



COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Cocos (Keeling) Islands Historical Society

Volume 11 Issue 2 SEPT 2011

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

COCOS Shire Web Site .

Type in www.shire.cc will now reveal that copies
of "The Atoll" are back after hackers corrupted
the .cc domain. A great update of ongoing
fortnightly events, a swath of photographs so for
yourself and friends interested in Cocos please
check in regularly.

And another!

Check <http://cocoswhatsonguide.blogspot.com>

This is a great effort of a Google based website
and aimed at Cocos tourism.

Simply WOW. See pages 3 & 4 for an item
included of a visit to Cocos in September by
Australian Geographic Magazine. Please don't be
shy to contact Linda as outlined in a copy of the
main body of the pdf file. No doubt the item will
take some compiling but the forerunner of a huge
potential for Cocos Tourism.

But wait there's more on 18 October 2011
the UK based **Fact Not Fiction Films (FNFF)** will
be visiting Cocos and two films are envisaged
with one specifically aimed at the Sydney/Emden
epic. See pages 3 & 4 for fuller information

Page 1 News & information.
Page 2, Travel, Cable Station Certificate & Axe.
Page 3 4 Porthcurno. Hi Peter Budd. Old Radio Gear. Visit by
Australian Geographic. Fact Not Fiction Films.
Page 5 Cocos and the Ayesha. Germany visit. Henning Bess &
Captain von Mueller grave site.
Page 6. Gibson-Hill book reprinted. In Kuala Lumpur.
Page 7 Zodiac Mags. Emden Family Henning Bess. Fred Roles
Page 8 Fred Roles pic.. All about North Keeling.

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.

HMAS SYDNEY/SMS EMDEN

Exciting indeed that funds were sought to
support a part time co-ordinator of the
proposed November 2014 commemorative
services on Cocos eventuated. Dee Friel has
slipped into this important role and although
office space is presently at a premium at least
this will allow phone, and internet services to
become available. When the Administrator
was approached in 2010 all this seemed a long
way off.

Members and friends may even like to check:

<http://www.emdenfamilie.de/index.html>

This is the web site of the Emden Family in
Germany. This is not an official organisation
but a group of just over 200 friends, relatives
and descendants of the German SMS Emden
and who at a recent meeting in Blankenburg
Germany in June this year saw a gathering of
just over 50.

An appeal

**Folks, Please pop over to page 6. We
seek ZODIAC MAGAZINES.**

HOLD THE PRESS!!!

**German Emden Family Head to
visit Cocos. See Page 7.**

TRAVEL NEWS

As they say if someone has to do it then it might as well be me! So June 2011 saw a trip from Perth to the UK with a stopover in Dubai, one of the more modern day seven Emirates, for a few days. One day was devoted to a day trip to Abu Dhabi another of the seven Emirate states and amazing to think Saudi Arabia was only a short trip away and names and places we only read about, virtually "just next door". The Dubai skyline is eye boggling and where have you ever been able to sit in an air conditioned bus stop? Travel on a series of one of the world wide Red Bus's all fitted with and provided with complimentary earphones with a selection of a whole range of languages is not unique but a great way to see the sights from an upstairs double decker bus. The Sheik Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi unbelievably magnificent, virtually beyond description.

However a major reason for the trip was in fact to visit Cornwall in the UK and particularly several days in the Porthcurno Museum researching the old Direction Island Cable Companies Zodiac magazines. Seemingly this is the only place left with a complete set. Thanks to Curator Alan Renton and use of research areas, the quick recovery of files from storage and not the least several trips through the WW2 virtually bomb proof area to view and photograph many of the exhibits was a bonus. We stayed in nearby Penzance, where bus travel in narrow roads edged with stone fences that meant oncoming vehicles time after time had to back into a gateway to allow the bus to proceed. Overgrowth often trimmed by the upper structure of the bus caused us to duck as they beat against the bus roof.

Returning via Germany to participate in a commemorative celebration of the German Emden family and friends paid huge dividends extending the bonds of the Historical Society.

