



**COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Cocos (Keeling) Islands Historical Society

**Volume 13 Issue DECEMBER
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Compiled by Lionel C Allen
lall7702@bigpond.net.au & as such all comments
not necessarily endorsed by the committee.

Continuity of staff in some areas on Cocos has always been of concern with virtually every resident on Cocos is involved in some sort of voluntary function and others on shorter term filling in for short periods such as some nursing, teaching and so on. Dee Friel leaving meant the HMAS Sydney/SMS Emden 2014 commemoration project went through a short term glitch with David Fagan taking up the reigns then with a change of circumstances Amber Watters stepped into the fold as Sydney Emden 100 - Project Administrator.

It is almost unbelievable that Nov 2014 centenary of the demise of the Emden on North Keeling Island has passed after a lot of effort by a lot of people.

On behalf of the Cocos Keeling Islands Historical Society may I sincerely thank you all.

Of many parts of the Sydney/Emden centenary celebrations was the weather being such that two trips could be fitted in to North Keeling. This allowed the placing of wreaths adjacent the Emden wreck site.

In retrospect one of the most poignant parts of the Nov 1914 battle befell HMS Cadmus assigned the horrific work of sailing to Cocos for the disposal of the crew of SMS Emden who were killed in action. There was no other option other than to slip their remains into the ocean. Many photos were taken this November 2014 by officials, and other visitors as part of the memory of so many sons of families who gave their lives were remembered.

Page 1 Society News. Dee Friel, David Fagan then finally Amber Watters ties the whole thing together. Vale Daphne Clunies-Ross & Vanda Buffett. Page 2, Cocos population. North Keeling out of sight! Page 3, Cocos wartime mystery resolves. Books & History Page 4 2014 services.. Last Emden? Page 5 More North Keeling Page 6 Nelson Mandela Remembered. Books, News, Statistics, Ayesha. Page 7 Arriving Cocos. Page 8 Some Cocos pix/

Cocos (Keeling) Islands Historical Society
C/- Post Office
Cocos (Keeling) Islands
Via Western Australia 6799

**Cocos (Keeling) Islands Historical
Society (Inc.)
Keeping Cocos History Alive.**

VALE DAPHNE CLUNIES-ROSS

A part of Cocos history was marked on the 5th August 2013 with the passing of Daphne Clunies-Ross nee Parkinson, wife of John Cecil Clunies-Ross in Perth Western Australia.

At her request only a family private services was held with a request her body be cremated and scattered on Cocos where she spent so much of her life.

The Historical Society offers heartfelt sympathy to her family.

VALE VANDA BUFFETT (nee Lagun)

As initially Nursing Sister on Cocos then married Charles Buffett who was a long term identity on Cocos as first Acting, then Official Representative and later Administrator on Cocos & Christmas Islands.

This was a chance notice in The West Australian Newspaper advising of her death on 11th Sept 2013.

Vanda is interred on Norfolk Island adjacent to Charles and her son who was killed in a tragic motor accident on the Island.

COCOS POPULATION.

Thanks to the CEO for providing the following Cocos population figures.

Actually initially combined with National and Christmas Island figures but removed to aptly display the Cocos numbers.

2011 Cocos census figures.

An incredibly low total of 550.

Age	Number 2011	% of population	Number 2006	% population
0 – 4 years	40	7.3	33	5.8
5 – 14 years	89	16.2	119	20.8
15 – 24 years	39	7.1	54	9.4
25 – 54 years	250	45.3	243	42.5
55 – 64 years	79	14.4	72	12.6
65 years and over	53	9.5	50	8.7

Applying one of the three R's

Generally speaking the distance from the northernmost end of Horsburgh to North Keeling Island is 24 kilometres give or take a metre or two. It is almost annoying therefore that even standing on tip toe at the northern most point on Horsburgh that North Keeling is not visible even allowing for the height of the tallest of palms. A good height for a *person* gazing north can be taken as 1.7 metres and a simple formula to assess just how far a person can see looking at the horizon equals to some 4.7 kilometres. This places North Keeling well out of view. Even adding the height of the palms, say 22 metres (72 feet) applying the same formula at best adds another 16.7

kilometres giving a total of 21.4 kilometres so again just out of eyesight. Probably a major reason that thoughts never tend to stray to what is happening on that little atoll.

What is interesting though is discussing trips between the two islands with our seniors who years ago that did travel occasionally between the two islands is that there was always and still is, a period of apprehension when sitting in a boat for a period when neither island is within view.

