of the flock and tried to tear off his head, but in vain, his neck stretched like a rubber string. I twisted it round. It came back again. At last I bit his head off and sucked his blood. It was a terrible taste!

Being Robinson Crusoe, the idol of my boyhood, was much different than what I dreamed. For instance, I had never read in the books that there were on the white beach, thousands of sand bugs, just waiting for me to make their abode in my skin.

By night, our strength had returned. It was a case of getting aboard the Sydney (which we saw in the distance dropping anchor) or remaining prey to vermin, man-eating birds and the mercies (or lack of them) of the elements. Accordingly, 12 of us rigged up an abandoned and very unseaworthy lifeboat and tried to launch it, in the face of heavy surf. For two hours, we struggled with the boat, but every time we would rush into the water with it, the surf would drive us back, the heavy boat crushing those in the way of it.

After two hours exhausting effort, there were only three of us left, the other nine having been killed under the boat, driven back by the tide. We managed to drag it far out into the bay, where the water was up to our necks and, with a final shove and a prayer to heave, we all climbed in. Of the eight oars we started with, all but one had been washed away and desperately with this, we pulled away slowly and uncertainly. I was never more glad to put land behind me.

RACE AGAINST DEATH

The boat began to fill at once with water. Two of us bailed it out, while the third rowed desperately to make the gangway of the distant Sydney, before the boat would break into splinters under the heavy sea. In the moonlight, we could see the fins of a hundred sharks swimming about our little lifeboat. The lighted gangway of the Sydney, at first never seemed to come nearer. The creaking of the boat warned us that it would not stand the pressure of the heavy swells for long.

At last we drew alongside the gangway of the Sydney. It had been my turn to row and consequently, I was the last to step from the boat onto the solid gangway. As I put one foot on the gangway, I felt the lifeboat give way under me, and when I turned around a second later, there was nothing but a mass of disjointed timbers, and many disappointed sharks floating on the water.

The officers of the Sydney turned their lights upon us and, at once, proceeded to search us. This was an easy matter for among the three of us, there was not a garment. I shall never forget how delicious was the cup of tea we were given.

We were transferred to a French cruiser and taken to Colombo. Herded together, in a narrow passage at the bottom of the ladder, we were certainly treated as prisoners of war. With neither blankets nor clothing, our suffering was greater. Some of the British sailors aboard brought us both food and blankets, but the French guards at the top of the ladder objected. On three occasions, our friends threw the guards down the ladder and the blankets and food after them. Then, strict orders were passed for our friends to keep away from the top of the ladder.

TREATMENT OF PRISONERS

This treatment seemed very unfair to me, in as much, as we had always been kind to prisoners. At Penang, the Emden sank a French destroyer, and in the face of enemy fire, Captain Von Mueller put out boats, which picked up thirty-six French Sailors. Although, there was a scarcity of food and cigarettes aboard the ship, we shared them with our prisoners. When it came time for us to turn them over to another ship, many of the prisoners cried with gratitude. They said that they had been told German sailors were inhuman beasts, who maltreated their prisoners.

We were transferred to H.M.S. Hampshire and taken to Malta.

I wish to explain that mine is only an experience similar to that of every comrade off the Emden. The things I did were also done by them and I hope, I will not seem to have bragged, in telling this story. There are only a few of us original "Emdens" left; "about fifty". I think, I have met a few of them since the war, but they do not seem to be the same. The experience at the Cocos Islands has taken something vital from everyone.

AN EPIC JOURNEY

It is a matter of history, that the forty-nine who were left on the island manned the Ayesha, an old schooner, and with little food and water sailed to the Arabian coast. Here they disembarked and trekked across the desert to Damascus. Emaciated, without clothes, and scarcely able to go on, they found the people here would not believe their story. It really was an impossible feat they had performed.

Two things, that stand out in my memories of experiences on the Emden, are the sights of the dying sailor, who stumbled from his gun and with his dying breath gasped "Three Cheers for the Captain", and the view of the French destroyer we sank at Penang.

In the case of the latter, I had been in my fighting station, in a small four feet by four cubby hole, in the hoisting room of the ammunition locker. The two motors in the room used for hoisting ammunition had exploded and the smell of rubber was suffocating me.

My only light was a candle which flicked and went out after a few minutes, when the oxygen supply gave out. It was against orders to open the armoured door during combat, so I stayed at my post until consciousness had just about left me.

