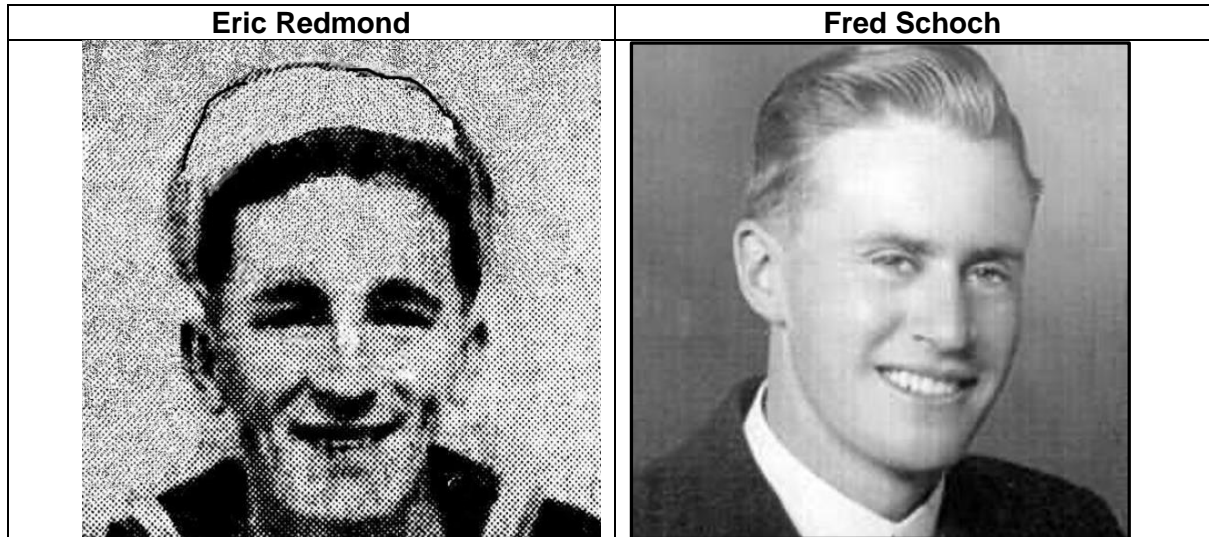**Eric Redmond (PMS 1932-34) and Frederick Schoch (PMS 1934)**

On 19 November 1941 the Australian light cruiser HMAS *Sydney* engaged the German auxiliary cruiser *Kormoran* in waters 230 kilometres west of Denham, Shark Bay, Western Australia. Both ships were destroyed and the Sydney's entire crew of 645 men were lost. Signalman Eric Redmond and Engineer Lieutenant Fred Schoch were two members of that crew.

Eric Redmond	Fred Schoch

Eric Redmond

Eric Neville Redmond was born in Clapham Common in England on 3 August 1919 to Daniel and Florence Redmond. The family migrated to Australia and were living at 52 Elizabeth Street, North Perth, when Eric commenced at Modern School on 9 February 1932. Eric completed his Junior Certificate exam and left Modern School at the end of 1934.

After working as an insurance clerk, Eric joined the Royal Australian Navy at Fremantle on 17 February 1938 for the standard period of 12 years. He underwent initial training at HMAS *Cerberus* south of Melbourne. He passed the Ordinary Signaller course on 5 October 1939 and was posted to the destroyer HMAS *Stuart* a week later. Eric was promoted to Signaller on 27 November 1939 and served on the *Stuart* as a Signaller until 19 May 1941.

During that time, the *Stuart*, under its legendary commander Hector Waller, was part of the 10th Destroyer Flotilla with *Vampire*, *Vendetta*, *Voyager* and *Waterhen*. It was famously called the "Scrap Iron Flotilla" by the Germans because of the age of the ships. The flotilla did sterling work resupplying the troops through Tobruk and other ports on the North African coast, and bombarding enemy installations and transport. In July 1940 the *Stuart* led the 10th Flotilla during the Battle of Calabria in which the Italian navy sustained significant damage. During the battle of Cape Matapan in late March 1941, the *Stuart* torpedoed the Italian cruiser *Zara*. The battle was an overwhelming victory for the Allies.