In the years as alloy boats and outboard motors became the norm travelling in convoy became logical in case one boat broke down with the speed of these boats reducing the time and any anxiety period considerably. Not so with those who sailed there in the islands traditional dukongs when this time could extend quite considerably.

TIME CHANGES LANDSCAPE

In 2004, the North Keeling lagoon that previously had always been known to be open to the ocean temporarily sealed off until now it has sealed completely. This in turn meant the inner lagoon that previously was quite salty and a significant fish breeding area is no longer so due to the heavy annual rainfall of near 2 metres the lagoon has become significantly fresh.

This was always one of the pitfalls of extended stays on North Keeling but even now with the freshwater lens extending the ground water could potentially become sufficiently fresh to be palatable only to be offset due to the intense bird life and their subsequent droppings makes the consumption of the water a high risk situation.

A little like Home Island in the late 1980's when a significant chicken hatchery was set up fairly smack in the middle of the island and fear of contamination of the ground water forced its closure.

Add the huge concern of Parks Australia over recent years to avoid the introduction of some contaminant or where one pregnant rat coming ashore amongst goods landed by would be migrants. Amazingly North Keeling is now probably the only place in the world where there are some or the original palm species from which virtually every sub species have developed.

Poignant Ceremony Finalises Cocos 1945 Wartime Mystery.

One of the most poignant ceremonies in Cocos wartime history came to a conclusion in Kuala Lumpur Cheras Cemetery on the 18th of October 2013 when the remains of 8 airmen who flew out of Cocos on August 23 1945 and failed to return were interred. This occurred just days after the cessation of WW2 after Japanese capitulation and during a flight in a Liberator aircraft to drop supplies.

As there appeared to be no trace for many years it was assumed the aircraft crashed into the ocean.

Strangely the aircraft was found in a remote jungle location in 1991 but the occupants remains were not recovered until 2009 by a team of volunteers. No doubt many local village folk in Malaysia had visited the site over the years but little remained after 2009. Families and relatives were invited guests attending but sadly many of the grieving parents had long since passed away.

One of many UK Daily Mail photographs.



This event tended to have a strange background. Some 3 years back a correspondent to the Society sent a copy of a newspaper article relating to an expedition who proposed visiting the old crash site. The file just sat until the morning of the 19th of October and may have continued to have done so but a listing of Society files onto a data base brought the article to light resulting in sending an email seeking a follow up. Then moments later checking incoming mail there was an email asking if there was a memorial on Cocos dedicated to these 8 men. There followed a

series of emails including a query of the name of one crew member addressed to the UK based War Graves Commission. Another was from the brother of one of the crew members. Cocos enthusiasts will recall efforts in 2004/5 resulting in 3 polished granite headstones and bases with supporting bronze plaques recalling 4 WW2 tragedies where lives had been lost and now mounted in what is the forecourt flanked by the CRC, Parks Australia Office and the post office.

I checked this link late Dec 2014 and it is still valid:-

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2219632/Remains-RAF-crew-died-World-War-II-rediscovered-years-ago-given-military-funeral-Malaysia.html?ito=feeds-newsxml>

This link covers the full details of the tragedy.

BOOKS AGAIN.

Under the heading of Society News on page 1 is mention of obtaining permission to have limited reprints of a number of Cocos related books. For authors the cost of having a book printed by commercial printer is normally not viable under some 500 copies. Then with that number as the cost is from say \$5 up per copy that means an outline for a private publication of some \$2500. For Cocos market due to the very limited tourist market this is years of supplies. Then comes a huge storage problem so reprints just don't happen. However it is important that supplies are maintained.

With this in mind the Society has sought and obtained permission from authors to have some 8 publication reprints made and logically the Cocos CRC would be in the best position to produce small batches of these reprints. That way no cost is incurred by the authors but if say 20 copies of each volume is made then a small mark up of say \$5 per copy is made to the author.

The sole aim of course is to ensure valuable parts of Cocos history are maintained.

COCOS HISTORY

Most folk with an interest in the history of the Cocos Keeling Islands would be aware of the two books by Ms. Pat Linford with a 3rd in the main compiled by her late husband Robert.

Ms. Linford donated a large collection of material to the Society in 2010. A lot of this material comprises early day hand written copies with some produced by an older

wet copying system with sometimes white print on a black background. It is difficult to assess the amount of time and personal expense outlaid by Mr. Linford so the Society is deeply grateful for this generous donation.

Whilst it would be desirable to see this compiled into computer files the only practicable and affordable approach would be at the hands of a long term volunteer sometime in the future.

