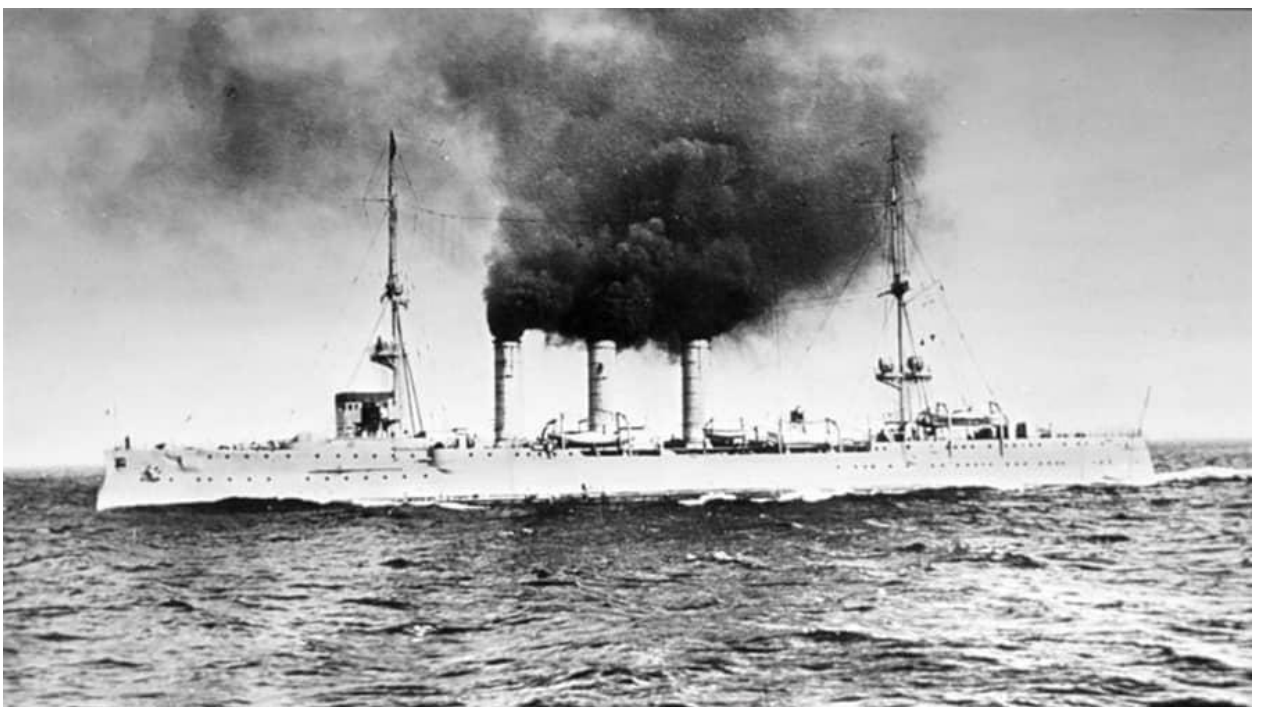


## "ZHEMCHUG", "EMDEN" AND "SYDNEY"



*Burning Emden (A. Burgess)*

On November 1, 1906, amid the massive battleship-building mania that would eventually lead Germany and Great Britain to war, the keel was laid at the Imperial Yard in Danzig for a light cruiser tentatively called *Ersatz Pfeil*, meant to replace a small obsolete cruiser named Pfeil ("arrow"). By the time the ship was launched on May 26, 1908, a subscription taken up by the city of Emden toward her slow construction had led to her being christened after that city.



## *Cruiser Emden*

Built at a cost of 6.8 million gold marks (319000 pounds sterling), *Emden* was 387 feet long, 44 feet in beam and 17 1/2 feet in draught and was already behind the cruiser state of the art for the time. Powered by two standing triple-expansion engines of three cylinders each, drawing power from 12 coal-fed boilers for a maximum speed of 24 knots, she was the last piston-engine cruiser to be built in Germany - her sister, *Dresden*, had turbines. *Emden*'s 10 4.1-inch high-velocity cannons were already matched in range and surpassed in punch by the 6-inchers equipping Britain's newest generation of light cruisers, against which her armor, ranging from 2 to 4 inches thick, could not provide adequate protection. Her elegant, forward-sloping bow was a throwback to the American Civil War and the Battle of Lissa, when the practice of ramming in naval warfare had been revived. But new, armor-piercing shells such as her own soon rendered ramming tactics obsolete once more, and clipper bows began returning to vogue. *Emden* did, however, also have two torpedo tubes transversely mounted in the hull, which could launch a total of five 17.7-inch torpedoes broadside at a range of 11,000 feet.

