

the ensign



Battle of the Atlantic 1939-1945

Glenn Hardie



Murray Bialek



THE FIRST FLAG HOIST ON THE NEW MAST coincided with this year's Battle of the Atlantic commemoration weekend, and was carried out on Thursday, 1 May 2008, at the new site of the Naval Museum of Alberta at The Military Museums. The hoist of the White Ensign was performed by Fred Hulme who joined the RCNVR in 1940 and served in four corvettes. Pictured in the bottom photo at right are **L to R:** MS Mike Teuling, LS (Ret'd) Fred Hulme, Chief Signalman (Ret'd) Harry Wade, and MS Carolyn Gagnon. The hoist remained in place throughout the Battle of the Atlantic weekend and the signal flags on the halyards read: **"RCN, 1939, 1945, BZ."**



THE NAVAL MUSEUM OF ALBERTA

A TRANSFORMATION

BY TERRY THOMPSON

During the late nineties a small group of people representing the Museum of the Regiments and the Naval Museum of Alberta came together to explore the possibility of joining all of Calgary's military museums under one roof, governed by one body, and yet remaining autonomous within each of their individual galleries.

Recognising that all of the participants shared common objectives, this group rolled up their sleeves and began developing a concept that would bring all of the Calgary military museums under one roof.

Plans for the new architectural design, fund raising, development of governance and management structures, and improvement to existing facilities, all began to march in lock-step. Targets were set, time-lines were forged, and a promotion campaign inviting support from all levels of government and the corporate community were initiated. A target of \$6.6 million was established by the fund raisers. As donors, sponsors and a vast number of supporters came aboard, other supporting facilities were added to the basic design.

The University of Calgary, one of the founding partners, will provide library and archival facilities that were badly needed by all of the participating museums. The Discovery Room and the Maize for the education of school children from elementary to high school were added. More recently the development of a fully environmentally controlled art gallery, once only a dream for future expansion, was included.

The original modest fund raising target of \$6.6 million was soon surpassed with the final tally of close to \$26 million as additions and expansions of early plans evolved.

Recently, our small highly efficient crew of naval museum volunteers began working diligently to unpack, clean and begin positioning the naval exhibits and displays. While precise dates have not yet been established, a soft opening is expected by early summer with the official opening planned for the fall of this year.

When open, the entry to the new centre will be through main doors facing south across the parade square. The visitor is welcomed into the Queen Elizabeth II Atrium that displays the crests of military regiments, naval units and air force squadrons that have served Canada. A huge interactive Mural Mosaic dominating the atrium depicts our men and women in uniform

and their achievements. The regiments that have served our country, some spanning three centuries, present their stories through their galleries on either side of the atrium.

Proceeding to the right of the large Mural Mosaic, one passes the Donor Wall that identifies the major financial contributors who have responded so positively to the campaign. The Donor Wall hosts an interactive display presenting brief anecdotal facts about Canada's armed forces.

The area in front of the Donor Wall provides the threshold for the entrance to the major new addition to the original structure. Proceeding eastward leading from the Donor Wall, one enters a grand hallway leading to the Naval Museum, the Air Force Museum and the University of Calgary Library and Archives. Moving a few steps along the hallway the visitor enters the bridge area overlooking the main deck. There below in a hangar-like setting are housed the three vintage naval aircraft and the heavy weapons that once provided the offensive and defensive fire-power for the Canadian Navy.

The gangways on either side of the bridge lead to the stairways down to the main deck where the visitor can examine first-hand, the exhibits and displays that provide a realistic depiction of life on a fighting ship at sea.

The Wheelhouse display manned by the helmsman provides vivid images of the North Atlantic during heavy seas. Visitors will need to steady themselves from the sensations of motion that the images instil.

The Convoys and Battle of the Atlantic Exhibit, funded in part by Heritage Canada and the Calgary Foundation, presents the story of that epic battle from both sides of the conflict. The story of the U-boats that preyed on the allied convoys delivering food, material, soldiers, airmen and women to war in Europe, is illustrated through dioramas and interactive display technology. The stories of the Merchant Seamen intermingle with those of their navy defenders to form a common thread throughout the exhibit.

The Convoys and the Battle of the Atlantic Exhibit will provide the framework for presentation of Canada's complete naval history, from the early Roman development of the convoy

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Below the bridge.



Main deck, bridge, mezzanine with the Air Force Museum in the background.



Artefacts on mezzanine awaiting placement.



Ship models awaiting placement elsewhere.



Wheelhouse fronts area below mezzanine where Honours Room and Battle of the Atlantic Exhibit is being developed.



A forlorn army field piece seeking its home with the PPCLI.



Work in progress.



Naval aircraft awaiting placement elsewhere.



concept for mutual protection of ships at sea, through the various technical evolutions necessitated by the wars of the early twentieth century.

The Korean War increased Canada's naval influence in the Pacific and represents the beginnings of our country's postwar navy. Today, the presence of Canada's navy can be found on all the oceans of the world. The waters of the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Aden, and the seas around East Timor are some that have come under particular focus over the past decade. The history of Canada's postwar navy will be brought more clearly into focus through new displays as the story of the Canadian Navy continues to unfold.