As mentioned above the Cocos Keelings population being so small means every adult person & stacks of the younger ones are placed in a situation of volunteering meaning they end up on several committees as well as being a participant.

One of the surprises though is the amount of effort by way of correspondence to a Ms Shealagh R Pike and Robert Linford seeking details of Alexander Hare and the time he lived on a farm in Cape Town.

Alexander Hare though was the first permanent settler on Cocos where he set up a viable coconut industry rather than Captain John Ross who on the other hand aimed at establishing a depot for goods from Indonesia when rainfall made many inland roads inaccessible

2014 commemorative services on Cocos.

For some 2-3 years various Australian Govt departments have been promoting commemorative services associated with Centenary ANZAC Day services in April 2015. Various private companies have been promoting sea cruises with one at least departing Fremantle in Western Australia then travelling via the small southern coastal City of Albany enroute then to the Middle East and finally to Gallipoli for ANZAC Day 2015.

This being the date commemorating the landing by allied troops there on 25 April 1915 with consequent disastrous loss of life. No less so of course amongst Turkish troops where their service men had little no option other than to defend their territory. Some 60,000 of their men lost their lives.

In 2010 after the Federal Govt called for submissions relating to the 2015 programs the Historical Society entered submission No 70 in a final total of 600. For some time the submissions were available as computer files for general on line observation but have now all been withdrawn.

At the same time a meeting with the then Administrator the Hon Brian Lacy saw funds awarded for a part time person to be employed on Cocos. Dee Friel was the first of these with her leaving meant the HMAS Sydney/SMS Emden 2014 commemoration project went through a short term glitch with David Fagan

taking up the reins then **Amber Watters** picked up the reins for the Sydney Emden 100 Two main items in the Society's submission sought to have the present FGS (Federal German Ship) Emden attend as well as the present HMAS Sydney. However in late 2013 the last in line of the Emden's was decommissioned and matters of funding and a range of other matters made it became only a long shot any Australian naval vessel would attend. This was Australia's first ever naval victory when it brought about the demise in Cocos waters on the 9th Nov 1914 so although it had been hoped a Royal Australian Navy might be able to fit in a trip this was not to be.

Cocos travel

All Cocos citizens and short or long term tourists are well aware that it is hugely cheaper to travel Bali from Perth Airport in Western Australia than it is to Cocos. Advertised one way fares are listed from near \$A500 one way. Bali from Perth is readily available from some \$340 return with accommodation advertised from \$27 per night upwards so guess where younger tourists head in spite of potential risks depending on their activities. Perhaps Cocos needs to spread a rumour of some hidden treasure to promote the tourist trade! Hopefully new proposed Monday services from Jan 2015 will allow a direct Perth-Cocos once again.

FGS EMDEN

NOTES FROM RETIRED REAR ADMIRAL HENNING BESS August 2013.

(Mr Bess led the recent group of some 12 visitors from Germany over the 7th to the 14th November 2014.

I took part in the final cruise of FGS Emden from Emden to Wilhelmshaven. For me it was a splendid occasion to be at sea for 24 hours again. The crew was in good shape and well motivated despite the forthcoming decommissioning. On October 12th there will be a big final and 30th anniversary party, and end of November she will be out of service. We are now all working for giving a new ship the famous name, a small frigate or corvette to be commissioned in 2019 or so. The decision will be made by the Minister of Defence himself.

A Comment.

Certainly war activities are not to be commended and on the 9th November 1914 the Emden suffered huge casualties of 134 men killed and 65 wounded but this was not before in some 3 months sailing the Emden notched up a huge range of victories never before or since experienced in naval history.



Parks Australia igloo on North Keeling Island 2011.

WW1 started July 28, 1914 and in the following three months, that is by the 9th November 1914, the *Emden's* crew had boarded many commercial vessels but such was the *Emden's* German Captain Müller's virtually unheard of gallantry not a single life was lost amongst them. Some were released as they were neutrals with a fifth agreeing to become a supply vessel for the *Emden*. Others were destroyed but this was not before crew or passengers were taken off, some loaded with captured crew members and passengers assigned to neutral ports.

Top right

2011 Photo courtesy Henning Bess.

Henning Bess, Head of the Emden Family in Germany astride one of the remnants of last salvage by the Japanese with items dragged ashore from the Emden but too unwieldy and financially unviable to remove from the island. Taken many decades apart is the 3rd right bottom photo showing that now much of the island is covered in the white droppings of the multitude of birds now resident there. Cyclones periodically devastate their numbers but presently they are at a peak. As such North Keeling must be one of the most unique sanctuaries anywhere in the world with conditions carefully monitored by staff from

Parks Australia. Also as commented previously one of the rare places in the world, if not the only place, where some of the original species of coconut palm survive. Other cross pollinated to provide greater output etc.

