

APPENDIX No. 18

THE LANDING ON COCOS.

[The following account of the German landing on Direction Island is extracted from a report by Superintendent Farrant, of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, who was in charge of the cable station at the time.]

"At 5.50 a.m. on the 9th I was informed that a warship with four funnels was steaming for the entrance between Horsborough and Direction Islands. Quickly investigating, and finding that the fourth funnel was palpably canvas, I found Mr. La Nauze and instructed him to proceed immediately to the wireless hut, and to put out a general call that there was a strange warship in our vicinity, asking for assistance and signing our naval code. At the same time I proceeded to the office and sent services, as previously instructed, to London, Adelaide, Perth, and Singapore.

"The *Emden* (for such she turned out to be) came in at a great speed nearly as far as our outer buoy, where she wheeled and disclosed an armoured launch and two heavily manned boats under her counter. They were immediately slipped, and speeded straight for the jetty. Through a glass we managed to distinguish four machine-guns, two in the launch and one on the bow of each boat. The information was conveyed to the aforementioned stations, and I personally told Singapore that it was the *Emden*. So quick had been their movements, evidently with the hope of rushing our wireless, that the slip of the last-mentioned services was passing through the 'Autos' when they entered the office.

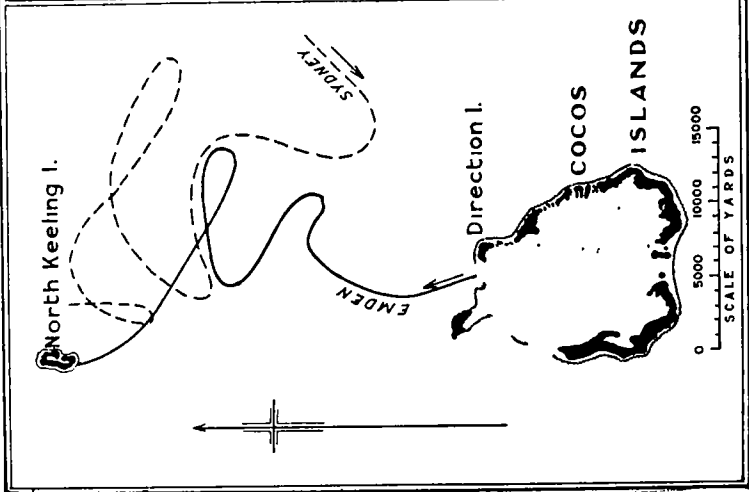
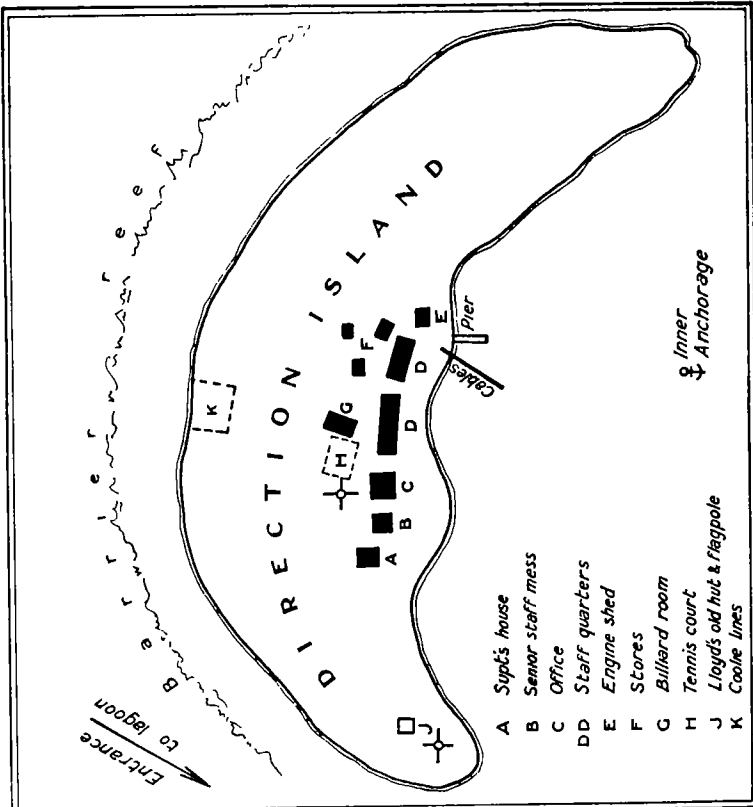
"In the meantime Mr. La Nauze was putting out the call. I returned to the wireless hut, where he informed me that the *Emden* and her collier the *Burck* were endeavouring to interrupt him. I instructed him to continue the call, as the fact of forcing the two ships to use their strong Telefunken notes could only be regarded as a matter for suspicion if picked up by a warship. I stood at the corner of the hut to assume responsibility for the use of the wireless, until an officer and some half-dozen blue-jackets ordered us to desist and leave. Armed guards ran to all buildings, and the office was taken possession of in force and the staff ordered out.