Needless to say, there have been many speed bumps along the way and there will continue to be impediments to be overcome as The Military Museums evolve in the future. Today, it is what is going on inside this new building that will be of interest to all citizens of Calgary, and in particular the educators in our rapidly expanding academic community. This unique complex is destined to become a centre for strategic and military studies second to none in North America.

In 2010 the Canadian Navy will be celebrating its centenary across Canada. The Naval Museum of Alberta will preserve the story of the first one hundred years of Canadian naval history for all Canadians.

As a new generation of young Canadians come forward to serve their country, they will build on the honourable history and traditions of our forefathers.. The torch will once again have been passed as the future of the Canadian Navy evolves and we continue to proudly preserve our past.

In the President's View

By Glenn Hardie

And so it continues! I doubt anyone anticipated we would still be in a transition stage now, nine months after closing the doors of our former Naval Museum to the public on August 6, 2007. However, I'm pleased to report that significant progress has been made at the new site since the last edition of the *Ensign*.

A new naval mast has been installed on the west side of The Military Museums' (TMM) grounds, close to Crowchild Trail. The recent Battle of the Atlantic ceremonies provided an ideal opportunity for the inaugural flag hoist on that mast, and you'll see on our front cover, a photograph of the White Ensign flying proudly over the signal "RCN, 1939, 1945, BZ."

Our three aircraft, the large gun mountings and heavy-lift artefacts, new cabinets, ship models, and numerous artefacts, have now all been moved to the new TMM site. Our interior contractors, Global Exhibit Technologies Inc., have completed much of the new 'walls and partitions' construction in the new

Naval Museum, and other work is proceeding in the neighbouring areas of the Air Force Museum of Alberta and the Discovery Room.

Once those installations are completed, and after our new Naval Museum space undergoes a thorough Friday Routine cleaning stations, we can continue the progress of placing our artefacts, coordinating the setup and positioning of the cabinets, treating and positioning of our mannequins, and generally moving toward a 'soft opening' date, whence the Naval Museum will be reopened to the public. We have been very careful to remain within our financial resources within a reasoned scale of priorities for the specific exhibits and displays that we feel can be finalized at this point in our history.

If you live in Calgary and have recently had the opportunity to visit the new Naval Museum, I'm sure you're impressed with the overall grandeur of the space and the excellent job that our interior contractors have completed to date. In the coming weeks, I anticipate that among other things, the wheelhouse graphic window displays and sound system will be installed, the bridge equipment will be positioned, and a submarine display will be commenced in the vicinity of the periscopes.

Our volunteers continue to work tirelessly to deal with all of the myriad issues that need to be addressed in a move of this magnitude. Our volunteers also turned out recently to staff our fund raising casino which was held on the nights of April 24 and 25. On behalf of each member of our Society, I'd like to again thank all of our volunteers for their dedication and continuing efforts on behalf of the Naval Museum. Our volunteers never cease to amaze me!

I look forward to seeing all of you during the 'soft opening' phase of our new Naval Museum, hopefully before the next edition of the *Ensign* is published! Post a lookout for the coming 'Official Opening' date this fall.

On a sadder note, those of you who have been long-standing members of our Society will remember Wayne Holmes who acted as President of the Society earlier in this decade, and was a good friend to all of us. Unfortunately Wayne passed away peacefully in Toronto on April 26, and will be laid to rest beside his wife Thelma in Saskatoon.

Two weeks earlier, longtime volunteer Ruben Mente passed away. Ruben moved to Toronto during the summer of 2006 to be closer to his family. Like Wayne, he will be missed by all of his many friends and associates at the Naval Museum. The funeral and interment were held in Calgary on April 23.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to their families.

Did you know?

Did you know that many companies recognize volunteer work through corporate donations? Some will do this only for employees, but others also recognize the work of their retirees. For example, in the energy industry the



following companies will donate up to \$1,000 per year for employees and retirees who engage in volunteer work — Shell Canada, Suncor, Petro-Canada, Chevron Canada, Imperial Oil and Exxon-Mobil Canada.

If you are a museum volunteer, check with your employer or former employer to find out if they will recognize your volunteer work with a donation to the Naval Museum of Alberta Society.

Cables Slipped

Wayne Holmes
1923 - 2008

It is with deep sadness that the Naval Museum of Alberta Society learned of the April 26, 2008, passing of one of our distinguished members and former President. Wayne joined the Royal Canadian Navy in Saskatoon in 1942 and was one of twenty-six Canadians who were selected for service in Royal Navy Submarine Service. He returned home in 1946 to a distinguished career with the Bank of Montreal.

On retiring from the bank, Wayne became involved in a variety of community activities including the Canadian Executive Services Organization and the 1988 Winter Olympics. Always enthusiastic in promoting the history of the RCN, he became a member of the Naval Museum of Alberta Society and in 1996 was appointed President. He served in that capacity until 2002.