After a period of trials and reserve service, *Emden* entered active duty on April 1, 1910. Her first orders were to have her gray finish repainted in white for tropical service. Then, with flag-showing stops along the way, she would replace the old cruiser *Niobe* in the cruiser squadron at the northern Chinese port of Tsingtao, which since being seized in 1897 had been developed into the capital of Germany's empire in the Far East. *Emden* would never see Germany again.

*Emden*'s first action came on January 10, 1911, when she joined *SMS Nürnberg* to assist in the suppression of a native revolt at Ponape in the Caroline Islands. The two ships shelled a 1,000-foot fortified hill on the nearby island of Jokaj, then landed a force of sailors and native troops to storm the position, which they took in six hours. The rebellion on Ponape itself went on for another six weeks before the last of the rebels surrendered. On March 1, *Emden* left the "pacified" island to return to Tsingtao, where she resumed colonial patrols and courtesy visits, broken up by semiannual rotations of personnel. In March 1913, the cruiser squadron came under the command of Rear Adm. [Maximilian Graf von Spee](#), and on May 29, 1913, Lt. Cmdr. [Karl Friedrich Max von Müller](#) took command of *Emden*.

Born in Hanover on June 16, 1873, Müller had originally trained to be an army officer as his Prussian father had been, but in 1891 he talked his father into letting him transfer to the navy, where he made midshipman within two years. He served on numerous ships, from battleships in the North Sea to gunboats in German East and Southwest Africa, where he contracted the recurring malaria from which he suffered the rest of his life and from which he would die on March 11, 1923. Müller's relatively slow progress up the ranks was largely due to his self-effacing reserve. His personality remains a mystery, but his old-fashioned chivalry and innovative tactical genius would soon be adequately spoken for by his deeds.

News of serious unrest in northern China brought *Emden* to Nanking on August 12, joining British, Japanese and American warships to protect Western interests against rebels reported to have been firing on steamers and gunboats along the Yangtze (Chang) River. Steaming upstream of Wuhu, *Emden* came under cannon fire from a rebel fort near Tongling, but 25 well-placed shells silenced the firers. She then proceeded to Hangkow, exchanging small-arms fire with rebels along the way, and remained active during the next eight months of intermittent trouble.

Already the gunnery champion of the cruiser squadron, *Emden* had a gleaming white hull and graceful lines, for which local mariners dubbed her *Swan of the East*. Her running of the Yangtze gantlet earned her the reputation of being the boldest and most dashing of the Western warships, while Müller was decorated for that feat with the Order of the Royal Crown, Third Class, with Swords, and promoted to full commander in March 1914.

On March 12, 1914, navigation officer [Kapitänleutnant Hellmuth von Mücke](#) from Zwickau, Saxony, was appointed executive officer. Mücke was as extroverted as his commander was modest, and

his job as disciplinarian for Emden's 400-man crew was eased by his charm, humor and infinite resourcefulness. Equally ingenious was Leutnant der Reserve [Julius Lauterbach](#), a muscular giant from Rostock who had left military school at age 17 against his family's wishes to pursue his love of the sea. After 20 years on the China seas with the Hamburg-America Line, Lauterbach stood in boisterous, beer-swilling, worldly wise contrast to his naval colleagues, but he had a seabagful of experience and local acquaintances that would come in handy in the year to come.

In mid-June, *SMS Emden* lavishly hosted the visiting heavy cruiser *HMS Minotaur*, flagship of British commander in chief for China, Vice Adm. Sir [T.H.M. Jerram](#). On June 20, Vice Adm. von Spee departed Tsingtao on a South Pacific cruise, leaving only Emden and a few auxiliaries behind. News of the assassination of Hapsburg heir Archduke [Franz Ferdinand](#) on June 29, followed by the arrival at Tsingtao of the old Austro-Hungarian cruiser *Kaiserin Elizabeth* on July 24 and word that Austria-Hungary had declared war on Serbia four days thereafter, resulted in orders on July 29 to "seek contact with Cruiser Squadron."

On July 31, 1914, *Emden* left Tsingtao so that she would be ready if the war spread further.