Then via Kuala Lumpur to meet Mr Henry Barlow on the basis the Society had arranged for a reprint of the superb Dr. Alexander Gibson-Hill of the first Cocos settlers Alexander Hare and Captain John Ross. See further note page 4.

One item that seemed to disappear and despaired of hearing or seeing ever again was the certificate of appreciation to the cable station staff for notifying the outside world, or correctly the approaching fleet the Emden was at the harbor entrance. Here it is safe and sound at the Porthcurno museum.



Can any one suggest why the photograph of the axe (below photo) should appear in this Newsletter? Give up? It is said to be the axe used by Helmut von Mucke's landing party to smash items in the DI cable office on the 9th November 1914. Curator Alan Renton offered it was used to chop down the Cable Station wireless mast so why disagree? It is well recorded though that the staff appealed to the German landing party not to fell the mast over the tennis courts. Finally axe or not two explosive charges were needed to get the mast to topple.



THE EMDEN AND PORTHCURNO

One of the “things” that has been in my mind, because no doubt of my own background in electronics, is a description of the radio equipment aboard both HMAS Sydney 1 and that on the Cable Station when the on the 9th of November 1914 the Emden sent a party ashore to destroy the cable station facilities. The Emden could in minutes have simply bombarded the cable station and even the civilian population on Home Island. Today you can easily purchase radio equipment that fits into a brief case which when connected to a length of wire, we call an antenna, you can talk to the world but that wasn't the case in 1914. The transmitters on board and ashore on the cable station would have been so called spark transmitters. When transmitting the signals splattered right across the radio spectrum a little akin to listening to a broadcast station and distant lightning can be heard crackling in the background.

Any way in the era is the pic below of a mock up of equipment on the ill fated SS Titanic.

SS TITANIC

A DISPLAY OF RADIO EQUIPMENT TYPICAL TO THAT ON THE ILL FATED SS TITANIC ON 15 APRIL 1912 AT PORTHCURNO.

WAS IT SIMILAR TO THAT ON COCOS IN 1914?



SAY HI TO MEMBER PETER BUDD

Long term Society member Peter Budd invited us to visit him at his home in Nailsea in the UK so here is his pix of Sat 11 June 2011 during a pleasant day's outing.



Peter's photo appears in early Cocos records as a younger man in naval uniform during WW2 and for a long time we were unable to reliably put a name to a face.

PROJECT: AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC "BEST OF AUSTRALIA" DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION ON CHRISTMAS AND COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

Thanks to funding provided by the Australian Government, Department of Regional Australia to the

Christmas Island Tourism Association, AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC will be visiting Christmas

Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to film a 52-minute documentary, produced and presented by Sorrel Wilby, showcasing the unique environment and culture of Christmas and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. Highlighting the whole visitor experience, it will be the latest in the Australian Geographic documentary series.

The documentary will be distributed on DVD to the 120,000* subscribers and 400,000+ readers of Australian Geographic worldwide and is part of an editorial package which includes a new full-size map created by the Australian Geographic cartography department, cover mentions on the Australian Geographic journal, a major feature on the region in the journal and an extensive website dossier. (* Number of current subscribers to Australian Geographic @ December 2010)

GOALS:

To provide Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands positive media promotions and

marketing to a targeted audience with the added bonus of a long term product for the Islands which can be utilised in future marketing endeavours for many years.

PROPOSED FILMING SCHEDULE:

6 – 13 September 2011 – Christmas Island
13 – 17 September 2011 – Cocos (Keeling) Islands
A second shoot is also proposed later in the year to coincide with the Christmas Island Red Crab Migration.

