

**OPERATIONS OF THE TENTH CRUISER SQUADRON:  
A CHALLENGE FOR THE ROYAL NAVY AND ITS RESERVES.**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of Greenwich  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised the work of others.

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The work is dedicated to the memory of Margaret and all who served in The Tenth Cruiser Squadron.

## ABSTRACT

The Tenth Cruiser Squadron provided a vital element to the Blockade of Germany, patrolling the seas between northwest Scotland, Iceland and Greenland. It was the longest continuous naval operation of the war lasting from 1914-1917. The Squadron's resources were armed merchant cruisers manned by Naval Reservists and Mercantile Marine ratings all commanded by a Flag Officer and Royal Naval Commanding Officers. The thesis follows the Royal Navy's deliberations to establish its Reservist elements and how the Navy assumed the men of the Mercantile Marine could be brought into naval service. A parallel debate in Parliament considered the viability of taking up ocean liners for conversion to armed merchant cruisers. Both sets of discussions lasted nearly fifty years.

Most existing Squadron literature is chronological, drawing heavily on official reports of proceedings. This thesis concentrates on analysing personal diaries and biographies and is focused on the crews' daily work to reveal a broad picture of life in the Squadron. Topics included are pay, accommodation, feeding scales, daily routines, promotion, pastoral and medical welfare, and recreation. These issues were in addition to the daily threats from surface and submarine attack and the constant debilitating bad weather.

Although deemed successful, the thesis concludes, the blockade could have been tightened sooner if the Government had used statistics already held on imports and exports. The conclusion is also made that the Royal Navy's failure to understand fully the shipping industry's unique facets and the merchant seaman, created problems that could have been avoided.

The Squadron's operational achievement was intercepting nearly 13,000 suspect vessels. Its patrols performed a constabulary function which encouraged ships to call voluntarily at examination ports to be searched effectively. Less tangible, but equally praiseworthy, was the successful cohesion built amongst crews of widely differing experience.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

10CS	Tenth Cruiser Squadron
FO	Foreign Office
G.O.C.	General Officer Commanding
M.M.	Mercantile Marine
NMM	National Maritime Museum
NFRNR	Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve
NRS	Navy Records Society
P&O	Peninsular Steam Navigation Company
RMSPC	Royal Mail Steam Packet Company
RA10CS	Rear Admiral Tenth Cruiser Squadron
R.D.	Reserve Decoration (for 15 years service)
RGSS	Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen
R.N.	Royal Navy
R.N.R.	Royal Naval Reserve
R.N.V.R.	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
R.U.S.I.	Royal United Services Institution
TNA	The National Archives
VA10CS	Vice-Admiral Tenth Cruiser Squadron

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On August 2, 1914, two days before the First World War began; Rear Admiral Dudley



de Chair boarded his flagship, H.M.S. *Crescent*, and assumed command of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.<sup>1</sup> The Squadron comprised the eight ageing cruisers *Edgar*, *Hawke*, *Endymion*, *Royal Arthur*, *Crescent*, *Grafton*, *Gibraltar* and *Theseus*. Built under the 1889 Naval Defence Act between 1893 and 1894, their silhouette epitomised the late Victorian warship. Displacing between 7000 and 7350 tons, they were fitted with either two 9.2" guns and ten 6", or one 9.2" and twelve 6" guns.<sup>2</sup> Coal burners, with a bunker capacity of 1250 tons, they had a maximum speed of 19.5

knots. In 1914, they were still described as 'excellent steamers' or in the case of *Royal Arthur* and *Crescent*, 'still steam very well'.<sup>3</sup> These ships with low freeboard were now twenty years old.

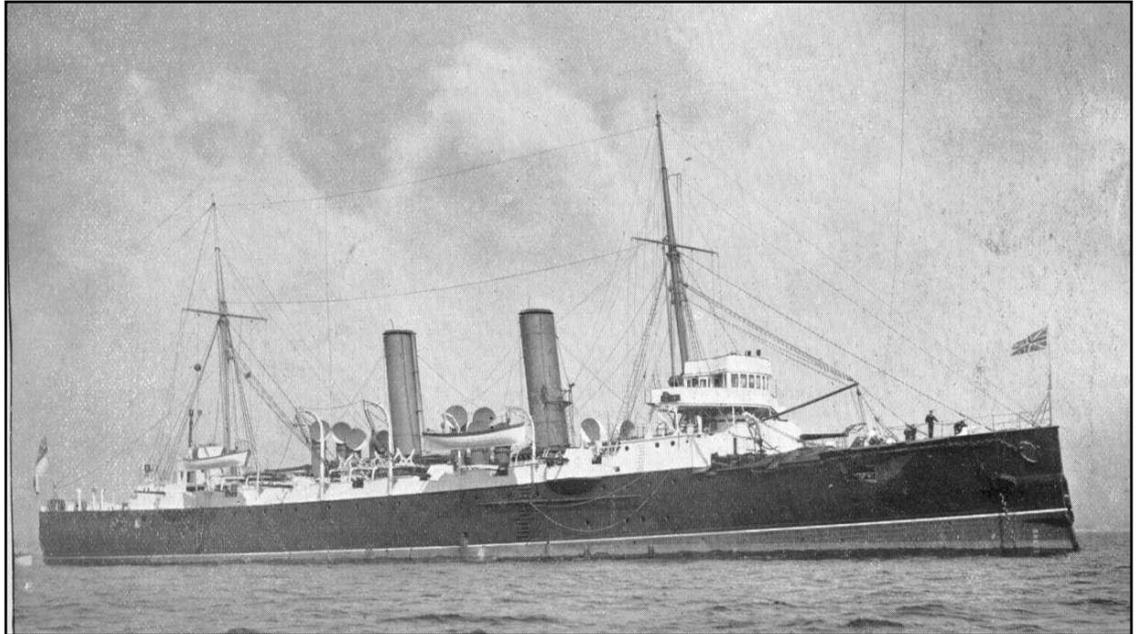
<sup>1</sup> Born in Canada in 1864, Dudley de Chair came from a family with a military background. He joined the Royal Navy as a cadet aboard H.M.S. *Britannia* at Dartmouth in January 1878. De Chair's term included Prince George, later King George V, and Prince Edward, his elder brother. Friendships formed at Dartmouth often last a lifetime and such an early contact with the Royal Family would certainly have been to de Chair's advantage in his future naval career. January 1880 saw de Chair appointed to his first sea going ship, H.M.S. *Alexandra*, flagship of the Mediterranean fleet. He was present when *Alexandria* was bombarded in 1882, then taken prisoner after volunteering to carry despatches to a desert fort. He was brought before the rebel leader Arabi Pasha but after a series of close shaves he escaped. His rescue was reported in the G.O.C's despatch announcing that Cairo had been re-taken, ending with the words 'Midshipman de Chair is safe'. Queen Victoria's request for prayers for his safety had been rewarded and de Chair was on the path to an eventful career after being required by Fisher to recount his Egyptian experiences. After passing his lieutenant's examination his biography reveals a series of 'plum' appointments both afloat and ashore, such as being asked by Jellicoe to join him as Assistant Controller and after promotion to captain being appointed as Naval Attaché to the United States. During these years he came in contact with Royalty both in Britain and from abroad as well as wealthy families such as the Vanderbilts. De Chair moved in high social circles. In November 1912 de Chair, now a rear-admiral, was invited by Churchill and persuaded by Beatty to become Naval Secretary. Although he accepted, he had mixed feelings about the post and clearly difficulties emerged. In May 1914 he was asked by Churchill to take charge of training the Navy's youth. He reminded Churchill of an earlier promise of command of the Second Battle Squadron. Nevertheless, he courteously accepted the training post but by August 1914, his Training Squadron of eight ageing *Edgar* class cruisers was redesignated the Tenth Cruiser Squadron and ordered to patrol the northern entrance to the North Sea. Although de Chair had survived Churchill's autocratic whims he was disappointed over not receiving the promised command of the Second Battle Squadron. He was one of many admirals who felt anger over Jellicoe's replacement in 1917 and perhaps this was the reason why he required his auto biography not to be released until after his death in 1958.

De Chair, D.R., *The Sea is Strong* (London,1961) 160

<sup>2</sup> Hampshire, A. C., *The Blockaders* (London,1980) 18

<sup>3</sup> Jane, F., *Jane's Fighting Ships of World War I* (London,2001 Edn.) 54

The Squadron was part of the Third Fleet and tasked with training duties. When de Chair telegraphed with his orders the ships were located at their home ports of Portsmouth, Devonport, Chatham and Queenstown. As soon as possible, they were to rendezvous at Scapa Flow where de Chair and the ships would be under the operational control of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe. During the afternoon of August 4, 1914, the Admiralty gave warning that hostilities against Germany would commence at midnight.



**Fig.2 An Edgar Class Cruiser**

The war plans required the northern exit of the North Sea to be patrolled by the Tenth Cruiser Squadron (10CS) - to be known as 'Cruiser Force B' or 'The Northern Patrol'. Their objective was to intercept and sink or capture German warships and merchant vessels. In addition all neutral vessels proceeding to German ports were to be stopped and the enemy denied access to any harbour or anchorage in the Orkneys and Shetlands. The Grand Fleet, operating from Rosyth and later Scapa Flow, was interposed between the Northern Patrol and the enemy bases to provide potential support.<sup>4</sup>

### **Three Key Elements of the Blockade**

There were three key components at work to operate the blockade. Firstly, the Tenth Cruiser Squadron blocked the waters to the north west of Scotland to prevent entry and exit from the North Sea. The subject of this thesis is this element. The Squadron

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<sup>4</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 167

started with the eight *Edgar* Class cruisers which proved inadequate in both quantity and quality to survive the weather in the huge area to be covered. After the amount of pre war consideration to this problem, it is surprising that the weak and meagre resources as the ageing *Edgars* were judged sufficient. There would seem to have been a failure to understand the continuous punishment these ships would receive from the weather and ignorance of the number of merchant ship movements to be intercepted.

Secondly, an examination service operated in the vicinity of Dover and Deal employing auxiliary vessels, reservists and customs officers to examine neutrals using the southern entrance to the North Sea. This force enjoyed the support of the anti submarine nets and a mine barrage in the Dover Straits as well as benefiting from the limited area to be covered, more kindly weather conditions and easier communications with the Foreign Office.<sup>5</sup>

Thirdly, there were economic and political pressures brought to bear on the neutral countries and foreign ship-owners seeking to continue trading with Germany. This element of the blockade was under the control of the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade. It was very much a backroom operation that quickly learnt to exploit the ‘commercial intelligence’ maintained by organisations such as the Baltic Exchange, the commodity exchanges, Lloyds’ insurance market and the many British worldwide business and diplomatic relationships. Whenever a neutral ship was detained at Deal or Kirkwall, reference was made to the Foreign Office for a final decision as to its fate.

### **Objective and Aims of this Thesis**

Most literature connected with the blockade of Germany relates to diplomatic, political and economic issues. In contrast, this thesis has a prime focus on the daily operations and challenges faced by the first component, the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, particularly the period when it was reliant on the Armed Merchant Cruisers.<sup>6</sup>

The diplomatic and political issues are first examined before reviewing the historical development of both armed merchant cruisers and the creation of Naval Reserves. These two resources were essential for the Squadron after many decades of deliberation they were combined in the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. The daily boarding

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 2 for details of the Downs anchorage activity.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 4.

tasks, threats from surface and underwater attack and the available countermeasures which were developed are explored. Squadron social and employment issues are examined. Finally, an attempt to evaluate the Squadron's performance concludes the paper.

The study emphasises issues from the perspective of challenges aboard the ships contrasting with the national and international viewpoints usually featured in 'blockade' literature. For a full understanding, the study touches upon the law concerning contraband, prize courts and the practical and technical issues of converting and operating merchant vessels as warships. In addition, some seamanship and navigational techniques of the day are considered. Perceived as a 'second team' task not ranking with 'premier league' war work it will review how the Navy adapted to carry out this maritime part of the blockade.

### **Basics of the Declaration of London 1909, Blockade and Contraband of War.**

Britain was ideally placed to the west of mainland Europe to control access to the North Sea from both the north and south. The Allies decided that a blockade of Germany would be an important part of their war strategy. A legal blockade can only be established by a belligerent government and its creation must be announced by declaration to the governments of all states - neutral, allied or enemy and also to local coastal or port authorities.<sup>7</sup> To effect a legal blockade would have required control over the Baltic coasts and this was never done. However, it became convenient to refer to the actions taken by the British as a blockade, albeit technically incorrect, since it only affected part of the German coast. Under international law, neutral ships are permitted to trade freely with belligerents. They must be prepared to submit to the right of visit and search, and may be brought before a Prize Court if they offer resistance to search, carry contraband, render aid to the enemy or attempt to infringe the blockade.<sup>8</sup>

However, in the main, the rules laid down by the Declaration of London, 1909, were observed in the First World War.<sup>9</sup> A key outcome from the Declaration was the setting up three lists: one of 'absolute contraband', namely, articles which were clearly war materials and another deemed 'conditional contraband' which comprised articles capable of use in either war or peace. This 'conditional' list included controversial

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<sup>7</sup> Green, L.C., *The Contemporary Law of Armed Conflict* (Manchester, 1993) 171

<sup>8</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 7

<sup>9</sup> Green, *Contemporary Law of Armed Conflict* 35

items such as ore, chemicals and rubber, all of which were becoming increasingly important to any modern war effort. There was also a 'free List' containing articles that could never be deemed contraband.<sup>10</sup>

The concept of war being conducted on a belligerent's behalf in some remote battlefield or country changed in the twentieth century. The reliance on factories employing numbers of civilians to produce a widening range of warlike weapons and material, made the idea of total war a reality. This realisation that caused the Declaration to allow the 'absolute' and 'conditional' lists to be varied as a belligerent saw fit. Notices of any changes were promulgated by Orders in Council. This meant neutral shipping had a problem keeping up to date with the contraband lists, if it was to avoid being stopped by blockading ships and becoming embroiled with the Prize Courts. The Squadron's boarding officers also needed to keep up to date with changes in the lists. The Foreign Office's problem, in setting the contraband lists, was to avoid damaging trade and relations with influential neutrals, particularly the United States of America.

### **Close Blockade Abandoned**

The development of submarines, mines, long-range coastal artillery and aircraft coupled with the complex shoal waters of the German Bight and the Baltic, a traditional close blockade were abandoned and a distant blockade would have to be implemented. The Grand Fleet, was based at Scapa Flow to cover the North Sea in conjunction with a line of cruisers from Shetlands to Norway. The Channel Fleet blocked off the southern approach into the North Sea via the Dover Strait.<sup>11</sup> Many accounts of the First World War leave readers concluding this was the entire blockade effort. In reality these arrangements served to guarantee that the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, could perform its part in a 'distant' blockade, which in itself was only part of an economic war against Germany.

### **Early Patrols of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron**

Vessels on passage to and from Germany could use the Norwegian coast and remain in that country's territorial waters until latitude 62° North before emerging into

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<sup>10</sup> Consett, M.W.W.P., *The Triumph Of Unarmed Forces (1914-1918)* (London,1923) 12  
See Appendix 2 for further details

<sup>11</sup> Halpern, *A Naval History...* 22

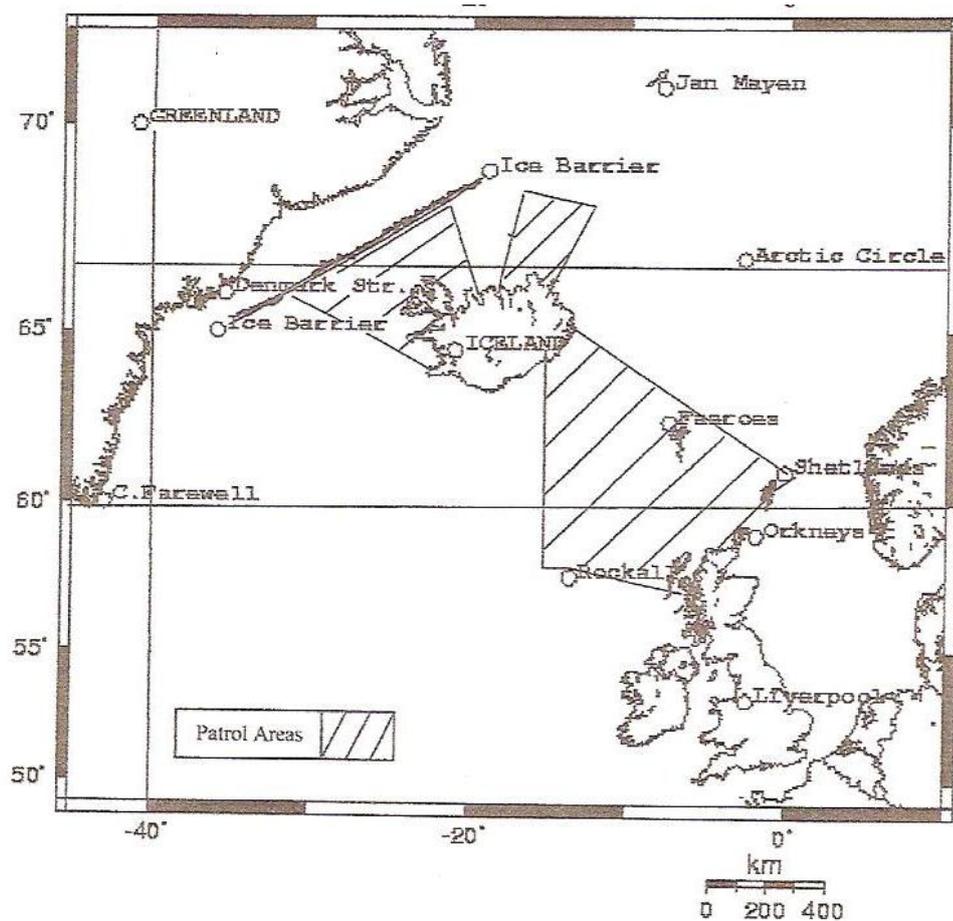


Fig. 3 Tenth Cruiser Squadron – Sphere of Operations.

international waters.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, de Chair set up a Norwegian Patrol around this latitude and a Shetlands patrol in a north-easterly direction from the Outer Skerries expecting to make interceptions. Some British armed merchant cruisers were already patrolling from the most northern point of the Shetlands in a north westerly direction. Significantly, de Chair records the view that:

These ships [the armed merchant cruisers] had considerable speed and small fighting value; their duty is to report and shadow enemy war vessels and stop and examine all merchant shipping.

Clearly he did not regard them as real warships. However, in the same paper he acknowledges a key limitation of the *Edgars* was their slow speed and the time needed to reach full speed. Four *Edgars* were disposed to both the Norwegian and the Shetlands patrols but in each area, one cruiser would be away coaling at any one time.<sup>13</sup> These were inadequate resources for such large sea areas and no doubt de Chair felt vulnerable with, at best, only six ships on station at a time.

<sup>12</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 167

<sup>13</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 Revised Arrangement for Cruiser Force B 19 August 1914 24-5

**Additional Duties and Offensive Sweeps**

Initially, the ships were frequently detached for duties other than visit and search. Often the Squadron worked in cooperation with the Third Cruiser Squadron and other groups. The Squadron was often moved by the Commander-in-Chief to different patrol areas at short notice. Nevertheless, visit and search activities developed and as early as August 20, 1914, an encounter was made with the Norwegian-America line's *Bergensfjord*.<sup>14</sup> The *Bergensfjord* and her sister-ships would tangle repeatedly with the Squadron's patrols in the future. By the August 19, 1914, the Armed Merchant Cruisers *Alsatian*, *Mantua* and *Oceanic* were placed under de Chair's command but were treated as a separate unit. On August 25, 1914, de Chair inspected *Mantua*'s fighting arrangements and the Ship's Company. He was impressed with the extent of accommodation available to transport wounded after a fleet action.<sup>15</sup>

At this time, De Chair was also responsible for preventing enemy access to any harbours in the Orkneys and Shetlands. He contacted Lieutenant-Colonel H.C.Evans R.M.L.I., who was responsible for organising an R.N.R. Force to defend the islands. De Chair landed three field guns and by August 24, 1914, discussed the possible berthing of two seaplanes in the harbour as part of the defences. Clearly he had in mind the possible value of naval aviation to the Squadron.

The R.N.R. Force of 70 men and a local Territorial Detachment meant some 240 men were available. On the November 3, 1914, de Chair met with the Senior Naval Officer, Lerwick, Commander J. Startin R.N.R., to discuss positioning of lookout huts and booms to defend the base.<sup>16</sup> Two colliers were positioned in Lerwick on the eastern side of the Shetlands and two others in Busta Voe on the western side. These reduced the *Edgar*'s steaming distance for coaling but the Armed Merchant Ships still had to return to the Clyde or Liverpool.

During these early weeks of the Squadron's existence, the Army was mobilised for the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and sent to support Belgium and France. The Battle of Mons was conceded when the BEF and French Army retreated on 29 August 1914. During the year volunteers were called for at home and from Australia, Canada and

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<sup>14</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 27 August 1914 11-21

<sup>15</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 27 August 1914 11-21 This raises the question whether de Chair, at this stage, realised the accommodation was there for boarding and prize crews or the extent to which these activities would develop.

<sup>16</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 3 December 1914 74-80

Newfoundland. Germany brought food supplies and allocations under Government on 26 December 1914. It was now clear it was no longer going to be a 'short' war.<sup>17</sup>

### **Changes in the Weather Foreshadow Changes in the Squadron**

When autumn arrived the weather started to take its toll. Reports emerged of weather being too bad for boarding to take place. Continuous running of the *Edgars* brought on a spate of engineering problems. First to suffer was *Gibraltar*, with the combustion chamber of one boiler nearly closed and everything clinkered including the lowest tube. *Gibraltar* was sent to the Tyne for docking. Soon *Royal Arthur* and *Crescent* needed defects repaired when next in for coaling. On October 29, 1914, *Grafton* reported the main condenser leaking and fear that the copper expansion ring at the back of the port High Pressure Slide had fractured as well as funnels showing signs of weakness. Next to succumb was *Theseus* on the evening of the same day. She had broken down whilst in general chase with *Endymion*. On Saturday, 31 October, *Theseus* again reported defects. A rupture of the inner bottom above the reserve feed water tanks, bilge water leaking into feed tanks and the water density of boilers rapidly increasing. *Theseus* was ordered to Swarbacks Minn to make good her defects. *Endymion* had reported her arrival at Scapa Flow and also the need to stay there with serious defects in the engines and fore bridge. *Crescent* reported a leaky condenser.<sup>18</sup>

On the October 15, 1914, the Squadron suffered its first enemy loss when *Hawke* was torpedoed. After transferring of mails from *Endymion* she was hit abreast the forward funnel and sunk by the *U-9*. Grainger states in a footnote, that it was the attack on *Hawke* that persuaded Admiral Jellicoe to withdraw the Grand Fleet from the North Sea. On October 17, 1914 the Commander-in-Chief issued an order that required to the Northern Patrol to be confined to intercepting trade to the North Westward of the Shetlands.<sup>19</sup>

On the November 11, 1914, *Edgar* reported serious engine defects and was ordered back to base for repairs when the weather moderated. The Squadron then encountered a severe gale with heavy seas and 'hove to' whilst the wind veered from W to NW. *Crescent* shipped heavy seas over the fore-castle which wrecked the fore bridge,

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<sup>17</sup> Winter, J.M., *The Experience of World War I* (London, 1988) 2000 Edition 72, 114 and 164

<sup>18</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 1 November 1914 49-62

<sup>19</sup> Grainger, J.D. (Ed.), *The Maritime Blockade of Germany in the Great War* Navy Records Society (Aldershot, 2003) 54

sweeping overboard the Admiral's Sea Cabin, carrying away the ventilating cowl of the foremost stokehold which caused a considerable amount of water to get below and put fires out, breaking hammock nettings and damaging beyond repair the Port Cutter Even though turned in, removing bodily a whaler at davits abaft the cutter; various hawser reels and other deck fittings fastened to the deck were torn away from their seating due to rotten woodwork.

*Edgar* also reported an Able Seaman and a cutter swept overboard and other items damaged.<sup>20</sup> *Crescent*, *Royal Arthur* and *Grafton* were ordered to the Clyde for survey and repairs, these were put in hand, the aim being to have the ships seaworthy by December 7, 1914. Discussions were held with the Director of Dockyards (Sir James Marshall, KCB) but on November 20, 1914, the Admiralty ordered the seven *Edgars* of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron to return to their Home Ports forthwith, to be paid off. Even when there might be a respite from the gales, the frequent fogs brought their particular tests for the navigators. The constant harsh weather in these near Arctic waters proved to be a perpetual background challenge for the Squadron's vessels. It had proved too much for the *Edgars* and would be no help to the replacement Armed Merchant Cruisers.

Understandably in the first months, when the *Edgars* comprised the Squadron, Jellicoe perceived these vessels as warships available to him for 'sweeps' of the North Sea and Norwegian waters. If nothing else, they looked like warships. This meant when they were off station the blockade was ineffective. The first severe gale of the winter had put an end to these old cruisers on the Northern Patrol, nevertheless in their brief operations they had boarded over 300 ships and intercepted many more in rough weather.<sup>21</sup> Fortunately, in these months there had been little traffic in the North Sea since most German merchant ships were interned in neutral ports abroad. Jellicoe became frustrated by the fact that since the beginning of October, of some twenty five neutrals sent to Kirkwall and several others to northern ports, only one had been permanently detained.<sup>22</sup> This was perhaps the moment of realisation that there would be constant frustrations stemming from political or commercial considerations, the precise nature of which was often known only to the Foreign Office.

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<sup>20</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 74-80

<sup>21</sup> Hampshire, A.C., *The Blockaders* 34

<sup>22</sup> Hampshire, *The Blockaders* 33

### Different Threats

The First World War brought the reality of mines, submarines and torpedoes to the top of the Navy's agenda. Any doubts about the effectiveness of submarines and torpedoes had been dispelled with the destruction by the German U-9, of the cruisers *Aboukir*,



Fig.4 Vice Admiral Sir Reginald Tupper

*Hogue* and *Cressy* in less than one hour on September 22, 1914.<sup>23</sup>

Submarines were a constant threat to the Squadron since they were avoiding the shallow waters of the Dover Strait, with its submarine nets and mine barrage, and taking the northern route to their patrols as well as laying mines in the Irish Sea.

Another threat was attack by German surface raiders. Germany chose to use surface raiders and before the Squadron was in position, the

battleship *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* and the German armed cruiser *Möwe* had passed into the Atlantic.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the naval race against Britain the Kaiser had also chosen to expand Germany's liner shipping and open up the potential for armed merchant cruisers for herself. This fact later impinged on the Squadron. The Tenth Cruiser Squadron's ships were armed but not armoured. The Squadron was very vulnerable if it met a well armed surface raider a fact always recognised by both de Chair and his successor, Vice Admiral Tupper.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Hough, R., *The Great War at Sea 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1983) 62

<sup>24</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 169

<sup>25</sup> Born in London in October 1859, Reginald Tupper's family were Huguenots with longstanding connections in the Channel Island of Guernsey. He had been attracted to the Navy whilst convalescing in Portsmouth and in January 1873 he joined H.M.S. *Britannia* at Dartmouth to start his naval career. His father's friends had warned that as the Navy was at a low ebb, there were few prospects for a boy barely thirteen at that time. In March 1875 he joined his first ship, H.M.S. *Undaunted* then being commissioned at Sheerness as flagship of the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Station. After service in Australian and Pacific waters he was specially selected for service in the Royal Yacht *Victoria and Albert* as a sub-lieutenant in July 1882. Clearly there was an agreeable social life aboard this ship on such occasions as Cowes Week and it would not be the last time that he mixed with Royalty. After being promoted lieutenant and qualifying as a gunnery officer he was appointed to H.M.S. *Northumberland*. Promoted to captain in 1901, Tupper was a member of a committee looking at the issues involved in taking up liners from trade in order to convert them to armed merchant cruisers. He records that he learnt much about the shipping industry and merchant seafarers in this post. After commanding H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* in the Mediterranean, Tupper was appointed captain of the gunnery school H.M.S. *Excellent*, a key achievement for a gunnery officer. He was promoted to Rear-Admiral in September 1910, after which he was involved in diplomatic and committee work. In March 1912, the First Lord, Mr. Churchill proposed that Tupper should be head of the Mission to the Turkish Navy, the purpose being to prevent that Navy coming under German influence. Despite assurances of subsequent high command and a week to think it over, Tupper declined Churchill's blandishments preferring to serve in the British Navy. Consequently he was left wondering about his future employment but later returned to command of the *Prince of Wales*. In January 1915, Tupper was recalled from retirement and appointed

**Armed Merchant Cruisers and Naval Reservists Converge**

In order to continue the blockade the Admiralty turned to Armed Merchant Cruisers manned by Naval Reservists and Mercantile Marine personnel for whom there would be challenges aplenty. The vessels deployed were coal burners and thus needed regular visits to coaling stations on the Clyde or at Liverpool. The regular passages to and from coaling, usually as a single ship, left the Squadron's converted liners vulnerable to underwater and surface threats. As the war progressed there was a need to establish a coaling base and other support in the Shetlands.

A particular challenge for de Chair, Tupper and the Royal Naval Commanding Officers of the armed merchant cruisers was the moulding of a disparate mix of seafarers into effective teams. Each armed merchant cruiser had typically only three or four Royal Navy officers aboard. The remaining officers and ratings came from the Royal Naval Reserve (R.N.R.), and later the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (R.N.V.R.), the Royal Fleet Reserve (R.F.R.), the Royal Marines (R.M.), Royal Navy Boy Seaman and various Mercantile Ratings. Additionally, each ship had a number of ratings from the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve (N.R.N.R.).

**Research Literature and Sources**

At the time, the public knew little of the Squadron's endeavours even though the task was the longest continuous naval operation of the war. In most books on the naval activity in World War 1, dominant themes are the Fisher revolution, the naval arms race and technological change. In particular the Battle of Jutland features, being the long awaited decisive fleet action, left the perceptions that the Navy's performance there was not an unqualified success. The Grand Fleet, stationed in northern waters, was perceived in the public mind as 'the blockading force' rather than a fleet in being giving support to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, if it should be needed. Post war the public came to believe that solely as a result of the Navy's blockading squadrons the German population reached the point of starvation and surrendered.

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Rear-Admiral for the West Coast of Scotland and the Hebrides. On 28th February 1916, he was offered and accepted command of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron in succession to Sir Dudley de Chair. Tupper considered this appointment the most important of his career. Tupper, R. *Reminiscences*

Post war literature slowly revealed the Squadron's work and the blockade in its wider sense, which continues to inspire academic study in 2012. The literature has been grouped by topic but there is inevitably a degree of crossover in some cases.

### **Strategic, Tactical and Planning**

Corbett and Newbolt's two part *Official History of the War: Naval Operations* did not appear until 1923 and 1931 respectively.<sup>26</sup> Dealing with all naval operations in the widest sense, it is unsurprising there is only a brief mention of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron and focussed on the action between *Alcantara* and *Greif*; the fortitude of the merchant seafarers involved is praised. Likewise Marder's five volume work *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* and Halpern's *A Naval History of World War I* both deal with the wide ranging naval activity and so are only able to give limited space to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.<sup>27</sup>

In 1920 the three volume publication, *Seaborne Trade*, was written by C.Ernest Fayle.<sup>28</sup> This was intended to show how seaborne trade was affected by naval operations, complementing the work of Corbet. Fayle gives a very detailed account of shipping operations for each area of the world, listing the effects on ship owners, their trade and particular vessel type. Fayle also examines the effects on Britain's allies as well as Germany's shipping. The work is split further into two main periods. First 'The Cruiser Period' when Germany made use of its warships and converted liners as surface commerce raiders; followed by 'The Submarine Period' when Germany made full use of the U-boats for commerce raiding. Fayle was the first author to explain that the perceived 'blockade' should be more accurately defined as 'economic warfare'. Its intention was to disrupt trade in the fullest sense, seeking to deprive the enemy of essential materials, eliminate ships to prevent transportation of goods, disrupt the payments and exchange systems as well as bank credit. Germany embarked on commerce raiding throughout the war, however, her ability to import food and materials had been thwarted by much of her merchant fleet being interned. Instead she was forced to rely on neutral shipping where possible. To help thwart this approach, Britain's blockade relied on the Tenth Cruiser Squadron and the Downs Examination

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<sup>26</sup> Corbett, J.S. and Newbolt, H., *Official History of the War: Naval Operations* 5 Vols. (London, 1923 and 1931)

<sup>27</sup> Marder A.J., *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* (London, 1961) Vols. 1-5

Halpern, P.G., *A Naval History of World War I* (London, 1994)

<sup>28</sup> Fayle, C.E., *Seaborne Trade Vols 1,2 & 3 + maps* (Nashville, Reprint 1997)

Service at sea to support the Whitehall legal and diplomatic control of Germany's imports. Extensive appendices provide a welter of economic data. For the purpose of this thesis, some useful figures on the Tenth Cruiser Squadron's activities are included in the Fayle's text.

*The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*, by Avner Offer was published in 1989 and as the title suggests brings the approach of an agricultural economist. A key explanation is given that both Britain and Germany were well developed countries and whilst each was able to produce some food for home consumption both had to rely on food and raw material imports. Offer gives a wide ranging cover of the main food commodities from around the world and their importance to the survival of both sides. Britain and Germany both feared the effects of blockade and the potential for civil unrest. Offer also tends to use the words 'economic project' as an indicator of the true effects of a blockade. Modern Germany had a new dependence on imports whilst Britain had the larger merchant fleet to meet its own requirements. Offer devotes a chapter to the work of nutritionists and dieticians, making reference to many surveys in Germany as to calories needed and calories actually consumed by German society. A degree of conflict exists between the surveys but to the question 'Did Germany Starve?' Offer gives the following answer:

'The German people were often cold and hungry. But, whatever their complaints, Germany did not starve'.<sup>29</sup>

Much of the book is concerned with political and diplomatic issues as well as pre-war planning.

Note must be made of the work of Professor Niall Ferguson in his book *The Pity of War 1914-1918* first published in 1998. Known for his confrontational approach, he posed the question was Germany starved into defeat? His conclusion was:

The idea is one of the most tenacious in modern European historiography. Yet it is almost certainly wrong. In aggregate terms, of course, the average German suffered more than the average Briton, for the simple reason that the real per capita income fell in Germany - by around 24 per cent - during the war, while in Britain it actually rose.<sup>30</sup>

Ferguson then, echoes the conclusion from Offer but declares a different cause to Offer's dietetics and nutritional approach. However, Fayle (a witness to the period) whilst also providing calorie counts, describes the more traditional view of the

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<sup>29</sup> Offer, A., *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford, 1991) 53

<sup>30</sup> Ferguson, N., *The Pity of War* (London, 1999) 276

hardships suffered, especially on women and children, and the decline in health coupled with an increased death rate.<sup>31</sup>

Nicholas Lambert's *Planning Armageddon: Economic Warfare and the First World War* recounts the usual issues of close versus distant blockade.<sup>32</sup> He points out that there had been extensive planning prior to 1914 and a 'blockade' was ready for implementation. However, very quickly there was back tracking in the political spheres and tight measures were delayed. Lambert, quite rightly, queries what was meant by the word 'blockade' since it meant different things to different players. He also records that even the best works on World War 1 give only limited details of the Squadron. The work of Bell, mentioned below, is challenged and support is shown for the work and diligence of Captain Consett, our attaché in Stockholm, which was roundly set aside by the Foreign Office and politicians. This is a most detailed work which lays aside many long held beliefs about the true effects of 'blockade' which in its fullest sense is more properly called 'economic warfare'.

Two other recent books, devoted to research on planning and strategy, both of which came to be relevant to the Squadron. Critics have argued that long term planning and staff work was given little or no attention by the Navy but the research work of these books overturn that viewpoint.

*The British Naval Staff in the First World War* by Nicholas Black of Dulwich College has corrected the long held belief that only officers of limited ability (either intellectually or physically) were involved with naval staff work.<sup>33</sup> The War Office had seen a General Staff established in 1904 after lessons learnt in the Boer War, so the Navy was a 'late starter'. Black examines personnel records and reveals that officers of high calibre were steadily recruited to the naval staff as it grew from nothing to an effective organisation. By 1914 the naval staff was established but not without interference along the way by politicians and some 'in house' factions. Issues considered by the staff included convoy, economic blockade, the need for ships taken from trade and new technology such as radio. Black records that significant reliance fell on officers co-opted for their special skills and given R.N.V.R commissions. The

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<sup>31</sup> Fayle, C.E., *Seaborne Trade Vol, 2* 104-105

<sup>32</sup> Lambert, N.A., *Planning Armageddon: Economic Warfare and the First World War* (London, 2012)

<sup>33</sup> Black, N., *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (Woodbridge, 2009)

Trade Division came to be almost the controlling lever which operated the Squadron from the outbreak of war. Another revelation is that after Admiral de Chair was attached to the Foreign Office, he became more sympathetic to its view on how the blockade should be managed. This somewhat annulled the purpose of his transfer which was, amongst other things, to champion the Admiralty's case.<sup>34</sup>

Dr Matthew Seligmann's *The Royal Navy and the German Threat 1901-1914* deals with the Admiralty plans to protect British Trade in a war against Germany.<sup>35</sup> For over twelve years the Admiralty had been deeply concerned at the prospect of a German *guerre de course* being conducted by surface raiders against British maritime commerce and it examined several policies to meet this threat.<sup>36</sup> In addition to expanding its fleet of battleships, Germany started to arm some of its most modern and fastest passenger liners and selected cargo ships. It was one of the latter vessels which found itself in a surface action with Squadron's *Alcantara*. Whilst the threat did not materialise to the extent feared, Seligmann reveals the full extent of expense in time and other resources committed by the Admiralty to prepare countermeasures. The works of Black and Seligmann provide unique insights into pre-war planning activities not previously examined..

### **Operational and Technological**

Earliest, in 1920, was "*The Royal Mail*" *War Book* commissioned by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (RMSPC), gave prominent attention to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron in which seven RMSPC ships served. In the same year the Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) published its book *Merchant Adventurers 1914-1918*. P&O had three vessels in the Squadron, but many of its larger vessels were employed as ocean escorts, transports and hospital ships. The books were intended to impress readers with the wartime contributions made by these well known British shipping companies. No doubt some copies became complimentary publicity material within the shipping world.

Archibald Hurd's three volume work, *The Merchant Navy* had already been published in 1921, and this was considered the official history of the Merchant Service in the

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<sup>34</sup> Black, N., *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* 140-1

<sup>35</sup> Seligmann M.S., *The Royal Navy and the German Threat 1901-1914* (Oxford, 2012)

<sup>36</sup> Seligmann, *The Royal Navy and the German Threat 1901-1914* 172

war.<sup>37</sup> In Hurd's history, the Squadron's work is given prominent space with many details and charts; details of patrols and tactics are shown. Possibly official sources considered this work a more appropriate place to record the endeavours of the Squadron with predominantly merchant service crews.

Two key officially commissioned publications followed the First World War but were not immediately available to the public. The Naval Historical Branch delivered *The Tenth Cruiser Squadron During The Command Of Admiral De Chair 1914-1916* in 1921.<sup>38</sup> This monograph gives an accurate account of the Squadron's work whilst under de Chair's command. A similar monograph covering the period when Vice Admiral Tupper was in command was planned but never started. Such omission may have spurred Tupper to give a post war lecture to the Royal United Services Institution (R.U.S.I.) and write his autobiography, *Reminiscences*.<sup>39</sup> The Trade Division's *A History Of The Blockade Of Germany And The Countries Associated With Her In The Great War, Austria, Bulgaria And Turkey 1914-1919* thought to be printed in 1920 it was a detailed Staff Review still classified 'confidential' in the late 1930's.<sup>40</sup> Written by Bell, it deals with the blockade from the Foreign Office viewpoint. It lists some details of 'The Blockade Squadron' and the 'Naval Control Service' not found elsewhere. Also reviewed are the practicalities of blockade in a modern world where close blockade cannot be mounted. The publication is predominantly the view of the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, departments which jointly saw the blockade as their responsibility. Since much of the doctrine was revived on the outbreak of World War II, this may explain the reluctance to release its contents earlier.

E. Keble Chatterton, a former Lieutenant R.N.V.R., was a prolific naval and maritime author during the inter-war years. In 1932, his book *The Big Blockade* was published.<sup>41</sup> It is a comprehensive volume devoted solely to the Squadron, covering its work and the politics affecting it. Chatterton claimed access to original documents but gave no references. He had the advantage of interviewing former Squadron personnel.

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<sup>37</sup> Hurd, A., *The Merchant Navy* 3 Vols. (London, 1921 Ed. 2006)

<sup>38</sup> Naval Historical Branch Monograph No.19 *The Tenth Cruiser Squadron during the Command of Admiral De Chair 1914-1916* (London 1921)

<sup>39</sup> Tupper, R., *Reminiscences* (London, 1929)

<sup>40</sup> Bell, A.C., *A History of the Blockade of Germany and the Countries Associated with her in the Great War, Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey, 1914-1918* (London, 1937)

<sup>41</sup> Chatterton, E.K., *The Big Blockade* (London, 1932)

Some of the photographs are definitely taken from Tupper's private collection. Chatterton had the tone of a Boy's Own Paper story. However, with further understanding of the Squadron and a second reading he gives a good all round account of the Squadron, the politics and law at the time.

In the inter-war years, publications such as Admiral Consett's *The Triumph of Unarmed Forces* and Lieutenant Guichard's *The Naval Blockade* appeared, concerned with the political, legal and economic aspects of the blockade but had no real mention of the Squadron.<sup>42</sup> The importance of Consett and Guichard is that their accounts are from two naval officers, although serving ashore, were involved in blockade issues. Their revelations about the blockade's limitations provided little comfort to those who had served at sea in the Squadron.

Parmelee's *Blockade and Sea Power* published in 1924 gives a good account of the political issues leading up to the point when United States of America joined the Allies.<sup>43</sup> It leans towards the American viewpoint. So, by 1932 there had been a steady stream of writing about the Squadron for the public to read, making up for the lack of wartime publicity.

Post World War II, the first author to return to the blockade subject was Marion Siney in 1957 with her work *The Allied Blockade of Germany 1914-1916*.<sup>44</sup> It is confined to political and diplomatic issues and gives the only scant mention of the 10CS vessels. Many official records had not been made available at the time and her work stops at 1916. The author A. Cecil Hampshire wrote *The Blockaders* published in 1980.<sup>45</sup> Hampshire often wrote about 'Cinderella ships' and turned attention to armed merchant cruisers of both world wars. The part devoted to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron is interesting but without the depth of Chatterton.

In 2003, the Navy Records Society published *The Maritime Blockade of Germany in the Great War* edited by J.D.Grainger.<sup>46</sup> This provides an authoritative chronological

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<sup>42</sup> Consett, M.W.W.P., *The Triumph Of Unarmed Forces (1914-1918)* (London, 1923)

Guichard, L., *The Naval Blockade 1914-1918* (New York, 1930)

<sup>43</sup> Parmelee, M., *Blockade and Seapower* (London, 1924)

<sup>44</sup> Siney, M.C., *The Allied Blockade of Germany 1914-1916* (Ann Arbor, 1957)

<sup>45</sup> Hampshire, A.C., *The Blockaders* (London, 1980)

<sup>46</sup> Grainger, J.D., (Ed.) *The Maritime Blockade of Germany in the Great War* Navy Records Society (Aldershot, 2003)

account of the Squadron's daily blockade activities by drawing heavily on the Reports of Proceedings by both de Chair and Tupper. These are found in the primary sources under the ADM 137 series, held at The National Archives (TNA). After a comprehensive introduction, each chapter has a summary for the period covered by the chapter's TNA extracts. The book is enhanced by diary extracts from Able Seaman Style, a signalman aboard *Alcantara* and notes from Dr. Shaw, a Surgeon Lieutenant R.N.R., serving with the Squadron. It barely deals with the political and diplomatic aspects.

*Britain's Economic Blockade of Germany 1914-1919* by Eric W. Osborne, published in 2004 provides the most comprehensive account of the blockade covering the legal, diplomatic and political matters.<sup>47</sup> In this respect Osborne is most useful. Whilst the ships of the 10CS are mentioned, this 'naval' aspect of the blockade receives much less attention. Omissions from his bibliography are Consett's *The Triumph Of Unarmed Forces* and de Chair's autobiography *The Sea Is Strong*.<sup>48</sup>

The recent publication from The World Ship Society by Messrs, Osborne, R., Spong, H., Grover, T., *Armed Merchant Cruisers 1878 – 1945* published 2007 provides a wealth of technical detail about the Squadron's ships and armed merchant cruisers in general.<sup>49</sup> Thus the years 2003 to 2012 have seen a valuable new supply of authorship on this subject.

### **Social**

A key part of this thesis, not found in other blockade texts, is devoted to the experiences of the personnel in the Squadron. The autobiographies and a clutch of wartime diaries of both Flag Officers and others are important sources. They reveal the perceptions of two flag officers, one commanding officer, two experienced second in command officer and three young midshipmen and others providing an excellent cross section; they reveal the 'on board' procedures, training as well as employment and man management approaches of the time. Off watch recreational activities and the tensions between RN, RNR and Mercantile Ratings, topics not covered in existing texts, which concentrate on the diplomatic and political issues of blockade.

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<sup>47</sup> Osborne, E.W., *Britain's Economic Blockade of Germany 1914-1919* (London, 2004)

<sup>48</sup> However, Osborne does use de Chair's Reports of Proceedings from the TNA.

<sup>49</sup> Osborne, R., Spong, H., Grover, T., *Armed Merchant Cruisers 1878 – 1945* (Windsor, 2007)

Admiral Tupper's autobiography *Reminiscences* was published in 1929 in which fifty four pages, as well as a chart and diagrams, give a detailed, firsthand account of controlling the Squadron: he also admitted that command of the Squadron was his most important career appointment. Admiral de Chair's *The Sea Is Strong* was published in 1961 after his death in 1958.<sup>50</sup> He had written his memoirs between 1931 and 1947 but they were not to be published until after his death. Perhaps it was his experience of working closely with Churchill and his anger at the way Jellicoe was relieved of his post.

Thus it is possible to compare the views and experiences of de Chair and Tupper. Their service careers had had much in common and both gave their total dedication to the Squadron, in the closing years of their naval careers.

The next to be considered are the diaries. A privately published book entitled *Tenth Cruiser Squadron Northern Patrol from the Diaries and Letters of Captain H.C.R. Brocklebank July 1914-August 1917* appeared in 1974.<sup>51</sup> Edited by Captain Brocklebank's daughter, it is an important element in Squadron literature. Brocklebank was in continuous command of the *Changuinola* from her take up by the Admiralty to the Squadron's dispersal. The photographs show useful evidence of the seamanship involved and Brocklebank's letters to colleagues, reveal his own feelings about the Squadron and some of the promotions given to Squadron officers. Brocklebank's diary along with others is in the Imperial War Museum (IWM). Of these, two are by officers serving as second in command, namely, John Shuter aboard H.M.S. *Changuinola* and Commander F.H.Grenfell RN aboard H.M.S. *Cedric* whose commanding officer was second in command of the Squadron.<sup>52</sup> The museum also holds journals or diaries for the Midshipmen Poole and McKeag RNR, formerly apprentices in the Mercantile Marine.<sup>53</sup> *Scrimgeour's Small Scribbling Diary 1914-1916* was reprinted in 2008.<sup>54</sup> Originally privately printed in the early 1920's this is an account of Midshipman Alexander Scrimgeour R.N. who served aboard the Flagships *Crescent* and *Alsatian* under Admiral de Chair. This young man came from a very privileged background and his diary,

<sup>50</sup> De Chair, D.R., *The Sea is Strong* (London, 1961)

<sup>51</sup> Brocklebank, J., Ed. *Tenth Cruiser Squadron Northern Patrol from the diaries and letters of Captain H.C.R. Brocklebank July 1914-August 1917* (Affpuddle Dorset, 1974)

<sup>52</sup> Imperial War Museum JAS/1/1 Diary John Shuter H.M.S. *Changuinola*  
P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric*

<sup>53</sup> Imperial War Museum P 389 Journal of Midshipman F.L. McKeag RNR H.M.S. *India*  
DS/MISC/98 Microfilm Mid. Francis Poole RNR H.M.S. *Alcantara*

<sup>54</sup> Scrimgeour, A., *Scrimgeour's Small Scribbling Diary 1914-1916* with additional notes by compilers Hallam, R., and Beynon, M., and commentary by Professor Andrew Lambert. (London, 2008)

particularly the letters to his mother, tells as much about his social life, as it does about the Navy.

### **The National Archives**

The National Archives ADM 137 series provides a primary source covering the Historical Section Records used for the Official History of the First World War. It includes a wealth of topics having direct or associated relevance to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron such as the Squadron Orders, wireless telegraphy, Grand Fleet Secret Orders and Home Waters Telegrams. Ship's logbooks have been claimed as the first drafts of history: it is fortunate then, that the navigational logs of the Squadron's armed merchant cruisers are intact at The National Archives and can be found in the ADM 53 series. The vessels taken up at the end of 1914 have thick hardback logs capable of holding perhaps two years' entries. By March 1915 the Navy changed to using logs of month's duration in card backed format. Each completed month was to be sent to the Admiralty by first available means. The *Clan MacNaughton* was an early casualty when she foundered on February 3, 1915. No logs are held for her and her loss may have triggered the monthly submission of logbooks thereafter. Many of the logbooks are marked as 'Closed until 1966' which is puzzling. The National Archives do not record reasons why documents are closed, except for standard retention rules or specific dates ordered, often ordered, by the Government department releasing documents. The logbooks hold the minutae of each ship's daily routine and navigation. They provide a salutary reminder of how often navigation was labour intensive and a much less convenient skill to use, compared with today's electronic age. In addition to all the routine matters which are punctuated with unexpected events to provide a view of life aboard a Squadron ship.

Since the Squadron was so dependent on commissioned merchant ships together with reliance on Naval Reservists in conjunction with Mercantile Ratings, there are many more National Archive sources that are relevant. The less-often quoted MT 23 series, and BT 13 series covering the dates 1901 to 1918 (Transport Departments) and reveal how deeply the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seamen (RGSS), was involved with the R.N.R. and the armed merchant cruisers (AMCs). The ADM 1 series are of particular interest, revealing many documents dealing with the plans for the take up of armed merchant cruisers in the event of an emergency. Considerable detail can be found as to wage rate negotiations, victualling, uniform allowances, and engineering

issues as well as correspondence with several shipping companies. The R.N.V.R. and R.N.R. have many sources including the ADM 1 series in particular, but other references are also relevant to both reserves including the Treasury in the T series. The Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve provided the skilled boat crews for the Squadron and it is referred to in the ADM 128 and ADM 171 series. The political and commercial aspects of the blockade have archive coverage in the FO 382 series (Foreign Office). This series includes the General Correspondence for the Foreign Office, Contraband Department and the Ministry of Blockade for the period 1915-1920.

### **National Maritime Museum, Greenwich**

The large RMSPC and P&O Collections held by the National Maritime Museum (NMM) are important. From these, the reaction of the Company to the requisitioning of its ships can be gleaned, particularly the quarterly charter fees paid by H.M. Government. In both cases the Directors' Minutes throw more light on the attitude of ship-owners, towards the strains on their commercial services when vessels were taken up. Both these Companies had always supported their officers joining the permanent R.N.R., and with the start of the war they would come to realise the full effect of that commitment.

The Squadron's work and personalities did not have the flamboyance associated with Admiral Beatty nor the visual appeal of battleships and battle cruisers. It was boring, repetitive work, constantly beset with danger from the enemy and the sea. No doubt both de Chair and Tupper would have preferred posts with a greater opportunity for more spectacular contact with the enemy. However, they accepted their orders as professionals and each brought a different approach to the success of the Squadron's work.

Sir Eric Geddes, when First Lord of the Admiralty, is on record as saying:

The blockade was exercised by a little-advertised power, the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. That Squadron from 1914 to 1918 held the 800mile stretch of grey sea from the Orkneys to Iceland ..... If anything more strikingly demonstrating the value of sea power can be given, I do not know of it.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Tupper, R., *Reminiscences* (London,1929) 217

At the end of 1914, the Navy turned to the challenge of converting passenger/cargo liners into armed merchant cruisers. Manned mainly with Naval Reservists and Mercantile Ratings, the early months of 1915 saw the Squadron replenished by twenty-four ships taken up from trade. It then set about its patrols with a new will and a sharper focus.

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**Introduction.**

After the war started Parliament, the nation and the press developed strong and differing views on the rights and wrongs of the blockade as well as its conduct and effectiveness. The nation divided itself into ‘doves and hawks’. This chapter will review the pertinent legal, political and diplomatic constraints which most affected the part the Navy and the Tenth Cruiser Squadron played in the blockade.

The Squadron was tasked to ‘visit and search’ neutral shipping entering or leaving the North Sea via the North of Scotland.<sup>1</sup> In the minds of those who were even aware of its existence, the Squadron was often perceived to be the total blockade effort against Germany and deployed the entire resources of the Fleet. Aged only seventeen, Midshipman Scrimgeour’s diary captured the circumstances accurately:

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1914.

After reading the treatises and observations of several prominent civilian so-called experts in naval matters on the naval situation at the present, it seems to them to be an established fact, of which they are all so convinced, that our Fleet is conducting a close blockade of the Helgoland Bight and German North Sea coast. In fact, a blockade of the type which Nelson exercised before Toulon preceding the Trafalgar campaign.

It would surprise them to know that the blockade is of the “open” type advocated by Lord Howe; or, even more so, Lord Howe’s reason for favouring this type was that the efficiency of his material might be kept up. Jellicoe’s reason is that in face of hostile submarines to keep capital ships before Heligoland would be sheer folly.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, it only provided the ‘northern maritime contribution’ to Guichard’s ‘economic encirclement’.<sup>3</sup> Rear-Admiral de Chair’s Squadron was on station by 9 August 1914 and on the same day it was complemented in the South by the examination arrangements in the Downs Anchorages under the control of the Downs Boarding Squadron. This monitored neutral shipping using the Dover Strait to enter or leave the North Sea.<sup>4</sup> Together these two elements formed the ‘maritime aspect of the blockade’. Placing routes to Germany and northern Europe were under observation. Later, a further examination anchorage was established in Weymouth Bay.<sup>5</sup>

In Whitehall, the Foreign Office (FO), with assistance from the Admiralty and other government bodies, provided the third element of the ‘blockade effort’. In this way Britain, together with the French, set the rules and framework to operate an ‘economic’ blockade. The FO sought to control or influence the trade arrangements between

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<sup>1</sup> The Tenth Cruiser Squadron was also often referred to as ‘The Northern Patrol’.

<sup>2</sup> Scrimgeour, A., *Scrimgeour’s Small Scribbling Diary 1914-1916* (London, 2008) 92-93

<sup>3</sup> Guichard, L. *The Naval Blockade 1914-1918* (New York 1930) 6

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix Q ‘The Downs Examination Arrangements’.

<sup>5</sup> Clammer, R., *Cosens of Weymouth 1848-1918* (Lydney, Glos., 2005) 287-288

Germany and the neutral neighbours on its borders as well as its more distant trading partners such as America. National legislation, politics and international diplomacy were the weapons of these 'Whitehall Warriors'.

### **Germany's Need for Sea Trade.**

In the two decades preceding the war, Germany was transformed from being a self-supporting agricultural nation into an industrial economy needing to import raw materials. Germany's population grew to 70 million and increasingly relied on food imports. The raw materials Germany needed were: cotton, wool, copper, lead, rubber, paraffin, nickel, oils, fats, wheat, rye, barley and cattle.<sup>6</sup> In 1913, German imports exceeded exports by £100,000,000 in respect of foodstuffs, and by £172,000,000 in respect of raw material for industry. The export of finished goods, which exceeded the imports by £248,000,000, more or less created equilibrium.<sup>7</sup>

Germany needed fertilisers of which potash, phosphates and nitrates were essential. Deposits at Salzig supplied unlimited quantities of potash but 50% of the phosphate fertilisers came from the United States and North Africa whilst Chile supplied more than half German requirements for nitrates. Turning to corn, Germany imported 1½ million tons of wheat from the United States because she had increased the cultivation of rye at home, for which her soil was better suited; at the same time she exported 2 million tons of rye, thus her corn situation was reasonable. She consumed 6 million tons of barley but only produced 3 million tons; the balance came from Russia, together with one fifth of her fodder requirements. Finally, Germany produced an average of 40 million tons of potatoes for her needs. A small quantity of meat was imported.

Clearly, Germany's import of raw materials meant sea trade was essential. The United States supplied nearly all Germany's cotton, three fifths of her copper and three quarters of her mineral oils. Argentina supplied her with wool and hides, whilst British India was the source of textile plants and oleaginous grain. Also imported by sea were rubber, manganese, tin and all rare metals essential to industry. Sixty percent of her overseas commerce was carried under the German flag and remainder in foreign hulls.<sup>8</sup>

To the east, Germany had land access to adjoining neutrals for imports; but in the west, the sea traffic had to be transhipped via the Baltic through Scandinavian countries or

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<sup>6</sup> Chatterton, E.K., *The Big Blockade* (London, 1932) 94

<sup>7</sup> Guichard *The Naval Blockade* 4-5

<sup>8</sup> Guichard *The Naval Blockade* 5-6

Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Once the German flag was cleared by the internment, her increased reliance on neutral shipping made 'blockade' an attractive weapon for Britain and France. The structure of Germany's overseas trade needed to be analysed in relation to modern war. This took time to carry out which explains why the FO seemed to be 'shuffling' items between the absolute and conditional contraband lists in the early months.

Rapid positioning of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, meant the Admiralty had to some extent been better prepared than the FO. From the outset, reports from intercepting Squadrons were sent to the Trade Division of the naval staff. This Division had been formed to watch the movements of British trade, and to recommend measures for its protection. Although not directly ordered to deal with contraband matters, the officers of the division assumed these tasks were part of their duties. Throughout the war all orders to boarding Squadrons were issued from Trade Division and thus by default, it spawned the Contraband Committee, explained below.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Declaration of London, 1909 – Further Background.**

The issue of 'contraband of war' was woven into the Declaration of London, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1909. Under international law, neutral ships are permitted to trade freely with belligerents. They had to submit to visit and search, and could be brought before a prize court if they resisted search, carried contraband, rendered aid to the enemy or attempted to infringe the blockade.<sup>10</sup> However, belligerents often defined the content of contraband lists by their own interests, depending on their sea power. Earlier, Emperor Nicholas II had called forty-four States to a conference in The Hague between 15<sup>th</sup> June and 18<sup>th</sup> October 1907. The aim was to agree terms on the eight conventions concerning maritime war mentioned in Chapter One. The Declaration stemmed from a German proposal to institute an international prize court to look after the interests of neutrals in wartime.<sup>11</sup>

The Declaration had been the latest in a series of meetings, conferences and agreements stretching back half a century. It sought to establish a set of workable rules for the

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<sup>9</sup> Bell, A.C. *A History of the Blockade of Germany and the Countries Associated with her in the Great War, Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey, 1914-1918* (London, 1937) 35

<sup>10</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 7

<sup>11</sup> Consett, M.W.W.P., *The Triumph Of Unarmed Forces* 11

conduct of war and remove the anomalies, contradictions and confusion which had surrounded blockade and contraband.

It was necessarily a compromise between conflicting opinions, principles, and politics of the governments and countries represented. It was inspired by a desire to safeguard the respective rights of neutrals and belligerents in time of war.<sup>12</sup>

It was considered the most authoritative statement in international law affecting blockade to date. After signing there followed strong political debate in Britain on some of its proposals. This culminated in the House of Lords throwing out part of the Declaration in December 1911. Thus the failure of Britain to ratify the Declaration left it as dead.<sup>13</sup> In the same year the Admiralty was debating the practicalities of a close or distant blockade of Germany.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile the Foreign Secretary remained committed to support neutral rights in contrast to the House of Lords seeking to retain belligerent rights considered crucial to Britain. Even though blockade was discussed and naval research carried out pre-war, a lack of coordination meant when war was declared, Britain was not ready to conduct the blockade with the vigour which many believed was needed. Not only was the wrong type of vessel allocated in the first months of the Northern Patrol but the FO clearly had little understanding of the extent of the bureaucracy and staff finally needed to control an economic blockade from Whitehall desks. Bell recorded in his history:

From the outset, therefore, it was evident to everyone concerned, that our rights of interception would be more exercised from Whitehall than at sea; that the fleet would be little but constables and controllers of neutral traffic, and that it would rest with the central authorities to ascertain those facts about cargoes and their consignees, which would determine what rights of detention we could legally exercise.<sup>15</sup>

This view was less evident to those in the Fleet and ashore whose perceptions of blockade sprang from earlier centuries. As stated earlier, the initiative for Whitehall control came from the Admiralty's Trade Division in forming the nucleus of a contraband committee. This consisted of a Mr. Leverton Harris, a volunteer in the Admiralty's service, Captain Longden – of the Trade Division and Mr. Flint, an Admiralty civil servant. These members met, 'as occasion required', in the Old Admiralty Building. They scrutinised the reports of detentions from the Downs and Kirkwall. They soon realised the guidance of the FO would be necessary and asked a

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<sup>12</sup> Parmalee, *Blockade and Seapower* 35

<sup>13</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 13-15

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 1. p.4-5

<sup>15</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 35

member of it to attend their meetings. Together they formed a committee which became known as the *Contraband Committee*. When the blockade expanded, the ‘required occasions’ became daily and often for ten or twelve hours a day. Thus the Contraband Committee sought to combine the expertise of the Admiralty and the Foreign Office to form the ‘executive core’ which submitted matters to the Prize Court for adjudication.

**Blockade and Contraband.**<sup>16</sup>

The subjects of blockade and contraband were at the heart of the Declaration of London. A maritime blockade to stop entry or exit to an enemy port or coast, serves to prevent both the import and export of supplies by sea. The blockade must be real and effective and not just a paper declaration that in a certain area, vessels may be subject to interception. This meant a concentration of warships in a specified area known as a ‘close’ blockade. Britain had decided on a blockade of Germany as part its sea power, but to effect a legal blockade required control over the German Baltic coast which was only briefly attempted with submarines. What was instituted was Guichard’s ‘economic encirclement’, a definition which took account of Germany’s neighbours in all directions as potential sources for supplies.<sup>17</sup> Blockade became a convenient term used by Britain, her Allies and neutral critics. An effective blockade would have meant a transit through the neutral waters between Sweden and Denmark to reach the German Baltic Coast. Therefore, the total prevention of trade between Germany and Sweden, Denmark and Norway did not take place.<sup>18</sup> The port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands was another corridor for Germany to the wider world. Reliance was placed on neutral ships, prepared to carry her imports and hopefully, exports, to pay for the essential imports. Given enough vessels to intercept neutrals passing north of Scotland or through the Dover Straits, controlling cargoes, should have been straight forward. The reality was not so simple. Britain initially sought to observe the rules proposed in the Declaration of London, 1909 and take account of ‘neutral’ rights. This had set down the rules for the conduct of blockades and the classifying of goods as either ‘Absolute’ or ‘Conditional’ contraband or placed on a ‘Free’ list.

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix F. for the essential elements of blockade, background to the Declaration of London and Contraband Lists.

<sup>17</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 6

<sup>18</sup> Parmalee, M. *Blockade and Seapower* (London, 1924) 38-39

Under the terms of the Declaration of Paris, 1856 and the Declaration of London, 1909 ‘effective’ meant, ‘must be maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the enemy coastline.’

The two arms of Government mainly responsible for the daily work of the blockade were the FO and the Royal Navy. The blockade could be compared to a telescope with the FO looking through the eyepiece and getting a fuller, longer, more strategic view. The FO, in addition to pursuing Britain's war aims, had to avoid offence to neutrals on which Britain, as well as Germany, depended for supplies and support; not the least of such neutrals was the United States of America. (USA) The Navy seemed to be looking backwards through the telescope's object lens and getting a shrunken. This focussed on the historical perception of interception and seizure of vessels. However, Britain, like other colonial powers, was already enmeshed in an economy dependent on Empire trade plus goods and services from neutral countries. The foundations of globalisation had developed rapidly in the previous century and a world war affected not only the military forces but also the civilian workforces of both belligerents and neutrals alike.

On 6 August, 1914 the United States proposed to belligerent governments the Declaration of London be adopted as the legal code for the blockade. Germany and Austria agreed but Britain refused. The American Government withdrew its suggestion and the opportunity to base blockade operations on the best code available was lost. This dominated the relationship between Britain and the USA. Significantly, the USA was the only nation to ratify the Declaration of London. On 20 August, 1914 Britain issued an Order in Council establishing its own list of absolute and conditional contraband which was much more extensive than those in the Declaration. Subsequently, Britain extended the doctrine of 'continuous voyage' to conditional contraband contrary to Article 35 of the Declaration. Since Britain had not ratified the Declaration she adopted a selective strategy to allow flexibility in her approach to the neutrals' reactions.<sup>19</sup>

### **Foreign Office Arrangements.**

On 2 November 1914, the Admiralty declared the North Sea as a war zone in response to Germany's mine laying activities. This was a month before De Chair transferred his

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<sup>19</sup> Egerton, W.A., *Contraband of War* (Portsmouth, 1914) 49

The concept of 'continuous voyage' lays down that 'Absolute Contraband' must be seized if the final destination is the enemy's country or country occupied by him irrespective of which port it may be unloaded. In the case of 'Conditional Contraband' which is being carried to a neutral port, the captor must be able to show that:  
(a) The goods are consigned 'to order'; or (b) The goods are consigned to a person in territory belonging to or occupied by the enemy; or (c) The consignee is not shown on the Ship's Papers.

flag on 4 December 1914 to await the *Edgar* replacements.<sup>20</sup> Whilst the Squadron personnel had been getting to grips with their part in the blockade, changes and developments were progressed in Whitehall's administrative arrangements. The Allied intention was to prevent contraband goods reaching Germany whilst allowing other trade to continue normally. Reliance was placed on the periodic issue of Orders in Council and negotiations with foreign governmental organisations or national trade bodies willing to guarantee cargoes consigned to their country would not be transhipped to Germany. For the FO the blockade became a welter of committees, complex legal discussions, administration of export/import licenses and the collection of trade intelligence which was buttressed by the available sea power. Controlling commerce in Britain and abroad was at the core of the blockade with the 'maritime elements' providing vital constabulary checkpoints. Events bred more committees, each providing a service considered necessary but not necessarily communicating well with each other.

By the 15 August 1914, the *War Trade Committee* was formed with representatives from the Board of Trade (BoT), FO and the Admiralty. It was to co-ordinate the work of all ministries which were concerned in the block. On the 22 September 1914, Lord Crewe was appointed Chairman of the *War Trade Advisory Committee*, this was a consultative organisation intended to act as a clearing house for information of all kinds relating to the blockade.<sup>21</sup> In the same month an *Export Licensing Committee* was appointed and further committees and sub committees to look after specific aspects. One of the most contentious tasks was the maintenance of secret Black Lists. The *Foreign Trade Department*, as part of the FO, had control of the Statutory Black List and directed banks as to the granting of credits and exchange rates.<sup>22</sup> The Statutory Black List, first issued on 29 February 1916, gave the names of firms known to working for the enemy. It was issued to commanding officers of blockading ships to enable them decide more readily when a cargo should be considered 'suspect'.<sup>23</sup> The *War Trade Department* had control of the General Black List. This was in classes A and B. Individuals and firms in Class A were denied all facilities for shipments, cabling and correspondence and were regarded as enemies as far as trading was concerned. Class B individuals and firms were under Government surveillance and

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<sup>20</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 44-45

<sup>21</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 33

<sup>22</sup> Parmalee, *Blockade and Seapower* 85-86

<sup>23</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy*, Vol. III 76

were usually denied facilities for shipments, cables and correspondence. Parmelee records individuals and firms were unaware of their presence on the secret lists to ensure they continued to attempt to trade rather than push them into offering cooperation and help to Germany.<sup>24</sup> The *War Trade Statistical Department* published a detailed 'Secret Monthly Report' entitled 'Statistics of Imports into Scandinavia, including Iceland, the Faeroe Islands and the Netherlands.' The figures were taken mainly from copies of ship's manifests and other shipping documents.<sup>25</sup> It can be seen operating a modern 'blockade' from a Whitehall centre was much more than intercepting, boarding and sending neutral vessels in for examination. It required meticulous record keeping on large card indexes supported by complex cross referencing. The various committees and departments collected information concerning the dealings of merchants thought to have German interests as well as records of cargoes referred to the **Contraband Committee** and also financial transactions and bank credits of those firms suspected of German sympathies. Each item in itself created suspicions, any one of which could trigger an order for a neutral vessel being intercepted by the Squadron.

Although 21 October, 1914 was the first formal meeting of the **Contraband Committee** it did not start a Minute Book until November, 1914, when meetings started daily.<sup>26</sup> Department examined all contraband referred to it, from all parts of the world, for a decision to release or presentation to the Prize Court for adjudication. Britain continued to add to the contraband lists in a spate of Proclamations and Orders in Council commencing 21 September followed on 29 October 1914, 23 December 1914, 11 March and 27 May 1915. For example on 29 October 1914, iron, copper, lead, and rubber were declared contraband. On 11 March 1915, wool, hides, skins and leather were added. In August 1915, cotton was declared contraband. Many of these items were on the free list in the Declaration of London.<sup>27</sup> This protracted stiffening of the FO's view of the blockade resulted from the initial reluctance of Sir Edward Grey to stray from the Declaration's definition of contraband items. The lawyer, H. Reason Pyke, made the point it is impossible to compile a list of contraband articles valid for all times when he stated:

It has accordingly been the invariable practice from the inception of the law of

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<sup>24</sup> Parmelee, *Blockade and Seapower* 89-90

<sup>25</sup> Parmelee, *Blockade and Seapower* 92-93

<sup>26</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 36

<sup>27</sup> Parmelee, *Blockade and Seapower* 36-37

contraband for maritime nations to exercise their discretion, subject to such restrictions as may attach either by treaty or under the customary law of nations, with regard to the objects to be treated as contraband, and to include in that category all articles and commodities which, from the changing phases of the war, or from novel modes of conducting war, may be capable of rendering material support to the naval or military power of the enemy.<sup>28</sup>

Pyke recorded in 1866 Spain, declared that a belligerent has the right to declare new articles to be contraband of war when, from the circumstances of the war they become on the part of the enemy elements for undertaking and carrying on hostilities. Similarly, in correspondence with Chile in 1885, the United States acknowledged that with the lapse of time, the just rights of belligerents may require additions to the articles previously regarded as contraband of war.<sup>29</sup> Pyke shows during this period the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments also started on the premise of the Declaration of London but also created many amendments.

By 18 April 1915, the German Government issued a new Contraband Order in retaliation to the British Orders. Their lists of absolute and conditional contraband did not differ materially from the British lists of 23 December 1914 and as amended on 11 March 1915. However, coal and coke were made absolute instead of conditional contraband, while motor tyres, which were absolute on the British lists, were conditional in Germany, as was wool. The German Order, unlike the British, had a 'free' list which included raw cotton and except for metallic ores, rubber, oil seeds and nuts was practically the same as that given in Article 28 of the Declaration of London.<sup>30</sup> Although there were similarities by both belligerents, differences no doubt reflected the perceived strategic needs of each side.

### **The First German Declaration of Submarine War.**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> February 1915 the German Government sent a memorandum to all neutral powers warning of reprisals in response to the Entente's stoppage of maritime trade between neutrals and the Central Empires. A German objection was the British proclamation of a war zone covering the North Sea was effectively an irregular blockade of neutral coasts which was forbidden by international law. The declaration warned from the 18<sup>th</sup> February 1915 onwards any hostile merchant ships encountered in British or Irish waters, including the Channel, would be destroyed without regard for

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<sup>28</sup> Pyke, H.R., *The Law Of Contraband Of War* (Oxford, 1915) 178

<sup>29</sup> Pyke, *The Law Of Contraband Of War* 179

<sup>30</sup> Pyke, *The Law Of Contraband Of War* 182-183

crews or passengers. Although the construction of a submarine did not allow the taking of survivors, Germany felt no conscience over this approach. Neutral ships were also at risk in these waters since hostile merchant ships had previously used the ruse of hoisting neutral colours and mistakes could not be avoided.<sup>31</sup>

World powers were astonished at Germany's declaration. The United States attempted, without success, to intervene between the belligerents: it was requested that the Entente allowed foodstuffs to pass to the Central Powers provided they were consigned to neutral agencies, able to guarantee distribution would only be to non-combatants. In return Germany was requested not to use submarines against merchant shipping as she had threatened. Germany's reply was evasive and gave no promise of restraint but instead put her threats into effect. This was the spur for Britain to introduce the terms of the Order in Council referred to earlier dated 11 March 1915, sometimes known as the 'Reprisals Order'. Prior to this date Britain and France had confined their actions to contraband but in the future they were free to bring into their ports any goods the destination, ownership or origin of which was presumed or merely suspected of being hostile. The result was all direct trade between Germany and the powers overseas was blocked.<sup>32</sup> This retaliatory Order in Council was the trigger for a further spate of diplomatic exchanges, of which the Squadron probably knew little.

### **Reaction in the Navy.**

From August to November 1914 the Northern Patrol had been in the hands of the *Edgars* alone. Commodore Goodenough writing aboard *Southampton* whilst in command of the First Light Cruiser Squadron made the clear case for a more rigorous approach to what he termed 'a limited blockade'.<sup>33</sup> He records weather and possible submarine attack, in addition to other duties, prevented every merchant ship wearing neutral flags being physically visited. He further admits due to limited resources many other ships must have passed unseen. The benevolent British attitude to the blockade allowed a flourishing trade to the Skagerrak and hence to Scandinavia and Germany. Goodenough also expressed the view destroyers were too valuable as warships to be risked for boarding duties against neutrals. This point was confirmed in a separate paper by an unknown author, possibly Jellicoe.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 40-41

<sup>32</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 41-42

<sup>33</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Goodenough to C-in-C Home Fleet 11 October 1914 271-2

<sup>34</sup> TNA ADM 137/1936 Employment Of Destroyers In War 1913 125-126

The 'post manoeuvres' review in 1913 of the War Plans revealed the paucity of ships available for the Northern Patrol to provide the following cover :

The Pentland Firth also the Channel between Orkneys and Shetlands and the area between the North of Shetlands and the coast of Norway (62°N).