On August 2, the crew learned that Germany had declared war on Russia. The next day, France joined with Russia against Germany. On August 4, near Tsushima Island, Emden encountered the 3500-ton mail steamer *Ryaezan* en route to Nagasaki. The Germans gave chase and *Ryaezan* fled at 17 knots, radioing Vladivostok for help as she sought sanctuary in neutral Japan. Jamming *Ryaezan*'s transmissions with her own radio, *Emden* caught up with the Russian an hour later and brought her to a halt with 12 shots across her bow.

Julius Lauterbach was appointed prize officer and would remain in that capacity for the rest of Emden's raiding career. When he boarded the ship, *Ryaezan*'s captain professed not to speak German, but Lauterbach laughingly reminded him that he had spoken it well enough when they had been drinking beer at the club in Tsingtao a month earlier. *Ryaezan* carried 80 passengers but little cargo. Nevertheless, her good turn of speed gave Müller reason to keep her for later use as an auxiliary cruiser. (With eight 4-inch guns installed from the gunboat *Cormoran*, she joined Spee's squadron as *Cormoran II* on August 27 but achieved nothing before being interned at Guam in December.)

On the way back to Tsingtao, *Emden* ran into five cruisers of the French squadron southbound from Vladivostok, but to the Germans' relief and amusement the French sheered away, thinking *Emden* was an outrider for Spee's squadron and fearing a trap. On that same day, however, a more serious naval adversary entered the picture: Britain had declared war on Germany. Japan was bound by a 1902 treaty of alliance to Britain and could be expected to cash in on it at German expense at any time. Tsingtao would now be a deathtrap to any German ship that stayed, and so, after recoaling and resupplying, *Emden* left China for the last time to join up with Spee's squadron, which lay at Pagan Island, north of Guam in the Marianas. As Emden entered Pagan Harbor on August 8 and anchored alongside *Sharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Nürnberg*, she was fervently cheered. Her crew later learned that a wireless report had said that she not only had taken *Ryaezan* but also had an engagement with the Russian light cruiser *Askold* in which both ships had been sunk.

On August 13, Admiral Spee summoned his captains aboard *Sharnhorst* to discuss where to go from Pagan. Spee wished to carry on the war in the East by maintaining a menacing "fleet in being" that would divert and tie down elements of the Royal Navy. For that strategy he judged the Indian Ocean logistically and tactically impractical--a British lake with no secure place to refuel--opting instead for the southeastern Pacific, where the long coast of neutral but sympathetic Chile could provide hidden shelter and supply whenever necessary. Although Captain Müller agreed that coaling considerations were important to Spee's squadron, he felt that the long voyage to that part of the ocean and the paucity of worthy targets once he got there would contribute little to the German war effort. He therefore proposed that *Emden* remain behind to fend for herself in the Indian Ocean, where she might cause disruption among the enemy while taking advantage

of the flexibility of maneuver that a single warship might enjoy over a squadron. Spee considered the proposal overnight and then agreed, detaching *Emden* and the collier *Markomannia* on the morning of August 14.

On the following day, Japan delivered an ultimatum to the Germans at Tsingtao: Germany was to remove or disarm all warships in the Pacific and evacuate the port of Kaio Chow by September 9, with acknowledgement and response to be made by August 23. The Germans did not dignify the demands with an answer but prepared for the siege to come. Japan was now in the war on the Allied side. By the end of 1914, all of Germany's possessions in the Far East would be in her hands--the Marianas, the Gilberts, the Marshalls, the Carolines, German Samoa and Tsingtao (the latter, the only place to seriously resist, fell after more than two months). Spee's squadron and *Emden* were now cut off from any friendly port of call, in two seas full of enemies, hunted by warships of the British Commonwealth, France, Russia and Japan.

Under the circumstances, Müller's idea of using *Emden* for lone privateering on the high seas seemed suicidal. With a range of 1226 miles at 24 knots, or 3790 miles at 12 knots, *Emden* had been built for scouting and fleet support in the North Sea, not for the independent long-range cruising of Britain's empire-keeping cruisers. Besides avoiding her enemies, her greatest challenge as a raider in the Indian Ocean would be in keeping herself coaled and maintained. *Emden's* greatest weapon was neither her guns nor her torpedoes, however--it was the ingenuity of her captain and officers, who devised a strategy of self-help around making maximum use of whatever ships she captured, combined with carefully worked-out rendezvous with *Markomannia* and prizes impressed into service as additional supply ships. The excellent staff work and intelligence gathering of *Emden's* officers would also be instrumental in keeping abreast of the maritime routes to prey upon and the whereabouts of warships to avoid. Their ingenuity was soon to give them and their ship a reputation that, as a Dutch journalist put it, seemed "to combine the properties of the Flying Dutchman with those of the Alabama." More fanciful minds imagined that Müller was in league with the devil.