PROJECT MANAGER:

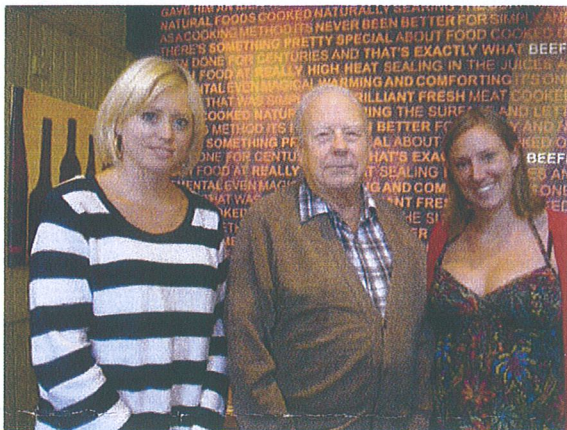
For further information regarding this project, please contact:

Linda Cash
Marketing Manager
Christmas Island Tourism Association
Email : marketing@christmas.net.au
Mobile : 0439 215 001

(Linda on Christmas Island and the whole Cocos scene will be busy working towards this splendid and unprecedented opportunity for publicity for Cocos Tourism and of course the Historical Society will support the projects to the best of our ability.)

F.N.F.F.

FACT NOT FICTION FILMS



The thorn between two roses! It was simply great and far too good an opportunity not to have met up with Rebecca, left, and Nathalie on the right, at the town of Horsham on the 9th of June on behalf of the Historical Society in the UK this year and part of the Fact Not Fiction Film staff who will visit Cocos in October 2011. Huge publicity for Cocos Tourism and it is difficult to envisage any one on Cocos who will not be involved in some aspect or the other. Questions will abound as work proceeds compiling material on Cocos related to a special SMS Emden/HMAS Sydney Documentary.

Funds were sought via the Shire of Cocos and generously (as with the Australian Geographic) again provided via the Australian Government. Here is a brief breakdown of the proposals:

A documentary will include the following elements.

- . Location of Cocos (Keeling) Islands.
- . History of Cocos (Keeling) Islands up to World War 1 and current day history.
- . History of SMS Emden from launch at Danzig on 26 May 1908.
- . History of HMAS Sydney from launch on 29 August 1912 up to being Decommissioned in 1928 and broken up for scrap.
- . The Battle of Cocos on 9 November 1914.
- . Context, history and importance of the event.
- . Strategic value of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.
- . Overview of the five ships of the Royal Navy (RAN) that have been named HMAS Sydney.

COMMENT

(It always seemed sad to me that HMAS Sydney 1 was broken up for scrap rather than dry docked as a memento of Australia's first naval victory. At the time the economy was at low ebb and unemployment high so the breaking up provided valuable work in a period of economic depression).

Presently under construction are replacement naval vessels for the RAN and one is to be named HMAS Sydney. This appears to be the same situation in Germany where a new Emden will be in service by 2014. Regardless the aim is still, hopefully, to see one or both Australia and Germany naval authorities arrange for visits to Cocos in November 2014.

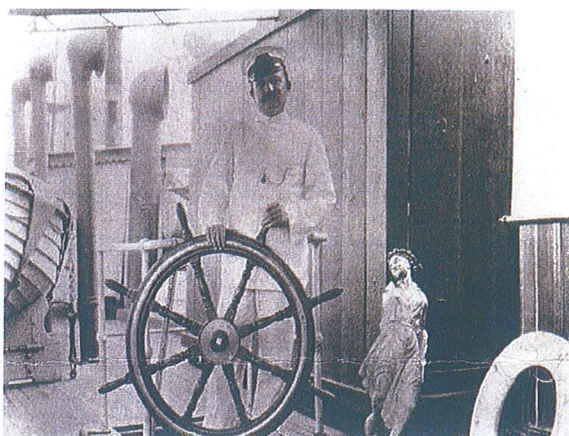
EMDEN BOOK

Another HMAS Sydney/SMS Emden Book!
Not yet translated into English but a brand new release by the brother of an Emden crew member Robert MaaB – Emden, (Herbert).
It seems that one new book per year over the last five years has been produced that is Emden related. With all the potential publicity with National Geographic and Fact Not Fiction Films Cocos & 2014 commemorative services Cocos Tourism will be *very* busy.