At last, however, I heard a voice come to me, though the speaking tube ordering "Pause in fighting". With all the strength I had left, I flung the door open and crawled out on deck into the reviving air.

I forgot my condition at the sight, I beheld there. The rising sun was just coming over of the ocean. Black against the burnished gold of the half sun appearing above the water was the outline of the stern half of the enemy ship, rising clear out of the water, propellers whirling at such a rate, that we could hear their noise. For a full four seconds, the ship paused there in its dive and then, with a lurch, disappeared beneath the surface. At such times, I grew philosophical and then I pondered, on the rising of the God-made sun as contrasted with the going down of the man-made ship.

This was even more thrilling, than the sight of the burning oil tanks against the night sky at Madras, making the clouds seem to drip fire.

H.H. Harms-Enden,
HAMBURG- Bergstedt,
Kirchenhoide 31
17th December 1963.

The Exiles Club
COCOS (KEELING) ISLAND.
Indian Ocean.

Dear Sirs,
Mr Paul Koster-Enden, Secretary of the "Enden Old Boys' Association", sent me a copy of your letter of 4.8.63, and also some photographs showing Memorial Plate and Memorial Parade in remembrance of November 1914.

I do confess, I was deeply touched by these pictures and take this opportunity to thank you very much for letting me have these souvenirs.

Then my glance fell upon your address and it struck me what a fitting name you have chosen for your Club (Exiles Club).

I was born in Hongkong and spent most of my life in the Far East, especially in China and India, in far out-of-the-way places, in India on Christmas Eve under a dark sweltering tropical sky with jackals howling in the nearby jungle; in China in small grey-tiled houses that were shaking under a biting cold winter storm and myself the only white man in a dirty and dreary looking place.

I shall never forget such Christmas Eves, sitting in front of my fireplace, alone, except for my Golden Irish Setter, who seemed to perceive my thoughts, sad as they were.

Exiles Club ! A really fitting name for your lonely Island. Maybe you will feel somewhat cheered if you know that on Christmas Eve, thousands of miles away a man will raise his glass full of Golden Rhonish Wine and drink to the health of all of you and wishing you a happy return to your Old Country.

With Kind Regards.

Yours

N.B. Please find enclosed copy of an article which appeared in the North China Daily News, Shanghai, in April 1931.

THRILLING STORY OF THE OLD ENDEN

Shanghai Survivor of Cocos Island Battle Describes Last Fight.

FAMOUS GERMAN RAIDER'S END.

Heroic Struggle of Predecessor of Ship Now in Shanghai.

The glory of the Enden, second of three German cruisers of that name, will never die. The new Enden bearing on her stem a replica of the Iron Cross awarded for her predecessor's exploits is now being feted in Shanghai.

After its successful cruise in the Indian Ocean during the early months of the world war, and its ultimate sinking off the Cocos Islands, Kaiser Wilhelm II, by special act of cabinet granted permission to the 100 surviving members of the crew to adopt as their surname that of the ship, Enden. The present German cabinet repassed this act to propagate the name through the ages.

Mr Hans Heinz Harms-Enden, of the Sulzer Brothers Engineering Office of Shanghai is one of fifty living survivors of the Enden. At the request of the "North China Daily News", Mr. Harms-Enden, an unassuming, middle-aged man, reviewed his experiences as engine room petty officer of the Enden during her career in Western Waters.

This is the first time most of his thrilling account of courage and hardship incidental to the sinking of the Enden has appeared in print. In his book, "The Enden", Captain von Mueller omitted several incidents ^{related} None of the survivors has ever before published memoirs of life on the Enden.

TRIBUTE TO EMDEN COMMANDER.

Mr. Harms-Emden's account follows:-

To begin with, I should like to pay tribute to the commander of the new Emden now visiting Shanghai. Captain Witthoefft, who was second officer of the old Emden, was the most popular officer I have ever known. He was an efficient and clever leader, fine looking, human, and lacked the haughtiness that officers often assume. Because of these qualities he was loved and respected by every man on the ship. I am sure that all those who knew him in the old days are glad to hear that he is in command of the new Emden.

The old Emden was manned by Germany's choicest men. Physical sturdiness, an unblemished reputation, and a high efficiency rating were the requirements the men met. Despite the fact that the navy enlistment period was of four years during which wages were but a few pfennigs a day, and the army held forth the lure of two-year enlistment periods, more men volunteered for service in the navy than they needed.