Wayne's direct involvement in all museum activities brought many positive changes to Naval Museum operations and fund raising. With his wife Thelma at his side, he was active in Calgary's naval community and he will be sadly missed by all of his friends and associates.

On behalf of all the members of the NMAS and the naval community at large, we extend our sincere condolences to his family and many close friends.

Ruben Mente
1931 - 2008

Long time member and volunteer at the Naval Museum, Ruben Mente passed away on April 15, 2008. He will be sadly missed by his many friends at the museum. Always with a smile, Rube pitched in to lend a hand whenever and wherever it was needed. He was instrumental in cataloguing the John Burgess Library and the photo records of the museum. Ruben and his wife Thelma moved to Toronto to be closer to their family in 2006.

Ruben was a veteran of the Korean War, following which he began a long career with Firestone Canada.

A Funeral Mass was held at St. Gerard's Church in Calgary on April 23, 2008. The Naval Museum of Alberta Society extends its sincere condolences to all members of his family.

Bill Wilson Honoured

The Sir Arthur Currie Award is presented each year by the Calgary Military Museums Society (CMMS) to a Western Canadian who, by demonstrating leadership and determination, has made an outstanding contribution to the Canadian military community.

Captain W. H. Wilson, RCNR, has been named the recipient of the Sir Arthur Currie Award for 2008. Bill has been a long time member of the Calgary naval and military community and one of the founding members of the Naval Museum of Alberta Society. To quote, in part, from the CMMS media release:

In 1998 Captain Wilson together with members representing the Museum of the Regiments and the air force community in Calgary, began exploring the possibility of combining all of the Calgary military museums under one roof. He was instrumental in establishing the Sharing Our Military Heritage fund raising campaign and served on most of the various committees that were established to plan for the eventual transition of all military museums into The Military Museums in Calgary.

His outstanding leadership and enormous determination have contributed effectively to the realization of what was once a dream. The soon to be opened The Military Museums will be one of Calgary's finest historical institutions. The inclusion of the University of Calgary in the military partnership long supported by Captain Wilson has made Calgary a recognized centre of military studies in Canada and North America.

The Sir Arthur Currie Award was presented to Bill at the CMMS gala dinner at the Telus Convention Centre on May 2, 2008. **Bravo Zulu Bill!**

Farewell but not goodbye

Your Board of Directors has brought pressure to bear on our modest editor to make space for a few words regarding his departure from the immediate fold.

Unless you have attended recent Christmas brunches, summer barbecues or annual general meetings, you may not know that George and Gloria Moore will be moving to the fair city of Kamloops, BC, at the end of May.

Fortunately, Cascade Creek Publishing will be moving with him and he will continue to provide us with his publishing services. The *Ensign*, along with the other naval publications, couldn't exist without him, and we acknowledge a loss to our community. We are sure that both Gloria and George will soon become popular members of Kamloops' society.

The wonders of modern technology will allow us to continue



the publication of the *Ensign*. *Publish in Kamloops, print in Calgary* has become our motto, and we look forward to a new Kamloops flavour in our *Ensign*.

We hope that George and Gloria will continue to attend at least some of our Naval Museum functions when they can, and we wish them happiness and contentment in their new home.

And so, we say farewell, but not goodbye.

The Board of Directors on behalf of all of the members of the
Naval Museum of Alberta Society

The Editor's Mailbox

The following quotations are from a letter to your editor by well known author and authority on naval history, Cdr. Fraser McKee, RCNR (Ret'd.) of Etobicoke, Ontario. Fraser's comments relate to our Winter 2007-08 edition cover photograph of HMS *Ophir*, as well as Frank Saies-Jones historical feature article entitled *Bluejackets in Khaki*, also published in that issue.

Re: OPHIR – I just reviewed a large book on AMCs [Armed Merchant Cruisers] for the Canadian Nautical Research Society and OPHIR is listed, with this detail:

- (1) *Blt. for Orient Steam Nav. Co. Apr. 1891. Handed over in Nov. '91.*
- (2) *Chartered for Royals' world cruise Nov. 1900. Back to OSNC Jan. 02.*
- (3) *Hired as an AMC 26 Jan. 1915; 8 x 6" guns, to 9th Cruiser Sqdn. in the North Sea.*
- (4) *Feb. 1915, purchased by Admiralty.*
- (5) *June 1917, decommissioned as "Unsuitable in Northern waters."*
- (6) *Recommissioned and sent to Hong Kong as Base Ship.*
- (7) *Tried for sale - no takers. Sold for breaking up at Troon, Sept. 1922.*

There was a good book, sold for peanuts, but with a large selection of watercolour drawings by a seaman who was on that world cruise. I sold it off with half my library six years ago. Dated as I recall about 1990, and a copy cost about \$6 or \$7 – a bargain.

I have two Service Certificates, one an original and one a photocopy of 1914, titled "The Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve," although that name wasn't adopted until 1923! An interesting anticipation of history by the Queen's Printer or some fellow in DND in 1914.