COCOS AND THE AYESHA

Incredibly again was to receive these photos from Björn von Mücke as a direct descendant (his father) of the officer in charge of the

German landing party on 9 November 1914. It did seem from various records that when the landing party contacted and went aboard the German vessel the *SS Choising*, the poor old Clunies-Ross schooner the *Ayesha* was scuttled. However some objects were removed.



Here is the text as sent Björn von Mücke that the accompanied one of the photos and is gratefully acknowledged:-

Captain Minkwitz on board of SS CHOISING (I suppose in Massaua at the Red Sea, former Italian colony) with the rudder wheel, the figurehead and the life-buoy of AYESHA.

The family retains the steering wheel and the lifebuoy but unfortunately when discussed in Blankenburg in June this year the figurehead has never been located.

In the book Cocos Maritime History ISBN 978-0-473-15420-2 by Bruce Clunies-Ross writes:- "The Ayesha was dry docked at Batavia in February 1912 to repair a damaged rudder and it was discovered her keel and stem were rotten. The Ayesha was temporarily repaired at a cost of 270 pounds and returned to Cocos where she lay idle, anchored at the 'blue patch' off Direction Island."

(As the *Ayesha* had only been purchased new in 1908 and built just two years earlier this cost the family dearly). Even so it when confiscated by Helmut von Mueke on 9 Nov 1914 it became the first part of a sea and land party to return to Germany and a tumultuous welcome.

Below. The *Ayesha* as new in a Plymouth shipyard in the UK in 1908.

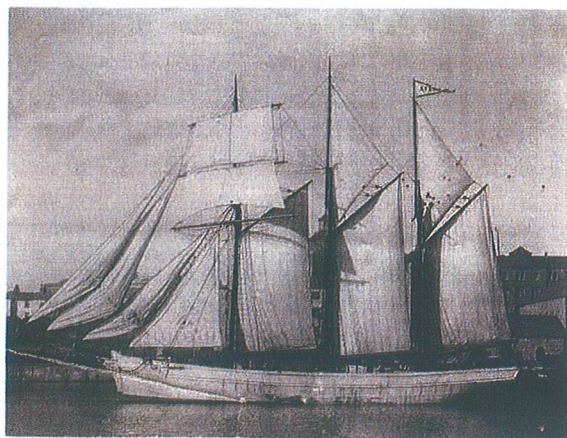
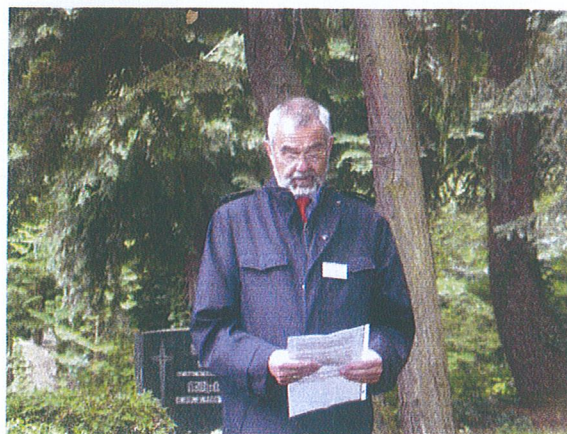


Photo courtesy Björn von Mücke

GRAVE SITE OF EMDEN'S CAPTAIN von MUELLER

Head of the Emden Family Henning Bess (below) reads a eulogy at the grave site of Captain Carl von Mueller and his wife in Blankenburg Germany. (25 June 2011)



Well over 50 friends and descendants of the Emden Family attended the service at which it was a pleasure to be able to attend.



BOOKS BOOKS BOOKS.

Almost enough to make the Historical Society feel smug has been an ongoing move to arrange a reprint of the Dr Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill book bearing the title of Documents relating to John Clunies Ross, Alexander Hare and the early history of the settlement on the Cocos-Keeling Islands.

