**Essays on Mount Crosby - HMS Sydney Photograph c.1925**

In November 1914, about one hundred years ago at the time of writing, the first of many troopships filled with young Australians (mostly they were young) set forth from Albany into the vast Indian Ocean to meet their unknown fortune at war. Most Australians were patriotic about our Army and Navy, but there would be nothing like some early good news to displace any doubts about our untested force.

Imagine then, news that the German raider Emden had been seen in the Indian Ocean harassing commercial shipping and lurking dangerously near the intended course of the vulnerable troopships.

Imagine further, that the Emden came under attack from the HMS Sydney and, after ninety minutes of the most intense sea battle, the captain of the Emden (a decent man) chose to run the Emden aground on otherwise unspoilt Cocos Island to save the lives of his remaining crew.

What sensational news; and what a relief that we had done so well at first.

It made a lasting impression across Australia, and Mount Crosby was no different in that sense to any other place. The Sydney's early victory etched itself into our wartime memory - a symbol of hope and pride and, dare I say, relief.

In that context it is not surprising that the young people of Mount Crosby, when thinking of sailors' costumes for some pantomime or fancy dress some years later in the 1920s, elected to pay tribute to the Sydney's exploits - a joyful wartime memory so different to those that came after it.

The costumes were made locally by Maggie Auld (McDougall), bless her.

Col Hester