On September 10, *Emden* captured the 3392-ton *Indus*, bound for Bombay to pick up cavalry horses. All that was aboard the ship, however, was ballast and toilet soap, but the latter was gratefully taken aboard. In his haste to leave Tsingtao, Müller had neglected to stock enough soap for his crew, and with barely a fortnight's supply left, he had just recently been teased by first officer Mücke about the necessity of giving first priority to the capture of a soap ship. This minor incident inspired an advertisement that turned up in the *Empire*, a Calcutta newspaper, on September 25:

*German cruiser Emden:*

*There is no doubt that the German cruiser Emden had knowledge that the Indus was carrying 150 cases of North-West Soap Company's celebrated ELYSIUM Soap, and hence the pursuit. The men on the Emden and their clothes are now clean and sweet, thanks to ELYSIUM Soap. Try it!*

Commercial exploitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and one may imagine the delight and amusement aboard *Emden* when one of her crewmen came across this newspaper ad aboard one of *Emden's* prizes about a month after its publication. The text was signaled to the cruiser and recorded in her signal log. If ever there was proof that *Emden* had achieved notoriety--and perhaps even a sort of popularity--among her enemies, here it was, in writing.

*Emden's* growing fame was all the more reason for Müller to continue to play a careful game, keeping an erratic course and sometimes exchanging friendly, though distant, greetings with passing merchant ships to keep the Allies guessing as to his whereabouts before choosing to strike again. On September 14, Müller stopped the neutral Italian freighter *Loredano* to appeal to her captain to take on some of his prisoners, steered a false southerly course until the Italian was out of sight, and then changed direction to slightly west of north. Sure enough, *Loredano's* captain

could not wait to report his encounter with the Germans, and over the next few days no less than five ships, any one of which would have overwhelmed *Emden*, were being dispatched or alerted in hopes of trapping the Germans. They included *HMS Yarmouth* (the light cruiser *Emden* sought to impersonate with her false fourth stack), armored cruisers *HMS Hampshire* and *HMS Minotaur*, and Japanese battle cruiser *Ibuki* and light cruiser *Chikuma*.

That night, Müller encountered the steamer *Trabboch*, quickly took her and, after evacuating

her crew, blew her up. He then released his latest captives on board *Kabinga*, after seeing that they signed the customary petition that they would never take up arms against Germany or her allies. *Kabinga's* captain sent a letter to Müller thanking him for the way he, his family and crew had been treated during their detention, and as they departed, the newly released prisoners gave three lusty cheers to *Emden*, her captain and her crew. When they reached Calcutta, they spread word of their humane and chivalrous treatment, and both *Emden* and her skipper came to be known as the "Gentleman of War" throughout the Far East and back in Britain.

No sooner had *Kabinga* vanished into the night than Müller spotted another, eastbound merchantman that, he subsequently learned, had seen the great explosion of *Trabboch* and was trying to leave the area at best speed. Müller gave chase and, with a shot across the merchantman's bow, forced her to heave to for an exchange by megaphone:

"What ship?"

"*Clan Matheson*."

"English?"

"No, British!" replied the irritated Captain William Harris, who was Scottish.

Soon after, *Clan Matheson's* nationality became a moot point as she was scuttled, and some of her crewmen were put to work farther south off the Andaman Islands, assisting in coaling up *Emden* from the *Pontoporos*--albeit for payment.

Returning to the Singapore-Calcutta and Madras-Rangoon steamer lanes on September 15, *Emden* met only the neutral Norwegian steamer *Dovre*, whose master took aboard *Clan Matheson's* crew and informed the Germans that he had seen two British auxiliary cruisers in the Strait of Malacca and the French cruisers *Dupleix* and *Montcalm* in Penang. One of Müller's officers suggested raiding Penang, but for now the captain chose to head south until *Dovre* was out of sight, then swing west toward Madras, with the intention of "diminishing English prestige" by shelling the oil tanks there. While he did so, two Allied warships that could have stopped him were elsewhere. Captain H. W. Grant and *HMS Hampshire* were 300 miles to the east, steaming to investigate a false report of gunfire--more likely thunder misinterpreted by a nervous populace - near Akyab, on the northeast coast of Burma. Grant had left orders for his partner, *HIJMS Chikuma*, to cover Madras against a possible visit by *Emden*, but *Chikuma's* captain took his time coaling in Colombo before steaming for her appointed beat, certain that the Germans would not be so foolish as to strike so deep in British waters. He thus threw away Japan's last chance to claim a naval victory of any sort during World War I and left Madras wide open for *Emden's* attack on September 22.