Eric served on the *Vampire* for two months in mid-1941, returned to *Cerberus* in July 1941 and was then posted to *Sydney* on 22 October 1941. It is likely he joined the ship in Fremantle on 10 November 1941 when it returned to port after a patrol in the Indian Ocean.

Frederick Schoch

Frederick Harold Schoch was born in Geraldton on 4 September 1918 to Frederick Sr and Merle. His father taught at several country schools and Fred attended primary school at No. 1 Saw Mill School in Deanmill, Coolgardie State School and Kurrawang State School. He then attended the Eastern Goldfields High School from 1930 to 1933 for his first four years of high school. When his father was transferred to Cookernup near Harvey, Fred transferred to Modern School to undertake his fifth year, commencing in February 1934. He successfully completed his Leaving Certificate exam in November of that year.
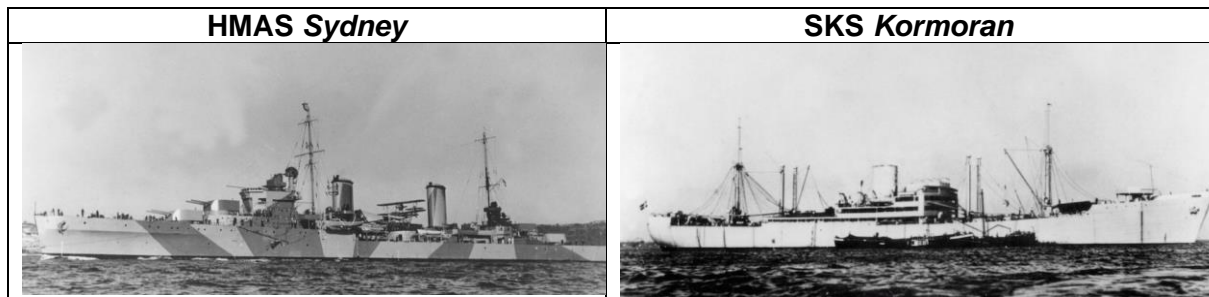
Fred enrolled in engineering at the University of Western Australia in 1935, lived at St George's College, and completed his five-year degree course in August 1939. In December 1939 he accepted a position as Assistant Engineer at Cooperative Bulk Handling.

Fred joined the Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve on 1 October 1940 as an Engineer Sub-Lieutenant. He transferred to the Permanent Naval Forces on 13 August 1941 with the rank of Temporary Sub-Lieutenant (Engineer) on probation and was posted to HMAS *Sydney* on the same day.

On 15 October 1941 the *Sydney* returned to Fremantle after patrolling in the Indian Ocean and he and Mary Elizabeth (Betty) Ross were married in Claremont that afternoon. The *Sydney* sailed the following day, returned to Fremantle on 10 November and departed at dawn the next morning for its rendezvous with the *Kormoran*. Fred and Betty had barely three days of married life together.

The Battle

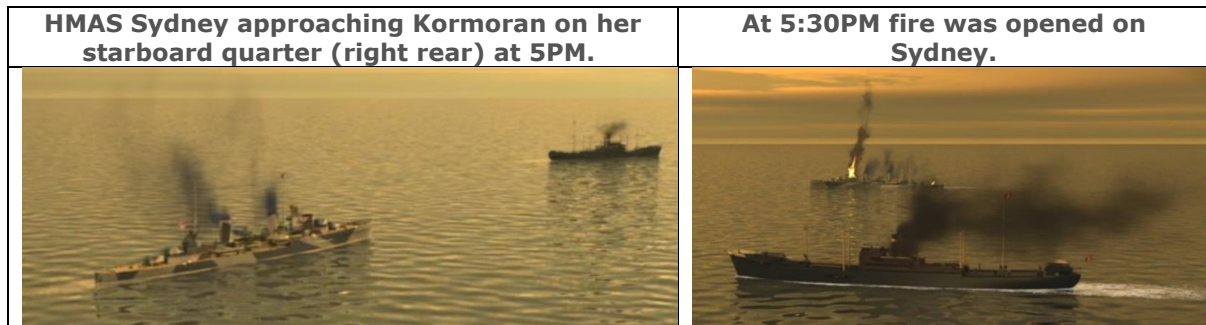The Sydney had returned to Australia in February 1941 after distinguishing herself under Captain John Collins in the Mediterranean, in particular by the sinking of the Italian destroyer *Espero* and cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni* in 1940.