When I was about 18 years old, my guardian decided to send me for four years to a Technical College. Before leaving for it, he granted me a trip to the North Sea. When I arrived at Wilhelmshaven, I saw her just in her right mood, and she fascinated me so much that I preferred to join the navy. I refused to return and after a while my guardian sent me his permission to enlist in the Navy. I assume that his resistance was mostly overcome by the fact that I had to pay double the fee at the college, as I had always been compelled to do since. I was born in Hongkong and they considered me a British subject. Even when I was a Prisoner of War, the British Authorities in Malta considered for two days, whether I was a German or not.

It was only natural, that I should want to go to sea. My father and forefathers were all sailors. My brother had joined the Navy before. He went down with the Nürnberg during the Battle of the Falkland Islands.

MEETING WITH THE SYDNEY.

At the outbreak of the war the Emden, was stationed in the Indian Ocean. With the aid of luck and under the genius of Captain von Mueller, we established a good record during our service there. Many ships were captured, and many sunk at our hands, while we fortunately escaped with few casualties.

The end of our activities came in November 1914, at the Cocos Islands, when, because of our unfortunate position and the expert strategy of the enemy commander, who took full advantage of the longer range of his gun and his faster speed, the Australian cruiser, Sydney, blew our ship to bits and killed or captured all but forty-nine of our crew.

I shall never forget the horror of the last two days of the Emden. We lay in a little coral-locked harbour off the island. Early in the morning of November 15, forty-nine men under Captain Luene, were sent to the destruction of the cable station, as their objective. This was easily accomplished. I remember standing on deck with the rest of the crew and watching the mast of the station fall to the ground.

Little groups of men stood on deck laughing and joking as the sun rose. Everything seemed so quiet and at peace, that everybody was happy. It is hard to say how it may seem as incredible as the stories superstitious old ladies tell, of an evil premonition of disaster, made me stand out, as a gloomy pessimist, to my mates. Some of them commented, on my low spirits, to which I replied that the previous night I had dreamed the decks of the Emden, were drenched in blood, and the familiar faces, that now smiled at my account were covered with pain, and terror, as had happened on the many ships we had successfully fought. I told my mates, that I felt that this would be the last sunrise, for many of us. Entries in my diary, made before the presence of the Sydney, became known, will prove that my intuition, was not a product of fancy after the encounter. I later learned, that two members of the crew had had similar dreams.

"CLEAR FOR ACTION."

My mates, had scarcely turned their attention to other matters, when the look-out called from the crow's nest that a ship was approaching. Once the order rang out, "Clear for Action". We thought, that this must be some old, war vessel, that we could despatch with ease. Unfortunately, when she had reached us, that the British Cruiser, Sydney, was conveying a large number of Merchant ships far to the north of us. But by some strange chance the Sydney, had forsaken the shortest route to their destination, and taken a round-about way, thinking in this way to avoid us, who might be a

---ing for them on the regular course.

We later learned that a false fourth stack which we disguised the night, had wobbled while passing another vessel, and the word was immediately passed on to the Sydney, who came to investigate.

As the mast and subsequently, the outline of the Sydney, appeared over the horizon, we at once weighed our anchor and went off, with full speed to meet her. We had no time to embark our landing party but signalled them that something was wrong. They were not yet able to see our adversary.

At a distance of about 9000 m. we opened fire. The second volley was well placed. The Sydney soon retired, to make repairs, hiding herself behind a thick smoke screen, and at the time we thought we had sufficiently scared her off to continue the completion of our objective.

Some time later, however, the Sydney returned and keeping well out of the range of our guns, opened fire, and soon her shells found their mark. We were helpless. The only hope to get the Sydney within the range of our guns was to deceive her by circling around and around and making unexpected loops. Our Captain succeeded several times, and even at one moment the Sydney came within our torpedo range. She was already considered a sure prey. Captain Witthoefft, being torpedo officer, standing in the conning-bridge, aiming at the Sydney, shouted the preparatory command "Achtung!"

THE SHIP DOOMED.

The men at the torpedo tubes stiffened ready to loose the apparatus, when a bare second too soon, a shell from the Sydney crashed into the torpedo room, filling it in a moment with water. Now we were doomed to perish. But again and again the Emden circled around, to draw nearer to the Sydney, but our speed slackened, the ship was sinking slowly, gaining much water every minute.

All our gunners had been killed, no ammunition, no men left at the guns, the ship was a mass of fire and smoke. To save the rest of his crew, the Captain ran the ship ashore.