Although the war had been going on for eight weeks, Müller found the city lit up like a carnival. Already aware of reports of German atrocities on the Western Front, he took pains to angle his 25 salvos of 130 shells against the fuel tanks with a minimum of error. As a result, only five people were killed and 12 injured in the destruction of 346000 gallons of fuel worth about 8000 pounds. The destruction was less than it might have been, but its psychological effect on the British was devastating. For days, trains were packed with people fleeing before the "mystery ship" could return; the economy of the city was affected for weeks; the raid was the talk of the bazaars for months; and the word "Emden" took its place in the Madras dialect of the Tamil language to signify "an enterprising and ingenious person."

As an indirect consequence of *Emden's* activities, Admiral von Spee's Pacific squadron was reported to have been sighted off British Samoa, but there were no ships available to deal with it, all being either in or around the Indian Ocean hunting for *Emden* or guarding convoys against her. On the same day *Emden* bombarded Madras, Spee struck at Papeete in French Tahiti. The only opposition, the gunboat *Zélée*, was quickly overwhelmed by shells from *Sharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Nürnberg*. Spee then steamed on, unopposed, until November 2, when he won his greatest victory at Coronel, and December 8, when he met his end at the hands of a British squadron off the Falklands.

Having done her small part to embarrass the British in the eyes of the Indian people, *Emden* escaped none the worse for wear. Of nine shots fired at her by the elderly shore batteries, only three exploded close by her, and none of them hit. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, who would later describe the German Pacific squadron as "a cut flower in a vase, fair to see and yet bound to die," was growing frustrated and angry about the continued invisibility of *Emden* everywhere save in the daily newspapers. In a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty and First Sea Lord Prince [Louis of Battenberg](#) on September 29, Churchill wrote: "The escape of *Emden* from the Bay of Bengal is most unsatisfactory, and I do not understand on what principle the operations of the four cruisers *Hampshire*, *Yarmouth*, *Dupleix* and *Chikuma* have been concerted. From the chart, they appear to be working entirely disconnected and with total lack of direction." On October 1 he reiterated the need for a coordinated effort and complained bitterly of the delays in transport schedules caused by *Emden's* continued existence: "I wish to point out to you most clearly that the irritation caused by an indefinite continuance of the *Emden's* captures will do great damage to Admiralty reputation."

No concerted effort, however, would have substituted for plain luck against Müller's principal weapon: space. Left entirely to his own devices, he could strike anywhere he chose in the Pacific, Indian or Antarctic oceans. The science of radio directional ranging was in its infancy, and in any case, *Emden* only used her wireless to listen in on others, as she had nobody to transmit to. A chance sighting would have been fatal at the hands of any of her enemies, but *Emden* had so far succeeded in losing herself in the sheer vastness of the sea. She now set course southward, even deeper into enemy waters and into one of the busiest sea lanes in the East, where between September 25 and October 19 she captured 13 ships. Their stores kept her in business, and their newspapers, some dated to within a day of capture, kept Müller and company abreast of the psychological impact *Emden's* exploits were having on the region--causing growing panic, as well as admiration, among their enemies.

September 27 brought the most fortunate prize of the cruise, the 4,350-ton collier *Buresk*, carrying 6600 tons of first-class coal from South Wales to the British China Squadron in Singapore. After coaling from her for the last time off Miladunmadalulu Atoll in the Eastern Maldives, Müller dispatched the almost-depleted Markomannia to restock from Pontoporos' hold at a rendezvous point at Simaloer, then proceeded south in company with *Buresk*, stopping at Diego Garcia on October 9. There *Emden's* crew coaled her up again and did some desultory hull-scraping and maintenance. They also took the time to repair the engine of the motorboat of the local coconut and copra plantation, whose people had not been visited from the outside world since late July and did not know there was a war going on. They learned the truth when the auxiliary cruiser *Empress of Russia* arrived on October 12, sent by Captain Grant to check in case *Emden* had gone there, only to discover from the astonished natives that she had been and gone two days before. This latest addition to the *Emden* legend was headlined "High Comedy on the High Seas" by at least one British newspaper.