"Lieutenant von Mucke, in charge of the landing party, was exceedingly agreeable. He informed me that he had landed 3 officers and 40 men, and his instructions were to destroy the cable and wireless station. Further than this, he said, they would not go, and all private property would be respected. He instructed me to collect the staff and take them to a place of safety, as he was blowing up the wireless mast. Three charges had to be fired before it fell. The mainmast was considerably damaged; the top-mast appears unhurt, and a short length is broken off the top-gallant-mast. Instruments, engines, dynamos, batteries, etc, were all battered to pieces with huge axes . . . The *Emden* was for a short time circling over the cables, but, evidently worried by our wireless, she almost immediately stood out to the entrance to watch for anything coming up.

"The only question I was asked was the whereabouts of the cable ends; the answer 'in the sea' appeared to satisfy them, as I was not pressed. Whilst all the damage was being done ashore, the launch was searching the foreshore for our cables, and I noted with delight that she first raised a small type (probably B), which would be our half-naut of spare laid out in the lagoon. The greater part of her time was taken up in coiling this cable inboard, and it did not appear to strike them that there was a considerable slack for a laid cable. Later they raised Perth, which they experienced very great difficulty in cutting, and which was one of the causes of their not getting aboard the cruiser. The cut was made about 300 yards from the jetty. At about 8.45 a.m. the *Emden* steamed in again, and made frantic endeavours to recall her boats, using both her flags and sirens. The launch appeared to be unwilling to give up her cable, and some delay was experienced in getting her in and the men aboard. Lieutenant von Mücke shook hands with me on leaving, and apologised for having to blow up our small engineer's store—owing to there being a roll of electric light cable there—and hoped the flames would not spread. All the men were looked over for loot, and a few minutes later put out to rejoin their ship. . . .

"After the departure of the boats, I requested the staff to have breakfast and then help in clearing up and finding out exactly how we stood. The time was about 9.30 a.m. We had scarcely reached our houses when a report was brought in that a large ship was approaching from the eastwards, and at the same time it was noticed that the *Emden* had raised her anchor and was standing out to sea. Getting on to the barrier, a cruiser was seen coming up at a great rate, stoking heavily and enveloped in a cloud of black smoke. It was only an occasional glimpse now and then which showed her to be a four-funnelled light cruiser, which we incorrectly assumed to be the *Newcastle*. Coming out of the entrance the *Emden* fired immediately, and we were afterwards informed that shells landed in both the *Sydney's* controls, breaking one of their range-finders. The reply was instantaneous, and a very picturesque battle started at a range of about 3,700 yards and within a mile or so of the barrier.

"The *Emden* worked her guns splendidly, and seemed to be firing continually. Her shells were plainly visible, cutting through the black smoke of the *Sydney*, and she appeared to be making good shooting. The *Sydney*, on the other hand, having to pick up her range by gunfire, was at first somewhat handicapped, her shells landing over or short of the other cruiser and apparently somewhat astern. They had, no doubt, underestimated her speed, as she was travelling at a big rate. This, however, was speedily rectified, and getting out of range of the *Emden's* guns she hit her frequently. The latter soon lost a funnel and almost immediately a mast, followed by another funnel, and was seen to be burning astern, with an escape of white steam from her side. The two ships then passed the horizon and were lost to sight. We afterwards learnt that to avoid sinking she ran for a reef at North Keeling, burning furiously. . . . The landing party had, meanwhile, returned, and the German flag was hoisted. I was asked to get the men together, and it was explained to them that they were under German martial law, and that any attempt to communicate with the enemy would bring about drastic punishment. All fire-arms had to be given up, and the staff put up under an armed guard. When Lieutenant