I was in the starboard engine, which had been the whole time under fire. The cranks of the engine were already beating the water to white foam when we got the order to open the stop cocks and come up to deck. This we did but the engine room had been so demolished by enemy's fire, that only two of the twenty men could follow the order. All others had been killed during the flight or perished in the boiling water and steam, that streamed from broken pipes. I, and an old warrant-officer, were the fortunate ones.

I was saved, from being scalded to death, while opening the stop cocks by a flow of oil from an open faucet. For a minute, I would work and then run back for a shower of cool oil under the faucet.

My clothes were blown from my body. I was not conscious of my nakedness until I reached for something, in my pocket. I was embarrassed, when I found I had neither pockets, nor garments.

Through a hole I crawled onto the deck on the portside. Shells were still bursting everywhere. Through the smoke and flames, I saw huge waves coming on and sweeping the deck. I thought we were just disappearing beneath the waves. Others apparently thought the same, for they jumped overboard to get free from the sinking ship. I was about to follow them, when something maybe my good angel, caused me to stop right in the jump, to turn around and to walk through smoke and flames to the starboard side. There I came upon Captain von Mueller, who was caring for the wounded. The smoke cleared away a little and we saw, crying with joy, and forgetting everything around us, our flag was still flying from the mast. At this moment, a bleeding sailor stumbled forth from his damaged gun and shouted; "Three Hurrahs for the Captain!"

Scarcely had the cheers died away when the man fell down on the deck, silent for ever.

BLOWN OVERBOARD.

Shells were still bursting everywhere. Our own shells' concussion blew many of us overboard. Three times I pulled a friend, from the water, but he fell in a fourth time, I learned later, and was drowned. I myself was right

over the side, but managed to grasp a rope, dangling from the mast, now shot down to a position even, with the water.

Later, I became unconscious, overcome from the picric acid, of the shells I was lying in front of the conning-tower, when I was wakened by the sound of bursting shells.

The Sydney had returned, in the late afternoon and opened fire again, because we had answered her signal to surrender.

I saw Captain von Mueller ordering the survivors to take protection behind the armored tower while he remained in front of it.

There he stood out clear against the horizon, tall and motionless, calmly facing the flashing guns of the Sydney like a firing squad.

I could not help; thinking that he was determined to share the fate of most of his men. But strange to say, though shells were bursting around him, killing and wounding many who had taken cover, he stood there untouched.

Fate refused to allow him to die with his men and ship.

Flames and Waves.

On the second day, the surf was even higher, than on the first. Things on board became worse, the ship was still burning, huge sea gulls were continually attacking us, there was no fresh water, the wounded suffered terribly, so I decided to jump over board to establish connection with the island, to get the wounded ashore. I asked Capt. von Mueller's permission and I shall never forget his look, when he wished me success.

Under the guidance of Capt. Witthoft, everything was carefully prepared, A long rope, which I was going to carry to shore, was fastened to my body and armed with a huge knife as protection against sharks, I jumped over board, into the crest of an oncoming wave.

A whirlpool, which had its centre just below the bow of the ship dragged me deep down under the keel of the Emden. When the speed slackened, I saw the pool had at least a diameter of 10 feet. Further I saw that the Emden was pinched between two coral reefs stretching fingerlike out from the island, and this surely caused the large whirl.

I was not alone. Just opposite me, quite as helpless as I, was whirling, a big shark, his white belly showing towards me. Then there was a moment of no movement. The water slowly began to rise filling the base of the pool, I heard a greater thunder. The pool was filled with a strange green light, it had been closed by the waves. Then with tremendous force, the water like a gigantic fountain rose from the base of the pool, and along me straight up. The keel of the Emden was passing like a red line before my eyes. In this moment, I had the feeling of being lost. I saw the huge shark being flung against the bow of the ship, and now was my turn, I felt.

When I regained consciousness, I was far away from the Emden, amidst the boiling water of the surf. About 200 yards away, was the shore. I swam towards it, but strangely every time a wave was coming on, I was pushed below the surface, instead of thrown up. The rope had been caught by the reefs and I was tied as to a buoy. At last the rope broke, and I reached the tide of the surf, but it was impossible for me to overcome the backwash. I tried again and again and gave up.

Down I went. Two times, three times, all was peaceful. I saw the blue sky, the white beach with palms moving gently in a breeze. I really felt quite happy. Then suddenly, I shot straight up into the air, was caught by a breaker, and thrown ashore and back to life.