The ships of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadrons (totalling at the outside twelve ships) were allocated, but the point was at any one time, a quarter of the number would be away coaling or steaming to or from the patrol grounds.<sup>35</sup> This meant the practical difficulties of Commodore Goodenough in the early war patrols had already been recognised but no evidence of further planning demonstrated. Goodenough's final recommendations harked back 100 years and sought to have a more rigorous blockade with a northern and southern port, as checkpoints to obtain clearance to proceed.<sup>36</sup> Failure to observe these was treated as un-neutral service and the full force available to a belligerent was to be used to ensure conformity. Vice-Admiral David Beatty, aboard H.M.S. *Lion*, wrote to Jellicoe on 1 October 1914 with similar recommendations to grip the blockade since he had observed significant neutral traffic heading towards the Kattegat. Petrol and foodstuffs was getting through to Germany and a tougher approach would be needed. Even in the North Sea, the shortening days and approaching winter weather was not conducive to boarding and effective searching could only be done in sheltered water.<sup>37</sup> From the outset, Jellicoe had had some misgivings about the value of the blockade and the cost of the naval resources being employed. Supported by the recommendations from Beatty and Goodenough on the 13 November 1914 he made a stark submission to the Admiralty.

SECRET

COPIES OF TELGRAMS

From ..... The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleets.

To ..... ADMIRALTY. Date ... 13<sup>th</sup> November 'C'

55. Since 5<sup>th</sup> October, 25 merchant ships have been detained and sent into Kirkwall. One of these sailed from South America with contraband for Germany before war was declared and has been permanently detained. One for Bergen was ordered to discharge rubber portion of cargo before proceeding with remaining cargo of foodstuffs. Remainder were bound for Baltic and Dutch ports and were allowed to proceed with complete cargoes which included 1 ship with copper, 11 with grain and foodstuffs, 5 with petroleum, 1 with magnetic ore, 1 with sulphur, 1 with coal and 2 with general cargoes. The 25 ships do not include vessels sent into other northern ports.

The Squadrons now employed on this patrol work are much required for other duties, and it seems doubtful whether it is desirable to continue incurring the risks, wear and tear entailed in boarding ships if all ships boarded are subsequently released, unless any real benefit is derived from the temporary detention of these vessels. The captains of several of the ships stated that the cargoes were known to be going to Germany.

Submitted whether the present practice of boarding should continue or not.

<sup>35</sup> TNA ADM 137/1936 Review Of The War Plan After Manoeuvres 1913 119-120

<sup>36</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Goodenough to C-in-C Home Fleet 11 October 1914 272

<sup>37</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Beatty to C-in-C Home Fleet 1 October 1914 267-70

REPLY

From ..... ADMIRALTY. Date ... 14<sup>th</sup> November 'D'  
 To ..... The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleets.

282. Your 55. Unfortunately great legal difficulties exist dealing with neutral ships from neutral ports carrying cargoes to neutral owners. The ultimate arbiter is the Prize Court and in many cases you mention, such as food, we have been advised we had no case and would be liable to heavy damages, besides greatly irritating neutral governments. With the copper and petroleum ships satisfactory guarantees were obtained in every case that the cargoes were for neutral consumption and would not be re-exported. Such guarantees could not have been obtained except by means of your action of bringing in ships. As Germany is an exporter of coal, the import of this article into neutral countries helps to cripple German coal export. Magnetic ore, see Admiralty signal 61 of 25<sup>th</sup> October . Sulphur referred to was understood to be making wood pulp.

Your action in arresting these ships has already produced most valuable results, viz.-

1. Ship owners are avoiding carrying cargo
2. Underwriters will not insure except at extreme premiums.
3. Guarantee has been forced has been forced from neutral Powers, who are now prohibiting export of many objectionable articles.

All this pressure on German trade is direct consequence of the delay, anxiety and extreme inconvenience involved to neutrals by the Fleet interference.

R.F. 0019

The VICE ADMIRAL COMMANDING  
 ORKNEYS AND SHETLANDS.

Forwarded for your information with reference to your communication No.30 of 10<sup>th</sup> instant  
 Forwarding a list of vessels sent in to Kirkwall.

17<sup>th</sup> November 1914.

.Jellicoe to Admiralty and Reply.<sup>38</sup>

Jellicoe's telegram and the Admiralty's reply encapsulate both views of the 'blockade'. The Commander-in-Chief had given vent to his frustrations and the futility of the operation with the few ships available. In reply, had come a 'well done' from the Admiralty reassuring him the Northern Patrol's 'visit and search' activities were a valuable deterrent to the neutral ship-owners. A clear morale booster no doubt sent with FO approval. The first gale of the winter brought the matter to a head and when the *Edgars* had to be decommissioned, the 'blockade' by the Northern Patrol was virtually non-existent until the armed merchant cruisers started to become available from mid December 1914.<sup>39</sup>

The Orders in Council of March 1 and May 1915 meant the British Government had, at last, reached a degree of finality on the contraband lists. It was fortuitous the FO deliberations of the months since the war started, occurred when the Squadron was at its weakest with only *Edgars*, followed by the need to 'work up' the routines for the armed merchant cruisers. It confirmed Britain had been a long way from being ready for the practical needs and implications of a distant blockade. Below flag officer level, commanding officers and boarding officers must have found the flow of contraband list

<sup>38</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Jellicoe to Admiralty 13 November 1914 279  
 ADM 137/1915 Admiralty to Jellicoe 14 November 1914 279

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 1, page 9

changes by the FO frustrating. Captured ships, sent in to Kirkwall' seemed to be repeatedly ordered for release. This demoralised boarding boat crews who felt let down after risking life and limb with repeated boardings. For many afloat in the Squadron, even though they accepted the blockade's importance to the Government, intercepting neutral ships, boarding, inspecting and then perhaps 'taking in' to an examination port did not seem real 'war work' or 'contact with the enemy'. This view was often noted by commanding and senior RN officers in the Squadron. Although the Naval Prize Manual had been rewritten in 1913-14 it was still a very detailed text.<sup>40</sup> There was a need for a true pocket guide for boarding officers. Gieve's, the naval tailors, met the demand with a concise pocket guide entitled 'Contraband of War.'<sup>41</sup> The author stressed the importance to the Naval Officer of understanding the Declaration of London with the following bidding:

...although it is to be presumed that the Government will in all ordinary cases assume responsibility for the actions of their servants, it must be understood that the personal responsibility for wrongful application of these laws rest with the Naval Officer; for in misapplying them he renders a dis-service to the State by exposing her to diplomatic remonstrance and heavy pecuniary loss. In other cases a want of knowledge of these laws may lead to indirect service being rendered to the enemy.<sup>42</sup>

This should have left little doubt for the active service naval mind, as to the importance of the 'visit and search' routine work, even though less exciting than the prospect of any direct North Sea contact with the enemy.

Being in Operational Command of the Squadron, Jellicoe continued to amass statistics showing the number of ships intercepted when bound both east and west through the patrol lines. These were garnered from Squadron reports all of which convinced him contraband was getting through to Sweden and potentially Germany. Lack of feedback as to whether a captured vessel was subsequently released compounded the frustration. He had only to read *The Times* and note from the many 'blockade' articles and editorials to know very strong views were held about whether the 'blockade' was having an effect. These dispiriting articles did nothing for the Squadron's morale, so Jellicoe felt it important to keep up his pressure on the FO by repeatedly raising the issue through Admiralty channels.

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<sup>40</sup> TNA ADM 116/1232 Revision of Naval Prize Manual 1913 see also:

<sup>41</sup> Egerton, *Contraband of War*.

<sup>42</sup> Egerton, *Contraband of War* xii

**Jellicoe's Staff Research.**

The Commander-in-Chief had another card to play in this game of correspondence shuttlecock. Jellicoe's Secret Pack reveals on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1915, he wrote to The Secretary of the Admiralty enclosing a research paper proposing further measures for the blockade.<sup>43</sup> He submitted a paper written by one of his staff aboard H.M.S. *Iron Duke*, namely, Lieutenant E. Hilton Young, M.P., RNVR, of whom Jellicoe wrote:

‘..... has been of great assistance to me in dealing with the statistical side of the contraband trade. He writes with knowledge and authority on the subject, and is well acquainted with the work of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.’

Hilton Young was a good example of the personalities and hidden experience which could be found in the R.N.V.R.. Unlike officers in the R.N.R., whose life experience was confined to their normal seafaring occupation, the R.N.V.R. often garnered men with experience in other professions and walks of life which fitted them for demanding intellectual workloads. Hilton Young was such a man. After Eton, he studied at University College, London and Trinity College, Cambridge where he took the Natural Sciences tripos. Called to the Bar in 1904, he practised in the King's Bench Division and the Oxford Circuit. When illness forced him to abandon a legal career he turned to journalism and politics. He became an assistant editor on the *Economist* and later financial editor of the *Morning Post* (1910-1914).<sup>44</sup> He was not a peacetime Reserve officer but in August 1914, was commissioned as a lieutenant R.N.V.R.. Jellicoe had chosen well and Hilton Young was set to work on the idea of ‘rationing’ imports to neutral countries, a concept which would become well known in the blockade. Aged 36 and given his background, the task of an original research paper for the Commander-in-Chief would not have been daunting. In 1915, Hilton Young started his first term of office as Member of Parliament for Norwich, a position which probably gave him the right of direct access to Government Departments.<sup>45</sup>

Hilton Young's paper focussed on the need to have a ‘simple and certain’ method to decide whether or not a particular consignment of goods for Germany's neutral neighbours exceeded its ‘usual consumption’ which would be counted as its ‘ration’. He proposed exporting neutrals and importing neutrals be induced to inform Britain of

<sup>43</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Jellicoe to Admiralty 1 September 1915

<sup>44</sup> Edward Hilton Young [www.archiveshub.ac.uk/news/0300ken.html](http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/news/0300ken.html)

<sup>45</sup> Young, E. Hilton., *By sea and land: some naval doings* (London, 1920) 18-19

Young was initially posted to H.M.S. *Cyclops* at Scapa Flow as a cipher officer but soon found himself transferred to H.M.S. *Iron Duke* and took on gunnery duties taught by ‘on the job’ experience. He lost an arm at the battle of Jutland. After the war he was again M.P for Norwich (1924-1929). He served in many Government posts at home and abroad. In 1926 he left the Liberals and became a Conservative. In 1935 he was created a peer and became 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Kennet of Dene.

shipments of commodities needed by the enemy, to countries contiguous to Germany and the relation such shipments bore to the 'normal consumption' by that country. Shipments notified should be allowed to pass, up to the 'normal ration', and those not notified be liable to detention. Jellicoe gave the paper his strong backing, making the point again that the level of our sea power being used was causing Germany but 'slight inconvenience'. He wanted all other considerations set aside and every opportunity taken to crush Germany both economically and by force of arms. Jellicoe then, was one of the 'hawks'.

In his paper Hilton Young argued too many ships were released after capture. Only fifteen percent of those intercepted were detained and of these only a small part of the cargo was placed in the Prize Court. His source was the Squadron's own records and also the Contraband Committee's minutes to which he had access. He recognised that the neutral exporters, especially the United States, would be reluctant to control exports and undertake the difficult task of refusing one exporter whilst allowing a competitor to trade. In fact, such discrimination to the advantage of Britain and the disadvantage of Germany, could lay the United States open to a charge of acting in an un-neutral manner. He also saw difficulties in leaving the control of imports in the hands of the contiguous neutrals since these could be falsified and the excess imports still find their way to Germany. Despite the agreements made with organisations like the Netherlands Overseas Trust and certain continental shipping companies, it was well known abuse of the agreements took place. Instead, Hilton Young proposed cooperation be sought from 'exporting' neutrals and contiguous 'importing' neutrals as to agreeing a 'normal' amount and subsequently notifying when a shipment was made. Britain would be expected to agree not to increase its own exports to contiguous neutrals of the materials concerned and take an unfair trading advantage. For Britain, it would remove the burden of proof as to 'continuous voyage' and for the neutral exporters, a simple administrative procedure which would not incur internal disputes between rival exporting manufacturers claiming favouritism and resulting in less interference.<sup>46</sup>

### **Reaction to Hilton Young's Paper.**

On the 6 September J.E. Masterton Smith, Private Secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty, sent an informal reply. The formal response from the Admiralty was dated

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<sup>46</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Operations of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron and the Policy of Normal Allowances. Lt. E Hilton Young RNVR 28 August 1915

3 October, 1915, a month after the paper was submitted. The writer acknowledged receipt of the paper by Lieutenant E. Hilton Young RNVN and pointedly made no reference to the Member of Parliament status of this junior ranking reserve officer. Instead, there followed a defensive statement:

I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that they are fully alive to the urgency of the question and certain measures are in contemplation which if found practicable will, it is hoped, result in diminishing the facilities for suspicious importations which you have represented.<sup>47</sup>

The Hilton Young paper seems to have had some impact at the Admiralty. This also revealed that Mr. Balfour had referred it to the Contraband Committee. Mr Balfour had received a seven page Minute written by the Chairman of the Contraband Committee and he promptly required this to be passed to the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>48</sup>

The Minute started with an expression of agreement with Jellicoe's determination to beat the enemy and then reassured the 'control exercised by the Navy has been much more effective than Admiral Jellicoe supposes'. The Chairman then chose to deal with the matter by splitting cotton from other goods. Cotton was considered to be under control, especially since it had been declared absolute contraband on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1915. Cotton was dealt with at some length since it had been a very contentious matter with the United States. Britain, as an exception, had allowed contracts in hand on that date to be shipped and completed. The Chairman confessed little doubt Germany would have built up significant stocks prior to the transfer of cotton to absolute contraband.

Turning to 'other trade' the Chairman gave a detailed account of the processes used by the Contraband Committee whenever ships and all or part of its cargo were sent in for examination, before the approaching the Prize Court. Details of the amount and nature of each consignment together with the names and address of the shippers and consignees were telegraphed to the Contraband Committee. The FO along with the War Trade Department, assisted with Diplomatic Service reports from abroad and intelligence by the Censor from intercepted letters and telegrams, could provide a mass of information about suspect traders and commercial deals. All these sources had to be considered and it is not surprising the clerical effort needed caused irritating delays.

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<sup>47</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Admiralty (Murray) to Commander-in-Chief 3 October 1915

To some extent this was true, in that the chronology in Bell's *A History of the Blockade of Germany* shows that in June there had been an Anglo-French conference on economic warfare in Paris which was the inception of the rationing system. In August a further Allied conference on economic warfare saw the first rationing list drafted.

<sup>48</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Minute by Chairman of the Contraband Committee 6 September 1915 33-39

Cargoes were landed and stored or even purchased for British use. The Chairman revealed sometimes additional guarantees were required and assured Jellicoe all possible precautions were taken to ensure cargo is not re-exported after a vessel was released. The whole seemed to be hamstrung by watertight departmental functioning. Even the Customs at Kirkwall were only told 'the vessel may proceed' with no further explanation as to the reasons for its release. The Minute shows the effort involved to observe international law and deal with the political sensitivities, both national and international. The Chairman challenged some of Jellicoe's traffic figures and provided his own 'from London'. Whilst the need for secrecy can be understood, the whole document is so revealing of the blockade workload which had developed in Whitehall, it is a pity sea going officers of Jellicoe's and de Chair's rank had not been told of it earlier. It could have saved much frustration.

Jellicoe replied on 14 September, 1915 informing the Admiralty 'it was satisfactory to note the [Contraband] Committee consider the control exercised by the Navy is much more effective than is supposed in the Fleet'. He then went on to give further examples from his own sources and observations as to why he considered there was a risk of adopting a false sense of security by relying on guarantees. His reply concluded:

For these reasons it is considered that the guarantees on which we depend must be regarded as largely inoperative, and that the enemy is able to obtain such portions of the guaranteed cargoes as he may require.<sup>49</sup>

For a while that is how things were left. Those at sea, risking life and limb, convinced of leakages taking place were not encouraged by Whitehall's soft approach. Meanwhile, the Contraband Committee was running and expanding a large administration process. This sought to observe fully the laws and tried to avoid unnecessary compensation and demurrage costs for cases likely to be thrown out by the Prize Court. In fact, in August 1915, an Allied conference on economic warfare was held at which the first rationing list was drafted. However, it was not until February / March before the Ministry of Blockade issued two orders in respect of forcible rationing that governed the blockade of Germany during 1916.<sup>50</sup>

### **Transatlantic Politics.**

On 29 November 1915, Grahame Green was instructed by the Lords Commissioners to send the Commander-in-Chief, a copy of a confidential American Note dated 5

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<sup>49</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Jellicoe to Admiralty 14 September 1915

<sup>50</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 272 and 456

November 1915, addressed to Sir Edward Grey.<sup>51</sup> It seemed Whitehall felt, having already explained their complex daily control of contraband, it would be worthwhile letting Jellicoe realise the amount of political communication came from the United States. It is surprising it had not been officially copied to Jellicoe earlier since it had already been published, almost in full, in *The Times* on Monday, 8 November 1915. The original note ran to thirteen pages of close text and then six pages of statistics. These six pages were ‘an incomplete list of vessels carrying American cargoes which sailing in practically all instances from American to Scandinavian ports, were diverted by British authorities to the port of Kirkwall, or called at that port under instruction from owners, from 11 March 1915 to 17 June 1915.’ This comprised 274 vessels showing in each case the extent of the delay caused. A further 75 vessels made up a provisional list for the remainder of June, July and August 1915.<sup>52</sup>

The Note covered thirty-two paragraphs raising issues over detention of vessels, shipments to neutrals, blockade of neutral ports, evidence of contraband, blockade measures, blockade law, the British prize courts, damage to trade, illegal exercise of force, forced re-consignment of cargoes and suspected trading with enemy. The issue of ‘visit and search’ had rankled between Britain and the United States since the War of 1812 when American vessels were boarded to re-capture British seamen deserters. In the American Civil War, the Union States blockaded the coastlines of the Confederate States, hoping Britain would support the north. Instead, Britain declared neutrality and continued to trade and supply arms to both North and South. Nassau became the neutral delivery point from which the Confederate blockade runners collected their imports and endeavoured to export cotton in payment which supported the British textile industry. To the United States it was an artificial distinction to quote Nassau as the port of delivery, when clearly the cargoes were intended for Confederate consignees. The Northern States declared the concept of ‘continuous voyage’, the transshipment at Nassau being a mere subterfuge by Britain seeking to trade with both north and south in the war.

By 1914, international trade had expanded beyond anything imagined in the American Civil War and America chose to repeat Britain’s earlier actions by proclaiming

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<sup>51</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Admiralty to Jellicoe 29 November 1915, 46-56  
*The Times* Monday, 8 November 1915

<sup>52</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Admiralty to Jellicoe 29 November 1915  
Pages 14-19 of the American Note of 5 November 1915.

neutrality in order to trade with both belligerents. American exports of grain, cotton, meat, oil and minerals were sought by both Germany and Britain. The American objections to the British 'blockade' were summarised at the end of the Note.

Objections were that British methods to obtain and use evidence of cargoes being destined for enemy ports or label such cargoes as being contraband were not justified. The blockade was declared ineffective, illegal and indefensible; the whole judicial procedure of the Prize Courts was claimed to be a violation of the law of nations. America objected to the maintenance of 'black lists' affecting their business houses and condemned the British of relying on expediency in conducting the affairs of the blockade. The Government of the United States took on its shoulders the job of being the champion of neutral rights not only for all neutral nations generally, but clearly for the protection of its own trade in particular.<sup>53</sup>

### **Jellicoe's Responses to the American Note.**

On the 6 December 1915, Jellicoe sent the Admiralty his reactions to the American Note. His first rebuttal was against the claim all ships were being sent in for examination and that a search could easily be conducted at sea, there being little difference between a ship of 1000 tons or one of 20,000 tons. Any seafarer would have supported Jellicoe when replying, 'I am sure that the fallacy of the statement must be apparent to anyone who has carried out such a search at sea.' The need for detailed searches was compounded by the practice of contraband being concealed in passengers' baggage. The different cargo packaging such as casks, barrels and wooden cases found in a general cargo required close examination. Where a vessel carried a bulk cargo the contraband could be placed at the bottom of the hold and the bulk cargo stowed on top.

On suspected vessels a search could only be done safely in port, when part or all of the cargo was discharged before the ship or cargo could be placed before the Prize Court for adjudication. Jellicoe stressed when an interception took place both the neutral and the armed merchant cruiser were at risk from U-boats. However, the British practice of 'sending in' was far more humane than the German threat of sinking without any consideration of a neutral crew's well being.

America claimed the blockade was not 'effective' since the Baltic coastline of Germany was not under blockade, proving the 'so called' blockade was incomplete and

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<sup>53</sup> *The Times* Monday, 8 November 1915, American Note of 5 November 1915 paras. 33-35.

illegal. Jellicoe pointed out the American blockade in the Spanish-American war was confined to Spanish colonies and America was neither able nor attempted to blockade the coast of Spain. Legal opinion later showed it was legitimate for a blockade to be confined to only part of a belligerent's coastline. Complaints about the number of interceptions of American vessels and delays caused to their voyages were challenged by Jellicoe who had kept meticulous records of his own. To strengthen his arguments he had the benefit of reports from the boarding and armed guard officers who constantly sought intelligence from the masters of merchant ships intercepted. Many masters gave willingly of their knowledge of the situations in the Scandinavian countries and almost boasted of the amount of contraband that was evading the blockade. This information was not always to the liking of the Whitehall community. A further reason for interception was the number of Germans of military age travelling back to Germany often on forged papers.

Jellicoe's lengthy letter went on to quote the actual interception statistics from his own Squadron records. The oilers [tankers] were operated by the Standard Oil Company some having been transferred from German ownership to the American flag which always rendered them under suspicion.<sup>54</sup>

ENCLOSURE No.2

In Home Fleets letter No.2747/H.F.0020 of 6 December 1915

List of American ships which arrived at Kirkwall for examination  
1<sup>st</sup> APRIL – 30<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 1915

Summary

28 Ships arrived (only 1 Westbound).

23 “ proceeded.

5 “ sent South for further examination

8 “ “ in by Owners – 4 of these also had  
armed guards

Average time of detention of ships which  
Proceeded..... 9 days.

Longest time of detention. 25 days – in case of  
“POLARINE” on 8 June.

Jellicoe to Admiralty<sup>55</sup>

The file concerned reveals the most meticulous records of the movements east and west of neutral ships intercepted. The extract above shows the delays caused to ships sent in for examination due to the administration work of the Contraband Committee served to discourage ship-owners from accepting contraband cargoes.

<sup>54</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Jellicoe to Admiralty 6 December 1915 57-65

<sup>55</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Jellicoe to Admiralty 6 December 1915 70

A further analysis revealed how Jellicoe's detailed records allowed him to dispute American claims:

Percentage of American vessels to neutral vessels generally, intercepted by the Northern Patrol is as follows:

1915	
1 <sup>st</sup> Apl. to 30 <sup>th</sup> Sep.	3.3
1 <sup>st</sup> Oct. to 30 <sup>th</sup> Nov.	4.6

Percentage of American vessels which are sent into port by the Northern Patrol on being intercepted is as follows:

EASTWARD BOUND

1 <sup>st</sup> Apl. to 30 <sup>th</sup> Sep.	96.
1 <sup>st</sup> Oct. to 30 <sup>th</sup> Nov.	57.1

WESTWARD BOUND

1 <sup>st</sup> Apl. to 30 <sup>th</sup> Sep.	10.5.
1 <sup>st</sup> Oct. to 30 <sup>th</sup> Nov.	0.

Eastward bound American vessels carry oil, foodstuffs and other commodities which render search in port necessary.

Westward bound vessels are sent into port from time to time to ascertain whether they carry goods from Germany, and whether they are being used as auxiliaries to the German Navy.<sup>56</sup>

Time spent in port is not productive for a shipowner. Bell conceded it was difficult to quantify the effect of these coercive delays in an examination port but gave an indication of the total loss which would depend on the following:

- (i) For vessels on time charter (of which there were a great number):

*Total number of days detained x daily charter rate.*

- (ii) For vessels working in the service of their owners:

*Total number of days detained x ships daily charges*

(a sum which often included the cost of supplying hundreds of passengers with a first-class hotel fare). The total would certainly be many millions of pounds.<sup>57</sup>

Apart from dealing with diplomatic exchanges, accurate records were needed to counter any subsequent financial compensation claims from neutral owners.

Jellicoe continued his dialogue with the Admiralty, which was his official route to the Foreign Office, until his appointment as First Sea Lord in December 1916. How much of what he recommended was blocked by any 'gatekeepers' at the Admiralty and Foreign Office is not known. Nevertheless, he was 'the man on the spot' and could not be ignored entirely. He was known for his attention to detail, commitment to planning and the observance of orders. These attributes, coupled with his historic naval

<sup>56</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Jellicoe to Admiralty. Points connected to the American Note .

<sup>57</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 251

perception of blockade, impelled him to take the patrol's performance seriously, and not only as the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, which was continuously on patrol, but it was the part of his wide command.

Extracts from a letter to the Admiralty dated 19 June, 1916 aboard *Iron Duke* show Jellicoe's frustration:

2. The ships of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron intercept the greater part of the Atlantic Trade with Northern Europe, but owing presumably to the difficulty of proving the belligerent intention and purpose of the cargoes on board the merchant vessels brought in, we allow the majority of it to proceed. The effect of this is that Germany obtains most of her requirements, and the object of the Blockade announced by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, namely the prevention of commodities of any kind from reaching Germany, is nullified.

3. Thus the considerable outlay incurred in the hire and upkeep of the ships of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, and the maintenance of their crews is largely wasted and the pressure of our sea power on Germany can hardly be said to exist: we cause the enemy slight inconvenience only.<sup>58</sup>

Jellicoe was justified in his concern about costs and an examination of the Squadron for the week Sunday, 4 July 1915 is revealing. On that day, the following ships were included in the Squadron:

*Alcantara, Alsatian, Ambrose, Andes, Arlanza, Cedric, Changuinola, Columbella, Digby, Ebro, Hilary, Hildebrande, India, Mantua, Motagua, Orcoma, Oropesa, Orotava, Otway, Patia, Patuca, Teutonic, Victorian, Virginian.*<sup>59</sup>

The total gross tonnage for these 24 vessels was 232,637 tons. The charter rates were laid down by Government in a publication known as the Blue Book and those for Armed Merchant Cruisers were as follows:

<b>Armed Merchant Cruisers,</b>		
<b>Speed.</b>	<b>Per gross ton per month.</b>	
	s.	
22 knots and over	25 )	
21 knots and under 22	24 )	With relief from all
20 " " 21	23 )	risk and expense of
19 " " 20	22 )	ship and stores.
18 " " 19	21 )	
Under 18 knots	20 )	

Period three months certain.

If period is in excess of three months, rate to be 1s. per ton less in each case in respect of the excess period.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Jellicoe to Admiralty 19 June 1916

<sup>59</sup> Grainger, *The Maritime Blockade of Germany* 191

<sup>60</sup> Salter, *Allied Shipping Control* 349

Taking into account the above parameters the **monthly** charter costs alone, totalled £222,354. In addition, there were victualling costs and pay for 7,330 officers and men. The bunker capacity is known for only seventeen of the above ships which totalled 39,673 tons. It cost £41,656 to fill the bunkers with Rhonda coal priced at £1.05p per ton in 1915 of these seventeen ships alone.<sup>61</sup>

Concern for costs also show up in Lt.Cdr. Genfell's diary on 31 May 1915 when he wrote:

‘.....here we have been 10 days at sea & no but one boat away & have scarcely seen a ship. At £1000 a day for the use of *Cedric*, this is not good value for the British Public’.<sup>62</sup>

Date of entry C of D Minutes *	Date Voyage Completed	Surplus / Deficit	Amount	D'yly Eq'nt	Repair Costs	D'yly Eq'nt	Voyage Length
<b>Government Service</b>	<b>H.M.S. Andes</b>						
29.10.1915	30. 6.1915	Surplus	£16305	161.4	£3755	37.1	101days
16.10.1915	30. 9.1915	“	£16750	182.0	-----	----	92 days
9. 2.1916	31.12.1915	“	£17918	194.7	-----	----	92 days
21. 6.1916	31. 3.1916	“	£17983	197.6	-----	----	91 days
11.10.1916	30. 6.1916	“	£17730	194.8	-----	----	91 days
<b>Peace time Trading</b>	<b>RMS Andes</b>						
27. 7.1921	12. 3.1921	(Deficit)	(£21530)	(422.1)	£15220	298.4	51 days
5.10.1921	23. 5.1921	Surplus	£12898	243.4	£ 7030	132.6	53 days
2.11 1921	31. 7.1921	“	£ 6202	119.3	£ 7600	146.1	52 days
22.12.1921	8.10.1921	“	£ 6832	133.4	£ 6960	136.5	51 days
22. 2.1922	17.12.1921	“	£14342	281.2	£ 7500	147.0	51 days
24. 5.1922	3. 3.1922	(Deficit)	(£ 7565)	(154.4)	£ 8250	168.4	49 days

Fig 3 Selected operating figures for H.M.S. Andes / RMS Andes<sup>63</sup>

Ship-owners, such as the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, enjoyed a welcome regular income from the Government charter money. The table above shows the comfort of regular surpluses from the *Andes* under war conditions in 1915-16 with relief from repairs costs. These contrast with the fluctuations of peace time trading in the period 1921-22 where seasonal trade and responsibility for repairs make a clear difference to a ship-owner, even one with mail contracts.

In his letter of 19 June, 1916 Jellicoe touched on another frustration which was clearly not helpful when he closed with this polite but clear complaint:

7. In conclusion I would mention that the Consul's [at Christiana] reports enclosed in Admiralty letter N.I. 14786 of 11<sup>th</sup> instant are dated 25 March and 2 April respectively, but were not received by me until 13<sup>th</sup> June, and then only after special application for them had been made. The delay has rendered some of the information contained in these valuable documents of little use.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> [http://www.therhondda.co.uk/facts/coal\\_prices\\_1840\\_1938.html](http://www.therhondda.co.uk/facts/coal_prices_1840_1938.html)

<sup>62</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2 85

<sup>63</sup> NMM RMS/1/17 Minutes of Court of Directors Jan. 1913-Nov.1916 \*  
RMS/1/17 Minutes of Court of Directors Jul.1921-May. 1922 \*

There is always a conflict between the need for security and secrecy pitted against the passing of information which is needed or helpful. The Tenth Cruiser Squadron's activities were always kept out of the public limelight to imbue a sense of surprise when interceptions were made. The Squadron Standing Orders specifically stressed the need for 'reticence' by officers and crews when ashore.<sup>65</sup> Poor communications clearly extended beyond the relationship between the Admiralty and the FO, when the Vice Admiral Commanding Orkneys and Shetlands turned to Jellicoe for help in his letter 27 May, 1916:

Submitted. With reference to H.F.0020/442 of 23 May, 1916, the Customs at Kirkwall receive no information from London when part of a vessel's cargo has been declared prize unless the ship is actually ordered to discharge part of her cargo into prize court at some British port.

2. I would submit that the Admiralty be asked to request the Customs in London to inform their officials when any part of a ship's cargo is prize courted whether the vessel is permitted to proceed to her destination or not and the information would then be passed on to me from Kirkwall or Lerwick.<sup>66</sup>

### **Additional Blockade Measures: Coal, Mails and Navicerts**

Three further measures which impinged either directly or indirectly on the Squadron were coal exports, searching of mails and the issue of Navicerts; they were progressively implemented with Foreign Office backing.

Britain had a near monopoly on coal exports to neutral countries and the maintenance of bunker coal stocks around the world. It was to prove an effective negotiating tool for blockade policies. The Squadron maintained a patrol to upset the trade of iron ore between Narvik and Rotterdam. Although occasional arrests were made, the trade was able to continue by using the territorial waters by day and also moving at night to avoid the patrols. The ore ships and also many vessels carrying herrings to Germany often called at the Tyne and Sunderland for bunker coal. In May 1915, Trade Division issued orders bunker coal was to be refused and the Division widened the control of coal with the full support of the Foreign Office. The effect was:

- (i) No coal would be supplied to any vessel trading with a German port or to any vessel carrying goods of enemy destination or origin.
- (ii) No coal would be supplied to a vessel chartered to an enemy subject or a blacklisted firm.

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<sup>64</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: Jellicoe to Admiralty 19 June 1916

<sup>65</sup> TNA ADM137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 11

<sup>66</sup> TNA ADM 137/1915 Secret Pack: VA Orkneys and Shetlands 27 May 1916 135

(iii) All vessels supplied with British bunker coal were to call voluntarily at a British port; all vessels supplied with British bunker coal were to receive approval for the cargoes carried from a neutral to a neutral port; all vessels supplied with British bunker coal were to secure certificates of origin for all cargoes exported from Scandinavian countries; all vessels supplied with British bunker coal were to refuse cargo space to goods consigned to order.<sup>67</sup>

The control of bunker coal reduced the interception work load of the Squadron by coercing neutral ship-owners into making voluntary calls at examination ports.

Historically, the overt or covert interception of mails had been a fruitful source of military intelligence. However, by 1874 governments were beginning to cooperate on agreed standards as to the operation of mails which started to take on a more sacrosanct nature.<sup>68</sup> Even so, attempts, some involving the American Supreme Court, to grant mail ships a form of special immunity had not been agreed by 1900. At the second Hague conference in 1907, the German delegate realised that mail ship immunity was impractical and made the following proposal:

The postal correspondence of neutrals or belligerents, whether its character be official or private, shall be inviolable if it is found in a neutral vessel; if the vessel is seized it shall be forwarded by the captor with as little delay as possible. Exception is made in the case of violation of blockade, if the correspondence is destined to, or starts from a blockaded port.

The rules in the preceding paragraph are applicable to postal correspondence found in an enemy vessel.

The proposal was accepted and it made an 'abrupt innovation' which overruled the older law relating to enemy despatches.<sup>69</sup> It confirmed the sacrosanct status which mails now held.

Although the War Office War Book allowed for the limited opening of mails it was necessary to seek Foreign Office warrants to do so. The whole process was complicated and understaffed. Originally the military was only interested in military intelligence but inadvertently realised the amount of commercial intelligence which had a direct bearing on the blockade. There was no interest in the parcel post by the military authorities. The French authorities had started to see the abuse of the parcel post to send high value items, such as furs, sometimes as means of paying for other commercial trade.

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<sup>67</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 345-351

<sup>68</sup> Ships carrying mails stowed the bags in a discrete lockable mail room.

<sup>69</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 352-353

The British post authorities produced the following figures:

<i>Parcels sent to per week.</i>		<i>Parcels coming from per week</i>		
<i>Before war</i>	<i>15<sup>th</sup> September, 1915</i>		<i>Before war</i>	<i>15<sup>th</sup> September, 1915</i>
50	400	Sweden	5	1,000
Negligible	250	Norway	Negligible	150
40	600	Denmark	30	4,500
50	80	Holland	120	150

In the light of these figures, ministers authorised customs to open parcels entering the United Kingdom from September 1915. The French complained British practice lagged behind their own, in that Britain restricted the examination to mails transiting Britain and parcels were not seized by our patrols. In late September instructions were given to inspect parcels found on neutral steamers. Sir Edward Grey insisted a French cruiser was attached to our patrols as a public gesture the French government shared the responsibility for the interference with the mails.<sup>70</sup>

The justification was borne out when it became clear the Germans were using the postal service as a vehicle of trade. Searches revealed such high value items as rubber, jewellery, violin strings and medicines were found in *Tubantia's* mail bags. Rubber to the value of £400 was found in *Gelria's* mail; and four hundred small packets of coffee were found in the *Iris*. In this case the envelopes were labelled 'Samples of no value' which was a clear abuse of the postal convention.<sup>71</sup>

It appears the actual opening of the mail bags was done by the UK Customs in the examination ports since no instruction for boarding officers to do so can be found. Many of the boarding officers would have been 'mail ship' men in peacetime and the idea of tampering with the mail was quite alien to them. They had been brought up to treat mail with a reverence akin to that given to a shipment of bullion. Failure to do so ensured serious career consequences.

### Navicerts

When Hilton Young had written his paper on 'rationing' he recognised the need to start the process of blockade control in a simple way at the earliest part of a cargo's transit. The interceptions and possible subsequent vessel searches were an inconvenience to shippers and ship-owners costing them money. As the war progressed, more neutral shipping companies made voluntary arrangements to call at British ports for clearance

<sup>70</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 355-356

<sup>71</sup> Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany* 359

and avoid interceptions. On 11<sup>th</sup> March 1916, a system known as ‘Navicerts’ was brought into effect. These were Letters of Assurance issued by British consular or other officials at a vessel’s departure port when bound for a neutral country. The letters certified that the vessel carried no contraband articles after a search at the departure port. When Navicerts were granted this saved much in time and money and avoided interceptions and coercive delays.<sup>72</sup> The system was applied to vessels leaving the United States until that nation joined the Allies and entered the war against Germany. It particularly facilitated trade between America and Scandinavia and since much dispute had arisen from this trade was no doubt a politically selected starting point for the new system.

### **Political Reaction in Westminster.**

The issue of the blockade received a full airing at Westminster. Two debates, in particular, revealed the difficulties of communication between the Navy and the Foreign Office; also the limited understanding of the situation by members not closely involved with the blockade.

The first was a two day debate in the House of Lords which started 22 February 1916.<sup>73</sup>

Lord Sydenham placed the following motion before the House:

That this House considers that, in conformity with the principles of International Law and with the legitimate rights of neutrals, more effective use could be made of the Allied Fleets in preventing supplies, directly conducing to the prolongation of the war, from reaching enemy countries.

Initially blaming the Navy, the debate turned into a severe criticism of the Foreign Office and the Government’s conduct of the blockade. Sydenham delivered a clear and detailed history of the blockade’s events since the war started. He called for a more rigorous approach to rationing and revealed to the House the underestimated importance of cotton and cocoa.<sup>74</sup>

These long and detailed debates disclosed the levels of understanding and misunderstanding of the speakers; only the most penetrating statements together with their originators follow, in order to give the tone of the discussions.

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<sup>72</sup> Parmalee, *Blockade and Seapower* 49-50

<sup>73</sup> Hansard *HL Deb 22 February 1916 vol 21 cc71-128*  
*HL Deb 23 February 1916 vol 21 cc129-84*

<sup>74</sup> Cocoa contains nearly 50% fat which is not only food but is used in the manufacture of nitro-glycerine and in other industries. Germany strove to import many fat producing commodities for these purposes.

*Admiral Lord Beresford*, making his first contribution to a ‘Lords’ debate gave a cutlass brandishing performance. He claimed the Navy should be in charge of the blockade, arresting suspicious ships and sending them in for adjudication by a Prize Court. Instead he asserted:

Now we have only a “sort of blockade” carried out by Proclamations, Orders in Council, Agreements, and Committees, and it is not clear who controls that blockade. ....If the Cabinet would settle a definite policy, the Navy could enforce it

*Beresford* continued:

....Now who is to blame? Is it the sailors? Is it the soldiers? No.....No. And there are no party differences. Then what is it? I maintain that it is the conduct and control by the Government. You have a Cabinet of twenty-one amateurs, and they have usurped the Executive. .... amateurs who know nothing whatever about it.<sup>75</sup>

These damaging salvoes from Beresford were thoroughly in keeping with his reputation. He had focussed on the realities and revealed the political confusion at high levels.

*The Marquis Of Lansdowne*, countered the emphatic views of Beresford and others outside of the House:

..... In his view-and it is a view that is held by many people outside the House-we have only to emancipate the Fleet and turn it loose to take whatever steps may seem good to it in order to bring this war to a prompt conclusion. In this House these things are said in temperate and courteous language.

He then claimed the rationing system was often used simplistically to prove leakages of contraband in the blockade

.....I venture to press upon your Lordships that all these figures and statistics require extremely careful scrutiny before you base conclusions upon them.<sup>76</sup>

Here Lansdowne had hit on the difficulty of deciding a base year for the rationing process calculations; a point raised much earlier in Lt. Hilton Young’s paper. Lansdowne continued to explain the rationing system in greater detail then gave a welcome announcement.

We mean to put the whole of this blockade business-in charge of a single Minister, who will be of Cabinet rank, and who will be entrusted with the general co-ordination of all this business.<sup>77</sup>

The debate continued with more detail concerning the Prize Court operations

*The Lord Chancellor (Lord Buckmaster)*

...The noble and gallant Admiral thought that if the Fleet had its way it would be able to tighten the band that is now around Germany, and he seemed to have been led to think that the Fleet could stop anything of that character sailing on the high seas.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Hansard, *HL Debate 22 February 1916 vol. 21 cc 84-93*

<sup>76</sup> Hansard, *HL Deb 22 February 1916 vol 21 cc 96*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* cc 103

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid* cc 123-124

*Beresford* promptly denied this.

*The Lord Chancellor*

...I am glad the noble Lord makes that admission. But directly he denies that, he opens the loophole for exactly the transactions of which Lord Devonport has spoken—that certain goods we wish to keep from the Germans may be the subject of legitimate and fair trade transactions between neutral countries which we cannot stop.

The Lord Chancellor then explained, if the Navy sent in large numbers of ships for adjudication, the Prize Court was unlikely to cope. This would mean longer delays and the possibility of large claims for damages from ships wrongly arrested. It could even destroy the justice of the present system. Finally he sought a more balanced support from Beresford.

Nobody knows better than I do the fairness of the noble and gallant Admiral. ...and I am sure he will give consideration to what I say even if he does not accept it.<sup>79</sup>

Coming as it did at the end of the first day of the debate, this proved an effective reply to Beresford's opening broadside. The next day the debate continued to focus on the legality of the workings of the Contraband Committee, rationing and agreements with neutral trade organisations.<sup>80</sup> The long day closed with an apologetic retraction of the motion by Lord Sydenham ending with the words:

.....and I therefore beg to withdraw the Motion.<sup>81</sup>

The real benefit was the appointment of Lord Robert Cecil as Minister for Blockade at the end of February, 1916.

Thirteen months later the blockade came under scrutiny again during a debate in the House of Commons on the War Measures (Blockade).<sup>82</sup> Cecil had been appointed to bring about a more business like approach to the blockade and when replying he reviewed the changes made and admitted what many had long suspected:

.....I do not think I am indiscreet in saying that when I took office there was a certain amount of friction between the two offices. [Admiralty and Foreign Office] I am glad to say it has entirely disappeared.<sup>83</sup>

To bring about the new accord Cecil had been helped by the appointment of de Chair, now a Vice Admiral. Cecil's next task was to rationalise the blockade administration. Some departments were merged and an all-round improvement made in communications between departments. He went on to review the progress made on the

<sup>79</sup> Hansard, *HL Deb 22 February 1916 vol 21 cc 127-128*

<sup>80</sup> Hansard, *HL Deb 23 February 1916 vol 21 cc 129-84*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 184

<sup>82</sup> Hansard, *HC Deb 27 March 1917 vol 92 cc 226-80*

<sup>83</sup> Hansard, *HC Deb 27 March 1917 vol 92 cc 248*

rationing scheme and the implementation of the Navicert system. For those who were still baying for the Admiralty to have sole control of the blockade he pointed out that such a transfer would simply move the workload of international diplomacy for which it had no proper resources.<sup>84</sup>

Clearly, Cecil had no intention of supporting a move to the Admiralty. Throughout these debates, mention of giving the Navy or the Fleet a free reign on the blockade, leaves the reader with the impression speakers visualised huge squadrons of Dreadnoughts and battle-cruisers being deployed. An impression which confirmed the views of Midshipman Scrimgeour referred to at the start of this chapter. Only one speaker, Sir Edward Carson, provided some reality.

.....the **blockading squadron** at the present moment would have to go out and insist upon every ship coming into port for examination. That would be almost impossible, certainly with the force we have now;<sup>85</sup>

He referred, of course, to the nominal twenty-four converted merchant ships in the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.

Cecil's recruitment, in March 1916, of a naval liaison officer was a careful choice. It was Rear Admiral de Chair, then commanding the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. No one had a better understanding of the practical blockade issues at sea. De Chair had been in command of the Squadron during the crucial first twenty months of the war. Promoted to Vice Admiral, his new appointment had been approved by Jellicoe, but de Chair admitted he was almost heartbroken to give up his sea-going command.<sup>86</sup> Congratulations flowed from his contemporaries and many regretted his departure, for he had in effect, built the Squadron into the effective team it had become. Reporting to Whitehall, de Chair found the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr Balfour, readily confided there had been little harmony between the Navy and the FO. The latter was more interested in placating neutral countries by releasing ships than supporting the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.<sup>87</sup> Subsequently, Lord Cecil, the Blockade Minister confirmed two different cultures existed, one of action in the Navy rather than the slower, measured approach of the FO.<sup>88</sup> However, the bitterest pill for de Chair was yet to come. When he called officially on Sir Edward Grey the Secretary of State for

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid* cc.267

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid* cc 274

<sup>86</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 218

<sup>87</sup> De Chair *The Sea is Strong* 217-218

<sup>88</sup> De Chair *The Sea is Strong* 218-219

Foreign Affairs he explained the Squadron's difficulties. De Chair records the reaction from Sir Edward:

He was very much interested and apparently surprised, as no one had taken the trouble to acquaint him fully with the difficulties the difficulties we had to contend with at sea on that vast expanse of water comprising the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans.<sup>89</sup>

Somewhere along the lines of communication 'gatekeepers' had run their own blockade and provided unnecessary challenges for the Navy and the Squadron.

Both de Chair and Tupper, were fortunate in having Jellicoe as their Commander-in-Chief, who correctly believed his duty was to 'fight the corner' for them. Jellicoe came to have a high regard for the 'Tenth'; it was a view which led him to concern himself with some blockade aspects, which Whitehall would have preferred to have in its exclusive ownership. The legal and political backgrounds reviewed above, formed a constant background challenge for the Navy, during which, the resources for the Squadron had to be assembled and then applied to the important challenge of patrolling the Northern waters.

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<sup>89</sup> De Chair *The Sea is Strong* 220

**Background.**

The Royal Navy has often commandeered merchant ships in wartime or periods of tension. The subsidised mail steamer services which emerged in the 1830's and 1840's marked another link between the Navy and merchant shipping. From about 1870 onwards, interest by Government and the Admiralty grew in using commercial tonnage not only as transports but also as armed auxiliary cruisers. By 1914, a relationship existed between the law, naval war planning and the shipping market which allowed the Navy to treat the merchant and fishing fleets, as a potential reserve of vessels to be commissioned and operated as warships.

**The Advent of Mail Steam Packets.**

In 1823 the Admiralty became responsible for the Mail Packet Services and by 1837 controlled thirty-seven sailing and seven steam packets running out of Falmouth.<sup>1</sup> By 1840, mail contracts had been concluded with Cunard, P&O and the RMSP companies, to provide steamer mail services across the Atlantic, to India and the West Indies respectively. This way mail services were developed by the 'private sector' but under Admiralty control. Contracts terms required the steamers, when built, to be capable of carrying guns of the highest calibre, have wooden hulls and be able to transport military personnel at reduced rates.<sup>2</sup> In the case of RMSPC, the Director's Minutes record:

That the Admiralty required the introduction of a clause in the Contract authorizing the Lords of the Admiralty to employ the Vessels as Vessels of War<sup>3</sup>

The ships were regularly surveyed by the Navy and each ship carried an Admiralty Mail Agent. Besides supervising mails, the Agents rendered reports about the ships' condition, management and maintenance. Fourteen steamers were required for RMSPC's West Indies contract alone and with the addition of the Cunard and P&O vessels, the Admiralty had acquired, via the mail subsidies, access to a potential reserve of ocean going steamers for wartime.

**The Crimean War and the Contract Steam Packets.**

In the Crimean War, Government circles commented on the disappointing response to its adverts offering charters to commercial sailing and steam powered vessels. One

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<sup>1</sup> Robinson, H., *Carrying British Mails Overseas* (London, 1964) 123

<sup>2</sup> Robinson, *Carrying British Mails Overseas*, 149

<sup>3</sup> NMM RMS/1/1, *Minutes of Court of Directors* 16<sup>th</sup> March 1840.  
[The underlining is in the original minutes.]

possible cause of the reluctance was the extensive inventory of boatswains', carpenters', engineers' and gunners' stores required at the owner's expense before a charter would be granted. These lists, together with specimen charters, for both sailing and steam vessels were set out in a Government publication *Instructions for Masters on board Her Majesty's Hired Transport*.<sup>4</sup> There were also detailed instructions as to charts, chronometers and other navigational matters. No doubt some parsimonious owners, used to operating sailing ships on a shoestring, decided the capital cost of meeting the stores requirements outweighed the charter terms on offer. In addition to charter terms, *Instructions for Masters* set out the required accommodation and feeding scales for troops, as well as other general guidance.

However, the contract mail steamers had little choice but to comply with Admiralty requirements. The requisitioned vessels were compensated by agreed charter rates for the transport work. The rates appear to have been open to some negotiation. The RMSPC Directors were approached in July 1855 by the Admiralty seeking to retain the steamers *Medway*, *Trent*, *Thames* and *Severn* for a further six months at forty-two shilling per ton.<sup>5</sup> The Company required forty-five shillings and only seven days later had received Admiralty acceptance of the higher rate.<sup>6</sup> Thus, although the Government and Navy sought to control the merchant steamers, it was on a mutually agreed financial basis.

In the event, none of the mail steamers were ever armed beyond their signal cannons. In fact in these early years there appeared a clear reluctance by the Admiralty to allow cannon into the hands of merchant seamen. In an earlier period of tension, the RMSPC had approached the Admiralty on this matter and did so again in 1854, but the Board of Ordnance declined the request for the loan of thirty carronades against privateers, on the grounds of inconvenience and precedent. The Board was, however, prepared to sell at a 'reasonable price'. There is no evidence that the Company took up this offer.<sup>7</sup>

When the diplomatic crisis caused by the American interception of the *Trent* emerged in December 1861, the news initially electrified Britain with a demand for war. The Government made war plans, assembled troops, and diverted warships. At the same time it chartered transports from both Royal Mail and P&O. The threat of war

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<sup>4</sup> NMM RMS/38/4 *Instructions for Masters on board Her Majesty's Transports* 1855 H.M.S.O.

<sup>5</sup> NMM RMS/1/4, *Minutes of Court of Directors* 26<sup>th</sup> July 1855

<sup>6</sup> NMM RMS/1/4, *Minutes of Court of Directors* 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1855

<sup>7</sup> NMM RMS/6/8 *In Letter Book from Public Departments* 1<sup>st</sup> May 1854

prompted the RMSPC Directors to raise again the matter of arming the packets against privateers. By 1861 the Post Office had regained control of the Mail Packet Service and correspondence with the Admiralty had become at arms length.<sup>8</sup> This allowed an excellent opportunity for prevarication. The General Post Office wrote on 18 December 1861 stating that the Admiralty needed to know the necessary plans and strength of RMSPC ships to be armed.<sup>9</sup> It was the Admiralty that had laid down such rules and measured the ships twenty years earlier, when the original mail contract was signed. Finally, on 6 January 1862, the Admiralty offered a full list of available guns in Chatham, Portsmouth, Devonport and Woolwich. There was however, one problem in that no gun carriages could be manufactured, due to pressure of work in Government Departments. If the Company wished, the War Office would readily provide information for their construction. Also, rifles of the pattern of 1842 could be supplied but shot and ammunition for the heavy guns only could be issued.<sup>10</sup>

In the coming years, great progress was made in shipping. Propellers replaced paddlewheels, iron hulls emerged and coaling stations sprang up around the world to support expanding cargo, mail and passenger services. The replenishment of the coaling stations created a trade of its own. By 1875 all references to the armament or fitness for war service of mail packets had disappeared from British shipping contracts. All that remained, in contracts with four companies, was a clause allowing the Admiralty to charter ships in cases of 'great public emergency'.<sup>11</sup> It would be 1876 before the issue of armed merchant vessels returned to the agenda.

During the final thirty years of the century the Royal Navy was immersed in technical change. The century had seen the transition from wood via iron to the use of steel for hull construction.<sup>12</sup> Rapidly changing technology meant it was prudent to build only small classes of warship as a hedge against early obsolescence. Improving gunnery, the arrival of torpedoes and, most importantly, the use of electricity aboard ship all played a part. The 'jeune école' was questioning the place of battleships and the value of convoy in favour of the fast cruisers protecting defended sea lanes. The British Navy

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<sup>8</sup> Harcourt, F., 'British oceanic mail contracts in the age of steam, 1838-1914', *Journal of Transport History, Third Series*, Vol. 9, 1988 7-8

<sup>9</sup> NMM RMS/6/14 In *Letter Book from Public Departments* 18<sup>th</sup> December 1861 301

<sup>10</sup> NMM RMS/6/14 In *Letter Book from Public Departments* 6<sup>th</sup> January 1862 323

<sup>11</sup> Poolman, K., *Armed Merchant Cruisers* (London,1985) 2

<sup>12</sup> Sondhaus, L., *Naval Warfare 1815-1914* (London,2001) 140

League, started 1894, generating the emergence of 'navalism' in the public mind which continued throughout the years prior to 1914.<sup>13</sup>

**Great Steamers, White and Gold.**<sup>14</sup>

In March 1876, a report circulated in the Admiralty that stated:

There is a magnificent fleet of British Merchant Ships, possessing the most valuable elements of warlike efficiency, viz. high speed, coal endurance, strength of structure and seaworthiness.

The report continued:

The introduction of torpedoes into offensive warfare has given, to the weakest of these ships, the power of inflicting swiftly and secretly, fatal blows upon Ships of War, clothed with armour, and defended by powerful guns.<sup>15</sup>

The report reflected the growing discomfort that 'navalists' were feeling over the Royal Navy being under-strength in available cruisers to defend Britain's vital trade routes. It was the result of discussions started a year before in the Admiralty, 'as to the desirability of reverting to the former practice in the Navy of partially fitting Mail Steamers for war purposes'. The reporting committee had referred to a mail contract of 29<sup>th</sup> January 1852 and concluded that the first and obvious choice for armed merchant cruisers, was the mail steamers already receiving a Treasury subsidy.<sup>16</sup> They were, after all, among the fastest steamers afloat.

**The Armed Merchant Cruiser Experiment.**

The idea of mail steamers fitted to fire torpedoes at warships smacks of lateral thinking but also optimistic expediency. Nevertheless, the Director of Naval Construction (DNC), Mr. Barnaby, saw fit to give initial support when he stated:

As the modern Mail Steamer is so strongly built structurally as to be capable of receiving armament upon its decks without distress, it might be found possible to regard it as an auxiliary to the un-armoured fleet.

However, on further reflection he became 'afraid it would not be wise to employ such ships as men-of-war'. Once again there was a reluctance to finally decide to place armament aboard mail steamers.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Hamilton, W.M., 'The 'New Navalism' and the British Navy League, 1895-1914'. *The Mariner's Mirror* Vol. 64 (1978) 37-44

<sup>14</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Just So Stories* (1902)

<sup>15</sup> The torpedo appears to have been perceived as solely a surface ship weapon at this time.

<sup>16</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 1

<sup>17</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 2

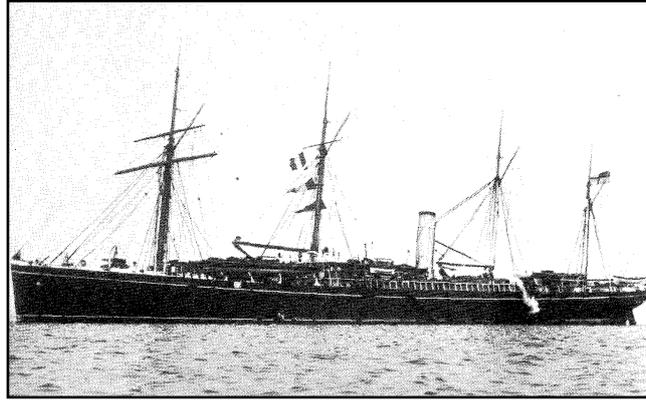


Fig.5 H.M.S Hecla.

Nevertheless, the interest in adapting merchant ships continued. The Naval Estimates in 1877/78 provided for a trial which was carried out by converting the *British Crown* into the armed cruiser named H.M.S. *Hecla* being commissioned on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1878. *Hecla* was fitted with five muzzle loading guns firing a 64 pound shell and one breech-loading 40 pounder. The vessel could deliver broadside, bow or stern fire. Captain Singer and Admiral Boys, who had been on board reported that the experiment was successful. In fact, so successful that twenty four sets of armament similar to *Hecla's* were sent to foreign stations for local fitting to merchant ships on ocean trade routes.<sup>18</sup> In 1883, Captain A.K.Wilson concluded that *Hecla's* armament was not ideal and the debate as to suitable attributes of an armed merchant cruiser's construction and armament moved forward again. A dormant list of merchant vessels suitable for conversion, started to be kept by the Admiralty.

The fast, modern Cunard liners *Oregon* and *Umbria* built in 1883 and 1884, took the development of the armed merchant cruiser forward.<sup>19</sup> These ships had incorporated the current Admiralty guidelines developed for armed cruisers.<sup>20</sup> As a result of this encouraging experience, in 1886 an agreement was reached giving the Admiralty an option for five years on the use of Cunard's five faster ships as auxiliary cruisers. There was a total subsidy of £20,000 per ship being paid annually for *Umbria*, *Etruria* and *Aurania* as part of the deal. The agreement required half the crew to be Royal Naval Reservists and gun platforms to be fitted. Owners were required to store and maintain guns and mountings as well as guaranteeing to fit the ships as auxiliary cruisers in one week at short notice.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 4-6

<sup>19</sup> Cunard Line, *Triumph of a Great Tradition 1840-1990* (London,1990) 20

<sup>20</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 6-9

<sup>21</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 10

The 1880's saw a flurry of situations in which the Navy took ships up from trade to serve not only as transports but also armed cruisers. Even earlier, in the Abyssinian War, six P&O steamers were employed on Red Sea and Indian Ocean transport work. The waterless landing place for the Expedition was supported by the ships' condensers providing the army with 500,000 gallons of distilled water. In 1882 unrest in Egypt saw P&O providing a refugee ship and eight transports for the Egyptian Expedition. In 1884, when the Mahdi forces were beleaguering small Egyptian garrisons, P&O was called on, at short notice, to transport troops from Cairo to Suakim in the Red Sea. When two of the company's east bound ships called at Port Said they were converted for troops during their southbound Canal transit. Within 10 and 16 hours respectively, of their arrival at Suez, they departed for Suakim fully provisioned, with 1600 troops aboard. In another crisis with Russia in 1885, the first steps to protect shipping in Eastern waters were equipping P&O's *Massilia* at Sydney and *Rosetta* at Hong Kong as armed cruisers. The vessels were reported to be 'fitted with guns and military stores and were performing gun drill before vessels chartered at Liverpool for the same purpose had taken their equipment on board.' With these recent experiences in mind, in 1887, P&O started to build a class of four Jubilee ships which were fitted with gun-platforms and material for speedy conversion to armed cruisers.<sup>22</sup>

### **Cheap Alternative or Value For Money?**

Armed cruisers came to the fore during the Naval Estimates Debate in the House of Commons on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1887. A 59 page transcript starts with a 30 page barrage of criticism by Sir John Colomb, formerly a Royal Marine Artillery officer, before becoming a Member of Parliament.<sup>23</sup> Colomb projected himself as a supporter of the Empire and protection of trade by a strong Navy. He also strove to use facts and statistics when he spoke in the House. This debate was no exception. The retention of the transcript in P&O records shows the company's interest in the debate, no doubt prompted by the events recorded above.

Colomb wanted 'to reduce the Vote by £10,000 being the subvention for the rights of pre-emption or hire as armed cruisers or transport.' The crux of the Admiralty proposal was to set aside a fund, payable to selected shipowners, to ensure the availability of

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<sup>22</sup> Cable, B., *A Hundred Year History of the P. & O. 1837-1937* (London,1937) 196-198

<sup>23</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports Naval Estimates Debate, House of Commons 7 Sep. 1887*(Transcript from the Shorthand Notes of Messrs. J. Moore & Son 38 Parliament St. S.W.)

specified vessels in time of war, no doubt prompted by events of the decade. The proposal was presented as a new policy and Colomb demanded, not unreasonably, to know ‘the ends and objects and limitations of this new policy.’ He also wanted to know what existing policy it was to replace. Colomb asserted ‘in the mercantile marine there is an enormous dormant reserve of naval power and the only question is how it is to be utilised.’<sup>24</sup> Colomb then claimed the Admiralty’s old policy amounted to no more than a faint idea of using the mercantile marine. He believed an unpublished list of 300 vessels totalling over 1,000,000 tons existed but in the Egyptian crisis vessels other than those listed were chartered. Colomb then moved to the facts. The proposed £10,000 was to give control over two ships and bought the right of employing them in war at a fixed (but as yet unknown) sum.

Colomb continued:

.....we are to pay the £10,000 in peace for reserving that right. Now, in 1883 the Admiralty hired three transports, in 1884 it hired 26, and in 1885 for this small expedition to Egypt over this small distance 121 ships were hired and the entire cost of that large number of vessels, nearly 150, for a small expedition to send a short distance was over a million and a half of money. Now it is quite evident that if you have for an Expedition of that kind and that you require over 150 transports you have to give a larger force for double the distance and you will see how the number of those transports must swell. Therefore in this matter of transport as a provision for war I think that the payment of £10,000 for two ships can produce no effect if you want transport.<sup>25</sup>

It is easy to imagine this tirade being delivered as a scathing attack. Credit must be given to Colomb for his use of ‘expanding’ statistics and emotive words such as ‘small’ and ‘short’ as well as ‘larger’ and ‘double’ to suit his argument. That said, a reader can start to feel some substance in his emerging argument.

Colomb was concerned at the proposed maximum cost of up to £50,000 a year for 10 ships in peace time. In five years of peace this would total £250,000 compared with the 16 ships costing £600,000 when the threat of war actually existed in 1885. This was an average cost of £37,500. In fact, only one ship was fully equipped and it took 42 days from being chartered to having her guns aboard. Many of the others never left harbour. Colomb went on to accuse the Admiralty of using the idea of armed merchant cruisers to avoid ordering purpose built cruisers for the Navy. He considered the proposed expense as a gift to the shipowners. He felt that if it was to ensure availability and

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<sup>24</sup> This assertion reveals the perception of both Government and Admiralty towards the mercantile marine, namely, a reserve for the Navy.

<sup>25</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports* 6

prevent ship sales to foreign powers then laws should be passed to prevent this. Although he spoke widely of Britain's mercantile trade routes, his thoughts on how to deploy armed cruisers were somewhat convoluted. He envisaged the cruisers would carry out patrols whilst continuing with their carriage of mails and cargoes, even suggesting that passengers would prefer to travel aboard armed merchant cruisers rather than slower unarmed ships.<sup>26</sup>

It then fell to Mr. Forwood to start a 20 page rebuttal of Colomb's criticisms.<sup>27</sup> Forwood started by saying the idea was not new and whilst the present Board of Admiralty were united in the proposal, previous Boards had considered the plan. It was with the 1885 debacle in mind, that the proposal had been brought up. At the root of the proposal was the need to ensure our best steamers could not be sold to foreign owners who might be inimical to us. Colomb's idea of legislation was unworkable since in times of emergency, and no hostilities had started, it is difficult to pass any law that is only to operate on the outbreak of hostilities. A shipowner could easily sell to a mutually agreed neutral flag. Afterwards, the vessel could be sold on to an unfriendly foreign state. Later in the debate, this was confirmed by Sir E.J.Reed who admitted he had been approached by foreign powers, in past emergencies, with a view to securing some of Britain's fastest steamers.<sup>28</sup>

Forwood analysed the costs and demonstrated that the proposal was financially very sound. Gun platforms and gun carriages were stored where the ships usually came to refit and so they could be made ready at short notice. The Admiralty had stipulated that half the crew would be Naval Reserve men. The need was for ships capable of 16 knots and speed had a price. It was not thought there would be many ships with this high speed and the proposal would provide funds to give control of them. Forwood gave a reassurance:

It is far from the idea of the Board of Admiralty that these vessels are to supersede Naval Cruisers.<sup>29</sup>

Later he carefully encouraged Members to support the proposal when he said:

I do not mean to say that those 10 vessels are a proper substitute for the

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<sup>26</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports* 59

<sup>27</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports* 31

Arthur B. Forwood was Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty

<sup>28</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports* 52-53

<sup>29</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports* 37

10 Cruisers but the House may be able to form some estimate of the comparative cost of having 10 vessels always under our finger and thumb and in our call whenever we want them and building 10 steamers and keeping them up. Now ten cruisers of speed at all to compare with merchant steamers would cost something like one million and a half of money. To maintain, man and keep these ships in repair would cost about £150,000.<sup>30</sup>

Presented like this, the thought of £50,000 per annum for the control of 10 armed merchant cruisers probably started to be attractive to those in the House. Conversely, it confirmed Colomb's suspicion the Admiralty was doing it on the cheap. Colomb also argued the Government should follow foreign countries examples and support owners in their ship design and construction. He thought the trifling subvention of £10,000 per 2 ships would hardly be enough encouragement. Forwood was at pains to announce that the White Star Line had found the sums sufficient to lay down two ships as a result of the prospect of the subvention. These ships would have their engines and boiler well secured and not exposed to shell and shot and meet the wishes of the Naval Constructor.<sup>31</sup>

A supportive speech from Sir E.J.Reed for the Admiralty was followed by a few small exchanges between Colomb and Forwood. Colomb fell back to claiming his only thought was for the British tax payer. Finally, his motion was withdrawn and the Vote agreed.<sup>32</sup> Both Colomb and Forwood proposed the deployment of armed merchant cruisers as trade protection and 'scouting'. The success of the latter purpose was dependent on outpacing an enemy to return to base with a sighting report – the days of wireless were some way off. Despite these woolly statements, the debate placed the important idea of armed merchant cruisers firmly on an agenda affecting the Navy, its Reserves and the management of major shipping lines. In 1888 ten ships of the P&O, four from Inman Line and the White Star's *Majestic* and *Teutonic*, among others, formed part of a total of twenty seven ships on the Armed Cruiser list, drawn from eight different companies. The addition of fast ships to the auxiliary register was part of the sweeping changes in the Naval Defence Act of 1889. The Act planned to increase the number of cruisers but even Victorian capitalism did not run to building the desired number. Despite protestations to the contrary, the Admiralty found it expedient to develop the armed merchant cruisers to help protect trade.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports* 44-45

<sup>31</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports* 47

<sup>32</sup> NMM P&O 69/3 *Armed Cruisers or Transports* 59

<sup>33</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 10

Sir Thomas Sutherland, chairman of the P&O , in an interview reported in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, when asked if in favour of the armed cruiser policy he replied:

Decidedly, I am of opinion that the Government should have first call upon the best and latest steamers of our mercantile marine. And the Admiralty is slowly coming round to the view that our great merchant vessels may in time of war prove themselves valuable auxiliaries to the Navy. I do not mean, of course, that a merchant ship can ever be transformed into a man of war. A merchant cruiser is armed for purposes of defence, not offence; and with the great speed that our biggest ships now possess, and their enormous coal-carrying capacity, they would be of the utmost service if war broke out. The fastest vessels would, of course, be employed as patrols and scouts, perhaps as transports; while the slower vessels could be engaged in carrying coal and stores for the blockading Squadrons.

So Sir Thomas, as a shipping magnate and Member of Parliament, was conveniently in tune with Government and Admiralty thinking. Sutherland went on to make the point ‘that if war broke out fast big steamers would rise tremendously in value.’ If the Government wanted to be certain of their services then it would be necessary to buy them right out as hiring them would hardly be entertained by the owners. For this reason the policy of a subvention was needed in time of peace. The subvention was an ‘anticipatory compensation for the moderate rate at which these first class vessels would be chartered in time of war.’ The P&O had fourteen vessels retained by the Government. The monetary subvention was received on only four of the steamers – ‘we have presented the other ten – so as to speak – to the Government.’ This ‘largesse’ no doubt helped Sutherland reconcile any conflict of interest between being a shipowner and simultaneously an M.P. concerned for the Defence of the Realm. Finally, the interview turned to the question of manning the armed merchant cruisers. The Government had wanted any ‘earmarked’ steamer to be manned by a crew of which fifty percent, were Naval Reservists. Sutherland said he would be very pleased to employ Reservists but not enough of them were available. He made the point if this was to be a pre-requisite for a steamer to be ‘listed’, the Admiralty must make the effort to develop the Naval Reserve. This was not the task of the shipowner.<sup>34</sup>

Above all, Sutherland was a commercially minded ship manager and understood the financing, construction, manning and potential difficulties which would affect operating merchant vessels as armed cruisers. His contemporaries in Cunard and

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<sup>34</sup> NMM P&O 69/2/3 *Pall Mall Gazette Interview with Sir Thomas Sutherland M.P.* Nov. 3 (No year given but pencil note suggests 1889)

RMSPC would have shared his views and whilst the mail contracts helped create a façade of Victorian patriotism, deep down they were in the shipping business to make a profit.

**Towards an Understanding of Requirements**

By 1891 the Admiralty had set out the regulations and terms on which the subventions would be paid on vessels which may be employed as armed merchant cruisers.<sup>35</sup> The preamble read:

The Board of Admiralty will consider from time to time applications from owners who may have built or who propose to build, steamers which will be suitable for use as armed merchant cruisers, to have such steamers placed on the list of vessels for which a subvention is paid. Such applications will be considered on the terminations of any contract which the owners of vessels that are now on the list.

The regulations then set out the detailed specifications required to be met by ships on the list. A prime criteria was speed and this controlled the basic level of subvention.

Average continuous speed on ocean voyages.	Annual subvention
21 Knots	£10,000
20 “	£9,000
19 “	£8,000
18 “	£6,000
17 “	£4,500
16 “	£3,350

Fig.6 Armed Merchant Cruiser basic subvention rates 1891.

However, the interests of the taxpayer were given comfort by the fact that in the case of vessels having a mail subsidy these subventions were reduced by 25%. A further reduction was imposed of £12 a head per annum, for any deficiency in the average number of Royal Naval Reserve men borne less than the number required by the rules. The specifications developed three lists of vessels which gave the Admiralty valuable potential options in the event of taking these steamers up from trade.

<sup>35</sup> TNA MT 23/185 Armed Merchant Cruiser's. Folder 3394/1905 Regulations for the Subvention of merchant Vessels that may be employed as Armed Merchant Cruisers Admiralty 9<sup>th</sup> October 1891

**List I - List of merchant vessels qualified for service as Armed Cruisers and receiving an Annual Subvention. Comprising:**

<b>Company</b>	<b>No. of Ships</b>	<b>Total 11.</b>
Cunard	2	
White Star Line	2	
P&O	4	
Canadian Pacific	3	

**List II - List of Merchant vessels qualified for service as Armed Cruisers, which the Admiralty at their option can claim to Purchase or Hire when required.**

<b>Company</b>	<b>No. of Ships</b>	<b>Total 17.</b>
Cunard	<b>4</b>	<b>(16-18 Knots)</b>
White Star Line	<b>3</b>	<b>(14-15 Knots)</b>
P&O	<b>10</b>	<b>(14-16 Knots)</b>

**List III - List of other Merchant Vessels which are qualified for Service as Armed Cruisers.**

<b>Company</b>	<b>No. of Ships</b>	<b>Total 28</b>
Royal Mail Steam Packet	11	
Pacific Steam Navigation	4	
Union Steamship	2	
David Currie	2	
P&O	1	
Orient Line	3	
Guion Line	2	
Barrow Steamship	1	
Canadian Australian SS	2	

Interestingly, List I included White Star Line's *Teutonic* built in 1889 which was later taken up for the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron. List III included 11 RMSPC steamers but in the event none of these were to join the Squadron. Indeed most of them did not rate the recommended speed of 16 knots. Significantly, List III bore the printed footnote that 'owners of these vessels have not made a definite application to have them surveyed.' It may be they were unaware these vessels were on this dormant Admiralty list.

Looking at the owners, it is clear the range of speed and geographical options concentrated on the fast transatlantic runs and the key routes via the Mediterranean to the East or south to the Cape.

In the South African wars the Admiralty chartered merchant ships as transports and troopships but not armed cruisers. However, the planning and correspondence regarding armed cruisers continued.<sup>36</sup> There had evolved an agreement known as 'The White Star Agreement of 1902' later this was to be replaced by the 'Combined Agreement of 1903' but without subvention. Always with an eye on a budget the Admiralty sort to fix the 'hire' costs in advance of any take up from trade. Not surprisingly this was resisted by the shipping companies, who obviously had an eye on the market rates which would actually exist in wartime.<sup>37</sup> An Inter-Departmental Committee considered how to apply the principle 'that no Government subsidy shall be given to any company which will not give the Admiralty the right of purchase or hire in the event of war on previously arranged terms.'

The Admiralty's wish to fix costs as far as possible beforehand contrasted with the Board of Trade which recorded the following protest:

Under Schedule 3 of the New Cunard agreement the conditions for purchase or hire appear to relate only to the use of the vessels as cruisers, and it will be remembered that this Dept: has always deprecated the use of vessels for transport work forming part of an agreement for purchase or hire for cruiser purposes, it being held that the Dept: should be free to take up, on the best terms obtainable at the time, any British vessels meeting its special requirements.

Finally, the Transport Department made the point:

The fixing of rates by agreement beforehand in the case of a limited and special class of vessels, which must be engaged under special conditions, and are only wanted in Naval War, was no doubt advantageous; but to apply the same principle to the numerous ships suitable as ordinary transports is an entirely fresh departure, which in the opinion of the Department would be a source of loss rather than gain to the Crown.

### **Linking the Armed Merchant Cruiser and Naval Reservists.**

The discussions with legal advisers continued until 1908. The records reveal that a certain amount of negotiating correspondence sprang up between the Admiralty and individual companies. An example in respect of Cunard follows:

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<sup>36</sup> TNA MT 23/185 Armed Merchant Cruisers – Officer to Superintend the fitting out, and associated folders.

<sup>37</sup> TNA MT 23/167 Armed Merchant Cruisers Admiralty Policy in regards to folder T7894/1903

With regard to the question of complement, under the present arrangement The Company undertake that in peace time half the officers, other than engineers, and not less than half of the crew carried shall belong to the R.N.R. or R.F.R.. It appears probable that without the increase of subsidy the Company might be willing to arrange that half of the Engine Room Dept. should also be comprised of R.N.R. and R.F.R. Officers and men.

There was also a growing desire to charter merchant vessels on a monthly basis, no doubt another ploy to limit the Crown's outgoings. Some of the Companies were prepared to continue to provide food for the crew aboard ships taken up and where this happened the hire payable was increased per gross ton per month e.g. 20/- became 24/- and 17/6 became 21/6.

Finally by 1908 the Combined Agreement had emerged with the two types of Charter Form established, both on monthly hire:

**Charter A** to correspond with the revised Transport Regulations  
(without demise to the Crown)

**Charter B** applicable to all Commissioned Mercantile Fleet Auxiliaries  
(with demise to the Crown)<sup>38</sup>

Clearly that the idea of taking up ships from trade was considered sufficiently important to occupy significant planning effort by the Admiralty to establish commercial negotiations with a range of owners.

Speeds on the Atlantic routes continued to increase and speed was a major prerequisite for armed merchant cruisers. In 1907, Cunard brought out the *Lusitania* and *Mauretania* both capable of an average speed of 24 knots.<sup>39</sup> The British Government had made a loan to Cunard of £2,400,000 at 2¾% interest for the ships. They were stiffened to carry 6" guns and had an annual operating subsidy of £75,000 per ship in addition to the Mail subsidy. Security for the loan included Cunard's whole fleet, which was to be held at the disposal of the Government.<sup>40</sup> The interest in armed merchant cruisers was now reaching almost obsessive levels. However, the expansion of German liners and their rumoured, superior armament no doubt focussed the minds of the British planners. In the event, biggest is not always best and when war came, *Lusitania* and *Mauretania* proved better suited to trooping. Their huge fuel costs changed their role in the war.