Re the 8th RN Division in France in 1915, there are six cap badges for them that the officers and POs wore eventually, and I have one of each – quite rare. There never was a badge for two of them, BENBOW and COLLINGWOOD, as they were decimated (my memory was in Holland, but from [Frank's] article, maybe it was Gallipoli and never converted to unique badges. There was also a badge for the RN Machine Gun Battalion (or maybe Regiment) which I've seen but don't have.

The Curator's Cabin

By Murray Bialek

We have finally completed the move to our new location. However, it will still take us more months to be fully operational. Some internal construction still has to be completed, exhibit cabinets filled, displays arranged, graphics mounted on walls, mannequins treated and dressed, signage and labels written and placed, etc. We hope to have an official opening sometime this fall. I now have an office at The Military Museums (TMM) and have started to attend regular staff and curator meetings. However, I am still spending most of my time in the old building but this will change in the very near future.

The front two-thirds of our current building has almost been emptied and the remaining items (primarily hundreds of paintings and photos from our bulkhead displays) have been photographed and itemized by Bruce Connolly, wrapped and packed (almost all by Barbara and Neil Murray, and some also by Jarad Wagar, a reservist with HMCS *Tecumseh*), and moved to the rear one-third of the building. My understanding is that the front two-thirds of the museum will be converted by DND for use by cadet units. We will retain the back one-third of the museum as storage and workshop space. Don Connolly and Gary Hansen have already started to empty out the ATCO trailer. Thanks to Al Judson, archivist at the KOCR museum in The Military Museums, for putting us in touch with First Energy Capital who donated industrial strength shelving.

Our Volunteer Committee submitted a report to the TMM with a number of recommendations. One of these recommendations was that the Naval Museum would like to continue to have watchkeepers in the new facility. While we would all like to see a 'human' naval presence whenever visitors come into our museum, the new watchkeeping policy is still under development by your board of directors.

Listed below is a small sampling of recent donations to your museum:

- Certificate of Service.
- Supply Ratings History Sheet.
- Shooting trophy presented by Cdr. Gerrard.
- Identity Certificate (1945).
- Medals: Korean War Medal, Korea Volunteer Service Medal, UN Service Medal - Korea, CD.
- 40th and 60th Anniversary Murmansk Run Medals.
- World War Two unique photographs.
- World War Two medals.
- Combined Operations Manual.
- Set of USNIP 'Classics of Naval Literature.'
- Assorted books.



- Ship model of HMS *Endeavour*.
- Wren photo collection 1966-69 CFS Shelburne.
- Mess kit/dress.
- Buttons.
- Cap tallies.
- Flying clothing card.
- Fleet Air Arm observer's wings.
- Uniforms.
- Leather flight jacket.
- Great coat.
- Engine room telegraph.
- 4th Canadian Training Squadron kisby ring.
- White Ensign originating from HMCS *Bonaventure*, 12 breadth (144 in. x 72 in.) nylon, and flown on our new mast at TMM during Battle of the Atlantic weekend (and shown on our front cover).

On behalf of the museum I would like to recognize and thank a number of individuals and organizations who recently made artefact and equipment donations: Estate of Peter MacRae, John Chapman, George Moore (Cascade Creek Publishing), Pearl Darling (Estate of Albert Cave), Fr. Stan Fraser, Richard and Diana Boon, Joyce Iannone, Ian Christie, First Energy Capital, Thomas Cove, Fran Lefavre, Wayne Linde, Margaret Wood, Jim Picco, Mrs. B. A. H. Smith, and Diane Rosentreter.

The regular NMAS Casino nights took place on April 24th and 25th. Don Connolly once again spearheaded the organisation of the event, a task that he does so well. He was assisted during his winter absence by Jim Cowie and Cal Annis. The

positions of bankers, cashiers and chip runners were filled by a willing cadre of volunteers and we all look forward to seeing the results of their efforts in August. A huge **BZ** goes out to all who participated.

Volunteer Help Still Required

Your museum still has a crucial need for volunteer help, especially if you have some 'paper pushing' skills. We are also looking for a volunteer who has some basic computer skills.

If you are able to give a minimum of one to two full days per week (Monday to Friday) please phone our General Manager/Curator Murray Bialek at 242-0002.

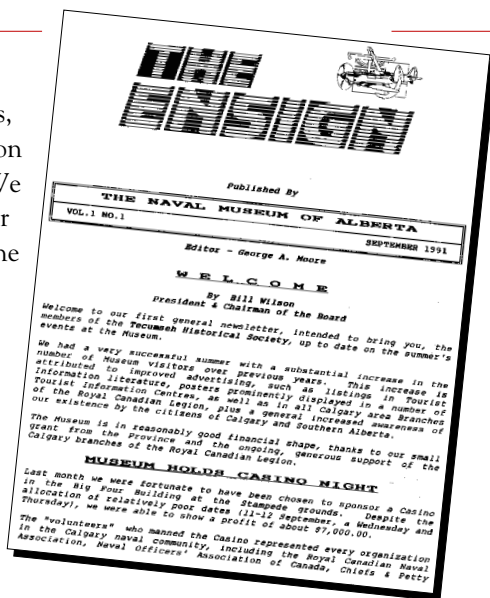
Adieu my good friends...