I am sometimes inclined not to call this strange incident "Luck!"

I was just going peacefully to rest, but providence cheated me.

My explanation is that like a drowning rat, I had convulsively stretched my legs, my right foot hit a rock and out of the water I came.

AWARDED THE IRON CROSS.

For this I was awarded the Iron Cross First Class . My friends told me later, that as they watched me from the deck of the ship, they considered my life worth , nothing.

At length , I was joined by comrades who had been blown off the ship and managed by clinging to empty ammunition boxes to ~~be~~ be washed ashore . The sights of suffering were terrible . Armless and legless men lay dying on the beach as the tide rolled over them . Helpless men called in vain for water , and then maddened by thirst gulped down big mouthfuls of salt salt water . Those of us, who could walk , tried in vain to stop their drinking brine. Even the second medical officer, in his madness drank himself to death with salt water.

Then we were faced with the problem of removing the wounded out of the glare of the burning sun . Most of us had not a stitch of clothes on, and we realized that exposure to the rays of the hot sun would be fatal. We, who were able to do so , dragged the rest into the shade of rocks and trees.

One tree in the neighbourhood bore coconuts . For half an hour , we ineffectually tried to climb forty feet to them . Eventually, I succeeded in reaching the fruit, and threw down a half hundred . It is a good thing, I had the foresight to throw four of them clear for myself , because my mates had unthinkingly begun eating every one. I shared mine , with those who were too weak to come to the tree.

MADNESS OF THIRST.

I remember , that in my madness, brought on by thirst, I was visited by the apparition of a big glass of Weiss Beer, cool and foaming over the side of the glass . This elusive glass of beer evaded me, and I chased it until I finally fell unconscious to the ground . The water that we condensed and kept in tanks on the ship often roundly cursed by crew, now came into my dreams.

When I awoke, I found that little vermin had fixed themselves to my skin. They bit painfully and had to be dug out with a sharp twig. Large birds, were descending on us and with sharp hooked beaks were tearing away parts of the flesh , of those who were too weak to resist . In my fear and rage, I killed several dozen of these birds , and we found it necessary to maintain two guards to beat them away from the wounded.

Roaming through the brush looking for something to eat and drink, I came upon a large breeding sea bird . Up into the air it went , a snow white bird, six feet wingspread, leaving a big egg on the white sand . When I took it in my hand , it cracked all over and somewhat surprised , I put it back into the nest , and I witnessed one of nature's great wonders. A small beak broke through the shell, which then burst into two halves, and then there was lying in the sand , a large green coloured helpless bird , crying weakly for its mother . I gazed and gazed. As a city boy , I had never seen that before . Meanwhile the old bird , which had been circling around my head , gently swooped down and drawing nearer towards me, protected with its right wing , its little one from the burning sun . At last it sat down on the nest just in front of me .

NATURE'S MIRACLE.

And now imagine ! On a remote island somewhere in the Indian Ocean. On a small patch of white sand , in the midst of a thicket sat a snow white bird guarding its little one , against the burning sun and against a so-called white man, kneeling before it, who was yellow tinted by gunpowder and bruised all over his body , and half mad with thirst . It needed , only one grasp to take hold of about 40 lbs of fresh meat, but I could not do it, because the Bird's eyes , looked at me so full of confidence . I forgot everything around me , cowered and mused about the queer ways of life .

~~For~~ Some time later, I again searched the bush , and came upon some full grown sea gulls not yet fledged . They were all lined up on a branch . When I passed them they were crying for food . Me and food ! That made me wild. I grasped the biggest of the flock and tried to tear off his head . Dub in vain, his neck stretched like a rubber string . I twisted it round . It came back

again . At last I bit his head off and sucked his blood. It was a terrible taste!

Being Robinson Crusoe , the idol of my boyhood, was such different, than I dreamed .For instance , I had never read in the books that there were on the white beach , thousands of sand bugs, just waiting for me to make their abode in my skin.

By night, our strength had returned. It was a case of getting aboard the Sydney, which we saw in the distance , dropping anchor or remaining prey to vermin, men-eating birds and the mercies (or lack of them) of the elements. According, 12 of us rigged up an abandoned and very unseaworthy lifeboat and tried to launch it, in the face of heavy surf . For two hours we struggled with the boat, but every time we would rush into the water with it, the surf, would drive us back , the heavy boat crushing those in the way of it.