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<sup>38</sup> TNA MT 23/218 Armed Merchant Cruisers. Tender form and Charter Parties Folder 1543/1908

<sup>39</sup> Cunard Line, *Triumph of a Great Tradition 1840-1990* (London, 1990) 24

<sup>40</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 11

Responsibility for arranging transport for Government work laid with the Transport Department of the Admiralty. Mainly, this was chartering passenger vessels for trooping and organising passages for Naval and Army officers with the main shipping companies. In addition, some three or four hundred colliers were chartered in a year, mainly on single voyages to supply the Fleet and naval bases. The Department was also entrusted to make detailed shipping plans for expeditionary forces and ships required for naval use under approved naval war plans. Although limited in scale, it had experience of the commercial nature of shipping and the need to negotiate within the industry.<sup>41</sup> Whilst the term 'requisitioning' has an authoritarian ring to it, the taking up of merchant ships from trade, had steadily evolved as a subtle combination of legal enforcement and commercial negotiation for tonnage in the market. The tonnage was found by ordinary commercial processes such as business contacts, press notices calling for tenders and the Baltic Exchange facilities. Although patriotism was more commonplace prior to World War I, technically, shipowners could have 'flagged out' if they had not wanted their ships caught up in the war. However, the continuance of mail contracts and the prospect of guaranteed freight money from a Government committed to war were strong incentives to remain under the Red Ensign.

Planning for the take up of ships was matched by parallel planning as to their manning. Between 1900 and 1911 Parliament and the Admiralty had passed Acts, progressively strengthening the Naval Reserve forces to be available in time of war.<sup>42</sup> The raising or keeping of a standing army within Britain and Ireland in time of peace, without the consent of Parliament, was unlawful. The answer was to bring forward the Army Act for renewal by Parliament each year, when amendments were incorporated. The Act had long included requisitioning powers for carriages and horses but in 1913 Section [5] it was extended to include 'vessels' and 'aircraft of all descriptions.'<sup>43</sup>

### **Requisitioning and the Transition to War.**

By 1914 the necessary planning, legal and commercial negotiations to take ships up from trade were firmly in place and when war was declared, only two more triggers were needed. The first was the Defence of the Realm Act which was passed on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 1914.<sup>44</sup> Its wording was short, succinct and all embracing. It started as follows:

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<sup>41</sup> Salter, J.A., *Allied Shipping Control: an experiment in international administration* (Oxford, 1921) 39-41

<sup>42</sup> See Chapter 4

<sup>43</sup> DL Army (Annual) Act, 1913. *Public General Acts*. P.2 Ch.2 1913

<sup>44</sup> DL Defence of the Realm Act, 1914. *Public General Acts*. P.80 Ch. 29

[1] His Majesty in Council has power during the continuance of the present war to issue regulations as to the powers and duties of the Admiralty and Army Council, and of the members of His Majesty's forces, and other persons acting on his behalf, for securing the public safety and the defence of the realm;.....

The other trigger came from *The London Gazette* on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 1914, calling out the Naval Reserves and announcing the Requisitioning of Ships.<sup>45</sup> The King's Proclamation gave authority to the Admiralty 'to requisition any British Ship or British Vessel within the British Isles or the Waters Adjacent thereto.' Whilst stressing the need and national emergency it continued:

.....owing to the urgency of the need it is impossible to delay the employment of such vessels until the terms of engagement have been mutually agreed upon: .....

and concludes with the principles as to the terms of engagement:

.....for such period of time as may be necessary on condition that the Owners of all ships and vessels so requisitioned shall receive payment for their use, and for services rendered during their employment in the Government service, and compensation for loss or damage thereby occasioned, according to terms to be arranged as soon as possible after the said ship has been taken up, either by mutual agreement between the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty and the Owners or failing such Agreement by the award of a Board of Arbitration to be constituted and Appointed by Us for this purpose.

On the same day, secret advance notices were sent to various ship owners that certain ships from the Armed Merchant Cruiser register might be required for war service.

So as de Chair led the *Edgar* Class cruisers to northern waters, the process had already been started to find replacements from trade which would be desperately needed in only a few months' time.

A telegram such as that sent to Andersons for Orient Line's *Otranto* would be followed by a letter of confirmation.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> The London Gazette, Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 1914. Third Supplement

<sup>46</sup> TNA MT 23/302 Telegram re *Otranto* Folder T5411/1914

<b>Telegram</b>	<b>Admiralty, London</b>
<b>O.H.M.S.</b>	<b>Anderson, Telex, London.</b>

**Urgent and confidential OTRANTO is requisitioned under Royal proclamation for service as armed merchant cruiser • Owners required to supply coal full bunkers engine room and deck stores for four months mess traps and utensils for full complement and victualling for three months all at Admiralty expense • Admiralty prepare ship but will require all assistance possible from you also in obtaining engine room complement which will be signed on from mercantile marine • Captain Hunt R.N. c/o P&O Tilbury appointed to superintend fitting • Please acknowledge Letter follows • Transports • sent 4/8**

Fig.6 Requisition telegram *Otranto*

### **Merchant Ship Conversion.**

Prior to conversion work, a Pre Charter Condition Survey would be made and agreed. This work would ensure any routine maintenance required by national and international legislation was up to date, as well as reviewing the general condition of the vessel and machinery. Thereafter, maintenance was in accordance with good seamanlike practice

Before examining the conversion of merchant ships to their auxiliary warship role, it is necessary to understand their different roles and construction. Purpose built warships are essentially a weapons' platforms and their purpose is to remain afloat, whilst operating their weapons for as long as possible. Thus, warships have a high degree of internal subdivision into many internal watertight compartments. Hull plating is strengthened in places with armoured plating and the continuous weather-deck completes what is essentially a strong box structure. In contrast, merchant ships need plenty of internal open space, with minimum subdivision, to create flexible stowage arrangements for cargo or room to build extensive living accommodation for passengers. Merchant ships are also strong box structures but with one essential difference. The weather-deck of a merchant ship is interrupted by large hatch openings. These are needed to load and discharge the cargo, into and from, the holds and 'tween decks. At sea these openings are made secure and watertight by portable beams, hatch-boards and tarpaulins. The latter two are held in place by locking bars together with battens and wedges against cleats on the hatch coaming. There is no armoured plating on a merchant ship's hull when built.

This fundamental difference in hull construction was at the core of Barnaby's concerns as DNC in 1875. After inspecting many merchant ship plans he was appalled at the lack of sub-division in many of them, revealing ships that were un-stiffened and frail. To convert such ships would be a long process when time would be precious in any run up to war. Another vulnerable point was that merchant ships propulsion machinery had much of it located above the vessels waterline. However, good sub-division did exist in some vessels and the outcome was to persevere with the armed merchant cruiser concept.<sup>47</sup> So much so, that by August 1881 there were 207 ships on the Admiralty auxiliary cruiser list and another seventy building.<sup>48</sup>

Merchant ship technology advanced with speeds increasing and for passenger ships the move from single screw to twin screw gave more manoeuvrability. As stated earlier, by 1891 the Admiralty had issued regulations regarding the armed merchant cruiser. In making a selection from any steamers offered, the Board intended to give preference to vessels which most closely met the following nine conditions:

1. Highest continuous seagoing speed at load draught
2. A minimum of 50 days coal endurance for all purposes at 10 knots
3. Twin screws
4. Ample sub-division into water-tight compartments
5. Good coal protection of such portion of the boilers or machinery as may be above the water
6. Approval of designs before construction where practical
7. The retention, free of charge, of other suitable vessel or vessels with each steamer subsidized
8. Convenience of trade in which the vessel is engaged for prompt use in the event of emergency
9. A reasonable surrender value<sup>49</sup>

The Lists I, II and III mentioned earlier, clearly take these key attributes into account as far as possible.

Although *Otranto* was not designated for the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron, Poolmans account of her the conversion activity reveals the frantic work to be completed. *Otranto*'s owners, the Orient Line, carried out the work at Tilbury.

Decks under gun platforms were strengthened and shored up, packing rings were fitted, and the guns themselves secured in place – eight 4.7's, four with shields, four older ones without. Bollards and fairleads were cut away to give a good arc of fire. A rangefinder was fitted on the bridge, magazines and shell

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<sup>47</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 3-4

<sup>48</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 6

<sup>49</sup> TNA MT 23/185 Armed Merchant Cruiser's. Folder 3394/1905 Admiralty 9<sup>th</sup> October 1891

rooms built in the fore and aft holds, with flooding arrangements. Steel plate half an inch thick was installed round the steering engine house, bagged coal was stowed abreast the engine cylinder tops. Cabin bulkheads, glass ventilators and furniture were removed to make space for mess-decks, a large sick bay with cots was fitted up in the old smoking room and an operating theatre set up amidships, the most stable part of the ship at sea.

The work had started on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, when the vessel was taken up and completed in only nine days.<sup>50</sup> The workforce needed was:

Shipwrights 45 for 4 days, 14 for 4 more days  
Boilermakers 70  
Shore party & bosun 20  
Joiners 30 reducing to 12  
Electricians 3-4  
Plumbers 2-4  
Together with an unrecorded number in shore workshops<sup>51</sup>

Poolman omits to mention that at least the vessel's upperworks and funnels would have been painted grey in this time. The summary shows the amount of pre-planning that had now grown up around the take up of vessels to be converted. It also shows the benefits of a significant ship repair industry, dry-dock and maintenance facilities which existed in most British port complexes. These had developed as a result of a large British merchant fleet needing support in the ordinary course of trading. Without this infrastructure the rapid conversions would have been impossible. Brown also states in the month of August, 1914 eleven such conversions were already in progress and by any standards this would have been a testing challenge.<sup>52</sup>

The merchant ships designated for the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron were either passenger/cargo or cargo/passenger ships, depending on the predominant activity. To change the nature of these vessels to auxiliary cruisers meant compromises and some fundamental reworking of essential elements of a ship's design. The most basic of these was the vessel's stability. A merchant ship's draught will vary hugely between her loaded condition and when 'light' ship with no cargo aboard. The loaded condition means that propellers are fully immersed and most efficient. This be appreciated by recognising in a single screw cargo ship in a 'light' condition, a propeller may not even be immersed for a full revolution, resulting in loss of power. For this reason, twin screw steamers were preferred since their propellers were more deeply immersed for

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<sup>50</sup> Poolman, *Armed Merchant Cruisers* 14

<sup>51</sup> Brown, D.K., *The Grand Fleet* (London, 1999) 154

<sup>52</sup> Brown, *The Grand Fleet* 153

most of the time. The armed merchant cruisers needed permanent ballast, using either stone or pig iron, so that they floated close to their loaded draft. This ballast compensated for the absence of cargo which when carried was always carefully apportioned between lower hold and 'tween deck. Too much weight in the holds created too great a 'righting lever', making the vessel 'stiff' or 'crank' in a seaway. This could cause severe 'racking' stresses on the ship's framing as she rolled quickly. Conversely, too little weight in the hold made the vessel 'tender' and created a slow, gentler rolling since the 'righting lever' was reduced. In practice the vessels would be loaded slightly 'stiff' so that as bunkers and water were used, the severity of the rolling decreased.<sup>53</sup> This was a most important issue for the Squadron's ships, in view of being tasked to the Norwegian Sea and Icelandic waters. Precautions had to be taken to prevent the ballast from moving in a sea way. Warships, once built and fitted out vary their drafts by only a small amount depending on how much fuel, water and ammunition is on board, consequently unlike a merchant ship their stability changes little during normal operations.

The extensive watertight sub-division in warships has been mentioned and to simulate this in the armed merchant cruisers, large baulks of timber and large numbers of empty 40 gallon drums were stowed in the holds. These provided additional buoyancy in the event that the hull plating was breached by gunfire or torpedo. The principle is known as 'permeability' and the presence of drums and timber reduced the available space for the ingress of water. The holds were also used to provide additional stowage for coal bunkers as well as for the main ammunition magazines.

Additional coal bunkers were often constructed abreast the main engines which were triple or quadruple expansion reciprocating steam engines. Typically tall, their cylinders were particularly vulnerable to damage by gunfire. Another weak point was the emergency steering position at the after end of the ships. Secondary steering on a warship is well protected. To protect the Squadron's ships the after steering positions were given the protection of steel plating.

The main armament was intended to allow the ships to fire a four barrel broadside from either side of the ship. The larger ships had eight guns, four on each side. The smaller

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<sup>53</sup> Cockcroft, A.N., *Nicholl's Seamanship and Nautical Knowledge* (Glasgow,1983) 301-302

ships, had six guns, two on each side plus one on the f'c'sle and one on the poop deck. The f'c'sle and poop guns were on the ship's centreline and had a wide arc of fire to allow four barrels to be brought to bear on either side of the ship. Originally the plans were for 4½ inch guns on all ships but these were replaced with 6 inch guns whenever possible, when it was realised that German commerce raiders had more powerful 6 inch guns. Ships joining the Squadron later in the war were fitted with 6 inch guns when taken up.

Once work had been completed, two further vital tasks had to be done. Stability had to be verified and magnetic compasses adjusted. Addition or removal of weights aboard a ship alters the vessel's centre of gravity and this in turn affects the 'righting lever.' The weight changes in the conversion process from guns, ballast and additional bunkers combined with the absence of a normal cargo, meant the stability had to be rechecked. An 'inclining test' was carried out under carefully controlled conditions. The resulting measurements allowed recalculation of the vessel's basic stability. The test would have been familiar work for a ship builder or repairer.

Compass adjusters were found throughout ports serving the shipping industry. Ships' magnetic compasses require periodic adjustment. After structural changes likely to alter magnetic influences at the compass position, the ship must be swung by a qualified compass adjuster on all points of the compass. The difference between a true heading and the compass heading is called 'compass error.' Compass error has two components, namely, 'variation' and 'deviation.' Variation is the effect of the earth's magnetism and differs between positions on the earth, however, its value is well documented. In contrast, deviation varies with the vessel's heading as shipboard structures change their relative position to the compass needle. Thus deviation is exclusive to a particular vessel and may be affected by different cargoes, especially steel cargoes. In the case of the armed merchant cruisers such changes were caused by the fitting of guns and other ferrous items. Permanent magnets inside the binnacles are repositioned to minimise the effect of deviation. A 'deviation card' showing the residual deviation on the major headings was then constructed.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, the contents of a short Admiralty telegram, followed by a letter of confirmation, triggered a welter of activity based on detailed planning for many commercial merchant

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<sup>54</sup> Admiralty, *Manual of Navigation 1954* (H.M.S. O London, 1955) 12-19

ships from many different trades. Later, additions were needed such as the addition of paravane gear, against mines. In some cases depth charge chutes were fitted and also deceptive hull paint schemes primarily against submarines.

Figure 7 overleaf shows a general arrangement drawing of *Virginian* when these additional measures had been adopted.<sup>55</sup> The result was the armed merchant cruiser which was inevitably bound to be a compromise solution in the mind of a professional naval officer. Indeed, de Chair had said they were of ‘small fighting value.’

Two technical developments which came to affect all types of ship had developed during the pre-war years require special mention. These were electricity aboard ships and the arrival of wireless communications. Neither was compulsory for ships but all merchant ships in the Squadron were already fitted with both when taken up.

These then, were the physical resources which were placed under de Chair’s authority to replace the inadequate *Edgar* class cruisers. The *Edgars* looked like classic Victorian warships which in the first months may have fixed Jellicoe’s perception of their purpose. He had often detached them from their interception duties to join other cruisers, under his command, on various sweeps - sometimes well into the North Sea. With such diversions and the dilution when two were off task to coal ship, it was remarkable that they achieved over 300 boardings in the early months of the blockade.<sup>56</sup> Even if Jellicoe had allowed the Squadrons six ships on task, to concentrate solely on visit and search activities this would have been inadequate, given the huge sea area to be covered. De Chair had spent such a large part of his career actually at sea, he must have been well aware that his resources were inadequate in both quality and quantity.

Early in August, de Chair was told that his Squadron was to be strengthened by four armed merchant cruisers, namely, *Alsatian*, *Mantua*, *Oceanic* and *Teutonic*. It was decided that these four ships when available would concentrate their patrols from the most northern point of the Shetlands to the north west. This was issued by de Chair on 19<sup>th</sup> August in his report of proceedings, requiring the armed merchant cruisers to ‘stop and examine all merchant shipping.’<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Brown, *The Grand Fleet* 152

<sup>56</sup> Hampshire, *The Blockaders* 34

<sup>57</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 27 August 1914 11-21



When all seemed settled on 9<sup>th</sup> September the news broke that *Oceanic* was now a total wreck after her grounding near Foula Island. *Alsatian* was tasked to take *Oceanic*'s survivors to Liverpool, leaving *Mantua* and *Teutonic* on patrol. Jellicoe confirmed the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron and 'such Armed Merchant Cruisers as may be attached to it' were under de Chair's command. Also, in de Chair's absence, the senior officer was to take charge and may receive orders direct from the Commander-in-Chief. In the same despatch Jellicoe withdrew the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron to the Cromarty Firth and placed *Alsatian* and *Mantua* with the Rear-Admiral, H.M.S. *Drake*, patrolling the Norwegian coast.<sup>58</sup> De Chair hoisted his Flag in *Alsatian* on 4<sup>th</sup> December at Liverpool, after the withdrawal of the *Edgars* from the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron. The blockade was now virtually non-existent until the promised replacement armed merchant cruisers were ready.

In his Report of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1915, de Chair set out the situation as at the 4<sup>th</sup> December 1914.<sup>59</sup>

Activity	Liverpool	London	Avonmouth	Hull	Tyne	Clyde
Rearming With 6" guns	<i>Alsatian</i>					
Fitting Out	<i>Eskimo</i> <i>Caribbean</i> <i>Ambrose</i> <i>Oropesa</i> <i>Hilary</i> <i>Hildebrand</i> <i>Virginian</i> <i>Cedric</i>	<i>Orotava</i> <i>Clan</i> <i>MacNaughton</i> <i>Digby</i> <i>Otway</i>	<i>Patia</i> <i>Patuca</i> <i>Bayano</i> <i>Motagua</i> <i>Changuinola</i>	<i>Calyx</i>	<i>Viknor</i>	<i>Columbella</i>

Fig. 7 Fitting Out Situation as at 25.1.1915

Almost without exception, the ships were fitting out at their normal home ports taking advantage of a familiar local ship repairing industry. De Chair must have found it very helpful to have so many of his Squadron fitting out in Liverpool at the same time. This would give the opportunity to meet at least some of the new commanding officers as they took up their appointments.

The *Edgars* had been between 22 and 24 years old and had heavier armament. One author describes their merchant ship replacements as 'diverse', a tactful reference to their varying type and age.<sup>60</sup> A look at the liners and their owners shows there is a clear sense of 'age grouping' from different companies. Probably the most obvious is

<sup>58</sup> TNA ADM 137/1989 C-in-C Grand Fleet to RA 10<sup>th</sup> CS 35

<sup>59</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 25 January 1915 87-103

<sup>60</sup> Halpern, P.G., *A Naval History of World War 1* (London, 1994) 48

the Elders and Fyffes' group of five very similar ships. An age analysis of the vessels reveals most were of relatively recent build.

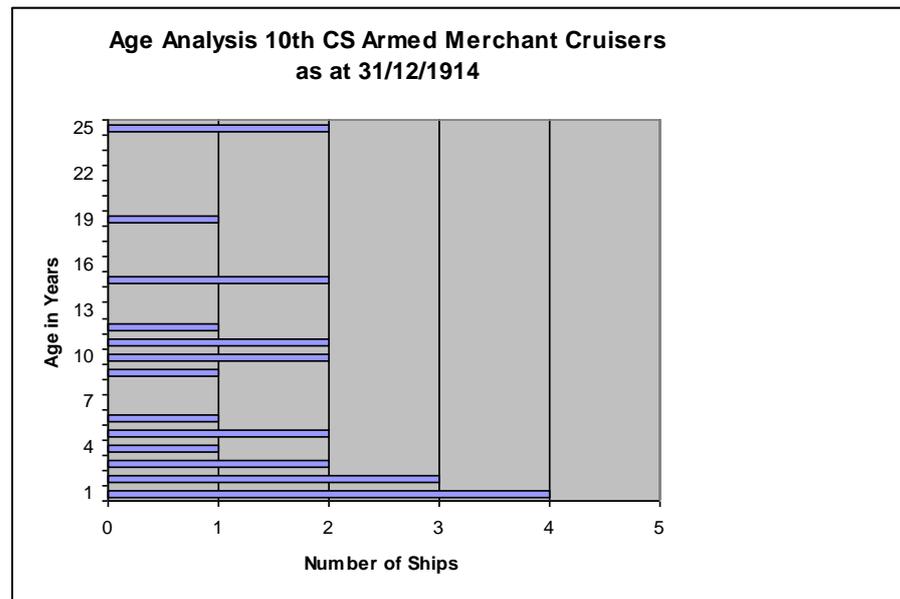


Fig.8 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron - Age Analysis.

Sixty six per cent of the Squadron (16 ships) were under ten years old, fifty per cent of the Squadron (12 ships) were under five years old and sixteen per cent of the Squadron (4 ships) were only one year old. Nevertheless, a look at the list of ships (See Appendix 4.) would reveal, to a seaman's eye, a few points for concern in the vessels allocated to the Squadron.

Two ships, *Caribbean* and *Teutonic* were twenty five years old, even older than the *Edgars*. *Teutonic* survived the war and proved to be a tower of strength in the Squadron. In contrast, *Caribbean* lasted only a few months with the Squadron before being withdrawn for other work. She was a single screw ship, originally the *Dunottar Castle* for Union Castle line.<sup>61</sup> When bought by RMSPC in 1913, renamed *Caribbean* and considered a bargain, her purchase avoided repairs to two older ships in the company. The next doubtful was *Viknor* (formerly the *Viking*) owned by the Viking Cruising Company which specialised in summer cruises to the Norwegian Fjords. *Viking*, formerly the *Atrato* from RMSPC, was an elegant ship with slender hull lines, raked funnels, low freeboard amidships and a clipper bow. *Viknor* was never intended for the Norwegian Sea and Icelandic waters in the winter. Two former cargo ships the *Clan MacNaughton* and *Digby* seemed out of place on the list. Whilst *Digby* had been built for the North Atlantic services of Furness Withy, *Clan MacNaughton* was

<sup>61</sup> Haws, D., *Merchant Fleets - Royal Mail Line & Nelson Line* (Crowborough,1982) 75

intended for Clan Line's services between Britain and India. Finally, the *Calypso* and *Eskimo* from Wilson Line of Hull, built for service in the Baltic and North Sea also seemed out of place on the list. *Calypso* had been renamed H.M.S. *Calyx*, probably to avoid confusion with H.M.S. *Calypso*, the headquarters ship allocated to the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve in 1902.<sup>62</sup> No doubt de Chair would have had concerns about at least some of these ships and events would later prove him to have been right to do so.

The Admiralty had shown again, that the fleets of shipping companies were, in the Navy's mind, a 'strategic reserve of ships' to be commandeered whenever Government saw fit. The effectiveness of the blockade, to all practical purposes, was in abeyance whilst the merchant cruisers were fitted out. At this point, the Admiralty made it very clear to Jellicoe and de Chair that when ready, the ships were to be 'employed exclusively for patrol duty.'<sup>63</sup> It was a clear pointer to Jellicoe and potential support for de Chair if any interference should emerge. This brief pause in events, gave de Chair the chance to think about how the increased number of ships might be deployed and also who would man them. The *Edgars* crews were to be transferred to the armed merchant cruisers, but many more officers and men would be needed. De Chair estimated it to be a complement of 9,800.<sup>64</sup> With this new impetus, it was time to think about the 'reserves of manpower' which could be made available and where they could be found.

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<sup>62</sup> For King and Country – Stanley I Hillier and the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve [http://home.thezone.net/~ainal/for\\_king\\_and\\_country.htm](http://home.thezone.net/~ainal/for_king_and_country.htm) (Accessed 25/07/05)

<sup>63</sup> TNA ADM 137/989 Admiralty to C-in-C Home Fleet 18 November 1914 390

<sup>64</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 184

‘Call out the Reserves!’ is a rallying call as stirring and rousing as the cry from Victorian times to ‘Send a Gunboat!’ The act of calling up a nation’s reserve is deemed, in international diplomacy, a belligerent one. In 1914, Britain did not delay in mobilising the Naval Reserves. On Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1914, the King’s Proclamation called out ‘Men of the Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Fleet Reserve as well as Officers and Men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.’ A separate Proclamation on the same day called out ‘Officers of the Royal Naval Reserve.’ A further Proclamation announced the extension by five years, of the service of all classes of men in the Navy whose term of service had just expired or was about to expire.<sup>1</sup> Here then, with one exception, were the crewing resources for the Squadron’s ships. There was no mention of Mercantile Marine ratings that, as civilians would be expected to form a vital part of the manning 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron.<sup>2</sup> Technically, these civilian personnel were free to stay or go, since conscription had not yet been introduced.

All these sources of manpower had their own history, ethos and culture which needed moulding into a cohesive team by Admirals de Chair and Tupper together with the Royal Naval Commanding Officers and First Lieutenants of the ships. Additionally there were a numbers of ratings from the decommissioned *Edgar* cruisers. This chapter will look at some of the historical background to these groups and examine their position in the years leading up to the war. This will include their backgrounds, training, motivation, conditions of service and rivalries.

Impressment style recruiting fell into abeyance after 1815, but the law relating to it had not been repealed. A peacetime reduction of the Navy’s size made the manning issue a lower priority. However, the question of how the fleet would be manned in the event of war, occupied the thoughts of many in Government and the Admiralty. In that event, the need would be for seamen capable of handling sails and working guns. The arrival of steam propulsion circa 1830 to 1840, sometimes obscured the fact that sail handling remained a key skill aboard both warship and merchantman until almost the end of the century. For example, steam gunboats responsible for policing the Empire were barquentine rigged and used sail whenever possible. Sail handlers could be found aboard merchant vessels but the Navy would also need men competent at gunnery and teaching this to merchant seamen was at the heart of the concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> *The London Gazette*, Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 1914. Third Supplement

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 6

The solution would occupy nearly fifty years of discussion, theorising, politics, Treasury restraints, commercial resistance and plain stubbornness on the part of some naval officers and politicians. The issue ran parallel to the arguments about armed merchant cruisers and it was fortunate that no real major conflict emerged whilst all this took place. In the Crimean War it had been politic not to use powers of the press gang. However, a manning shortage for the Baltic Expedition in that war, generated some sense of urgency amongst politicians and the Admiralty which resulted in 1859 the Royal Naval Reserve (Volunteers) Act being passed. The Act provided for the raising of a volunteer force of professional Mercantile Marine seamen to undergo naval training.<sup>3</sup> There were no plans to recruit officers at this stage.

Manpower planning is difficult at any time for large organisations. Requirements change, technology develops, international relations and government policies fluctuate, whilst at the back of all these variables remains the available finance. The Navy was subject to all these forces whilst ship and weapon technologies were advancing. In addition, there was always the changing assessment as to any potential enemies' resources. The challenge was finding a balance between peacetime needs and a rapid expansion needed in war. In 1852 the Admiralty set up a Commission on Manning which led to the idea of continuous service being introduced.<sup>4</sup> This resulted in the benefits of stable employment to the Navy and the men. Merchant seamen enjoyed no such employment security until the next century and continued to be paid off after each voyage.

The concept of turning to the Mercantile Marine to provide a reserve of both ships and men seemed an obvious route. However, shipowners and merchant seamen did not always see the solution in the same light as some politicians and senior naval officers. Nevertheless, the 1859 Act setting up a naval force was at least a start.

### **The Royal Naval Reserve (R.N.R.)**

Prior to 1859 there had been earlier attempts to form a reserve for the Navy. Initially the Sea Fencibles in the Napoleonic Wars and later the Royal Trinity House Artillery, consisting of a corps of 1200 men, raised by Trinity House from merchant seamen and

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<sup>3</sup> Bowen, F.C., *History of the Royal Naval Reserve* (London,1926) 8  
Bowen's *History of the Royal Naval Reserve* is the most authoritative and detailed account of the R.N.R.'s creation and early history.

<sup>4</sup> Wells, J., *The Royal Navy: An Illustrated Social History 1870-1982* (Stroud,1994) 10

their officers.<sup>5</sup> The costs of the Press Gangs, when revealed, astounded the public and showed 3000 useful seamen were employed therein who would have been better deployed at sea. Figures for the Press Gang operations between 1811-1813 record that of 29,405 men pressed some 27,300 deserted. In 1834 Sir James Graham brought forward his ticket scheme which intended to create a registry of merchant seamen to improve the status of seamen and a potential for a naval reserve. His proposed bill was dropped but in 1835 the first Merchant Shipping Act was passed which covered much the same ground and set up a modified registry of British Seamen. The system was not a success since it was bedevilled with desertion by the seamen. The cause of this problem was the scandalous treatment of seamen by the owners, a problem which nobody cared to tackle.<sup>6</sup>

By 1846 Captain Sullivan, R.N., later Admiral Sir B.J.Sullivan, drew the attention of the authorities and the public to the need for a naval reserve of trained seamen, the Merchant Service being the only source from which such reservists could be trained. Sullivan's scheme was remarkably close to the one which was finally implemented but at the time Sullivan received only laughter for his efforts. In fact, a year later in 1847, Captain J.H.Brown, the Registrar-General of Seamen under the Board of Trade, proposed a voluntary Naval Reserve to meet the country's needs. It all sounded like the classic 'not invented here' syndrome but naval officers had always viewed the issue from the Fleet's viewpoint and excluded other considerations. The Registrar-General's experience made him aware of the difficulties which would need to be overcome. Discussions turned into personal attacks but finally Brown saw the 1852 Navy Estimates provide for 5000 reservists to be enrolled. Politics again swept this aside but in 1853 there emerged the Naval Coast Volunteers and a wide reaching questionnaire about the idea of a Naval Reserve.<sup>7</sup> The replies revealed only critical opinions of the Merchant Service and the poor quality of men and some officers. Still no one thought to relate the quality of personnel with the poor conditions of service but it served to arouse interest. Some supporters of the R.N.R. wanted a period of service in the reserve to be compulsory for merchant seamen whilst others saw it as a voluntary reserve. There were issues of whether service qualified for any pension payments. The Manning Committee in 1859 had also recommended positioning training ships at ports around the United Kingdom. These were to provide training facilities for both the reservists

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<sup>5</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 1-2

<sup>6</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 3

<sup>7</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 3-4

and the coastguard, which was a separate force. In this way it was envisaged that an annual 'intake' of seamen would be created for the Merchant Service and also the reserve.<sup>8</sup> It was expected that many of the reservists would be drawn from the coastal trades and the very extensive fishing fleets. These men would be available immediately should the need for a 'call out' arise. In fact, men on long voyages in the deep sea trades were not entirely welcome since their availability could be delayed. Men on a voyage expected to exceed six months had to apply for leave from the R.N.R.. There was strong support from the men in Scotland and the North East coast.<sup>9</sup> The situation was reviewed at the end of 1861 when just over 8000 men were enrolled and a further 600 on a waiting list. Of the 8000 enrolled, 6000 were qualified in gunnery and only 850 were on leave for long voyages, meanwhile 5000 were working in the coastal trades and readily available. Thus the R.N.R., once created and clear of politics, had reached a significant size. At this time the Royal Navy itself, had only 15,000 able seamen.<sup>10</sup>

Although the Act of 1859 had allowed the setting up of a reserve of seamen it did not include the recruitment of officers. This came later under the Royal Naval Reserve Officers Act, of 1861 which allowed the recruitment but detailed requirements were intentionally left vague.<sup>11</sup> The regulations turned out to be less than generous from the Admiralty and less than appealing to men who had command of first class merchant ships. The reserve was not to have more than 400 officers in all, at any time. The senior officers were to be lieutenants and not more than 130, ranking after RN lieutenants. To qualify for entry, a man had to be in command of a merchant ship, hold an extra master's certificate and to have had command of a vessel of not less than 500 tons gross for at least three years. The regulations set down similar extensive previous sea service to be appointed sub-lieutenant. These gave little encouragement for a man who had held posts on crack liners as chief officer to find himself messing in the gunroom.<sup>12</sup> At least the reserve officers were granted a uniform which distinguished them from fulltime naval officers.<sup>13</sup> R.N.R. ratings had to wait until 1869 when an R.N.R. cruise was planned to take the reservists to sea as a body. A uniform was issued

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<sup>8</sup> One of these training ships was H.M.S. *Trincomalee*, stationed first at Sunderland and later West Hartlepool, where she is now preserved. (2006)

<sup>9</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 5-10

<sup>10</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 15

<sup>11</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 8 & 11

<sup>12</sup> The 'gunroom' is for junior officers of sub-lieutenant and midshipman level only.

<sup>13</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 12 & 13

on loan for the cruise and in return for good conduct a man was allowed to keep it without payment.<sup>14</sup>

The next twenty-five to thirty years would see R.N.R. supporters and detractors rise and fall. The Admiralty wanted a reserve at little or no cost but was unsure of its precise requirements. Increasingly the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen (RGSS) was expected to administer the R.N.R., act as recruiter and to keep a balance between the Navy's demand and the shipowners' legitimate concerns about the manning of their ships. One of the first things done by the RGSS in connection with the enrolment of officers was to point out to the Admiralty that only 400 extra masters certificates had ever been issued and that a lieutenant's rank as a maximum would not encourage younger men. A further file note records:

I have heard that the Admiralty do not care about having the elite, if so, this is a mistake for the Officers who stand high in the Mercantile Marine would be the men in whom most dependence could be placed in time of need.<sup>15</sup>

This resulted in the stringent extra masters certificate requirement being modified.<sup>16</sup>

A further revealing file note shows the confusion as to how the R.N.R. was to be managed, 'The Admiralty seem at a loss how to deal with the accounts of the Naval Reserve.'<sup>17</sup>

In 1867 the RGSS produced a detailed report of the state of the R.N.R. in response to criticism of the numbers and quality of the reservists. As at the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1866 the reserve stood at 16,346 ratings and 1190 officers. The Registrar made the following points:

To enter, men must have 5 years sea service – one year at least as A.B.  
The average height of reservists was greater than Royal Navy average.  
Men rejected from the Reserve had been accepted by the Navy.

The *Trent* Affair in 1865 showed huge support from the Reservists as evidenced in their letters to The Times. The report continued:

.....we bear in mind that each Naval Reserve man is a skilled workman [by the nature of the entry requirements] and far above the class of men from which our Army is recruited.

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<sup>14</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 23

<sup>15</sup> TNA MT 9/13 R.N.R. Regulations for Enrolment of Officers Minute Paper 773 (BOT) 18.1.1861

<sup>16</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 15

<sup>17</sup> TNA MT 9/13 R.N.R. Regulations for Enrolment of Officers BOT Minute 8431 (BOT) 6.8.1861

A final point being:

The real question at bottom is a question of policy – are we to have a large standing Navy – or a less large Navy with Reserves. The former is naturally the general tendency of the service: the latter perhaps of civilians.<sup>18</sup>

This really was the heart of the matter. Looking back, there were so many opinions and viewpoints, the temptation is to ask whether the Admiralty really did want a Reserve and the associated responsibilities and overheads.

By 1868 the Board of Trade (BOT) was made responsible for Estimates for the R.N.R. Vote but the differences between the BOT and the Admiralty continued. The file shows:

But it is not to be supposed that whenever the Navy want men we are to go for them to the Reserve. If these were the conditions we could get no reserve at all. The men would not join for they could not be perpetually harassed by going into and out of the Navy and Ship owners would not consent to their joining for they could not have their Ships unmanned whenever the Navy wanted men. To prevent this undue interference with our Commerce the regulations have been framed and wisely framed so as to assure the Trading Community that our Merchant Seamen will not be called on to serve unless a sudden emergency requires an increase in the Fleet.<sup>19</sup>

These views signed by a 'T. Grey' revealed the extent to which the BOT and RGSS sat as a buffer between Navy and Mercantile Marine interests.

The perceived need to provide a reserve of men for the Navy coincided with the possible need to requisition top quality mail steamers. Pitted against this, was the desire of the shipowners to be cooperative whilst remaining profitable and have sufficient manpower for their needs. This latter point was especially true with expanding demand for shipping services to serve an expanding Empire. The opening of the Suez Canal meant an expansion in the merchant steamship fleets which in turn reduced the need for merchant seamen 'handling sails.' These were the very seamen who were being sought by both the Naval Reserve lobby and the trading shipowners. Many were prompted to contribute to the debate but they often confused the agenda by trying to solve both problems at once. Like many naval officers, they found it difficult to separate in their minds that the Navy was an organisation dedicated to serve the Monarch and nation, unlike the Mercantile Marine. This was a privately owned part of

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<sup>18</sup> TNA MT 9/34 M2612/1867 Royal Naval Reserve Criticism of working, results and policy

<sup>19</sup> TNA MT 9/41 M.6583 Royal Naval Reserve. Board of Trade to be responsible for Estimates.

a growing world transport system, which had existed to create profit for its owners and employment for its workers. Both sides had a need, but both were reluctant to commit funds or administrative resources to either set up training or release men to carry it out. Both the Navy and the Mercantile Marine used ships and this similarity seems to have clouded the fact that they used very different types of vessel and both organisations had different agendas.

In 1873 Admiral The Hon. Sir F.W. Grey published a pamphlet on the subject.<sup>20</sup> In this Admiral Grey proposed a scheme which sought to solve all problems at a stroke. He had had responsibility for manning in the Navy and was pleased with the idea of continuous service. He argued that reliance on volunteers from the Merchant Service was unwise since only the men from the best companies would be fit for the Navy. Instead, he looked forward to a compulsory period of naval service, say three years, and then a man could stay in the Navy or transfer to the Merchant Navy. This was unlikely to please the shipowners since they were already feeling the shortage of seamen. Interestingly, he considered different rates of pay for wartime and peacetime and somehow sought to bring this into a pension arrangement. In 1898, Lord Brassey, well known for his interest in Naval Reserve matters, also wrote on the subject of linking The Royal Naval Reserve and Mercantile Marine and took the bold step of associating the Colonies to his views.<sup>21</sup>

The recent Royal Jubilee allowed Brassey to enhance his proposal with the following:

The sentiment of loyalty evoked all over the Empire by the Jubilee afforded a splendid opportunity of laying the foundations of federal defence and of making the Naval Reserve a truly Imperial force - a force in which Canadians and Newfoundlanders, Afrikanders and Australians should serve side by side with and on the same conditions as Britishers. The importance of educating our colonial fellow-subjects to realise their common responsibility with us in the defence of the Empire can hardly be over-estimated.<sup>22</sup>

These were fine words which discounted the fact that each of the provinces of Canada and the states of Australia saw matters on a much more parochial basis. Assisting with the Empire's defence was not top of all agendas. Brassey had produced another 'one size fits all solution' but recognized the rapid growth in steamers and a similar decline in sailing vessels. In retrospect, some of both Brassey's and Grey's ideas did work

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<sup>20</sup> BL Grey, F.W., *Suggestions for Improving the Character of Our Merchant Seamen and for Providing an Efficient Naval Reserve* (London,1873)

<sup>21</sup> BL Brassey, T.A., *The Royal Naval Reserve, the Mercantile Marine and the Colonies* (London,1898)

<sup>22</sup> Brassey, *The Royal Naval Reserve*, 19

their way into the British maritime world but not in the terms in which they had been proposed.

A practical view was put forward in 1878 by Mr John Burns, of the Cunard Line, when he proposed the following:

..the formation of a reserve of ships from the fleets of the great mail Companies. He did not wish to interfere in any way with the existing Royal Naval Reserve, but in addition to the ships he proposed the formation of a special reserve of men drawn entirely from seamen in the employ of the mail companies, who should be trained in naval ships when necessary, and should form a long service personnel in the companies' services. The Admiralty were to pay an annual retainer so long as the ships were maintained at the standard they demanded for cruiser service, and, in the event of war breaking out, they were to have the right of purchasing or chartering the ships at a rate to be mutually agreed. On the other hand the companies had to undertake to facilitate the training of the men and to release them from all engagements in the event of war in order to allow them to be employed in the Navy.<sup>23</sup>

This seemed a commonsense approach but unfortunately it came from a shipowner and not the Navy. Bowen states this was the first time that a scheme such as this was put forward, but with various modifications it would be repeated many times during the next forty years.

Whilst these verbal and policy contests went on, those more directly responsible for the Reservists, effected changes to the drill arrangements and annual sea training. Pay and allowances were reviewed and improved. The main complaint was that the equipment in the training centres was old and obsolete, a problem which was always put down to lack of finance.<sup>24</sup> The rank of Midshipman was introduced by an Order in Council in October 1872.<sup>25</sup> A further move was the introduction of Assistant Paymasters. Although temporary assistant paymasters had been admitted to the Reserve since 1894 it was not until 1904 that an Order in Council placed the Accountant Branch on a formal basis. In peacetime the assistant paymasters would train and serve ashore but in wartime they would join the Fleet.<sup>26</sup>

To help things along in 1888 the Admiralty wrote to the BOT as follows:

.....to acquaint you, for the information of the Board of Trade, that the reason for conferring appointments as Honorary Commanders in the Reserve on Superintendents of large Steamship Companies was principally to enlist their sympathies in the Royal Naval Reserve and thus to induce

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<sup>23</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 33

<sup>24</sup> Parker, W.H., *Leaves from an Unwritten Logbook* (London, circa 1930) 120

<sup>25</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 28

<sup>26</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 78

them to take an interest in manning the Companies Vessels with Royal Naval Reserve men and firemen and to assist generally in the recruiting of the Force.<sup>27</sup>

When the Superintendent, (a former ship's master), of the Liverpool Mercantile Marine Office wrote seeking a similar honorary commission he received the following succinct answer from the Admiralty:

The special reasoning which led to the Order-in-Council in question in favour of Superintendents of Steamship Companies however, does not apply in the case of Superintendents of Mercantile Marine who act as registrars of Naval Reserve whose duty it is to recruit men.

This would certainly have helped recruit deck officers in the large mail companies, since a suggestion of support by the marine superintendents was as good as an order. By the turn of the century the R.N.R. was in a healthy state as to numbers. The promotion stakes allowed advancement beyond lieutenant and with growing numbers of senior mail ships' captains holding commissions, it was almost an expected ambition for younger deck officers to want to join. It has been shown in the previous chapter that to have a mail contract, a shipowner was required to have a certain number of R.N.R. officers and ratings in his employ. This provided an excuse for further pressure on the deck officers and seamen. Quite apart from this company pressure, many young deck officers would see naval service as a valuable extension of their professional knowledge and a chance to see 'how the Navy did things.' In addition, periodic training with the Navy provided a welcome break from the routine of commerce and provided opportunities of social and sporting activity not found in the Mercantile Marine. Two other factors deserve mention. Firstly, an unwilling deck officer may have had the option of joining another company but had very little chance of shore employment if he felt really aggrieved about company pressure to join the R.N.R.. Secondly, many young deck officers in the mail companies had undergone pre-sea training aboard training ships before starting their apprenticeship at sea. Here they had experienced discipline and routine based on the Navy and the R.N.R. basic and annual training would, in many ways, have been a familiar experience.

Engineers had been eligible to enter the R.N.R. since 1863.<sup>28</sup> However, the question of whether ships' engineers could be pressured to join the Reserve by an engineer

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<sup>27</sup> TNA MT 9/326 M2091/1888 M.8964 Royal Naval Reserve. Grant of Honorary Commissions to Marine Superintendents and Superintendent Engineers of large Ship Companies and promotion of Sub-Lieutenants.

<sup>28</sup> TNA MT 9/18 M4065/1863. R.N.R. Further regulations & Bill to admit Engineers.

superintendent was a very different matter. Both the Royal Navy and the Mercantile Marine took a long time to both accept the need for the engineer and agree his status aboard ship. The engineer represented a challenge to the hard earned skills of 'sailing ship seamanship', long cherished by the seaman officer in the Navy and the deck officer in the Mercantile Marine. The naval engineer's long struggle for recognition is fully recorded by Geoffrey Penn's 'Up Funnel, Down Screw'.<sup>29</sup> Merchant ships' engineers, whilst establishing their profession, appeared to fare better than the Navy's engineers. The engineer's skill was in short supply and whereas the Navy seemed to resist the change, important parts of the Mercantile Marine, such as the mail companies, saw the future economic opportunities of steam power. They were prepared to accept the premium of higher pay and readily grant officer status and conditions to their engineers.

Other causes for cohesion amongst engineers were that most came from the North East Coast of England or Scotland. In both these centres of ship building and marine engineering, industrial and academic institutions emerged which formed focal points for developing the engineer's skills.<sup>30</sup> Engineers served apprenticeships between say 16 and 20 years of age and during that time developed their own individual personalities, influenced by free time after work. In contrast, the deck officer was at sea for his apprenticeship and required to conform to company culture, suppressing to some extent any individuality. There were also social class differences. Deck officers tended to come from the more affluent southern England and often had families rich enough to send them for expensive pre-sea training aboard school-ships such as the *Conway* and *Worcester*. These gave exclusive entrées to the larger mail-ship companies and often the Navy itself.

Engineers competed to acquire an engineering apprenticeship coming from the poorer populations such as Clyde-side and the rivers Tyne and Wear. By the time these two groups came together aboard ship, at about 19 or 20 years old, they were very different people. The deck officer's self assurance bred from the familiarity of life aboard ship contrasted with the new engineer feeling his way in a strange environment, sometimes with behaviour and demeanour which revealed insecurity. Once aboard, the accommodation and working stations for these two groups were quite separate and they

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<sup>29</sup> Penn, G., *Up Funnel, Down Screw* (London,1955)

<sup>30</sup> Such as the 'North East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders' and the London based 'Institute of Marine Engineers'.

often dined, for practical reasons, in different locations. It was perfectly possible for each to perform efficient work with only minimal contact between them. Little wonder the attitude that 'oil and water don't mix', took hold on both sides. As already indicated, things were little better in the Navy. The long wait for real recognition prompted some naval engineers to leave and transfer to the Merchant Service. The difference between Navy and Merchant Navy in 1849 thereabouts is quoted by Murray.<sup>31</sup>

...the engineers would require better pay than those in the Navy. On board the Oriental [that is, the P.&O.] boats a first class engineer receives £16 to £26 per month. It is true that in the Queen's Service chief first-class engineers get £17 a month and pensions, but we find our first class engineer as good a table as you or I would set down to – in fact, they live like princes. In the Navy they have to find their own table, except the common rations of the ship. As regards pensions, I have heard some of the engineers say, 'What is the use of a pension? Very few of us will ever live to enjoy pensions; if we go on foreign station perhaps there is not one of us that will return to receive it.' In India we have scarcely kept a complete crew of engineers for more than a year together; we have entire changes year after year, principally from death, and from liver complaints arising from the intense heat of the engine room.

Engineers were in demand in both organisations, yet the Navy continued to prevaricate over their status. But the naval engineers were as dedicated and determined as their Merchant Service counterparts. In 1851, the Royal Naval Engineer's Club was formed in Portsea, for both social and professional purposes where technical papers were read and collected.<sup>32</sup>

The movement of water in the form of steam through piping, boilers, condensers and engine cylinders, led the seaman officer to deride engineering as 'little more than advanced plumbing.' This ignored the vital engineering skills needed to effect any running repairs which might be needed at sea. The situation was not helped by Sir Andrew Noble, Chairman of Elswick Shipbuilders, when he wrote to Fisher supporting reductions in the number of engineers being trained and claiming much of the engineer's work was of a routine nature. Noble claimed that great theoretical and practical attainment was not needed on board ships as the work was of a mundane practical nature requiring, only basic knowledge. He argued that the clamour for increased status for engineers arose from a mistaken idea as to the duties and class of men required as engineers on board warships, noting that engineers in the merchant

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<sup>31</sup> Murray, R., 'Rudimentary Treatise on Marine Engines' (London, 1852) 176 cited in Greenhill, B. and Gifford, A., *Steam, Politics and Patronage* (London, 1994) 88

<sup>32</sup> Penn, *Up Funnel, Down Screw* 79

marine appeared to be content.<sup>33</sup> As a shipbuilder, Noble clearly had a sales agenda for steam power.

It should be no surprise that the Navy's internal dilemmas over engineer officer status meant that the issue of engineers in the Royal Naval Reserve received a low priority. Initially, engineers were not required to carry out training in the Navy, it being held that engineering was the same in any ship. This only served to underline the 'oil and water' division between engineer and seamen officer. To the Mercantile Marine engineer it only proved they were far better off outside the Navy. In any case the idea of all that 'saluting and marching about' was not part of the engineer's psyche, not to mention the idea of paying Mess Bills as part of board and lodging. The R.N.R. situation by 1889 was as follows:

R.N.R.	Authorised	Serving
Lieutenants	150	120
Sub-Lieutenants	270	120
Engineers	150	3
Asst. Engineers	150	0
Midshipmen	200	155

Fig.9 R.N.R. Officers 1889

Clearly, these figures confirm the R.N.R. was perceived by potential volunteers as an occupation for 'mail company' men and certainly not one of interest to engineers.<sup>34</sup>

However, as a concession in 1897, the Admiralty allowed engineers to undertake some training in Naval Dockyards to study the construction and repair of machinery and attend trials of warships. There was a good response but what the engineers really wanted was experience on warships at sea.<sup>35</sup>

There still remained a potential need for engine room ratings. By 1894, with the continued increase in steam propulsion, it was recognised there would be a need to increase the number of authorised firemen to 6000. Imaginatively, the Navy looked to the land as one source of recruitment. It agreed to recruit a special class of firemen from the large gas and electric light generating companies. These men were

<sup>33</sup> Nicholas, A.N., 'Engineer officer education in the Royal Navy 1902-26: status, expertise and technological change'. Manchester M.Sc 1992 75

<sup>34</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 49

<sup>35</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 68

accustomed to working ashore in the winter months and going to sea in the summer. These were often slack periods when R.N.R. training could be slotted in.<sup>36</sup> This move showed the Navy was realising that simply 'snapping the fingers' could not instantly produce a civilian based reserve force without causing disruption to vital industries. Even the 'mail companies', with their vested interest in the R.N.R. found the release of reservists for training an administrative overhead.

In fact, on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1903, Louis Battenberg then Director of Naval Intelligence, wrote to shipowners:<sup>37</sup>

..... requesting the help of shipowners to collaborate with the Admiralty to plan the protection of trade.

In the correspondence, Battenberg poses some pressing questions and supports his letter with three lists:

- List A - Vessels to be taken up from trade. (listed by type)
- List B - Armed Merchant Cruisers (individual ships and owners were named)
- List C - A summary of the strength of the Royal Naval Reserve

Two of the questions are reproduced and the answers of Sir Ian Sutherland dated 26<sup>th</sup> August 1903, after an internal report by a Captain Parfitt of the P&O, are in italics.

Question 3. What would be the effect upon their carrying arrangements, of the withdrawal of the Steamers which will be taken up by the Admiralty for auxiliary services as shown on the attached List A?

*Answer. The effect on the carrying trade of the country by the withdrawal of these Mail & Passenger steamers would be practically insignificant.*

After the experience of World War I, today this seems an optimistic response.

From the words 'will be taken up' the Admiralty clearly knew its intentions.

Question 6. What would be the effect upon such ships as may be on the point of sailing from the Home ports, of calling out the numbers of Royal Naval Reserve Seamen and Firemen which are shown on List C?

*Answer. As a larger number of ships would be laid up, according to my belief, during the whole term of a Naval war, I do not think that the absorption of the Officers and men of the Royal Naval Reserve would prevent the adequate manning of the ships that would be able to keep the sea. In the case of a Company like the P&O Company, the large number of Naval Reserve Officers whom they employ would, if absorbed into the Navy, create a considerable inconvenience, and the chances are that their*

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<sup>36</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 83

<sup>37</sup> NMM P&O/11/30 Merchant Vessels in Wartime. Sutherland/Battenberg Correspondence 1903

*places would not be easily filled without considerable delay. But this inconvenience would no doubt be overcome in time if a Naval war proved to be of a prolonged duration.*

This reply, whilst flagging the Company's administrative difficulties in supporting the R.N.R., reveal some interesting insights into Sutherland's perception of the conduct of any future war. Why would a large number of ships be laid up? The internal memo between Captain Parfitt and P&O Chairman, Sutherland in the same file is worth noting. On the maintenance of trade, Parfitt seems to be a few years ahead of the Admiralty in recognising reality when he stated:

*..... there still remains the danger of the enemy's cruisers preying upon our commerce, for it would be impossible to blockade the enemy's ports so closely as to prevent his cruisers or privateers from putting to sea.*

In this same correspondence, Battenberg's 'List C' reveals the following statements and assumptions:

1. Approximately 10,000 Royal Naval Reserve (all in 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> period of Service) in the United Kingdom. The greater number of these are Fishermen or engaged in the Coasting Trade.
2. All Royal Naval Reserve Firemen available at home, and estimated at about 2,600 at present; 300 or 400 more would be required if available.
3. All Royal Naval Reserve men outside the United Kingdom, of whatever class or period of service, would be technically called out by the proclamation, and may be called on by the Senior Naval Officers abroad to serve in the Royal Navy; but instructions have been given not to disturb the Mercantile Marine unnecessarily, and it is not considered likely that more than a small percentage of them would be required.

It is clear from Battenberg's correspondence with the shipowners that the Navy were at last shaking off the dithering discussions and debates about the R.N.R. and Armed Merchant Cruisers. Instead a sharper focus on how the R.N.R. men and merchant ships taken up from trade would be deployed was emerging, coupled with the recognition that trade must still go on as much as possible.

As to mobilising the Reserves and the P&O, Captain Parfitt's internal memo stated:

*.....Our Company has at the present time 221 Officers (Executive and Engineer) holding commissions in the Royal Naval Reserve, also a large proportion of the European Seamen are belonging to that force. In the event of the Admiralty enrolling our Native Firemen for service on Men of War in the East, we should have a large number of Officers and Men for the service of the Country.*

This extract shows a typical 'mail company' commitment to encouraging its officers to volunteer for the R.N.R.. Equally interesting is the offer of Native Firemen. Merchant ships often had multinational crews, just as the Navy in Nelson's day had some coloured men on board. However, the R.N.R. (Men) Regulations of 1914 made it clear that coloured crew members were not to be accepted by R.N.R. Registrars at Mercantile Marine Offices. The criteria laid down in Paragraph 20 was:<sup>38</sup>

1. No applicant is to be accepted for enrolment in the Royal Naval Reserve unless he is a British subject, is able to speak and understand the English Language, can sign his name, is free from physical defect, has been vaccinated, and is in all respects suitable.
2. Coloured men, natives of India, and Mulattos are not to be entered in the Reserve.

Attitudes in 1914 towards coloured seamen aboard a Navy vessel are recorded by Commander A.D.R. Pound whilst serving in H.M.S. *St. Vincent* and destined to become First Sea Lord 1939-43.<sup>39</sup>

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1914.

.....5 additional Petty Officers (Active Service), 3 R.F.R. AB's and 12 R.N.R. Seamen joined the ship yesterday. One of the latter is a black man. It is a great mistake to enter them because it is hardly fair to make a distinction and mess them apart from the ship's company but on the other hand it would not be surprising if the men objected to having him in their mess.

The issue of coloured firemen had been considered by a House of Commons Committee in 1902. It was a delicate issue which raised arguments for and against the employment of Lascars and Kroomen as stokers. It was decided that any plan for their inclusion in the reserve should be left to the governors and the commanders-in-chief of the various naval stations. The committee considered that:

.....these coloured subjects of the King offered a reserve of stokers that should not be neglected, and that even Chinese firemen might be found in Hong Kong and Singapore who could be made useful.<sup>40</sup>

Clearly, in 1914 the R.N.R. Regulations had not incorporated this viewpoint. If these Asian and Chinese men, regarded as compliant and well disciplined, been able to physically tolerate the cold temperatures of the Arctic and Norwegian Seas, it might

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<sup>38</sup> AL R.N.R. Regulations (Men) 1910 + addenda (1912) Revised to 31 July 1914 Para. 20

<sup>39</sup> Duffy, M., (Ed.) *The Naval Miscellany: Volume VI* Navy Records Society (Aldershot, 2003) 403

<sup>40</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 81-82

have prevented the some disciplinary problems from Liverpool firemen which affected the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron.

An important R.N.R. development took place in 1910 when the Trawler Section was established. The Navy, although researching the subject, generally had a limited interest in mine warfare and had not seriously considered the task of sweeping mines to clear a channel. The problem had interested Admiral Lord Charles Beresford and whilst on a visit to Grimsby in 1907 he was intrigued by the possible use of fishermen and their craft for minesweeping. The towing of nets or trawl gear outboard was natural to these men, but for the deep sea man the idea of cordage and gear over the side was alien. Beresford championed the cause and not only was the Trawler Section created but the Admiralty was persuaded, after experiments with chartered craft, to order six trawlers for training purposes. The Trawler section, which had a modified but practical uniform authorised, would go on to be a most important part of the R.N.R.'s wartime contribution. Armed trawlers became the small ship 'workhorses' for the fleet.<sup>41</sup> Nine armed trawlers were attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron as shown in Appendix 5. When Battenberg wrote to the shipowners in 1903, his 'List A' specified eight different types of vessel to be taken up from trade but made no mention of using trawlers or drifters. Yet his 'List C' showed that of the 10,000 R.N.R. – 'the greater number of these are fishermen or engaged in the Coasting Trade.'<sup>42</sup> If these men had been used in large numbers to man vessels on Battenberg's 'List A', then the fishing and coastal trade would certainly have been disturbed and these men placed in larger vessels of which they had no experience. The formal creation of the Trawler Section must have prevented a number of square pegs finding round holes.

As the years 1900 to 1914 passed, the conditions of entry to the R.N.R. became less onerous, more sensible and more considerate to the officers, men and their employers. A more realistic and practical effort had been made to dovetail civilian employment with a potential Navy requirement. The last return prior to the war showed that on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1914 the R.N.R. rating strength was as follows:<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 94

<sup>42</sup> NMM P&O/11/30 Merchant Vessels in Wartime. Sutherland/Battenberg Correspondence 1903

<sup>43</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 102

<b>R.N.R.</b> Wireless Telegraph Operators	6
Engine-Room Artificers	513
Leading Seamen	197
Seamen	9,793
Leading Stokers	88
Stokers	4,733
Total	15,330

<b>Trawler</b> Skippers	111
<b>Section</b> Second Hands	152
Enginemmen	275
Trimmers	119
Deck Hands	368
<b>Total</b>	1,025

**Grand Total      16,355**

Fig.10 R.N.R Rating Strength 1.8.1914

The R.N.R. had come through many trials since its inception in 1852 but had reached a balanced state when called up in 1914. The prospect of promotion to rank of commander certainly made it more appealing to the deck officer. However, with the take up of liners as armed merchants cruisers in mind, the Navy List in December 1913 revealed a weakness: out of 1980 R.N.R. officers shown, only 300 were Senior Engineers, Engineers or Warrant Engineers.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, within this one reserve force, although all earning a living from sea employment, there were many different types of experience gleaned from very different trades and vessels. 'Home Trade' men were different people from those signing 'Foreign Going' Articles! It must be remembered that peacetime 'R.N.Rs' and temporary R.N.Rs' remained civilians until mobilisation or they accepted a temporary commission respectively.

#### **The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (R.N.V.R.)**

The impetus behind the creation of the R.N.R. came from a 'top down' approach by politicians. The Admiralty and naval officers had sought to meet their perceived need from the Mercantile Marine by actively trying to attract volunteers, sometimes using 'employer' pressure. In contrast, the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (R.N.V.R.) had its origins in a clear 'bottom up' approach. It was the individual civilian volunteers who begged the Admiralty to form them into an organised reserve force. Finally, the Naval

<sup>44</sup> NMM *The Navy List, January 1914.*

Forces Act of 1903 permitted the raising of a force of naval and marines volunteers.<sup>45</sup> The years 1880 to 1900 had seen an increase in the idea of voluntary service when the Territorial Army spawned many units with a 'city' or 'county' affiliation. It was not long before those with an interest in the sea, from all walks of life, sought to form some type of naval voluntary unit.

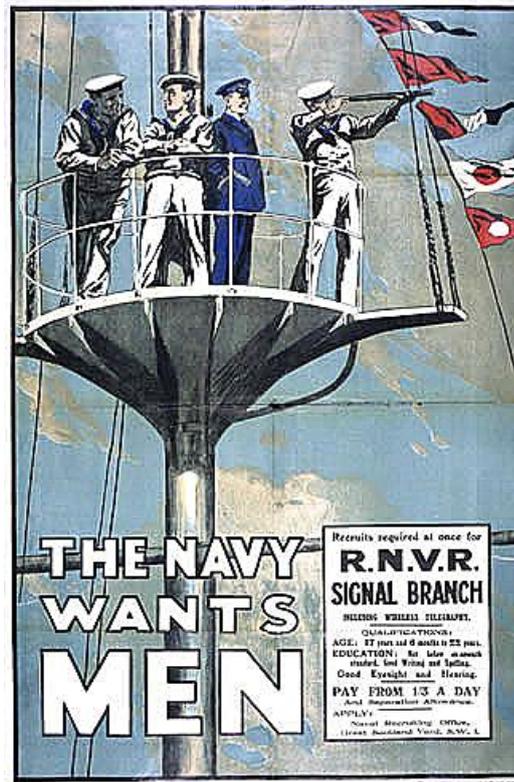


Fig.11 R.N.V.R. Recruitment Poster

The Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers (R.N.A.V.) existed from 1873 until 1892 but was not really wanted by the Navy. The R.N.R. had had a struggle for birth and the R.N.V.R. would repeat that struggle. The difference was that the volunteers needed for the R.N.R. were fragmented in companies and merchant ships, whereas the lobbyists for the R.N.V.R. were a united presence, mustering support from the public and luminaries such as Brassey and Beresford.. They just would not go away from the Admiralty's doorstep. The book 'The R.N.V.R.' by Messrs. Kerr and Granville describes the extent of the R.N.V.R.'s struggle.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the fact that many naval officers could not conceive of the idea that shore based volunteers would be of value aboard ship, the R.N.V.R. did survive and flourish.

<sup>45</sup> DL Public General Acts, 1903 Naval Forces Act, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1903, Ch.6 p.6

<sup>46</sup> Kerr, J. Lennox and Granville, W., *The R.N.V.R.* (London,1957) 53-65

Frequently pre-war this had been at great personal cost for some Divisions' Commanding Officers, who were often men of substance. By 1914, they were organised into regional divisions with either a drillship or drill hall available to them. The London Division R.N.V.R. had their drill ship, H.M.S. *Buzzard*, moored close to Blackfriars Bridge. The obvious zeal and enthusiasm of the volunteers soon caught the attention of the nearby Fleet Street press which nicknamed them the 'Blackfriars Buccaneers'.<sup>47</sup> The New Regulations for the R.N.V.R., published in 1909, saw the men no longer defined as 'efficient' and 'leading men'. Instead they became 'Ordinary Seamen,' 'Able Seamen' and 'Leading Seamen.' This was a significant move against the prejudices held out towards the R.N.V.R.. By now the force had over 4,000 officers and men spread over six divisions at London, Clyde, Bristol, Mersey, Sussex and Tyne.<sup>48</sup> When the war broke out, this was what was to become known as the 'Permanent R.N.V.R.' and it numbered 5,680.<sup>49</sup>

One myth, often repeated by historians that the R.N.V.R. was made up of rich yachtsmen needs to be dispelled. It was a very inclusive organisation drawing men from all walks of life, the intake often dictated by the local employment activities. Whilst London had a large number of professional men, in Liverpool, Glasgow and Bristol the great majority were working men from shipyards, workshops, high stools, and from behind counters. The London Stock Exchange and Law Courts components were made up of clerks as well as principals.<sup>50</sup>

When the R.N.V.R. and the Royal Fleet Reservists (see below) reported for duty there were no ships for them to man. Instead, Churchill found it expedient to form this body of men into The Royal Naval Division which fought, with great distinction, as part of the Army ashore.<sup>51</sup> Very few of this original part of the R.N.V.R. were to serve at sea. 'Crystal Palace Park' in South London was used as a mobilisation depot and when the Royal Naval Division moved to Blandford Camp in January 1915, it started to train wartime RNVR recruits for the Navy. Daily training revolved round basic seamanship in classrooms, gunnery, boat-work on the park lake in boats brought up from Chatham and communications, including wireless telegraphy as shown in the poster. In fact, some 8,000 new entries were trained as Signalmen and Wireless Telegraphists. During four and a half years some 5000 officers and 120,000 ratings received their preliminary

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<sup>47</sup> Taylor, G., *London's Navy* (London,1983) 32

<sup>48</sup> Kerr and Granville, *The R.N.V.R.* 76-77

<sup>49</sup> Mobilisation of the Royal Navy [www.gwpda.org/naval/mobrno2.htm](http://www.gwpda.org/naval/mobrno2.htm)

<sup>50</sup> Kerr and Granville, *The R.N.V.R.* 59

<sup>51</sup> Kerr and Granville, *The R.N.V.R.* 80-89

training at Crystal Palace.<sup>52</sup> These recruits became the 'Temporary R.N.V.R.', required for the duration of the war only and many of them came to serve in the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron as seamen. The R.N.V.R. would reach a total of over 40,000 in October 1918.<sup>53</sup>

Only 260 R.N.V.R. officers served on board ships larger than destroyers and sloops.<sup>54</sup> A small number of R.N.V.R. officers served with the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron. These were often Assistant Paymasters, R.N.V.R.. Some were former Army officers, whose injuries prevented their return to the Front, and they received R.N.V.R. commissions to carry out coding and decoding duties. Pre-war, the R.N.V.R. had always been open to recruits from many trades and walks of life. In the war, the Admiralty used the R.N.V.R. as an umbrella under which it could gather all those able to contribute a civilian or specialist skill for the Navy's purpose, for the duration of hostilities.

### **The Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve.**

The creation of the R.N.R. (1859) and R.N.V.R. (1903) had both been preceded by protracted political argument as to the need for their existence. The creation of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve (1902) suffered similar political birth pains.<sup>55</sup> The idea of having a Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve (NF R.N.R.) had sprung from the years prior to 1902, when the British Government was urging the colonies, such as Australia and Newfoundland, to take on a share of the Empire's defence.<sup>56</sup> Almost 'shamed' into action, Newfoundland's Prime Minister, Robert Bond, preferred a naval defence force if money had to come from Newfoundland's exchequer. In return Bond wanted to see St. John's developed as a cruiser base and a defended port from which the North Atlantic cables and grain traffic could be secured in time of war. It was also a practical viewpoint in that, he believed recruitment for a naval force would be easier from the fishing community. This proved correct, for numbers came forward. Sensibly, the annual training cruise to the West Indies, was timed to be clear of the peak fishing season. For the young men of Newfoundland it almost became a point of family honour to volunteer for the Reserve. Additionally, it provided an opportunity to visit places such as the West Indies and New York, when aboard the ships of the North American

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<sup>52</sup> Kerr and Granville, *The R.N.V.R.* 90-91

<sup>53</sup> Mobilisation of the Royal Navy [www.gwpda.org/naaval/mobrno2.htm](http://www.gwpda.org/naaval/mobrno2.htm)

<sup>54</sup> Kerr and Granville, *The R.N.V.R.* 114

<sup>55</sup> TNA ADM 128/112 Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve 1902 Aug.- 1913 Jan.

<sup>56</sup> BL Ransom, B., 'A Nursery of Fighting Seamen? The Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, 1901-1920' in Hadley, M.L., Huebert, R., Crickard F.W. (Eds.)

*A nation's Navy: in quest of Canadian naval identity* (Montreal, 1996) 239-240

[Ransom provides an excellent historical account of the NF R.N.R. from its inauguration to being finally disbanded in 1920]

Squadron. They soon earned the approval of the station commander, Commodore G. A. Giffard, R.N.. when he referred to them as being '... a formidable addition to our personnel.'<sup>57</sup>

In October 1902, H.M.S. *Calypso* arrived at St.Johns to be berthed there as a reserve drillship. She was an obsolete barque cruiser which had been refitted with modern armament and had a permanent team of twenty eight R.N. instructors. The Governor and local politicians saw great public relations benefit by developing the training facility in the island's main harbour. Whether by plan or accident the commanding officer selected was Commander F.M.Walker R.N., whose previous appointment was commanding officer of the reserves drillship H.M.S. *Gleaner* on the lower Thames. No doubt he had learnt that reservists need to be run from a 'different rulebook' if the best was to be drawn from them.<sup>58</sup> The NF R.N.R. flourished and in the early years recruits were almost always hardy fishermen. They were to be trained as seamen gunners and amongst their many training activities was an annual day long event of competitive rowing. This was held in August on Quidi Vidi Lake in St.John's. The Newfoundlanders consistently beat the teams from the R.N. Squadron, in which the NF R.N.R. had been given the nickname 'Quidi Vidi Lancers.' Thus, their boat handling skills as professional fishermen became almost legendary, enhanced by their success in these annual contests. Ransom records:

The Newfoundlanders were valued above all for an increasingly rare capability in traditional seamanship within a technologically complex steam-powered armoured fleet. Sentiments which remain valid even today.<sup>59</sup>

When war came in 1914, over 100 NF R.N.R. reservists found themselves aboard HMCS *Niobe* (Capt. Robert Corbett R.N.). Part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron under Rear Admiral Cradock, *Niobe* was tasked to blockade patrol off the Atlantic ports of the United States. The Newfoundlanders were in demand, since many of them had trained on heavy ordnance and there was a significant requirement for the boarding of intercepted merchant ships. Captain Corbett in a note to the governor of Newfoundland stated:

These men..... are almost unknown to me as defaulters. They are most able and willing, which speaks highly for their previous training.<sup>60</sup> The two

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<sup>57</sup> Ransom, *A Nursery of Fighting Seamen?* 241

<sup>58</sup> For King and Country – Stanley I Hillier and the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve [http://home.thezone.net/~ainal/for\\_king\\_and\\_country.htm](http://home.thezone.net/~ainal/for_king_and_country.htm)  
(Accessed 25/07/05)

<sup>59</sup> Ransom, *A Nursery of Fighting Seamen?* 246

<sup>60</sup> Their training in St.John's had included optional reading and writing classes every evening, skills not necessarily available throughout rural areas of Newfoundland.

Sea Boats are manned entirely by them and they have had constant work boarding ships in all weathers, and I am prepared to back them against any boats crew of the Imperial ships on the station.<sup>61</sup>



Fig.12 Newfoundland Reservists on wharf adjacent H.M.S. *Calypso*, circa 1914

By the summer of 1915, *Niobe* was taken off task and the Newfoundlanders were transferred to Britain to join other NF R.N.R.'s borne on the books of H.M.S. *Pembroke*, the Naval Barracks at Chatham, Kent. The Newfoundlanders were drafted into three main activities in the Royal Navy. Some, being trained gunners, were placed aboard Defensively Armed Merchant Ships which sailed independently on the Mediterranean and Indian trade routes. Others found themselves working with British fishermen who had formed the R.N.R. Trawler Section but the majority served aboard the armed merchant cruisers, particularly those of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron.<sup>62</sup> Like all reservists, they were more interested in getting an important job done rather than being immersed in the 'hierarchical ceremonial' so prevalent in the peacetime Royal Navy. In the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron, some 80 Newfoundlanders would lose their lives during the war.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Surgeon Probationers, R.N.V.R.**

In 1913 on the 19<sup>th</sup> December, an Order in Council established the officer rank of Surgeon Probationer, R.N.V.R. under the authority of the Naval Forces Act, 1903.<sup>64</sup>

The Navy recognised the shortage of medical officers and introducing Surgeon Probationers was an expediency to help relieve the situation. The idea was to encourage accredited medical students at recognised universities or medical schools to volunteer to serve for a minimum of six months or a maximum of five years. There was a good response from students, especially from Ireland, where conscription was never implemented during World War I.

<sup>61</sup> Ransom, *A Nursery of Fighting Seamen?* 248

<sup>62</sup> Ransom, *A Nursery of Fighting Seamen?* 249-250

<sup>63</sup> Ransom, *A Nursery of Fighting Seamen?* 251

<sup>64</sup> Orders in Council for the Regulation of the Naval Service. Vol. IX 11<sup>th</sup> February 1913 to 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1917

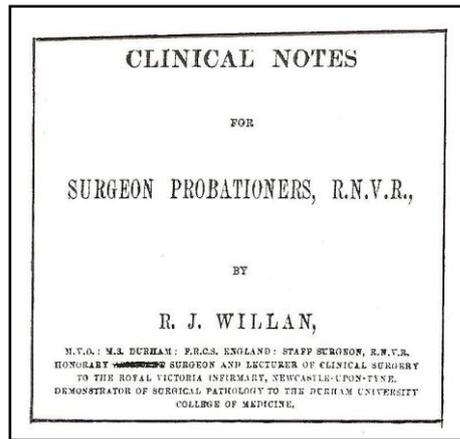


Fig. 13. Title page from R.J. Willan's book.

They were not to be used as substitutes for fully qualified surgeons but were to be employed principally to give first aid on board ship, and in naval hospitals and hospital ships acting as clinical clerks and dressers. They were to be found in destroyers, sloops and small escort vessels. In these cases they had medical charge of the ship's company but were always able to obtain advice from a fully qualified R.N. Surgeon. They wore the uniform of a Sub Lieutenant R.N.V.R. with the scarlet cloth of a surgeon beneath their single gold stripe and messed in the wardroom.<sup>65</sup> Their pay and conditions of service were identical to those of a Sub Lieutenant.

Their professional training was not forgotten and the regulations allowed them to be granted reasonable leave to take their final examinations. This was fixed at three weeks but where a probationer needed longer and requested demobilization this was never to be refused. The hope was that once qualified they would return to serve in the medical branch and to this end the fifth year students were released to qualify and their places taken by less advanced students. Surgeon Rear Admiral R.J. Willan R.N.V.R. wrote a book of Clinical Notes for their guidance. In it, he gave the following profound guidance:

In civil life the successful Practitioner is the one who does not consider it an indignity to have a second opinion about a case.<sup>66</sup>

The intake of Surgeon Probationers was strong for each of the war years and the fact that their introduction was conceived in 1913 showed a welcome degree of forward planning. In all, some 1029 students served as Surgeon Probationers.<sup>67</sup> All armed merchant cruisers in the 10th Cruiser Squadron carried a full surgeon or medical

<sup>65</sup> Allison, R.S., *The Surgeon Probationers* (Belfast, 1979) 9

<sup>66</sup> Allison, *The Surgeon Probationers* 64

<sup>67</sup> Allison, *The Surgeon Probationers* 118

practitioner. In addition, an analysis of probationer's names in Allison's book shows that twenty one ships of the Squadron also had a Surgeon Probationer appointed at one time or another. In all, twenty eight Surgeon Probationers served with the Squadron.<sup>68</sup> Five of the ships had more than one appointment, indicating the idea of release for examinations and replacement by new students seems to have worked in practice. The whole concept demonstrated the flexibility of using the Reserves to provide specialised manpower to the benefit of the Navy and the individual.