As you can see from the facsimile to starboard, the first edition of *The Ensign* wouldn't have won any prizes for graphic design, but it nevertheless reflected a commitment to the basic premise that, if the Naval Museum was going to succeed and live on in perpetuity, it would have to communicate with its members and those with an interest in seeing Canada's naval history recognized and celebrated. During the past 17 years, those who can be attributed with this vision, and there are far too many to name in this space, have succeeded in spades, with a brand new facility prepping to open its doors later this year.

When I started *The Ensign*, I had no visions whatsoever of still occupying the editor's chair in 2008, but here we are. It's been, and continues to be, a labour of love. Gloria and I, having experienced a nomadic (thanks to Canadian Pacific) marriage of over 46 years, are on the move again, although this time we foot the bill. Following 24 happy years in Calgary, we take possession of a new home in Kamloops, BC, on June 2nd. I'm happy to say that thanks to the 'information age,' and the good graces of the

Naval Museum's board of directors, I will be staying on as your editor. We will truly miss our good friends in the Calgary naval family but plan to visit as often as we can, and hopefully will be here for the grand opening of the new facility this autumn.

In the meantime we will say *adieu*, not goodbye, and I would like to thank all those who have supported me in my efforts to publish a newsletter which I trust, reflected the quality of your unflagging efforts to build a naval museum that is second to none in this country. Please don't hesitate to look us up if you are in Kamloops ... *we'd love to see you!*



AN INGLORIOUS END

THE DEMISE OF THE GERMAN HIGH SEAS FLEET IN 1919

BY FRANK SAIES-JONES

Those of us aware of the many events leading to the beginning of the First World War will no doubt agree that the remarkable growth of the German navy after 1898 was a major factor contributing to the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914. The creation of a German High Seas Fleet and its rapid growth during the sixteen years prior to the declaration of war was basically due to the efforts of two men, one of whom was Alfred von Tirpitz, the other being the Emperor of Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II.

Tirpitz joined the German navy in 1865, and by 1897 held the rank of Admiral as the head of the country's relatively small fleet. As a Captain in 1894, he had written a paper advocating the existence of a strong, world class blue water navy for Germany, comparable in size to Britain's Royal Navy which at that time, was the world's largest. On reading the paper written by Tirpitz, the Kaiser—who up to that time had not shown a great deal of interest in naval matters—suddenly became aware of the importance of seapower in the course of history. Having witnessed the Naval Review in England marking Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, he returned to his country greatly impressed and envious of Britain's naval supremacy.

Both men, now convinced of Germany's need to create a High Seas Fleet, began construction of what they hoped would be a fleet that matched the size of the RN in home waters, and which could give a good account of itself in the event of war between the two countries. There were other motives driving Germany's naval expansion, but the overall consideration for doing so was directed at Britain. Of this fact there was no doubt in the minds of the British.

With the launching of HMS *Dreadnought* in 1906, every other existing battleship in the world was rendered obsolete, including those in the RN. The Germans quickly turned their attention to creating a similar warship, and started construction in 1907 of three new 'dreadnoughts,' thus triggering an Anglo-German arms race that was to continue for the next seven years.

When the war finally began on August 4, 1914, the strength of the two navies (commissioned ships and those under construction) was as follows:

Warship Type	Royal Navy	Imperial Navy
Dreadnoughts	37	23
Battlecruisers	10	6
Heavy cruisers	34	8
Light cruisers	36	30
Destroyers	143	127
Submarines	66	41

In the late summer of 1914, the man who was primarily responsible for creating Germany's High Seas Fleet, Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, was adamant in his thinking of how the fleet should now be deployed. He was all in favour of challenging the RN to do battle, stating this was the sole purpose for which it was created, and its spectacular growth over the preceding 20 years.

The Kaiser however, disagreed, and proud as he was of his new and powerful navy, did not want to risk the loss of any of his ships. He intended to use his fleet in a defensive role at the outset of the war, while holding it in a state of readiness, alert for any opportunity that may arise later to engage in a decisive battle with Britain's navy.

On August 28, 1914, the first major battle of the war was fought in Heligoland Bight. A British force of 52 vessels engaged a 36 ship German squadron

sinking three light cruisers and a destroyer, with no loss of ships on their own side.

In November of that year, and again in 1915, the Germans used their battlecruisers to carry out nuisance raids on a number of towns along the east coast of Britain. These raids did little damage however, and when on January 24, 1915, the two navies met again off Dogger Bank, the British sank the battleship *Blücher* and severely damaged the battlecruiser *Seydlitz*.