After two hours exhausting effort, there were only three of us left, the other nine , having been killed under the boat, driven back by the tide. We managed , to drag it far out , into the bay , where the water was up to our necks , and with a final shove and a prayer to heave, we all climbed in . Of the eight oars , we started with all but one had been washed away , and des-
-perately with this, we pulled away slowly and uncertainly. I was never more glad to put land behind me.

RACE AGAINST DEATH.

The boat began to fill at once with water. Two of us bailed it out, while the third rowed desperately to make the gangway of the distant Sydney, before the boat would break into splinters under the heavy sea. In the moonlight , we could see the fins of a hundred sharks swimming about our little lifeboat . The lighted gangway of the Sydney , at first never seemed to come nearer. The creaking of the boat warned us that it would not stand the pressure of the heavy swells for long.

At last we drew alongside the gangway of the Sydney . It had been my turn to row and consequently , I was the last to step, from the boat onto the solid gangway. As I put one foot on the gangway , I felt the lifeboat, give way under me , and when I turned around a second later , there was nothing but a mass of disjointed timbers , and many disappointed sharks, floating on the water.

The officers of the Sydney , turned their lights upon us and at once, proceeded to search us. This was an easy matter for among the three of us there was not a garment . I shall never forget how delicious was the cup of tea we were given.

We were transferred to a French cruiser and taken to Colombo. Herded together , in a narrow passage at the bottom of the ladder , we were certainly treated as prisoners of war. With neither blankets nor clothing our suffering was greater . Some of the British sailors aboard brought us both food and blankets , but the French guards at the top of the ladder objected . On three occasions our friends , threw the guards down the ladder and the blankets and food after them . Then strict orders were passed for our friends to keep away from the top of the ladder.

TREATMENT OF PRISONERS.

This treatment seemed very unfair , to me, in as much , as we had always been kind to prisoners . At Penang, the Emden sank a French destroyer, and in the face of enemy fire Captain von Mueller put out boats , which picked up thirty-six French Sailors . Although , there was a scarcity of food and cigarettes aboard the ship, we shared them with our prisoners. When it came time for us to turn them over to another ship many of the prisoners cried with gratitude . They said that they had been told German sailors were inhuman beasts , who maltreated their prisoners.

We were transferred to H.M.S. Hampshire and taken to Malta.

I wish ; to explain that mine is only an experience similar to that of every comrade off the Emden. The things, I did were also done by them and I hope , I will not seem to have bragged, in telling this story. (more) are only a few of us original " Emdens" left, about fifty . I think, I have met a few of them since the war, but they do not seem to be the same. The experience at the Cocos Islands , has taken something vital from every one.

AN EPIC JOURNEY.

It is a matter of history , that the forty-nine , who were left

on the island manned the Ayesha, and old schooner, and with little food and water sailed to the Arabian coast. Here they disembarked and trekked across the desert to Damascus. Emaciated, without clothes, and scarcely able to go on, they found the people here would not believe their story - it really was an impossible feat they had performed.

Two things, that stand out in my memories of experiences on the Imden, are the sights of the dying sailor, who stumbled from his gun and with his dying breath gasped "Three Cheers for the Captain", and the view of the French destroyer we sank at Penang.

In the case of the latter, I had been in my fighting station, a small four feet by four cubby hold, in the hoisting room of the ammunition locker. The two motors in the room used for hoisting ammunition had exploded and the smell of rubber was suffocating me.

My only light was a candle which flicked and went out after a few minutes, when the oxygen supply gave out. It was against orders to open the armoured door during combat, so I stayed at my post until consciousness had just about left me.

At last, however, I heard a voice come to me, through the speaking tube ordering "Pause in fighting". With all the strength, I had left, I flung, the door open and crawled out on deck into the reviving air.

I forgot my condition at the sight, I beheld there, The rising sun was just coming out of the ocean. Black against the burnished gold of the half sun appearing above the water was the outline of the stern half of the enemy ship, rising clear out of the water, propellers whirling at such a rate, that we could hear their noise. For a full ~~xxxxxxxx~~ four seconds, the ship paused there in its dive and then with a lurch disappeared, beneath the surface. At such times, I grew philosophical and then I pondered, on the rising of the God-made sun, as contrasted with the going down of the man-made ship.

This was even more thrilling, than the sight of the burning oil tanks against the night sky at Madras, making the clouds seem to drip fire.

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