LOST MISSIONARY.
ECHO OF 1943 SINKING.
An Amazing Coincidence.

A little over three years ago a small naval supply ship, H.M.A.S. 
Patricia Cam, was sunk off Wessel 
Island in the Northern Territory by a 
Japanese reconnaissance float plane. The ship sank almost im-
mediately and the Japanese con-
tinued to bomb and strafe the sur-
vivors as they struggled in the 
water.

The pilot then brought down his 
plane on the sea, fastened to the edge 
of the floating wreckage and, covering 
the nearest swimmers with a re-
volver, ordered them to climb aboard. 
The plane then took off with its 
prisoner, who happened to be the 
Rev. Leonard Kentish, a Methodist 
missionary who was taking passage 
in the ship.

This week a letter was received 
by "The West Australian" from the 
wife of the missionary, Mrs. Violet 
M. Kentish, of Toowong, Brisbane, 
asking that the facts of her hus-
band's disappearance be published in 
the hope that some reader might 
be able to provide a clue to his fate.

The letter was passed for inquiry 
to a member of "The West Aus-
tralian" staff, who, by an ex-
traordinary coincidence, was a survivor 
from the Patricia Cam and was only 

a matter of yards from the Rev. 
Kentish when he was taken pri-
soner.

Mrs. Kentish's letter is as fol-
lowes:—"Dear Sir,—I am writing to 
solicit your help in regard to my 
husband, Rev. Leonard Kentish, a 
Methodist missionary, late of Goul-
burn Island, Northern Territory, who 
was taken prisoner on January 22, 
1943, by the Japanese. The facts 
as I know them are as follows: The 
Rev. Kentish, who was chairman of 
his district, left his home at Goul-
burn Island 260 miles north-east of 
Darwin to make an itinerary of his 
circuit, travelling by a naval vessel. 
When in the vicinity of Wessel 
Island a Japanese seaplane came 
down, as it were out of the blue, and 
bombed the vessel which sank im-
mediately. It continued bombing the 
struggling men in the water, and 
then machine-gunned them for half 
an hour. Later the pilot came down 
the water and took one prisoner, 
my husband, the only padre on 
board amongst 18 men. The last 
the men saw of my husband was 
when the pilot gave him a drink 
from a flask as the plane took off 

when the pilot gave him a drink 
from a flask as the plane took off 
in a northerly direction. Since that 
time no news whatever has reached 
us of him. Should any of your 
readers have either seen or heard 
of my husband I would appreciate 
very much if they could contact me. 
The Rev. Kentish was 6ft. in height, 
had dark eyes and hair and was 
hard of hearing.—Yours, etc., 
Violet M. Kentish, 78 Jephson-street, 
Toowong, Brisbane."

The attack on the Patricia Cam 
was only one of a number of attacks 
made on shipping between Darwin 
and Thursday Island by Japanese 
float planes. It was established that 
these planes were operating from 
Taberfane in the Aru Islands, and it 
is a reasonable assumption that the 
Rev. Kentish was taken in the first 
instance to Taberfane. As the main 
prisoner-of-war camp for this area 
was at Ambon, it is also probable 
that he was taken there from Taber-
fane. Any returned prisoner of war 
who was in the Ambon camp in 1943 
may be able to throw some light on 
the Rev. Kentish's fate.