**The Royal Fleet Reserve.**

The Parliamentary Estimates for 1899 saw the issue of the Reserves under discussion again, with a proposal to increase the R.N.R. establishment by 1000. One M.P. proposed an increase in the establishment from 25,800 to 70,000 or even 80,000. This was abandoned on cost and significantly, to prevent disruption of trade should a call up be needed. The huge increase in Britain's Mercantile Marine had also coincided with an increase in foreign seafarers being employed, whilst the British nationals had declined from 182,000 to a little over 152,000.<sup>69</sup> Instead, the Naval Reserve Act of 1900, set up a new reserve force, the Royal Fleet Reserve (R.F.R.) with an establishment of 15,000.<sup>70</sup> This was a reaction to the German naval expansion under Rear Admiral Tirpitz after his appointment in 1897. In essence, the terms of the Act allowed naval pensioners to be recalled for duty and additionally, men enlisted in the Navy or marines could have their term of engagement extended, if required. Whilst no precise numbers can be found, the logbooks for the 10th Cruiser Squadron ships, frequently show R.F.R. men and pensioners joining the ships. These personnel were considered to be 'fully trained men'.

**The Royal Marines.**

Each Armed Merchant Cruisers had a Royal Marine detachment on board, in charge of a Non-Commissioned Officer. Typically, there were between 25 and 45 depending on the size of the AMC. As far as possible, Marine reservists were mobilised but soon reliance had to be placed on new recruits, no doubt attracted by posters such as that shown overleaf.

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<sup>68</sup> Allison, *The Surgeon Probationers* 119-139

<sup>69</sup> Howarth, S., *The Royal Navy's Reserves in War and Peace 1903-2003* (Barnsley, 2003) 5-6

<sup>70</sup> DL Public General Acts 1900, Naval Reserve Act, 8<sup>th</sup> August 1900, Ch.2 p.158



Fig.14 R.M. Recruitment Poster

The poster depicts Marines in tropical whites and protected by gun shields. In the real world, many of the Squadron's gun mountings had no such protection and tropical whites must have been a fantasy which invaded many minds in the Arctic and Norwegian waters. The logbooks at the National Archives reveal that men from both the Royal Marine Artillery as well as the Royal Marine Light Infantry were drafted to the Squadron. Apart from brief mention in the books by Admirals de Chair and Tupper, the only mention of these detachments in 'Royal Marine' literature is in Blumberg's record of the Royal Marines 1914-1919.<sup>71</sup>

### **The Mercantile Marine.**

Merchant seamen had always been considered a potential manpower reserve for the Navy. Being civilians they never wore uniform ashore and except on passenger ships, wore only rough working clothes at sea. In that sense, they were an invisible reserve.

To most naval men, the merchant seaman seemed only motivated by making money. But then that was the prime interest of their employers, the ship owners. The whole situation was complicated by different rates of pay between 'foreign going' and 'home' trades, which were further complicated by slightly differing rates between owners based at different ports. As recently as 1911, British Merchant Seamen had been embroiled in a bitter strike against the owners. The seamen's plight drew sympathy and support from the British dock and road transport workers, as well as seamen from

<sup>71</sup> Blumberg, H.E., *Britain's Sea Soldiers* (Devonport, 1927) 5

four other countries.<sup>72</sup> If the Squadron's armed merchant cruisers were to operate, they would need cooks, stewards and most important of all, firemen and trimmers from the Mercantile Marine. Fortunately, when the British Empire was threatened by war the owners and men of the British Mercantile Marine sank their very considerable differences and agreed to co-operate in the Country's service.<sup>73</sup>

The relations between owners and men had been in a low state for years. In August, 1914, British Shipping totalled approximately 20,000,000 tons; the personnel including officers and men numbered about 193,500, not counting fishermen and Lascars. Some 14,000,000 tons were controlled by members the Shipping Federation Ltd and a further 5,000,000 tons were controlled by the Liverpool Employers' Association. Thus two main employers' association controlled virtually the entire industry. In contrast the merchant seamen were fragmented into no less than nine organisations seeking to represent their members. Deck Officers (about 24,000) were organised in four separate Associations:

The Imperial Merchant Service Guild  
The Mercantile Marine Service Association  
The British Shipmasters' and Officers Protection Society  
The Association of Coastwise Masters, Mates and Engineers

On the Lower Deck there were roughly 37,200 Cooks and Stewards of whom a considerable number were organised in the National Union of Ship's Cooks, Stewards, Butchers and Bakers, though many Cooks and Stewards aboard tramp vessels were members of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union. Petty Officers, Sailors and Firemen numbered 106,500, of which 90% of were in the National Union of Sailors' and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

The best organised were the Engineers (about 20,600) being represented by only two Associations which probably reflected their experience of industrial relations when serving their shore based apprenticeships. These were:

The Marine Engineers' Association  
The Amalgamated Society of Engineers<sup>74</sup>

All the different factions of seafarer, felt certain their own union would best look after their own specialist interests. It was the perfect 'divide and rule' situation which

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<sup>72</sup> Hope, R., *A New History of British Shipping* (London, 1990) 345

<sup>73</sup> NMM Hopkins, C.P., "National Service" of British Merchant Seamen 1914-1919 (London, 1920) 3

<sup>74</sup> Hopkins, "*National Service*" 3-4 (Father Hopkins had long campaigned to improve seafarers conditions and he played an important part in ending the strike. His book, which is hard to locate, gives a first class detailed insight to the events of the time.)

suited the ship-owners very well. The owners were defeated in the strike but between 1911 and 1914, relationships between owners and men worsened. The Shipping Federation acknowledged that it had to reorganise to be in a better position to meet its antagonists in the future.<sup>75</sup> With bitterness like this festering under the surface, all the more credit is due for the declaration of co-operation for the sake of the country.

The Navy had to ensure that it could engage the merchant seamen it needed, particularly engine room personnel. When R.N. Captains were appointed to the *Armada Castle*, *Oceanic* and *Marmora* they were instructed:

.....that enquiries be made by these officers of the local Shipping Registrar as to what % additions to the rates of wages ruling at the Port are likely in his opinion to be necessary to ensure the prompt engagement of the mercantile crew.....<sup>76</sup>

On August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1914 a Conference held in Westminster proposed:

- (i) That the Admiralty should agree to authorise a flat rise of of £1 per month over and above the wages set out in the official wages book of the Union, dated June 1913, in all vessels requisitioned or chartered by the Admiralty during the present emergency
- (ii) That in that case the National Union, by their officers, will undertake to inform their branch officers throughout the United Kingdom that those are the rates to be observed during the period of requisition or charter by the Admiralty.
- (iii) Will use its utmost endeavour to furnish men required at such rates.<sup>77</sup>

In 1913, wages for an Able Seaman stood at from £5 to £5.50p per month; of Firemen and Trimmers at from £5.25p to £6 per month.<sup>78</sup> Doubtless the higher rates for Firemen and Trimmers reflected the demand from the near complete transition to steam and the very heavy physical and unpleasant work in the stokehold. The Admiralty was now coming to terms with the market forces in the real world of industry. These ratings signed a special agreement called T124, which whether they realised it or not, conveniently brought them under the Naval Discipline Act. Reading the small print was never a strong point for most merchant seamen. All too often merchant seamen were trusting when they should have been suspicious, and often suspicious of those seeking to help them.

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<sup>75</sup> Hopkins, "National Service" 4-5

<sup>76</sup> TNA MT/23/301 A.M.C.s Officers to Command these vessels. (T5302/1914)

<sup>77</sup> Hopkins, "National Service" 13-14

<sup>78</sup> Hopkins, "National Service" 7

In the main, the Union proved to keep their agreement of co-operation. One small incident arose with the Master of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company's *Teviot*, a transport, when he claimed difficulties from the local Official of The Seamens' and Firemens' Union in Dublin. The local Divisional Naval Transport Officer was asked by the Master, to 'prevent such action.' He in turn, sought help from the Transport Department which gave him a disappointing reply dated 10 December 1914:

With reference to your submission of the 7<sup>th</sup> instant, regarding the the signing on of crews of Transports, you are informed that it is not possible to take such action as you desire. Every effort should be made to avoid friction as the question of provision of crews is becoming very difficult.

This reply and a pencil note below the typescript - 'The unions on the whole have worked well with us' – summed up the position.<sup>79</sup>

Before leaving the Mercantile Marine there are other points to consider. The Engineers were usually retained aboard the AMC's by offering them 'temporary' commissions in the R.N.R.. Other Merchant Navy officers could be placed on a T124 agreement whereby they received owner's pay +15%. Most of the Squadron's Commanding Officers chose to encourage an AMC's peacetime Master to stay aboard in a 'navigational consultant capacity' and when this happened the Master was granted a 'temporary' commission as Commander R.N.R..<sup>80</sup> This was reverting to the 'Sailing Master' post of Nelson's day, and a practice which was repeated aboard the transport *Canberra* in the Falklands Campaign of 1982.

Finally, there was the question of Radio Officers. Wireless operators in the Merchant Service would not receive the title 'officer' until 1937, however, they did enjoy officer's accommodation and privileges from the time of their introduction at sea.<sup>81</sup> The Navy considered Wireless Telegraphists as a specialist communications rating so here was another anomaly for the Navy to consider for the AMC's taken up from trade. All the ships taken from trade were already fitted with wireless and the solution was to grant the operators the status of Warrant Officers.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> TNA MT 23/331 Union Interference (T15599/1914)

<sup>80</sup> TNA MT 23/325 Pay and outfit allowances granted to Merchant Service Officers in AMC's. Whether C-in-C's can grant acting promotion to officers belonging to Royal Naval Reserve when desirable. (T112960/1914 and T12643/ 1914)

<sup>81</sup> Hancock, H.E., *Wireless at Sea: the first fifty years* (Chelmsford,1950) 142

<sup>82</sup> Tupper, R., *Reminiscences* 227

**Royal Navy.**

When the *Edgar* class cruisers were de-commissioned some of the crews were transferred to the AMC's. It might have been imagined that R.N. ratings would have taken it on themselves to act as mentors for the Reservists. One reservist, although not in the Squadron, makes some valid points in that he noticed in the Army, - regulars, territorials and volunteers, 'were all one.' They all wore the same khaki and 'pips' on their shoulders whereas the Navy had many subtle features of uniform which differentiated the R.N., R.N.R. and R.N.V.R. officers.<sup>83</sup>

Service	Cap Badges	Sleeve Stripes	Midshipmen's Collar Twists	Buttons
<b>RN</b>	Crown and Anchor	Straight Stripes	White Patch with Gold Twist	Crown and Anchor
<b>RNR</b>	Crown and Anchor letters RNR super imposed	Narrow Interlaced Stripes	Blue Patch with Gold Twist	Crown and Anchor letters RNR super imposed
<b>RNVR</b>	Crown and Anchor letters RNV super imposed	Wavy Stripes	Red Patch with Gold Twist	Crown and Anchor letters RNV super imposed

Fig.15 RN, RNR, RNVR Officers' Uniforms compared

Previous experiences tended to accentuate the differences, for example the R.N. 'old hands' had often had sail training which set them apart. The R.N.R.'s would have their Merchant Navy interests to talk about and the R.N.V.R.'s with a stable shore based background were preoccupied with cricket or football match results. They were often given separate messes and in the logbooks the R.N. ratings were always referred to as 'Active Service'. No doubt there were many moments when the R.N.R., R.N.V.R. and Mercantile Ratings felt they were on equally active service. Whilst 'group loyalty' is always laudable, there would have been good grounds to discourage divisive cliques developing on a ship which might have to go into action whenever a neutral vessel was boarded.

The *Changuinola's* crew complement below, shows the typical variety of seafaring experience which would have to be moulded together on each of the Squadron's ships. The Royal Naval officers on board a Squadron ship would typically be the Commanding Officer of captain's or commander's rank, the Executive Officer usually a lieutenant commander plus a commissioned gunner and a paymaster.

<sup>83</sup> Moseley, S.A. *The Fleet From Within: Being The Impressions Of A R.N.V.R. Officer* (London,1919) 28-30

<b>Officers</b>	Royal Navy	4	
	Royal Naval Reserve	14	
	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve	1	19
<b>Petty Officers &amp; Men</b>	Royal Navy	22	
	Royal Fleet Reserve (both classes)	42	
	Royal Naval Reserve	35	
	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve	15	114
<b>Marines</b>	Royal Marines	6	
	Royal Fleet Reserve (both classes)	16	
	Pensioners	3	25
<b>Civilians</b>	Cooks, Stewards & Firemen	63	63
	Total		221

Fig.16 H.M.S. *Changuinola* -- Composition of Crew <sup>84</sup>

It can be seen, in conjunction with Chapter 3, that the long process of bringing together a fleet of ships and men from civil sources was ready, but only 'just in time'. The Hague Conference in 1907 had set out the requirements which allowed converted merchant ships to act as warships.<sup>85</sup> These are shown below:

Art.1. No merchant-ship converted into a warship can have the rights and duties appertaining to the status, unless she is placed under the direct authority, immediate control and responsibility of the Power whose flag she flies.

Art.2. Merchant-ships converted into warships must have the external signs which distinguish the warships of their nationality.

Art.3. The commander must be in the service of the state and duly commissioned by the competent authorities. His name must appear on the list of officers of the military fleet.

Art.4. The crew must be subject to the rules of military discipline.

Art.5. Every merchant-ship converted into a warship is bound to observe in its operations, the laws and customs of war.

Art.6. A belligerent who converts a merchant-ship into a warship must, as soon as possible, announce the conversion in the list of the ships of its military fleet.

By the time the names of the Squadron's ships were progressively published in the Navy List, the longest continuous World War One naval operation was already in the hands of Admirals de Chair and Tupper and the commanding officers of the Squadron.

<sup>84</sup> Brocklebank, J., Ed. *Tenth Cruiser Squadron Northern Patrol from the diaries and letters of Captain H.C.R. Brocklebank July 1914-August 1917* (Affpuddle, Dorset, 1974) 8

<sup>85</sup> Hall, L.A., *The Law Of Naval Warfare* (London, 1914) 22  
NMM 342.537 International Convention relative to the conversion of merchant ships into warships. signed at The Hague 18 October 1907 (London H.M.S.O 1910)

**Commanding Officers.**

Although the highest number of ships in the Squadron at any one time was 24, throughout the period 1914-1917 some 39 merchant ships would serve the Squadron, allowing for replacements. In that time, some 30 officers of captains rank with a typical seniority of 6¾ years and 25 officers of commanders rank with a typical seniority of 6½ years, served in command of these vessels. Eighteen of the ships had the same commanding officer throughout, but the rest had anywhere between two and five changes of commanding officer. The precise reason for the many changes of some commanding officers, at a time when stability would have helped cohesion, is not clear. The previous appointments of these officers reveals that five of them had served on board the *Edgar* class cruisers, two had been on the staff of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, three in Admiralty departments, two on loan to foreign governments, and the remainder in a variety of sea going or training establishment appointments. Two took post in these Arctic waters directly from service in the Mediterranean and one from the West African station.

This varied group of commanding officers were the ones who had the task of managing such a disparate group of seafarers and turning them into a team. Hopefully, they would recognise that the R.N.R. officers and engineers would have a degree of empathy with the Mercantile Marine ratings, thus creating another internal group interest. This must have been inevitable since at the end of the war they would all be employed for their former ship-owners again.

**The Need for an Identity.**

With so many varied origins and experiences amongst the crews, what was needed was a simple unifying idea that would uniquely identify them and their difficult work to the rest of the Navy. With former members of the 'Quidi Vidi Lancers' and 'Blackfriars Buccaneers' in the Squadron, the clue was in their midst. The closest land to the Squadron was often the most northern lighthouse in Britain, Muckle Flugga, and was a frequent reference landmark.<sup>86</sup> They needed a cohesive nickname and inspired by the lighthouse chose to be known as the 'Muckle Flugga Hussars'.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See Appendix 7

<sup>87</sup> Hampshire, A.C., *The Blockaders* 24

The armed merchant cruisers usually retained the vessel's peacetime master to serve as a navigational consultant to the naval commanding officer.<sup>1</sup> The civilian master's ship knowledge assisted the naval commanding officer and relieved him of some pressures whilst operating an unfamiliar type of vessel. It was a special and challenging relationship which required forbearance and cooperation between the two officers concerned. The masters were either already R.N.R. officers or were granted temporary commissions as R.N.R. commanders, if they agreed to serve. A shipmaster is expected to conduct his vessel safely to the satisfaction of the shipowner, shippers and insurers. Risk taking was not required in his personality or performance. Safety and compliance with company, national and international regulations were the ways to the top for the mail steamer master. There is nothing to suggest that ship owners hinted that masters should 'keep an eye on the Navy' whilst using 'their' ships. However, at least some of these long serving 'company servants', probably saw it as a self appointed task but one which needed to be kept in check.

In contrast, whilst a commanding officer in the Navy was not expected to risk his ship in any foolhardy way, it was accepted that a ship's loss or damage is sometimes a necessary sacrifice. A commanding officer, whilst required to comply with naval discipline and show good sense, was expected to have an extra personal spark and flair. The naval officer would have been used to competition throughout his service career to reach the top and the ultimate competition was to beat the enemy. The two types of personality could either gel successfully or clash disastrously. This relationship was a key factor in the first loss of the Tenth Cruiser squadron.

In addition to the eight *Edgar* Class cruisers, de Chair had responsibility (at least on paper) from 19 August 1914 for the armed merchant cruisers *Alsatian*, *Mantua*, *Oceanic* and *Teutonic*. At first, these vessels patrolled lines to the north east from Muckle Flugga in the Shetlands, depending on the number available, since one ship would be coaling at Liverpool at any one time.<sup>2</sup> Initially, de Chair seems to have focussed his attention on the *Edgar* cruisers. De Chair inspected the *Mantua* on 25 August 1914 at Lerwick and was impressed with the unused accommodation which he thought could carry away the wounded after a fleet action.<sup>3</sup> Whilst he agreed the armed merchant cruisers had considerable speed he felt that they had small 'fighting' value.

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<sup>1</sup> Hurd, A., *The Merchant Navy* Vol. 2 (London,1921) 122

<sup>2</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 Revised Arrangements for Cruiser Force B 19 August 1914 24-5

<sup>3</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 27 August 1914 11-21

Their duty was to report and shadow enemy war vessels, as well as stop and examine all merchant shipping. On 8 September 1914, little more than a month after the war had started; *Oceanic* was reported aground to the east of Foula Island and then abandoned as a total loss. This was 25% of the fastest vessels in de Chair's command and even with his diluted view of their capabilities, cannot have been welcome news.

### **The Loss of *Oceanic***

What then, had happened? No official records remain of the courts-martial proceedings against Captain W.F.Slayter R.N., Commander H.Smith R.N.R. and Lt.D.Blair R.N.R., the commanding officer, the *Oceanic's* former master and the navigating officer respectively. However, a close insight into the event and the personalities involved has been gleaned from press reports of the courts-martial, *Oceanic's* navigational log and individual biographies.<sup>4</sup> Whilst establishing the root cause of the grounding it lay in setting the wrong course at 0332hrs on 8 September, the landfall was not helped by fog and mist patches. The enquiries also revealed a stark lack of understanding between Slayter and Smith as to their professional relationship.<sup>5</sup> Smith had been on the bridge when the ship grounded but claimed his appointment as 'adviser' did not require him to be 'in command'. Smith considered himself appointed 'Additional for Special Service'. However, Slayter construed Smith as 'Additional not for Special Service' and accordingly had authorised Smith to take charge during daylight hours and he had done so on occasions prior to the grounding. The issue pivoted on Sections 188 and 189 of King's Regulations & Admiralty Instructions

**188. " Additional for Special Service."**- Captains and other officers of the Military Branch, borne on the books of any of His Majesty's ships as " Additional, for special or particular service," are never to assume the charge and command of the ships in which they are so borne, nor any other charge or command, except that which may appertain to the special or particular service for which they are borne, unless they receive from the Admiralty, or from the officer in command of a foreign station, express authority to the contrary.

**189. " Additional " not for Special Service.-** Captains and other officers of the Military Branch who are borne on the books of any of His Majesty's ships as "Additional," but not for any special or particular service, are to take rank and command in the ships in which they are so borne, and be considered generally, to all intents and purposes, as if they belonged to the complements of such ships.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> NMM Barnett, L., *An Embarrassing Loss – H.M Armed Merchant Cruiser Oceanic 8<sup>th</sup> September 1914* (London,2004)

<sup>5</sup> NMM Barnett, *An Embarrassing Loss* 14-18

<sup>6</sup> H.M.S.O., *King's Regulations & Admiralty Instructions - 1913 – Vol.I* 51

It was the loss of a fine ship. Fortunately, in one sense, it had come early in the operations. It must have alerted everyone, to these sensitive working relationships in the Squadron, especially when the Squadron came to rely exclusively on armed merchant cruisers after the removal of the *Edgar* cruisers. The Naval Historical Branch limited its report of the event as follows:

....on September 1 the *Oceanic* was detached to the Faeroes, and on return to the Shetlands went ashore on Foula Island on September 8 and became a total wreck.<sup>7</sup>

Slayter made the point that Smith's appointment had been by telegram and not by the usual written format. One outcome of the tragedy was that future masters were granted seniority dates and their appointments were as executive officers of the ships concerned. In this way the normal command precedence was established.

Although the fate of the *Oceanic* was not repeated in the Squadron, the differences in ethos appear in the diary of Commander H.C.R. Brocklebank R.N., commanding the *Changuinola*.<sup>8</sup> Brocklebank's diary and letters give an excellent idea of life in the Squadron. They also reveal Brocklebank concerned to introduce the 'chummy' atmosphere of an officers' wardroom mess aboard *Changuinola*. Such a communal atmosphere was seldom found aboard a merchant ship where shipmates are seen as 'Board of Trade acquaintances' rather than 'brother naval officers'. The former master, Lt.Cdr.A.H.Reade R.N.R., as Executive Officer would have been president of *Changuinola's* wardroom mess. Reade comes in for repeated criticism in Brocklebank's diary where he is thinly disguised as R.... . There was clearly a clash of personalities when Brocklebank wrote, 'Old R.... is a weak spot in the ship, not of much use as navigator and of no authority in the mess.'<sup>9</sup> As the former master in peacetime, Reade would have maintained his authority by aloofness and solitude, rather than being a team leader in more direct contact with the team members. Brocklebank's real feelings about the R.N.R. come to light with his entry:

I have been at sea in this ship for over two years now and feel myself sinking to the level of the R.N.R., good fellows, worthy and honest though they may be, constant association with them does not tend to liven any brain or thoughts one may have.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Naval Historical Branch Monograph No.19 *The Tenth Cruiser Squadron during the Command of Admiral De Chair 1914-1916* (London,1921) para.12

<sup>8</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* q.v.

<sup>9</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 40

<sup>10</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 45

Nevertheless, Brocklebank accepts he had to be tolerant and reveals a degree of compassion when he writes:

R.... gets more foolish daily; I hope I can stick him out for the rest of the war for his own sake, because if I sack him then Elders & Fyffes will follow suit and the poor old boy will starve.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly, the relationships and different cultures between commanding officers and former shipmasters in the Squadron was a difficult and vital challenge to be reconciled.

‘Being in all respects ready for sea’, was the time honoured preamble to Sailing Orders for naval commanding officers and masters in many mail ship companies. These simple, precise words transferred responsibility for the vessel’s seaworthiness, daily management and the execution of its defined task firmly in the hands of the commanding officer. His receipt for the orders, confirmed that he considered the ship ready for sea. However, few, if any ships, ever put to sea totally ready ‘in all respects’ and commanding officers, sometimes, tacitly accepted minor shortcomings in crew or ship. Many individuals in the Squadron already had wide seagoing experience, and understood the ‘ordinary practice of seamen’. However, these new orders triggered many individual and collective challenges in adjusting to routines required by ‘King’s Regulations & Admiralty Instructions’ and ‘Squadron Standing Orders’. All this had to be accomplished in unfamiliar waters, renowned for atrocious weather, whilst facing enemy threats.

### **A Harsh Baptism for *Caribbean***

Today, ships undergo a period of ‘work up’ to assist in team building before sailing on task. The Squadron was denied this luxury and as ships were converted, they sailed to their patrol areas immediately after storing, loading bunkers, adjusting compasses and gun trials. Training for their new role took place ‘on the job’ as the ships’ logbooks show. The logbook entry for *Caribbean* anchored at Liverpool on 23 December 1914, after satisfactory gun trials and compasses adjusted is typical of the start of a commission.<sup>12</sup> At 0930 p.m. the log shows ‘Tug *Wapping* arrived with Christmas presents’, *Caribbean* departed Liverpool on 24 December at 12.20 p.m. and next day on Christmas Day at 12.10 p.m. the ship was at sea, rolling 35° each way with 5 men on

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<sup>11</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 44

<sup>12</sup> TNA ADM 53 37068 Navigational Logbook *Caribbean*

sick report and the vessel frequently pounding.<sup>13</sup> On Sunday 27 December at 1.50 p.m. the log shows the reality of the situation:

‘Attempted to turn ship about. Failed . Ship rolled 41½°’.

By 8.55 p.m. the same day *Caribbean* had sighted Muckle Flugga Light.<sup>14</sup> On passage from Liverpool the logbook recorded trouble with her steering four times, losing a patent logline and having her propeller fouled by the wire from her sounding machine. It was a challenging introduction to life on patrol in the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, packed into only four days after weighing anchor in the Mersey.

Undaunted, Cdr.F.H.Walter R.N. started training aboard *Caribbean* on 30 December, when targets were dropped and all gun layers were given practice. These were short winter days packed with relentless gun drill, instruction on ammunition care and handling, pistol and rifle drill, fire control, sight setting and signalling for officers, midshipmen, ratings and boy seamen. Many R.N.R. and R.N.V.R. personnel would have had training but the need now was to bring performance to concert pitch. The R.F.R. personnel were considered to be already proficient. This schedule of ‘on the job training’ was demanded of each of the Squadron’s ships as they became available, very necessary to transform the attitudes of all aboard to the realities of war service. One exception was the occasional mention of sword drill. An entry on the afternoon of 15 March aboard *Caribbean*, shows - ‘Officers and Midshipmen at sword & cutlass drill.’<sup>15</sup> Such an instructional activity is a spectacle to watch on a perfectly still parade ground, but on the moving deck aboard a ship in a force 4-5 northwest wind it must have been close to circus clowning. The value of time spent on this ‘ceremonial’ was questionable given the circumstances in which the ship was working.

Adapting to the daily naval routines was a challenge felt most acutely by the Mercantile Marine ratings on board, mainly from the catering and engine room departments. The peacetime R.N.R. establishment had no requirement for stewards and cooks so these ratings were brought under the umbrella of special agreements known as T124. Although the peacetime R.N.R. had provided vacancies and training for officers and ratings from the engine room department, relatively few volunteered to join. However, since the R.N.R. provided a structure, it was possible to absorb them aboard the armed merchant cruisers as ‘temporary R.N.R.’s’, if they cared to volunteer. This expediency

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<sup>13</sup> TNA ADM 53 37068 and also reveals the 24 hour clock notation was not yet used.

<sup>14</sup> Muckle Flugga Light is the northern most light in the British Isles.

<sup>15</sup> TNA ADM 53 37069 Navigational Logbook *Caribbean*

would prove to have some problems later. Those not volunteering, were free to seek other employment in the Mercantile Marine. The most obvious difference to merchant ship life was the issue of Daily Orders laying down the day's activities. Allied to this, was the morning muster known as Divisions and the late afternoon muster known as Evening Quarters. At these assemblies, important notices and also punishment warrants were read out. None of this happened on a merchant ship. Most surprising to the mercantile ratings would have been the reading of prayers at these musters. No merchant ship documentation recorded a crew member's religion, it was a private matter. The only formal Christian service held aboard, would be on passenger ships when Sunday Divine Service was taken by the master in a public room. Officers not on watch, mainly pursers and cadets, were required to attend if they valued their future in the 'company'. Ratings were neither expected nor wanted at these services which were a 'Passengers Only' occasion. Mercantile ratings would have been very surprised that Daily Prayers and Divine Service on Sundays were to enter their lives. De Chair saw this as an important part of inclusiveness to help disperse any differences of attitude amongst the ratings. De Chair's successor Vice Admiral R.Tupper, who took over in March 1916, included the attendance of the Mercantile Ratings in the Squadron's Orders.<sup>16</sup>

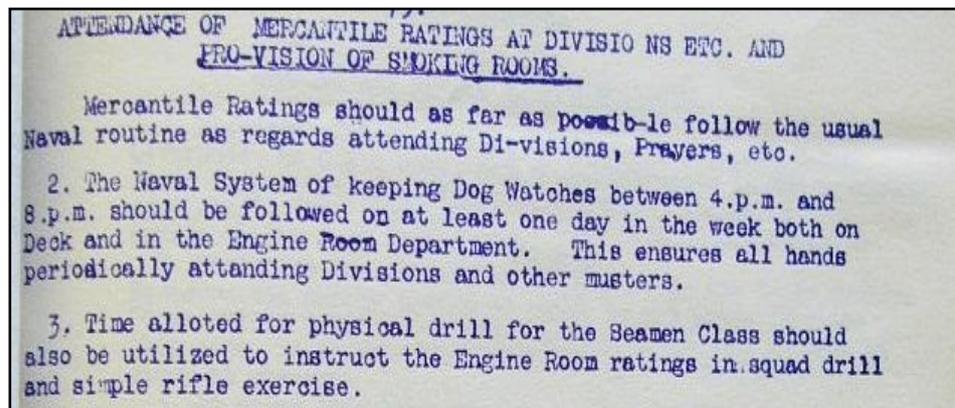


Fig.17 Extract from ADM 137/822 p.100

One further routine event which would bring home reality to all aboard, but more especially the Mercantile Ratings, was the regular reading of the 'Articles of War':

**729. Articles of War.**-The printed sheets containing so much of the Naval Discipline Act as relates to the punishment of offences, viz., the Articles of War, are to be displayed in an accessible part of the ship, for the information of the ship's company, to whom this portion of the Act is to be read quarterly, together with the last return of courts-martial received from the Admiralty.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders. 100

<sup>17</sup> BL H.M.S.O. King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions 1913 Art.729

Anyone hearing these solemn words for the first time, cannot avoid reflecting very seriously on the position in which they find themselves. The Articles are read on commissioning and repeated quarterly lest their meaning should be fading in any memories.

A wardroom steward, Ben Dack Rutland, aboard *Mantua* has recorded their impact on him in his diary:

Nov.22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday 1914 Had general parade [Divisions] the Captain read to us the Act of War we have to do very little wrong according to them to be shot .....<sup>18</sup>

Rutland had joined *Mantua* in January 1914 and completed three voyages between London and Bombay as a Bedroom Steward, before agreeing to continue serving after the ship had been requisitioned.<sup>19</sup> Although his diary only covers the three months Rutland served in the Squadron, its value lies in it being a rare mercantile rating's account of events from his perspective. He covered the weather and operations he observed, as well as his own concerns and fears.

In his *Reminiscences*, Tupper gives an insight into the detailed working of the Squadron. The daily routines and watch-keeping times are repeated in Appendix 8.<sup>20</sup>

Another change to routine for all on board would have been the practice of 'darken ship' from dusk until dawn. Portholes and doorways would have to shed no light on deck. Deck lights, which gave limited but adequate illumination to work on deck at night, would be switched off. Familiarisation with deck layout and fittings would become essential if injuries were to be avoided. Further reminders they were now at war in difficult circumstances.

### **Navigation.**

The bridge watch-keeping officers found themselves navigating in totally unfamiliar waters, although many were familiar with the actual vessels. Only officers from the North Atlantic services of Allan Line, White Star, Anchor and Furness Withy had regularly experienced constant 'heavy weather'. Although by 1914 gyro compasses were being fitted to H.M. warships, they were yet to appear aboard merchant ships.

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<sup>18</sup> NMM P&O /65/206 *Mantua* Contains diary record 20 Aug.1914-30 Nov.1914 by Ben Dack Rutland, Bedchamber Steward Entry 94

<sup>19</sup> TNA BT 165/892 *Mantua* (O.N. 127544) Period 2 Jan. 1914-30 Nov. 1914

<sup>20</sup> Tupper, R., *Reminiscences* (London,1929) 235-237

In 1914 navigation was not the featherbed of electronic aids in use at the end of the century. Such electronic aids were beyond the imagination of the Squadron's officers. Navigation in 1914 was more labour intensive than today. Safe navigation relied on the traditional 'lead, logline and lookout', combined with a well adjusted magnetic compass and Admiralty paper charts. If terrestrial or celestial observations were unavailable, then reliance had to be placed on efficient dead reckoning to derive estimated positions. These needed human assessment of currents, the wind effects and a proper leeway allowance. In a confused following sea with the ship zig-zagging, loglines streamed astern often fouled and had to be cleared. Clearing a fouled logline would take two or three men up 20 minutes to recover and re-stream whilst balancing themselves on a moving deck. Significantly, when *Oceanic* grounded, her logbook showed the patent logline had not been streamed for many days previously. Possibly, her 'hourly distances run' were calculated from engine room revolutions or merely estimates. It would be some years before the 'patent' log which towed a brass rotator astern to notch up the distance run was replaced by better technology.

In 1915 depths were measured using either a hand-lead, deep-sea-lead or the patent sounding machine. Hand-leads required a party of two men, with the ship moving only very slowly ahead. The deep-sea lead required the ship to be stopped and a party of 10 men. Slow moving or stopped ships were easy prey for German submarines as de Chair had experienced when the *Hawke* was torpedoed on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1914.<sup>21</sup>

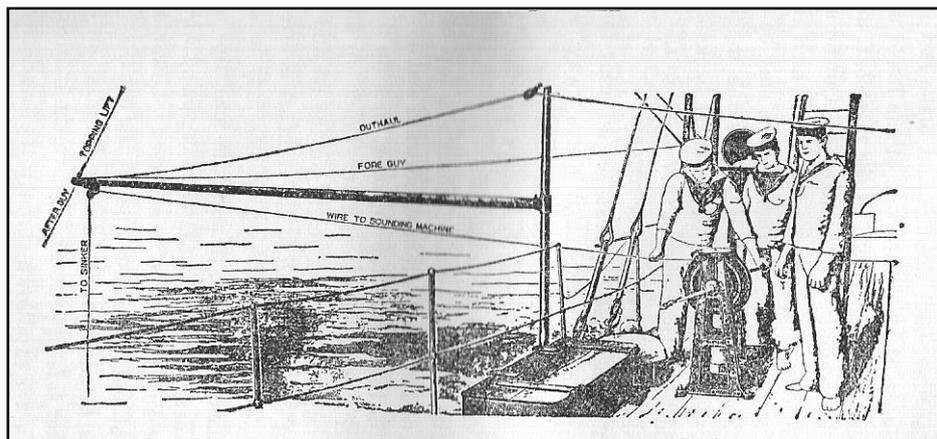


Fig.18 Patent Sounding Machine

Well found ships were fitted with patent sounding machines which could be used when the ship was under way at normal speed. Hand driven and electric models were

<sup>21</sup> TNA ADM 137/997 Rosoman to Miller 17 October 1914 14-15

available. In each case the actual reading was taken by an officer or midshipman. Steaming in 20 fathoms (120 feet) of water at a speed of 10 knots soundings can be easily obtained continuously once a minute, and in 10 fathoms (60 feet) once every half minute.<sup>22</sup> The sounding party would need two or more ratings as well as a supervising officer.

When making a rendezvous, the flagship *Alsatian* and other vessels had to rely on meticulous dead reckoning navigation. Consequently, we see repeated references in the logbooks to the magnetic compasses being frequently swung to verify deviation. Compasses were affected as the ships were now configured very differently from peacetime. Armament and ammunition, ballast, additional bunkers and a derrick regularly topped for boat launching and recovery. Additionally, patrol work required frequent alteration of course in unfamiliar latitudes, where cloud often prevented taking sun azimuth bearings to check compass deviation. When the base at Swarbacks Minn was established, a heeling error instrument was available, on loan from *Gibraltar*, to help with compass correction.<sup>23</sup>

Another concern was collision avoidance, especially when the Squadron's ships showed only dimmed or even no navigation lights, as was usual for warships in wartime. Neutral vessels trying to avoid the patrolling cruisers, were not averse to steaming as darkened ships with no navigation lights, a practice not permitted by the Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea. A proper lookout was not only needed for collision avoidance but also for sighting mines or submarine periscopes.

### **New Technology- Electricity and Wireless Telegraphy.**

Two aspects of recent technology which affected the Squadron were electricity, and wireless telegraphy. From 1870, the Navy had increasingly used electric power aboard ship for functions such as gunnery control and searchlights to illuminate targets.<sup>24</sup> A Captain H.B.Jackson, R.N., torpedo and electrical specialist, was given command of

H.M.S. *Defiance*, the torpedo school at Plymouth in 1895. Here, Jackson pursued his experiments with wireless waves and constructed a wireless set by the end of the year.

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<sup>22</sup> H.M.S.O., *Manual of Seamanship Vol.1* (London,1908) 141

<sup>23</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders. 69

<sup>24</sup> Hezlet, A., *The Electron and Sea Power* (London,1975) 25

In 1896 he met Signor Guglielmo Marconi. From this point the two men worked closely in a state of ‘competitive cooperation’.<sup>25</sup>

When wireless sets became viable, a network of commercial shore stations was developed by Marconi. Similarly, the Navy developed shore stations, firstly in Home Fleet waters and then further afield. Marconi rented out wireless sets to shipowners, together with one of the company’s employees as the operator. Thereafter, there was a ‘traffic charge’ calculated on the message activity. The loss of the *Titanic* in 1912 and the part wireless had played in it, gave a boost to the acceptance of wireless aboard merchant ships. The extent of progress by 1913 can be seen below:

Year	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Installations	143	250	303	580	686

Fig.19 Shipboard Marconi Stations 1913<sup>26</sup>

In 1906 The International Radio Telegraphic Conference in Berlin had set up the procedures for the conduct of wireless communications. Matters such as allocating operating frequencies, traffic lists and call signs needed to be documented if the technology was to succeed in an orderly way.<sup>27</sup> The introduction of the half hourly three minute silence periods, to allow any distress calls to be heard without interference, stemmed from the 1912 London Radio Conference.

The Navy’s 1906 exercises brought home the need for wireless discipline.<sup>28</sup> The need to use succinct, clear, and accurate messages had always been a requirement for the naval communications. The new technology seemed to encourage redundant and useless clutter which degraded the effectiveness of a wireless network.

In 1907, the Admiralty issued the ‘Instructions for the Conduct of W/T Signalling’ which allowed for international requirements as well as the particular needs of the Royal Navy.<sup>29</sup> The instructions required the use of visual signalling by flags and light

when possible since this was actually quicker than W/T. This inclination to lax W/T discipline was not confined to the Royal Navy. Hezlet records the chaotic scene in the U.S.Navy in 1908.<sup>30</sup> Wireless telegraphy would prove to be the vital technology for the

<sup>25</sup> Hezlet, *The Electron and Sea Power* 26-32

<sup>26</sup> Hancock, *Wireless at Sea* 77-78

<sup>27</sup> Hezlet, *The Electron and Sea Power* 63

<sup>28</sup> Hezlet, *The Electron and Sea Power* 61-62

.....that the working of the W/T was most inefficient, not because it didn’t work but because of the enormous number of useless and obsolete messages transmitted which had to be received and decoded.

<sup>29</sup> Hezlet, *The Electron and Sea Power* 64

Tenth Cruiser Squadron, and the challenge to control the 'human element' in the new W/T technology remained unchanged in 1914.

The 'Grand Fleet W/T Memoranda' No.1 dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 1915 entitled 'General Instructions For The Use Of Wireless Telegraphy' repeated all the points made above together with reinforcements by Jellicoe such as: <sup>31</sup>

.....the Admiralty informs me that Officers will be held personally responsible for any misuse of wireless telegraphy in the Squadrons and ships under their command.

.....Serious notice will be taken hereafter of disregard of instructions in this matter,

.....impress on flag and commanding officers the necessity for adequate supervision of telegraphist staff in ships at all times.

.....Under no circumstances are private messages to be transmitted ...

It followed that radio discipline in the Navy, directly affected the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. In fact, Many of the Grand Fleet cautions were repeated by de Chair and Tupper in their Squadron Orders. Referring back to the Grand Fleet W/T Memoranda, the Squadron Orders state:

..it is essential that the procedure thereto laid down should be rigidly adhered to. <sup>32</sup>

Thus wireless telegraphy in the Royal Navy had brought the need for good radio procedures. This was not a problem in merchant ships. The cost of Marconi outward messages fell to the shipowner and no master signs away the owner's money without good cause and proper receipts. Some masters of cargo ships resented paying a crew member just to be available to send a message in the event it was needed.<sup>33</sup> In the Royal Navy the whole concept was perceived as 'free' and officers who had been used to 'making a visual signal' from ship to ship had not adjusted to the new technology's implications. Being ready for sea in 1914, meant observing wireless discipline.

The RMSPC had started fitting Marconi sets to their new 'A' class ships in 1908. In the same year P&O's *Mantua* was fitted with wireless and in 1910 Bibby Line's

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<sup>30</sup> Hezlet, *The Electron and Sea Power* 66

Radio discipline was practically non-existent. Operators made no effort to reduce power when sending messages over short distances and interference was frequent. Ships often simply shut down their radios at sea so as to avoid receiving undesirable orders. Moreover there was a great deal of 'operator conversation' and the sending of unauthorised private messages.

<sup>31</sup> TNA ADM 137/342 Grand Fleet W.T Memoranda 1 November 1915

<sup>32</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders. 15 July 1915

<sup>33</sup> Hancock, *Wireless at Sea* 219

*Gloucestershire* was among many others.<sup>34</sup> When the Squadron received the vessels from trade they were already fitted with Marconi sets which had a range of 150 miles. These were considered inferior to the Navy's sets, nevertheless, the ships had arrived in a 'ready to go' status when taken up.<sup>35</sup>

In May 1914, *Alsatian* had been fitted with an early experimental radio direction finder. Initially, its value appeared limited, mainly because no one aboard knew how to operate it.<sup>36</sup> The fast development of wireless communications in the years leading up to the war had revealed the directional attributes of radio waves.<sup>37</sup> In time, the *Alsatian's* radio direction finder was improved and operators developed the necessary skills to give a more effective performance. There were many occasions when a rendezvous, in poor visibility, was made between the flagship, *Alsatian*, and other ships as a result of her direction finder. Later, both *Otway* and *Teutonic* were fitted with direction finders. Thus the Squadron was reasonably well placed with means of inter-ship and ship to shore communications in this, the first war where both belligerents used electronic warfare. The ships also received nightly broadcasts from the Marconi station at Poldhu in Cornwall with censored news on the war's progress which was passed to the ships' companies. Individual commanding officers frequently used W/T to counter isolation in the absence of squadron meetings. Although forbidden, this 'chatter' seems to have been tolerated, for Brocklebank only twice mentions 'wireless silence' being imposed in a span of two and a half years.<sup>38</sup>

Providing skilled W/T operators was a major challenge for the Navy which turned to the Marconi Company for support. Marconi wireless operators were trained to both operate and maintain W/T equipment. These men were transferred in their hundreds from the merchant ships to warships ranging from battleships to armed trawlers.<sup>39</sup> However, expediency usually brings its own problems and the Mercantile Marine was left bereft of wireless operators. Most merchant ships normally had only a single operator in time of peace; the matter was worsened by the requirement to place two operators aboard, to maintain a twenty four hour watch system in wartime. The demand for operators was further increased when vessels between 1600 and 3000 tons

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<sup>34</sup> Hancock, *Wireless at Sea* 47

<sup>35</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to C-in-C Grand Fleet 2 January 1916 422-31

<sup>36</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to C-in-C Grand Fleet 2 January 1916 422-31

<sup>37</sup> The directional attributes can be experienced on a modern portable radio by rotating the set

<sup>38</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 6

<sup>39</sup> Hancock, *Wireless at Sea* 88

which had previously been exempt, were required to be fitted with wireless.<sup>40</sup> Marconi started a recruitment campaign to enrol young men for training at the company instruction centres to meet this need. In addition, Marconi was contracted to provide W/T training in naval establishments and one of the largest was at Crystal Palace in South London. The R.N.V.R. had recently introduced a Signals Branch and many of these reservists considered themselves lucky to be drafted to the Fleet rather than the Royal Naval Division. The new demands of a prolonged war together with casualties meant that a new generation of wartime R.N.V.R. signalmen and telegraphists had to be trained. The initial needs of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron for W/T personnel had been dealt with by de Chair. The Marconi operators declined to serve in the Navy as Chief Petty Officers, their point being that assistant pursers and junior engineers were being granted commissions. De Chair set about getting telegraphic approval from the Admiralty for the men to be engaged as Temporary Warrant Telegraphists R.N.R., a posting which became increasingly seen in the Navy Lists of the time. De Chair's supportive comment was that:

.....the men appeared to be socially and intellectually quite as worthy of commissions as the majority of other mercantile officers who had received them,.....<sup>41</sup>

No doubt the Marconi Company's selection process and the men themselves, had they known of this assessment, would have felt reassured. Twenty five operators were secured with the help of Marconi's Liverpool office prior to sailing.

The Tenth Cruiser Squadron's need for W/T personnel was reflected throughout the Fleet and the temporary R.N.V.R. trainees from Crystal Palace were absorbed into ships' companies as quickly as possible. The approved W/T complement for ships of the Squadron was four.<sup>42</sup> In the early stages of the war one of these would have been a Boy Telegraphist but by December 1916, any Boy Telegraphists were 'additional' to complement. Commanding Officers were required to ensure Boy Telegraphists started watch-keeping as soon as possible. A Boy Telegraphist unable to keep a watch by himself when 17 years and 3 months had to be reported to the Flag Officer.

The aim was to have them fit for advancement to Ordinary Telegraphist by the age of 17½ years and once advanced, they would be eligible to be drafted elsewhere in the

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<sup>40</sup> Hancock, *Wireless at Sea* 88

<sup>41</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to C-in-C Grand Fleet 2 January 1916 422-31

<sup>42</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders. AMC W/T 18

Fleet.<sup>43</sup> Thus, like all other ships in the Grand Fleet, the Tenth Cruiser Squadron was challenged to share in the training of telegraphists to benefit all from the new wireless age. De Chair wrote a long report on the use of W/T in the Squadron in 1916.<sup>44</sup>

### Naval Aviation.

The other significant technological advance had been the rapid growth in naval aviation. When war seemed inevitable there was concern that Germany might attempt a landing in the Shetlands. The Army was keen that the military forces should have a joint operation with the Navy.<sup>45</sup> Vessels were sailed from Scapa Flow on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1914 for the islands. Initially, in addition to commanding the *Edgar* class cruisers, de Chair had to help set up an R.N.R. force to assist in the defence of the Shetlands. The extra commitment towards the defence of the Shetlands must have distracted some of his attention from the seagoing task of the Squadron. In September, 1914 Vice Admiral Sir Stanley Colville was appointed to the new command of Admiral of the Orkneys and Shetlands and no doubt made a welcome reduction to de Chair's personal workload.<sup>46</sup> The joint discussions on the Shetlands defence in 1914, had revealed the berthing of two seaplanes in Lerwick harbour was feasible.<sup>47</sup> De Chair may have been thinking about the potential for seaplanes to provide reconnaissance to spot submarines and vessels for boarding. Jellicoe was known to be keen to embrace aviation into his command.<sup>48</sup> The matter of aerial resources for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron was not raised until 1916.

On 23 September 1915 Admiral Beatty arranged for sea-going balloon tests at Rosyth under the supervision of Rear Admiral Hood. Carried out aboard the seaplane carrier *Engadine* the tests proved a balloon could be towed successfully as speeds up to 22kts and could easily reach a height of 3,000ft. In an enthusiastic report to Beatty on the tests, Hood wrote:

I think I have proved the value of the kite balloon for reconnaissance purposes; in a suitable vessel the strategic and tactical value will be very

great; at 3,000ft there will be a radius of vision of 60 miles and the communication will not be of the sketchy kind in use from aeroplanes, but will be conversation by telephone from a skilled observer sitting

<sup>43</sup> TNA ADM 137/342 Grand Fleet W/T Memoranda 19

<sup>44</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to C-in-C Grand Fleet 2 January 1916 422-31

<sup>45</sup> Naval Historical Branch Monograph No.19 *The Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 12

<sup>46</sup> Temple-Patterson, A., (ed.) *The Jellicoe Papers, Vol.1 (1893-1916)*  
Navy Records Society (Greenwich,1966-68) 198

<sup>47</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 27 August 1914 11-21

<sup>48</sup> Layman, R.D., *Naval Aviation in the First World War* (London,2002 Edn.) 102-3  
He was more concerned to have the means to bring down Zeppelins rather than aerial reconnaissance.

comfortably in a basket, to a responsible officer in a balloon ship, who with efficient W/T and all signal books and code books at hand, will rapidly signal by the most efficient method the information.....<sup>49</sup>

The results appeared promising but an important omission was no mention of the weather conditions at the time. One particular benefit was telephone communication with the balloon observer which promised to be better than contemporary aircraft radio. The visibility range achieved pointed to potential benefits for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron in sighting shipping to intercept.

Prolonged stays in port for repairs gave Flag Officers time to visit the Foreign Office and the Admiralty to discuss Squadron matters. On 5 July 1916 Tupper visited the Royal Flying Corps at Roehampton. Here he ascended to 1000 feet in a balloon. He was clearly attracted to the idea and calculated that a balloon ship could cover a gap in the patrol of 120 miles which had to be left open on occasions.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, Tupper had some success in his plans since his reports for 25<sup>th</sup> July, stated:

The Commander-in-Chief informed me that *Campania* would be available to carry out experiments with a kite balloon between the Faeroes and Shetlands on 28 & 29 July, but this had to be postponed owing to engine defects developing in *Campania*. It is proposed that *Alsatian* should attend these experiments when they take place.<sup>51</sup>

These experiments were planned for mid-summer, when fogs were prevalent and one wonders whether the prospect of being aloft in the winter gales would have been practical. Whilst an increase in the range of visibility to spot ships seemed attractive the converse was that neutrals were equally able to spot the balloons above the horizon and take avoiding action.

Tupper persisted, for when *Alsatian* was in Liverpool for refitting he reported on 15 September 1916, during the refit, a steam winch was fitted aft on the upper deck for the purpose of working a man lifting Kite or Kite Balloon. The man-lifting Kites had not yet been received.<sup>52</sup> Kite Balloons did not emerge again until November 1917. By now the Squadron was being redeployed and Tupper submitted proposals for a reduced number of ships to patrol. Clearly, now convinced about aviation he proposed:

Whilst in harbour at Scapa the three Armed Merchant Cruisers could be fitted by dockyard hands for carrying numerous aircraft-a sketch is attached regarding *Alsatian* to carry say 18 aeroplanes and two kite balloons...

<sup>49</sup> Layman, *Naval Aviation in the First World War* 120-21

<sup>50</sup> TNA ADM137/298 Tupper to Admiralty 16 July 1916 287-99

<sup>51</sup> TNA ADM137/298 Tupper to Admiralty 25 July 1916 314-22

<sup>52</sup> TNA ADM137/298 Tupper to Admiralty 15 September 1916 372-87

The proposals were overtaken by the progressive transfers of cruisers to convoy escort duty and the possible excursion into naval aviation for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron was over.<sup>53</sup>

Naval aviation also attracted the attention of many young naval officers, including one aboard the *Changuinola*. Commander Brocklebank's letter dated 27 April 1916 reveals:

Tom Smith my best Lieutenant has asked for a recommend for the flying corps but he came at a bad time, as in addition to being up till 1.30 last night, I had a glass of sherry at dinner with the consequent liver this morning so his request was refused: but I really can't afford to lose all my decent people and get mates of colliers in their place.<sup>54</sup>

The refusal may have had its roots in an earlier letter from Busta Voe, dated 24 February 1916 when Brocklebank wrote:

Last month I recommended Carroll for submarines and now to my disgust they have taken him and I lose my best Lieutenant. Everyone is now clamouring to go so I have caused it to be published in the ship that in future I only recommend people whom I want to get rid of as useless!<sup>55</sup>

Brocklebank reveals an element of snobbery towards the Mercantile Marine when he baulks at the prospect of a 'collier mate' in the wardroom. Such men were usually excellent seamen. The multiple requests for transfers to submarines and one for flying, may have been youthful desires for further adventures or perhaps a desire to escape from *Changuinola* or even Commander Brocklebank.

### **Shore Support.**

Whilst the individual commanding officers were responsible for ensuring individual ships were ready for sea, it fell to the Flag Officers de Chair and his successor Tupper to ensure there was shore support for the ships. For many of the cruisers, the Clyde and Liverpool were their peacetime home ports and well honed coaling and repair facilities were there to ensure as quick a turn round as possible. Since the armed merchant cruisers had been selected, in some haste, from merchant ships already in British ports it made sense to use existing facilities until a better solution could be found. A Base Office was opened in Liverpool under the auspices of the Senior Naval Officer there.<sup>56</sup> This carried out administrative work for the Squadron generally and particularly for ships in that port for repairs or coaling.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> TNA ADM137/1910 Vice Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS to C-in-C Grand Fleet 15 November 1917 382

<sup>54</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 39

<sup>55</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 38

<sup>56</sup> Rear-Admiral H.C. Stileman RN SNO Liverpool w.e.f. October 1914 *Navy List 1915*

<sup>57</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 9 March 1915 121-43

The average distance from the patrol areas to the Mersey was a distance of at least 600 nautical miles each way. Prior to the armed merchant cruisers being requisitioned the *Edgar* class cruisers had coaled at Busta Voe from colliers sent there for this purpose. De Chair needed a northern base in order to save the coal used on long passages back to the Clyde or Mersey as well as maximising time on patrol for the Squadron. Furthermore, there was a growing threat from mines and enemy submarines to Squadron ships on passage to and from home ports. Busta Voe, like Olna Firth, was an inlet leading off the strait of Swarbacks Minn on the west coast of the Shetlands.<sup>58</sup> At first de Chair looked at West Loch Roag in the Hebridean Isle of Lewis but Swarbacks Minn was to be preferred.<sup>59</sup> The personal contacts and the familiarity with the islands de Chair made at the start of the war would prove invaluable when he proposed setting up this base in the Shetlands for the Squadron. To keep the vessels at sea for the maximum time any forward base would need good coaling facilities with fresh water easily available for both boiler and domestic use.



Fig.20. Two six-inch 1st World War guns with emplacements guard the entrance to Swarbacks Minn naval base for the 10th Cruiser Squadron.<sup>60</sup>

On 16 April 1915, the Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleets wrote to the Admiralty supporting de Chair's recommendation to develop a northern base at Swarbacks

<sup>58</sup> Swarbacks Minn is the straight between Papa Little and the further island on Muckle Roe and means 'The Strait of The Black Backed Gull'. Chart 1119 Lat.60°20.5'N. Long.1° 25'W.)

<sup>59</sup> De Chair, D.R., *The Sea is Strong* 210

<sup>60</sup> [www.stmagnusbay.shetland.co.uk/Scenery.htm](http://www.stmagnusbay.shetland.co.uk/Scenery.htm)

Minn.<sup>61</sup> The anchorage at Swarbacks Minn was surrounded by a remote hinterland its great advantage was being adjacent to Squadron patrol areas. Additionally, the entrance was easier and less dangerous than that of Loch Roag, all key points made in a letter to Admiral H.F.Oliver, Chief of the Admiralty War Staff.<sup>62</sup> Final Admiralty approval came on 21 May 1915, and Swarbacks Minn was to become a new naval base with Rear Admiral W.B. Fawckner appointed Senior Naval Officer after de Chair's recommendation.<sup>63</sup> Significantly, Fawckner had had dockyard experience in berthing and handling ships. Since his retirement he had been in charge of the coaling station at Perim, an island near the southern entrance to the Red Sea possessing a large natural harbour. Fawckner seemed an ideal choice for Swarbacks Minn. The new naval base at Swarbacks Minn, in addition to providing coal and water, needed defence and this was given immediate attention. The first priority was for anti-torpedo nets to protect the entrance, together with the necessary trawlers and drifters. The Squadron had a coal consumption of 1600 tons per day and de Chair wanted four colliers always available in the anchorage. In addition, he foresaw that a coal barge was needed to bunker the drifters and trawlers, water piped to a pier and water barges for its transfer to the cruisers. Lookout posts connected by telephone were set up. A Hospital Ship and Frozen Meat Ship were called for and central to these demands was that the decommissioned *Edgar* cruiser *Gibraltar* was to be brought to Swarbacks Minn. *Gibraltar* was to act as a depot and repair ship and provide W/T facilities for the Senior Naval Officer. The *Gibraltar* became home to 250 R.N.R. Firemen, mainly with gas company experience, who assisted with the thankless and never ending job of coaling the cruisers as they came in.<sup>64</sup>

On occasions the ships used Loch Ewe on the west coast of Scotland for coaling, where there was an established naval presence.<sup>65</sup> Those ships with limited bunker capacity would continue to use Loch Ewe for coaling and as an alternative to either Swarbacks Minn, the Clyde or the Mersey. A pattern is indicated, certainly for *Changuinola*, whereby a week's stay in Glasgow would be followed by three or four cruises when coaling would be at Busta Voe before a return to Glasgow.<sup>66</sup> The flag officer aboard *Alsatian*, or in his absence then the second in command of the Squadron, had to keep a

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<sup>61</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiralty 16 April 1915 200

<sup>62</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 de Chair to Oliver 5 May 1915 203-6

<sup>63</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 Admiralty to C-in-C Home Fleet 21 May 1915 215

<sup>64</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 9 July 1915 203-24

<sup>65</sup> Admiralty Chart 2635 Lat. 57° 50'N. Long. 5° 40'W.

<sup>66</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 41

meticulous check on the coal stocks of all ships. This was one of the items of Squadron administration which fell to the flag officers staff, which were carried above *Alsatian's* normal complement. Squadron Standing Orders required ships to report to the Senior Officer when their coal stocks had only forty percent remaining.<sup>67</sup> This allowed planning to rearrange patrols and send ships in to Busta Voe, where there was a stockpile of 5000 tons, or send the ship to the Clyde or Mersey.<sup>68</sup>

**De Chair Removes Unsuitable Ships.**

IN 1908 de Chair had started a three year appointment as Assistant Controller at the Admiralty. His work had centred on ship construction, repairs and alterations to ships visiting Navy Dockyards and private shipyards.<sup>69</sup> Earlier between 1903 and 1905 he had made six transatlantic crossings by steamer.<sup>70</sup> These experiences would have given him sufficient knowledge of merchant ships to be apprehensive about some of the merchant vessels allocated to the Squadron.<sup>71</sup> Knowing the sea areas and the work planned for these ships, together with the weather to be expected there, four ships would have raised questions in most seamen's minds. They were *Clan McNaughton*, *Eskimo*, *Calix* and *Viknor*. *Clan Mcnaughton* was a moderate sized cargo vessel which had limited living accommodation although space enough for additional bunkers. *Eskimo* and *Calix* (ex *Calypso*) were small North Sea passenger/cargo ships with limited bunker capacity owned by Wilson Line. Although *Eskimo* was the 'crack' ship of the company, like her sistership, *Calix*, they were not suitable for ocean work. Lastly, *Viknor* (ex *Viking*) built in 1888, was a steamer with a clipper bow which had recently been used on holiday cruising during summer months in Norwegian waters. Since the *Edgars* had been withdrawn the patrols had been practically non-existent. The merchant cruisers had been brought forward with such urgency that de Chair probably felt, at least initially, he must accept the resources available. The ships had, after all, been passed by the Naval Constructors so de Chair needed to have experience of them before writing formal complaints.<sup>72</sup>

Some commanding officers also had reservations about the arrangements in their ships. Commander Brocklebank writing home from the *Changuinola* on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1915 says:

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<sup>67</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders. 57

<sup>68</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders. 13

<sup>69</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 127-128

<sup>70</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 115

<sup>71</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>72</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 Whiting to First Sea Lord 10 February 1914 26-7

Some days ago I wired to Liverpool saying that I would want three hundred tons of ballast on arrival and last night comes a telegram from the Admiralty wanting a full report on the subject as they do not consider that the stability of the ship necessitates any ballast: so I suppose it will be some months before I get my ballast: it is not the stability that is wrong but the trim. She is down by the stern and should be on an even keel and when very light of coal handling her in heavy weather may be awkward. So you need not be anxious about the ship's stability she's not going to turn over.<sup>73</sup>

Merchant ships performed best when slightly 'down by the stern' so that their propellers and rudders were more deeply immersed in the water. When cargo was discharged or coal consumed then the vessel's draught was reduced and the propeller became less effective. Warships were designed to be on an even keel and their draught differed relatively little between light and loaded condition. Here then was a challenge noticed in the early stages of Brocklebank's time in command of *Changuinola*.

Commander Walters aboard the *Caribbean* reported on the 9 January 1915:

10. ....but very bad weather was experienced and though the ship is a very good seaboat, rolls very heavily, and steers badly, unless going Full Speed.

11. Several defects require to be made good, the Telemotor gear being the principal item, and the alteration of the seaboat's davits which are at present a most dangerous fitting, .....

12. ....Coal expenditure appears to be excessive since leaving Liverpool ship has steamed 3028 miles on 1200 tons of coal.<sup>74</sup>

Merchant ships were intended to operate at economical full speed most of the time. Manoeuvring the engines is confined to the departure and arrival events of a voyage. Constant alteration of speeds and the need to make broad zig-zags became a burden too much for *Caribbean*. By 23 February 1915, de Chair was reporting *Caribbean* as – 'unsuitable. Old and slow and of small capacity. Difficult to load and rolls badly'.<sup>75</sup> Even so *Caribbean* struggled on with patrols until 9 June 1915 when her officers and crew were transferred to commission *Victorian*.<sup>76</sup> *Orotava*, like *Caribbean*, had not been rated highly by de Chair, nevertheless, the Navy had bought both steamers for £75,000 from the RMSPC on 30 June 1915.<sup>77</sup>

*Patia* was one of five similar ships taken up from Elders and Fyffes, the others were *Bayano*, *Changuinola*, *Motagua* and *Patuca*. Captain G.A. Vivian R.N., in command of

<sup>73</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 9

<sup>74</sup> TNA ADM 137/989 Walter to Rear Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS 9 January 1915 596-8

<sup>75</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 de Chair to Admiralty 23 February 1915 89-92

<sup>76</sup> TNA ADM 53/37072 Navigational Logbook *Caribbean*. Later *Caribbean* was employed as a depot ship for workmen at Scapa Flow but foundered off Cape Wrath with the loss of 15 lives on 27 September 1915. Haws, D., *Merchant Fleets - Royal Mail Line & Nelson Line* (Crowborough, 1982) 75

<sup>77</sup> NMM RMS/1/17 Minutes of the Court of Directors 30 June 1915

*Patia*, raised two important points in his first report after only a month's service aboard. The first, mirrored comments reported above by Commander Brocklebank aboard *Changuinola*. Vivian reported of the *Patia*:

When full up with coal and down by the head, as is for normal trim under these conditions, she is not a particularly good seaboat and is sluggish and wet. When however, the forward coal is out or to an extent out, the ship behaves extremely well in a sea-way and is buoyant and dry when hove to in a heavy sea.

The forward holds were no doubt filled with extra coal and this was not the way the ship would normally be stowed in peacetime on the banana trade. Ships down by the head are always sluggish. Vivian's next comment shows the stark difference in watertight subdivision between a merchant ship and a purpose built warship.

Her weak point from a structural point of view is that the two large holds have no subdivision at all and no real decks; they are in fact two large tanks, the flooding of either being sufficient to sink the ship, and owing to the extremely small pumping power available for clearing these spaces the flooding of them is a comparatively easy matter. This point has been represented to the Admiralty, but if it is intended to retain these ships for service in the Navy, they would undoubtedly be very vastly improved by the fitting of a thwartship watertight bulkhead in each hold, and this would not be a matter of much time and or money.<sup>78</sup>

Vivian's next report included a repeat of these views when he included:

I would again submit that the efficiency of the ship would be very materially improved by the fitting of a thwartship bulkhead in each of the two holds.<sup>79</sup>

News received on the 11 March 1915, of *Bayano* being torpedoed with a heavy loss of life only four days after Vivian's report, prompted action. The risks associated with the absence of a watertight bulkhead were reported to the Admiralty.<sup>80</sup> *Patia* arrived at Belfast on 14 April 1915 and work was put in hand to fit the bulkheads authorised by the Admiralty as well as other improvements.<sup>81</sup> The whole episode showed that ships taken up from trade would sometimes need significant alterations, especially where they originated from a specialised trade such as bananas.

### **Weather, the Unavoidable Challenge.**

One challenge which constantly dominated the Squadron's operations, over which there could be no control, was the weather. Ships on the North Atlantic runs had started to pass weather information ashore by means of W/T as early as 1909.<sup>82</sup> Gale warnings for the British Isles were broadcast to ships in the Eastern North Atlantic approaching

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<sup>78</sup> NMM VIV/4 Vivian to Rear Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS 2 February 1915

<sup>79</sup> NMM VIV/4 Vivian to Rear Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS 7 March 1915

<sup>80</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiralty 15 March 1915 103-5

<sup>81</sup> NMM VIV/4 Vivian to Rear Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS 20 May 1915

<sup>82</sup> Met Office Timeline of Events [www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/pressoffice/anni\\_versary/timeline.html](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/pressoffice/anni_versary/timeline.html)

these shores as far back as 1911. On the outbreak of war in 1914, this service ceased, the war brought home the fact that weather information was too valuable to hand to the enemy.<sup>83</sup> However, the Navy seems to have continued a daily weather report to all H.M. Ships.<sup>84</sup> The Squadron ships on patrol needed little in the way of weather reports since most of the time they were in the midst of the most challenging weather in the world. Many patrol activities were in the present day areas of Fair Isle, Faeroes and South East Iceland. Ships proceeding to and from the Clyde and Mersey would pass through the Hebrides, Malin and Irish Sea areas. In the winter months, the Flag Officers Reports of Proceedings and Navigational Logs of the ships abound with mention of heavy weather often causing damage to the ships. Sometimes the weather severely hampered the rate of boarding, when patrol vessels might be 'hove to' for considerable periods against strong westerly gales.<sup>85</sup>

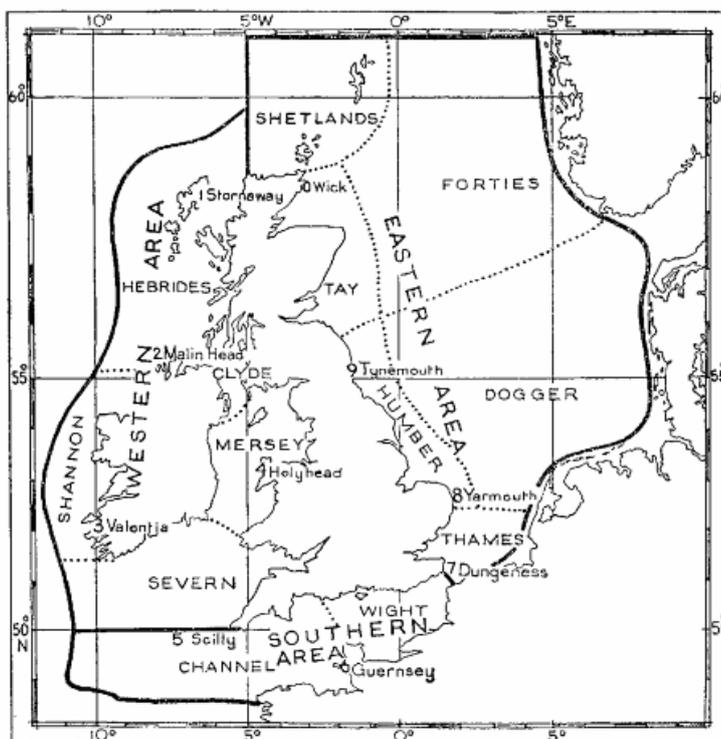


Fig.21 BBC Forecast Areas in 1924.<sup>86</sup>

Commander Brocklebank's diary aboard *Changuinola* for 12 December 1915 states:

'Sunday. Rolling very heavily all night; no sleep. Divisions, no rounds or prayers. Very heavy rolls smashed fore-gun platform and fore magazine. The sea gets up and goes down with remarkable rapidity.'<sup>87</sup>

The volatile nature of the weather conditions was often a point for comment. The challenge of the weather varied markedly between the summer with almost 24 hours of

<sup>83</sup> Fact Sheet No. 8 – The Shipping Forecast National Meteorological Library and Archive

<sup>84</sup> Admiralty, *Manual of Navigation 1914* (H.M.S. O London, 1915) 286

<sup>85</sup> TNA ADM 137/298 de Chair to Admiralty 28 February 1916 72-80

<sup>86</sup> [www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/library/factsheets.html](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/library/factsheets.html) 8 This coverage was inadequate for the Squadron.

<sup>87</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 16

daylight and the winter with typically only five or six hours. The winter months saw gale and storm force winds daily with their attendant high seas and wintry squalls. Icing was always a possibility which would put dangerous top weight on the upper deck.

Whilst the sea ice between Iceland and Greenland closed off the Denmark Strait in winter, this was a possible route for neutral ships in the summer. A Squadron ship had to be sent in the spring to observe the sea state and a summer patrol considered. The dark winter nights gave increased opportunities for neutrals to evade the Squadron. In contrast the summer's long daylight hours provided the Squadron increased opportunities to sight, chase and board neutrals. Although the storms moderated in summer, the Squadron was often hampered in summer by sea fogs. In July 1915 *Alcantara*, whilst on E Patrol to the north of Iceland reported experiencing twelve days nearly continuous fog and mist.<sup>88</sup>

The weather is well recorded in logbooks and official reports but a look at Ben Rutland's diary from the *Mantua* shows how debilitating constant foul weather can be, even for those not working on deck.

A selection of Rutland's entries shows:

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 1914

Very bad weather with rain and hail storms seas running mountains high..  
night time again not much change in the weather, still creaking and straining to make headway.

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> November 1914

Awful weather can't stand this all the winter especially up in these latitudes we are nearly always in the Arctic Circle. We are battered down everywhere without a ray of daylight all day if you go on deck you stand a great chance of being washed overboard.

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November 1914

Very bad weather decks were covered in ice this morning and nearly all day it has been snowing I shall be very glad to get away from this.

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 1914

Still rolling heavily never get any good sleep .....I can never stand this all winter.

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November 1914

Arrived in the Mersey last night ..... anxiously awaiting letters must get away from this.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 21 August 1915 232-55

<sup>89</sup> NMM P&O /65/206 *Mantua* Rutland, Entries 39, 81, 84, 86, 102  
when *Mantua* was on detached duty to Archangel.

Hard though it seemed to Rutland, he was not keeping a watch on deck exposed to the elements. Rutland often comments on the cold weather and on October 14, records 'getting very cold so we had warm clothing served out (gratis) this morning'.<sup>90</sup>

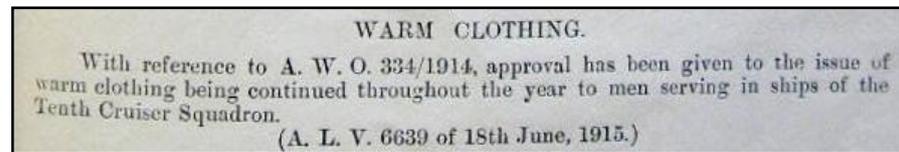


Fig.22. Extract from ADM 137/822 p.15

Nine months later the Navy had accepted the Squadron's special needs when warm clothing was authorised all year round.<sup>91</sup> In contrast to the cold, the firemen and trimmers in the engine-room, stokehold and bunkers laboured four hours on and eight hours off in dehydrating heat. Day after day, coal had to be trimmed, bagged for the next watch and then fed to the boilers. Ash had to be removed and sent up on deck, all to be done whilst the ship rolled and pitched mercilessly.

De Chair was well aware of the weather's power after the devastation to the *Edgar* Class cruisers in the previous autumn: and it was the weather which claimed the first loss of the reconstituted Squadron. This was the *Viknor*, lost on passage from patrol to Liverpool with eight German nationals aboard, taken from the Norwegian liner *Bergensfjord*. Wreckage was washed ashore at Portrush and it was assumed she was lost on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1915 in a gale. De Chair records that she was considered a poor sea boat and was not classed A1 at Lloyds.<sup>92</sup> Barely, three weeks had passed when *Clan Macnaughton* was concluded to have foundered on the night of 2/3 February 1915 again under stress of weather with a loss of 277 lives.<sup>93</sup> The precise cause of her loss was uncertain. Ransom infers the vessel was torpedoed.<sup>94</sup> In contrast, Chatterton claimed she was mined in a gale.<sup>95</sup> Wreckage found in 60°25'N 9°37'W identified as belonging to *Clan Macnaughton*, led Jellicoe to conclude, 'I fear she foundered during night 2<sup>nd</sup> inst.'<sup>96</sup> Brocklebank recorded in his diary that on the morning of 30 January 1915 *Changuinola* had come across *Clan Macnaughton* when he had a few minutes talk with Commander Jeffreys by searchlight. Bob Jeffreys had been a longstanding friend of Brocklebank.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>90</sup> NMM P&O /65/206 *Mantua* Rutland entry 55.

<sup>91</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Orders, Warm Clothing 15

<sup>92</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 25 January 1915 87-103

<sup>93</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 9 March 1915 121-43

<sup>94</sup> BL Ransom, B., 'A Nursery of Fighting Seamen? The Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, 1901-1920' in Hadley, M.L., Huebert, R., Crickard, F.W., (Eds.)

