

# Five Salvoes — and no reply

► over due, no doubt, to damage to the director tower.

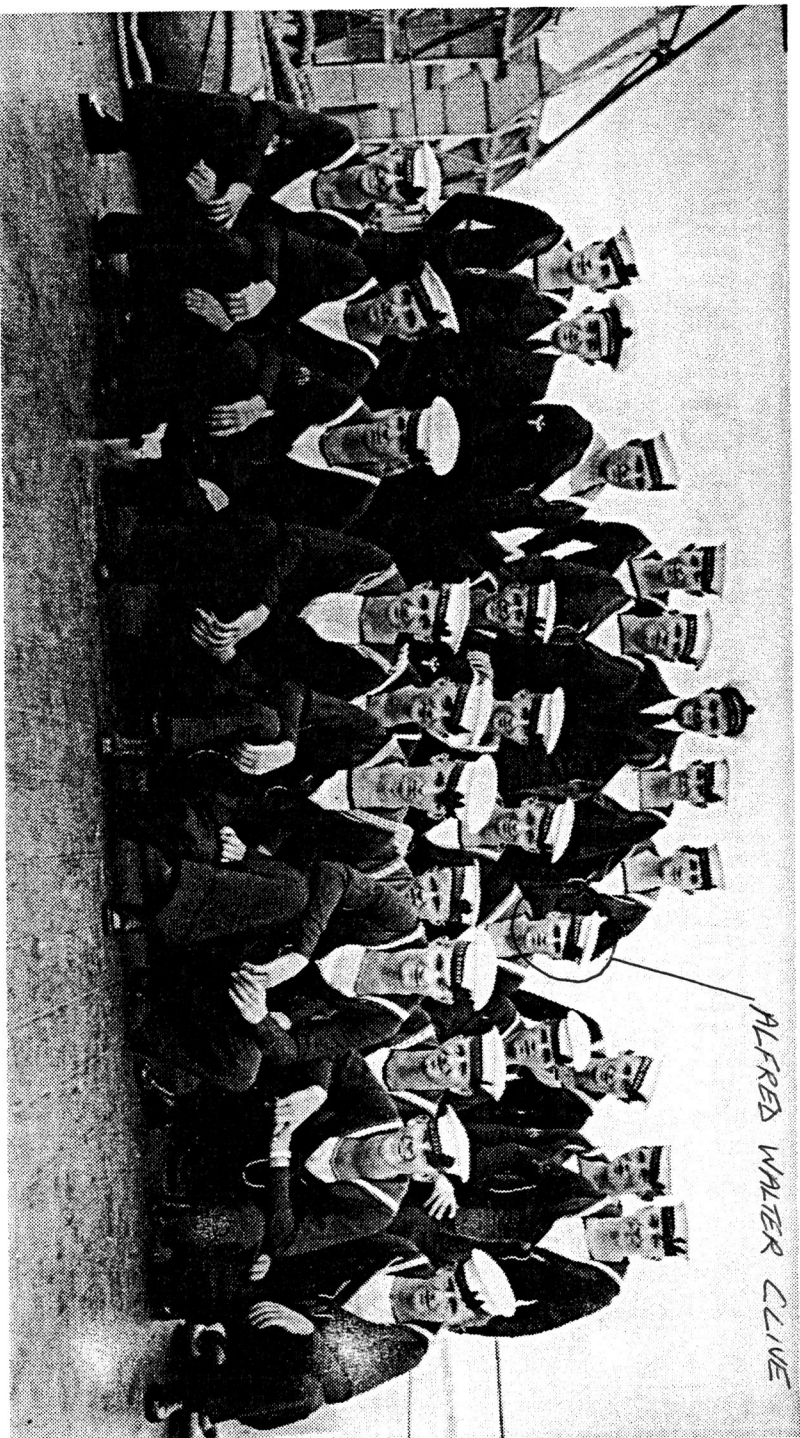
Lieutenant Fritz Skeries, KORMORAN's gunnery officer, recalled that his second salvo "hit the bridge near the funnel" the third "the forward tower" the fourth "the machine room" and the fifth "shot the cruiser's aeroplane".

Up to the fifth salvo no reply came from SYDNEY then "C turret well and fast" (no doubt in local control) scored hits, amidships and engine room, followed by "two or three salvoes from D turret, all of them over".

After about eight or nine salvoes KORMORAN fired two torpedoes. Lieutenant Skeries recorded one hit "between the first two turrets" but his captain recorded the hit "forward of A and B turrets". The other passed ahead of the cruiser, which was by this time nearly motionless and under heavy fire from KORMORAN's starboard secondary armament and machine guns.

The only reply from SYDNEY after her last shots from the after turret were some "shots from one-inch guns, mostly short".

About five minutes after action began, SYDNEY passed astern of KORMORAN in an unfavourable position for the raider to launch torpedoes. Thick smoke from the fire in the engine room obscured the cruiser from the bridge but the anti-aircraft control officer continued firing with



ALFRED WALTER CLIVE

The West Australian contingent of SYDNEY's 1941 personnel.

the KORMORAN's stern armament at a range increasing to some 4,500 yards. SYDNEY was seen to be losing way on a southerly course with her "bow dipping and listing slightly".

At about 1745 Commander Detmers recorded that he "turned away to port in order to destroy the enemy completely". As his ship turned her engine revolutions dropped rapidly. Contact was lost with the engine room.

Simultaneously four torpedo tracks were observed but he held his course because he said it was "questionable whether the engine would make the turn and tracks deviate well astern". All four torpedoes passed close astern just as the raider's engines broke down completely.

Five minutes later KORMORAN's forward gunnery control was again working with the whole port battery firing at a range between 6,000-7,000 yards. SYDNEY was hit repeatedly and burning from forward of the bridge to the region of the after funnel. At about 1800 KORMORAN fired a single torpedo at 7,700 yards which failed to hit.

At 1825 KORMORAN ceased fire by which time the range had increased to more than six miles. She had fired, said Commander Detmers, about 550 rounds of 5.9 inch. By this time the engine room had been abandoned and preparations to scuttle begun.

All life-saving apparatus, except for

two boats, was lowered and cast off, leaving 120 men and a number of officers still on board.

About 2330 the last two boats were lowered and explosive charge laying completed. At midnight the demolition charges were "touched off" and the last boat cast off. Half an hour later, when KORMORAN was settling slowly, her cargo of some 200 mines exploded, sinking her in two or three minutes, stern first.

There was nothing to indicate SYDNEY remained afloat. Last sighted some 10 miles distant, a "glare" had been visible until about 2200 and afterwards for some time "occasional flickerings" then "darkness".