More seriously, *Emden's* richest catch on October 19, the 7562-ton *Troilus*, went down with 10000 tons of rubber, copper and tin easily exceeding 1 million pounds sterling in value. At the end of the day her passengers, including a woman who recognized prize officer Lauterbach from having traveled aboard one of his peacetime commands, joined those of other prizes aboard the *St. Egbert*, taken the same day and released to carry them to safety. Müller then set course eastward again. His next target would be Penang, an island off the northwest coast of Malaya.



*Cruiser Zhemchug*

On the morning of October 28, *Emden*, with her false smokestack raised to impersonate *HMS Yarmouth* and, in a rare lapse of Müller's sense of chivalry, flying British colors, slipped into Penang Harbor and picked out among the many vessels there the 3050-ton Russian light cruiser *Zhemchug*. Built in 1903, *Zhemchug* had participated in the Battle at Tsushima in May 1905 but had escaped that debacle to be interned in neutral Manila. Now she joined her former Japanese enemies in the hunt for *Emden*, having arrived at Penang on October 26 to clean her boilers. Against the advice of Admiral Jerram, commander in chief of Allied fleets in Indochinese waters, who encouraged him to take extra precautions, Captain Second Grade Baron Cherkassov had gone ashore that night to visit a lady friend, leaving his ship with torpedoes disarmed, all shells stowed save 12 and no extra men posted on watch.

At about 5:13 a.m., *Emden* struck her British flag, raised the imperial German naval ensign, opened fire, and at 5:18 loosed her starboard torpedo. Half of *Zhemchug's* shells had been left by the after gun, which was put out of action when a blown-away ship's boat fell on it, and the other six shells were by the No. 2 starboard gun, which was pointing in the wrong direction. Her surprised crew dragged the ammunition to the forward gun and returned fire but scored no hits, one shell passing over the German cruiser and hitting a merchant ship in the harbor. After reversing course, *Emden* launched her port torpedo, which struck below *Zhemchug's* bridge and conning tower and blew her up, killing 89 of her crewmen and wounding 143. Deciding not to press his luck, Müller then headed out of the dangerous confines of the harbor. In August, a naval court at Vladivostok sentenced *Zhemchug's* captain and his first officer, Senior Lieutenant Kulibin, to a "house of correction" (3 1/2 years for Cherkassov, 1 1/2 years for Kulibin). Both officers were also stripped of their rank, their decorations and their status as members of the Russian nobility.

Of the French warships defending Penang, the third-class cruiser *D'Iberville* and the destroyer *Fronde* were laid up with boiler trouble. Although she herself suffered from bearing trouble, the destroyer *Pistolet* raised enough steam to take off in pursuit of the Germans at 20 knots. Meanwhile, *Emden*, mistaking an oncoming unarmed patrol vessel for an armed ship, fired on it and left it in a sinking condition, fortunately without inflicting casualties among its crew. Müller

next encountered the steamer *Glenturret* and stopped her only long enough to ask her captain to convey his apologies for shooting at the unarmed vessel and for not being able to rescue *Zhemchug's* crew. *Emden* then encountered the remaining French destroyer, the 310-ton *Mousquet*, which fired one torpedo and engaged the Germans with one of her guns before being demolished in an uneven 10-minute fight. *Emden's* crew rescued one officer--whose leg would later have to be amputated--and 35 men and cared for them as best they could while raising full speed to outdistance the game little *Pistolet*, which they finally lost in a rain squall. Two days later, the Germans stopped the British *Newburn* and transferred the French aboard the steamer to be conveyed to Sabang, Sumatra, minus three who had died of wounds and were buried at sea with full naval honors.

While *Emden* lost herself in the open sea and lay low, the newspapers spread the word of her latest outrage against the Allies. In Germany, the Kaiser conferred on Müller the Iron Cross First and Second Classes and the Iron Cross Second Class to 50 men to be picked from among his crew.

During the night of November 7-8, Müller waited anxiously for *Exford*, which was overdue for their rendezvous, and listened nervously to nearby heavy radio transmissions - had she been captured? The next day *Exford* turned up, having been delayed by avoiding a large convoy that had run across her path.

With enemy warships unlikely to be in the area for a while, Müller planned his next strike. He was not far from Direction Island in the Cocos Isles, which was a major British communications crossroads with a concentration of underwater cables and a large wireless tower. To preserve ammunition and lives, Müller decided to land a demolition team rather than use his guns to eliminate the facility.