*A nation's Navy: in quest of Canadian naval identity* (Montreal,1996) 251

<sup>95</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 91

<sup>96</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiralty 10 February 1915 21

The loss of *Clan Macnaughton* was widely felt and the diary of Commander F.H.Grenfell of H.M.S. *Cedric* reveals the strength of the feeling:

The Admiralty have been stirred to action by the criticism of Lord Charles Beresford and others upon the un-seaworthy state in which some of our Squadron have been sent to sea and have ordered the *Calyx* to pay off. We know well enough that she is unstable. The *Clan Macnaughton's* officers were firmly convinced that nothing could save the ship from capsizing if she met really bad weather and their fears were unfortunately all too well founded. The Constructor's Department at the Admiralty ought to render up some victims for hanging after the war; it is they who have passed the ships and allowed them to go to sea with empty holds and guns on deck and nobody with the least idea how these novel conditions would affect their stability.<sup>98</sup>

In response to de Chair's complaint about the choice of merchant ships, a certain amount of 'passing the blame' quickly developed. The Third Sea Lord was concerned to combat any possible criticism that ships had been sent to sea in an un-seaworthy condition.<sup>99</sup> The Superintendent of Contract Work, W.H.Whiting, reported to the Third Sea Lord that the vessels taken up were the best available, given the urgency with which they were needed.<sup>100</sup> A further note by Whiting to the Third Sea Lord named the committee members responsible for the selection of the first nine ships. These included the *Viknor* and *Clan Macnaughton* and there is an admission that these first nine ships were not inspected before being taken up. Whiting includes a self protective reminder that the Third Sea Lord approved the list. Inclining experiments were only conducted on vessels thought to have incomplete stability data and ballast was loaded where 'considered necessary'.<sup>101</sup> It is not known whether these admissions were copied to de Chair but they would have confirmed his own seamanlike suspicions. If de Chair had knowledge of Whiting's papers it would not be news he would have wished to pass on to his commanding officers in the Squadron.

A further file note by Whiting records the need for precise operating requirements to be known when taking up ships from trade. He records that ships capable of regular transatlantic running, may not be capable of constant zig-zagging in heavy weather coupled with the need for frequent alterations of speed. Since the heavy weather season was far from over he suggested employing larger vessels of say 10,000 gross tons – much bigger than the hard worked vessels from Elders and Fyffes.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 31-32

<sup>98</sup> IWM Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1 175

<sup>99</sup> TNA ADM137/1081 Third Sea Lord to Superintendent of Contract Work 13 February 1915

<sup>100</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 Whiting to First Sea Lord 10 February 1915 26-7

<sup>101</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 Superintendent of Contract Work to Third Sea Lord 14 February 1915 75-7

<sup>102</sup> TNA ADM 138/1081 Note by Whiting 24 February 1915 97

Even the hardy Newfoundland ratings felt the stress of weather and the strain of adjusting to rigid Royal Navy routines aboard the ill fated *Clan Macnaughton*.

A letter to home from one of them, Stephen Dicker, aged 22, is very revealing:

I am one of a gun's crew and have to stand my watch on the fo'c'sle no matter how the water is going over her, with a pair of short lace-up boots on. There were as many as 20 days.... that I never has a dry foot....<sup>103</sup>

There are few accounts of Squadron life by ratings and this appears to be the only one from a Newfoundland Reservist. Apart from the unavoidable discomfort from the bad weather, it reveals inadequate heavy weather clothing.

These then, were the daily challenges to be met by the crews before tackling any of those posed by the enemy. In retrospect, the Squadron's ships and men were 'not in all respects - ready for sea' and the execution of the tasks allotted to them. Some ships were inadequate, men needed further training, the weather proved to be far worse than most had expected, the proper use of the new technology of wireless needed to be understood and practiced whilst at the same time different cultures had to be brought together to maintain morale. There was a need to adapt and compromise, as well as recognise the need for a base much closer to operations. The next chapter will examine the effort needed for the Squadron's prime task of intercepting neutral ships, passing both east and west, to the north of the British Isles.

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<sup>103</sup> Cited in: Ransom. B, 'A Nursery of Fighting Seamen? The Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, 1901-1920' 250-251

When the Squadron was restructured deploying twenty four armed merchant cruisers, a more rigorous approach to interception was required to replace the seemingly random interceptions by the *Edgar* class cruisers. The matter was considered in a memorandum by Captain Richard Webb, Director of Trade Division at the Admiralty. Trade Division's primary duty was to detain British ships in port at times of special danger, or divert them to safer routes to diminish the risk from submarines. The Admiralty was responsible for the safety of the seas and the efficient prosecution of the maritime blockade. Where these duties required control over merchant ships, this task was given to the Trade Division.<sup>1</sup>

Webb's memorandum assumed both the Pentland Firth and the passage between Orkneys and Shetlands would be patrolled by resources other than the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. He proposed two solutions, one of which was less exposed to submarines with patrol lines totalling 850 miles whereas the other was only 450 miles in length. The second option was chosen on the basis that the patrol lines would always be shifted at short notice to keep an element of surprise for the enemy/neutral ships and against submarine threats. A patrol speed of twelve knots and an average visibility of 5 miles were assumed.<sup>2</sup>

On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1915 Jellicoe promulgated the new organisation of the squadron into four divisions which was to be as follows: <sup>3</sup>

<b>Area</b>	<b>Eastern base Line of Area</b>	<b>Ships allocated</b>
A. Between Faroes and Iceland	Meridian of 5° 30'W	<i>Alsatian</i> (Flag) <i>Mantua</i> <i>Otway</i> <i>Virginian</i> <i>Columbella</i>

<b>Area</b>	<b>Eastern base Line of Area</b>	<b>Ships allocated</b>
B. North of Shetland Islands	Meridian of 1° 00'W	<i>Teutonic</i> (Senior Officer) <i>Cedric</i> <i>Caribbean</i> <i>Patia</i> <i>Orotava</i> <i>Viknor</i>

<sup>1</sup> Salter, J.A., *Allied Shipping Control: an experiment in international administration* (Oxford,1921) 42

<sup>2</sup> TNA ADM 137/989 Memorandum by Webb 24 December 1914 566-72

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 9

C. South of Faroe Islands	Line joining Sydero and Sule Skerry	<i>Motagua</i> (Senior Officer) <i>Oropesa</i> <i>Bayano</i> <i>Changuinola</i> <i>Digby</i> <i>Hilary</i>
D. West of Hebrides	N ½ W from St.Kilda	<i>Hildebrand</i> (Senior Officer) <i>Calyx</i> <i>Eskimo</i> <i>Ambrose</i> <i>Clan McNaughton</i> <i>Patuca</i>

It was intended that the armed merchant cruiser *Laurentic* would join the Squadron and be allocated to Area A. In fact, *Laurentic* never joined the Squadron, being always detached on other work carrying troops and particularly gold, for which she was specially fitted.

Ships were to coal at Liverpool in rotation and when in routine, this plan intended that at least four vessels would be on each patrol line. Set up in mid winter, when the daylight hours were typically only about five hours, it was recognised that some steamers would get through the patrol. Later the patrols would be moved and changed, especially in summer when the ice cleared from the Denmark Strait and opened that as a potential route for blockade runners. The Squadron was intended to work in association with the nearby Yacht and Trawler Patrols and it was proposed to keep one cruiser squadron in the vicinity of Latitude 60°N, Longitude 5°W, ready to support the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.<sup>4</sup>

As the war progressed a number of armed trawlers were allocated to assist the squadron, usually with inshore activities, since the Squadron was intended to work seaward of the 100 fathom line (200 metres).<sup>5</sup> Blockade runners often aimed to reach latitude 65° N. and then work south inside Norwegian territorial waters to reach the Baltic via the Skaggeiak, thence to German Baltic ports. Conversely, this formed an exit route for German surface raiders and neutral vessels attempting to carry German exports. Thus at last, the Squadron could focus on its task of intercepting merchant vessels, eastbound with possible imports for German consumption and westbound with revenue earning exports from Germany.

<sup>4</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiralty 1 January 1915 10-12

<sup>5</sup> Hurd, A., *The Merchant Navy* Vol. 3 (London, 1921) 185  
See Appendix 5

**Patrol Formations.**

The three methods of patrolling were line ahead, line abreast or in a quarter line formation.<sup>6</sup> The distance apart of the ships was about 20 miles and each vessel had a clear view of 15 miles to the horizon, thus a blockade runner would be sighted by one

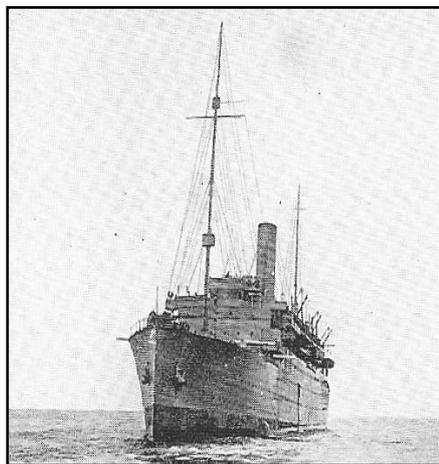


Fig.23 H.M.S. *Almanzora* on patrol.

or both adjacent cruisers.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the interval between ships was extended to 30 miles. On clear days, masthead lookouts were to be placed as high as possible.<sup>8</sup> The lookout man did two hours aloft and six hours off but in very severe weather this was reduced to one hour aloft and seven hours off.<sup>9</sup> Some ships had an additional crow's nest fitted well above that of their original design, a feature repeated in World War Two.

In the line ahead or cross patrols, the cruisers steamed in line ahead across the track of shipping. The ships generally steamed thirty or forty miles in one direction than altered course by 180° to steam the same distance on the reverse course. A disadvantage of this type of patrol was that if a ship had to stop and search a suspect steamer, there was a gap in the formation. This had to be covered by adjacent ships adjusting their station to give cover until the intercepting cruiser could rejoin.<sup>10</sup>

Ships steaming line abreast or quarter line formation steered a course to meet any blockade runners for twelve hours in daylight, then turned together at 20.00 hours onto a reverse course and then ran through the night with blockade runners until 0800 hours. Thus blockade runners were on a parallel course to the patrol through the dark hours and were likely to find themselves in the midst of the patrol at dawn.<sup>11</sup> One advantage of the line abreast patrol was that the formation was less disrupted if a cruiser had to stop to search a steamer. The gap was covered quickly by other cruisers altering course to close it and a gap could be made quickly, to allow a cruiser to rejoin the formation.<sup>12</sup> The plan was that if a blockade runner evaded one type of patrol, the probability was

<sup>6</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 190 (See also Appendix 9)

<sup>7</sup> BL De Chair, D.R., *How the British Blockade Works: An Interview with Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair*. (London,1916) 3-4

<sup>8</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Orders 22

<sup>9</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 236

<sup>10</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 246

<sup>11</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 190

<sup>12</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 246

that another would sight the vessel later. It should be noted that the Squadron ships steamed as darkened ships and showed no navigation lights in accord with warship practice in times of conflict. The Squadron's ships zig-zagged almost continuously, which added a further challenge to their station keeping difficulties in rough weather.

**Action on Sighting a Steamer.**

When a ship was sighted, a cruiser was brought to full speed and course altered to intercept the suspect vessel. When close enough a large red pennant was hoisted to indicate that the vessel had to stop. Guns were made ready and the crew closed up to action stations.<sup>13</sup> All vessels were treated as possible enemies until the boarding officer was able to confirm otherwise. All nations had been notified of this signal and to ensure attention two blank charges were fired. Failure to obey meant a shot was put across the suspect's bow. However, before firing the cruiser had to ensure her own white ensign was flying.<sup>14</sup> When the ship stopped, a cruiser would position herself to windward or ahead of the target ship if there was no wind. The boarding boat would be lowered with the officer, an armed guard and a party to search the ship. This was the point at which the Newfoundland Reservists and Scottish R.N.R. fishermen manned the boat and brought their particular experience to bear.

All ships had the benefit of an Evinrude outboard motor as auxiliary power for sea-boats in addition to oars and sail. *Alsatian* made good use of this but they were not to the liking of all commanding officers who were exhorted in Squadron Standing Orders 'to persevere' with their use.<sup>15</sup> Most boarding boats preferred to use oars and sometimes even sail. Squadron commanding officers would have been used to a sea boat being a Naval Service Montagu 27ft. whaler, when aboard naval ships in their earlier careers.

**Boarding Boats.**

The logbooks at The National Archives reveal that all the Squadron ships had retained their full complement of standard Mercantile Marine lifeboats. These robust clinker built craft were primarily 'life' boats intended for survival. They were not renowned for their handling or sailing qualities. *Alsatian* had been provided with two steel boarding boats which were stowed on her foredeck, one each side of No.2 hatch.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> This was in case the intercepted vessel might prove to be a decoy ship. See Glossary

<sup>14</sup> TNA ADM 186/11 Instructions for Boarding Officers and Prize Officers in Wartime (London,1914) 16

<sup>15</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 *Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders* 83

<sup>16</sup> H.M.S.. *Alsatian* Merseyside Maritime Museum Cat. No. 512

They can be clearly seen on the model of *Alsatian* held by Merseyside Maritime Museum.

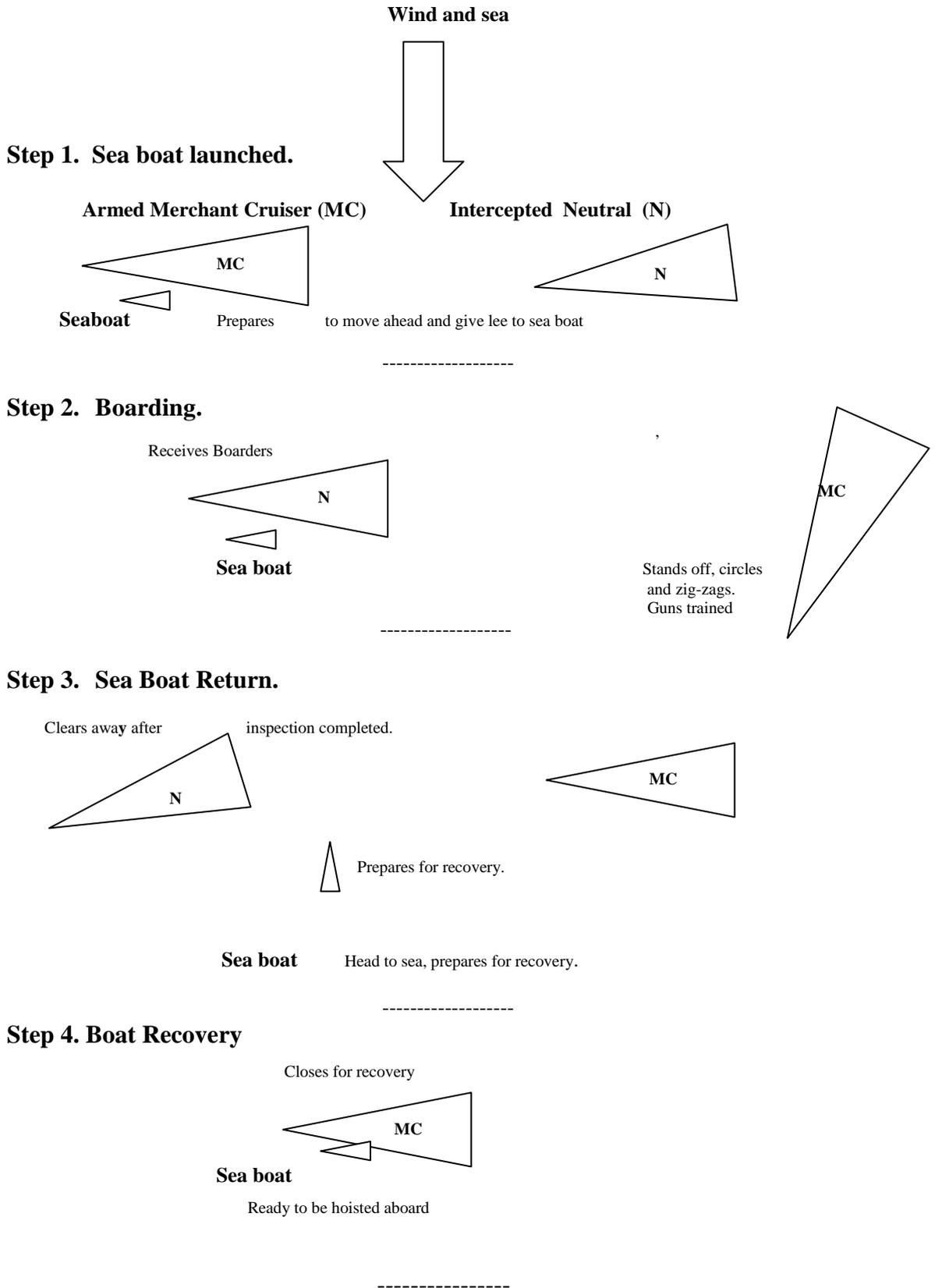


Fig.24 Visit and Search Operation

The favoured seaboat was the Montagu whaler with Robinson's Disengaging Gear. This allowed the boat's coxswain to release the boat quickly from the falls onto the peak of a wave. The tiller being lashed over towards the Cruiser's side and with the painter or boat rope secured to the bow, the slight ahead motion of the cruiser would give the boat a quick sheer away from the ship's side before the release of the boat rope. Captain Vivien of *Patia* in his first Report of Proceedings disclosed that after intercepting the Swedish steamer *Lapland*, 'This ship was not boarded as there was too much sea and we have no boat fitted with dropping gear'. In the last paragraph the point is stressed when Vivien added:

When fitting out I asked for Montagu whalers with dropping gear, I got two ordinary whalers without dropping gear. These boats are stowed on crutches in the after well deck, and can only be hoisted out by the derricks and winches. In a sea-way this is not a satisfactory method at all, and these boats should be at davits (which can easily be fitted) with dropping gear.<sup>17</sup>

The *Virginian* was also supplied with a steel boat which was disliked by her commanding officer who, surprisingly, agreed a swap for one of *Changuinola's* rotten wood boats, much to the delight of Commander Brocklebank.<sup>18</sup> *Changuinola* stowed her boat in a cradle on the port side of No.1 hatch. The method of hoisting out was by two derricks, one plumbing the landing point on deck and the other plumbed over the ship's side. The cargo runners from each derrick were brought together by means of a union hook. This allowed the boat to be lifted clear of the deck by the first derrick, then hove over the ship's side ready to be lowered to the water by the second derrick. The boat was suspended by a sling with four legs attached to a single lifting ring into which the union hook was placed. This simple arrangement which required a quick unhooking was a replacement for the Robinson's disengaging gear and also avoided the problems associated with standard lifeboat falls.

On one occasion, due to a misheard command, the *Changuinola's* boat failed to get clear and was towed under and turned over. Fortunately all the crew were recovered and the only loss was a few stores and an officer's new sword. On another occasion *Changuinola* was attempting to launch a boat from her davits. The foremost fall 'went away with a run' but the promptness of an Able Seaman who let go the after fall avoided a serious accident. Unfortunately, the Master-at-Arms tangled with the falls

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<sup>17</sup> NMM VIV/4 Vivian to Rear-Admiral 10CS 2 February 1915

<sup>18</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 13

and broke a leg.<sup>19</sup> Concern was also reported by Commander Walters aboard the *Caribbean* when raising the defect list:

Several defects require to be made good, the Telemotor gear being the principal item, and the alteration of the Seaboats' davits which are at present a most dangerous fitting, the distances between the boat's slings being 10 feet shorter than the distance between the davits.<sup>20</sup>

*Alsatian* also used derricks rigged for union purchase to operate her boats. This ship had four derricks at her No.2 hold just forward of the bridge. These were topped ready to lower a boat from either the port or starboard side of the ship.<sup>21</sup> Usual merchant ship practice was to lower derricks at sea and secure them on their crutches. There were three main reasons, first they made additional 'top hamper' which could reduce stability, second in a seaway there is always the possibility they could break loose and third they would be in the lowered position when the ship was swung for compass deviation. It is not known whether, when swinging for deviation in the squadron, two deviation cards were constructed, one with the derricks topped and the other with the derricks lowered and housed. These were risks which had been accepted, since the prospect of attempting to top derricks when underway was even more risky and too time consuming, prior to a boarding operation.

Photographs clearly show *Alsatian* and *Changuinola* adopted the union purchase method and it was possibly widely used.<sup>22</sup> Admiral Wardle, quoted in 'The Big Blockade' stated, "I much preferred my way in *Alcantara* of having a double-ended boat on No.2 hatch, so that I could hoist out on either side."<sup>23</sup> In contrast, aboard *Almanzora* an identical vessel, Commander Tarrant R.N.R. her peacetime Master, described the arrangements on that ship. "In *Almanzora* we had single wires through the davits to the boat."<sup>24</sup> Thus, with some local ingenuity, the absence of traditional sea-boats with Robinson's disengaging gear was overcome, proving the adage 'different ships-different long splices'.

The urgency of the order, 'Away Sea Boat's Crew' captured completely, the fundamental raison d'être for the Squadron's work. The order and reaction were the pivotal points of the repetitive process of sighting, chasing, stopping, boarding and examining a neutral ship, to be followed by either its capture or release. A process

<sup>19</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 13

<sup>20</sup> TNA ADM 137/989 Walter to Rear-Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS 9 January 1915 596-8

<sup>21</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* Photograph facing page 49

<sup>22</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 195, states a swinging derrick but photographs contradicted this.

<sup>23</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 225-226

<sup>24</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 225

governed by the need to always respect the sea state and weather, as well as the requirements of international law.

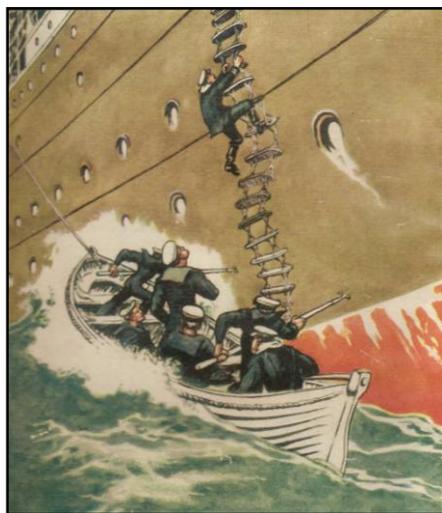


Fig.25. *The Big Blockade* book cover two remaining sailors perhaps contemplate the perilous row back to their parent ship and the task of the boat being hoisted aboard. And this is summer weather as shown by the crew's white cap covers! At least the crew have the help of a boat rope passed from the neutral ship.

The residual water from the previous roll of the ship, drains from the rim of a porthole and the overlaps on the hull plating, as she starts yet another roll towards the sea boat. The jumping ladder has swung clear of the ship's side to challenge the foothold and balance of the visiting officer. No doubt he was happy just to have held on, but views the distance yet to go, before he reaches the safety of the deck. A background anxiety in his mind might be the reception he will receive once aboard the vessel. Will the Master be cooperative or hostile? There is a surprising omission - no one appears to be wearing a life jacket – apparently a not uncommon practice at the time. Photographs in both Chatterton's book and Tupper's *Reminiscences* raise doubts about which was standard procedure. Many officers bought themselves a patented life saving waistcoat sold by Gieves.<sup>26</sup>

Aboard the parent armed merchant cruiser, the ship's company remained closed up at actions stations until the boarding officer signalled that the target ship was either friendly or neutral.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Chatterton, E.K., *The Big Blockade* (London,1932)

<sup>26</sup> Gieves – Life saving waistcoats

<http://www.gievesandhawkes.com/en/gieves-and-hawkes/about/history/#page10>

<sup>27</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 239

The difficulties of launching were small compared to the task of coming alongside a suspect vessel, whose crew might choose to give the bare minimum of assistance. The task of coming alongside the parent cruiser for recovery was even worse. It required careful positioning of the boat and split second timing to engage the lifting hooks, ready for the winches to take up the slack before being hoisted aboard.<sup>28</sup> All this difficult boat-work was demanding enough by day but it was not unusual to be carried out at night. On those occasions the parent cruiser kept track of the boat by the searchlight which was a wartime fitting. Reassuring to the boat's crew but providing a fine aiming point for any submarine in the vicinity. Time improved the proficiency of the boarding operations and the crews showed increasing pride in the work.

Comment must be made about a claim by Joan Brocklebank in her compilation of letters and diary entries from her father's time in command of *Changiunola*. In describing the armed guards the statement is made, 'the officer in charge would wear his sword as a symbol of his authority.'<sup>29</sup> The idea has been sustained by author Julian Thompson.<sup>30</sup> There is no evidence that this was a regulation and is likely to be the result of an over zealous requirement by Commander Brocklebank. He made a point of running *Changuinola* on pre-war navy lines:

I do divisions, prayers and physical drill every morning in man-of-war style and it does the men much good, much better than the sloppy do-nothing style that existed previously; the firemen now drill with rifle or gun every forenoon and are improving wonderfully. I have hopes of making them quite decent people by the end of the war .....

words which showed a clear Royal Navy v. Merchant Marine 'division of culture' and the class attitudes of the time.<sup>31</sup> Commander Brocklebank used every opportunity to lobby for his promotion to captain which he felt was long overdue, and perhaps thought a rigid style of management might draw attention to his ambitions.<sup>32</sup> The Navy Lists of the time only required swords to be worn 'when appropriate' and the only edged weapon required by the Gunnery Drill Book in a boarding boat was a cutlass in the possession of the coxswain.<sup>33</sup>

The Boarding Officer's Guide states, 'The O.C. will decide whether to arm the boat or crew.'<sup>34</sup> This may have been the discretion used by Commander Brocklebank as to

<sup>28</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 230

<sup>29</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 11

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, J., *The War at Sea 1914-1918* (London,2006) 156

<sup>31</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 39

<sup>32</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* Letters from Captain Benson, Second in Command of the Squadron and a neighbour in Alverstoke. 37-38

<sup>33</sup> NMM H.M.S..O., *Gunnery Drill Book for His Majesty's Fleet (Book II)* (London,1913) 248-9

swords, which were a compulsory item for an R.N.R. officer's uniform. It has already been noted that Commander Walters of the *Caribbean* was quick to put his R.N.R. officers to sword drill soon after commissioning. The obsession with swords may have been a generational issue with the commanders who were no longer in the zone for promotion. The Ruritanian spectacle of a naval officer struggling up a boat ladder, complete with a ceremonial accoutrement, would at best give some amusement to help lessen the annoyance of a suspect merchant ship's crew or simply strengthen their anger at being stopped. Admiral Tupper in his *Reminiscences* clearly states, 'The officers carried their revolvers; the men had their rifles with bayonets and ammunition.'<sup>35</sup> These 'tokens of authority' were likely to be much more practical and effective than any masterpiece from Messrs. Gieve's or Wilkinson.

**Armed Search Parties.**

According to Tupper, for a typical steamer, the armed search-party consisted of one lieutenant or sub-lieutenant with a midshipman and six or eight men, in addition to the boarding officer. Once safely on deck, the boarding officer would introduce himself to the ship's master and separate this man from his officers and crew. The ratings would make quick rounds of the upper deck to see if any hidden armament existed and if unarmed, a signal passed to the cruiser. Throughout the interception and boarding, the cruiser would stay outside torpedo range and continue to zig-zag. Once the 'all clear' signal had been received, the cruiser would withdraw a further distance and continue circling the suspect, which itself was permitted to move slowly ahead, whilst the search and inspection took place. All passengers and crew were mustered and interviewed to seek out any German nationals travelling as either passenger or crew and any found were taken prisoner. This was an important part of the inspection since many German reservists were trying to make their way home to help the enemy's war effort.<sup>36</sup>

When the Squadron had been restructured, R.N.R. boarding officers were selected because their merchant ship backgrounds made them familiar with the layout of a merchant ship, the different cargoes likely to be encountered and a ship's papers.<sup>37</sup> The purpose of the boarding was to identify a neutral ship and her destination and ascertain the nature of her cargo to see which category of contraband, absolute, conditional or

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<sup>34</sup> TNA ADM 186/11 Instructions for Boarding Officers 13

<sup>35</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 240

<sup>36</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 240-241

<sup>37</sup> See Appendix 10

free, it fell into. The Boarding Officer's Guide set out the approach to be adopted.<sup>38</sup> An overriding requirement, repeated in Squadron Orders, was to show courtesy:

The Boarding Officer should treat the ship's officers, crew and passengers with courtesy and consideration ..... he should invariably -- in the name of His Majesty -- formally intimate to the master and passengers of neutral vessels boarded, his regret at the necessity for stopping the vessel, and at the same time assure them that every consideration will be shown to their wishes and comfort compatible with a thorough examination of the vessel.<sup>39</sup>

The master was required to produce the usual ship's papers to confirm the ship's nationality and date of registration, the nature of the cargo together with its time and place of shipment, the cargo's port of discharge and to whom the goods were consigned as well as the weight, freight, volume and sometimes the value of the cargo.<sup>40</sup> When the Boarding Officer was satisfied with the papers and the examination of the vessel and cargo, then entries were made in the ship's logbook and the vessel allowed to continue its voyage.

The boarding might take about two hours as there was a degree of paper work to be attended to, especially if the master protested the manner in which the inspection was conducted. International law did not recognise any protest about being stopped but did allow for protest about the Boarding Party's conduct. If there was only a small quantity of contraband, then the law allowed the destruction of that cargo with the master's permission, after which he may be allowed to proceed. In such cases the certified copies of cargo manifests and logbook entries had to be exchanged for subsequent submission to a Prize Court to justify naval action. The Boarding Officers Guide lists pro forma affidavits for some eighteen different circumstances, so the officer brought with him quite a stock of stationery.<sup>41</sup>

### **Search Problems.**

However, examining a ship's cargo at sea is not easy and could be dangerous. It was not good seamanship to open hatches at sea, especially given the capricious and volatile weather experienced by the Squadron. Even lifting only the corner hatch-boards risked cargo damage and the ingress of seawater, whilst any descent into the holds with a ship rolling or pitching risked serious personal injury if cargo shifted, facts acknowledged

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<sup>38</sup> TNA ADM 186/11 Instructions for Boarding Officers and Prize Officers in Wartime

<sup>39</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 61

<sup>40</sup> Egerton, W.A., *Contraband of War* (Portsmouth, 1914) 23-27

This was a pocket sized *aide-mémoire* published by Messrs. Gieves as a guide to Naval Officers, Ship Owners, Merchants and Others. (See also Appendices F & G.)

<sup>41</sup> TNA ADM 186/11 Instructions for Boarding Officers and Prize Officers in Wartime 54-75

by de Chair.<sup>42</sup> Common hiding places were hollow masts, double bulkheads and false decks. One of the most novel methods was rubber disguised as onions. Large consignments of illicit contraband were most likely to be stowed in the lower hold hidden by bulk or bagged cargo on top if it. An example was the American barque *Dirigo* which was a prize sent in by *Orotava* on 2 March 1916. Ostensibly carrying barley for Kalwar in Sweden, Midshipman F.L.McKeag R.N.R. records that on arrival at Lerwick, a proper search revealed aeroplanes and armoured cars for Germany.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, if any suspicion arose from the ship's papers and a cursory examination of the cargo, then the vessel would be seized and sent into an examination port. First choice was Kirkwall in the Orkneys with Stornoway in the Hebrides as an alternative, whilst Lerwick in the Shetlands was only used in exceptional cases.

Once safely in port, a proper examination could take place, discharging the cargo, if needs be, to examine the bottom of the holds. This task was the responsibility of the Customs Service. De Chair thought the British Customs Officers were initially somewhat complacent in their approach to examining neutral ships.<sup>44</sup> For a shipmaster there are few more unnerving sights than a Customs Rummage Team, appearing from behind a dockside building, demanding a pilot ladder to climb aboard the moment the first mooring lines are ashore. A Rummage Team could demand access to any part of a vessel. Possibly de Chair had never had such an experience for had he done so, his opinion of the Customs might have been less derisive. It was not unknown for ships sent into Kirkwall or the Downs to be delayed there not merely for days but for weeks and occasionally for months. Details of the cargo manifests were transmitted to Whitehall Departments controlled by the Foreign Office for further consideration.. A further example of the growing importance of electronics in warfare.<sup>45</sup>

### **Search Delays Encourage Evasion.**

The prospect of such delays, however brief, created a powerful temptation for owners and shipmasters to attempt to run the blockade to avoid loss of revenue. From the very

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<sup>42</sup> BL De Chair, D.R., *How the British Blockade Works* 7

<sup>43</sup> IWM P 389 Journal of Midshipman F.L. McKeag R.N.R. 43

McKeag was a survivor from H.M.S.. *India* and when recovered in health was appointed to H.M.S.. *Orotava*

<sup>44</sup> BL De Chair, D.R., *How the British Blockade Works* 9

<sup>45</sup> AL Naval Staff Monograph - Trade Division - May 1920  
*The Economic Blockade 1914-1919* 107

The telegraphic rate and capacity of transmission is an important consideration, particularly in the case of work abroad .The average number of words at Kirkwall was 116,000 a month in 1916: the maximum in one day 20,000. It took two hours to punch 5,000 words, and they could then be transmitted at 60 to 100 words a minute by land wire. The rate by submarine cable would have been considerably less. 20,000 words a day would take 4 hours to punch and 4½ hours to pass i.e. (8½ hours in all). In the Downs, manifests were sometimes sent up by train to Whitehall for inspection.

outset the Squadron Orders required the following Danish and Norwegian passenger steamers to be regularly brought into Kirkwall when bound eastwards:-

*Bergensfjord*  
*Christianiafjord*  
*United States*  
*Frederick VIII*  
*Hellig Olav*  
*Oscar II*

The orders also referred to a list of ships to be brought in, whether suspicious or not.<sup>46</sup> When interviewed for the American newspaper the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, de Chair was asked to name the worst offender against the British blockade. Diplomatically, he replied, "I could easily tell you that but I shan't. The ships of one neutral have attempted to carry more contraband through our blockade than any other, but I can scarcely name the offender."<sup>47</sup> The most regular troublesome vessels proved to be the *Bergensfjord*, *Kristianiafjord* and the *Drammensfjord* of the Norske-Amerika Line. Norway being an independent nation of only a few years standing, sought to observe the international law but at the same time had to be aware of the sympathies Sweden held for the Central Powers.

Whilst the Norske-Amerika Line showed a desire to conform with requirements of the British Government there was a feeling that the company had some sympathy towards Germany. Certainly, some of their Masters and Mates, saw running the blockade as a legitimate sport and openly boasted of being able to avoid the cruisers.<sup>48</sup> A British subject in Bergen reported *Kristianiafjord* used 'the new Marconi Indicator' to pick her way through the patrols without being sighted.<sup>49</sup> The British reaction was dismissive on the basis that such equipment was proving of little use in *Iron Duke* and *Alsatian*. This was largely attributed to the lack of British trained personnel and ignored the possibility that *Kristianiafjord* may have had fully trained operators.<sup>50</sup> De Chair wrote to Jellicoe suggesting that *Kristianiafjord's* success was most likely due to the thick weather at the time. Like Dumas, de Chair based his opinion on the indifferent performance of *Alsatian's* direction finder. He reassured Jellicoe that W/T traffic in the

<sup>46</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 3 (5)

<sup>47</sup> BL De Chair, D.R., *How the British Blockade Works* 11

<sup>48</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 141

<sup>49</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 Extract from Memorandum of Hudson 25 April 1915(?) 267

<sup>50</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 Note by Dumas 3 May 1915 262

Squadron had been reduced and confirmed that efforts would be made to reduce it still further.<sup>51</sup>

Masters of vessels allowed to continue their voyage were issued with a list of the 'Flag of the Day' to be flown for the remainder of the day of boarding and one for each of the three subsequent days. This flag related to the direction of the ship's destination and indicated to any other cruisers of the squadron that the ship had already been boarded.<sup>52</sup> Before leaving a vessel the Boarding Officer would ask the master if he had any complaints about treatment during the boarding. If any were made, they were noted in writing on the appropriate forms, and delivered to the officer in command of the cruiser.<sup>53</sup>

**Suspect Vessels.**

Suspect vessels were deemed captured and placed under the control of an armed guard. This decision was taken by the cruiser's commanding officer after the findings of the boarding officer. Squadron Orders required interceptions were reported at once by W/T to the Senior Officer of the Patrol and also the Rear Admiral Commanding the Squadron.<sup>54</sup> Although coded and necessary, these reports helped reveal the presence of cruisers to neutrals fitted with direction finders. Occasionally, if stress of weather prevented boarding, a cruiser escorted a suspect neutral to Kirkwall. More usually it was a Prize Officer and an armed guard tasked to take a prize into an examination port. In these circumstances the white ensign was to be worn superior to the vessel's own national ensign. Although required by the Boarding Officer's Guide, this piece of chauvinism could have attracted the attention of a U-boat's prying periscope with unwelcome consequences.<sup>55</sup> However, Tupper's revision of the Squadron Orders in May 1917, took a less flamboyant approach with a clear order that only the national flag of the neutral was to be worn.<sup>56</sup> Usually, but not always, the Boarding Officer took on the role of Prize Officer if the decision was made to capture the neutral and send her into an examination port. The prime duty of the Prize Officer was to take charge of the vessel and navigate it to the port selected by his Commanding Officer where he was to hand over the vessel and her cargo to the Prize Marshall or the Principal Officer of Customs. He was to invite the Master and crew to assist in navigating the ship but

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<sup>51</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 R.A. 10<sup>th</sup> CS to C-in-C Home Fleets 7 June 1915 279

<sup>52</sup> TNA ADM 137/401 Boarding Merchantmen – Signal Tables 16 September 1914

<sup>53</sup> TNA ADM 186/11 Instructions for Boarding Officers and Prize Officers in Wartime 31

<sup>54</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 2 (3)

<sup>55</sup> TNA ADM 186/11 Instructions for Boarding Officers and Prize Officers in Wartime 32

<sup>56</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 63 (13)

could not compel them to do so.<sup>57</sup> Squadron Orders replaced the sentiment of ‘invitation’ to a clear ‘instruction’. The Prize Officer was to instruct the master of the route chosen and also supervise the navigation. However, Prize Officers were cautioned not to undertake responsibility for the navigation unless absolutely necessary.<sup>58</sup> In both publications, a vital first act for the Prize Officer was to take and retain complete control of any W/T installation on board. Any arms and ammunition were confiscated and steps taken to guard against recapture by the neutral crew. If a neutral crew or any part of it refused to work the ship, the Senior Officer on patrol was to provide a sufficient crew to work the vessel. The neutral crew or such part as refused to work, were warned of the consequences and if refusal continued, they were to be removed to the armed cruiser and detained.<sup>59</sup>

The Prize Officer and armed guard had to be self sufficient in respect of food for they had no right to be victualled on board a captive vessel. Usually this amounted to tinned corned beef and bread, sufficient for the passage and two days detention in Kirkwall. Warm drinks were cadged from the neutral’s galley. However, many vessels did provide food and some form of shelter. Usually the master made the Prize Officer welcome in the saloon but caution was exercised when receiving hospitality, since poisoning was always a possibility. The Prize Officer also had sufficient cash for contingencies with instructions to always get receipts for any expenditure. Railway passes were issued to get the crew from the port of disembarkation back to Liverpool or other port to rejoin their parent ship.<sup>60</sup> Each cruiser was allocated an extra two officers and twelve ratings in its complement to cover these duties.<sup>61</sup> As a cruiser sent away more armed guards on captured ships, her own crew became progressively depleted. Sometimes this meant ‘borrowing’ or ‘lending’ armed guards to other ships in the Squadron. Ships returning from repairs or coaling would bring out crews for ships still on patrol and this meant more boat-work to get the crews back to their own ships. Later, in the summer months smaller armed boarding steamers (usually requisitioned railway ferries) would bring out crews and return them to their ships. The management of this crew replenishment was a task for the Admiral’s staff aboard *Alsatian*.

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<sup>57</sup> TNA ADM 186/11 Instructions for Boarding Officers and Prize Officers in Wartime 32

<sup>58</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 62 (10)

<sup>59</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 59 (12)

<sup>60</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 3 (4)

<sup>61</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 61 (5)

**Further Risks to the Armed Guards.**

It can be seen that the British Armed Guards, once aboard a neutral ship in addition to the normal perils at sea were at risk on two further counts. Firstly, the neutral crew might attempt to overpower them and throw them overboard. Secondly, they might encounter a stoppage by a German U-boat, after which, they might be made prisoner or executed, especially if exposed to the German Boarding Party by the neutral crew. As already shown the British stance was not to place a neutral into further danger. Often a sympathetic neutral crew sought to protect the British Armed Guards and in doing so placed themselves at great risk. Pending Admiralty clarification, de Chair laid down the following guidance in Squadron Orders:

- (a) The officer must endeavour to arrange for the neutral ship to escape.
- (b) The officer must not use the neutral ship as a weapon for attacking the submarine.
- (c) The officer must not attempt any belligerent act under the neutral flag.  
Should the neutral crew desert their ship, however, and the submarine open fire the armed guard will then be at liberty to defend themselves on board the neutral ship.

It is considered that the fact of an armed guard being on board should be concealed from the enemy for as long as possible.<sup>62</sup>

This guidance was modelled on that given by the C-in-C Home Fleets in March 1915.<sup>63</sup> It was modified later to read as shown above by a further letter in June 1915.<sup>64</sup> The matter was raised again with the Admiralty by the C-in-C on 28 August 1915. This was prompted by a German press report that the American Sailing Ship *Pass of Balmaha* had arrived at Cuxhaven on 2 August 1915. The sailing vessel had been intercepted by the *Victorian* on 21 July 1915 and was intercepted again on 31 July 1915 by a German Submarine, whilst on passage to Kirkwall with a British Armed Guard aboard. At this point the *Pass of Balmaha* was placed in charge of a single German Petty Officer. Jellicoe pointed out it was nearly three months since he had been assured of clarification for this type of situation.<sup>65</sup> The British armed guard and Sub-Lieutenant C.E.Harris R.N.R. were taken prisoners of war and a letter from Harris, mentioned in an internal minute, revealed that a German submarine had maintained contact with the *Pass of Balmaha* until Heligoland. In the circumstances, the British armed guard would not have been able to resist.<sup>66</sup> This observation in an internal minute hardly constituted authoritative advice and it is not clear whether Jellicoe was even aware of

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<sup>62</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 10 (8)

<sup>63</sup> TNA ADM 1/8415/80 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiral Orkneys and Shetlands and Rear-Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS. 28 March 1915

<sup>64</sup> TNA ADM 1/8415/80 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiral Orkneys and Shetlands and Rear-Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS. 21 June 1915

<sup>65</sup> TNA ADM 1/8415/80 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiralty 28 August 1915

<sup>66</sup> TNA ADM 1/8415/80 Minute by Anderson 7 September 1915

the minute. The matter appears to have festered on and exactly one year later on 28 August 1916, the C-in-C repeated verbatim his previous communication to the Admiralty.<sup>67</sup> Jellicoe drew attention to an Admiralty letter M.04362 of 18 June 1915 which laid down that ‘an Armed Guard should on no account attempt any belligerent act under a neutral flag’.

It was an important issue since Britain had set out to observe the provisions of the Declaration of London 1908. In negotiations, Britain maintained the long standing right of a warship to ‘stop and visit’ neutral merchant ships. One of the intentions of the Declaration of London was to minimize the effect of war on neutral merchant ships plying a legitimate trade. For neutral ships, acceding to a ‘visit’ and possible capture for adjudication was preferable to being stopped by U-boat to receive a perfunctory search and then an arbitrary sinking by gunfire or scuttling. Germany had defined a ‘danger zone’ in which any merchant ship could expect this treatment. The Declaration laid down any vessel which forcibly resisted the legitimate exercise of the right of stoppage, search or capture lost the protection of her neutral flag. In such cases the vessel stood condemned under Article 63, and her cargo was treated as cargo of an enemy vessel.<sup>68</sup> The normal procedure for a warship was to send a captured neutral vessel into port as a prize. However, abnormal or exceptional circumstances did allow other actions. Basically, these were if the safety of a warship or the success of her current operations were in jeopardy. In exceptional circumstances the captor could carry out the sentence which the case merited. For example, if the vessel was liable to be condemned it could be destroyed. If only part of the cargo was liable to be condemned this could be destroyed and the vessel released. In the case of sinking a vessel the crew were required to be put in a place of safety, in effect the lifeboats on an open sea. The U-boats, as part of their claim of abnormal circumstances, pointed to their construction not allowing accommodation for neutral captives or belligerent prisoners.<sup>69</sup>

Admiral Tupper amended the Squadron Orders in their revision on 8 May 1917 to read:

The Admiralty direct that resistance is not to be offered by an Armed Guard on board a neutral vessel in the event a submarine or other armed enemy vessel being encountered. The Armed Guard should, if possible, attempt to escape observation in the manner laid down in G.F.O., 297. Cases have actually occurred where the Armed

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<sup>67</sup> TNA ADM 1/8415/80 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiralty 28 August 1916

<sup>68</sup> Hall, L.A., *The Law Of Naval Warfare* (London, 1914) 156-157

<sup>69</sup> Pyke, H.R., *The Law Of Contraband Of War* (Oxford, 1915) 208-209

Guard has been able to escape in the ship's boats disguised as firemen or other members of the crew.

If capture is imminent, all confidential instructions should be carefully destroyed, and arms, ammunition, &c., thrown overboard to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy.<sup>70</sup>

Finally, it appears the Admiralty had provided positive guidance on the action to be taken. Tupper recorded that sixteen merchant ships with Squadron armed guards aboard were attacked and sunk by enemy submarines.<sup>71</sup>

These were not mere hypothetical arguments. The relationship between Prize Officer and a ship's Master was a delicate one. Whilst the outcome could be impeded by the Master, the Prize Officer had to weigh up the situation carefully before resorting to force. The case of the American *Pass of Balmaha* had brought this matter to the forefront, further examples followed. The Norwegian sailing ship *Glendoon* with an armed guard aboard commanded by Sub-Lieutenant W. MacLure, R.N.R., from H.M.S. *Oropesa*, lay becalmed in a dense fog when she encountered a German submarine at 3.a.m. 24 May 1915. The master of the *Glendoon*, Captain Larssen, was ordered to lower a boat and send his ship's papers across to the U-boat. Larssen personally took the papers to the submarine. When asked if there were any British subjects on board or if he had seen any British warships he said he had not. This was accepted and after the papers were examined the submarine left, steering to the West. Larssen had chosen to make the denial personally and in shielding the armed guard had taken a grave risk of losing his ship and crew, the more so since his wife and daughter were also aboard. MacLure concluded that any resistance using rifles against the U-boats armament would have jeopardised the lives of all the neutral persons on board. Larssen stated that he would have been willing to call at Kirkwall of his own accord if asked, but objected to the presence of an Armed Guard on board as they only endangered the ship and his crew. Later, whilst becalmed in the Fair Island channel, HMT *Sarah Alice* refused MacLure's request for a tow. This angered Larssen so much he threatened to reveal the Armed Guard if intercepted by another U-boat.<sup>72</sup>

On another occasion the Norwegian Steamer *Trondhjemsfjord* was proceeding to Kirkwall under an Armed Guard from *Hildebrand* when intercepted on 28 July 1915 by a German submarine. After a chase the *Trondhjemsfjord* stopped and the Master,

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<sup>70</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders 63 (12)

<sup>71</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 266

<sup>72</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 MacLure to Down 327-8

Captain Bang was ordered aboard the submarine with his ship's papers. Before leaving his ship Captain Bang arranged for the Armed Guard to be disguised and their rifles to be hidden in the forepeak. Soon after the master boarded the submarine she signalled the crew of the *Trondhjemsfjord* to abandon ship immediately. At 1.25 p.m. when the lifeboats were clear of the ship, the submarine fired a torpedo at 130 yards. The vessel sank at 2.51 p.m. and afterwards the submarine towed the boats four miles south to the Norwegian barque *Glance* which was ordered by the Germans to take the survivors aboard. Thanks to the praiseworthy efforts of Captain Bang and his wife in providing disguise, the Armed Guard under Lieutenant Crawford R.N.R., escaped and returned to Thurso from Sweden. The young German U-boat commander treated the captives well and explained his motive for sinking the *Trondhjemsfjord* was because she was an English steamer bought by the Norwegian Company.<sup>73</sup>

One particular challenge for the Boarding Officers was that of the sailing ship. The handling of sailing ships was a dying skill for Merchant Navy officers by 1914. Nevertheless, the Reports of Proceedings and statistics show they were frequently a target for boarding and sometimes had to be sent in for examination. Boarding Officers were probably at Senior Second Officer or Junior Chief Officer level in their civilian role and able to call on some sail experience. Often the officer in charge of an Armed Guard would be a junior lieutenant or sub-lieutenant or even a midshipman. This age group was likely to have little or no sail experience and a sailing ship master could pull the wool over such young eyes in the matter of sail operation. One such occasion was when H.M.S. *Ebro* stopped the Norwegian sailing vessel *Queen of Scots* on 16 May 1917 and she was boarded by Lieut. S.M.Smiles R.N.R. in Latitude 61°25'N Long 14° 0'W. (About 290 miles south east of Reykjavik and 180 miles west of Sydero Island.)

The Master when instructed he would have to call at Stornoway, expressed concern at the risk of submarines, although assured an escort would meet his ship. An Armed Guard consisting of Sub-Lieutenant C. Redfearn R.N.R. and six ratings was placed aboard with orders for Stornoway. Redfearn was specially instructed to take the vessel to Stornoway and not to get too far to the east as the ship was a suspicious vessel. Once clear of *Ebro* the Master of the *Queen of Scots* claimed headwinds would make Lerwick a more accessible port and finally prevailed on the Armed Guard Officer to agree to a change of destination. Light winds were then experienced and the vessel

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<sup>73</sup> TNA ADM 137/1101 Crawford to Rear-Admiral H.M.S.. *Cyclops* 116-119 29 July 1915

remained for two days to the north of the Faroes until the wind freshened from the south. On 20 May 1917 an armed boarding steamer enquired of the *Queen of Scots* as to her destination and on being told Lerwick allowed her to proceed. During the same day when about 170 miles NNE of Lerwick the wind shifted to the SW and increased to a moderate gale. Although sail was shortened the ship continued to make a course to the east, for two days. The Master claimed he could not lie any closer to the wind as the main topgallant mast was broken after which the wind dropped and the Master reported a shortage of water. It was then decided to make for the nearest port to replenish. The wind remained in the South West and therefore unfavourable for Lerwick. The ship was taken to Alesund, Norway arriving on 28 May 1917, some twelve days after boarding. Commander Wrightson, in command of *Ebro*, had little option but report the account above to Vice Admiral Tupper and acknowledge that Sub-Lieutenant Redfearn, owing to lack of sailing ship experience, had been bluffed into agreeing all the Master's proposals.<sup>74</sup> In reply, Tupper concurred with Wrightson's opinion and included a rebuke regretting that an officer experienced in sailing ships had not been allocated the task. Tupper also covered himself by adding, 'if such an officer was available'.<sup>75</sup> That was precisely the problem, the Navy abolished the Masted Training Squadron in 1899.<sup>76</sup> Even earlier, the RMSPC had built its last square rigged steamer the *Orinoco* in 1886, leaving sail behind as a secondary means of propulsion.<sup>77</sup> This had left little or no chance the youngest officers in the Squadron had received sail experience. No one could have foreseen a distant blockade in northern waters, where the last stronghold of sail was sustained by Scandinavian owners working both deep sea and smaller vessels. Cdr Wrightson replied explaining his officers experienced in sail were in the key posts of 1<sup>st</sup>Lieutenant, Boarding Officer, Navigation and Gunnery. However, Redfearn had carried out Armed Guard duties satisfactorily in the past and was therefore sent.<sup>78</sup>

Midshipman Francis Poole R.N.R. was placed in charge of the Armed Guard from *Alcantara* aboard the Norwegian 3 masted barque *Dagmar* on 6 February 1916 with orders to make for Lerwick. The *Dagmar* had a cargo of resin and was bound for Trondheim when Poole boarded her in a SW gale 92 miles NE of Lerwick. He had a very trying time of it, twice running out of provisions, oil and coal. On both occasions

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<sup>74</sup> TNA ADM 137/1275 Wrightson to Vice-Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS 483-4 5 June 1917

<sup>75</sup> TNA ADM 137/1275 Tupper to Wrightson 485 6 June 1917

<sup>76</sup> Smith, H.H., *An Admiral Never Forgets* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London,1936) 123

<sup>77</sup> Haws, *Merchant Fleets - Royal Mail Line* 54

<sup>78</sup> TNA ADM 137/1275 Wrightson to Vice-Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS 485 5 June 1917

*Dagmar* fell in with H.M.S. *Andes* and restocked. Four days after boarding, *Dagmar* arrived off Lerwick when three abortive attempts were made to tow her in by a trawler. She then failed to hold her anchorage and was forced to beat out again. When the ship ran out of oil for the navigation lights the crew and master refused to work the ship. Poole threatened to use force and the crew relented. After further favourable and unfavourable wind shifts *Dagmar* was finally towed into Lerwick on 16 February 1916 some ten days after boarding.<sup>79</sup> On 25 August 1916, Midshipman F.L. McKeag was transferred from *Orotava* on loan to *Hildebrand* which had 'run out' of Prize Officers. McKeag was tasked as Prize Officer with one man as Armed Guard, to take the Norwegian fishing ketch *Prima-donna* to Lerwick. After several days of alternate head and fair winds the ketch was becalmed and finally towed into Lerwick by the armed trawler H.M.S. *Sweeper*. On passage, McKeag had arguments and refusals to work from the crew. Like Midshipman Poole above, McKeag also resorted to the threat of force to prevail.<sup>80</sup>

Many of the sailing vessels were small craft carrying fish and fish oil from Iceland to Scandinavia and specifically Denmark. The fish was food and the oil had industrial uses were it to get to Germany. In the short period 7-24 May 1917 of fourteen vessels sent in by the Squadron, seven of which were sailing ships. Of the sailing vessels, one was driven to Aalesund, one was sunk and the armed guard taken prisoner, another had been set on fire and no news of the armed guard. Two more sailing vessels sent in between 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> May had not been heard of, nor the fate of the armed guards known.

Two other sailing vessels had been sunk but both the armed guards landed at Lerwick. As a result Captain Webb, Director of Trade Division, questioned the policy of diverting small sailing vessels in the danger zone and proposed amending squadron orders to read:

In view of the danger to small sailing vessels from enemy submarines such vessels need not be sent in unless carrying contraband goods of an important nature to Scandinavia or Holland.<sup>81</sup>

It is not clear whether this was done. Clearly, the longer time taken to bring a sailing ship in as a prize, coupled with the increasing submarine activity were factors having

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<sup>79</sup> IWM P190 Diary Mid. Francis Poole R.N.R. H.M.S.. *Alcantara* 6-16 February 1916

<sup>80</sup> IWM P389 Journal of Midshipman F.L. McKeag R.N.R. 46

<sup>81</sup> TNA ADM137/1275 Minute by Webb 436 2 June 1917

an effect on the availability of boarding and prize crews. Webb's suggestion seems to have sought to prioritize the Squadron's boarding work load.

### **Interception of the *Kristianafjord***

A dramatic interception of the *Kristianafjord* by H.M.S. *Teutonic* (Cdr A.Smyth RN) on 15 November 1915 included all the key components of the Squadron's daily workload. Collecting intelligence, making an assessment, allowing for weather and then setting a trap - all of which depended on radio communications.



Fig.26 Norwegian America Line's *Kristianafjord*

On 14 November 1915, H.M.S. *Patuca* passed a report to de Chair that the United States tanker *Wico* had sighted a large steamer heading NE at speed, approximately 70 miles WNW from the Butt of Lewis. De Chair concluded this was the *Kristianafjord* and promptly instructed *Teutonic* to patrol to the north of Muckle Flugga. Coincidentally, *Teutonic* had also intercepted *Patuca*'s signal and was aware of the situation before receiving de Chair's orders. It was known the Captain of the *Kristianafjord* took pride in evading the patrols and Cdr Smyth plotted various potential rendezvous points between Sydero Light on the Faeroes and Muckle Flugga in the Shetlands. Smyth assessed that *Kristianafjord* would aim to sight Muckle Flugga for a position and he centred his patrol in that vicinity.

The weather on the 15<sup>th</sup> was bright and fine with occasional snow flurries and rain squalls with a maximum visibility of 10 miles. These were the short days of winter and although the moon did not set until 1am., Smyth doubted he would sight *Kristianafjord* if she was not showing lights. Between 4 and 6pm the wind strengthened from the NE and would have slowed *Kristianafjord* down. At 10.15pm Smyth stepped onto the

bridge to hear the Officer of the Watch stop the starboard engine and alter course to starboard to avoid a large steamer close to port and without lights. The steamer was slow to answer and switch on her lights and had to be encouraged by a warning blank shot from a 6pdr gun. By now the sea was too high for boarding and *Teutonic* stood with *Kristianafiord* in the direction of Kirkwall. The events of the next few hours are encapsulated in the extracts from the signal log reproduced below:

**SIGNALS EXCHANGED**

- 10.05pm. *TEUTONIC* -- *STRANGER* (Lamp) 15/11/15.  
 “What Ship”  
 Reply “*KRISTIANAFIORD*”
- 10.10pm. *TEUTONIC* -- *STRANGER* (Lamp)  
 “Stop engines and switch on your lights you are not to move”.  
 Reply:-“I am stopped”.
- 10.24pm. *TEUTONIC* -- *KRISTIANAFIORD* (Lamp)  
 “Obey my orders all courses will be made magnetic you are not to use your W/T or I shall take immediate steps”.
- 10.55pm. *TEUTONIC* -- *KRISTIANAFIORD* (Lamp)  
 “Why are you using your wireless”.  
 Reply:-“I was only sending three letters to my Owners”.
- 11.10pm. *TEUTONIC* -- *KRISTIANAFIORD* (Lamp)  
 “You are not to use your W/T I am taking no risks”.  
 Reply:-“Thank you for your courtesy”.
- 11.20pm. *TEUTONIC* -- *KRISTIANAFIORD* (Lamp)  
 “Proceed at 10 knots”.  
 Reply:-“Please your instructions for the night I am going to retire”.
- 11.25pm. *TEUTONIC* -- *KRISTIANAFIORD* (Lamp)  
 “Steer S.S.E. speed 10 knots”. 16/11/15
- 10.57pm. *TEUTONIC* -- *S.O. 10<sup>TH</sup> C.S. (W/T)* (15/11/15)<sup>82</sup>  
 “Latitude 61° 10’N Longitude 0° 50’W *KRISTIANAFIORD* now hove to here too rough to board shall I take him to Lerwick or Kirkwall 2222”
- S.O. 10<sup>TH</sup> C.S.-- TEUTONIC (W/T)*  
 1.50am. “Well done” put Armed Guard aboard under lee of Shetlands Lieutenant in charge and send to Kirkwall 2320.”
- 1.52am. If Captain protests say that you have orders of British Government, send her Kirkwall Lieutenant Armed Guard it should be able to navigate ship if necessary to 2330.
- 1.55am. Was “*KRISTIANAFIORD*” burning navigation lights when caught 0042

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<sup>82</sup> Italics show W/T signals

**TEUTONIC -- S.O. 10<sup>TH</sup> C.S. (W/T)**

2.55am. "KRISTIANAFIORD" was steaming high speed without lights. 0250

01.21am. KRISTIANAFIORD -- TEUTONIC (Lamp)

As we are now entering the war zone proclaimed by Germany I must have your full guarantee that you will take responsibility for everything happening to the ship in the said zone. Commander.

(This signal was repeated at 2-30am.)

3.30am. KRISTIANAFIORD -- TEUTONIC (Lamp).

I am waiting for a reply to my two requests I will not be ordered to do anything before ingoing.

5.03am. KRISTIANAFIORD -- TEUTONIC (Lamp).

From Officer of the Guard.

The Captain will navigate this ship to Kirkwall.

6.05am. **TEUTONIC – C-in-C and S.O. 10<sup>TH</sup> C.S. (W/T)**

60° 12' N 0° 20' W. Armed Guard now taking "KRISTIANAFIORD" to Kirkwall Captain has agreed to navigate her. Am proceeding to Swarbacks Minn.<sup>83</sup>

The sequence of signals reveal the stress and adrenaline on the bridges of both vessels. The signal times of despatch from the Senior Officer to *Teutonic* and the times of receipt show the delays needed for coding, transmission and then decoding. The illustrations of *Kristianafiord* and that of the *Teutonic* in the bibliography, reveal the potential for a disastrous collision due to the foolhardiness of steaming without navigation lights. Finally, the signal from *Kristianafiord* at 11.20pm seeking night orders before 'retiring', reveals a mixture of defiance and nonchalance which was understood and respected by both captains. Most interceptions were of a more routine nature and periods of boredom, when no sightings were made, held their own challenges to morale. This boarding was but one of many and in all, the Squadron made 12,979 interceptions during its operations.<sup>84</sup>

Although the articles of the Declaration of London were many and sometimes complex in their operation, it had to be borne in mind that trade in contraband goods was by no means generally forbidden during war. It was the trade with the enemy in these articles which was illegal, and then only under strict rules framed to protect the interests of neutral states and individuals.<sup>85</sup> The capture of a suspect vessel and the safe conduct of

<sup>83</sup> NMM 80/033 H.M.S.. *Teutonic* Patrol Report by Capt. A.H.Smyth RN 18 Nov. 1915

<sup>84</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 267

<sup>85</sup> Egerton, W.A., *Contraband of War* (Portsmouth, 1914) 7

the prize to port could incur inconvenience and cost to the captor out of all proportion to the benefits to be gained.<sup>86</sup> The correct application of the rules at the point of interception fell to the Squadron and in particular the Boarding Officers and Armed Guard Officers. Whilst a Government normally assumes responsibility for the actions of its servants, any wrongful application of the rules by Naval Officers risked exposing the State to serious diplomatic repercussions and possibly heavy financial penalties. In other circumstances, lack of understanding of the laws could give indirect assistance to the enemy.<sup>87</sup>

Intercepting, boarding and inspecting were the *raison d'être* for the Squadron's existence. The order, 'Away Sea Boat's Crew' then, brought together the dangers of the sea and weather with the onerous responsibility of diplomatic legal interpretation aboard neutral ships. By any standard these would have been significant challenges in themselves. However, they had to be met daily against the background threats of destruction by the enemy's weapons both on and beneath the sea.

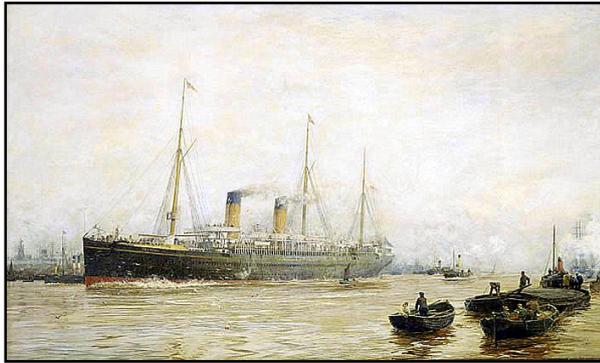
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<sup>86</sup> Egerton, *Contraband of War* 11

<sup>87</sup> Egerton, *Contraband of War* xii

The appearance of the White Star Line's *Teutonic* at the Spithead Review in 1889 was a milestone in the development of armed merchant cruisers. The name had been chosen as an acknowledgement of Queen Victoria's family connections with Germany. The *Teutonic* and her sister-ship *Majestic* were built in 1889 and 1890 respectively and



27. *Teutonic* leaving Liverpool 1889 for the Spithead Review.<sup>1</sup>

were the first liners designed to be converted to armed merchant cruisers in twenty four hours. The primary armament was intended to be eight 4.7 inch quick firing guns supplemented by two smaller 6 pounders.

The National Maritime Museum's painting by W.L. Wyllie shows *Teutonic* wearing the blue ensign and fitted with two 4.7 guns on the port side, one on the foredeck and another on the afterdeck. These had been fitted for the Review, which was in honour of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, and to show how Britain's growing fleet of liners could be transformed for war purposes. The message was not lost on the Kaiser. In the naval race between Britain and Germany in the years leading up to 1914, Germany included plans to use large merchant ships as armed cruisers just as the Royal Navy planned. The Hamburg-Amerika liner *Normannia* had been involved in fleet manoeuvres as early as 1895. By the twentieth century reinforced decks were built into selected ships and secret orders given to their masters. Early war experience showed both sides that their largest and fastest vessels such as *Mauretania*, *Lusitania*, *Wilhelm der Grosse* and *Kronprinz Wilhelm* were both costly in fuel and large vulnerable targets. Unlike Britain, the Kaiserliche Marine had few suitable fast passenger ships of between 10,000-15,000 gross registered tons, from which to choose. Much of Germany's merchant ship tonnage had been interned abroad for the duration of the war. The Germans decided to convert selected modern cargo ships as commerce raiders. Modern cargo ships were available, anonymous in appearance, fast enough to overhaul many British merchantmen and even resist attack by small un-armoured warships. As a result, the converted merchantmen *Möewe*, *Greif* and *Wolf* became at one time or another challenges for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> NMM Ref: BHC 3657 'Teutonic leaving Liverpool about 1890.' by W.L. Wyllie (1851-1931)

<sup>2</sup> Walter, J., *The Kaiser's Pirates: German surface raiders in WW I* (London, 1994) 43-45

**The Cruisers' Armament.**

In the British planning for armed merchant cruisers the basic objective was to fit ships with eight 4.7" guns. This allowed a broadside of four from either side of the vessel. These guns were obsolete weapons which had been removed from broken up cruisers. Stockpiles of 4.7" guns were arranged at strategic ports throughout the Empire to allow a quick conversion of liners taken up from trade whilst overseas. The first steamers taken up for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron were all fitted with these guns, typically supplemented with two six pounder guns for anti aircraft purposes.

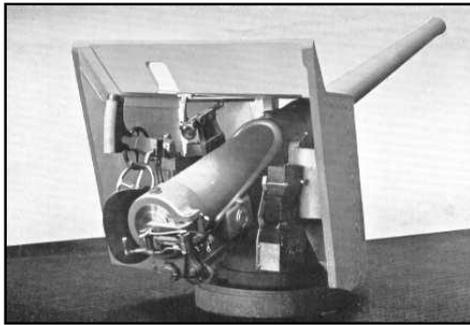


Fig.28 4.7" Naval Gun

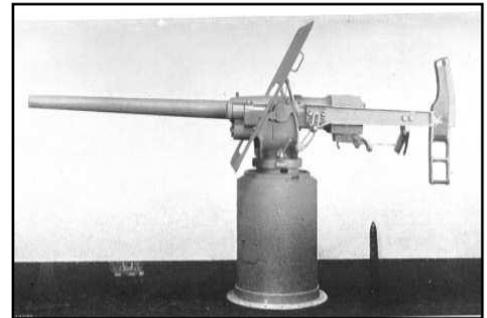


Fig.29 Six Pounder Mounting

The 4.7" gun was the primary armament for both attack and defence against enemy warships and surfaced submarines. It was also used to send a salutary shell across the bows of neutral vessels which chose to ignore the two warning blank charges fired from a six pounder. It was realised these guns were useless to deal with the German warships the squadron was likely to meet and they were replaced by 6" guns.<sup>3</sup> The upgrading was done progressively as ships returned to base for coaling and refit. *Alsatian* was the first to be taken in hand for conversion in December 1914. Gun trials were carried out beyond the Mersey Bar on December 15<sup>th</sup> but were not satisfactory. The extra recoil from the higher calibre guns had started five rivets in the mountings of three of her forward guns and the two after guns started twenty three and twenty seven rivets respectively.<sup>4</sup> This resulted in a further delay of one week and proved the vital need for the strengthening to be of the highest quality on ships never built for the carriage of guns this size. The lessons were learnt and subsequent vessels joining the squadron, namely, *Andes*, *Alcantara*, *Almanzora*, *Arlanza*, *Ebro* and *Avenger* all of them direct from the builders, were fitted with 6" calibre guns at the outset. These guns had a range of 11,000 yards at maximum elevation and fired a maximum of six rounds

<sup>3</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 223-224 Tupper, at one time Captain of the gunnery school H.M.S. *Excellent*, described the 4.7" guns as 'hopelessly obsolete'.

<sup>4</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 65-66

per minute.<sup>5</sup> The illustration shows such a gun fitted with a gun shield but in many cases these were not fitted.

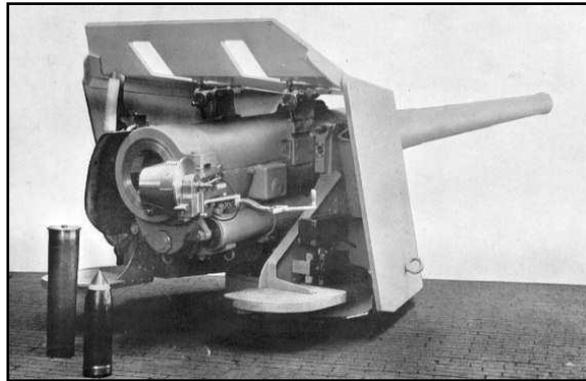


Fig.30 6" Naval Gun

It did become necessary to build shelters near each gun to protect the crew from the extreme weather experienced.<sup>6</sup> The other components required to arm the cruisers were ammunition magazines, searchlights for target illumination and an optical rangefinder which was at the heart of the gunnery control problem.

As electricity became a standard feature aboard warships in the last decades of the nineteenth century one of its uses was to power searchlights. It was a normal component fitted to the Squadron's ships as part of the gunnery system. As stated in Chapter 6 they had a role assisting boarding boats at night. This did have some risks in providing an aiming point for enemy vessels but on balance their use opened up the opportunity of fighting at night with quick firing guns.<sup>7</sup>

Below decks in a forward and after hold each cruiser had magazines fitted inside steel tanks. The magazines were provided with the necessary ventilation and flooding arrangements as well as precautions against flash. Some ships had the additional precaution of a cofferdam all round the magazines. Ammunition supply to the guns was a problem, *Alsatian* relied on whip hoists. Plenty of 'ready use' projectiles were kept close by the guns, which were kept loaded at all times.<sup>8</sup> Pre war research had shown the ammunition supply trunking should be kept a minimum distance of 12 feet away from a magazine and not connected to it.<sup>9</sup> The squadron orders reiterated the stringent rules about the care and handling of projectiles and cordite set out in the Grand Fleet Orders. In particular, a constant monitoring of the magazine temperatures

<sup>5</sup> Buxton, I., *Big Gun Monitors* (Tynemouth, 1979 reprint) 194

<sup>6</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 224

<sup>7</sup> Hezlet, *The Electron and Sea Power* 14-16

<sup>8</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 224

<sup>9</sup> Brown, *The Grand Fleet* 34

was required.<sup>10</sup> Supervision of the gunnery matters would have fallen to the Commissioned or Warranted Gunner appointed to each ship. Extreme low temperatures needed extreme action to ensure the guns were working. Signalman Thomas Grayson's diary aboard *Ebro* North West of Iceland on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1917, recorded:

Steamed foremost guns and got them in working order. Fired a round of Black [powder] out of each to clear the boxes. Got Boat Derrick in working order. Clearing ice away.<sup>11</sup>

Admiral Tupper summarises the gunnery control systems as being by voice pipes with telephones fitted to the bridge. Most of the gunnery was entirely independent and left to the skill of the gunlayer.<sup>12</sup>

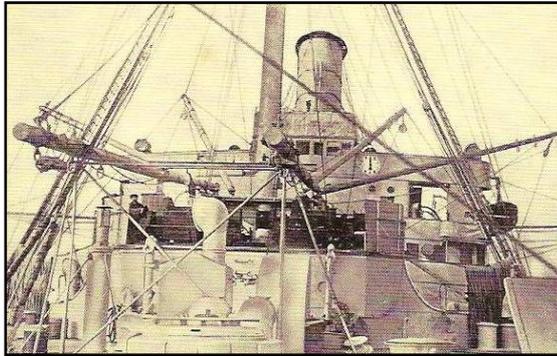


Fig.31 H.M.S. *Alsatian*'s bridge front and foredeck.

In addition, *Alsatian* was fitted with large range clock faces on the port and starboard side of the bridge front.<sup>13</sup> These also appear on the model of *Alsatian* made by the ship's carpenter.<sup>14</sup> Buxton records that a special Artillery Clock and Deflection Indicator was developed so that the results of spotting could be translated directly into changes of gun range and deflection.<sup>15</sup> These dials may have been fitted to *Alsatian* on an experimental basis.

A vital element in the gunnery system was the optical rangefinder to provide a target range. The optical rangefinder had been under development in both Britain and Germany in the pre-war years. They were not a statutory requirement aboard a merchant ship and were very expensive instruments. Consequently, very few were fitted to British merchant ships since the need to measure 'distance off' from other ships was minimal in peacetime. However, ships of the Squadron were supplied with

<sup>10</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Orders 12

<sup>11</sup> IWM 96/47/1 Grayson T. Signalman H.M.S. *Ebro*

<sup>12</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 224

<sup>13</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* facing 49

<sup>14</sup> H.M.S. *Alsatian* Ref: LOA0580 Merseyside Maritime Museum Cat. No. 512

<sup>15</sup> Buxton, I., *Big Gun Monitors* 199

rangefinders, like other large warships, and their use in gunnery control is explained in this chapter and the glossary.

These instruments had been developed prior to the war and by 1914, three companies, Barr & Stroud, Vickers and Siemens were supplying the Navy.<sup>16</sup>

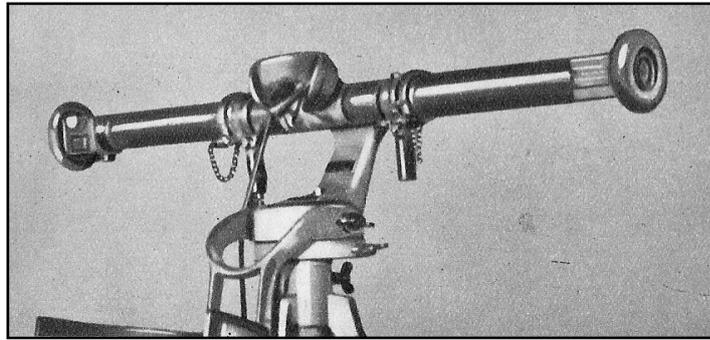


Fig. 32 A commercial rangefinder of 1947 vintage.

The rangefinders needed careful attention since they were susceptible to damage from excessive sunlight and any damp getting into the mechanism. A log of any adjustments had to be kept. Thomas Grayson, a reservist signalman, recalled for duty aboard *Ebro*, frequently mentions in his diary being on 'rangefinder duty' but fails to say whether this was for maintenance work or actual range taking.<sup>17</sup>

### The Fire Control System.

The solution of the gunnery control problem was a complex matter to be solved without help from today's electronic and gyroscopic input. The mathematical problem to decide the correct elevation and training angles could not be easily solved in the height of action, let alone allowance for wind and also the ship's roll, pitch and yaw. In addition to an accurate range from the target, experienced estimates of the enemy's course and speed were needed. These were combined with 'own ship's course and speed' and alterations of course, to ensure a shell landed at the target's projected position, after a flight of 12 or more seconds. How then, was it done? The gunnery control system aboard the ill fated *Alcantara* has been recorded by one of her survivors, Midshipman Francis Poole R.N.R.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> NMM Admiralty *Handbook for fire control instruments* (London, 1914) 9

The rangefinder supplied to *Virginian* can be clearly seen in Chapter 3 on page 74.

It is the 'T' like structure positioned abaft the compass and the 9ft. tube has been aligned fore and aft.

<sup>17</sup> IWM 96/47/1 Grayson. T.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix 11.