HMAS *Sydney*	SKS *Kormoran*

Captain Theodor Detmers, the commander of HSK *Kormoran*, Germany's largest auxiliary cruiser, described the encounter with HMAS *Sydney* and the *Kormoran* in his book, "The Raider *Kormoran*". The *Kormoran* was sailing towards Shark Bay on "a beautiful day with warm sunshine" looking for its eleventh merchant ship to sink. At 3:55pm a ship was sighted and identified as a cruiser of the "Perth" class. Captain Detmers knew he was outgunned by the enemy ship but surprise was on his side as the *Kormoran* was disguised as the Dutch merchant ship "Straat Malacca".

Captain Detmers, hoping to entice the *Sydney* in closer, played for time by sending confusing signal flag messages and radio calls. *Sydney's* commander, Captain Joseph Burnett, with guns trained on the suspicious-looking ship, ordered the *Kormoran* to stop and gradually sailed closer. At 5:30pm the range was around one kilometre and the *Sydney* "had

come practically to a standstill". Captain Detmers ordered the Dutch flag to be lowered, the German naval war flag to be raised, and "gave the order to open fire both to my gunners and the torpedo batteries."

HMAS Sydney approaching Kormoran on her starboard quarter (right rear) at 5PM.	At 5:30PM fire was opened on Sydney.

The first salvo from the *Kormoran* "scored direct hits on the enemy's bridge and in his artillery control post", requiring each of *Sydney's* four main turrets to be independently operated. The *Sydney's* first salvo missed the Kormoran. The *Kormoran* fired its next eight salvos without any answering fire from the *Sydney*, ruining the bridge where Eric Redmond was on duty and destroying the *Sydney's* engine room where Fred Schoch was stationed. The raider's underwater torpedo tube also fired a torpedo that struck the *Sydney* near its bows causing a large explosion which put the two forward turrets out of action. The *Kormoran's* anti-aircraft weapons were used with devastating effect as they poured fire along the *Sydney's* deck and superstructure.

At 6:25pm Captain Detmers gave the order to cease fire. The *Sydney* "was over ten thousand yards distant; drifting rather than sailing, and little more than a flaming wreck." Shots from one of *Sydney's* rear turrets had set the *Kormoran* on fire and Captain Detmers ordered his ship to be abandoned and scuttled.

There were no survivors from the *Sydney*. Of the *Kormoran's* crew of 399, 318 survived the battle and were interned as prisoners of war, firstly in Harvey and then in Victoria. One crew member died in captivity.

And so passed two fine young Australians who had made the supreme sacrifice for their country. Eric was 22 when he died and Fred was 23.

LEST WE FORGET

References:

- PMS Archives

Books

- Bathgate, Greg and Shepherd, Phil, *Oversight, Battle With Raider Resolved*, Boolarong Press, Brisbane, 2014.
- Detmers, Theodor, *The Raider Kormoran*, 2nd Edition, William Kimber, London, 1959.

Internet

- Eric Redmond's Service record
  https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=4507874&S=2&R=0
- Fred Schoch's service record
  https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/ViewImage.aspx?B=5218707&S=3&R=0
- Battle of Cape Matapan https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Cape_Matapan
- HMAS Stuart https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMAS_Stuart_(D00)
- Part 1 of the story of HMAS Sydney https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-ii
- Part 2 of the story of HMAS Sydney https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-sydney-ii-part-2
- Engineering Heritage Western Australia http://ehwa.wikidot.com/people:schoch-fred
- Carnamah Historical Society and Museum https://www.carnamah.com.au/teachers?starts_with=S&page=62
- German Auxiliary Cruiser *Kormoran* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_auxiliary_cruiser_Kormoran

Further reading

- Gill, G. Hermon, *Royal Australian Navy 1939-42*, Australian War Memorial Canberra, 1957.
- Mearns, David, *The Search for the Sydney,* HarperCollins, Pymble, NSW, 2009.
- Olson, Wesley *Bitter Victory: The Death of HMAS Sydney,* University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, WA, 2000.