Via **Mr Henry Barlow** in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia now the headquarters of the Royal Malaysian Asiatic Society the Society had 500 copies printed of which their Society retains 50 copies as a fee. Dr Gibson-Hill it should be explained spent some 10 ½ months as medical doctor with the Cable company in 1941 skipping back to Singapore just in time to be taken a POW. He had spent 1940 on Christmas Island. Some delay was incurred deciding if the reprint should include this period also but it was decided to make an exact print, warts and all as an old saying goes, of the original and this does mean some of the original spelling errors, and a number of other minor glitches reappear. A correction sheet to debug many of these for each copy is under way. The cover is new gloss aimed at more sales appeal and now has the ISBN 978-967-9948-50-9.

The book is of 306 pages of small type and there is on closer reading a fair degree of duplication. However no one is ever going to be able to duplicate this early research and is not likely a further reprint will occur in favour of "e" copies.

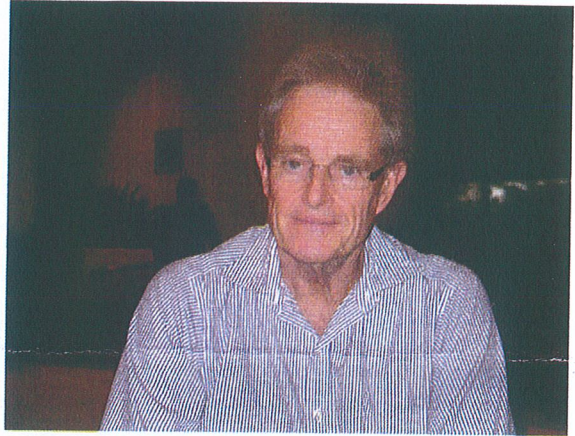
Possibly a reprint could have been done in Australia but there is no way it could have been produced as cheaply and as in Malaysia. Similarly this means copyright was not a problem. Price ex Cocos? Not at this time worked out but **very** affordable.

By using email and a few calls via an international SIM card to **Cocos Manpower Director Rosly Arkrie** we were more than delighted that he was able to take delivery of the books and include them in a container headed directly for Cocos. This saved a lot of stress plus if sent via Australia they may have incurred GST and of course reshipping.

A few heart palpitations were relieved during this process as Rosly visited KL the week after you scribe arrived back in Perth. **Thank you Rosly on behalf of the Historical Society & me!** (Steer clear if you don't want to get your ear battered on this epic).

A visit to **Kuala Lumpur** in late June/early July meant a lot of voluntary help and valuable time from people who are extremely busy so was greatly appreciated.

Here is a pic of Mr. Barlow as we chatted and sought out information over a cuppa.



TRAVEL

If there is one thing that stands out with travel is the enormity of the airports. Over the years I'd passed through most of the airports but air travel had burgeoned and that means the airports of old have grown enormously in size. Hopping into Malaysia sees one obliged to be finger printed both on the way in and out. It was amusing to see passengers emptying water out of plastic bottles and one large pot plant in a KL departure lounge must be suffering an overload wetting. It was a bit of a let down on trains in the UK not to have a TV screen fitted! Most have outlets for powering a computer.

A young girl on our outward air travel from Perth and obviously a seasoned travel moments after takeoff set up a chant "where's the food?" We didn't have to wait long fortunately. If there is one thing I felt sympathy for was her mum with another two other quite small children not getting more than moments of sleep on a long overnight leg having to tend to her brood.

INPUT NEEDED

Items are needed for the Newsletter. Unusual today is of interest tomorrow so any email of postal items appreciated.

APPEAL FOR ZODIAC MAGAZINES

Perhaps you have a family friend who was associated with the Cable services? The cable company from early 1900 to near 1967 published a magazine named the Zodiac. Huge amounts of the Direction Island cable station goings on were published in the Zodiac. The Historical Society would dearly like to acquire any copies.

What's in a name?

"We" all know that Cocos actually consist of two atolls and not just, as their official title of Cocos (Keeling) Islands would infer. Just how long the southern atoll will take to silt up and become a single island is debateable but that is now the situation with North Keeling Island. The ocean entrance first closed off in the year 2000 and has lost all vestige of being called an atoll as the internal lagoon of old is now just a muddy flat. The school outing to North Keeling some months back outlined this amusingly as the students commented on the old lagoon's muddy and sticky interior.