Poole's point about the system being slow was valid, nevertheless, this was the method of fire control for most of the Navy at the time. The mathematics of relative bearings and speeds, whilst under constant change, were solved by using the Dumaresq and rate clock to keep the range. This meant spotting for range became almost as straight forward as when the range was constant.<sup>19</sup> A recent publication from the Imperial War Museum makes the point that only eight ships in the Royal Navy were fitted with director firing when the war started.<sup>20</sup>

**Regular Gun Drill Essential.**

Whilst the Squadron's armament may have been considered suitable and adequate, efficient gunnery required well trained crews. The opinions of Commander Grenfell aboard *Cedric* painted a sorry picture. If his experience was typical of the Squadron then it showed the problems that lay ahead. In the early days after commissioning, Grenfell's diary entries show the despair he felt:

**26<sup>th</sup> November 1914, At Devonport.**

Told off *Cedric's* guns crews. All these men are either retired CPO's or PO's or R.N.R. & R.N.V.R. men in equal proportions of the latter. Some v. old crocks among the PO's. Gun Layers were tested for eyesight & several rejected on that score.

**11<sup>TH</sup> December 1914, On patrol ground.**

Except the Captain & myself, of all our R.N.R. Officers only two have ever served in a naval ship. The midshipmen know a little Gunnery, picked up at the Devonport Gunnery School, but all the principal officers of Quarters have never before seen a gun & some of the men were distinctly gun shy when we fired yesterday.

**13<sup>th</sup> December 1914, At Sea**

..... we have 28 PO's & CPO's all retired naval men, 104 seaman all R.N.R. & R.N.V.R., 3 W.Telegraphists, 3 Signalmen (one R.N.V.R.), 2 Armourers, ?.....& ships?, 4 ERA's (R.N.R.), 10 Artificers (all shore men) & 39 marines, all pensioners.....Chief Gunner Mr. Kelly --- retired 5 years. Boatswain Mr. Walsh was boatswain of the ship. Remains the Chief Steward Mr.----- now given the rank as a warrant officer, & is a most important part of the complement.

**14<sup>th</sup> December 1914, At Sea.**

.....about half our R.N.V.R. had never been to sea before. One man was overheard to state that he was sent to Antwerp with a rifle he didn't know how to shoot with, & now he was given an oar which he ----- well didn't know how to use. What can one do with such men! Most of the R.N.V.R. men have never been to sea before, know nothing of ship's life & sea ways, or of seamanship, or even of sea terms ---- I asked a man whether he could put a mousing on hooks & he did not know what it was. But they are a v. willing lot & many of them are of superior type. The R.N.R. men are the usual lumbering, thick headed merchant seaman, some pretty useless & it will take much time to teach them to move smartly.

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<sup>19</sup> Brooks, J., *Dreadnought Gunnery and the Battle of Jutland* (Abingdon,2005) 26

<sup>20</sup> Thompson, J., *The War at Sea 1914-1918* (London,2006) 51

The shortcomings which Grenfell perceived of the ‘old crocks’ would emerge as his salvation. No doubt their maturity and former experience enabled them to realise the parlous situation in which all on board were in. They were experienced men who could recognise the limitations in the ratings’ naval training and also the inexperience of the younger officers.<sup>21</sup> Grenfell seemed to have forgotten he had been on the Retired List for nine years himself and was lucky to have support offered spontaneously:

**27<sup>th</sup> December 1914, At Sea.**

..... I had a talk with CPO Mildon the Chief Boatswain’s Mate yesterday. He said all the PO’s were most anxious to help me & that the ship would go into Liverpool at the end of this cruise much cleaner than any other Merchant Cruiser, but he said the strain on the older men was pretty great --- & I don’t doubt it. Many of the PO’s must be well over 50, & have been called up after several year’s of quiet rusticing not to say rusting – on shore. The ‘boys’ are willing enough but many of them are ignorant.<sup>22</sup>

Two days later, after issuing some typewritten guidance notes on gunnery and other officers’ duties, he was rewarded by a request from them:

They have come to me for some drill in order that they may be able to handle their divisions without exposing themselves to criticism.<sup>23</sup>

Grenfell’s somewhat derisive views of the R.N.R. and R.N.V.R., suggest he may have been among those R.N. officers who did not consider R.N.V.R. volunteers would be of value aboard warships. The R.N.V.R. was started in 1903 only two years before Grenfell retired in 1905. This was a time for development and change in the R.N.V.R. and it can be speculated how much Grenfell actually knew about their background. Many R.N. officers never came across a reservist at any time at all. Amongst *Cedric*’s clutch of R.N.V.R. would have been ‘permanent’ R.N.V.R.’s from peacetime as well as ‘hostilities only’ R.N.V.R. who had even less naval experience. In the earliest years there had been a plea for more modern guns in the R.N.V.R. drillships only really understood by Lord Beresford.<sup>24</sup> Prior to the war, Churchill had stated the R.N.V.R. would be ‘welded indistinguishably’ with the R.N. Post mobilisation Churchill only intended the R.F.R. to join the fleet. He had a large number of R.N.V.R. personnel available which he used to form the Royal Naval Division for service supporting the

<sup>21</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1. Pages 44-57.

Grenfell had been placed on the Retired List of the Royal Navy in December 1905 with the rank of Lieutenant, but, on his recall and mobilisation in August 1914 he was granted the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Initially, Grenfell served as Assistant Naval Transport Officer at Queenstown and Marseilles, and then as Second-in-Command of H.M.S. *Cedric*, the largest ship in the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. On December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1914 Grenfell was promoted to the rank of Commander on the Retired List. He frequently dined at the Adelphi whenever *Cedric* was in Liverpool and was often in the company of the Senior Naval Officer there, Rear Admiral Stileman RN.

<sup>22</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1. 77

<sup>23</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1. 80

<sup>24</sup> Kerr and Granville, *The R.N.V.R.* 74-75

Army in Antwerp and many were never sent to sea.<sup>25</sup> The probability is that most of *Cedric's* R.N.V.R.s were 'hostilities only volunteers' for at this stage, conscription had not been introduced.

Grenfell did recognise there was a difference in ethos and motivation in the R.N.V.R.'s not seen in the R.N.R.'s. Unkindly described as '*lumbering, thick headed merchant seaman*' a more precise description would have been 'phlegmatic'. As employees of the shipowner, they were required to perform routine tasks to ensure safe and uneventful sea voyages. They were not required to show the initiative seen in the R.N.V.R.'s fight to exist, nor did they possess the same extrovert tendencies developed in previous shore employment. Why then did a merchant seaman join the R.N.R.? Most of them worked for the mail companies where the better conditions of pay and short voyages existed. Since the mail companies needed a minimum numbers of Reservists to retain their mail contracts, membership of the R.N.R. was an economic advantage to owner and seafarer. Undoubtedly, most 'peacetime' R.N.R. officers had a professional interest in 'how the Navy did things' and patriotic motivation would have been more prevalent in those days. However, many 'company's men' were given 'temporary' R.N.R. commissions, a move to ensure their retention aboard the armed merchant cruisers. No doubt that happened on board *Cedric*. After complaints the training syllabus for the R.N.R. had been extensively revised in 1906.<sup>26</sup>

The gunnery element set out to achieve the following standard:

...gun drill with all the pieces from the 3-pounder to the 6-incher inclusive-This drill being intended not to make the men good shots but to accustom them to the firing of guns in their vicinity and to make them useful members of the gun's crew-<sup>27</sup>

Grenfell may have been led to think that the R.N.R. and R.N.V.R. training and experience was more extensive and if so, his concern can be understood. It would be a significant challenge for him, the RN Gunner and the recalled pensioners, both R.F.R. and R.M.L.I., to start raising the standard of the ship's gunnery. By 15 February 1915, Grenfell was further rewarded by for his patient encouragement leading to his diary entry:

Stewards have formed two gun's crews for loader drill and I have given them permission to practice with Patrick the Gunner's Mate.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Howarth, *The Royal Navy's Reserves in War and Peace 1903-2003* 39-40

<sup>26</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 87

<sup>27</sup> Bowen, *History of the R.N.R.* 89

<sup>28</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1 147

If the manning situation aboard *Cedric* was typical, it certainly justified the Squadron commanding officers' practice of starting gunnery instruction and drill as soon the cruisers were commissioned and had put to sea for patrol duty.

Effective gun drill was and still is, a slow and measured progression from individual tasks being mastered, leading to the creation of an efficient gun's crew. Each man has a numbered position on the mounting and a precise task to be performed in a precise sequence. Until everyone knew their work, the ammunition supply parties were drilled at different times. Better results were obtained by short and frequent drills rather than long sessions. One hour was long enough for any one drill and in the early stages more than one drill could be carried out in a day.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, the Squadron logbooks regularly record gunnery instruction taking place morning and afternoon once the ships commissioned. Whilst on patrol the periods of twilight at dusk and dawn made the ships vulnerable to attack by submarine. Consequently, in addition to extra vigilance by lookouts, the guns were manned in readiness. Each merchant ship sighted was considered a potential enemy warship and such sightings meant gun's crews were on the alert. Thus, the combination of training drills and regularly 'clearing for action' would have quickly improved their gunnery skills. Gunnery was the elite specialisation which pervaded all naval thinking. It started to spread throughout the Squadron when Grenfell aboard *Cedric* noted in his diary as early as 14 March 1915:

We are getting so into Gunnery ways and phraseology that the numbers of the hymns at Sunday service are given out by the Captain (quite unconsciously) in spotting words used in passing ranges to the guns. 'Hymn number two, oh seven' we had today and 'Hymn number four double oh' last Sunday.<sup>30</sup>

Tupper, as a former gunnery officer ensured the Squadron's ships were provided with all the necessary gunnery training equipment.<sup>31</sup> These included floating targets, loaders, aiming rifles and 'dotter' now described.<sup>32</sup> Ships were encouraged to carry out target practice with the heavy guns whenever the opportunity allowed. The 'floating targets' were large structures which were hoisted outboard and launched whenever weather would allow their easy recovery. Once recovered, the ship's carpenters would make good any damage ready for the next practice shoot. On one occasion *Ebro*, whilst in the

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<sup>29</sup> Admiralty, Notes on Gunnery for Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships B.R. 219/39 (London,1939) 8

Although published in 1939, the notes refer to the weapon systems fitted to the Squadron in 1914.

<sup>30</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1 176

<sup>31</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 253

<sup>32</sup> Scott, P., *Fifty Years In The Royal Navy* (London,1919) 81-89

These training devices had mainly been developed by Admiral Sir Percy Scott from 1897 onwards.

Admiralty acceptance of the designs was not immediate but they were in use before World War One started.

vicinity of Iceland, took the opportunity of target practice on an iceberg.<sup>33</sup> Ideally gunnery practice should use a towed target to simulate a moving enemy. In this way, the entire gunnery system from the gunnery control officer via the transmitting station through to the gun-layer was exercised. A purpose built towed battle practice target was 90feet long by 30feet tall and the usual range was 4,200 yards. Instead, the Squadron had only floating makeshift versions about 12½ feet by 10 feet supported by four casks such those aboard *Cedric*.<sup>34</sup>

### **Improved Training Equipment Developed.**

The 'loader' was a device which simulated the breech of a gun, into which practice 6-inch shells were thrust by the loading numbers in the crew. This training was used to speed up their performance in clearing the barrel and loading the next projectile in order to develop a 'rate of fire'. It was a muscle bending machine and later models were used for punishment at Whale Island gunnery school well into the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the ships' logs, mention is made of target practice using either 'sub calibre' tubes, '1-inch tubes' or 'aiming rifles'. The sub-calibre tube was fitted inside the breech of full sized guns. Its purpose was to fire a 1" shell for practice purposes rather than a costly full sized projectile. Admiral Scott became convinced that this device was inaccurate, notwithstanding it was the Admiralty approved apparatus. Once he had proved the inaccuracy he developed the 'aiming rifle'. This was a standard Lee-Metford service rifle also adapted to fit inside the breech of a 4.5" or 6" gun. An armature and electromagnet was attached to the rifle trigger and wires connected this to the gun-layer's trigger to achieve simultaneous firing. Used with the improved targets designed by Scott it proved successful and less costly. Had the Navy adopted its use in 1898 Scott claimed a potential annual saving of £40,000. At that time the one inch cartridges cost £110 per 1000 compared with £4 per 1000 for the Lee-Metford aiming rifle.<sup>36</sup> Reading the logs, diaries and Squadron Orders it seems in addition to both .303" and .45" aiming rifles, the 1" sub-calibre tube was in frequent use in the Squadron.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> IWM 96/47/1 Grayson.T., Diary Entry 21 March 1917 H.M.S. *Ebro*

<sup>34</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2 88-89

<sup>35</sup> Padfield, P., *Guns at Sea* (London,1973) 214

<sup>36</sup> Scott, *Fifty Years In The Royal Navy* 82-84

Scott claimed had the Navy adopted its use in 1898 a potential annual saving of £40,000. At that time the one inch cartridges cost £110 per 1000 compared with £4 per 1000 for the Lee-Metford aiming rifle.

<sup>37</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Parts 1 & 2.  
Grenfell frequently mentions the 1" aiming rifle in use.

Finally, the 'dotter gear' which was a training aid to simulate the ship's roll and teach the gun-layer to keep his aim on the target. Scott had noticed one man had a particular dexterity using the elevating wheel to keep his sights on a target despite the ship's roll. He believed that other men without this natural skill could be trained to give a similar level of performance. This germ of an idea led Scott to develop what became known as the 'dotter'. It was a contrivance with a vertical framework on which a target could be moved up and down using a handle and bicycle chain. Alongside the target and moving with it was a card with two horizontal lines drawn so that the area between them was in line with the bull. This was placed in front of the gun. A device extended from the gun barrel which carried a pencil point. This made a mark on the card, whenever the man under training pulled the trigger and at the same time the pencil moved a space to the right. The resulting series of dots showed how often the man's aim was on target and the extent by which it missed the target. This meant the skill of 'continuous aim' was possible rather than waiting for the ship to roll the sights onto the target. The success of the 'dotter' saw it adopted by both the Royal Navy and American Navy.<sup>38</sup>

#### **Ammunition Allowances for Training.**

Target practice was limited by the Ammunition Allowances laid down in the Squadron Orders. Allowances were granted for each type of gun and different types of firing. It should be noted that ships were not allowed to carry more than half the annual allowance on board at any time. Closely allied to Target Practice was a love of competition which Scott had encouraged. In pre war years this reached such a level in the Navy, that the gunnery results of individual ships were published in the national press in order to encourage performance.<sup>39</sup> Whenever possible both de Chair and Tupper would visit individual ships and oversee a series of evolutions or exercises which always included gun drill.<sup>40</sup> There can be little doubt that individual guns' crews aboard a Squadron ship, would have been timed against each other to sharpen up their performance for the Admiral's inspections. Both Admirals always commented in their inspection reports on the level of a ship's gunnery performance.

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<sup>38</sup> Scott, *Fifty Years In The Royal Navy* 86-87 Padfield, *Guns at Sea* 214-216

<sup>39</sup> Padfield, *Guns at Sea* 216

<sup>40</sup> These visits took place at sea and the Admirals transferred by sea boat. In this way they had first hand understanding of the skills demanded from the boats' crews and the risks taken by them.

30.

ALLOWANCE OF PRACTICE AMMUNITION.

The annual allowance of practice ammunition authorised for ships of the Squadron is as follows:—

6-inch	- - - -	32 rounds per gun.
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In the case of 6-inch B.L. guns, 10 of these may be full charges and the remainder two-thirds.

6 and 3-pdrs.	- - - -	38 rounds per gun.
1-inch electric	- - - -	200 rounds per 6-inch gun, and, in addition, where .303 aiming rifles are not supplied, 400 rounds per gun of 1-inch ammunition may also be expended in lieu of .303.
.45 aiming rifle	- - - -	500 rounds per 3 or 6-pdr. gun.

2. The annual allowance is to be counted from the date of commissioning. Not more than half of this allowance should be carried on board.

3. The expenditure of the practice ammunition should be spread over the year, the full calibre allowance being allotted as follows:—

HEAVY GUN.

*Officer of Quarters Firing	- - - -	6 rounds per gun.
*Day Practice	- - - -	10 rounds per gun.
*Night Practice	- - - -	4 rounds per gun.
*General Gunnery Test	- - - -	8 rounds per gun (Full charges).
C-in-C.'s Allowance	- - - -	4 rounds per gun (to be reserved for expenditure under Vice-Admiral's or Rear-Admiral's orders).

LIGHT Q.F. GUN.

For testing of Gunlayers	- - - -	6 rounds per gun.
Night Firing	- - - -	6 rounds per gun.
†Exercising Submarine attack	- - - -	26 rounds per gun.

4. Attention is called to clause 4 of Vice-Admiral's Memorandum No. 30 of 29th December 1916—"Gunnery Drills and Instructions."

Fig.33 Allowance of Practice Ammunition <sup>41</sup>

37.

DISCHARGE OF RATINGS FOR SERVICE IN DEFENSIVELY ARMED MERCHANT VESSELS.

Each ship is to discharge ratings as follows for the purpose of providing guns' crews for defensively armed merchant vessels:—

- (a) A maximum of three R.N.R. seamen per month who have been selected as suitable for gunlayers in defensively armed merchant vessels. Commanding Officers are relied upon to endeavour to discharge suitable men at this maximum rate, but are not to reduce the number of trained seamen in their ships below 60 per cent. of the total number of seamen calculated on the authorised complement.
- (b) In addition to the above, two R.N.R. or R.N.V.R. ratings per month suitable for second hands (breech worker) of the guns' crews.
- (c) In addition, two Marines, R.F.R., per month, for service as gunlayers in defensively armed merchant vessels.

These men are to be discharged to depot on arrival of ships at their Southern Bases, and reliefs requested in accordance with Admiralty Monthly Order 405/1915.

2. The Marines will be relieved by experienced Active Service Marines or recruits; the R.N.R. ratings, so far as is possible, by R.N.R. men, who are not suitable for draft to defensively armed merchant vessels, but it is understood that trained seamen are not at present available as reliefs.

3. The provision of ratings for this service is becoming of very great importance, and every effort must be made to send suitable men, and to give them the best preliminary training possible; it should be remembered that training afloat can be made much more practical than training in a gunnery school.

4. The men selected for gunlayers should be given instruction in shooting, rapidity of fire, single-gun spotting practice (at spotting table), duties of Captain of Gun, care and maintenance of guns, mountings, and ammunition, how to exercise themselves and their crews when in the merchant vessels, e.g., horizon laying, giving sight-setting instruction and drill to their sightsetters.

It should not be overlooked that 3 and 6-pdrs. form the armament of a large proportion of the defensively armed merchant vessels.

The men for duty as second hands cannot do better than attend the above instruction as far as possible.

Fig.34 Gunnery Ratings for Defensively Armed Merchant Ships.<sup>42</sup>

Tupper had been captain of the gunnery school, H.M.S. *Excellent*, between 1907 and 1910 and this experience no doubt strengthened his concern for the Squadron to be well

<sup>41</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Orders 78

<sup>42</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Orders 91

trained in gunnery. The gunnery standards must have shown steady improvement for by May 1917 the Squadron Orders included a requirement to release gunnery ratings for service aboard merchant ships.<sup>43</sup> In 1915 the Admiralty had started to progressively arm merchant ships with defensive guns.<sup>44</sup> Reading the extract reproduced above, it shows a demanding target of seven ratings from each ship on a monthly basis. This was a significant training target and must have reflected the standards the Squadron could now be expected to achieve. A quarterly return of names was to verify if quotas were met.

Whilst the Squadron's ships were armed, they had no armour plating fitted. This weakness concerned Tupper who stated in his 'Reminiscences':

Yet if one properly built and commissioned German cruiser had contrived to get among us for twenty four hours she might have wiped out the whole squadron.<sup>45</sup>

### **Germany Starts Surface Attacks.**

It was a well founded concern. Germany started surface attacks on British shipping from the beginning of the war, deploying the conventional light cruisers *Dresden*, *Emden*, *Karlsruhe*, *Königsberg*, and *Leipzig*.<sup>46</sup> The Kaiser's pre-war viewing of the *Teutonic*, as a potential armed merchant cruiser, had prompted Germany to turn to the conversion of fast transatlantic liners, such as *Kaiser Wilhelm Der Grosse*, into armed raiders. These vessels were either interned or sunk by mid 1915. At this time Admiral von Pohl had started unrestricted submarine warfare even though Germany had only 23 serviceable U-boats. An alternative platform was needed until the building rate for U-boats could be assured. The solution came from a proposal in October 1915 by Leutnant zS. Theodor Wolff in which he suggested the use of more modest steamers such as anonymous freighters. They were to load extra coal to increase their range and the loaded draught would increase the deception on which they were to rely. Their speed need not be overly high since the speed of the typical British tramp ship was only 8-10 knots. Admiral von Pohl was persuaded to give the converted merchant ship another chance and so the *Möewe*, *Greif* and *Wolf* were fitted out.<sup>47</sup> Both the armed raiders *Möewe* and *Greif* would impinge on the work of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.

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<sup>43</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Orders 81

<sup>44</sup> Hurd, A., *The Merchant Navy* Vol.2 (London,1921) 231-240

<sup>45</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 264

<sup>46</sup> The exploits of these vessels is outside the scope of this paper. The logistic demands of arranging coal supplies and other stores in remote parts of the world proved difficult. By mid 1915 they had all been destroyed.

<sup>47</sup> Walter, *The Kaiser's Pirates* 140

*Möewe* was built as the banana carrier *Pungo* a few months before World War One. Her speed of 13 knots was somewhat higher than usual because the banana trade. Renamed *Möewe*, her typical ‘three island’ silhouette assisted deception perfectly. *Möewe* operated from 1<sup>st</sup> November 1915 until 22 March 1917 sank 38 ships (165,340 gross tons plus one of unknown tonnage). Uniquely she carried out two major cruises and three lesser cruises. *Möewe* left Kiel in December 1915 to lay mines off the Orkneys before the start of raiding merchantmen.<sup>48</sup> Throughout 1916 *Möewe* continued to seek merchant ship targets. On 15 December 1916 *Almanzora*, *Orcoma* and *Arlanza* sailed from Liverpool and were joined by *Gloucestershire* in the Irish Sea. These ships were detached from the Squadron to join other forces to hunt down the *Möewe* an operation which proved unsuccessful. Although their absence was short lived, it was an unwelcome reduction to the Squadron’s patrol strength in mid winter.<sup>49</sup>

#### Surface Action Between H.M.S. *Alcantara* and *Greif*.

Early in 1916 came the news of *Alcantara* engaging in a close range action against the *Greif*. The practice of assuming every intercepted vessel was a potential enemy was validated in the loss of the *Alcantara* on 29 February 1916.

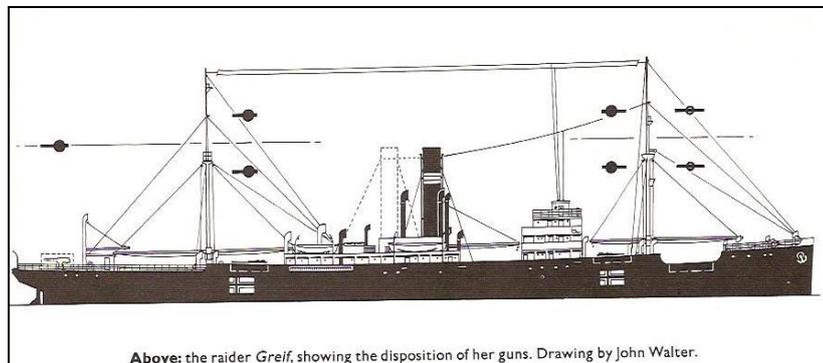


Fig. 35. The raider *Greif*, showing armament disposition

*Greif* at 4,962 gross tons was about the same size as *Möewe* but at 13 knots her speed was slightly less. Launched a few days before the war started, she had a distinctive break between the bridge and boat-deck. Unusually for a tramp steamer she had two funnels one of which was removed when taken up by the German Navy. Her armament was two 15 cm guns between the bridge and foremast, one on each side. Two more 15cm guns were mounted aft of the boat-deck and forward of the main mast. One 10.5 cm gun was right aft on the main-deck, hidden in a deck house. A single torpedo tube was placed on each side of the foredeck between the foremast and the forecastle.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Walter, *The Kaiser's Pirates* 141-142

<sup>49</sup> Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 272

<sup>50</sup> Walter, *The Kaiser's Pirates* 91

When inspected at Kiel, the occasion was marked by indiscreet publicity telling of *Greif's* planned departure for the Indian Ocean. This did not escape the attention of espionage rings and no doubt found its way back to London. The weather, typical for this time of year, provided *Greif* with the cover of poor visibility, grey mist and snow flurries for her entry into the North Sea. *Greif's* departure occurred about the time the *Möewe* had been expected to return from her first cruise. The reconnoitring submarine U70 lost contact with the raider but later reported sighting a British submarine. This may have revealed the emergence of the *Greif* to the Admiralty, the information that a 'steamer' was seen proceeding off Eckersund on the south-west coast of Norway at ten knots.<sup>51</sup>

*Alcantara*, owned by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, had been launched in October 1913 and on 19 June 1914 left for her maiden voyage to Buenos Aires. In 1915 she had been converted to an Armed Merchant Cruiser and was commissioned at Liverpool 16 April 1915. She was a very different vessel to the *Greif*. Built for the South American passenger trade she measured 16,034 gross tons, had triple screws and a speed of 17 knots.<sup>52</sup> Her armament was eight 6" Q.F. guns and two 6 pounders plus depth charges.<sup>53</sup> By 29 February 1916 *Alcantara* had been at sea for fifty days and was coming to the end of her patrol. A rendezvous with *Andes* had been arranged by Captain Wardle, the Senior Officer of 'G' Patrol in position 61°50'N, 1°00'E, which is seventy eight miles north east from Muckle Flugga Light. The purpose was to hand over secret orders and release *Alcantara* for a routine refit at base. At 04.00 a W/T signal from the Commander-in-Chief was received alerting the Squadron that a German raider was out and was expected to attempt to pass through the patrol. At 0800 a further signal ordered 'G' Patrol to close up since they had been working 40 miles apart. The remainder of the Squadron were ordered to join up with 'G' patrol in support.<sup>54</sup>

Captain Wardle had *Alcantara* cleared for action. Guns were made ready and manned, four lifeboats on each side were swung out and lowered to 'E' deck. Ammunition and fire parties were alerted. A most practical task was for the crew to change into clean

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<sup>51</sup> Walter, *The Kaiser's Pirates* 91-92

<sup>52</sup> Haws, *Merchant Fleets - Royal Mail Line & Nelson Line* 73

<sup>53</sup> Leslie, "*The Royal Mail*" *War Book* 47-48

This is the armament usually quoted by authors but Midshipman Poole's account of the gunnery infers only six 6" Q.F. guns. (see p.136). Further, Captain Wardle's 'Report of Proceedings' on *Alcantara's* action TNA ADM 137/873 GF ROP J-M 1916 (5) 223 - makes it clear there were only three guns on each side. Additionally, the Gunnery Officer's Report in the same reference on page (236) also shows only six 6" guns.

<sup>54</sup> Leslie, "*The Royal Mail*" *War Book* 60

underwear, this being intended to limit infection in the event of a man being wounded. At 08.55 smoke was reported on *Alcantara's* port beam to the westward which Wardle assumed to be *Andes*. At almost the same time a W/T signal from *Andes* giving her position and reporting the enemy sighted. *Alcantara's* speed was increased to full ahead and course altered to bring the smoke about three points (33 degrees) on the port bow. By 09.10 *Andes* had been sighted on the starboard bow of *Alcantara* and Wardle assumed *Andes* was pursuing the reported enemy. Meanwhile Wardle decided to investigate the vessel on *Alcantara's* port bow and proceeded with the usual challenges for what he expected would be a routine interception. The vessel claimed to be the Norwegian steamer *Rena* which was painted on her bows. She wore a Norwegian ensign on her stern and had Norwegian flags painted on the sides of her hull. At 0950 *Andes* signalled by light 'That is suspicious vessel'. By then *Rena* had stopped and Wardle, having decided to send a boarding party, was manoeuvring *Alcantara* for this purpose intending to approach *Rena* from the stern. On seeing *Andes's* signal, *Rena* which was actually the raider *Greif*, moved full ahead, struck her Norwegian ensign, broke out the German ensign and lowered gun-ports to commence firing at *Alcantara*.

The initial hits on *Alcantara's* bridge area came from *Greif's* hitherto hidden poop gun. They demolished *Alcantara's* internal communications, the engine room telegraphs and the boarding boat which was swung out. After this lucky opening salvo *Greif* turned to starboard and opened fire with her other guns. *Alcantara* replied with her port guns and scored direct hit on *Greif's* poop gun and set fire to her ready use ammunition. The approaching *Andes* opened fire at 7,500 yards and together with *Alcantara* had *Greif* ablaze by 10.15.<sup>55</sup> During the action *Alcantara* had been handicapped for ten minutes when her steering gear failed and the auxiliary system needed connecting. However *Alcantara* had taken many hits near the waterline on the port side and after taking a heavy list to port and had to be abandoned at 10.45. Captain Wardle's sketch plan of the action is reproduced overleaf.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> TNA ADM 137/873 *Andes* Report of Proceedings 1.16.1916

<sup>56</sup> TNA ADM 137/873 Grand Fleet, Report of Proceedings January-May 1916 219-226

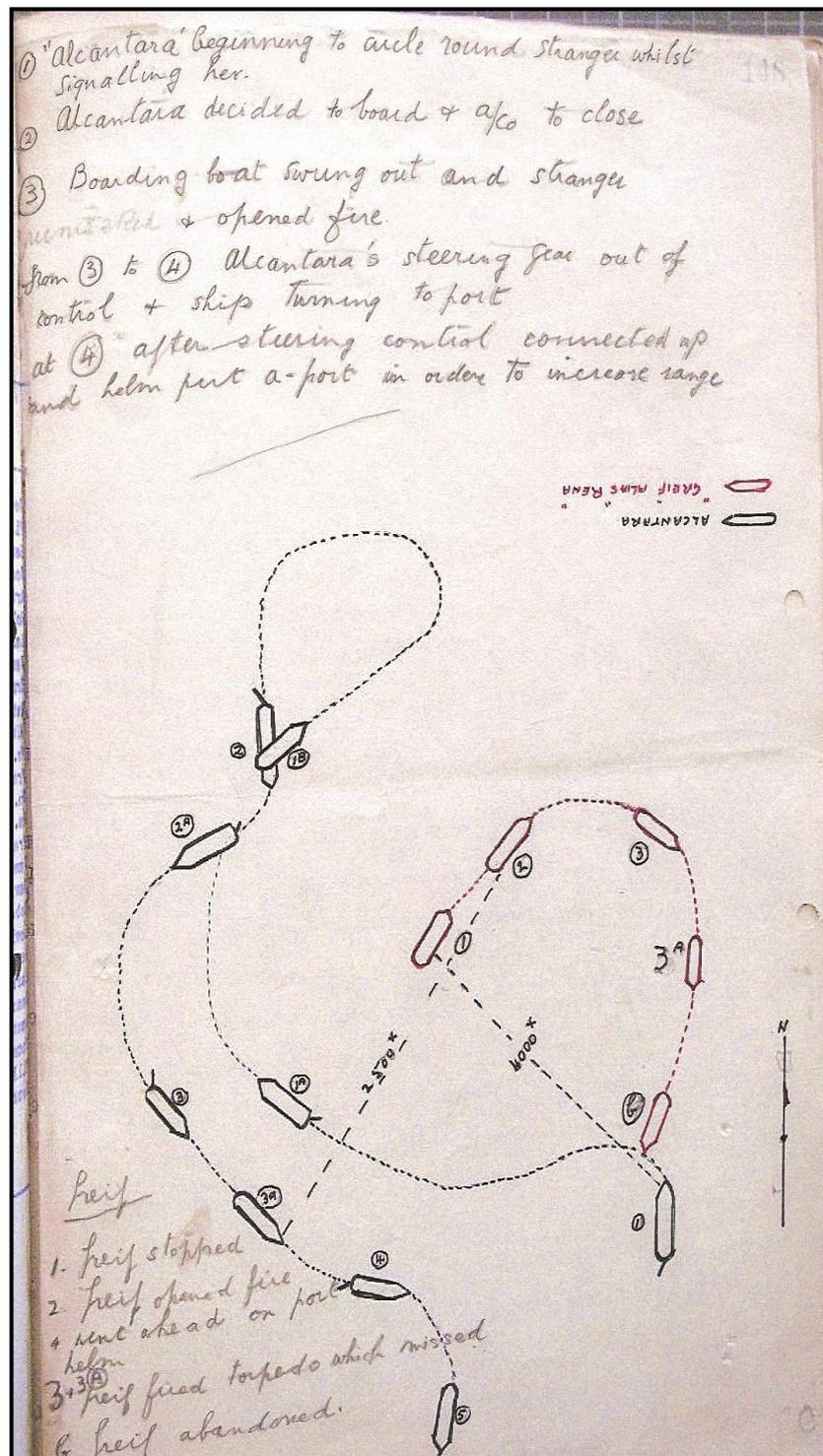


Fig.36 Tracing of Captain Wardle's sketch plan of the Alcantara v. Greif action.<sup>57</sup>

When approaching a strange vessel the cruisers gave the order to stop when about 5,000 yards distant. It was always prudent to keep well away from the intercepted vessel to keep out of gun range and in the case of *Greif*, her torpedo range. It is difficult

<sup>57</sup> TNA ADM 137/873 Report of Proceedings 148

to understand why Wardle approached *Greif* to within 2000 yards. He did not realise that this was the armed raider and possibly was becoming over confident in this routine and repetitive operation. Once he had decided to board *Greif*, it may be that he sought to ease the burden of the boarding boat's crew. Two thousand yards may not seem a great distance but the one nautical mile it represents is a long way to row in a seaway.

Midshipman Poole aboard the *Alcantara* left his personal account of the action in the Imperial War Museum and the magazine *Sea Breezes*. The magazine article gives a vivid account of the whole action, observed from his Transmitting Station whilst damage to the speaking tubes had stopped communication. When the order 'Abandon ship' was passed Poole's visit to his cabin to get his lifejacket let him see the carnage first hand. As a survivor in the water he saw further horrific injuries and also in the lifeboat where he finally secured a place. A section in the same article throws light on the shambles aboard *Greif*. Poole said the action was at such close range it was difficult for either ship to miss the other. Poole's account also has a rather chilling aspect to it.<sup>58</sup>

Survivors were picked up by *Andes* and the light cruiser *Comus* together with the torpedo boat destroyer *Munster* which had also been searching for the *Greif*. Once the survivors were rescued *Comus* and *Munster* used *Greif* as target practice. She finally sank shortly after 12.00. The quick arrival of *Comus* and *Munster* served to justify Captain Webb's recommendation that a cruiser force should be kept in the vicinity to back up the Tenth Cruiser Squadron at any time.<sup>59</sup>

It is worth noting the archives reveal differences of opinion amongst those witnessing the events. Wardle remained convinced *Greif* did not hoist the German ensign when firing started. The German survivors unsurprisingly claimed otherwise. Wardle claimed when *Greif's* gun-ports were lowered, the Norwegian flag on her sides were obscured. *Comus* claimed they were visible at all times and she was better placed to comment having spent considerable time close by before *Greif* finally sank. Wardle was adamant that *Alcantara* was not hit by a torpedo, claiming it passed astern of the ship. Many aboard *Alcantara* claimed a second torpedo hit her on the port side and witnesses

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<sup>58</sup> IWM DS/MISC/98 Microfilm Mid. Francis Poole R.N.R. H.M.S. *Alcantara*

Poole, F., 'The Kilkenny Cats'. *Sea Breezes Magazine* (Liverpool, Oct. 1951) 252

Travelling to join *Alcantara* for the patrol Poole had a conversation with a shipmate who admitted a premonition that he would not return. Seaman's superstition had taken over, since the sailing was on a Friday and the ship's black cat had deserted two days previously. This warrant officer was seen swimming away from *Alcantara* but not again.

<sup>59</sup> TNA ADM 137/989 Memorandum by Webb 24 December 1914 568

aboard *Andes* agree a second torpedo was seen fired from *Greif*. Jellicoe had some sympathy to the view that a torpedo had struck *Alcantara*, believing that gunnery alone could not have sunk such a large vessel.<sup>60</sup> A passenger vessel such as *Alcantara* would have extensive sub division in her hull. Engine room reports reveal that a closed watertight door was forced open after a large explosion on the portside causing rapid flooding in the machinery spaces. A torpedo hit was very plausible. Captain Wardle gave the order to 'Open fire' at 09.40 and ordered 'Cease firing' at 10.35. The Gunnery Report shows the expenditure of ammunition in an action taking less than an hour.

Gun	Rounds Fired
6" No.1 Port	30
6" No.2 Port	70
6" No.3 Port	80
6" No.1 Starboard	Nil
6" No.2 Starboard	4
6" No.3 Starboard	3
Six Pounder	100

Fig.37 Ammunition expended by *Alcantara*

Pointed common shells with a small number of armour piercing shells were used. There were three misfires at the No.1 port gun and one at the port 6 pounder. The rate of fire was nothing like the theoretical maximum for the guns but does show the marked improvement in the gun's crews of the armed merchant cruisers. In less than an hour 187, six inch shells had been aimed at *Greif*. The gunnery communications from the Transmitting Station were by voice-pipe, as described in Appendix 11. However, once firing started it was found impossible to get communications through by this method. Consequently firing was controlled by the Officer in charge of each gun. Ranges were passed from the Transmitting Room to dials to the four foremost guns but it seems they were not used. (See page 164) Ranges passed varied between 1000 yards and 3,500 yards. Poole states that the range never exceeded 3000 yards.<sup>61</sup> Due to the ammunition whips being prematurely disconnected and the early failure of the *Alcantara's* dynamos the hoist motors were useless. However, there was no shortage of shells since each gun had 20 rounds on deck and more ammunition was carried over from the disengaged side. The enemy's gunnery was described as rapid but ragged, and short rather than

<sup>60</sup> TNA ADM 137/873 Grand Fleet, Report of Proceedings January-May 1916 Letter from *Iron Duke* to Admiralty dated 3 March 1916

<sup>61</sup> Hurd, A., *The Merchant Navy* Vol. 2 167

over. *Greif* used high explosive shells which when striking the ship's side and if they detonated often made holes 3 feet in diameter.<sup>62</sup>

After their rescue, the interrogation of prisoners from the *Greif* whilst aboard *Comus* on passage to Rosyth revealed useful intelligence about the German Navy. Especially interesting were the similarities and differences between *Greif* and British armed merchant cruisers. The armament was as stated above but in addition there was a machine gun intended for the boat deck. Two rangefinders were on the lower bridge and a small searchlight placed behind the funnel. Two torpedo tubes were on the foredeck. Tupper stated the use of torpedoes against *Alcantara*, raised the question whether to fit tubes to British armed merchant cruisers but he was against such a step.<sup>63</sup> The ship's complement was 11 officers, 5 warrant officers and about 305 crew. *Greif* had over 5000 tons of coal on board stowed in the holds as well as all bunkers. She had a water distilling plant on board and was intended to be at sea for many months. There were no volunteers in the crew and they had just boarded the ship about two days prior to leaving port. After their departure their captain addressed the crew and explained the purpose of their mission, to sink British merchant ships. He also stated if needs be, he would allow the ship to be interned and she may not return to Germany. There were no marines in the German navy and more ships of the *Möewe* type were planned.<sup>64</sup>

Immediately after the action Jellicoe placed an embargo on all discussion within the Fleet about the events and no mention was to be made in signal logs.<sup>65</sup> When the Censor's Office finally agreed a press release there was no mention of torpedoes being fired from *Greif*. On 26 March 1916 the Chief Censor's Office agreed to Secretary of the Admiralty making the following announcement:

An engagement took place on 29<sup>th</sup> February in the North Sea between an armed German 'raider' *Greif*, disguised as a Norwegian merchant vessel, and H.M's Armed Merchant Cruiser *Alcantara*, (Captain T.E. Wardle R.N.).

The engagement resulted in the loss of both vessels, the German 'raider' being sunk by gunfire and the *Alcantara* apparently by a torpedo. Five German officers and 115 men were picked up and taken prisoners out of a total complement that is believed to have been over 300. The British losses amounted to five officers and 69 men.

It should be noted that during the whole of the engagement, the enemy fired over the Norwegian colours painted on the side of the ship.

This news is now published as it is made clear by receipt of the German wireless

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<sup>62</sup> TNA ADM 137/873 Grand Fleet, Report of Proceedings January-May 1916 236-237

<sup>63</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 221

<sup>64</sup> TNA ADM 137/3852 German Auxiliary Cruisers 10-17

<sup>65</sup> TNA ADM 137/466 C-in-C Home Fleet to Flag Officers etc., 29 February 1916 376

message that the enemy have learned that the *Greif*, a similar ship to the *Möewe*, had been destroyed before she had succeeded in passing our line of patrols.<sup>66</sup>

Whilst true in itself, it was a refined version of the action, carefully crafted for public consumption.

A court martial on Captain Wardle and all surviving Officers and crew of H.M.S. *Alcantara*, was convened on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March 1916. It was held aboard H.M.S. *Indefatigable* at Rosyth over which Admiral R.S.Lowry presided. The court findings gave a brief summary of the action and concluded:

The Court was of the opinion that the Officers and men of His Majesty's Ship *Alcantara* showed promptitude and resource in the circumstances and fought their Ship in a creditable manner, until forced to abandon her by their Ship lying on her beam ends.

The Enemy Vessel was put out of action and abandoned by her crew through being engaged at close range by His Majesty's Ship *Alcantara* with His Majesty's Ship *Andes* in support. She was afterwards sunk by the combined fire of His Majesty's Ships *Comus* and *Andes*.

The Court also recorded that the *Andes* had supported her consort in a proper manner. It concluded that no blame was attributable to Captain Wardle, the Officers and Crew for the loss of *Alcantara* and acquitted them.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to Wardle, copies were sent to the Commander-in Chief, Grand Fleet and the Vice Admiral Commanding, Tenth Cruiser Squadron. De Chair added some criticism of both *Alcantara* (Captain Wardle) and *Andes* (Captain Young) in his letter of 13 May 1916 to Jellicoe. De Chair considered the confusion over signals at the start of the action, the fact that the port guns had trained badly due to the effects of sea water and *Andes* fire often fell short of the target had done little to help. He did admit that *Andes* was at a longer range. De Chair concluded his letter to Jellicoe:

The finding of the Court is satisfactory as regards the action of both *Alcantara* and *Andes*, but I am of opinion from the evidence given that *Andes* did not do all that was possible as to warning *Alcantara* that she was standing into danger, nor did the *Alcantara* take sufficient precautions in view of the warning as to the proximity of the raider; nevertheless both Captains, when they did grasp the situation, made the best of it and did very well.<sup>68</sup>

Wardle had been confused in not realising the vessel he approached, with the intention of boarding, was the enemy raider being hunted. Whilst he kept the guns' crews closed up he had stood down other parts of the crew at the crucial moment.

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<sup>66</sup> TNA ADM 137/873 GF ROP J-M 1916 252

<sup>67</sup> TNA ADM 137/3620 Action between H.M.S. *Alcantara* and Enemy s.s. *Greif*.  
Court Martial Proceedings 349-350

<sup>68</sup> TNA ADM 137/3620 Court Martial Proceedings 353-355

In writing to the Admiralty from *Iron Duke* on 16 May 1916, Jellicoe added further views. He thought Wardle should have taken greater precautions than he did in approaching *Greif* in view of the instructions he had received. He also thought the *Andes* firing was ‘certainly not good’, which he attributed to the longer range. He did not consider the *Andes* was handled very judiciously. *Andes* had kept a cautious distance and although this reticence was criticised by Jellicoe, himself a cautious man, he did conclude that the caution was perhaps justified.

If he had seen Jellicoe’s letter Captain Wardle would have found some comfort and consolation:

At the same time it is right to state that the situation with which Captain Wardle was faced, and which any ship finds in dealing with a hostile vessel armed with torpedo tubes and disguised as neutral, is one of great difficulty.<sup>69</sup>

Following the action, protracted correspondence resulted in many recommendations for awards and promotions. The exception was *Andes*, whose performance was not considered worthy of such acknowledgement.<sup>70</sup> On 22 August 1916 the Prize Court awarded a prize bounty of £1,605 to the crews of *Alcantara* and *Andes*.<sup>71</sup> The RMSP, as owners of *Alcantara*, claimed £805,000 as compensation for her loss and by 11 October 1916 two amounts totalling £500,000 had been paid by the Admiralty.<sup>72</sup>

In March 1916, Tupper, as de Chair’s successor, had barely transferred his flag to *Alsatian* in Liverpool, when Captain Wardle reported aboard after the loss of *Alcantara*.<sup>73</sup> Both Admirals associated with the Squadron must have found it galling to know the one ‘big gun’ action involving the Squadron had taken place whilst they had been in port. It was an expensive lesson, costly in men and a fine ship. Wardle’s account no doubt stiffened Tupper’s resolve to keep the Squadron’s gunnery at the highest standard possible and he devised further training exercises for the lookouts and gun-layers. Gun’s crews represented the fighting cohesion of the various seafarers, from whatever their origin or department. The drills encouraged them to work as teams, not the least for their self preservation. The manned guns were a major persuasive tool in the daily task of interception. As well as being protection against surface attack the guns were also, for the most of the war, the only means of active response to some underwater attacks. Always provided the guns’ crews’ reactions were quick enough to

<sup>69</sup> TNA ADM 137/3620 Court Martial Proceedings 356-357

<sup>70</sup> TNA ADM 137/3620 Court Martial Proceedings 292-318

<sup>71</sup> NMM RMS /1/17 Minutes of the Court of Directors Jan.1913 – Nov. 1916 376

<sup>72</sup> NMM RMS /1/17 Minutes of the Court of Directors Jan.1913 – Nov. 1916 352 & 385

<sup>73</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 220

open fire on a U-boat before it submerged! *Alcantara* and *Greif* had confirmed the acquisition and maintenance of gunnery skills were vital for the Squadron. Tupper records that:

The gunlayers had orders to open fire at once whenever they saw a periscope or anything that resembled a submarine, without first reporting it, and they soon proved that it was quite safe to trust to their discretion.<sup>74</sup>

This must be the ultimate example of what Gordon calls the ‘devolution of command’.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 254

<sup>75</sup> Gordon, A., *The Rules of the Game* (London, 2000 Ed.) 589

**Defence against Mines and Torpedoes.**

The psychological impact of unseen, underwater weapons was very real and more so since the Navy had paid little attention to either the offensive or defensive aspects of mine warfare and had failed to develop anti-submarine weapons and procedures. Mines and torpedoes, although usually out of sight, were never out of the minds of the Squadron's officers and ratings. From the start of the war to the end of the Squadron's activities, the clandestine delivery of these weapons by either submarine or surface vessel always posed a threat. Mines are cheap to make and can produce disruption to an enemy, the value of which far exceeds the cost of these weapons. In addition to destroying enemy ships, the threat of mines always ensures delay in shipping movements, whilst personnel and vessel resources are deployed to clear fields. Only one detonation is enough to guarantee a massive reaction and the mere declaration of a field, which may be false, can set sweeping operations in motion.

**Pre-war Minesweeping Preparations.**

Pre-war, mine warfare was not one of the Royal Navy's major priorities. For ambitious naval officers, gunnery or service in destroyers were the perceived routes to the top. Laying practice mines and then recovering them in small vessels had little appeal compared to glamorous fleet manoeuvres involving battleships or battle-cruisers. One British officer was reputed to consider those engaged with minesweeping as 'no better than lavatory attendants'.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Navy was not well equipped to deal with mines when the war started. The visionary work started by Admiral Lord Charles Beresford in 1907 meant a Trawler Section of the R.N.R. was established by 1914. Agreements had been developed with some trawler owners for the hand over of their vessels should war break out.<sup>2</sup> By October 1914, some 246 mine-sweeping trawlers were available, supported by logistic arrangements ashore around the British coast.<sup>3</sup> Many more vessels and men would subsequently be needed to combat the disruptive power of the mine. Initially, only passive responses to the mine threat were available such as keeping a sharp lookout, using diversions or re-routing and accepting that sweeping could cause delay or even temporary port closure.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Halpern, *A Naval History of World War 1* 34

<sup>2</sup> Bowen, *History of the Royal Naval Reserve* 94-96

<sup>3</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol.1 335-336

<sup>4</sup> Sweeping was not a fast operation and normally conducted at a speed of less than ten knots, even in fair weather. Winds in excess of Force 5/6 will prevent effective sweeping. Jellicoe considered such a slow speed ahead of a battle squadron was too risky and routine sweeping was initiated off bases which the Grand Fleet used. Streaming and recovery of the sweeps takes time and the manoeuvring of paired trawlers can result in the sweep parting. Trawlers were often sunk in mine sweeping operations. A nearby base or base ship is needed to provide repairs and stores.

**Mines and The Hague Convention.**

There was a belief that mines would not be laid in the approaches to commercial ports but instead, only against naval ports. This had originated in the eighth Convention of the Hague Convention 1907 wherein it was proposed in Article 2:

It is forbidden to lay automatic contact mines off the coast and ports of the enemy with the sole object of intercepting commercial navigation.

The Article was adopted, but Germany and France made reservations. One of the sticking points was how would it be possible to know whether a particular minefield had been laid for the 'sole' purpose of intercepting commercial shipping.<sup>5</sup> Article 3 of the Convention also placed the need to declare minefields to the wider world:

When anchored contact mines are employed, all possible precautions ought to be taken for the security of peaceful shipping. The belligerents undertake to provide, as far as possible, for these mines becoming harmless after a limited time has elapsed, and where the mines cease to be under observation, to notify the danger zones as soon as military exigencies permit, by a notice to mariners, which must also be communicated to the governments through the diplomatic channel.

Article 3, had plenty of scope for a varied interpretation both legally and operationally, especially the notification of danger zones. Even though Germany and France reserved their consent to Article 2, Britain accepted the Convention as being better than nothing. The Government took the view it should be prohibited for belligerents to use unanchored (floating or creeping) mines at all and also anchored mines except in their own or the enemy's territorial waters and within ten miles of their fortified ports.<sup>6</sup> Germany had been expected to mine its coastline and that was partly why Britain had chosen a distant blockade. Germany had mines and torpedoes which were superior in performance to British weapons.

**Germany's Opening Moves.**

On 7 August 1914 Germany informed the neutral Powers of her intention to close the trade routes to English ports by mines and commenced to lay mines indiscriminately on those trade routes both inside and outside her territorial waters. The Articles did not stipulate the distance from the coasts and ports of an enemy at which mines could be laid and Germany was quick to hammer this point home. The auxiliary minelayer *Königin Luise* laid a minefield about 40 miles off Lowestoft on the night of 4/5<sup>th</sup> August 1914. Next day she was sunk by the cruiser *Amphion* and a force of destroyers returning from the Dutch coast. Whilst returning to base, the *Amphion*, a new cruiser, was herself mined and sunk on the *Königin Luise* minefield. The minelayer had been

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<sup>5</sup> Cowie, J.S., *Mines, Minelayers and Minelaying* (London, 1949) 172-174

<sup>6</sup> Hall, *The Law Of Naval Warfare* 27-28

painted to resemble a Great Eastern Railway steamer.<sup>7</sup> This ruse of disguising a minelayer or armed raider as a neutral vessel came to be widely practiced.

On the night of 21 August, mines were laid off both the Humber and Tyne. The fields were discovered almost immediately and sweeping commenced. Several trawlers were sunk and it was decided that the fields, if left alone, would provide defensive cover from further German surface action. The mines had not been laid strategically well from the German point of view and by simply re-routing, no further sweeping resources were expended.<sup>8</sup>

Soon there were frequent 'sightings' of mines which all too often turned out to be some flotsam or a fisherman's buoy. Although frequently mistaken in this way the only safe action was caution and make a sighting report. Many real mines were sunk by rifle or gunfire, as well as fishermen's buoys. The Admiralty organised the weekly promulgation of areas which were dangerous due to mines and reported sightings of mines. This was a huge central collating task followed by its dissemination to ships at risk.<sup>9</sup>

Two other early mining operations had a more direct relevance to the Squadron. In mid-October, the North German Lloyd Liner *Berlin* (17,300 tons), which had been armed and fitted for mine laying broke out from the North Sea. *Berlin* had a large complement of mines aboard and her target had been the Clyde. Her commander abandoned the Clyde and instead laid two hundred mines on the night of 22-23 October, in the shipping lanes off Tory Island to the north west of Lough Swilly. On 26 October, the minefield claimed a merchant ship, the *Manchester Commerce*. Unknown to the *Berlin*, the Grand Fleet was nearby and on 27 October, the dreadnought *Audacious* was mined twenty miles off Tory Island. The Grand Fleet had been unaware of the *Berlin's* activities. Despite a valiant attempt to save the *Audacious* by the White Star Line's *Olympic*, the battleship was lost. It had been a worthwhile operation for the *Berlin* and had confirmed that Germany intended to reach out with their mines.<sup>10</sup>

After her conversion, the armed raider *Möewe* left Kiel in December 1915 to lay mines off the Orkneys prior to raiding merchantmen. She hugged the Norwegian coast before

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<sup>7</sup> Halpern, *A Naval History of World War 1* 27

<sup>8</sup> Cowie, *Mines, Minelayers and Minelaying* 45

<sup>9</sup> TNA ADM137/292 Information Concerning Mines 15 Jan 1915 1

<sup>10</sup> Hough, *The Great War at Sea 1914-1918* 63

turning westwards and helped by foul weather evaded any British patrols. On New Year’s Day 1916, she laid her mines east of Cape Wrath. Before the end of the day *Möwe* had laid 250 mines in eleven separate lines to threaten the western approaches to the Pentland Firth.<sup>11</sup> The Germans had set the opening scene and made it clear that totally safe havens would be difficult to find. The Squadron would always be at risk from these weapons.

**Contemporary Mine Technology.**

In this war, both sides had only contact mines available. The big fear was that floating mines would be used since their position varied with tide and current. Under the Hague Convention such mines were required to become harmless within one hour of being laid.<sup>12</sup> The Convention also forbade the sowing of ‘anchored automatic contact mines’ which did not become harmless on breaking loose from their moorings. Some German mines were prone to have weak mooring wires and the corrosive action of sea water could prevent the mandatory spring device opening the firing contact to render the mine safe.<sup>13</sup> This meant a floating mine could be encountered far from the original laid location.

The Grand Fleet’s Mine Memoranda reported that Germany was using two types of mine, the ‘Carbonit’ and ‘Leon’. The ‘Carbonit’ mine was a moored contact mine with a charge chamber carried below a large buoyancy chamber. The mooring drum carried 55 fathoms of rope and accurate depth setting was achieved by a sinker in conjunction with a hydrostatically operated grip on the mooring rope. Usually five horns were fitted to operate the electrical firing circuit.<sup>14</sup> Three different sizes were recovered:

Type	Charge	Probable Use
I	180 lbs Guncotton	By light cruisers and small minelayers.
II	290 lbs Guncotton	By minelayers.
III	150 lbs T.N.T. (estimated)	By destroyers: <u>also adapted for laying by submarines</u>

Fig.38 German Mine Types.

Type III was a later type and may have been designed for use by submarines. The moorings of Type II were substantial and used a special wire (about 1½”) there was no

<sup>11</sup> Walter, *The Kaiser’s Pirates* 141-142

<sup>12</sup> See description of ‘Leon’ mines below.

<sup>13</sup> Griffiths, M. *The Hidden Menace* (London,1981) 155

<sup>14</sup> Cowie, *Mines, Minelayers and Minelaying* 37

provision for rendering them safe when broken adrift and if sighted they were to be destroyed by gunfire.<sup>15</sup>

The 'Leon' mine was an oscillating mine of Swedish design. When laid it sank to just below the set depth and had no mooring rope. A hydrostatic valve closed and completed a circuit from a battery to a small electric motor which drove a propeller at the lower part of the mine forcing it up towards the surface. When just above the set depth the hydrostatic valve switched off the motor, allowing the mine to sink again. Thus it oscillated between two pre-determined depths. Firing was by means of an inertia pistol and the mine became harmless when the battery ran out or by means of a time switch.<sup>16</sup>

Germany possessed some thousands of 'Leon' mines. They could be laid from torpedo tubes or be thrown overboard from vessels being chased. This was a possibility which greatly concerned Admiral Jellicoe.<sup>17</sup> Overtaking vessels were warned to keep clear of the wake of any vessel they might pursue. Enemy destroyers and submarines were expected to make use of this tactic. Battery life was estimated at eight hours and after that, the slight negative buoyancy took the mine to the sea bed. Some 'Leon' mines were fitted with dummy periscopes to provide additional confusion by tempting shipmasters to attempt to ram what they may have believed to be a U-boat.<sup>18</sup>

In July 1915 mines were detected near well known lightships in the North Sea, examples were South Goodwin, Kentish Knock and Shipwash. The mines had been laid shallow and were sometimes visible at low water which pointed to their being laid by submarine. It was thought submarines were able to carry at least six mines. A warning was given that similar mine-laying could be expected in other areas depending on distance.<sup>19</sup> It had been hoped that the Dover mine barrage would deter submarines passing down channel to reach the Western Approaches and force submarines into a long passage round the North of Scotland. As the U-boats improved in performance and range, their crews gained in confidence and the north about passage became routine. This brought the threat of submarines with either a torpedo or mine-laying capability to the Shetlands, Orkneys, Pentland Firth, Hebrides, North Channel, Irish

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<sup>15</sup> TNA ADM137/292 Information Concerning Mines 15 Jan 1915 2

<sup>16</sup> Cowie, *Mines, Minelayers and Minelaying* 37

<sup>17</sup> Patterson, A. Temple, (ed.) *The Jellicoe Papers, Vol. I* NRS (Greenwich, 1966-68) 51-52

<sup>18</sup> TNA ADM137/292 Information Concerning Mines 15 Jan 1915 2

<sup>19</sup> TNA ADM137/292 Information Concerning Mines 15 Jan 1915 2

Sea and Mersey. All were areas frequented by Tenth Cruiser Squadron at one time or another.

Minefields of only four mines placed close inshore, at key focal points or in the approach channel to a port can be as disruptive as a large field laid by a purpose built minelayer. The humble neutral fishing vessel behaving unusually close inshore was always suspected. From 1<sup>st</sup> October 1914, the East Coast ports were closed to neutral fishing vessels. Any such vessels found west of a certain line in the North Sea were under suspicion of mine laying. Any trawlers not in the exclusive employment of the German Government found illicitly laying mines would be sunk and their crews liable to be treated as war criminals.<sup>20</sup> The action of the *Berlin* so far to the west, alerted Jellicoe to the vulnerability of the North Channel and St. George's Channel approaches from the Atlantic, leading to Liverpool and other West Coast ports. Sweepers were diverted from the East Coast to strengthen the efforts in these areas. Vessels masquerading as neutral merchant ships were thought to be replenishing the minefields in the Irish Sea. The ships of the Squadron regularly used the Clyde and Liverpool and so the Lough Swilly sweeper force was tasked to check sweep between Barra Head and Inistrahull.<sup>21</sup>

### **Minesweeping and Re-routing for the Squadron.**

The prospect of enemy mining in the Irish Sea, North Channel, the Hebridean Sea or The Minches was a serious threat to the Squadron's armed merchant cruisers which used the Clyde and Liverpool for repairs and coaling. The most effective and quick answer to a mine threat is to establish a diversion route whenever the local hydrography permits. The area around Barra Head was suitable for mines and was also an important landfall for the ships coming from the west, on passage to the Clyde or Liverpool. Two routes between Barra Head and the Mull of Cantyre (Kintyre) were laid down in the Squadron Standing Orders to control the ships on passage:

The following route is to be used by all ships proceeding to the Clyde or Liverpool from the north:-

9. West of St. Kilda, passing 10 miles 270° from Barra Head and Oversay, thence close round the Mull of Cantyre [Kintyre], avoiding the area mentioned in Notice to Mariners No.137. It is to be observed, however, that the line BC has been moved to the southward, and is 1 mile clear of the Mull of Cantyre. This information is confidential and the Notice to Mariners will not be amended.

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<sup>20</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol.1 336

<sup>21</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol.1 402

The passage between Barra Head and Oversay should be made in daylight, but the Mull of Cantyre should be rounded at night without lights.

All other traffic must pass between Rathlin Island and the Irish Coast.

The passage close to the Mull of Cantyre is to be used by ships proceeding to Liverpool and the Clyde. It should also be used by those returning from Liverpool if Senior Naval Officer so directs.

Directions as to the route to be followed by ships proceeding north from the Clyde or Liverpool will be given by the Admiralty through the respective Senior Naval Officers.

The following alternative route may be used by ships proceeding to and from the Clyde and Liverpool when considered desirable:-

Round Barra Head, outside the 50-fathom line, thence, passing northwards of Coll Island, through the Sounds of Mull and Islay, and then as usual.

As the chart of the Sound of Islay is unreliable this passage is never to be used by ships of more than 26 feet draught, and at low water it is only to be used by ships of less than 24 feet draught.

Ships are to avoid the main trade routes as far as possible. Both when outward and inward bound St. Kilda should not be approached within 50 miles, unless orders to the contrary are received.<sup>22</sup>

Two routes, one offshore and one inshore were provided to help protect the cruisers. The offshore route between Barra Head and the Mull of Cantyre had depths close to or more than the maximum 55 fathoms used on moored mines. Another advantage was more sea room for zig-zagging to avoid torpedoes. The inshore route was clearly laid down in the belief that prospective mine layers, either surface or submarine, would be discouraged by the navigational difficulties. This route added 57 miles to Liverpool which equated to 4½ hours extra steaming at 13½ knots, assuming safe navigation allowed that speed throughout. The inshore route was a navigational challenge in the best of weather and sensibly the Squadron's ships had draught limits placed on them for the passage.<sup>23</sup>

The sea area near the Mull of Cantyre was similar to the Dover Straits in that a patrol of net drifters and armed trawlers was established to hinder U-boats from passing through the North Channel. On 22 February 1915 the channel was closed to merchant ships.<sup>24</sup>

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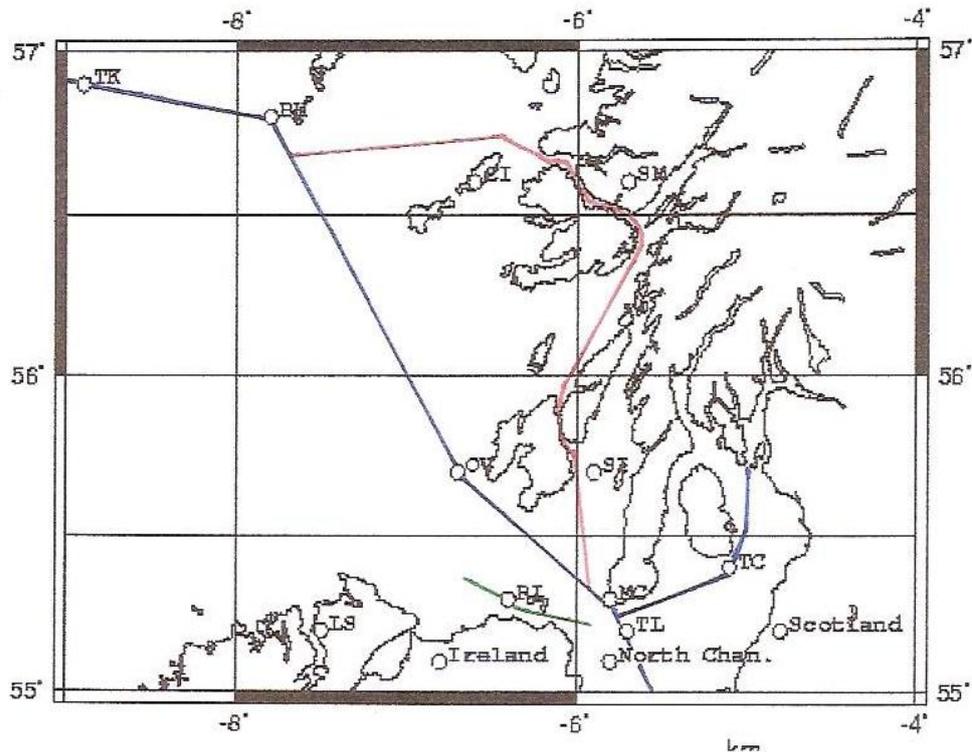
<sup>22</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Orders paras.8-9 Conduct of Patrols (3)

<sup>23</sup> The extra steaming could create a 'knock on' effect of missing a tide for docking, which in turn, could create a further 6 hour delay. Consequently, this delay could disrupt the booking of shore gangs to attend a ship on arrival, demonstrating the further 'attrition' which mine warfare can create.

<sup>24</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol.1 382

Fig.39 North Channel Approach from the North West.

(Not to scale)



**Key.** Latitude - North    Longitude – West

\_\_\_\_\_ Offshore Route    \_\_\_\_\_ Inshore Route    \_\_\_\_\_ Rathlin Island Route

- |                                 |                              |                             |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>BH</b> 10' – 270° Barra Head | <b>OV</b> 10' – 270° Oversay | <b>TC</b> Towards the Clyde |
| <b>CI</b> Coll Island           | <b>RI</b> Rathlin Island     | <b>TK</b> Towards St. Kilda |
| <b>LS</b> Lough Swilly          | <b>SI</b> Sound of Islay     | <b>TL</b> Towards Liverpool |
| <b>MC</b> Mull of Cantyre       | <b>SM</b> Sound of Mull      |                             |

The Rathlin Island route provided a discrete stretch of clear water regularly swept and regularly patrolled against U-boats. Lt.Cdr F.H.Grenfell R.N., second in command of H.M.S. *Cedric*, recorded in his diary for 1915 that *Cedric* used the Rathlin Island route both inward and outward to Liverpool. *Cedric* was the largest ship in the Squadron at 21,000 gross tons and whenever she used the Rathlin Island route was escorted by a torpedo boat destroyer.<sup>25</sup>

### Squadron Mining Casualties.

H.M.S. *Viknor*, the oldest ship in the Squadron, was the first to be lost. *Viknor* was on passage to Liverpool after having intercepted the *Bergensfjord*, placed a prize crew

<sup>25</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr. F.H.Grenfell R.N. 25 February 1915 and various dates thereafter

aboard and sent her into Kirkwall. Baron von Wedel and seven other Germans had been taken off *Bergensfjord* and *Viknor* had been instructed to take them to Liverpool. She last reported her position through Malin Head on 13 January 1915, after which nothing further was heard. Wreckage from her was washed ashore at Portrush and it was assumed she had foundered in a gale. However, in view of the mine-laying activity in these waters it was likely a mine, particularly a floating mine, caused her loss.<sup>26</sup>

H.M.S. *Arlanza* taken up for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron in April 1915 and built in 1911 was one of the youngest ships.<sup>27</sup> By 1915 every effort was made to avoid sending the Squadron's ships on 'special service' but this need did arise on occasions. The Admiralty ordered *Arlanza* to leave for Archangel on 12 October 1915. Her route was to pass East of the Orkneys and Shetlands keeping at least 150 miles from the Norwegian Coast and the Lofoten Islands except when rounding North Cape when the distance could be reduced, if necessary on account of ice.<sup>28</sup> *Arlanza* was tasked to take high ranking British and French officers to Archangel and bring back high ranking Russian Army and Navy officers. These officers were to take part in a conference with the British and French Ministers of Munitions. They were carrying personal letters from the Tzar. *Arlanza* had also loaded platinum to the value of nearly half a million pounds sterling. In June 1915, Germany had laid 285 mines in the northern approaches to the White Sea, scattered in the channels between the headlands on the route to Archangel.<sup>29</sup> On 21 October 1915, *Arlanza* left Archangel in convoy with escorting trawlers minesweeping ahead and anchored overnight in view of the mine threat. Next day the convoy continued and later started to disperse whilst *Arlanza* proceeded independently. Half an hour later, *Arlanza* struck a mine forward and settled 10 or 12 feet by the head.<sup>30</sup> The ship was abandoned but later re-boarded. Then followed a three day struggle in terrible weather to be towed stern first by the Wilson liner *Novo*. After the towing arrangements repeatedly parted, to avoid nearby rocks, Captain Norris decided to steam ahead in the hope that the exposed forward bulkhead would hold.

<sup>26</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 25 January 1915 87-103  
Some 22 officers and 272 men were lost amongst them 25 from the Newfoundland Division.  
*Viknor's* loss was taken badly in Newfoundland.

<sup>27</sup> Haws, D., *Merchant Fleets - Royal Mail Line & Nelson Line* 72-73  
*Arlanza* had her first contact with the enemy on 16 August 1914, prior to being taken up from trade. She was captured off the coast of Brazil by the German raider *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* but was released when it was realised she had 337 women and 97 children on board.  
NMM NOR/1 H.M.S. *Arlanza* May-October 1915 Her early days with the Squadron were marked by a detailed investigation as to why she was incorrectly reported 'Ready for Sea' on 28 June 1915 whilst still engaged in boiler scaling.

<sup>28</sup> NMM NOR/1 Letter, Admiralty to C-in-C, Home Fleets 9 October 1915 No.278

<sup>29</sup> Halpern, *A Naval History of World War I* 134-135

<sup>30</sup> The forefoot and much of the adjacent hull was destroyed. Luckily, the forward magazine did not explode.

Fortunately it did and *Arlanza* reached the safety of Youkanskie Inner Harbour in the White Sea on 26 October.<sup>31</sup> On 2 November 1915 H.M.S. *Orotava* was detached from the Squadron to take *Arlanza's* place. *Orotava* arrived on 13 November and took aboard the Russian delegation, some of *Arlanza's* crew and the platinum. One of the trawlers, *Lord Denman* assisting *Arlanza* was lost after striking one of *Arlanza's* protruding propellers. Fortunately, there was no loss of life.<sup>32</sup> Arrangements were made for a 'care and maintenance' party of eleven officers and eighty one ratings to stand by *Arlanza* whilst ice bound for the coming winter.<sup>33</sup> It was nearly a year before *Arlanza* appeared in the weekly Squadron reports again.<sup>34</sup>

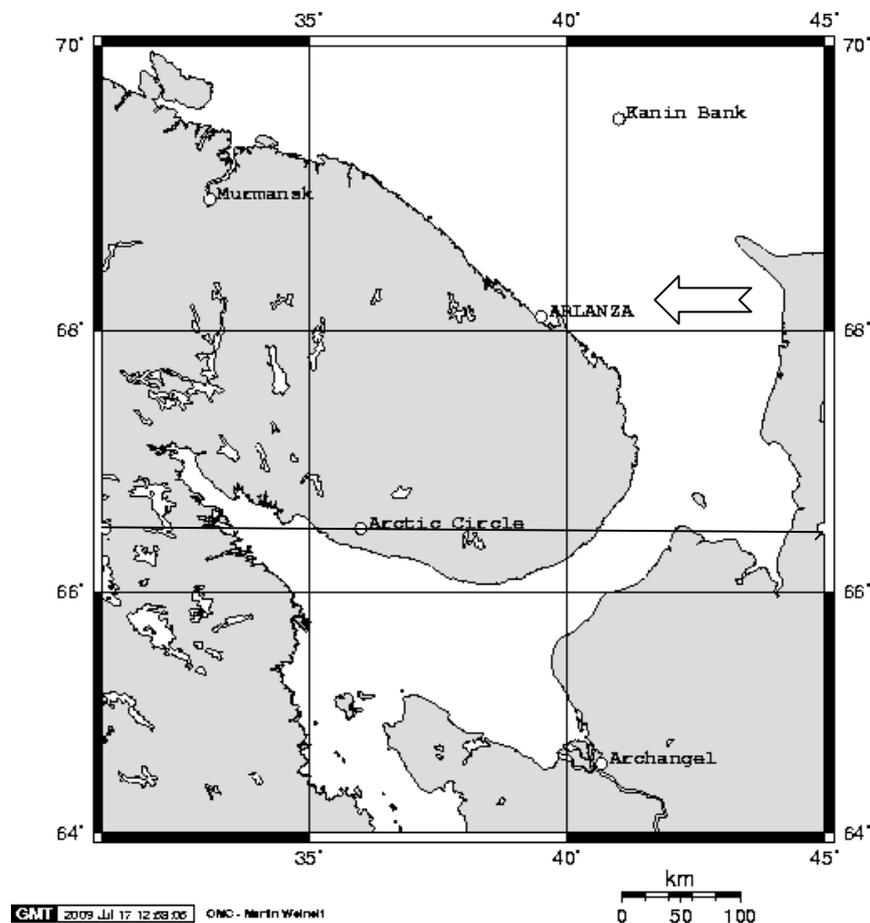


Fig.41 H.M.S. *Arlanza* Winter Location 1915.

*Arlanza*, with only six months Squadron service she became unavailable for nearly a year and needed costly repairs. *Orotava's* diversion for *Arlanza's* rescue was a further temporary reduction in the strength of the patrol. The whole incident had shown the effectiveness of a single mine as an underwater weapon.

<sup>31</sup> IWM 02/2/1 Journal of Leading Signalman Driscoll, J., H.M.S. *Arlanza* 14-15

<sup>32</sup> Leslie, H.W., "The Royal Mail" War Book (London, 1920) 53-57

<sup>33</sup> NMM NOR/1 H.M.S. *Arlanza* May-October 1915 18

<sup>34</sup> TNA ADM 137/298 Tupper to Admiralty 5 November 1916

**Submarine Minelayers.**

Jellicoe recorded that by the end of February 1917, Germany had an estimated 130 submarines available for home waters. Germany was building at the rate of eight submarines a month and 50 per cent had mine laying capabilities.<sup>35</sup> During April 1917, 515 mines were swept off the British coast but at the cost of a mine sweeper each day.<sup>36</sup> The minesweeping resources had been expanded to counter the ever growing threat confirmed by wireless intelligence, casualties and sightings of submarines. Longer range U-boats passed from Heligoland, north of the Shetlands, or through the Fair Isle Channel, then altering course to the south west and heading for the North Channel or the Eastern Atlantic.<sup>37</sup> Sightings were often made to the west of the Outer Hebrides and the U-boat commanders had no qualms about passing through the Minches. Either route took them to the Western Approaches and ports on either side of the Irish Sea. German policy was to target focal points such as Barra Head or deliver small fields of four mines off harbour approaches.<sup>38</sup> Jellicoe was concerned for the safety of the Grand Fleet base at Scapa Flow. Likewise, de Chair realised that the new northern base at Swarbacks Minn would attract submarine activity. Inevitably the base was discovered and received the attention of the enemy. The need for boom defence and anti-submarine nets was recognised.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, de Chair warned in his Report of Proceedings dated 9 July 1915 that a pair of minesweepers would be needed to keep the channel open.<sup>40</sup> Six minesweeping trawlers were eventually based at Swarbacks Minn.