At dawn on November 9, 1914, *Emden* approached Fort Refuge with her dummy stack up, but the British on Direction Island were not caught napping. Their suspicions were aroused by the absence of any flag flying from her mainmast, and they recognized her fourth stack as painted canvas. As *Emden* approached, the transmitter signaled: "What ship? What ship?" *Emden* tried to jam it, but the British managed to get off two more transmissions in succession: "Strange ship in entrance" and "SOS, Emden here." While Mücke's landing party was demolishing the communications facilities, an unidentified warship tried in vain to contact the station. From the strength of her signal, *Emden's* men judged her to be at least 200 miles away, and they carried on with their job of destruction. The ship was probably *HMS Minotaur*, which desperately relayed the news of *Emden's* presence in all directions.

Among those who received the message were three warships protecting an Australian convoy only 53 miles and two hours to the north of the Cocos. The convoy leader, Captain Mortimer Silver of *HMAS Melbourne*, denied the request of the captain and crew of *HIJMS Ibuki* that they have the honor of dealing with the Germans, fearing that their battle cruiser might not be able to outrun *Emden* should she decline to fight. As the Japanese officers wept in frustration, he dispatched Captain [John Glossop](#) on *HMAS Sydney*, a fast, modern light cruiser, whose 6-inch guns were more than equal to the task of taking on *Emden*, to investigate.

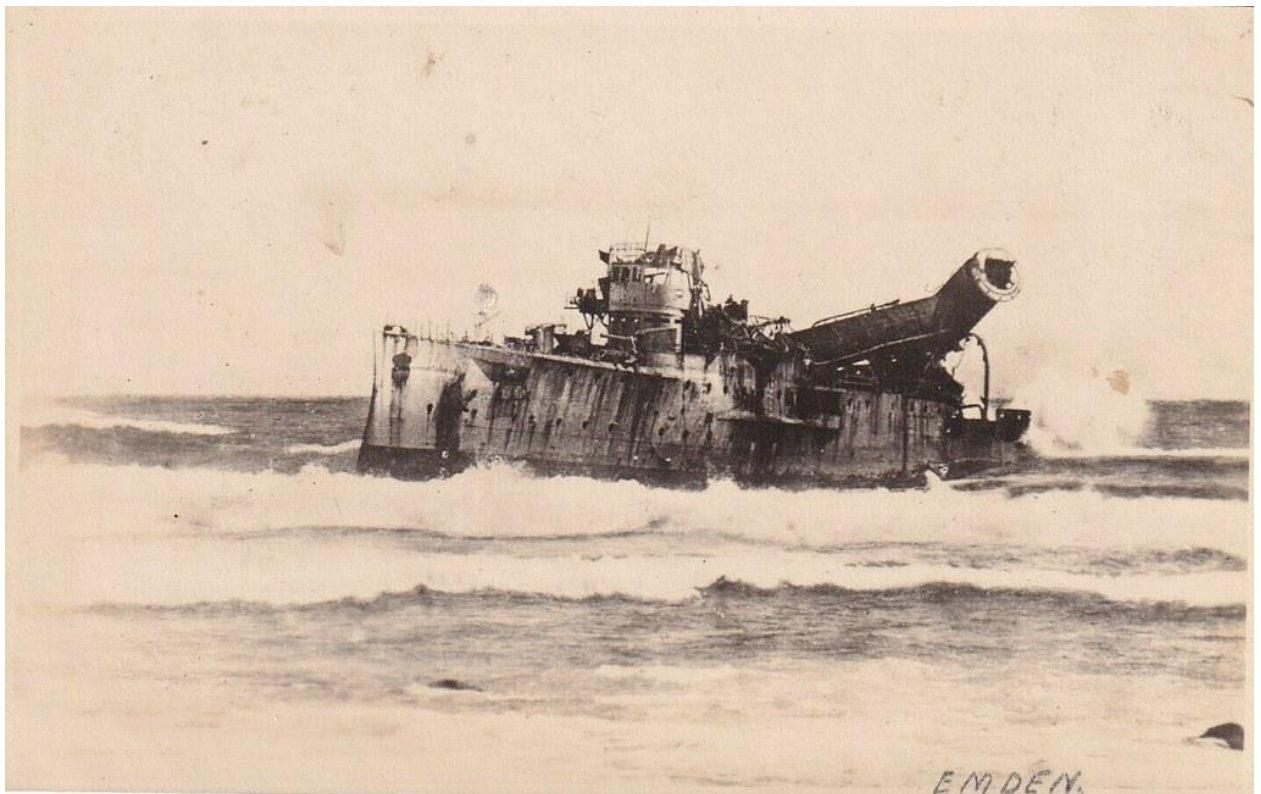


*Cruiser Sydney*

Leaving the convoy at 7 a.m., *Sydney* reached Direction Island at 9:15. Mücke was becoming concerned about the time it was taking his men to complete their overly thorough destruction of the island's communications facilities when he heard *Emden's* whistle. He and his men ran to the beach, only to see their ship heading out to sea. Although his ship was undermanned and his opponent was clearly both more powerful and faster than *Emden*, Müller saw no alternative but to make a fight of it.