This then was the situation that existed until May 31, 1916, when the Battle of Jutland was fought. During the intervening



HMS *Dreadnought* set the bar for capital warship development into WWI.



months, ships of both belligerents met on a number of occasions, including the battles of Coronel and the Falkland Islands. Devastating encounters took place such as the sinking of the three British light cruisers *Hogue*, *Aboukir* and *Cressy* by *U9*, and the destruction of the raider *Emden* by the Australian heavy cruiser HMAS *Sydney*. Jutland however, was the decisive engagement that the British and Germans had been looking forward to since the declaration of war.

The argument as to who won the Battle of Jutland continues to this day. Suffice to say that after Jutland, Germany elected to keep the High Seas Fleet at home to avoid another encounter with the RN's Grand Fleet. The Germans continued to operate their light forces in the English Channel and intensified their submarine campaign against allied merchant shipping in the Atlantic.

Admiral Sir John Jellicoe on the other hand, a few hours after his ships had anchored in Scapa Flow, reported to the Admiralty that: "...the Grand Fleet is ready to sail once again into battle on four hours notice." Following Jutland, British ships continued to operate in the North Sea, but restricted their operations to no more south than the mouth of the River Tweed, and to a longitude of four degrees east. In August 1918, Admiral Reinhard Scheer became Chief of Staff of the Germany navy, and Rear Admiral von Hipper assumed command of the High Seas Fleet.

Two months earlier, Germany had asked the President of the United States to arrange an armistice to be followed by a negotiated peace treaty. Knowing this, Scheer decided to make one last attempt to fight a decisive action with the Grand Fleet. If he was victorious his hope was that it would improve Germany's bargaining position with the allies when war came to an end. This one last foray, scheduled to begin on October 29, 1918, was destined never to take place. On the eve of the fleet's departure from Schillig Roads, Hipper received word that the sailors in his fleet had mutinied. Discontentment on the lower deck, which began in August 1917, had now come to a head. By 10:00 pm on that date; men aboard three of his 'dreadnoughts' were refusing to obey orders, and by midnight three more ships were in open mutiny.

The aftermath of Jutland had a damaging effect on the morale of the men in the Kaiser's fleet. The virtual bottling-up of German ships in Wilhelmshaven, the reduction in rations for the men (due to the impact of the British blockade) war-weariness and a general feeling of discontent among the ships' companies, resulted in their mutiny.

This insurrection was not confined to the navy alone. Entire army divisions on the western front laid down their arms and refused to fight. Workers and Soldiers' Councils sprung up throughout the country, similar to those which were formed during the Russian Revolution. The German naval ensign had been replaced by the red flag of the Communists. Officers were stripped of their swords, badges of rank were torn from their uniforms, and they were openly insulted and abused by the mutineers.

When the war ended on November 11, 1918, an armistice was declared under which the German High Seas Fleet was turned over to the British for internment pending the signing of a peace treaty. The Treaty of Versailles however, would not be signed until June 28, 1919, at which time the ultimate fate of the German ships would be decided. The victorious allies had quickly agreed as to the fate of the German U-boats. Over 200 of them had surrendered to the British within the first two weeks of the armistice being signed. Some of these were later turned over to various allied countries, but most were quickly scrapped.

It was a different matter when it came to deciding the fate of surface ships. Originally it was intended to disarm the vessels and have them interned in neutral ports to be designated by the allies at a later date. Unknown to the Germans, the British intended to hold them in Scapa Flow, pending a final decision. Only two days after the signing of the armistice, the disarmament of 74 vessels to be interned began. On being ordered by Admiral Beatty to send a flag officer in a light cruiser to make arrangements for the official surrender, the Germans dispatched Rear Admiral Hugo Meurer in the *Konigsberg*. On November 15, 1918, at a designated position 50 miles east of the Firth of Forth in Scotland, the *Konigsberg* was met by a Cruiser Squadron of the RN led by HMS *Cardiff* and ten destroyers. Conducted to an anchorage in the Firth, Admiral Meurer was received on board Beatty's flagship, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, where he was handed documents relating to the transfer of ships to be interned. On November 17, 1918, *Konigsberg* returned to Germany under escort.

In his dealings with Beatty, Admiral Meurer found the attitude of the British admiral both formal and businesslike. No sympathy was shown to the Germans by Beatty, and all questions put to him by Meurer were decided in his favour without discussion. Despite conditions existing in Wilhelmshaven at the time, including desertions, drunkenness, lack of discipline and the abuse heaped upon officers by the Workers and Soldiers Councils of the revolutionaries, disarming of the ships was completed by November 18, 1918.

It now remained for Admiral Hipper to choose a flag officer for the distasteful task of leading the High Seas Fleet to internment. His selection fell on Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter, a professional officer and staunch monarchist who had entered the navy as a cadet in 1885 at the age of 16. Reuter was a veteran of both Dogger Bank and Jutland, and a respected and popular officer. He was later to claim that if the Germans were to break the armistice conditions, the British would be free to take whatever action they deemed necessary to ensure the ships would never again fall into German hands. He also believed the ships would eventually be interned in neutral ports pending a final peace settlement.