The precautions were not wasted. On 12 March 1917 the Senior Officer, Swarbacks Minn reported that the trawlers had sunk three mines off Eshaness. *Changuinola* was on passage to Swarbacks Minn and was diverted to another patrol. In the evening of 13 March 1917, the channel was declared clear. Consequently, *Virginian* was able to leave Swarbacks Minn and *Changuinola* and *Motagua* were ordered to arrive there on the 15 March 1917. *Changuinola* arrived safely at Swarbacks Minn at 03.00 on 16 March 1917. At 04.15 *Motagua* signalled being struck by a torpedo forward. In fact, she had struck a mine at 03.15 in a position some 6½ miles to the south west of Eshaness. *Motagua* was extensively damaged but managed to reach Swarbacks Minn. Subsequently, sweeping near the position in which *Motagua* was mined revealed three

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<sup>35</sup> Jellicoe, J.R., *The Crisis of the Naval War* (London, 1920 Reprint 2006) 33

<sup>36</sup> Grant, R.M., *U-Boat Intelligence 1914-1918* (Hamden, Ct., 1969) 110

<sup>37</sup> Messimer, D.R., *Find and Destroy* (Annapolis, 2001) 228

<sup>38</sup> Grant, *U-Boat Intelligence 1914-1918* 123

<sup>39</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 Note by Learmonth 15 May 1915

<sup>40</sup> TNA ADM 137/185 de Chair to Admiralty 9 July 1915 203-24

more mines. Swarbacks Minn was closed by Admiralty Order until extensive sweeping effort was completed.<sup>41</sup> Three weeks later, in the forenoon of 6 April 1917, after temporary repairs to her damage, *Motagua* sailed from Swarbacks Minn for Liverpool.<sup>42</sup> Confirmation was received on 9 April 1917 that *Motagua* and her escort had arrived at Liverpool for repairs.<sup>43</sup> *Motagua's* repairs and refit would mean an absence from the Squadron of three months. In dull misty weather, she left Liverpool on 22 June 1917 to rendezvous with *Alsatian* for despatches before joining B Patrol.<sup>44</sup> *Motagua* was a costly casualty from a small minefield and again, the enemy had pinned down British resources in extensive mine sweeping effort. The incident showed that sweeping effort only relied on 'best estimates' as to a minefield's extent and one stray mine, undetected, could still reward the enemy

### **Mine Counter Measures – The Development of the Paravane.**

Initially, apart from a good lookout, the only 'on board' protection was the large number of empty 40 gallon drums and large baulks of timber in the cruisers holds. This provided extra reserve buoyancy and prevented the ingress of water in the event of underwater damage

In September 1916, Tupper attended some paravane experiments at Spithead. For ships fitted with them, paravanes brought the prospect of self protection against mines. Tupper submitted a request for the Squadron to be fitted but this had to be on a progressive basis as the ships were dry-docked.<sup>45</sup>

Originally, the paravane had been developed as an anti-submarine weapon but played a greater part in the minesweeping role. The paravanes were in pairs, one each side of the ship. They remained at a pre-selected depth as long as the ship was making way whatever the ship's speed or course.<sup>46</sup> The two towlines were secured to a clump on the ship's forefoot, hence the need for dry-docking.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> TNA ADM 137/299 Tupper to Admiralty 29 March 1917 119-41

<sup>42</sup> TNA ADM 137/299 Tupper to Admiralty 9 April 1917 156-70

<sup>43</sup> TNA ADM 137/299 Tupper to Admiralty 24 April 1917 183-200

<sup>44</sup> TNA ADM 137/299 Diary of 10<sup>th</sup> CS events 304-12

<sup>45</sup> TNA ADM 137/298 Tupper to Admiralty 22 September 1916 372-87

The paravane's development became linked to Lt.C.D.Burney, R.N. who had elected for half pay in 1911 to follow his research interests in experimental aviation. When war was declared he was an instructor at the Chatham Gunnery School and his weekends were spent at Bristol on seaplane and other experiments.

Cope Cornford, L., *The Paravane Adventure* (London,1919) 15-17

<sup>46</sup> Messimer, *Find and Destroy* 75-76

<sup>47</sup> TNA ADM 186/374 Handbook of Burney Paravanes Plate LVI for clump piece detail 1916

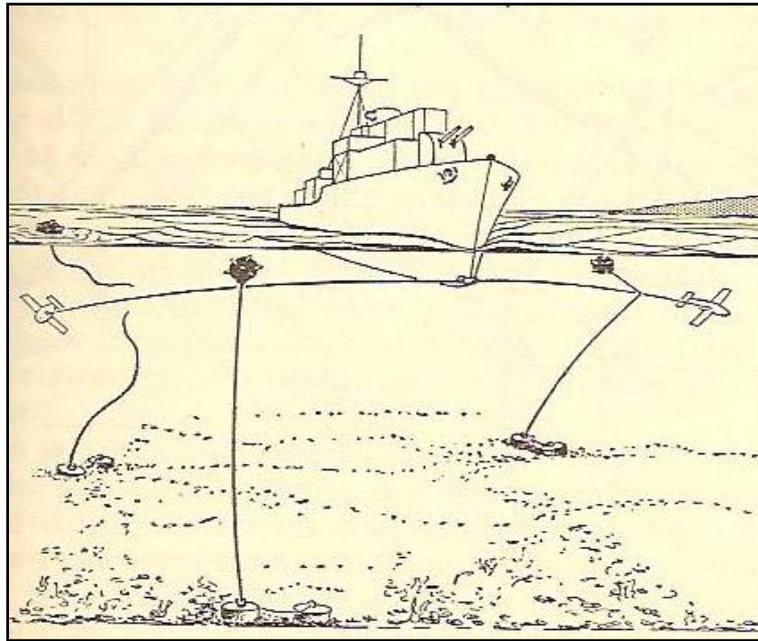


Fig.42 The Otter Paravane in action

The towlines were specially made steel wire rope which was intended to cut the mine mooring as it chafed along. At the junction between the towline and the paravane was a special cutter intended to finally part the mine mooring and bring the mine to the surface where it could be destroyed. The drawing in Chapter 3 on page 74, shows the clump piece, towline, paravane, easing out and recovery lines and paravane davit in the stowed position on the starboard side of *Virginian*. Jellicoe records initially there was opposition to paravanes because of cost and development problems whereby the towlines would un-lay.<sup>48</sup> They were introduced to the Squadron but initially were unpopular with the deep sea personnel, due to their ingrained training not to have cordage outboard when under way. In theory the ships were protected from mines unless one was directly in line with the ship's stem when contact was unavoidable. On one occasion *Alsatian*, outward bound via the Minch passed through a recently laid but unknown minefield. Her paravanes saved her by bringing two mines to the surface, one on each side, thereby revealing the minefield.<sup>49</sup> However, on other occasions paravanes could create problems which probably meant total recovery and re-streaming. *Changuinola* had one such day on 6 August 1917:

During the day the Paravanes (P.V.) gave trouble in the morning; the port one hit some obstacle, came to the surface and had to be rectified. Later the starboard P.V. hit a shark and brought him up to the surface in a flurry and badly cut about. The P.V. stayed down doing its duty.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War* 57

<sup>49</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 255-256

<sup>50</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 21

Thus the Squadron came to have some 'on board' protection from mines. The paravanes were deemed a worthwhile protection and by the end of the war, 3000 British merchant ships had them fitted.<sup>51</sup>

**Submarines.**

Initially, neither Britain nor Germany appreciated the extent to which underwater warfare would come to be used.<sup>52</sup> The usual method for sinking a merchant ship without armament was for the surfaced submarine to stop the vessel and allow the crew to take to the boats. Once the crew was clear of their vessel, the submarine would use gunfire or scuttling charges to sink the vessel. This was a requirement of international law and also German policy. There were, however, occasions when the warning was not given, the most notable being the sinking of the *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915.<sup>53</sup> Costly torpedoes, were normally reserved for attacks on warships or valuable targets. A situation well known to de Chair after the loss of H.M.S. *Hawke* in the Squadron's early days. The Squadron ships all had guns capable of opening fire beyond the range of guns carried by most U-boats. The Squadron, being technically warships was always at risk from torpedoes even before Germany started its unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, when underwater attack was applied to warship and merchantman alike. Before the end of the war the Squadron lost one vessel probably mined, two ships badly damaged by mines, another sunk by gunfire and a torpedo from a surface raider and six more were torpedoed by submarines.

Germany's high level engineering skill provided more efficient mines, torpedoes and submarines in the early stages of the war, thereby securing an early advantage in using underwater weapons. Germany's submarine rate of build at eight per month was superior to Britain's two per month. Other notable features were the excellent engines and the strength of their hull construction.<sup>54</sup> The boats were tested to a depth of at least 180 feet and many exceeded 250 feet without damage. Except for the cruiser class all could dive from diving trim in between 30 seconds to one minute. They were capable of prolonged endurance submerged. They could travel under water at the slowest speed for some 48 hours, at about 4 knots for 20 hours, at 5 knots for about 12 hours, and at 8 knots for about 2 hours.

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<sup>51</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol. 3 125

<sup>52</sup> Messimer, *Find and Destroy* 3

<sup>53</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol.1 410

<sup>54</sup> Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War* 41

Jellicoe’s description of the U-boat in 1917 reveals the versatile range of capabilities which had been progressively developed.<sup>55</sup>

Type	Length (Feet)	Displ- ment (Tons)	Speeds Surface Sub- merged (Knots)	Guns	Tubes	Torpedo/Mines	Endurance
<b>Cruisers</b> Double hull	215	1850	12 6	2x 5.9” 2x 22pdr	2	12	4 months
<i>Later</i>	275/320		16-18 7-8	1 or 2 5.9”	6	10	12-20000 m. At 6 knots
<b>U-boats</b> Double hull	210-220	750	15-16 8	1 or 2 4.1”	4-6	10	5 weeks
<i>Later</i>	230-240	800-820			6	16	> 5 weeks
If fitted as Minelayer					2	2      36	
Much larger Minelayers				1x 5.9”	4	10+      42	
<b>U.B.-boats</b> Single hull	100		7-9 5	1x 22 pdr	2	4	2 weeks
<i>Later</i> Double hull	180		13 8	1x 4.1”	5	10	8000 mls.
<b>U.C.-boats</b> Single hull	111	175	6.5 5		-	-      12	800 mls. @ 5.5 knots
<i>Later</i> Double hull	170-180		11-12 7	1x 22 pdr	3	5      18	8-10000 mls. @ 7-8 knots

Fig.43 German U-boat types 1917

Torpedo tubes on WWI submarines were aligned on the fore and aft centreline. This meant the craft had to be pointed at right angles to a target ship’s course as part of the aiming procedure before firing the torpedo.<sup>56</sup> The U-boats used their higher surfaced speed to approach as close as possible without being sighted, often in the awash condition, ready to dive if spotted by a sharp eyed lookout.<sup>57</sup> Once the U-boat dived she was constrained by a reduced underwater speed in reaching the ‘right angled’ position some 400 to 600 yards from the target ship and within the range of the torpedo.<sup>58</sup> The U-boat usually had only one, or at the most two, opportunities to be in the ideal firing position, even against a slow cargo ship steaming at 10 or 12 knots.

<sup>55</sup> Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War* 31-33

<sup>56</sup> This is not a constraint in 2010 whereby ‘homing torpedoes’ allow greater flexibility in the firing position.

<sup>57</sup> Domville-Fife, C.W., *Submarines, Mines And Torpedoes In The War* (London, 1914) 41-42

The awash condition increased the submarine’s visibility range and saved battery power.

<sup>58</sup> NMM Admiralty, *Wartime Instructions for Merchant Ships* (London, 1917) 26

**Anti-Submarine Measures.**

A target ship steaming a straight and steady course presented the easiest target for a U-boat. The U-boat commander faced a set of factors similar the gunnery problem in the previous chapter. He needed to estimate of the target's course and speed in relation to his own, adjusting his course and speed to reach an ideal firing position. The estimation was frustrated by target ships zigzagging whilst on passage or patrol and also manoeuvring for boarding boat operations. From the start, zigzagging was always used in daylight and also on moonlit nights. The Squadron logbooks repeatedly show the typical entry being 'zigzagging 2 points either side course line every 15 minutes'. In waters where submarines had been seen or were known to be operating, more active forms of zigzag were used such as 'zigzagging 30° either side course line every 10 minutes'. Assuming a patrol speed of 13 knots using these zigzag patterns, the distances made good achieved 90% and 87% of the actual distances run respectively. The consequence was that between 10% and 13% of bunker coal could be used in submarine avoidance alone. There still remained a danger that a submarine would monitor these simple zigzags and anticipate the alteration of course to a new leg. By 1917, merchant ships were instructed to devise their own zigzag patterns to prevent U-boats anticipating course movements. It was recommended that legs should not be less than 1 mile and not exceed 3 miles. When altering course only a small amount of helm was used. This reduced the loss of speed on the turn and kept the submarine in doubt longer, as to the next course.<sup>59</sup> Other simple procedures were showing no navigation lights at night, traversing known danger areas such as the Mull of Cantyre at night and timing port departures so as to approach danger areas at dusk.<sup>60</sup>

The reduced visibility at dusk and dawn were particularly dangerous parts of the day. At these times U-boats could exploit the limited light and their higher surface speeds to gain a closer firing position before attacking. The keeping of a 'good lookout' had taken on the need to watch for floating mines, torpedo wakes and periscopes. It was more than a matter of a pair of eyes watching for other ships with the collision regulations in mind and possible blockade runners. Naval practice was for each lookout man to be responsible for only a limited sector of the horizon therefore a number of lookouts were on duty at any one time to get all round coverage.

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<sup>59</sup> NMM Admiralty, *Wartime Instructions for Merchant Ships* 28

<sup>60</sup> Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War* 37

The training of lookouts was a need which Tupper pursued with some imagination since it was a vital part of the anti-submarine response. To sustain maximum concentration, rotation of sectors and relatively short periods on lookout had to be organised. The masthead look-out man in the crow's nest did two hours on watch aloft then six hours off. In severe weather this changed to one hour aloft and seven hours off.<sup>61</sup> Tired look-outs are inefficient look-outs and the daily routine of closing up to action stations each dawn and dusk at sea must have left some residual tiredness in all the crew involved. Gunlayers received special competitive training to spot periscopes. Tupper describes some simple but effective training schemes devised. The first scheme comprised:

A large piece of canvas painted to represent an expanse of sea with waves, and this was stretched on a frame and supported about three feet six inches off the deck. The class would gather round and one rating would be sent underneath the canvas with a sailmaker's needle, which would be stuck through the canvas until one of the men saw it and gave the order to fire and the bearing from the ship.

Although slow at first, the men's reactions speeded up and Tupper considered it worthwhile training. Gunlayers had orders to open fire at once whenever they saw a periscope or anything resembling a submarine, without first reporting it. They soon proved it was safe to trust their discretion.<sup>62</sup> Once the Swarbacks Minn base was established, demonstrations of torpedo tracks became available as a further training. Standing Orders described the form of the demonstrations:

In order to exercise Officers and other Torpedo look-outs in observing the track and approach of a torpedo, arrangements have been for a Destroyer, stationed at Swarbacks Minn, to fire torpedoes periodically at a drifter or steamboat stationed in a suitable position close to the ship. Torpedoes would be adjusted so as to pass under the drifter or steamboat, and Officers and men could observe the tracks from the deck of these craft or from the deck of their own ships.

2. Torpedoes must not be fired at any vessels of the Squadron.<sup>63</sup>

These demonstrations used dummy torpedoes which floated 'head up' on completion of the run, were then recovered and prepared for further demonstrations. It was a costly piece of training but one that had to be experienced in order to know what the tracks looked like in reality.

The admonition in the second sentence of the Standing Order above seems superfluous. It may have been self protective writing in the event of any misguided action aboard the attendant destroyer. It may have been spawned by some 'spirited mischief' by *Cedric*

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<sup>61</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 236

<sup>62</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 253-254

<sup>63</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Orders Torpedo Lookouts 82

whilst on patrol. This happened when the *Cedric* came up astern of *Patia* on 5 May 1915 and was not challenged. Captain Benson R.N. aboard the *Cedric*, decided a shell fired at *Patia* would ginger up the performance of *Patia*'s lookouts and officer of the watch. Captain Vivian R.N. in command of *Patia* had not shared Benson's sense of humour, since the shell fell into the water only 100 yards astern, prompting Vivian to make a formal protest to de Chair.<sup>64</sup> The reaction to this aboard *Cedric* was recorded by Grenfell in his diary when he wrote, '...but it gave us an excuse for a little fun'. However, when it became known that Vivian intended to report the matter, Grenfell ends his diary entry with, 'Our Captain is feverishly compiling a counterblast for de Chair'.<sup>65</sup> Nothing further can be traced of this incident and it may be that de Chair chose to let the matter die, since Benson was Second in Command of the Squadron. Vivian's complaint was justified for had the shell ricocheted it could have seriously damaged *Patia*. For those aboard *Cedric* it seems to have relieved the boredom of patrol and provided some 'realistic' training.

By 1917 all merchant ships were issued with instructions as to action if the trail of a torpedo was seen. The operative word was 'if', for in all but the calmest seas, torpedoes were seldom seen and even when they were, it was usually too late. Merchant ships, especially single screw vessels, were not built to carry out the rapid helm and engine movements prescribed on sighting a torpedo's wake.<sup>66</sup> The ships of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron were all merchant ships, some of them with only a single screw.

### **Depth Charges.**

There is little evidence of depth charges being used in the Squadron. However, the drawing on page 74 shows a 'depth charge shoot' [chute] on the vessel's stern. Whether this was an early depth charge thrower or rack is not known. Thornycroft started developing a single tube thrower in 1916 which could throw a 300 lb. Type D depth charge forty yards. However, this did not go into general service until 1917 and the depth charge rack did not appear until 1918.<sup>67</sup> Even when supplies of depth charges started to trickle through to the fleet, vessels requiring them were initially rationed to four such weapons.<sup>68</sup> It is not known where the Squadron stood in the priority for depth charges, however, enquiries into the loss of *Champagne* and *Hilary* mentioned later in the chapter revealed these vessels carried depth charges. Once again Tupper seems to

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<sup>64</sup> NMM VIV/4 Letter Capt. G.W. Vivian, R.N. to Rear Admiral, 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron 6 May 1915

<sup>65</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 5 May 1915

<sup>66</sup> NMM Admiralty, *Wartime Instructions for Merchant Ships* 30

<sup>67</sup> Messimer, *Find and Destroy* 159-161

<sup>68</sup> Jellicoe, *The Crisis of the Naval War* 51

have been up to date on weapon research and developments and devised a further training scheme which seems to anticipate the fitting of depth charges:

Then each ship had a couple of spars the diameter of a periscope which were weighted so that they would float about three feet out of the water. The ship manoeuvred to be about 2,500 yards from where the dummy periscope had been dropped, while the officer of the watch and gunlayers were lined up faced inboard. Then the ship was put on her course, the officer of the watch taking charge and the gunlayers and ratings on the look-out. Directly any gunlayer saw a periscope he opened fire without orders, the report of the gun and the splash of the shot showing where and when he had seen it. The officer of the watch then shaped his course to ram the submarine, while the gunlayer continued to shoot, and after passing it the officer of the watch dropped his depth charges from the stern so as to get the submarine if the shot missed it.<sup>69</sup>

Whilst this sounded like an optimistic action, it must have given the squadron crews a sense that they had some means to 'hit back'. The evolution in itself had value even without depth charges for often a quick response with gunfire alone would turn a submarine away. These actions were the seeds of what would become the classic World War II corvette attack on a submarine.

Tupper gave no indication of the date of this training development but a clue comes from a diary entry by Brocklebank aboard the *Changuinola* for 6 May 1917 when he wrote:

10.30 Dropped a dummy periscope to practice officer of the watch, lookouts & gun's crews at sighting it & also to practice dropping a depth charge near it using a dummy mine.<sup>70</sup>

### **Squadron Torpedo Casualties.**

Tupper records that on fifty three occasions the Squadron's ships encountered submarines but escaped their torpedoes, doubtless a result of a good look out and quick reactions of their gunners.<sup>71</sup> However, six Squadron ships were sunk by submarines. *Bayano* and *India* were torpedoed in 1915. In 1917, when the U-boat campaign was stepped up, *Hilary*, *Avenger*, *Otway* and *Champagne (Oropesa)* were torpedoed between May and September.

Reports into the losses of *Hilary*, *Avenger* and *Champagne* show the prosecuting officers bearing down on the captains to reveal the extent to which Squadron and Grand Fleet Orders had been observed at the time of attack. Particular reference was made to zig-zigs in operation, watertight doors being closed and most importantly the number

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<sup>69</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 254

<sup>70</sup> IWM PP/MCR/53 Capt H.C.R. Brocklebank R.N. H.M.S. *Changuinola* 6 May 1917

<sup>71</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 255

and position of lookouts as well as their use of binoculars.<sup>72</sup> Prosecutors were also looking to ensure a commanding officer fought back with all available weapons, the abandon decision was only made when no other options were open and that all crew possible were saved. *Hilary* was torpedoed at 07.10 on 27 May 1917 in 60°40'N 03°0'W whilst en route to Swarbacks Minn for coal. She had reduced speed to 10 knots to stream paravanes and had just returned to 12.5 knots when the attack commenced. Three torpedoes were used. She had 5 full time lookouts posted and supplied with binoculars. A low sun prevented the sighting of the attacker. The captain was criticised for his concern over coal expenditure rather than running at the 16 knots minimum speed required by the Grand Fleet Orders and for inadequate training of lookouts. However, evidence revealed the ship's maximum speed was only 14.5 knots. Admiral Beatty, by then Commander-in Chief of the Grand Fleet considered the risk from mines was small and is on record as stating the Paravanes should have been streamed earlier and the planned earlier time of arrival of 01.00 maintained.<sup>73</sup> This was in line with local orders for Swarbacks Minn which recommended no arrivals between 06.00 and 10.00 whilst the daily morning sweep for mines took place.<sup>74</sup>

The next loss was *Avenger*, one of the most modern ships in the Squadron and the only one oil fired. Attacked at 02.30 on 14 June 1915, when nearly daylight in 60°07'N 04°00'W whilst en route from patrol to Scapa Flow making 18 knots. When the first torpedo struck there were 25 lookouts, with binoculars, on duty and had been on watch one hour. The ship was zig-zagging at the time. *Avenger's* after holds, although not directly hit, had rivets opened by the impact and began to flood. The ship was not fitted with additional buoyancy in her holds. The pumping arrangements for these holds were inadequate.<sup>75</sup>

*Champagne* was the last ship in the squadron to be lost. Attacked at 06.10 on 9 October in 54°17'N 05°10'W, to the west of the Isle of Man, whilst en route from Liverpool to rejoin patrol duties and making 13 knots. When the first torpedo struck there were 17 lookouts, some six or seven with binoculars, who had been relieved every hour. The ship was using a zig-zag pattern recommended in the Wartime Instructions for Merchant Ships in a danger zone. Visibility was clear at the time. Casualties were over

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<sup>72</sup> TNA ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Standing Orders No. 71 page 94

<sup>73</sup> TNA ADM 137/3679 Court of Enquiry into the loss of H.M.S. *Hilary* 25 May 1917

<sup>74</sup> TNA ADM 137/3679 Court of Enquiry into the loss of H.M.S. *Hilary* 25 May 1917 387-388

<sup>75</sup> TNA ADM 137/3671 Court Martial Proceedings H.M.S. *Avenger* 14 June 1915

fifty members of crew, more than ten killed in the engine room, with difficulties handling collapsible lifeboats a contributory factor to the loss of life.<sup>76</sup>

In all three cases the commanding officers were exonerated, having fought back at the submarines to the best of their ability, abandoned their ships only when nothing could be done to prevent loss and endeavoured to save any many crew as possible. Another common feature of all three losses was that lookouts did not see periscopes or torpedo tracks and if they did at the last minute, this was too late. Attempts at avoiding action proved fruitless. All three losses suffered secondary damage remote from the point of impact which worsened their plight. Examples were steering gear being jammed, damaged gun training mechanisms, limiting the ability to fire when the attacking submarine surfaced. Rivets were 'started' causing flooding in unexpected areas and no portable pumps were available if engine rooms pumps were useless. Less obvious was the loss of emergency wireless transmitting ability when the battery accumulators, made of glass in those days, were shattered and masts whipped from the torpedo impact parted radio aerials and sending them onto deck. In addition to evasive zig-zagging and gunnery, two other developments deserve mention in connection with anti-submarine measures which were used by the Squadron.

### **Early Electronic Warfare.**

The war was the first in which both sides made extensive use of wireless and telegraphic communications. Germany used its efficient communication network to pass warnings to all its warships and merchant ships before war was declared and as a result most of its merchant fleet took refuge in neutral ports. However, Britain dealt body blows to the network, initially by cutting the German cables in the Channel on 5 August 1914. Subsequently, attacks were made on German wireless stations in other parts of the world.<sup>77</sup> In Britain, a series of listening posts on the East coast were set up with guidance from a Mr. Russell Clarke, a barrister and prominent radio amateur who had been supported by Sir Alfred Ewing.<sup>78</sup> In February 1915 the Marconi Company told Admiral Hall, the Director of Naval Intelligence, of the success they had achieved with wireless direction finding with the Army on the Western Front. The outcome was a number of direction finding stations being set up around the British coast. These were manned by a new section of the R.N.V.R. called the Shore Wireless Service.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> TNA ADM 116/1613 Findings of the Court Martial H.M.S. *Champagne* 14 October 1915

<sup>77</sup> Hezlet, *The Electron and Sea Power* 83-85

<sup>78</sup> James, W., *The Eyes of the Navy* (London, 1955) 28

<sup>79</sup> James, *The Eyes of the Navy* 68

The stations were set up in months from Shetlands to Kent and by using cross bearings, the position of any ship which used its wireless in the North Sea could be plotted.<sup>80</sup> Together with the code breaking skills from Ewing's team, Admiral Hall could supply worthwhile intelligence to the Home Fleet on U-boat movements. The situation was further enhanced as the U-boats themselves were fitted with wireless sets with longer ranges which tempted them to transmit. Warnings of U-boat activity could be made available to the Squadron, to repositioning patrol lines if submarines were expected. By moving a threatened patrol line 30 or 40 miles east or west it was hoped to avoid attack. Additionally, this served to create a random repositioning which would surprise intending blockade runners. Equally important the warnings allowed adjustments to the number of armed trawlers working in the vicinities of the Pentland Firth, Kirkwall, Lerwick and Swarbacks Minn, all of which were important areas to the Squadron. These vessels also formed a 'listening chain' with their electronic hydrophones for submerged submarines transiting the Pentland Firth and in the vicinity of Fair Island. [Fairisle]<sup>81</sup> To work efficiently, these devices required the drifters to be stopped in calm weather.

### **Camouflage and Dazzle Paint Schemes.**

The idea that a paint scheme could render a ship invisible had been raised at times in the past. The Admiralty commissioned research at the University of Edinburgh which concluded such a hope was not possible. Different background light, sea movement and varying latitudes meant no one scheme could meet all circumstances and render a ship 'invisible'. Less visible, to some extent, was possible but not invisible.<sup>82</sup> The proposals usually received polite but arms' length replies. Some of these inventive minds had printed pamphlets extolling the advantages of their approach to the subject and they sought support from politicians and the press in their claims for financial reward.<sup>83</sup> By 1917, with mounting merchant ship losses, the Admiralty was prepared to consider anything and the idea of camouflage went ahead. It came to be known as 'dazzle painting' and is associated with Lieutenant Commander Norman Wilkinson, R.N.V.R.. It was not so much intended to camouflage but to confuse the submarine commander in assessing a target's course and speed when planning an attack. The Tenth Cruiser was at the forefront of its use and one authority believes it wore the first

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<sup>80</sup> Hezlet, *The Electron and Sea Power* 98

<sup>81</sup> TNA ADM 137/138 Auxiliary Patrol Areas – Shetlands and Orkneys 1915

<sup>82</sup> TNA ADM 1/8412/50 Method of ship painting to render invisibility 13 February 1915

<sup>83</sup> TNA ADM 245/4 Royal Commission on Awards to Inventors 2 May 1919

designs.<sup>84</sup> Once taken up from trade the civilian livery had to be removed. Initially, the quickest way was to retain the black hull and paint the upperworks and funnel grey as in the model shown in Figure 40 below. As early as 1915 instructions were given to paint false white bow waves to accentuate the appearance of speed. Grenfell's diary aboard *Cedric* notes, 'India has a terrific bow wave painted on her stem that looks like nothing so much as snow clad hills and peaks'.<sup>85</sup> A few days later on 10 June 1915, Grenfell recorded:

Commodore and I went away in the cutter to note the character and extent of the ship's bow wave when going at full speed, incidentally we took away a camera.....ship ran past us at full speed while I made lightning sketches of the bow wave.<sup>86</sup>

In 1917 the programme of 'dazzle painting' started, each design was created by Norman Wilkinson and his artists working at the Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House. Some photographs of the Squadron's ships can be traced showing their paint schemes. *Alsatian* is shown in dazzle paint and significantly, fitted with two depth charge racks on her stern in David Williams book.<sup>87</sup>

Fig.44 R.M.S.*Alsatian* in peacetime livery

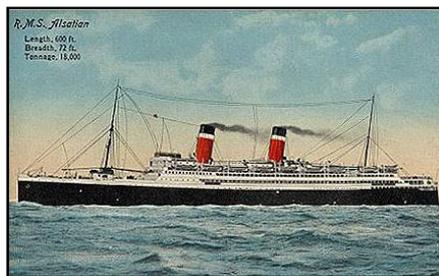


Fig.45 H.M.S. *Alsatian* in wartime colours



The Royal Mail War Book includes H.M.S. *Almanzora* in her 'dazzle scheme'.<sup>88</sup>

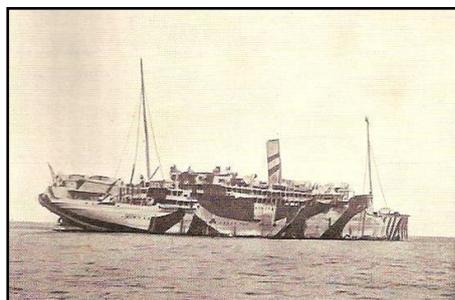


Fig.46 H.M.S. *Almanzora* (Photo in sepia)



Fig.47 H.M.S. *Almanzora* (Oil Painting)

<sup>84</sup> [www.shipcamouflage.com/1\\_1.htm](http://www.shipcamouflage.com/1_1.htm) Raven, A.

<sup>85</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell, R.N. Part 2, 78

<sup>86</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell, R.N. Part 2, 105

<sup>87</sup> Williams, D., *Liners in Battledress* (London, 1989) 35

<sup>88</sup> Leslie, H.W., "The Royal Mail" War Book facing page 48

In looking at *Almanzora* it should be remembered this was a sister ship to *Arlanza* and her size gives an insight to the extent of the three day struggle, mentioned earlier, to take that ship in tow.

Black and white photographs cannot show just how brightly coloured the dazzle schemes were in real life. Fortunately, an oil painting of *Almanzora* exists for comparison revealing just how vivid some of these dazzle schemes could be.<sup>89</sup>



Fig.48 R.M.S. *Ebro* (Post Card)

A report from H.M.Y. *Sayonara* in October 1917 shows the effectiveness of the ‘dazzle painting’.<sup>90</sup>

9.55 am. Sighted H.M.S. *Ebro* in the Sound of Mull on the port bow, end on. She appeared to alter course to port immediately after and seemed to continue to do so, whereas in reality she was altering her course to starboard. I should think confusion would be caused in aiming a gun or torpedo.

I was so sure that she was trying to cross my bows that I was on the point of stopping my engines and going astern to avoid a collision, when I discovered she was altering course to starboard. After passing the vessel it was almost impossible to tell how she was steering.

The *Ebro* postcard above, created in peacetime livery, serves to show the vessel was not a small one. Other reports gave similar encouragement, but the Admiralty was not as convinced as the United States Navy about the value of ‘dazzle painting’ as an anti-submarine measure. Nevertheless, in October 1917 the Admiralty decided the whole British Merchant Navy should be dazzle painted. The average initial cost per vessel was £125 and assuming a renewal twice a year typical costs were between £250 and £300 per ship. However, the adoption in the Royal Navy was much less general. By the end of October 1918, 251 warships and 2,719 merchant ships had been dazzle painted.<sup>91</sup> The ‘Committee on Dazzle Painting’ reported on 31 July 1918 and concluded:

The experience gained in the painting of merchant ships was too short for definite conclusions to be reached. The opinion of the majority of masters and officers of the Mercantile Marine favoured dazzle painting which they looked upon as a substantial

<sup>89</sup> RNM Ref.1977/233 Papers of Leading Signalman R.N.V.R. Phillip Needell 1916-19

<sup>90</sup> [www.shipcamouflage.com/1\\_5.htm](http://www.shipcamouflage.com/1_5.htm) Raven, A.

<sup>91</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol. 3 218-219

aid against submarine attacks.....in view of the undoubted increase in the confidence and morale of officers and crews of the Mercantile Marine resulting from this painting, which is a highly important consideration, together with the small extra cost per ship, it may be found advisable to continue the system, though probably not under the present wholesale condition.<sup>92</sup>

Since the Squadron was made up of converted merchant ships manned extensively with Mercantile Marine personnel it seems reasonable to assume the dazzle painting in the Squadron must have strengthened their morale.

In contrast, it is worth noting the German views of dazzle painting. Released British Merchant Navy prisoners from U-boats reported that dazzle painting did not seem to worry the submarine commander. More than one submarine commander inquired the purpose of the painting. Captured German submarine prisoners did not attach any importance to the paint schemes. However, Germany did experiment with the paint schemes and used the examples for training the U-boat crews. Support of these views came from British submarine commanding officers who stated the assessment of a target's course and speed also used other criteria such as mast and funnel positions.<sup>93</sup>

The Squadron's armed merchant cruisers were never built to receive the punishment from a submarine attack, whereby several torpedoes were fired, and still survive. No amount of wooden shores supporting the steel bulkheads together with holds filled with buoyant 'cargo' proved totally effective against the underwater power and impact of mines or torpedoes.

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<sup>92</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol. 3 220-222

<sup>93</sup> Hurd, *The Merchant Navy* Vol. 3 223-224

This chapter examines several issues which affected the daily life of the Squadron. Although treated individually, together they cover important aspects in the wider morale in the Squadron and an understanding of them will reveal the less obvious challenges in the Squadron.

### **Industry Background.**

The bitter strike in 1911 and views of ship-owners towards merchant seafarers were mentioned in Chapter 4. The memory of this event remained fresh throughout the shipping world. All the Squadron's R.N.R. personnel, stewards and the majority of engine-room ratings were drawn from the shipping industry and expected to return to it for post war employment.

Comparison of the Minutes of the Directors of both the P&O and RMSPC, reveal the impact of the war, the Squadron activities and two very different attitudes. The P&O Minutes between 1914-1917 were preoccupied with business discussions about possible company mergers and the minutiae of share transfer records. There are regular statements as to the number and tonnage of their ships engaged by the Admiralty. On 8 August 1915 H.M.S. *India* was torpedoed. However, it was not recorded in the Minutes until 15 October 1915 confined to informing the Directors this was the Government's risk and negotiations were in hand for her value. By the 10 November 1915, the Board was reassured that a payment of £65,000 had been received 'on account' of the loss and hire of *India*. Nearly a year later on 21 June 1916 the Board was told claims for the loss of *India* had been settled.<sup>1</sup> The Minutes made no mention of the loss of 113 men and 10 officers, of whom 4 were P&O officers, recorded in Company's war history.<sup>2</sup> RMSPC also included regular statements of their vessels deployed with the Government and in addition the amount of regular hire payments received. In contrast, RMSPC Minutes always recorded whenever a staff member paid the ultimate sacrifice and the Director's resolution that their names must appear in the Company's Roll of Honour.<sup>3</sup>

The Shipping Federation had been created by the owner's to ensure a supply of seafarers under their own control ('Ticket' men) and without 'taint' from Union contact. The fragmented 'trade' groups amongst the seafarer's organisations suited the owners very well. They were still smarting from their defeat in the 1911 strike and

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<sup>1</sup> NMM P&O /1/119 Minutes of Meetings of Board of Directors 7 Oct.1914 – 11 Dec.1929 53-93

<sup>2</sup> Hook, F.A., *Merchant Adventurers 1914-1918* (London, 1920) 305-307

<sup>3</sup> NMM RMS /1/17 Minutes of the Court of Directors Jan.1913 – Nov. 1916 and RMS /1/18 Dec.1916 – Jul. 1922. The actual Roll of Honour is housed in St.George's Centre, Gillingham, Kent.

determined to prepare to confront the ‘antagonists’ in future. The Federation built up resources including a depot ship to move strike breakers to any troubled port.<sup>4</sup> The Unions issued manifestoes headed ‘Get ready for the Fight.’ Simmering attitudes such as these were least needed when war broke out and provided an extra challenge to create cohesion amongst in the Squadron crews. The Executive of the National Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union decided however, that the Nation’s necessity should NOT become the Union’s opportunity.<sup>5</sup>

**Pay, Parity and Promotion.**

It was fortuitous that the long discussions about armed merchant cruisers and naval reserves had ended before the war and reached some conclusions, furthermore, stock-piling of naval guns around the Empire had taken place. However, whilst the ‘calling out of the Naval Reservists’ was a straight forward and rehearsed plan, the supply and integration of Mercantile Marine personnel proved less easy. When the war began, in order to engage Mercantile Ratings, the Navy was faced with the reality of supply and demand and the effects of market or ‘port rates’. Expediency was often the solution to difficulties over pay, promotion and job titles. However, expediency often rebounds as a later problem.

<b>PORT</b>	<b>1911</b>	<b>1913</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>1916</b>	<b>1918</b>
<b>Liverpool</b>	£4.75	£5.25	£5.50	£8.50	£14.50
<b>London</b>	£4.75	£5.25	£5.50	£8.50	£14.50
<b>Southampton</b>	£4.75	£5.25	£5.00	£8.50	£14.50
<b>Glasgow</b>	£4.75	£5.50	£5.50	£8.50	£14.50
<b>Avonmouth</b>	£4.75	£5.25	£5.25	£8.50	£14.50
<b>Hull</b>	£4.50	£5.00	£5.50	£9.00	£14.50
<b>Bristol</b>	£4.50	£5.00	£5.50	£8.50	£14.50

Fig.49 Indicative Basic Monthly Port Rates of Pay. (£.p) Able Seaman (Passenger Ships)<sup>6</sup>

Agreement was made to pay £1 a month above the port rates in the Union’s book for 1913 to retain or recruit Mercantile Marine ratings as a reward for added danger and

<sup>4</sup> Powell,L.H. *The Shipping Federation : a History of the First Sixty Years 1890-1950* (London,1950) 8

<sup>5</sup> Hopkins, “*National Service*” 3-13

<sup>6</sup> Hopkins, “*National Service*”. Table is extrapolated from various pages and compiled to show indicative pay for Able Seaman (Passenger Ships). Rates for Cargo ships and coastal ships were varied and were lower. Smaller ports also usually paid less.

their patriotism in volunteering. In 1913 the monthly pay for a Royal Navy Able Seaman was £2.92 and a Stoker 2<sup>nd</sup> Class £2.53.<sup>7</sup> Permanent R.N.R. personnel called up from the Merchant Service only received these same Naval rates and effectively suffered a pay cut. The R.N. ratings always considered the Mercantile Ratings as overpaid for ‘seemingly’ similar work. This ignored the fact that R.N. ratings enjoyed continuous service agreements which could lead to pensionable service, ‘in house’ medical care and many other benefits such as sport and collective welfare benefits. The Mercantile Ratings had none of these.<sup>8</sup> On arrival at a home port, the Mercantile Rating is ‘off articles’ and consequently ‘off pay’ until he ‘signs on’ for the next voyage or finds another ship. The Navy could not come to terms with the fact that theirs was a ‘service’ and the Mercantile Marine was a competitive industry from top to bottom for freight rate, passenger traffic and jobs.

Mercantile Ratings who had signed on the first special T124 articles and mobilised R.N.R. ratings, soon found that ratings which had stayed aboard ordinary trading vessels and deemed to be less patriotic, soon overtook the ‘£1 a month above port rates’ by subsequent negotiated war bonuses. The widening gap is shown below.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>ROYAL NAVY</b>	<b>MERCANTILE MARINE</b>
	<b>Able Seaman</b> With 6 years service <b>Basic Pay per Month</b>	<b>Able Seaman</b> Liverpool Passenger Ships <b>Basic Pay per Month</b>
<b>1914</b>	<b>£2.92p</b>	<b>£5.50p</b>
<b>1916</b>	<b>£2.92p</b>	<b>£8.50p</b>
<b>1918</b>	<b>£3.17p</b>	<b>£14.50p</b>
	<b>Stoker 2<sup>nd</sup> Class</b> With 6 years service <b>Basic Pay per Month</b>	<b>Coal Trimmer</b> Liverpool Passenger Ships <b>Basic Pay per Month</b>
<b>1914</b>	<b>£2.53p</b>	<b>£6.00p</b>
<b>1916</b>	<b>£2.53p</b>	<b>£9.00p</b>
<b>1918</b>	<b>£2.53p</b>	<b>£15.00p</b>

Fig.50 Comparative Basic Monthly Rates of Pay. RN v. MM (£.p)<sup>9</sup>

Comparing the pay rates it is not surprising the Admiralty found itself involved in expedient anomalies, sometimes of its own creation.

<sup>7</sup> Navy List 1913. 773

<sup>8</sup> TNA MT 23/574 A point reiterated by the Board of Trade letter dated 15 March 1916.

<sup>9</sup> Compiled from Navy Lists and Hopkins, “National Service”

The dilemma was shown in Rear Admiral Stileman's letter seeking authority to pay higher rates to complete the *Andes*' crew after the Liverpool port rates were raised.<sup>10</sup>

Authority is requested to place all mercantile ratings at present serving in H.M. Ships visiting Liverpool on the port rates as at present or as may in future prevail. To complete the crew of H.M.S. *Andes* the present rates will have to be paid, and I anticipate that should different scales of pay prevail in the same ship, wholesale desertions will ensue in all ships affected.

Many arrangements had not been clear and earlier in January 1915, de Chair wrote to the Director of Trade Division, who in turn passed the query to the Director of Transports.<sup>11</sup>

The conditions under which some of the Armed Merchant Cruisers, more particularly *Alsatian*, have been taken up are not quite clear, and the arrangements laid down in 'Instructions regarding Armed Merchant Cruisers' do not appear to have been followed as far as engagement, crews, messing and complements etc., are concerned. If you can supply any information on these points, it would be of assistance to Captains who are at present not sure of their powers or limitations in relation to Companies under which their vessels fall.

The expectation was that the war would only last a few months and so the first T124 articles were limited to six months service in a specified vessel. There was an option of being released from T124 articles after three months service by giving one weeks notice. The option could be exercised by a commanding officer at any time and allowed a cost saving in the event of the expected short war. The highest charter rates for the ships were for only three months, thereafter a reduced rate applied. Germany had also expected a short war since the Schlieffen Plan relied on knocking out France in six weeks. It was not to be. Soon Mercantile Ratings started to apply for release after their three months service and demanded their release after six months. This came as a shock to the R.N. mindset and after reference to the Law Officers it was confirmed that Mercantile Ratings were within their rights. The only solution was to re-draft the T124 agreement to require service for the period of war and service in any vessel and it became known as T124Z. Those agreeing to sign T124Z received a further 50p per month bonus above men on T124 articles. Thus expediency created a further anomaly.

Those refusing to re-sign on T124Z, and many did, were simply allowed to continue on the old T124 arrangement and remain on the same ship.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> TNA MT 23/376 Submission Rear Admiral Stileman to Admiralty 25 May 1915

<sup>11</sup> TNA MT 23/346 Director of Trade to Director of Transport 30 January 1915. By this date, the *Edgars* had been de-commissioned and De Chair was having to focus on Armed Merchant Cruisers rather than run them 'at arms length' as he had done when they were first attached to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.

<sup>12</sup> TNA MT 23/794 W.Graham Greene to S.N.O. Liverpool 5 April 1917

One of the root problems was the question of parity between R.N./M.M. job titles and job content. Examples were Boatswains and Carpenters, often entered as Chief Petty Officers on complements, yet the Naval perception of a chief petty officer (CPO) was much higher than in the Mercantile Marine, where often it only represented long company service. One of the stark differences of perception was that of Chief Steward in the eyes of the Navy, seen as no more than a 'General Mess Man' and classed as a 'First Class Domestic'. A Chief Steward in the Mercantile Marine does not 'wait table' but is responsible for the higher aspects of catering management. This was especially so on the passenger ships taken up as armed merchant cruisers. Previous Navy discussion papers talked of no more than CPO rank as being suitable.<sup>13</sup> The matter was helped to a conclusion when Cunard Steam Ship company sent a firmly worded letter suggesting that Warrant Rank would be appropriate, as already agreed in some vessels.<sup>14</sup>

In August 1915, ships were required to submit a report as to the relative status, etc, of officers and men not in the R.N.R.. The table below shows in detail the disparity of pay between naval ratings and mercantile ratings which had developed aboard *Arlanza*. In making the report Captain Norris commented that the Boatswain and Chief Carpenter, although classed as Mercantile Petty Officers, he thought they did reach RN standards. The two posts in a true naval vessel would be given Warrant Rank and Norris promptly created a further anomaly by paying them as Chief Petty Officers whilst generously agreeing they could wear Warrant Officer's uniform for Sunday Divisions!<sup>15</sup> This situation was experienced in other ships and the matter seems to have been left to the captains to sort matters out themselves. For example, aboard *Cedric* the Chief Steward was 'given the rank as' a warrant officer – which was not the same as holding a warrant!<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> TNA MT 23/434 Director of Transports 22 August 1915

<sup>14</sup> TNA MT 23/456 Cunard Steam Ship 23.Nov. 1915

<sup>15</sup> NMM NOR/1 Admiral D.T. Norris Collection H.M.S. *Arlanza* 17 August 1915 This provides an excellent account of the difficulties and anomalies which were also experienced on other ships in the squadron.

<sup>16</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1 52-55

Mercantile Rates of Pay		Naval Rates of Pay	
<b>Deck Dept.</b>			
Boatswain		£12.65p *	£ 9.00p
Chief Carpenter		£13.16p *	£15.00p
Painter		£11.50p *	£ 4.75p
Plumber		£11.50p *	£ 4.50p
Carpenter's Crew	8	£11.50p *	£ 3.50p
Lamp-trimmer & A.B.		£ 6.75p	£ 2.75p
<b>Stewards &amp; Cooks Dept.</b>			
Chief Steward	1	£18.40p	£ 5.25p
Chief Cook	1	£14.95p	£ 5.75p
Ward Room Steward	1	£10.35p	£ 3.375p
Storekeeper	1	£ 9.20p	£ 3.375p
Assistant Storekeeper	1	£ 6.00p *	£ 2.25p
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cook	1	£10.35p	£ 3.75p
3 <sup>rd</sup> Cook	1	£ 8.05p	£ 3.75p
Ship's Cooks	2	£ 9.20p	£ 4.50p
Assistant Ship's Cook	1	£ 6.00p *	£ 3.75p
Baker	1	£10.35p	£ 4.50p
Assistant Baker	1	£ 7.50p *	£ 3.15p
Butcher	1	£ 8.625p	£ 3.75p
Pantryman	1	£ 7.50p *	£ 3.00p
Captain's Steward	1	£ 8.05p	£ 4.50p
Stewards	20	£ 5.50p *	£ 2.625p
<b>Engine Room Dept.</b>			
Leading Fireman		£ 8.50p	£ 5.75p
Storekeeper		£ 8.50p	£ 5.75p
Dynamo Attendants	2	£ 8.50p	£ 4.75p
Greasers	23	£ 8.00p	£ 4.00p
Fireman	32	£ 7.50p	Stoker 1 <sup>st</sup> Class £ 3.125p
Coal Trimmers	26	£ 7.00p	Stoker 2 <sup>nd</sup> Class £ 2.50p

Fig.51 H.M.S. *Arlanza* Comparative Mercantile and Naval Monthly Pay Scales (£p.)

The parity issue also affected M.M. Radio Officers v. R.N. Telegraphists. Marconi operators had been granted warrant rank as a required inducement to get them to serve. Un-certificated Engineers were perceived by the Navy as no more than Engine Room Artificers. An attempt by the Navy to down grade Un-certificated Engineers to CPO status met huge resistance. Shipping companies wrote perfunctory acknowledgements but one replied that engineers were hard enough to recruit without this proposal.<sup>17</sup> The prospect of a Temporary Commission in the Royal Naval Reserve was not seen as a sufficient inducement by many engineers. Originally, it was not anticipated in the Armed Merchant Cruiser regulations, that engineers should be commissioned. The many disputed cases were eased once military branch status was granted to R.N Engineers after 1 January 1915. A noteworthy incident arose on 10 April 1915 when the engineers of *Andes*, *Arlanza*, *Alcantara* and *Orcoma* sent a long telegram direct to

<sup>17</sup> TNA MT 23/545 British India S.N. Coy 24.2.1916

Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty. Their real grievance was the belief that they would not be allowed the same marks of rank granted to other temporary R.N.R. commission holders, in particular the deck officers. Closely allied to the matter of uniform was their status as to which messes in which they would be victualled. All this required Admiral Stileman's attention to arrange an investigation.<sup>18</sup>

A similar problem arose in October 1915, when the engineers aboard *Almanzora* declined R.N.R. Commissions unless paid under King's Regulations for their respective ranks. The Admiralty replaced the engineers, refused their demands and notified RMSPC that they would not be allowed to serve on any ship employed by the Admiralty. The Court of Directors informed the engineers that having been barred by the Admiralty their prospects of future RMSPC employment had been considerably reduced, since so many of the company's vessels were employed by the Admiralty.<sup>19</sup> Often the engineers real grievances centred round their being treated the same as deck officers who had also been granted temporary R.N.R. commissions. Unlike Engineers, these officers were not required to sign T124Z articles on renewals and the Navy was perceived to question the engineers' loyalty in requiring them to sign. Their grievance letters often stated it was not a question of money but of equal trust. The matter reached the point whereby The Marine Engineers Association laid a tersely worded formal complaint before the Director of Transports.<sup>20</sup>

Another anomaly resulted from the rules governing the promotion of permanent R.N.R. Officers to the rank of Lieutenant which were detailed and demanding. Those who had achieved the promotion by this route were aggrieved to find that temporary commissions as Lieutenant R.N.R., were being granted to Mercantile Officers who had not performed the 'apprenticeship of the peacetime Reservist's Naval training' laid down in regulations.<sup>21</sup> Engineers observed that deck officers commissioned as Sub Lieutenants R.N.R. were promoted on a 'time served basis' whereas engineers without certificates were refused commissions. It took the Navy some time to realise that under Board of Trade regulations a Second Engineer only required a 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Certificate. This seemed to muddy the issue since mail ship companies chose to employ far more certificated engineers than the minimum required by law. This was a commercial decision which probably obtained a level of relief in the vessel's insurance premiums.

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<sup>18</sup> TNA MT 23/468 SNO Liverpool 13 April 1915.

<sup>19</sup> NMM RMS 1/17/ Minutes of the Court of Directors 21 October 1915 300

<sup>20</sup> TNA MT 23/816 Marine Engineers Association to Director of Transports 27 March 1916.

<sup>21</sup> Admiralty, *Royal Naval Reserve Regulations (Officers)* (H.M.S.O London, 1911) Chapter VIII

Another example of the convolutions which could arise was that of Engineer Commander J.R. Clay R.D. R.N.R. aboard *Teutonic*. This officer was on the Retired List with seniority 9 March 1913 ranked as Chief Engineer R.N.R.. Using the new military nomenclature for engineers he held a commission as Engineer Lieutenant-Commander. However, his position aboard *Teutonic* was one in which an engineer, not already belonging to the R.N.R., would have been given a commission as Acting Engineer Commander, R.N.R.. The net effect was that Clay was receiving less money than when he served in a lower rank in the R.N.R. in peacetime. It was finally settled and the long correspondence makes an interesting example of expediency which cannot have been unique.<sup>22</sup>

After pay rates, closest to the merchant seaman's heart, came the reputation of a shipping company as a 'good feeder'. Just as port pay rates varied, the daily feeding scales varied to some extent between owners as can be seen in the table below. The better 'feeders' were able to select the higher quality of personnel. There was a minimum Board of Trade feeding scale of provisions which was usually found in the tramp ship trades and often resorted to, as a threat, in the event of complaints about food. The predominantly passenger companies from which the armed merchant cruisers were chartered, provided a daily feeding rate often in excess of that of the Navy. The harsh weather of the White Star's North Atlantic run, brought better feeding for ratings than that of the 'blue water' sailings to the West Indies and South American services of Royal Mail. Like pay, food was also a 'market' driven aspect to the employment of civilian merchant seamen. So much so, that some companies allowed a higher meat allowance to firemen and trimmers to compensate for their physically punishing work.

In order to secure this key Merchant Marine manpower, the Navy had to come to terms with a higher feeding scale. The companies had agreed to undertake the victualling but only at the scales shown in the table. Consequently, there was an attempt to establish a standard feeding rate for Armed Merchant Cruisers similar to, but more generous than those allowed for Transports.

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<sup>22</sup> TNA MT 23/794 Commodore H.M.S. *Teutonic* 25 April 1916 et seq.

Owners	Vessel	Officers	Chief Petty Officers	Ratings
Royal Navy (original offer)		20p	11p	9p
Royal Mail	<i>Alcanatara</i> <i>Almanzora</i> <i>Andes</i> <i>Arlanza</i> <i>Ebro</i> <i>Orotava</i> <i>Caribbean</i>	32½p	11p	9p
Pacific Steam	<i>Oropesa</i>	32½p	11p	9p
Cayzer Irvine	<i>Clan Macnaughton</i>	32½p	11p	9p
Elders & Fyffes	<i>Patia</i> <i>Patuca</i> <i>Bayano</i> <i>Motagua</i> <i>Changuinola</i>	32½p	11p	9p
White Star	<i>Cedric</i> <i>Laurentic</i> <i>Teutonic</i>	32½p	17½p	12½p
Allan Line (CPR)	<i>Alsatian</i> <i>Victorian</i> <i>Virginian</i>	32½p	17½p	12½p
Orient Line	<i>Orvieto</i> <i>Otway</i>	30p	15p	9p
P&O (initially but increased on 1.3.1915)	<i>India</i> <i>Mantua</i> <i>Moldavia</i>	20p 32½p	11p 14p	9p 10p
Union Castle	<i>Kildonan Castle</i>	32½p	15p	9p
Furness Withy	<i>Digby</i>	32½p	14p	10p
Wilson Line	<i>Calyx</i> <i>Eskimo</i>	32½p	14p	10p
Anchor Line	<i>Columbella</i>	32½p	17½p	12½p
Booth Line	<i>Ambrove</i> <i>Hilary</i> <i>Hildebrand</i>	32½p	17½p	12½p
Viking Cruising	<i>Viknor</i>	32½p	17½p	12½p
Bibby	<i>Gloucestershire</i>	?	?	?
Union Steam	<i>Avenger</i>	?	?	?
R.N. Transports		32½p	12½p	5p
Royal Navy AMC's Target Standard Rates		32½p	14p	10p

Fig. 52 Comparative Daily Feeding Rates

Feeding was clearly a significant overhead and it is not surprising the Navy's Director of Transports' correspondence had undertones of 'lavish' and 'luxurious' when

referring to the companies' feeding rates. Similarly, the Director of Victualling felt the word 'extravagant' appropriate.<sup>23</sup>

The messing arrangements existed from Nelson's time. A 'mess' consisted of between 12 and 16 sailors and each mess member took turns at being 'cook of the day'. This man was in charge of that day's catering. He would receive the daily food allocation, decide the meals and prepare the food for baking, cooking, frying or boiling by the galley staffs. Next, the 'cook of the day' collected the food, served it to his messmates and cleared up afterwards. This gave some individual control over the diet at mess level.<sup>24</sup> However, it left the way open for a forceful senior rate to set the agenda in a mess and at the end of each month rebated money could be shared amongst the mess members. The option of eat or spend was often the cause of unhappy messes. This quirky system would be known to the full time R.N.R. ratings from their annual training periods but was quite alien to the mercantile ratings. It was used in the squadron when it was commissioned.

In the 1920's, the Navy started to introduce 'general messing' whereby galley staff prepared, cooked and served the food based on a 'ship wide' menu for the day. Thus the old 'cook of the day' merely collected the cooked food from the galley and brought it to the mess tables. This was precisely the method long used on merchant ships. However, it needed larger galley facilities. It appears the Navy trialled this method in the Tenth Cruiser Squadron and its introduction was started in 1916.<sup>25</sup> Most of armed merchant cruisers already had larger galleys and were quite familiar with a general messing concept for both passengers and crew in peacetime. There were some minor cases of resistance, probably from the few R.N. 'old sweats' who saw the disappearance of perks from the dividend of messing rebates. The R.N.R. and Mercantile Ratings were probably pleased to return to 'normality'. The Admirals and Captains were pleased with the quick adoption of the system which would not have been difficult with former passenger ship facilities.

About the same time as general messing being introduced, the Navy made a concerted effort to introduce its compromise standard AMC rates shown at the foot of the table above and also standard pay rates. Neither ambition was achieved in the Tenth Cruiser

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<sup>23</sup> TNA ADM 137/298 Brooks to First Sea Lord 214-215 9 May 1916

<sup>24</sup> The National Archives, *Brinestain and Biscuit* (Kew, 2006) 4-10

<sup>25</sup> TNA MT 23/520 Alterations to Galley Accommodation with the introduction of general messing 2 May 1916

Squadron. As the war progressed the intention was to introduce these standard rates for vessels newly chartered. Once again the need for expediency and acceptances of ‘market pressures’ controlled the Navy.

The effects of feeding rates are shown below in two of *Cedric’s* 1914 Christmas Menus.

<b>Chief Petty Officers</b>	<b>Ship’s Company</b>
Giblet Soup	Giblet Soup
Fried Sole	Boiled Chicken & Bacon
Roast Turkey Cranberry Sauce	Green Peas
Green Peas	Boiled Potatoes
Roast & Boiled Potatoes	Plumb Pudding Rum Sauce
Plumb Pudding	Mince Pies
Christmas Cake Mince Pies	Oranges Apples Nuts
Ice Cream	
Grapes	
Oranges Apples Nuts	

Fig.53 Christmas Dinner 1914 menus aboard H.M.S. *Cedric*

Commander Grenfell’s diary comment was ‘all this after 14 days at sea’. Next day he records, ‘The men say they had more to eat at dinner than they could get through. Capt. supplied bottles of beer for all hands’.<sup>26</sup>

However, such satisfaction with food was not everywhere. Captain Vivian, H.M.S. *Patia*, wrote a detailed letter of complaint straight to Director of Victualling, this was sent, perhaps deliberately timed, when Admiral De Chair was on leave.<sup>27</sup> The complaints were:-

- (1) An insufficiency of meat .
- (2) The inferior quality of the food supplied
- (3) The extreme monotony of the diet

Vivian also sent some food for examination by the public analyst. The situation was difficult for Vivian in that he was unsure as to the rate and terms agreed between the

<sup>26</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell Part 1 71-73

<sup>27</sup> NMM VIV /4 Vivian (H.M.S. *Patia*) to Secretary of the Admiralty 4 May 1915. This detailed letter is worth study to get an insight into how unpleasant merchant ship food could sometimes be, often as a result of ‘racketeering’ between a supplier and the catering officials.

Admiralty and the owning Company. A hindrance, about which De Chair had already complained to the Admiralty. Vivian's investigation revealed the ship's Chief Steward had been instructed by the company's shore counterpart to 'economise' on the meat ration. Vivian countermanded this, demanding that the full Admiralty ration be issued.

Two other major 'food' incidents occurred. One aboard, *Gloucestershire* where an investigation in May 1916 by the Director of Victualling revealed that organisational procedures and greedy behaviour by the younger men were root causes. The ship had recently transferred to 'general messing' and transition problems existed.<sup>28</sup> However, men in the Tenth Cruiser Squadron were known to supplement their food from their own pocket.<sup>29</sup> The other incident, involved both food and pay and resulted in a mutiny aboard *Teutonic*. It is dealt with in the 'Discipline' section below.

### Health

Each cruiser had aboard a Staff Surgeon, assisted at times by Surgeon Probationers and other permanent Sick Berth Attendants of whom some were auxiliaries and reservists. Two surgeons' logs remain from the Squadron.<sup>30</sup> They found themselves dealing with the usual injuries from typical shipboard accidents, minor operations and sports injuries, as well as the usual diseases of the time which included venereal diseases. Aboard *Almanzora* during April 1916, Surgeon Parry Price found the need to inspect the ship's company daily due to an outbreak of measles. It is noted that during the long winter nights, when the ships were darkened, the number of accidental injuries increased.

Surgeon Parry Price reviewed the health aboard *Almanzora* as follows:

In considering the physical condition of the crew one must bear in mind the fact that they are made up of mercantile ratings and pensioners and a sprinkling of R.N.R. ratings and some dozen or so active service ratings, with some 40 boys. These boys are amongst the cleanest and healthiest I have ever seen. Their weights and chest measurements are well up to the average for boys of their age. Their physical development even in a period of three months has often been very marked. .... The firemen, who were mercantile ratings, and were for the most part people rejected by the navy were a very poor lot physically. Most of the venereal disease was found amongst these ratings and there were several attempts at malingering. The marines who were either pensioners or recruits were very healthy, and there was very little illness amongst them.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> TNA ADM 137/298 Brooks to First Sea Lord 9 May 1916 214-215

<sup>29</sup> ADM 137/298 Tupper to Admiralty 25 April 1916 196-207

<sup>30</sup> TNA ADM 101/405 H.M.S. *Almanzora* Medical Officers' Journal H. Parry Price Surgeon R.N. (Temporary) 22 April 1915 to 28 August 1915 Average strength of Ship's Company 375.

TNA ADM 101/405 H.M.S. *Alsatian* Medical Officers' Journal W.P. Walker Fleet Surgeon 1 January 1916 to 31 December 1916 Average strength of Ship's Company 563

<sup>31</sup> TNA ADM 101/405 H.M.S. *Almanzora* Medical Officers' Journal General remarks.

Fleet Surgeon Walker's log aboard the flagship *Alsatian* covered a whole year and from the medical viewpoint is very comprehensive. In his summary in the section on stomach disorders he noted:

It is observed that Mercantile Ratings esp. Firemen's Branch drink may ?.....? when ashore on leave and their conditions of life (home life) is often ?.....? of satisfactory or conducive to good health.<sup>32</sup>

The constant heat of the stokehold and the incessantly rising coal dust in the dark bunkers would have done little to sustain the health of these engine room ratings.

The link between food and health is obvious and this was at the heart of Captain Vivian's complaint about food standards aboard the *Patia*. A constant worry is the risk of food poisoning and *Patia* had experienced an outbreak of enteric fever in the crew.<sup>33</sup> Such outbreaks, whilst debilitating to individuals, were also a heavy drain on the ship's operating efficiency, which no doubt helped ensure a response to *Patia*'s problems from the Admiralty. It is worth noting whilst both Surgeons from *Almanzora* and *Alsatian* reported a few individual cases of enteritis but nothing on the scale of an outbreak like that aboard *Patia*. Vivian, in command of *Patia*, wrote to de Chair and praised the dedicated work of Staff Surgeon Scribner together with Auxiliary Sick Berth Reserve Attendant P.C.Grills. The correspondence reveals that these two men coped with an outbreak of enteric fever, lasting three weeks whilst on patrol. Being one of the smaller ships, *Patia*'s hospital had only four cots and many of the sick had only mattresses in the alleyways, chocked up against the ship's rolling motion.<sup>34</sup> The presence of a qualified medical practitioner removed doubts a commanding officer may have had about health issues. Surgeons often bolstered the morale of the ships' companies with support and organisation for the many leisure activities detailed later in this chapter.

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TNA ADM 137/969 AMC Policy re Boy Seamen. 69

In September 1914, it had been noted that 1,100 Boys were in depôts and proposals were made to draft them to the Third Fleet to release active service seamen and R.F.R. ratings but not exceeding 20% of the seaman. A reduction in fighting efficiency was accepted against the training value for the Boys. Surely another political expediency? (See also footnote overleaf)

TNA ADM 137/822 Squadron Standing Orders 56. 88

1. As a general rule Boys were not allowed as part complement of ships, in the Tenth Cruiser Squadron only being drafted as such when Seamen were not available. They were, however, sent as additional to complement when so desired, and if numbers permitted, with a view to their being trained and generally assisting in the work of the ship.
2. All Boys were to be discharged to depôt on being rated Ordinary Seamen, those forming part complement being relieved by Seamen R.N.R., R.N.V.R., or ratings entered for hostilities only, and those additional by other Boys, if possible. All of which confirms expediency and the ongoing reliance on Reservists.

<sup>32</sup> TNA ADM 101/405 H.M.S. *Alsatian* Medical Officers' Journal W.P.Walker Fleet Surgeon General Remarks

<sup>33</sup> NMM VIV /4 Vivian (H.M.S. *Patia*) RA Tenth Cruiser Squadron 20 August 1915

<sup>34</sup> NMM VIV /4 Vivian (H.M.S. *Patia*) RA Tenth Cruiser Squadron 20 August 1915 and 3 September 1915.

**Accommodation**

Once taken up from trade, to reduce fire risk, the cruisers were stripped of all furniture and fittings in passenger accommodation as well as public room decorations and amenities. The result was a significant amount of available space for naval use. Although Navy ships used hammocks for crews, by 1914 this practice had long since ceased in merchant ships where everyone had a fixed bunk. Even though the crew accommodation was subject to Board of Trade surveys and measurement, crew areas were sometimes cramped, especially on passenger ships which carried large catering staffs. There seems to have been no discernable policy as to how the vacated passenger space was to be used but the indications are that the Squadron's crews enjoyed 'spacious living' compared with normal naval vessels.

Whilst there were variations two descriptions give an insight the life style. *Cedric* was actually the largest ship in the Squadron and Commander Grenfell's diary recorded:

I occupy the suite of rooms on the port side of C deck, close to the Enquiry Office which has been converted to the Ship's Office ----- I have a sleeping cabin, bathroom & writing room all v. comfortable. The other cabins on this & the deck above .....? The Captain's cabin under the bridge is however, small. We mess in a part of the Saloon, boarded off as a ward room & the messing is top holes --- The men are all in cabins, the P.O.'s & Sergeants in 2<sup>nd</sup> Class the men in 3<sup>rd</sup> Class saloon.<sup>35</sup>

Later, on 28 May 1915, Grenfell wrote a revealing entry:

Today I am shifting the Firemen into the new quarters (3<sup>rd</sup> Class Cabins) I have been cleaning for them. They will all receive new beds & bedding and their clothing will be fumigated before being transferred. Cartledge- an ex Navy Leading Stoker .....has been placed in charge of the Firemen & their quarters & given a P.O.'s badge to wear. He seems to shape well & cottons to the idea of making the Firemen conform to Service ways & ideas as to cleanliness. The Chief Engineer has got wind of this & came to me yesterday expressing much anxiety as to the cleanliness of the firemen, their welfare etc.. When I mooted the idea to him some while ago he was all for that you couldn't do anything with a Liverpool fireman, & that it wasn't worthwhile to try, that they were scum & deserved nothing. Different tune now, but that's the Chief and the Merchant Service – Get the work out of the men & for the remainder let them go to hell their own way.<sup>36</sup>

This is a most telling extract which revealed the gulf between the Royal Navy's and Mercantile Marine's understanding of each other and their different attitudes to man management and welfare.

*Almanzora's* Surgeon gives a clear picture as to how living was aboard his ship and by inference, aboard *Alcantara*, *Andes* and *Arlanza*.

<sup>35</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell Part 1 52-55

<sup>36</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell Part 2 75

This ship [*Almanzora*] was under construction at the time of outbreak of hostilities and she was taken over whilst on the stocks. That being the case she has never had the fittings of an ordinary passenger ship and she remains almost a bare shell.

She is ideally suited for this work of patrol as there is very little woodwork to take fire in case of action.

The accommodation for both officers and men leaves little to be desired. The men's quarters are both roomy and airy, though at times we have had difficulty in keeping them warm enough. There are rather too many dark unoccupied spaces which from their unhealthy smell suggest that men, such as the mercantile Liverpool firemen use them as urinals when too lazy to go to the urinals provided. The ventilating arrangements are excellent when taken advantage of, but great difficulty has been experienced in persuading the men to take advantage of them and air their quarters.

The accommodation for the crew is most roomy and excellent particularly is this so in the case of the boys.

Their sleeping quarters are situated on the main deck amidships where their hammocks are hung in a space which could easily accommodate twice their number. Their mess deck is for'rd well warmed and easily ventilated.

The firemen's quarters are very roomy but, with the necessary changes among their numbers every two months, owing to the fact that they are mercantile ratings, it has been more difficult to make them keep their quarters clean and airy. They show no enthusiasm for letting fresh air into their quarters. The galleys are most excellently fitted out in all cases with tiled floors which can be easily scrubbed out, and I have always found them spotlessly clean. This is also the case with all their utensils. All lavatories are provided with ample flushing arrangements.<sup>37</sup>

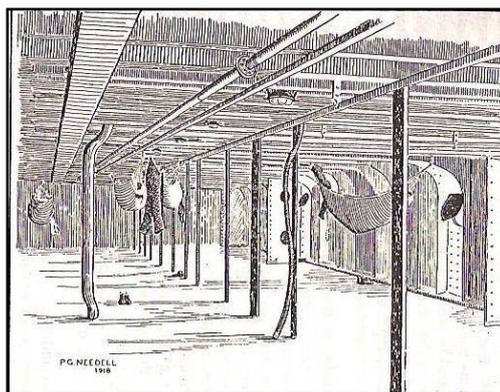


Fig.54 Men's Sleeping Flat - 'B' Deck

The stark atmosphere aboard *Almanzora* is confirmed by the sketch of sleeping accommodation above by one of her Signalmen Phillip Needell R.N.V.R. and the following description by Commander W.C.Tarrant R.N.R..<sup>38</sup>

As fitted out for Naval Service the Ship was a mere shell of hull and engines, and the luxurious accommodation common to passenger steamers of this class was conspicuous by its absence; only absolute necessities such as magazines, store rooms, and accommodation for officers and crew being installed. These necessities occupied only a comparatively small portion of the huge vessel, and a walk through the spaces, which will eventually be utilised by passengers, left the impression of having passed through a series of great steel tanks.

<sup>37</sup> TNA ADM 101/405 H.M.S. *Almanzora* Medical Officers' Journal General remarks.

<sup>38</sup> Tarrant, W.D. and Fry, C.V. *H.M.S. Almanzora (Sept 1915 – Jan. 1919)*, Privately published held in Royal Mail Association Collection 2009 16-17

1918,

Such was the world of Tarrant, Fry and Needell all of whom served aboard together.

However, both de Chair and Tupper encouraged the ships to make maximum use of the available space and whenever possible use one of the former public rooms as an ‘assembly space’, preferably with a stage at one end, for divisions or prayers in cold weather, church on Sunday and lantern lectures.<sup>39</sup>

Below, are Needell’s sketches of arrangements aboard *Almanzora*.

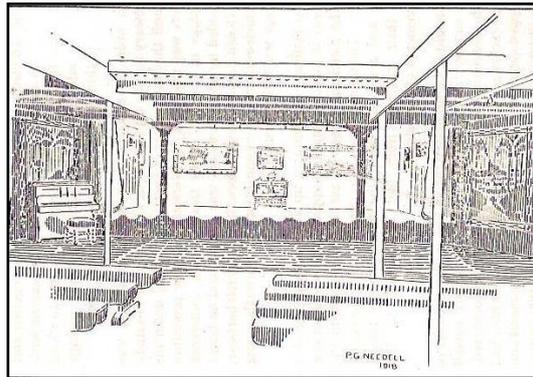


Fig.55 The Theatre - (First Class Lower Smoke Rom)<sup>40</sup>

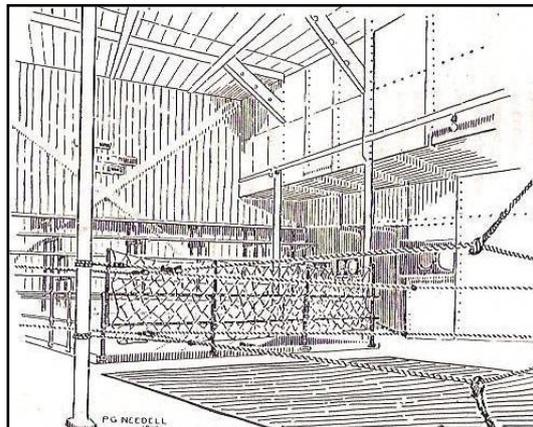


Fig.56 The Boxing Ring (First Class Social Hall)<sup>41</sup>

### Pastoral

Religion and church attendance played a fuller part in the national life of 1914-1918 than it does today. In tune with that, the Navy laid down precise arrangements for prayer and pastoral care of naval personnel.<sup>42</sup> In the Squadron, every effort was made to comply with the requirement to hold morning prayers every weekday after morning

<sup>39</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 222

<sup>40</sup> Tarrant, W.D. and Fry, C.V. *H.M.S. Almanzora* 37

<sup>41</sup> Tarrant, W.D. and Fry, C.V. *H.M.S. Almanzora* 39

<sup>42</sup> Kings Regulations & Admiralty Instructions - 1913 - Volume I 216-217  
<http://www.pbenyon1.plus.com/KR&AI/Index.html>

quarters or divisions and Divine Service on Sundays. The Liturgy of the Church of England was adopted within the Navy. Officers and men not on duty were required to attend this service, unless permission to be absent had been obtained. For active service personnel, naval pensioners and reservists this would have been a normal aspect of their shipboard lives. Mercantile Marine personnel were never under such requirements aboard a normal merchant ship as explained earlier.<sup>43</sup> In ships without Chaplains, a senior officer or the captain read prayers on these occasions. In port, all denominations were encouraged to attend worship ashore on Sundays and the logbooks record the landing of church parties and their return. Mercantile ratings on shore leave at Liverpool and the Clyde were more likely to attend the local Missions to Seamen and Stella Maris clubs. Here religious worship was not under any compulsion but encouragement. The Seamen's Missions were also meeting places for the Mercantile Ratings to hear about pay and conditions in ships still trading as independent merchant vessels. They could reveal any misgivings or grievances they held about serving in the Tenth Cruiser Squadron to other mercantile ratings, who might be approached later to serve in the Squadron.