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Von Mucke came up he explained that, if the *Emden* did not return before evening, he would take the schooner *Ayesha* and leave the island. He required provisions, which he said would be returned or paid for later, and asked for any old clothes for his men. He allowed us full liberty, and allowed me to lock up my office, the stationery, etc. It was only now, when the officers were too busily engaged in provisioning the schooner to properly look after their men, that a good deal of petty pilfering went on, and more damage was done to the already destroyed office. At 6 p.m. they joined the *Ayesha*, towing their two boats and being towed by the launch. The German flag was broken at the peak, and after giving three cheers for the staff, and the compliment returned, they stood out to sea in the dark.

"We had made no provision for lighting, as they had not discovered our oil store, and I thought it desirable to see them away before opening it up. At 6.30 p.m. we groped for and dug up our buried mirror, collected cells from the various hiding places in the bush, and quickly got into communication with Batavia, who answered our second or third short call. We tried Rodrigues, but probably our battery was too small, and we failed to raise him. After reporting as much as was necessary—as we were tired out, and working with candles in the midst of a chaos of broken glass—I closed down for the night, telling Batavia to watch for us at daylight.

"At 6.30 a.m. on the 10th we dug up and brought in our spare instrument, tray cells, etc., and were early in a position to wire reports and exchange services with Singapore. Discovering a millimeter in a fairly good state of preservation, we were able to roughly test the other two cables, finding Rodrigues in good order and Perth cut. We communicated with the former station, and a boat with the handy men, under Mr. Griffin, searched successfully for the Perth ends. The cable was somewhat pulled about, and had to be straightened before making a temporary connection. The ends were lashed to a life-boat, and communication restored early in the afternoon. Our Chinese lighter was scuttled by the Germans, and I was very glad to receive from Captain Glossop the above-mentioned life-boat, which had previously belonged to the *Emden's* collier, the *Buresk*, and which Cocos Station should find extremely useful. . . .

"Dr. Ollerhead, by going on to the roof to inspect the *Emden's* fourth funnel, gave me the chance of putting out the wireless call without any waste of time; Mr. C. H. K. La Nauze maintained the call under very trying conditions; Mr. Preshaw worked long hours erecting instruments and re-wiring circuits. Mr. Griffin recovered the Perth ends, and straightening out the cable, enabled us to make a short connection. Mr. Beauchamp went out after dark to recover buried instruments, and Mr. Cherry constructed another instrument out of very unpromising material collected from the débris.

"I suppose we were putting out our calls for a quarter of an hour, first 'Strange ship at entrance,' and later '*Emden* here.'¹ The first was picked up, but I have heard no mention of the second. Lieutenant von Mucke, a tall, pleasant, well-built man, allowed me to do almost everything I asked him, and I am pleased to say that at my request he sent no one to Home Island. They were all thoroughly sick of the work they had to do, and up to their arrival here had not

¹ This was evidently jammed, as no ship records having picked it up.

lost a man. He told me that the *Emden* had a complement of 300 men, of whom forty were ashore; but later Dr. Ollerhead said that one of the survivors told him that she had 352 on board at the commencement of the fight. Whatever the number was, he considered the absence of the landing party a very severe handicap. He explained to me the *Zhemchug* incident, and how they tried to lure the *Pistolet* to close quarters. He further explained that it was the first time that he had been ashore for three months, except for seven minutes on 'another island.' It was not the *Emden* that passed here on the 1st September, but he suggested that it might have been the *Königsberg*. I asked him whether, in the event of our cruiser returning, he intended to fight on the island, and he shrugged his shoulders and said 'I must.' As the ship would have most certainly shelled him, I arranged with him that the staff and servants should go to another island out of the danger zone, and I told the carpenter to tell the Chinamen to make all preparations to leave. On account of the few boats, and the probable shortness of notice, I am afraid that not all could have got away; but I had no intention of going until every man and servant had gone. Direction Island would have afforded sufficient shelter, and was quite safe for a few, and I did not feel at all inclined to move. Another officer with the landing party was Lieutenant Schmidt, son of Admiral Schmidt of Kiel.

"The *Emden* flew no colours, and evidently hoped to find us asleep. As it was, they turned out quite a few men!"