CO-INCIDENCE

Without doubt the 9th November 1914 Sydney/Emden epic placed Cocos on the map as never before or since. The Emden had a remarkable run before HMAS Sydney 1 caused its demise and by that time most of the world, in wartime conditions, was cheering the gallantry of the Captain. A co-incidence

though is that the 9th November 1989 marked the fall of the Berlin Wall.

ANY IDEAS?

Already the Society has posed the idea of suitable cast bronze memorial to be erected on North Keeling Island ashore of the site the Emden ran ashore.

A very substantial piece of raw West Australian granite is in mind and already pondered is getting it ashore. Say it is some 2 metres long and some 600 to 700 centimetres in the other two dimensions upon which two flat cast bronze plate profiles of two naval vessels are envisaged to be mounted. All set up in Perth before delivery of course. The granite piece has already been eyed off.

However don't be shy to send in ideas of distant profiles of two naval vessels side by side as though viewed from a distance.

GENEROSITY ALL ROUND. NOMINATED GERMAN FAMILY HEAD TO VISIT COCOS.

This seems almost unbelievable as funding was extended for retired Rear Admiral Henning Bess as nominated head of the Emden Family in Germany to visit Cocos on 18th October 2011.

Henning will travel out to Cocos with the Fact Not Fiction Film group on 18th October and return on 25th October to fit in with his charitable commitments.

This was a long term hoped for proposal that has taken a lot of organising. With a visit being arranged to coincide with the Fact Not Fiction Film (FNFF) group will have tremendous feedback worldwide and particularly Germany. The Emden Family in Germany has just over 200 members so the flow on will be quite extensive.

TEMORARILY MISSING!

Fred Roles was a name we picked up from a visit to Porthcurno wondering if the Society was still functioning so we have sent on a number of back copies of the Newsletter by email attachments for him to peruse. Fred was on Direction Island during the air raid that tragically killed a Home Island mother and her baby and on Direction Island Thomas Edward

Chancellor of the Royal Navy in the same air attack 5th Aug 1944.

Fred at Sri Lanka enroute to Cocos.



Now at home in the UK.



Obvious?

That is the location of the shipwreck of the German SMS *Emden* on North Keeling. The *Emden* headed north towards North Keeling Island and would, seemingly, because of the damage it had suffered would be run ashore on the southern most point.

If you look at Google Earth you will see a note where the remaining *Emden* memorial is located and the wreck, no longer visible, is just a very slightly east. This is virtually at the very southernmost tip of North Keeling.

The Clunies Ross family ran a cable ashore to winch various remnants ashore.



Data courtesy Parks Australia Cocos

The Commonwealth of Australian Gazette No W 42 of 12 March 1982 gives co-ordinates of:-
11 deg 50 min 30sec South &
96 deg 49 min 22 sec East.

You can follow these co-ordinates and get right to the point of the wreck.

North Keeling Oddities.

One of the oddities of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands is their title never conveyed they in fact at the time of their discovery in 1609 they consisted of two separate atolls just 24 kilometres apart. At the end of the year 2000 North Keeling though the lagoon closed off from the ocean. This is in itself a fascination to be able to see a natural phenomena in progress. The internal lagoon once a fish breeding area is now just a sticky muddy area fast filling with plant life.

It is interesting to note that several authors attribute Captain William Keeling with sighting just North Keeling in 1609. That is logical as the island is named after him. However there is no record of Captain Keeling sighting his namesake whereas he certainly sighted the southern atoll as he lists sighting 23 islands in the southern group.

It would seem for years Captain Keeling's ships sailing records became hidden in an archive and so it seems natural enough to assume the island, or atoll as it was in his time and named after him would have been the one he sighted. Such documents were extremely valuable and no doubt negotiable where trips could take months or years and many of the crew decimated with illness and deaths.

Just why no one was interested in settling on Cocos until Captain John Ross in 1825 is a mystery. After all if one had to be marooned on a tropical atoll with no chance of outside rescue then the southern atoll would be an excellent choice!