Having hoisted his flag in the battleship *Friedrich der Grosse*, Reuter led the defeated fleet to sea at 0130, November 21, 1918. In line astern at dawn, they were met by a British destroyer and 250 allied warships which passed down the line of 74 enemy ships



on both sides before turning about and escorting the German ships into the Firth of Forth. These two great fleets, meeting as they did on that day, made for the largest gathering of seapower in the history of the world. The guns of the British ships were trained fore and aft, but on Beatty's orders were not locked in position. Ammunition was at the ready, rangefinders continually calculating the closing range and the crews of the British ships wore anti-flash gear, carried gas masks, and were closed up for action.

With all the escorts in position, Beatty's flagship, the *Queen Elizabeth*, wearing the ensign he had flown at Jutland while in command of the *Lion*, sailed to the head of the triple line of ships. As he passed each allied ship, ratings manning the sides gave three cheers to their Commander-in-Chief. That afternoon, as the German ships lay at anchor in the Firth, Admiral Beatty signalled the interned fleet by radio: "The German flag will be hauled down at 1557 [sunset], and is not to be re-hoisted without permission."

After the British had conducted a thorough inspection of the German ships to ensure they were completely disarmed, Admiral Reuter was informed that his ships were to be interned at Scapa Flow (considered to be a more suitable anchorage than the Firth of Forth), and they would not be sent to neutral ports in accordance with Article XXIII of the Armistice. This decision of the British was considered by Admiral Reuter to be a breach of faith on their part, and as the peace conference dragged on, the fate of what was now known as the Internment Formation, appeared to be sealed.

As 1918 drew to a close, the British who were anxious to return some of the 20,000 men who had sailed the German High Seas Fleet into captivity, arranged to repatriate some 3,200 on December 3rd. This number was increased on December 6th when two more ships from Germany embarked an additional 500 officers and 5,500 men. Six days later another 700 officers and 4,300 men were returned to the fatherland. During the first five months of 1919, repatriation continued until caretaker crews on the interned German ships numbered approximately 5,250 officer and men.

The ultimate fate of the German High Seas Fleet was one of the main reasons for the hold up of the long awaited Peace Treaty being hammered out in Versailles. In essence, while all countries involved were in agreement that none of the German ships should be returned to Germany, the question remained as to what should happen to them. The French thought they should be allowed to have a quarter of them and the Italians wanted to get their hands on a number—both countries making claims on the basis that during the war they had neglected their navies in order to concentrate on their armies. The British, who had retained naval supremacy, were not interested in acquiring additional warships, but on the other hand were not keen on having the former German ships being turned over to other countries in order to strengthen their navies. The US, who had played a relatively minor naval role in the war, but who were

about to successfully challenge the British to naval supremacy, had no objection to other navies being expanded at the expense of the British. One option considered by all nations involved was to have the ships sailed to the open sea and sunk.

When the Treaty of Versailles was finally signed, details of the naval conditions imposed by the allies on Germany came as a shattering blow to Admiral Reuter and the sailors under his command. The harsh terms laid down called for Germany to retain nothing more than a token surface fleet, and all the interned ships were to be handed over together with another 52 torpedo boats still in Germany. All warships under construction were to be dismantled and the strength of the German navy was to be restricted to a maximum of 15,000 men and 1,500 officers. Her postwar fleet was to have no more than six battleships of a maximum of 10,000 tons, six cruisers of up to 6,000 tons, twelve destroyers of up to 800 tons, twelve torpedo boats of up to 200 tons, and no submarines or aircraft.

As a result of the terms laid down, Admiral Reuter and his government had few options open. The German government could accept or reject them, or try to negotiate improvements. Rejection meant a renewal of hostilities which, under the circumstances, was unthinkable. Any hoped-for improvement in the harsh conditions imposed by the allies was highly unlikely. There was only one alternative as Reuter saw it ... SCUTTLE! An early standing order laid down by the Kaiser had stated: "... no ship is to be allowed to fall into the hands of an enemy under any circumstances." Inasmuch as the ships were legally still the property of the German government (even though interned and defenceless) Reuter considered that this order still applied. The prospect of the Germans scuttling their ships had crossed the minds of the British from the early days of the armistice, and the Germans had considered it even before they had sailed for the Firth of Forth. The Royal Navy had however, refrained from putting armed guards on the surrendered fleet due to its interned status.

The deadline for the signing of the Peace Treaty (originally set for June 21, 1919) was extended to June 23rd, and Admiral Sir Sydney Fremantle, who had taken over responsibility for the surveillance of the interned fleet, and who originally intended to seize the ships on June 21st, decided instead to take his squadron of battleships to sea for exercises that day, intending to return to Scapa on June 23rd in time to execute his plan if necessary. Meanwhile, Admiral Reuter heard a news report to the effect the British were planning to seize his ships on June 23rd. Not having been notified of the official date of the expiration of the armistice, he prepared to act on his own initiative. On the morning of June 21st, in full dress uniform he paced the quarterdeck of the *Emden*, and at 1000 ordered the international code flags 'DG' to be hoisted. The signal meant that all ships were to man their bridges and prepare for further signals. At 1030 he ordered the signal 'PARAGRAPH ELEVEN, CONFIRM' to be hoisted, putting in motion his order #P39 dated June 17, 1919, which gave details of how the ships were to be scuttled.



