

President's Musings – May 2019

We look forward to welcoming amongst our midst Captain Mike Oborn CSM RAN on May 27. A warm invitation is extended to our sister naval organisations to join us to meet and greet our new CO of *HMAS Cerberus*. He has been a Clearance Diver, commanded three ships, served with the RN Amphibious Task Group and also in Afghanistan, and has a lot to talk about!

Also, don't forget to diarise Marty Grogan's talk on June 24 entitled 'Tales from the Museum: The Nestor Bell'

I'm privileged to be a volunteer at our Cerberus Museum, and it certainly has its advantages as I get to delve amongst the archives. Recently I came across a faded old photograph of a cruiser and a hand written inscription in German written underneath. A translation had been attached and in essence the writer thanked the Lord Mayor of Brisbane for hospitality extended. According to the translation it was



signed by Frigate Captain Lansdorf as the CO of the cruiser *Karlsruhe*. My first reaction was that he may have been Captain Hans Langsdorff of Admiral Graf Spee fame, but on closer examination and help from Google, he was Fregatten Kapitän Wilhelm Harsdorf Von Enderndorf, seeming to

sign as Whm Harsdorf. Later in his career he became a full Captain but alas I can find no further information about him.

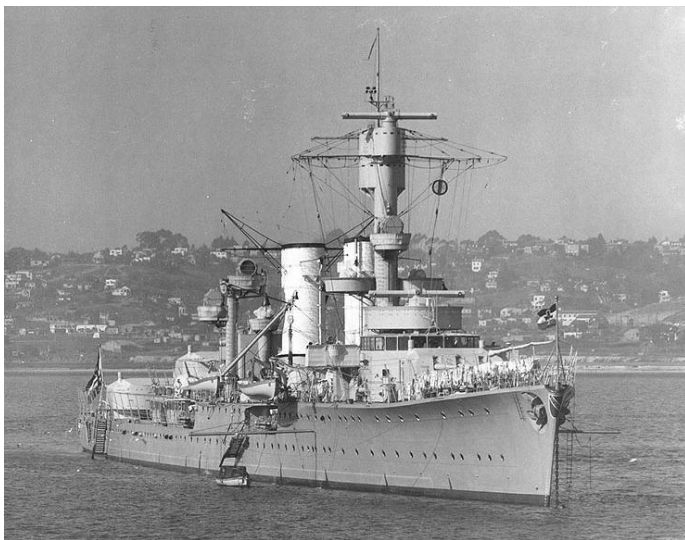
KARLSRUHE was a light cruiser, launched in 1927 and in 1930-35 took five overseas training cruises, flying the flag, and her visit to Brisbane 18-25th of January 1934, was one such cruise, having embarked the Officer Cadets of the 1933 course. She spent two months patrolling in Spanish waters during that nation's Civil war. The frequently rough seas in that



region revealed structural weaknesses in her and she was repaired / re-built between June and November 1939, having bulges added and beam and length increased, being recommissioned on November 13. Her full story is available on <https://www.kbismarck.com/karlsruhe.html>, however I quote from the website about her demise.

05 January 1940: *Karlsruhe* stops the Swedish steamer *Konung Oscar* in the Baltic Sea with 42 Polish men of military age aboard. The ship is taken as a prize and sent to Memel.

08 April 1940: Operation Weserubung. Participates in the invasion of Norway as part of "Group VI" destined to Kristiansand and Arendal. At 0510 hours, the *Karlsruhe* leaves Wesermunde with the torpedo boats *Greif*, *Luchs*, and *Seeadler*, seven motor torpedo boats, and the tender *Tsingtau*, with 1,100 soldiers of the 163rd Infantry Division aboard.



09 April 1940: The German group approaches the Norwegian coast at about 0430 hours in the morning, but due to heavy fog are not able to enter the fjord at Kristiansand until about 0600. The *Karlsruhe* then engages the Norwegian coastal batteries at Odderoya, but it is not until later in the afternoon that troops are finally landed and the city secured. At 1900 hours,

Karlsruhe and the torpedo boats depart Kristiansand. At 1958 hours the *Karlsruhe* is torpedoed south of Kristiansand by the British Submarine *Truant* (LCDR Hutchinson). The ship loses power and is a total loss, the crew being taken off by the nearby torpedo boats. *Karlsruhe* is finally sunk by 2 torpedoes from the *Greif*.

Karlsruhe was a 6,000 ton *Konigsberg* class light cruiser. Her armament included 9 X 15cm Guns in three triple turrets, 12 torpedo tubes in four triple mounts and up to 120 mines. She carried a sea plane and a maximum speed of 30 knots.

Yours Aye!

Rex Williams.