Below.

Henning Bess astride one of the salvaged items.



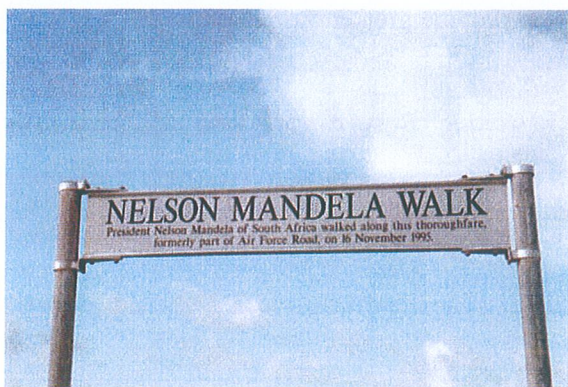
Below. Compare the two photos First taken by Vanda Buffet circa 1963



Below. Photo courtesy Henning Bess. Same area October 2011. Only steel work remains whilst the timber pieces have rotted away.



THE WORLD MOURNED THE PASSING OF NELSON MANDELA OF 5 DEC 2013.



The passing of Mr Mandela has a place in Cocos history when on 16th November 1995 he honoured Cocos with his presence. In his honour the northern section of Air Force Road was renamed after him.

The HMAS Sydney SMS Emden Story.

There are a number of facets relating to the Sydney Emden such as its incredible career before its demise in Cocos waters, the German Captain Karl von Müller's incredible gallantry & no less the amazing return to Germany of the ground raiding party led by Officer Hellmuth von Mücke.

On a personal note this led to meeting both the grandson of Captain Müller, and Hellmuth von Mücke in Germany some 3 years ago. Then it was amazing to not only learn that the son of H.M.A.S. Sydney, Captain Glossop, lives in Kelso in NSW, Australia followed up with a lengthy phone conversation & exchange of letters.

In Germany the Emden Family has records of 213 descendants and at well over that number of associates. Some 550 in total.

VISITORS

November 7th 2014 saw a party of descendants and friends travelling to Cocos from Germany to attend the Sydney/Emden commemorative services. They returned to Perth on the 14th. Over this period they attended an official cocktail reception. Visits to Home Island, dinner on Home Island and then an evening ferry return to West Island. A number of dignitaries from Australia also

attended. Other events occurred on West, Home and Direction Islands respectively. Thanks to the weather two trips to North Keeling Island and the laying of wreaths were fitted in.

Society News

To preserve facets of Cocos history the Society proposes to sell a number of books specific to the Society on a commission basis through the CRC. No author will gain other than a few dollars per copy as book sales on Island are notoriously slow but the aim is to keep them in circulation. Another for example the first Cocos book ever *Coral & Atolls* by Frederick Wood-Jones is out of copyright and a mix of an OCR program and retyping means copies will be available on a DVD as the cost of a reprint is way beyond the Society's budget.

WW1 STATISTICS

With the centenary of the Australian Navy's first ever naval victory looming that occurred in the ocean between the two Cocos Atolls on the 9th November 1914 just seemed to lead to researching the number of troops enlisted and the numbers who were killed. There are plenty of web sites giving these statistics with the problem virtually no two come up with the same figures.

Figures vary between 59 to 65 million men mobilized and after a check on a range of web sites it seems the number killed was some 8.2 million. Germany and Russia each suffering over 1.7 million men killed. Add to this the number of civilians and it means statistically this was greater than the entire population of some small nations. New Zealand for example with a population then of 1.1 million people.

Australia's population at the time of WW1 was just over 5 million.

This placed the centenary services on Cocos in November in a very sombre light with the emphasis on the phrase *Lest We Forget*.

THE AYESHA

Whilst the 9th of November 2014 marked the date of the Australian Navy's first ever naval victory it would not have had nearly the same significance if it had not been for the exploits of the German raider SMS *Emden* prior to this event.

After all naval victory firsts over the centuries are, to coin the old phrase, "tuppence a dozen." The huge difference is that for 3 months early in WW1 the Emden under the guidance of Captain Karl von Müller was involved in 32 engagements prior to its demise in Cocos waters. As exploit after exploit occurred its actions were followed world-wide by friend and foe alike. This was not due to the victories but the unprecedented gallantry of the *Emden's* Captain never before or since experienced in naval history. Certainly Winston Churchill as first Lord of the Admiralty had reason enough to fume, as well he had reason to do so, but fuming is one thing from his very remote offices in London to the actual interception of the *Emden*.