With the departure of Admiral Fremantle and his battleships from Scapa on June 21st, the fate of the once proud German navy had been sealed. One by one the German ships obeyed their admiral's order and, with the battle ensign of the Imperial German Navy hoisted to the gaff, and their crews standing to attention on the upper decks singing their National Anthem, the sea cocks were opened and they started going down. As they sank, they adopted strange angles. Some were heeling to port or starboard, some settling down on an even keel, others going down stern first or by the bow, and still others turning turtle and coming to rest with their keels above water. It was seven months to the day since they arrived in Scapa Flow.

The result of Admiral Reuter's decision to destroy the largest collection of spoils of war in the history of warfare caused mixed reaction among the world's nations. Publicly, the British vented their anger at Reuter and accused him of treachery, while privately they felt relieved that the problem of a final disposition of the High Seas Fleet had been solved, be it by an act of sabotage as they were later to claim. The French were hopping mad and called for vengeance, while the Americans showed little or no regard for what had happened.

After the scuttling, caretaker crew were considered prisoners of war by the British and interned. A commission of Inquiry was set up to determine if Admiral Reuter had acted under instructions from Berlin—a charge he adamantly refuted, claiming all along that he had acted unilaterally as an officer and a man of honour. When Germany signed the Protocol for Reparations for the lost ships on January 10, 1920, Admiral Reuter and his men were finally repatriated to their homeland. Forced to retire from the navy in 1920, Vice Admiral Reuter was promoted an honorary full Admiral in 1935. He died of a heart attack on August 29, 1939, five days before his country was again at war with England, and was consequently spared the shame of seeing a second German defeat in his lifetime.

The 'Grand Scuttle,' so called by Dan van der Vat in his book of the same name, was not the end of the story for the High Seas Fleet. In the years that followed, the greatest salvage operation in history began and continues to this day. The scuttle was by no means complete on June 21, 1919, for the Royal Navy was able to beach one battleship, three light cruisers and eighteen destroyers before they sank.

Starting in 1922, a destroyer sunk in shallow water was salvaged as a local venture, and in 1923 the Admiralty called for tenders to consider raising some of the ships. A contract was signed with a Mr. J. Robertson, but in January 1924, even before Mr. Robertson raised his first destroyer, Ernest Cox made a deal to salvage the battlecruisers *Seydlitz* and *Hindenburg*, and 24 smaller ships. Eventually his company, Cox and Danks Ltd., acquired salvage rights to the entire 'underwater steel mine.'

Starting work in the spring of 1924, Cox & Danks were eventually to lift wrecked destroyers at an average rate of one per month, and had lifted three of them before the rival firm of Scapa Flow Salvage and Shipbreaking Co. Ltd., owned by Robertson,

lifted the first of the four they were to salvage. After the sale by Cox of the 23,000 tons of scrap steel from the raised destroyers, which fetched £50,000, Cox turned his attention to the much more difficult job of raising the larger ships.

The last scuttled ship raised was the 26,180 ton *Derfflinger*, which had sunk in 150 ft. of water. Brought to the surface in 1939, on the eve of World War II, she was moored upside down behind Rysa Island in the Flow and kept afloat during the war years with the use of compressor pumps. In 1946, having spent the First World War right side up, and the Second World War upside down, she was finally broken up in the Clyde yielding 20,000 tons of scrap.

By 1981, three battleships and four light cruisers were still on the bottom and estimated to be worth several million pounds. No longer considered capable of being salvaged whole, these ships were purchased by Clark's Diving Services Ltd., of Lerwick, Scotland, who continue to salvage them piecemeal for their valuable steel.

The reason that salvage work still continues on these ships is intriguing, and directly attributable to the Atomic Age. From the time of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, the earth's atmosphere has been polluted by a high level of nuclear radiation.

In the process of steel manufacture, large quantities of air are involved, and all steel manufactured after 1945 contains traces of radiation. In making instruments such as those used to measure radiation with extreme accuracy, and for the use in the medical treatment of cancer, the use of untainted steel is essential. It has been said that some of the Kaiser's ships has even been used in the American space program.

Unfortunately, the world's stock of steel used in the construction of warships prior to 1945 is dwindling. Much of the steel salvaged from Scapa Flow before 1939 was sold to Germany. It is conceivable therefore, that some of it went into the construction of a new generation of German warships. It is ironic to think that the pocket battleship *Graf Spee*, scuttled after the Battle of the River Plate, might have been one of them.

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Frank Jones is the retired Curator and General Manager of the Naval Museum of Alberta.

Editor's Note – There is much to be found, including many photographs—which regrettably defied 'Ensign' space parameters—on the web concerning the scuttling of Germany's High Seas Fleet in 1919. For starters I would suggest <http://www.worldwar1.co.uk/scuttle.html> and <http://www.gwtpda.org/naval/sscuttle.htm>.



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