Steaming full-tilt toward her nemesis *Emden* commenced the engagement at 9:40. Her accurate third salvo struck *Sydney's* fire controls, knocking them out and killing the officer in charge. Glossop then wisely opened the range to use his larger guns to advantage, while denying *Emden* the use of her last hope, her torpedoes. Even firing independently, in the absence of central fire control, *Sydney's* 6-inch guns were devastating, her 670 rounds doing more damage than the 1,500 4.1-inch shells *Emden* fired were able to inflict. More often than not, *Emden's* shells bounced harmlessly off *Sydney's* 2-inch armor at 8,000 yards distance.

At 11:15, Müller found *Emden* to be a hopeless shambles, and his last hope, the torpedo tubes, were flooded and unusable. Turning north-northwest for North Keeling Island, he ran his ship up the reef at 11:20. Since the Germans neglected to strike their colors, the cautious Glossop fired two more broadsides at them before finally breaking off the action. *Sydney* had lost four men killed, four severely wounded and four slightly wounded from the 16 hits she had taken in the unequal fight.



*Ruin of Emden after battle...*

After *Emden* ran aground, *Sydney* headed for Direction Island, and on the morning of November 10, she sent men ashore to pick up Mücke and his shore party - only to discover that the Germans had vanished. Commandeering *Ayesha*, a 97-ton barquentine, Mücke and his men had sailed off 12 hours earlier. The Australians were not the only ones hoodwinked, however - after giving the Germans a cordial sendoff, the British on the island had promptly uncovered a hidden emergency cache of spare equipment and completely restored the island's communications. For all its fatal thoroughness, *Emden*'s last raid turned out to be the least productive.

*Sydney* returned to North Keeling, where, in a gesture appropriate to naval warfare of a century past, Glossop had the following message delivered by longboat to Müller aboard his beached ship:

*HMAS Sydney, at sea*  
*The Captain, HIGMS Emden*

*Sir,*

*I have the honour to request that in the name of humanity you now surrender your ship to me. In order to show how much I appreciate your gallantry, I will recapitulate the position.*  
*(1.) You are ashore, three funnels and one mast down and most guns disabled.*  
*(2.) You cannot leave this island, and my ship is intact.*  
*In the event of your surrendering in which I venture to remind you is no disgrace but rather your misfortune I will endeavor to do all I can for your sick and wounded and take them to a hospital. I have the honour to be,*

*Sir,*  
*Your obedient Servant,*  
*John Glossop*  
*Captain*

Müller, after having made a last, futile effort to destroy what was left of his disabled ship, accepted Glossop's terms and, after seeing his crew evacuated to *Sydney*, was the last to abandon *Emden* - for eventual imprisonment for the duration of the war on the island of Malta. As *Sydney* steamed on for Colombo, Glossop radioed ahead to request that there be none of the traditional cheering to greet his triumphant ship as it entered harbor, in deference to his defeated foes, especially their wounded.

So ended a voyage of 30000 miles, in which a single obsolescent cruiser had done damage worth at least 15 times the cost of building her--more than 5 million pounds sterling. She had sunk a cruiser, a destroyer and 16 merchant ships, coaled 11 times from three captured colliers and had bombarded oil facilities in the heart of the British empire, while disrupting transport, raising the price of rice and insurance in the Indian Ocean region and drawing the attention of 78 warships from four navies. *Emden*, however, had also managed to leave behind a record of daring, resourceful enterprise and chivalry that endeared her even to her enemies. A typical epitaph appeared in *The Telegraph* in London: "It is almost in our hearts to regret that the *Emden* has been captured and destroyed... There is not a survivor who does not speak well of this young German, the officers under him and the crew obedient to his orders. The war on the sea will lose some of its piquancy, its humour and its interest now that the *Emden* has gone."

In his report to the British Admiralty Captain Glossop highly appraised the conduct of the 60 young Australian seamen trained onboard of *Sydney*. The RAN was baptized by fire in this battle, and *Sydney* got even for the death of Russian and French sailors and for the ships sunk by *Emden*.

From Jon Guttman

See also G. Odgers. Navy Australia. The Australian Defence Force Series. 1993