Finally in an effort to cripple the then very vital link from Australia to the rest of the world the decision was made to send a party of 50 men ashore on Direction Island to destroy the equipment. Not being able to do so without being noticed the cable staff was able to send out messages both via their cable equipment but also by radio. Probably the most effective use of this then reasonably basic radio equipment made from the island resulting in the message being intercepted by several vessels in what was the First Fleet headed to the Middle East.

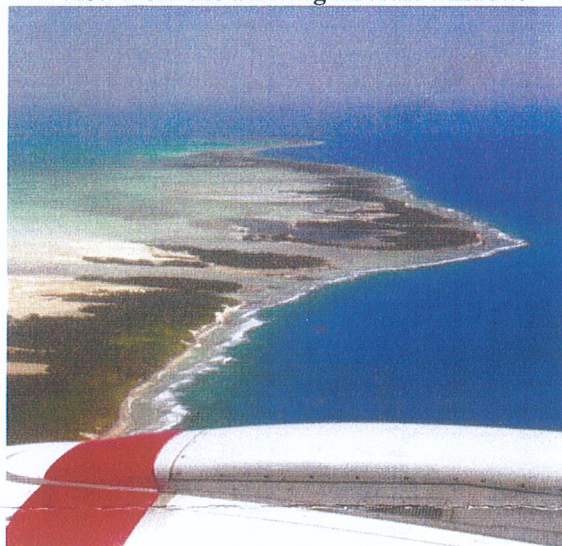
On board were some 8188 New Zealand and some 21528 Australian enlisted men. (National service was never compulsory in Australia in WW1 & nor in New Zealand until 1916 but British patriotism in 1914 was very high.)

This episode had the potential to be the greatest tragedy in the history of Australia & New Zealand "if only" the *Emden* had intercepted the fleet and the Australian Prime Minister of that time was very well aware of this. The *Emden* certainly had nothing to lose with their involvement in the 32 naval engagements not to mention the bombing of an oil installation in Madras, India.

The *Ayasha* entered the Islands history when the shore party appreciating the *Emden* would not return due to visibly noticeable damage to being inflicted on it by HMAS Sydney 1.

Scores of photos show the cable station staff and German seamen alike viewing the action from the northern shore of Direction Island or a better view from the roof tops of the cable station buildings.

AIRCRAFT ARRIVAL COCOS 7 NOV 2014
View from the arriving aircraft window.



BELOW..ISLANDS AND BLUE HOLES.

One of my pet grouches over the years is the insistence on claiming just 27 islands are contained in the Cocos Keeling Islands.

Perhaps this figure was a count of those that protruded at the highest of high tides.

Many simply come and go whilst records of 1909 expressed amazement that Workhouse Island, one just south of Direction completely disappeared. "Not a grain of sand remained" is one quote. A dictionary describes an island as a piece of land surrounded by water. Recent laser surveys of Cocos may let a new number to be listed. Certainly many would be most uncomfortable during a cyclone.



HOUSING SHORTAGE ON COCOS!



SCHOOL STUDENTS ART



BELOW THE BEAUTIFUL OCEANIA HOUSE



LLOYD LEIST WELCOMES GERMAN GROUP



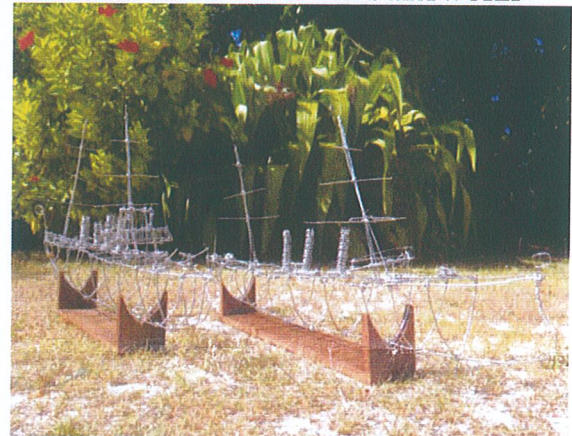
EROSION WHERE MONUMENTS ONCE STOOD



ABANDONED WEST ISLAND JETTY



SYDNEY & EMDEN STUDENTS ARTWORK



WREATH BEING CAST ON REMAINS OF EMDEN