In the Squadron *Alsation* had a permanent Chaplain appointed and a Chaplain was attached to each of the three Divisions in the Squadron. These attached Chaplains were dispersed as required by the Flag Officer or Commodore of the Division to which they belonged. Whenever the ships were in the coaling station at Busta Voe, the Chaplains were required to conduct a short service and administer Holy Communion aboard the base ship *Gibraltar*. In addition, two Roman Catholic Chaplains were appointed for duty with the Squadron and they embarked when opportunities offered.<sup>44</sup>

The Squadron Orders also reveal that when in the Clyde, the Rev.R.Irons, Rector of St.John's Church, Cranston Hill, Glasgow, near the docks was willing to entertain boys landed from ships of the Squadron, and provide them with healthy amusement when on shore.<sup>45</sup> There is brief mention in Admiral Tupper's reports of the prospect of a Church

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<sup>43</sup> Chapter 5 Page 115

<sup>44</sup> ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders. 85

<sup>45</sup> ADM 137/822 Tenth Cruiser Squadron Orders. 67

Army Recreation Hut being built at Swarbacks Minn but beyond laying of its foundations nothing more was reported.<sup>46</sup>

Naval Chaplains are charged with 'being regarded as a friend and adviser by all on board'. To this end, their uniforms carry no sign of rank, being devoid of brass buttons and gold lace. Like Surgeons, they often add a crucial dimension to the morale of a ship's company and both are entrusted with confidences given to no others. Often a commanding officer can 'unbend' to the Chaplain and Surgeon and may feel the Chaplain is a valued friend. Brocklebank recorded a Chaplain, Rev. Grundy, was on board *Changuinola* in February, 1917. Brocklebank, a stickler for Divine Service on Sundays, probably found the Chaplain's company more stimulating than the R.N.R. officers and had him sit next to him at table. In January Brocklebank wrote:

I have been at sea in this ship for over two years now and feel myself sinking to the level of the R.N.R., good fellows, worthy and honest though they be, constant association with them does not tend to liven any brain or thoughts one may have.

In April, 1917, *Changuinola* had a Roman Catholic priest named Kelly appointed. Brocklebank described him as a 'funny little Irishman' and but was careful not to discuss Home Rule whilst talking about Kelly's zeal in converting Protestants to the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>47</sup>

### **Discipline.**

The Naval Discipline Act is an Act of Parliament for the preservation of good order and discipline in the Service and augments the ordinary Law of England so that Service Personnel may be proceeded against at home and abroad for purely 'Naval Offences' as well as offences recognisable under ordinary Law.<sup>48</sup> All persons belonging to the Navy and borne on the books of one of H.M. Ships in commission are subject to the Act, including Royal Marines when borne aboard. Thus all R.N., R.N.R., R.N.V.R. and R.M. in the Squadron's ships were covered by the Act.

Given the above definition, this left the Mercantile Personnel carried aboard to be considered. In fact, they were also subject to the Act having signed one or other variant of the T124 Agreements used. This had been the subject of debate, as well as legal

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<sup>46</sup> Grainger, *The Maritime Blockade of Germany* 524, 567, 576

<sup>47</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 45-48

<sup>48</sup> Admiralty, *The Divisional Officer's Handbook* B.R.1992 (H.M.S.O. London 1957) 63

confirmation, and there is little doubt many Mercantile Ratings serving aboard the armed merchant cruisers, did not realise they were bound by the Act, until they fell foul of its provisions. King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions (K.R. & A.I.) detailed all the 'Naval Offences' and the appropriate punishments together with their consequential effects on a man's career. Also defined were the degrees to which an individual officer can punish without reference to a higher authority. The more serious offences were subject to the issue of a Warrant which was read to the assembled ship's company before the punishment was carried out. A Warrant required the confirmation of an officer of captain's rank, an important consideration when so many of the Squadron's ships were commanded by only commanders. Warrant punishments can have serious and long lasting effects on a man's record which is why they are taken seriously, e.g. his pension could be affected.

British merchant ships were also subject to a disciplinary code laid down by the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, which was drastically revised in 1906.<sup>49</sup> Therein was a list of shipboard offences and the punishments. Some of these could be dealt with by the vessel's master e.g. where the only punishment was a wages deduction. For more serious offences such as assault of the master, officer or certificated engineer where imprisonment for 12 weeks was the punishment, reference had to be made to a Magistrate's Court or a Naval Court for a sentence.<sup>50</sup> The inevitable delays that court procedures created were unwelcome to ship-owners and so it has to be admitted that discipline in merchant ships was not pursued with the same rigour as in the Royal Navy.

One offence which the Navy never ignores is 'Leave-breaking' i.e., failure to return from leave at the right time, in a sober state and fit for duty. Transgressions of up to 36 hours were dealt with on a scale largely involving mulcts of pay and/or stoppage of leave privileges. Aggravated offences and over 36 hours resulted in a Summary Warrant Punishment.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Bonwick, G.J. and Steer, E.C. *Ship's Business* (Wokingham, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 1957) 51

<sup>50</sup> Bonwick. and Steer, *Ship's Business* 78

<sup>51</sup> Admiralty *Kings Regulations and Admiralty Instructions* (London, 1913) 258 Para.793

In merchant ships, the Merchant Shipping Acts and the ship's Articles of Agreement for the voyage also laid down the penalties for a seaman being Absent without Leave.

Somewhat akin to the Royal Navy, these included a deduction of pay on a scale related to the length of absence.<sup>52</sup> However, in the world of merchant shipping as far back as 1593, failure to join on time and in a sober state has been a problem.<sup>53</sup> It is always a minority which creates this problem which the master, officers and sober shipmates are expected to tolerate. The problem became enlarged when transports, which were not under the Naval Discipline Act but taking troops and vital supplies to Europe were disrupted. One suggestion was for all men in the Mercantile Marine to be conscripted into the R.N.R. in order to bring the troublesome minority under control. The National Sailors' and Firemen's Union gave the response "Certainly not!"<sup>54</sup> However, the Union was mindful of the problem and cooperated to find a solution especially for vessels requisitioned for whatever government purpose.<sup>55</sup> So the effect was there were two separate codes of discipline, the Mercantile Marine ratings not serving in the Squadron enjoying the one which was more leniently applied, due to the threat of potential industrial action.

The Squadron was not immune and a small reserve of mercantile ratings was kept in a depot at Liverpool on the initiative of Rear Admiral Stileman the Senior Naval Officer there. When *Cedric* was in Liverpool, Grenfell was contacted for help in supplying 50 firemen, urgently needed for *Teutonic*. He records in his diary:

.....at the same time I sent the Officer of the Day (Stuart) , the ship's corporal , & an N.C.O. & private on shore to beat up the Firemen's haunts. Eventually one of our men went & Stuart's party were able to send down a number of men belonging to other ships and some civilians.

The next day, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1915, Grenfell found himself and *Cedric* on the receiving end of the problem:

The usual violent hustle to get things ready for sea. We only finished coaling at 10 a.m. ....Meanwhile a wild panic for firemen, orders & counter orders pouring in from the Office. [Squadron Office, Liverpool] Eventually they rounded up 15 men from the *Andes* & mustered aft in a state of serious intoxication after we had anchored in the river.....Eventually to sea at 6 p.m. & very thankful to get away from Liverpool.<sup>56</sup>

The experience must have been known to other ships in the Squadron.

<sup>52</sup> Bonwick. and Steer, *Ship's Business* 70, 77

<sup>53</sup> Hopkins, "National Service", 22

<sup>54</sup> Hopkins, "National Service", 23

<sup>55</sup> For a detailed explanation of the problem and its solution see Hopkins, "National Service", 22-25, 115-126

<sup>56</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell Part 2. 67

In his autobiography 'Reminiscences', Admiral Tupper wrote:

Man-o'-war's routine was entirely strange to these men, but, taking it all round, the discipline of the lower decks of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron was excellent.<sup>57</sup>

No Monthly Punishment Returns can be found in the National Archives which might have thrown light on Tupper's perception of 'excellent'. Since it was customary to record the reading of warrants in the ship's logbook, these were examined for the Squadron's ships and the results are shown in Appendix 12, Part A. In this way an attempt has been made to establish an 'average monthly rate' for warrants being read which proved to be 2.4. Whilst no conclusive correlation between the number of warrants and rank of the commanding officer can be seen, the inference is that ships with the higher scores were those with captains in command. Could this have meant that ships with only commanders in command were more lenient, being deterred by the need to make reference to higher authority for confirmation? Looking at the *Changuinola*, where for most of the time Brocklebank was only a commander before being promoted to acting captain it seems not. Nor in the case of *Caribbean*, where Commander Walter scored 31 warrants in only five months!

Part B of Appendix 12 lists the courts martial with tragic cases which sometimes brought harsh punishments to bear on offenders.

### **Recreation.**

Considering the repetitive and sometimes boring demands of watch-keeping at sea, together with the daily dawn and dusk call to action stations, it is surprising the squadron crews had time or energy for recreation. However, both collective and individual recreational activities are evident in preserved diaries. This was an age when entertainment and recreation was down to individual effort, often no more than a family sing song around a piano. Music was only heard by most people at church, the local band stand or music halls and theatre shows. In the Squadron it became the practice to turn one of the vacated passenger public rooms into a communal recreation room with a stage at one end.<sup>58</sup> It was also usual for the ship to 'acquire' a piano or pianola to create music. Add to this the fact that many Mercantile and R.N.R. officers and crew had experience of supervising deck games for passengers and the basis for organised recreation was created.

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<sup>57</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 265

<sup>58</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 237

Once the northern base at Swarback Minns was established it was common for inter ship football matches to be played there. Brocklebank records that a makeshift golf course was created which had no bunkers but plenty of natural hazards, helpfully a local byelaw decreed 'air shots' did not count in scores.<sup>59</sup> Many naval officers enjoyed golf and aboard *Cedric* Commodore Benson had a canvas screen rigged on 'A' deck for his golf practice.<sup>60</sup> According to Grainger, walks ashore at Busta Voe were taken by an A/B Style and Dr. Shaw with different opinions as to its enjoyment qualities.<sup>61</sup>

Most ships developed a miniature rifle 25 yard range in a vacant hold space and ran inter department competitions for miniature rifle and pistol shooting. This activity was so popular the crews were prepared to buy the practice ammunition themselves.<sup>62</sup>

Reading was a popular activity. Brocklebank aboard *Changuinola* set himself the task of reading Motley's 'Rise and Fall of the Dutch Republic', followed by Treitschke's 'History of Germany'.<sup>63</sup> On board *Cedric*, Commander Grenfell succeeded in persuading White Star Line to return the 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Passenger library and ensured the men were supplied with literature. He also records a large parcel of books and papers received with compliments to all ships by W.H.Smith & Sons.<sup>64</sup> However, Grenfell's attempt to organise subscriptions to a newspaper fund foundered as a result of squabbling between the Deck Officers and Engineers.<sup>65</sup>

Another popular pastime was organising ship's concerts. These brought to light the musical talent amongst the crews. Both Brocklebank of *Changuinola* and Grenfell aboard *Cedric* regularly report concerts in the diaries. They were usually held on Saturday nights whether the ships were on patrol or in Busta Voe. Grenfell reports that when in Busta Voe, the Port Admiral and his wife were guests to the concert, possibly because *Cedric's* captain was Second in command of the Squadron. For R.N.V.R. Leading Signalman Philip Needell aboard *Almanzora* his artistic talents were put to work painting scenery made by the carpenters.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 15

<sup>60</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1. 147

<sup>61</sup> Grainger, *The Maritime Blockade of Germany* 257

<sup>62</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 238-239

<sup>63</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* 32-33

<sup>64</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1. 152-153

<sup>65</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 75-77

<sup>66</sup> RNM Ref.1977/233 Papers of Leading Signalman R.N.V.R. Phillip Needell 1916-19

Needell was the archetype R.N.V.R. reservist. A bank employee and a keen rater in London Division R.N.V.R. and also a competent amateur artist. His diary in the R.N. Museum, Portsmouth often refers to doing 'special paint jobs' and scenery. Two of his paintings are held by the museum.

Grenfell's papers include a programme reproduced below.

<b>Programme</b>		
1. Coons Parade		Banjo- Mandolin and Piano
2. Song		Stoker Young
3. Dance		Seamen Tyrell and Penston
4. Song	'Where the River Shannon Flows'	Cook Norman
5.	CINEMA	
6. Song		Signalman McGill
7. Song	'The Curse of an Aching Heart'	Steward Taylor
8. Song	Selected	M. Loftus
9. Song	'The Old Brigade'	Steward Williams
10. Song	'Our Side'	Steward Flusk
11. Song	'Any Rags'	Sub Lieut. Ollerhead
12.	CINEMA	
13. Song	'Ship Ahoy'	Private Cox
14. Song	Song	Sub Lieut. Pearce
15. Song	Song - Dance	M.Loftus
<b>GOD SAVE THE KING</b>		
<b>H.M.S. CEDRIC 30<sup>th</sup> July 1915</b>		

Fig.57 Concert Programme H.M.S. CEDRIC 30<sup>th</sup> July 1915 <sup>67</sup>

The first concert which included 'cinematograph entertainment' had been given earlier. on the Friday July 9<sup>th</sup> 1915 when the pattern of alternate films and songs was started aboard *Cedric*.<sup>68</sup> Clearly some of the content would not be politically correct today, nor perhaps Grenfell's review of a concert on Friday March 19<sup>th</sup> 1915 when he wrote:

A most successful concert from 5 to 7.30 ending with a 'knock about' time that fairly brought the 'house' down. Ollerhead v. good as a Somerset farmer. Steward Loftus with his Coon songs was as usual the feature of the Entertainment.<sup>69</sup>

Since the Admiral's wife often attended these concerts it can be assumed the film titles were appropriate. The projector may have been bought by a shipboard collection or even a generous benefactor.

<sup>67</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 148

<sup>68</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 138

<sup>69</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1. 18

John Shuter, *Changuinola's* First Lieutenant, bought himself a set of woodworking tools and became creative after taking up 'carpenteering'. His diary proudly reports on 3 April 1915 that 'he had finished the bookcase and made a good job of it'.<sup>70</sup> There is no indication whether it was for his cabin or the officer's wardroom.

Merchant ships in peacetime comprised three main departments – deck, engine and catering. Outside of working hours there was little social interaction between the three sections e.g. it was rare for a merchant ship to field a football team. In the Squadron ships organised inter mess or departmental 'deck sports' competitions fielding the likes of tug-of-war teams, boxing, deck tennis and shuffleboard. Both officers and ratings regularly undertook physical exercises. An indoor board game called 'uckers' (a type of 'Ludo') was popular with ratings. Officers have been photographed playing 'deck hockey' using walking sticks. The spacious decks and public rooms would be a luxury denied most 'normal' warships. All this helped to develop the cohesion needed in wartime and stave off boredom. The range of recreational activities was typical of the Navy and cannot be considered in any way unique to the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. Inter watch or inter departmental team competitions would include both officers and ratings.

### **Monotony**

A further reason for encouraging recreational activities was to alleviate monotony. The diaries of both Brocklebank of *Changuinola* and Grenfell aboard *Cedric*. frequently alluded to this aspect of the blockade work. As stated earlier in this paper, intercepting merchant ships was not seen as 'real war fighting' in the eyes of the regular naval officer. Although his diary shows him to be a caring officer working to motivate the men, Grenfell reveals just how much he was affected by the monotony:

...we are always at sea & constantly exposed there & entering ports to the chances of the weather, to submarines & mines. That is all part of the fun, but still, one job, though no doubt highly important, is not exactly militarily satisfying – even the chance of a little personal contact with the enemy in the shape of a submarine is a grateful change, & did us all good today.<sup>71</sup>

The feeling now seems to be pretty general that this patrol business is hatefully monotonous, and each trip seems to get worse than the last. The novelty of rounding up ships & boarding them has entirely evaporated & with it all excitement. Each & all deplore the fact that we are apparently doomed to this for the remainder of the war.<sup>72</sup>

The monotony of this business is growing appalling.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> IWM JAS/1/1 Diary John Shuter, H.M.S. *Changuinola* 197

<sup>71</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1 174

<sup>72</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2 25

May the moment for YUVOLU arrive soon!<sup>74</sup>

Everyone is bored stiff with the war – or the part we have to play in it & only wishes the beastly submarine would turn up & give us a little excitement.<sup>75</sup>

These entries show it had only taken from December 1914 to May 1915 to bring Grenfell to this state of mind. All the more to his credit that he worked tirelessly to improve the crew's performance, morale and welfare – in particular, the welfare of the firemen.

### **Comforts and News from Home and Colonies.**

Grenfell records in December, 1914 the arrival of warm clothing from the Navy League which he distributed together with that supplied from the Admiralty. He commented, 'Good stuff all of it – but from now on the crew live in a most quaint piratical rig'.<sup>76</sup>

More arrived in February, 1915 when he wrote:

The Navy League has also sent 4 more parcels of warm clothing for the men; and another box of comforters & gloves and a very nice letter from the Headmistress of the Newton Abbott Girls Secondary School.<sup>77</sup>

Grenfell was a stickler for the correct dress and in March 1915 he started to tighten up on the appearance of *Cedric's* boarding crews:

Worrying people now about being in uniform in the daytime - the other ships – to judge from their prize crews that take passage on board of us – still delight in strange piratical, semi Arctic garments but the weather is now spring like & charming. There are I know, some who think thus; 'It is wartime, therefore we should wear strange garb.'<sup>78</sup>

On 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1915 with the war, blockade and Squadron well established, Grenfell revealed luxuries arriving from the West Indies:

At monthly payment today we distributed boxes of chocolates, the gift of the Colonies of Trinidad, Grenada & St.Lucia to the Navy and Army.<sup>79</sup>

Although *Cedric* seems to have done well in home support it was most likely repeated throughout the Squadron, as the practice of 'supporting the troops' from home became the custom.

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<sup>73</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2 45

<sup>74</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2 54

YUVOLU was the agreed codeword to send all ships in the Royal Navy to a defined war station in the event of a fleet action.

<sup>75</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2 59

<sup>76</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1 43

<sup>77</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1 150-153

<sup>78</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 1 166

<sup>79</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell RN H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 3 52

Letters to and from home have always been sacrosanct in the Navy and the Squadron was no exception. Ships going home for coaling or repairs would often carry mail from ships remaining on patrol. Similarly, ships outward bound from coaling or repairs would carry mail to other ships. However, the introduction of wireless telegraphy introduced a further dimension for news in World War One for the Navy. Late each evening a wireless broadcast was made from the Marconi Station at Poldhu in Cornwall. This was a censored account as to how the war was progressing for the benefit of the fleet. It was intended to summarise what might be read in the daily newspaper and was looked forward to each day. On occasions, the broadcast would not be received possibly due to equipment failure or bad atmospheric conditions. Whenever this happened, the diarists Brocklebank, Grenfell, Needell and Midshipman Scrimgeour never failed to say so in their diaries.<sup>80</sup> Sometimes the gap would extend to three days and then the diarists often limited the entry for the third day to only 'No Poldhu'. The feeling of disappointment is palpable to the reader and underlines the isolation of being on patrol in those inhospitable northern waters.

Despite the privations in the Squadron from bad weather whilst being in harm's way, the men fared very well compared with soldiers on the Western Front. Reference to the horrific photographs in Winter's work *The Experience of World War I* will soon dispel any doubts.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Needell's diary was intended for his wife and daily entries were often no more than descriptions of sunrise and sunset. As a signalman he would have always felt 'up to date' with news but absence of a Poldhu transmission clearly left him disappointed.

<sup>81</sup> Winter, J.M., *The Experience of World War I* (London, 1988) 2000 Edition.

The year 1917 proved to be the squadron's final one in the form it had become known. By the year end, all the ships had been dispersed to other duties.

Throughout the blockade shippers and ship-owners had tolerated the inconvenience of interception and search. The result was a costly loss of time and money. The deterrence of the interceptions ultimately forced them to recognise blockade requirements and regulations: in return, they received an expedited passage if they conformed voluntarily.<sup>1</sup> Britain had progressively increased agreements and accepted guarantees from foreign trade associations as well neutral countries, One important development was the introduction of 'navicerts' or 'letters of assurance' and this must have been a useful reduction in the interception workload. Before the United States entered the war American vessels were also subjected to the 'navicert' system.<sup>2</sup> A minute from Captain Webb of Trade Division also revealed a running down of blockade activity:

In view of the danger to small sailing vessels from enemy submarines such vessels need not be sent in unless carrying contraband goods of an important nature to Scandinavia or Holland.<sup>3</sup>

This meant a degree of prioritisation giving another reduction in the interception work, no doubt welcomed by Admiral Tupper. Marder reveals the blockade's progress as follows:

By autumn of 1916 the machinery of the blockade had reached a high degree of efficiency. \the various rationing agreements and agreements with neutral shipping lines were on the whole working well. ....As regards food supplies, the winter of 1916-1917 is acknowledged by all to have been in Germany, the worst period of the war.<sup>4</sup>

Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare on February 1, 1917. The losses of Allied merchant ships jumped from 520,412 tons in February to a peak figure of 860,334 tons in April 1917.<sup>5</sup> There was a reluctance to adopt the well tried historical convoy system for three main reasons. First, Admiralty thinking preferred the new concept of 'defended lanes' whereby a patrolling warship was allocated a sea area to respond to attacks on merchant ships. This was linked to the belief that a convoy presented a more vulnerable target for the attacking U-boat.<sup>6</sup> Second, there was a shortage of escorting destroyers. Jellicoe retained destroyers as protective screens for the Grand Fleet battleships when they made periodic sweeps of the North Sea. Third,

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<sup>1</sup> This meant a call at either Kirkwall or The Downs for inspection

<sup>2</sup> Parmalee, M., *Blockade and Seapower* (London, 1924) 49-50

<sup>3</sup> TNA ADM137/1275 Minute by Webb 436 2 June 1917

<sup>4</sup> Marder A.J., *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* (London, 1961) Vol.3 323-4

<sup>5</sup> Carolan, V., *WWI at Sea* (Harpendon, 2007) 121-123

<sup>6</sup> The reality was that an independent merchant ship could have been sunk a considerable distance from the warship's guard area and the U-boat escaped long before the escort arrived at the attack.

merchant ship masters were convinced that low speed, single screw merchant ships could not manoeuvre well enough, in close convoy formation, to match naval requirements. Nevertheless, Jellicoe mounted an experimental eight knot convoy from Gibraltar to Britain which arrived safely on May 20, 1917. This meant the convoy system was adopted and created a turning point for the war and ultimately the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.<sup>7</sup>

The United States entered the war on April 6, 1917 and an early contribution to the war effort by the U.S. Navy was to base destroyers at Queenstown, Ireland.<sup>8</sup> The first arrived there on May 4, 1917, and the early weeks were spent in familiarisation with the waters to the south and west of Ireland together with British patrols. By September, 1917, the convoy system was operating smoothly.<sup>9</sup> A destroyer escort group would meet inbound convoys in the Western Approaches and also escort outbound convoys from this area. This was where German U-boat activity took its toll on British and neutral shipping. The limited range of the destroyers was supplemented by an ocean escort for the convoys drawn from pre-dreadnought cruisers; these cruisers escorted the open ocean legs until the convoy was in range of the destroyer groups. Ships of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron were progressively withdrawn to help as ocean escorts starting in the spring of 1917. By August 7 1917, Tupper asked the Admiralty if the ten cruisers on detached convoy duty were to remain under his administrative command; he also proposed these vessels be interchangeable with those remaining on blockade patrol to relieve their monotony.<sup>10</sup>

Seeing the direction the war was taking, Tupper prepared proposals for the future composition of the Squadron: this included a suggestion for *Alsatian* to be modified to be capable of carrying aircraft. This was another attempt by Tupper to incorporate air support. Unknown to him, a meeting at Scapa Flow was held on 27 July which decided the squadron should be reduced and to allowing some vessels to be transferred to convoy escort duty.<sup>11</sup> Further reductions soon followed. In the event *Alsatian* was not converted for aircraft: two armed trawlers were retained to generate spurious signal traffic. This was intended to confuse approaching blockade runners, if listening, into thinking the strength of the blockade patrols was still significant.

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<sup>7</sup> Sims, W.S., *The Victory at Sea* (Annapolis, U.S.A. 1984 Edition.) 110-115

<sup>8</sup> Now called Cobh

<sup>9</sup> Sims, W.S., *The Victory at Sea* (Annapolis, U.S.A. 1984 Edition.) 118

<sup>10</sup> ADM 137/1910 Tupper to Admiralty 7 August 1917 365

<sup>11</sup> ADM 137/1910 Admiralty to Beatty 24 June 1917 207-8

How successful then was the blockade? On 27 March 1917, the House of Commons debated the issues of War Measures with reference to the Blockade. After some members had spoken, Lord Cecil, the Minister for the Blockade, reviewed the progress. Whilst conceding a slow start to many of the measures, he asserted with some confidence that the blockade was now working effectively.<sup>12</sup> After the war, in the eyes of politicians, it was totally successful. However, this was a conclusion influenced by the fact that Germany had come to the Armistice Table.

One man, Rear Admiral M.W.W.P. Consett was uniquely placed to challenge the long accepted, complacent confidence about the state of the blockade efforts. He had served, in the rank of captain, as the Naval Attaché in Scandinavia throughout the war. As such, he was able to travel extensively and gather facts for his reports and book published in 1923 which provided a different view of the blockade's acclaimed success.<sup>13</sup> His book examined the vital commodities in turn and provided facts showing Germany had obtained these, despite British naval operations and inter-government agreements and guarantees. Consett provided clear and compelling arguments as to how, with stiffer political decision, the blockade could have been more effective and sooner. Mention has already been made of the depressing effect these revelations had on Captain Brocklebank of *Changuinola*. It seems likely that other former patrol commanding officers were similarly affected on reading Consett. In the course of his duties and reports to the Foreign Office, Consett had repeatedly pointed out these 'leakages' in the blockade but all to no avail. Indeed, on visits by Lord Faringdon to Scandinavia, Consett had personally stressed the serious situation. Despite this, on 23 February 1916, Lord Faringdon made the somewhat dilute statement to the House of Lords,

'...that with regard to contraband he was convinced that but little was passing and that neutrals were doing their best to regard their obligations.'<sup>14</sup>

Consett's final chapter revealed his sense of betrayal after Lord Faringdon and Lord Cecil persisted in projecting a relatively glowing picture of the blockade's progress; the need to 'go public' was the motivation for his book.<sup>15</sup> Bell's official *History of the Blockade of Germany*, which was not declassified until 1937, gave but a passing reference to Consett's assertions.

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<sup>12</sup> Hansard, *HC Deb 27 March 1917 vol 92 cc226-80*

<sup>13</sup> Consett, M.W.W.P., *The Triumph Of Unarmed Forces (1914-1918)* (London, 1923)

<sup>14</sup> Parliamentary Debates No.4 p 155 23 February 1916

<sup>15</sup> Consett, *The Triumph Of Unarmed Forces* 277-278

In post war years there was much discussion about the morality of a blockade which was perceived to cause hardship to civilians in Germany. In reply others pointed out that Germany had, with her unrestricted U-boat destruction of allied ships, caused equal hardship to Britain's civilians. It was not until 1930 when Lieutenant Lois Guichard made the reality of modern war clear for his readers:

Moreover, the sufferings entailed upon the civilian population by the action of the Allies would not have been so intensified but for the restrictions which the German Government, which controlled the food supplies of the whole Empire, imposed upon civilians for the sake of the army.

This particular effect of the blockade is due unfortunately to the conditions of modern warfare, under which the whole of the vital forces of a nation are brought into play and non-combatants are directly affected.<sup>16</sup>

As late as 1939, the blockade was still being debated and written about. From the Oxford University Pamphlets on World Affairs, came a succinct, yet full, account of the blockade through to 1919.<sup>17</sup> The author, Mr. Arnold-Foster, came from long service in all parts of Whitehall's machinery throughout the war. From 1914, on the Contraband Committee where he served as an Admiralty representative until 1916; then followed service with the Black List, Main Licensing Committees, and finally the Restriction of Enemy Supplies Department. In 1919 he attended the Peace Conference. This was experience as unique as that of Captain Consett or any one of the Squadron's commanding officers and shows how many and varied shoulders bore the tasks of the blockade. The Armistice of 11 November 1918 was not the end of the war resulting in an immediate lifting of the blockade. The blockade machine was not finally scrapped until 12 July 1919 since it had needed a phased renewal of supplies to the various nations in the Central Powers. Anyone doubting the effects of the blockade on German civilians would be advised to read the closing pages of Mr. Arnold-Foster's pamphlet. The view of General Smuts who lived through the period provided a sound verdict on the effects of blockade and counter-blockade when he declared:

'...it is the most awful spectacle in history, and no man with any heart or regard for human destiny can contemplate it without the deepest emotion'.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond this no further judgement of the political success has been attempted in this paper. The result was essentially an operational success by virtue of the deterrent value created by the Squadron's constabulary type patrols.

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<sup>16</sup> Guichard, L., *The Naval Blockade 1914-1918* (New York, 1930) 304-305

Lt. Guichard, French Navy: Attached to the Historical Section of the French Ministry of Marine; Doctor of Law

<sup>17</sup> Arnold-Foster, W., *The Blockade 1914-1919* (Oxford, 1939)

<sup>18</sup> Arnold-Foster, *The Blockade 1914-1919* 40

**What Were The Lessons For A Government?**

Elder statesmen, like retired admirals, were living in the prints depicting close blockades in Nelson's period. When the cries of 'Leave it to the Navy and arrest all ships!' went up, they had not realised the total effects of global change in the nineteenth century. They seemed oblivious to advances in industrialisation which had led to the expansion in world trade; yet sub-consciously called for the defence of Britain's sea lanes as if they were marked out like a motorway. These changes, together with the interdependence of international trade agreements, increasingly affected by international politics and supported by the world telegraph links could not be ignored. They were the foundations of today's globalization.

Improved coastal gunnery, mines and torpedoes had removed the option of a close blockade: instead a turn was made to distant blockade supporting international diplomacy and politics guided by the Foreign and Colonial Office. Thus a nation which failed to analyse economic trade data between nations, and especially its own trading data, would be susceptible to self inflicted harm. A nation, whether contemplating instituting a blockade or not, needed to know which countries controlled its own supply of strategic goods and commodities. Failure to understand would leave it vulnerable and needing to find alternative sources: this could mean a loss of bargaining power and new suppliers taking their opportunity to increase prices. Similarly, a nation should know a potential enemies' vulnerability and dependence on strategic commodities so that these facts could be exploited. Examples are Germany's desperate need for fertiliser to help with its home food production and Scandinavian ship owners' preference for British steam coal. Consett's and Guichard's books suggest the data was largely there and could have been consulted and exploited much sooner to make the blockade more effective: or was any tardiness experienced a sign of the Foreign Office's more acute appreciation of the political issues? There was surely never better proof of the need for a nation to have a grip on its economic data on its imports and exports around the world, to enable a quick and planned response to the unexpected?<sup>19</sup> There is little mention in the press at the time of the contribution made by Whitehall departments. It was in these departments that the political and diplomatic decisions were taken for the control of export or import licences, the keeping of black lists, mail interception, the approval for funds transfers and all matters connected with Trading with the Enemy legislation. Surely, this was the brunt of the blockade effort? Instead

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 13 for sources of economic data.

the public was allowed to perceive the success fell to the ships and men of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, being hailed as a singular naval success and a boost to national morale. By April 1917 after the entry of the USA into the war the need for the Squadron was clearly reduced and the Allies were no able to conduct a 'paper' blockade from their Whitehall desks.<sup>20</sup>

**The Royal Navy's Main Function In The Blockade.**

Whilst Britain's warships exercised their right to 'stop and visit' merchant ships worldwide, a vital function of the Navy was to control the Channel and Northern routes to mainland Europe. The Northern Patrol was covered by the Tenth Cruiser Squadron's patrols which often had the Third Cruiser squadron in close proximity. However, it was the Grand Fleet in the background at Scapa Flow Anchorage which allowed the Squadron's round the clock activities to continue. Although its designated identifier was not disclosed in public, the Squadron became the Navy's proud face of the blockade effort. The Squadron's performance also served as some level of compensation for the perceived poor performance by the Royal Navy in the North Sea engagements such as Jutland.

However, Professor Ferguson's claim:

..... the naval blockade proved a much less lethal weapon than British navalists had assumed. No attempt was made at first to halt the flow of goods to neutrals which might then find their way to Germany.<sup>21</sup>

is reasonably justified when thinking of all three of the blockade components and complements Marder's view that the rationing agreements and the like were now working well.

Ferguson effectively confirmed the opinions of Consett and Guichard described earlier whereby there were 'leakages' in the blockade effort. The Tenth Cruiser Squadron's function was primarily a constabulary role, serving to discourage blockade runners... Its presence to intercept blockade runners was intended to encourage neutrals to observe the Allied preference for voluntary inspection in the Down's Anchorage, rather than any attempt at searches on the open ocean. This was a point of singular dispute with the United States of America until it joined the Allies and entered the war.

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<sup>20</sup> Black, N., *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (Woodbridge, 2009) 231

<sup>21</sup> Ferguson, *The Pity of War* 252

**How Successful Was The Tenth Cruiser Squadron?**

The immediate answer must be very successful. Its performance fell into two areas, firstly the number of interceptions achieved and secondly the management of the squadron given the varied background of those forming the crews and the range of vessels converted to armed merchant cruisers.

Fayle records that in 1915 the Squadron intercepted 3,098 vessels. Of these 408 (13.2%) were British or Allied ships; 817 (26%) were fishing craft; 1,130 (36.8) were neutrals which were allowed to pass after boarding or identification at sea. The remaining 743 (24%) or just over two a day were sent to Kirkwall or Lerwick for examination. Of ships considered important for interception only 8 evaded the patrols.<sup>22</sup>

By 1917 there had been a dramatic reduction in activity; in the second quarter the total neutrals passing in or out of the North Sea was 611. The total for the September quarter was 346 and for the final three months of 1917 only 162 neutral vessels passed into or out of the North Sea.<sup>23</sup> Clearly the Squadron patrols were becoming less productive as the Whitehall efforts started to bear improved results for the overall blockade effort.

The total interceptions achieved were 12,979 and this was 95.3% of the possible number. A further 2,039 vessels voluntarily reported to examination ports rather than attempt to evade the blockade.<sup>24</sup> No other performance indicator is recorded, neither the number of ships placed before the Prize Court nor the quantities of contraband by either weight or value can be traced. Anyone venturing out into the open ocean will soon be aware of its vastness and it is something beyond the understanding of those who have never done so. Coupled with the frequent poor visibility and almost constant rough weather then a 100% sighting record was neither achievable nor realistic. Added to this was the fact that the average number of vessels actually on patrol was only twelve, after allowing for refits, coaling and time on passage to and from base. Although the nominal number of ships allocated to the squadron was twenty four, this number was never 'on patrol' at any one time.<sup>25</sup> Other than the number of interceptions there is no tangible criteria of operational success except to acknowledge its presence released operational Navy vessels for other duties in the Northern waters.

The second significant and vital factor was the successful building of 'esprit de corps' both at squadron level and aboard individual ships. Whilst most of the crews had sea

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<sup>22</sup> Fayle, C.E., *Seaborne Trade Vol.,2* 149

<sup>23</sup> Fayle, C.E., *Seaborne Trade Vol.,3* 233

<sup>24</sup> Tupper, R. *Reminiscences* 267

<sup>25</sup> Appendix 14 for further selected patrol statistics.

experience of one sort or another, many had not experienced naval discipline and life aboard a warship. Especially whilst working continuously in such bad weather which few had experienced previously. However, motivating such disparate backgrounds to the task in hand was not unique to the naval commanders. Compared with counterpart commanders in the Army on the Western Front their efforts in the Squadron must have been easier. The Army also relied on many volunteer regiments and conscripts, usually having only limited military training, to serve in physical conditions far worse than the Squadron.<sup>26</sup> It was not until the late 1920s that some understanding as to why workers respond well in very difficult conditions was found.<sup>27</sup> Therein lay the explanation for the good response from the squadron crews. The press always referred to 'our blockading cruisers' and Admiral de Chair in a United States interview referred to the ships as 'specially adapted' for blockade duty.<sup>28</sup> Such encouraging references created a sense of value to an otherwise mundane war duty. Nevertheless, the bringing together of armed merchant cruisers manned by many different seafarers was clearly a successful combination of expediency and improvisation. It was the culmination of decades of discussion and deliberations over the need to use armed merchant cruisers and the need to establish naval reserves. Expediency is seldom the equal of a perfect solution and many earlier misgivings came to be justified.

### **What Were The Lessons For The Royal Navy And The Reserves Engaged?**

An initial mistake by the Naval planners was to underestimate the number of interceptions required of the patrols to the north and west. The eight Edgar class cruisers were not only inadequate for the areas but too few for an effective patrol. The defence of the Shetlands, included in de Chair's initial brief, was beyond his available resources and detracted from the patrol effort. .

Admiral Tupper considered there was a need for a better understanding of the Merchant Service and its function as a commercial industry, by the Royal Navy. In his final pages he records some of the suggested ideas to that end.<sup>29</sup> Had there been better knowledge, many difficulties for the Navy and the Squadron may not have arisen.

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<sup>26</sup> Winter, J.M., *The Experience of World War 1* (London, 1988) 2000 Edition.

<sup>27</sup> Schein, E.H., *Organizational Psychology*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1970) 31-35

The Hawthorne studies in the American Western Electric Company revealed, amongst other things, that workers responded well even when physical working conditions were deliberately worsened to measure their effect. The reason proved to be that 'Cinderella' workers felt important because they were 'on show' and being studied for the first time.

<sup>28</sup> BL. De Chair, D.R., *How the British Blockade Works: An Interview with Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair*. (London, 1916) (pamphlet)

<sup>29</sup> Tupper, R. *Reminiscences* 277-281

For the Navy, a better understanding that merchant ships are often built for a specific trade or cargoes between two particular ports or countries. This could have prevented the selection of the short sea vessels, *Calyx* and *Eskimo*, but it had been expedient to requisition them since the number of vessels immediately available was limited.<sup>30</sup> The advantages of the larger vessels were speed and bunker capacity. Even here, the larger passenger ships taken up from Royal Mail were relatively shallow draught ships to allow a passage up the River Plate to Buenos Aires. Designed for 'blue water steaming' there were not entirely suited for long service in the North Atlantic and Norwegian Sea in winter. However, as merchant ships have a lower level of watertight subdivision compared to warships, concern for their vulnerability in the event of attack from torpedoes or mines, was well founded as the losses proved.<sup>31</sup> The Navy needs to invest in the resources needed for a full understanding of the practical aspects of the world of merchant shipping. This is very important if it perceives a particular vessel may be taken up at some future date. Trades change and ships are bought and sold as profit and demand dictate to the owner. If a particular vessel is vital to the Navy then it must be prepared to pay the appropriate retention fees.

Turning now to the squadron personnel, the Navy's failure to appreciate the disparity of Merchant Service ratings' pay and conditions and the differences between companies and port areas was explained in the previous chapter. As the war progressed Merchant Service pay, due to war bonuses, outstripped the pay for ratings who had earlier signed T124 conditions; they were mainly engine room and catering departments. When replacements were needed they became harder to recruit due to this anomaly.

One further deterrent to recruiting replacement crews and that was the tighter approach to discipline in the Navy. A long standing disciplinary problem on merchant ships was the 'failure to join' or 'joining in a state of intoxication' at the time of a ship's sailing.<sup>32</sup> Whilst this offence cannot be condoned the usual view was that it represented an inconvenience to be tolerated by owners, shipmasters and the more responsible sober members of crew. In peace time it was unlikely for an owner to suffer financial loss from delay due to the efforts of the master and remaining crew. However, in wartime the 'failure to join', for whatever reason, could mean convoys could be delayed. To their credit, the Unions made real efforts to discourage the behaviour. However, the

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<sup>30</sup> The most common design of merchant ship available was the three island tramp built solely for cargo, with a typical low speed of 10 knots, too slow for blockade pursuits.

<sup>31</sup> See Appendix 15 for losses of Ships and Men.

<sup>32</sup> Hopkins, "National Service" of British Merchant Seamen 22-25

Navy treated the offence as leave breaking and started to enforce the Naval Discipline Act in ships chartered or requisitioned by the Admiralty.<sup>33</sup> The offences particularly affected transports taking men and supplies to battlegrounds. An Admiralty attempt to create an emergency pool known as the 'Sunhill' scheme proved to be a failure. So the Navy was never clear of the problem when seafarers declined the prospect of lower pay and harder discipline of armed merchant cruisers in preference to a merchant ship in trade.<sup>34</sup> In the end, like ship-owners, the Navy found it had to pay the going 'port rates'.

Grenfell records an evening in May 1915 aboard *Cedric* whilst in Liverpool. Firemen were breaking out (deserting) 'right and left' yet Admiral Stileman refused allocating R.N.R. Stokers from the depot. Search parties were mustered and an urgent signal from Admiralty required 50 firemen for *Teutonic* to sail later that evening. A volunteer from *Cedric* and three of her men under stoppage of leave were sent to make up numbers scoured in the port.<sup>35</sup> The incident shows the problems that could emerge from poor discipline. Liverpool firemen were always renowned for their belligerent attitudes and resented discipline.

Firemen were a race apart with sole possessions of a pack of cards and a sweat rag they often had only the clothes they stood up in. They were quite impervious to cold or heat and scared of nobody. Invariably they were brought back by the local gendarmes, battered and bruised but in no way mollified. Come the night they would set off for a return bout.<sup>36</sup>

There were three occasions when firemen reverted to their stereotype. First was aboard *Changuinola* whilst in Glasgow on 10 February 1916, shortly before Tupper took command of the squadron in March. The complaint was about food and Cdr. Brocklebank read the Naval Discipline Act after which they resumed work.<sup>37</sup> The next was aboard *Teutonic* in Liverpool on 27 March 1916 when the complaint was that food was not up to the usual White Star standard and their pay was below port rates.<sup>38</sup> Finally, aboard *Alsatian* in Liverpool in October 1916 when the complaint was about pay. On both these latter occasions the men were returned to work at gun point and even ammunition was issued aboard *Alsatian*.<sup>39</sup> Such was the resentment aboard *Alsatian* that Captain Smith, Admiral Tupper's Flag Captain, records:

Although there was no further trouble, no fireman or trimmer would ever sing at any of

<sup>33</sup> Hopkins, "National Service" of British Merchant Seamen 120-122

<sup>34</sup> Hopkins, "National Service" of British Merchant Seamen 24 and 42

<sup>35</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell R.N. H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 67

<sup>36</sup> Hope, R., *Poor Jack: The perilous history of the merchant seaman* (London,2001) 305

<sup>37</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron Northern Patrol* 8

<sup>38</sup> TNA ADM 137/298 Benson to SNO Liverpool 170-3

<sup>39</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 265-67

our concerts. They flatly declared that they would not sing for a captain who called on Marines with rifles and bayonets whenever there happened to be a bit of trouble about.<sup>40</sup>

There can be little doubt word of these occurrences reached the waterfronts of the Clyde and Mersey, serving to discourage merchant seamen to engage on armed merchant cruisers. In the minds of the 'merchant jacks', a return to work at gunpoint brought echoes of the Press Gangs and the realisation that such legislation was still on the Statute Books. In fairness to Tupper, he did agree the allowance of 1s 3d daily feeding allowance needed to be increased to 1s 6d and he promised to take the matter up. Subsequently, when making his squadron inspections, Tupper was at pains to ensure the firemen's quarters were clean and comfortable.

In recording the *Teutonic* incident, Benson had referred to the firemen as 'almost without exception of the lowest scale of humanity found in Great Britain.' A curious attitude for a naval officer trained to see the ordinary rating as 'the greatest single factor.' This contrasted with the efforts of Grenfell aboard *Cedric* to create some self respect amongst her firemen. A fireman's working conditions and accommodation were very poor and despite the view of her Chief Engineer, Grenfell moved them into unused 3<sup>rd</sup> Class passenger cabins. He noted:

When I mooted the idea to him some while ago he was all for insisting that you couldn't do anything with a Liverpool fireman & that it wasn't worthwhile to try that they were scum & deserved nothing.<sup>41</sup>

Just three days later Grenfell was rewarded in his diary note:

Firemen improving, the truth of 'put a man in a sty & he will be a pig.'  
Firemen painting out their cabins. The poor devils are quite thoroughly neglected in their own service & live a life of brutality & piggery that is horrid to think of.<sup>42</sup>

At least Grenfell had not forgotten that it was a naval officer's duty to get the best from his men.

It is also regrettable that there appears to have been an endemic aversion to R.N.R. personnel on behalf of some R.N. elements. It was revealed by all three diarists. Brocklebank was an officer in command and showed a patronising attitude to R.N.R. officers.<sup>43</sup> Grenfell was an experienced, senior naval officer with misgivings about their naval experience and ability, which were later replaced by their willingness to learn and seek his guidance. Scrimgeour, a midshipman with a privileged education

<sup>40</sup> Smith, H.H., *An Admiral Never Forgets* 284-5

<sup>41</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell R.N. H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 75

<sup>42</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell R.N. H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 85

<sup>43</sup> See Page 228

and background, revealed a snobbish attitude to his fellow midshipman drawn from the merchant service. The kindest thing in his case is to attribute his attitude to a youthful, over confident self assurance.

Scrimgeour had some opinions about the R.N.R. at all levels starting with the ratings:

At two [14.00] the divisions went to rifle drill followed by squad and company drill. I shouted myself hoarse trying to instil into the wooden heads of the R.N.R. seamen from Newfoundland, etc., the elementary motions of the rifle, turning and marching.<sup>44</sup>

Writing to his mother he described his R.N.R. contemporaries aboard *Alsatian* in December 1914, he said:

We have got several R.N. Reserve midshipmen (apprentices in various liners in peace time) on board, and they are rather uncouth in their manners and hardly what the world calls gentlemen, although I dare say most of them are all right really. However, they rub most of our active service people up the wrong way, and I shall have quite a nasty time preserving the peace in the gun-room, as I am still senior G.R. officer, there being no Sub-Lieutenants on board, worse luck.<sup>45</sup>

Contrast this attitude with the opinion, included here for comparison, from one of the ratings he criticises. Newfoundland reservist, Stephen Dicker's letter home from *Clan MacNaughton*, is very revealing:

I cannot say the treatment is good in this ship – it is far from it.... I would like to be treated as a Man ought to and not like a dumb animal.... we Newfoundlanders are not used to a bugle and the consequence is, if we are a little adrift, we are run in for it and get so many days punishment.... Some Newfoundlanders are always adrift and doing punishment ... They don't be adrift intentionally I'm sure, but there is no excuse in the Navy ... [For] a man who has volunteered to fight for his King and Country and then to receive punishment in this way – I say it is far from right. I would fight for my King and Country to the bitter end, but I would not like to be treated as I have seen some treated since I came aboard here.<sup>46</sup>

An obsession with drill book procedures was unlikely to produce the best from reservists and particularly Commonwealth volunteers. They had been called up for specific duties, namely as boats' crews, unique skills which were indispensable in both World War One and later in World War Two.

Moving up the R.N.R. ranks Scrimgeour shows a more balanced but equally revealing view of the R.N.R. and their R.N. counterparts, especially retained ship masters:

Had a long chat with old Outram. He is a dear old chap, and talks in a gruff voice; very interesting some of his anecdotes are. It must be rather unpleasant for him, as the Commodore of the Allan Line, now being a Commander, R.N.R. and junior to our

<sup>44</sup> Scrimgeour, *Small Scribbling Diary 1914-1916* 183

<sup>45</sup> Scrimgeour, *Small Scribbling Diary 1914-1916* 113-15

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Ransom, B, 'A Nursery of Fighting Seamen? The Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, 1901-1920' 250-251

skipper and the Rear-Admiral, and treated as practically a nobody. He is a fine old seaman.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, the merchant ship watch keeping officers had been retained for their merchant ship knowledge needed for interceptions and boarding. Their R.N.R. commissions were temporary and did not guarantee prior naval training. Grenfell's diary confirms how serious the position was:

De Chair in a private letter to the Captain (Benson aboard *Cedric*) which he showed me, said that it had come to his ears that some of the Captains of ships of the 10<sup>th</sup> C.S. were not treating their R.N.R. Officers very well – that the latter were saying they had joined for the period of the war & were glad they had done so, but that they would be damned if they would be bullied by Naval Officers. Who? Captain thinks Booty in the *Otway*. At any rate it is most unfortunate.<sup>48</sup>

The R.N.R. crew aboard *Arlanza* wrote direct to de Chair complaining they were denied smoking between decks and portholes (scuttles) never allowed to be opened. De Chair was not pleased and called for Captain Norris to see how things were done aboard *Alsatian*.<sup>49</sup>

A better realisation that the world of shipping is a competitive business at all levels and a proper understanding of the difference between permanent R.N.R. Officers and those 'labelled' with temporary commissions to suit the Navy's expediency would have avoided problems.

The return of peace brought a severe reduction in the Navy's size and for ship-owners a return to business followed all too soon by a shipping slump. Worthy ideals of cooperation were soon forgotten and not pursued and Admiral Tupper's hopes were not to be.<sup>50</sup> After all, everyone felt the world had left behind the war to end all wars! Nevertheless, the Reserves must have proved their worth. The interwar years saw the reforming and expansion of the R.N.V.R., whilst the R.N.R. retained support and encouragement from the major shipping companies.

### **Westminster Appreciation for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron**

Recognition of the Squadron's challenges and achievements came at Government and National level when the House of Lords proposed and debated 'A Vote of Thanks to the Forces in March 1917.

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<sup>47</sup> Scrimgeour, *Small Scribbling Diary 1914-1916* 146

<sup>48</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell R.N. H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 12

<sup>49</sup> IWM P43 Diary Cdr F.H.Grenfell R.N. H.M.S. *Cedric* Part 2. 199

<sup>50</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 277

There is another aspect of the work of the Navy upon which I must speak for one moment, and that is the story of the Blockade. We hear the Blockade a good deal criticised and even attacked in the newspapers. I invite your Lordships to think for a moment of what a Blockade means to those who take part in it. Patrolling the ocean gateway 600 miles in width from Scotland to Iceland and Greenland, these vessels are exposed to incessant gales and to the perils of submarines.

Day and night it is their duty to stop and to board the ships that may be taking supplies to the enemy. The efficiency of the service may be gathered from the fact that, early in 1915, 256 out of 1,400 ships managed to slip through the patrol; at the end of 1916 only 60 out of 3,000 passed without being intercepted. The large majority of the men who are engaged in this work were before the war in the Mercantile Marine.

For a difficult task well done, this was singular praise, hard won and well deserved.

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## Rewards

Admiral Jellicoe was conscious of the hardships for the Squadron from the outset and early in 1915 he encouraged Admiral de Chair to make recommendations for the most deserving to be awarded decorations.<sup>1</sup> Jellicoe particularly wanted officers and ratings serving as Mercantile Marine personnel to be fairly rewarded. A disappointing initial response was a handwritten memo; the writer claimed whilst the Squadron suffered hardship, there was no record of it having been at risk from mines or submarines. Jellicoe required de Chair to resubmit the recommendations with a fuller account of the Squadron's activities showing the losses so far including *Hawke*. This was done on the 5 May 1915, by which time the *Bayano* had been torpedoed on 11 March 1915. After some protracted correspondence, a modified list was approved and the awards appeared in *The London Gazette* for 6 August 1915 to be effective the next day.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent recommendations for the Squadron awards were accepted less grudgingly and a 'scale' of awards was published for the guidance of commanding officers making recommendations.

## Remembrance

At this point it is appropriate to review the total losses of the Squadron. When the Squadron was de-commissioned it had lost nine armed merchant cruisers; two through stress of weather and seven from enemy action.<sup>3</sup> In addition, *Oceanic* had been lost through grounding and to this must be added the loss of the Edgar class cruiser, *Hawke*, having been torpedoed before the Squadron relied on the armed merchant cruisers. The final total loss of officers and men was 1,690 including 525 from H.M.S. *Hawke*.

Professor Jay Winter in his book *Remembering War* defines the first quarter of the twentieth century as 'The First Generation of Memory', reflecting the need to remember those who died in the Great War.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, memorials for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron range from geographically dispersed to non-existent and such as exist are detailed in Appendix 16.

Research reveals Mercantile Ratings serving in the Squadron who lost their lives are recorded on an equal basis as RN, RNR, RNVR ratings on the port Naval War Memorials. For example H.M.S. *Alcantara* manned by Plymouth Division, was sunk in the action against the *Greif*. The *Alcantara* lost 69 ratings, of which 33 were Mercantile Ratings on T124 agreements. Of these 33 Mercantile Ratings there are 25 names recorded on the Plymouth War Memorial and the 8 unrecorded will have graves other than the sea.

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<sup>1</sup> ADM 137/185 C-in-C Grand Fleet to Secretary, Admiralty 452 & subsequent papers

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 16 Decorations and Awards.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 15.

<sup>4</sup> Winter, J.M., *Remembering War* (London,2006) 20

No Veterans Association ever existed for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. Seafarers of the Mercantile Marine which included both permanent and temporary RNR Officers as well as all T124 personnel were not given to such associations. Many of these personnel would sail again in peacetime for the same owners and possibly on the same ships. They were unlikely to meet up with ships taken up from other owners. Merchant seamen often refer to each other as Board of Trade Acquaintances and the Squadron experience would be seen as just another 'hail and farewell' in a lifelong series. The RN personnel and the Fleet Reservists recalled from retirement would welcome return to retirement and probably felt more at home with their former RN shipmates. Appendix 16 gives details of Veterans Associations which arose much later.

### **Retrospection**

Finally, a retrospective account of four diarists and two of the ships involved after Squadron service.

**Midshipman Alexander Scrimgeour R.N.** wrote to his mother on 23 July 1915 from *H.M.S. Invincible*, a battle cruiser of 17,250 tons. He had escaped from the tedium of blockade and wearying four or five weeks at sea aboard the 'tin castle' *Alsatian*. To serve aboard a battle cruiser and have the excitement of action against the enemy had been his ambition. After action in the Heligoland Bight, the Falklands Isles and the Dardenelles, *Invincible* was now the flagship of the Third Division of the Battle Cruiser Squadron stationed in the North Sea. Again aboard a flagship and being for the third time, the senior midshipman in his ship, together with an action station in the 12 inch twin turret, Scrimgeour must have felt his career had taken a turn for the better.<sup>5</sup> *Invincible* next saw action at the Battle of Jutland. After inflicting hits on the German *Lützow* and *Derfflinger*, an incoming shell penetrated one of *Invincible's* midships turrets, bursting inside and relay igniting the magazine. The explosion cut the ship in half, the bow and stern sections collapsed inwards and downwards. Of the six survivors of *Invincible's* company of 1,032, Alexander Scrimgeour was not one of them.<sup>6</sup>

Post war **Leading Signalman Phillip Needell R.N.V.R.**, born in Islington in 1886, returned home and resumed his employment as a clerk in Barclays Bank. His diary had been intended for his wife but daily entries were often no more than descriptions of sunrise and sunset. No Doubtless for reference when his artistic interests continued in peace time. He became an

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<sup>5</sup> Scrimgeour, A., *Scrimgeour's Small Scribbling Diary 1914-1916* (London, 2008) 189-191  
This diary gives a rare insight to 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron life. Its value lies in the perceptions of a young officer in his late teenage years clearly showing promise and maturity. He had a privileged upbringing and gives a wonderful insight into the social life and naval training of a midshipman at sea in those days

<sup>6</sup> Gordon *The Rules of the Game* 450

active member of the respected Wapping Group of Artists, which still remains active in 2011.<sup>7</sup>

On being recalled to the Navy in 1914, **Commander Francis Henry Grenfell R.N.**, soon found himself to be second in command of *H.M.S. Cedric*, the largest armed merchant cruiser in the squadron. Like many R.N. officers he yearned for more direct contact with the enemy than blockade patrols. He volunteered for service in Q ships commanded *H.M.Q-Ship Penshurst* in which he became one of the most successful Q ship captains. In addition to accounting for two enemy submarines *Penshurst* was engaged in action against several others. Grenfell was decorated with the D.S.O. and Bar and promoted to captain on the retired list. Post war he returned to the Board of Education taking charge of the physical training section until he retired 16 years later. He was a keen mountaineer and a lover of music and art. When he retired at age sixty he trained as a sculptor at the London Polytechnic and within 18 months his work was accepted for the Royal Academy. His ‘*Cedric*’ diaries frequently recorded the bad weather on patrol – ‘it is difficult to know when one gale ceases and the next one starts’ he wrote. He frequently recorded the changing sky colouring at dawn and sunrise in great detail, perhaps a clue to the more artistic side of his nature. He never married and died at the age of 71 in 1946.<sup>8</sup>

**Captain H.C.R. Brocklebank C.B.E. R.N.** commanded *H.M.S. Changuinola* from December 1914 to the end of the war. *Changuinola* was one of the smaller armed merchant cruisers and one of the hardest worked in the squadron. Pre-war Brocklebank had been passed over for promotion from commander to captain but a fitting reward of promotion to Acting Captain came in 1916 and the rank was confirmed on his retirement from the Navy. His last appointment was as Naval Attaché at the Hague 1918-1919. In retirement he spent many happy hours in local public service, country pursuits and sailing. His main preoccupation was with Freemasonry.<sup>9</sup> His depression on reading the revelations in Captain Consett’s book on the blockade has already been mentioned. Like other diarists he commented on the weather but not just the bad weather; he took care to note the brilliant sunshine and clear air in northern waters on good days. One entry in particular suggests Squadron personnel could have good memories as well as bad. On 8 November 1915 Brocklebank wrote:

Blowing very fresh with a lively sea: passed about five miles off the Faroes, sheer cliffs rising hundreds of feet, snow clad with a low sun casting rainbows through the mist and driving rain leaving deep shadows in the valleys, a sight one is thankful to have seen.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> RNM Ref.1977/233 Papers of Leading Signalman Phillip Needell

<sup>8</sup> *The Times*, May 22, 1946 pg 7

<sup>9</sup> Brocklebank, *Tenth Cruiser Squadron* ii-iii

<sup>10</sup> IWM PP/MCR/53 Capt H.C.R. Brocklebank RN *H.M.S. Changuinola*

Captain Brocklebank died on 30 January 1947 aged 84.

*H.M.S. Alsatian*, the Squadron Flagship, emerged from war service to be renamed *R.M.S. Empress of France* and find herself under new owners, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company.<sup>11</sup> After refitting and refurbishment she continued on the North Atlantic passenger service between England and Canada until 1934 when she was scrapped.

*H.M.S. Almanzora* had been taken up as an armed merchant cruiser on leaving the builders and without any finish to her public rooms. It was not until 1920 with her passenger accommodation completed that she was able to sail on her maiden voyage from Southampton to South America. She remained on that service until 1939 when Royal Mail Lines had planned to take her out of service. *Almanzora* was frequently the subject of the posters painted by the marine artist Kenneth Shoesmith for the company's publicity. World War II saw *Almanzora* at war again, this time serving as a troopship until 1945. She remained on charter as a Government Emigrant ship until 1948 when she was scrapped.

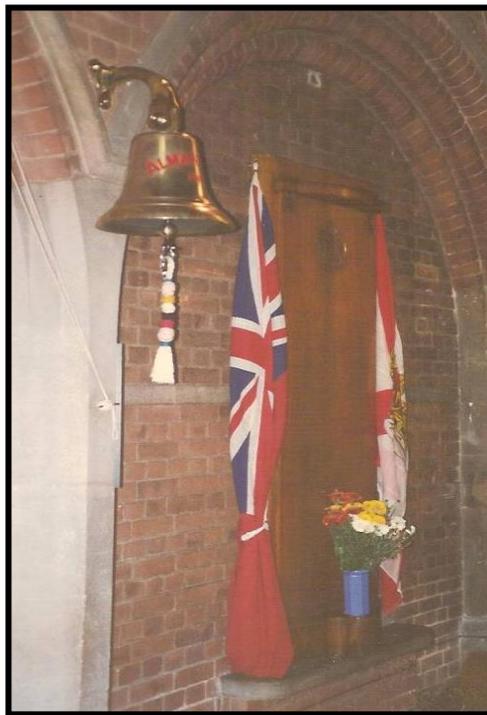


Fig. 58 The *Almanzora's* Bell

Because of her war service in both World Wars, Royal Mail Lines decided to incorporate *Almanzora's* bell into the company's two War Memorials: today, these together with the bell, are preserved in St. George's Centre, Chatham. The Centre is adjacent to the entrance at the Medway Campus of the University of Greenwich. During World War I, the Navy Lists show

<sup>11</sup> Scarth A.J., *The Ship Model Collection, Merseyside Maritime Museum* (Liverpool, 1995) 63

*Almanzora* was a ‘Chatham manned’ ship: it seems fitting that her bell, possibly the last physical item remaining from the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron, should have come to rest in the former Chatham Naval Barracks’ church.

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**1914**

**2 August**

Rear Admiral de Chair hoisted his flag aboard *Crescent* and took command of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron, ordered to Scapa Flow.

**2 August**

Orders given to 'Mobilise Naval Reserves'.

**4 August**

Ultimatum to Germany expired at midnight, when hostilities commenced.

**6 August**

United States proposed belligerent governments adopt that Declaration of London. Britain declined to agree.

**8 August**

All ships of Tenth Cruiser Squadron on station, comprising *Edgar*, *Hawke*, *Endymion*, *Royal Arthur*, *Crescent*, *Grafton*, *Gibraltar* and *Theseus*.

**18 Aug.**

Four armed merchant cruisers, *Alsatian*, *Mantua*, *Oceanic* and *Teutonic* to join and assist the Squadron.

**20 August**

Britain issued an Order in Council to substitute its own list of absolute and conditional contraband.

**28 August**

The Battle of Heligoland Bight

**8 September**

*Oceanic* aground Foula Island. Declared a total loss.

**22 September**

Cruisers *Aboukir*, *Hogue* and *Cressy* torpedoed by U-boat within one hour, whilst off the Dutch coast.

**15 October**

*Hawke* torpedoed by U-9.

**20 October**

British steamship *Glitra*, became the first merchantman sunk by a submarine, U-17, off the Norwegian coast. Carried out in accordance with international law.

**21 October**

First Meeting of the Contraband Committee.

**2 November**

North Sea declared a military area.

**11 November**

Very severe gales battered the *Edgar* class cruisers causing serious damage.

**18 November**

Northern Patrol to be continued with 24 armed liners, making up the restructured Tenth Cruiser Squadron under Rear Admiral de Chair.

**20 November**

Admiralty orders the *Edgar* class cruisers to be paid off.

**28 December**

United States of America: Note protesting against British interference with American commerce.

**1915**

**13 January**

*Viknor* (ex *Viking*) lost off Irish Coast, possibly mined.

**24 January**

The Battle of Dogger Bank

**3 February**

*Clan MacNaughton* believed to have foundered in N. Atlantic.

**4 February**

Germany declared a war zone round the British Isles in which ships would be sunk without warning. All formalities of 'visit and search' would be ignored, neutrals warned their shipping was at equal risk.

**10 February**

United States of America: protest against German declaration of a war zone round Great Britain.

**11 March**

*Bayano* sunk by Submarine off Corsewall Pt., Galloway.

**7 May**

*Lusitania* sunk by U-Boat.

**13 May**

Export of coal to all foreign countries prohibited.

**23 July**

British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reviews question of establishing a blockade under modern conditions.

**8 August**

*India* sunk by Submarine off Norwegian Coast.

**20 August**

Cotton declared contraband.

**During August**

Allied conference on economic warfare; first rationing list drafted.

**18 September**

German submarines recalled from the west coast of Great Britain; followed by the recall of all U-boats in home waters.

**During September**

Postal parcels inspection instituted.

**5 November**

United States of America: Note of protest as to rights of belligerents.

**1916****January**

Parliament passed the first conscription laws (compulsory enrolment) ever passed in Britain. At first only single men and childless widowers aged 18 to 41 were called up. By 1918 compulsory service had been extended to include all men aged 18 to 51. More than 2.3 million conscripts were enlisted before the end of the war in November, 1918. (Conscription did not apply to Ireland)

**23 February**

Ministry of Blockade created.

**29 February**

First instalment of the statutory black list published.

**29 February**

Vice Admiral Sir Reginald Tupper relieved Rear Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair in command 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron. De Chair promoted to Vice Admiral and sent to assist Lord Robert Cecil the Minister of Blockade in London.

**29 February**

*Alcantara* sunk in action against the *Grief* in Lat.61° 48'N. Long. 1°40'E.

**February-March**

Forcible rationing: Ministry of Blockade issue two orders that govern the blockade of Germany during 1916.

**13 March**

New orders for German submarine warfare issued.

**16 March**

Letters of Assurance (“navicerting”) system instituted.

**14 April**

British reply to American Note of 5<sup>th</sup> November 1915 on rights of belligerents.

**16 May**

Agreement with Iceland concluded: all exports deflected from Germany.

**31 May**

Battle of Jutland

**During June**

Admiral Sir John Jellicoe promoted to First Sea Lord and Captain David Beatty took over as Commander-in- Chief of the Grand Fleet.

**28 July**

United States of America: Note of protest at inclusion of American firms on the British black list.

**31 August**

German Government in council reconsider submarine warfare.

**6 October**

German order to restart submarine warfare in home waters.

**12 December**

Peace overture by the Central Powers.

**18 December**

American invitation to a general negotiation for peace.

**23 December**

Coal exports to Norway stopped.

**1917**

**7 January**

German Government decide to begin unrestricted submarine warfare on 1<sup>st</sup> February.

**1 February**

German unrestricted submarine warfare began.

**17 February**

Embargo on coal for Norway raised.

**6 April**

United States of America declared war on Germany.

**During April**

American War Trade Committee appointed.

**25 May**

*Hilary* sunk by submarine in Atlantic.

**14 June**

*Avenger* torpedoed by U-69 in N.Atlantic on passage to Scapa Flow.

**23 July**

*Otway* sunk by submarine in N.Atlantic.

**28 July**

*Almanzora*, *Andes*, *Arlanza*, *Armada Castle*, *Columbella*, *Kildonan Castle*, *Victorian* and *Virginian* detached from Squadron for duty as convoy escorts in North Atlantic.

**9 October**

*Oropesa* (Re-named *Champagne*) sunk by submarine in Atlantic.

**29 November**

Admiralty approve abolition of Tenth Cruiser Squadron.

**14 December**

*Alsatian* and *Orvieto* now part of the Second Cruiser Squadron which included HM Ships *Minotaur*, *Shannon*, *Amsterdam* and *Duke of Cornwall*. The new squadron had the support of twelve trawlers. All continued to make fake, coded radio messages to simulate genuine signal traffic from former Tenth Cruiser Squadron patrols lines.

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**Extracts from the Naval Staff Monograph, Trade Division, and May 1920.  
*The Economic Blockade 1914-1919***

The Downs was divided into two 'patrols' – the North Patrol dealing with southbound (west going traffic), and the South Patrol dealing with north-bound (east going traffic). In each patrol there was a guard ship (armed merchant steamer) and two tugs on duty with a torpedo boat in support. The guard ship on the North Patrol was some 3 miles from the Navy Office in Ramsgate, the guard ship on the South Patrol about 6 miles.

**Verification of the Ship's Manifest.** – Immediately a ship entered the Downs, it was signalled to stop or usually stopped and anchored of its own accord. A boarding officer and witnessing officer went alongside in a tug almost immediately and took preliminary particulars, such as name of the ship, its nationality, the name of the master, whither bound, where from, and a brief summary of the cargo. These particulars were wirelessly by the tug at once to the Navy office, and telephoned by the Boarding Office by direct line to the Trade Division. This constituted the preliminary boarding and took some ten minutes to half an hour. The boarding officer took off the manifest, bills of lading, and a copy of the crew list and passenger list, and sent them to the guard ship which despatched to the Navy Office by motor launch. The ship was placed on the list of ships detained, and the master given a copy of the local Instructions for Detained Ships.

The manifest went ashore and was sent to the Manifest Office to be summarised in a form suitable for the Contraband Committee. This might take from half an hour to six hours, depending on the length of the manifest, the language used, and the pressure of work. It passed to the Post Office to be telegraphed to the Trade Division for the Contraband Committee, who subjected it to skilled analysis.<sup>1</sup> It may appear that too much reliance was placed on the manifest, but the information it supplied was checked by other sources, such as intercepted wireless and cable messages, and by supplementary details which genuine consignees were prepared to give, and in numberless cases ships lay in the Downs or at Kirkwall, not merely for days, but for weeks, and occasionally months, because such information and satisfactory guarantees were not forthcoming.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Page 149 for details of telegraphic transmission speeds

<sup>2</sup> This post war admission of the delays explains the objections by shipowners generally and particularly those of the USA Government.

There always remained the possibility of unmanifested cargo being hidden in the holds, especially under cargo in bulk, but any such action constitutes in every country an infringement of the law, and there can be no doubt that the larger ships and shipping companies were averse from illegitimate courses, when they could make big profits in legitimate trade. Without the connivance of the company, the smuggling that a single officer could do in the holds was comparatively small, for the space was too valuable to permit an unauthorised use of it to be made without discovery. Still there was a possibility of a small quantity of unmanifested cargo passing in the holds, and the only safeguard against such an occurrence seems to be a careful consular supervision of the loading and a guarantee of lading on similar lines to the guarantees and letters of assurance afterwards given for some items of the cargo.

**Search of Ship.** - Supposing the manifest to be correct and in strict accordance with the contents of the hold, there still remain numerous spaces, such as bunkers, tanks, store rooms, the peaks, and double bottoms where unmanifested goods might be hidden. An indication of this may be obtained theoretically by comparing the weight of cargo according to the manifest with the weight calculated from the draught and deadweight scale. This was regularly carried out at Port Said, and if the discrepancy was more than 50 tons, full details were endorsed on the manifest, and the Admiralty were informed; but in the Downs, as it was often difficult to get the exact draught on account of the swell, the value of the method was somewhat discounted, and more reliance was placed on the work of the 'ship search' party.

Tanks were tested by sounding. The capacity of any particular tank could also be tested by running a definite quantity of water (if empty), or by running a definite quantity out (if full), and comparing the time actually required to effect an alteration in depth with the time estimated from the dimensions of the registered plan. It must be remembered, however, that any alteration in the construction of tanks, and their use to any large extent for the carriage of oil or contraband, would involve the connivance of a number of persons and it is doubtful if it could continue for any length of time without discovery.

**The Examination and Search of a Ship.** – As soon as possible after the boarding officer had left, or sometimes when he was still on board, drifters began to come alongside with the examining and search party in charge of an examining officer. In case of a large liner, the work was divided into five sections, though the personnel were not rigidly confined to the same sphere of work.

*Section A.* -- Naval control officer in charge with intelligence officer and two petty officer orderlies.

*Section B.* – Examining section for examination of officers, passengers, and crew:-

Officer interpreters (lieutenants, R.N.V.R.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Interpreters (civilian or seamen)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Detective sergeants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Petty officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Orderlies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>2</u>
								<b><u>10</u></b>

*Section C.*—Cabin section for search of saloons, cabins, cabin luggage, and stewards' rooms:-

Lieutenants, R.N.V.R.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Interpreter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Chief petty officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Petty officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Men	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Lady searcher	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tool carriers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>2</u>
								<b><u>20</u></b>

*Section D.*—Baggage section for search of baggage, and baggage rooms:-

Officer interpreter, lieutenant, R.N.V.R.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Petty officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Men	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Customs officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tool carrier	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>1</u>
Gangway petty officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Gangway orderly	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>1</u>
								<b><u>9</u></b>

*Section E.* – Ship section for search of ship spaces (except those allotted to Sections C. and D.), including tanks, double bottoms, engine and boiler rooms, bunkers, ventilator casings, and storerooms:-

Lieutenant, R.N.R.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Chief petty officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Petty officers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Able seamen	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Chief stoker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Stokers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Tool carrier	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<u>1</u>
								<b><u>12</u></b> <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> AL Naval Staff Monograph, *The Economic Blockade 1914-1919* (Trade Division, May 1920.) 109-110

**Researcher's Comment.** The paragraphs above have been extracted and reproduced to show the work pattern in the Downs. They demonstrate the need for reasonably sheltered water for an efficient search, in contrast to the open oceans patrolled by the Tenth Cruiser Squadron where a full search could not possibly be achieved. A proper search needed a total of 55 personnel. In addition to this staff, the Navy needed to provide the resources of adequate ships, a shore office and boarding tugs and drifters. This would be needed round the clock. It shows the extent of challenges for the Navy in the south in order to complement the large resources committed to the Northern Patrol. Ships sent into Kirkwall and Lerwick would be subject to a similar attention.

**Historical Background.**

The Declaration of Paris, April 18, 1856, confirmed the practice of Anglo-French cruisers during the war of 1856, in that:

a neutral flag covers enemy goods with the exception of contraband of war;  
and that neutral goods, with the exception of contraband of war, are not liable to capture under an enemy's flag.

This declaration had sacrificed Britain's traditional right whereby she was entitled to seize enemy property on board neutral ships: in return, privateering was abolished.<sup>1</sup>

By either default or design the negotiators did not define 'the exception of contraband of war'. It is reasonable to assume their intention was that goods and supplies most directly used in wars of that time, such as arms, military equipment, harness, haulage carts and ammunition. The Hague Convention of 1907, aimed to agree the terms of eight conventions concerning maritime war. These were: I, Blockade; II, Contraband; III, Un-neutral Service; IV, Destruction of Neutral Prizes; V, Transfer to a Neutral Flag; VI, Enemy Character; VII, Convoy; VIII, Resistance to Search. An important point was the creation of an International Prize Court to look after the interests of neutrals in wartime. Although supported by the British representatives, the terms were not supported by a large body of opinion at home. The hope was that the international court should base its findings on the general principles of law and equity.

The Government, at the request of Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, who was unsure of British support for an international court unless its powers were strictly defined, decided to call a conference in London by his note of February 28, 1908. Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, France, Japan, Austria, the United States and the Netherlands were invited to send representatives. Discussions lasted from December 4, 1908 until February 28, 1909 when the delegates signed a declaration of rules. The conference believed that the rules 'corresponded in substance with the generally recognised principles of international law' and the provisions of which 'must be treated as a whole and cannot be separated'.<sup>2</sup> In the event, neither the Declaration of London nor the Convention received a single ratification.

**Blockade, the Essential Requirements.**

In order to establish a blockade, it is necessary to issue a Declaration of Blockade. (Art.8)

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<sup>1</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 8

<sup>2</sup> Guichard, *The Naval Blockade* 9-10

This may be done either by the Government of the blockading power or the Officer in command of the naval forces acting in the name of the Government. (Art.9)

The Declaration must specify:

- (a) The date the blockade begins.
- (b) The geographical limits of the blockaded area and these must not extend beyond the ports and coasts occupied by the enemy (Art.1), neither must the blockaded area bar access to neutral ports or coasts. (Art.18)
- (c) The period within which neutral shipping may come out.

Further, this Declaration must be communicated to all neutral Powers and to the local Authorities at the point or points of blockade; the responsibility for the performance of the latter obligation rests with the Officer commanding the Blockading force. (Art.11)

Provided the blockade is established on the date and over the area specified, it becomes effective and remains so until such time as it becomes no longer 'effective in fact,' is voluntarily raised (Art. 8 and 13), or is annulled by an act in contravention of Article 5, which lays down that 'A blockade must be applied impartially to ships of all nations.'

One exception to these laws is admitted – namely, that should the blockading force be temporarily withdrawn due to stress of weather the blockade is not thereby raised. (Art.4)

A blockade once raised from any cause can only be re-established by a repetition of the above procedure.

Having established an effective blockade, it might be supposed that the duty of the blockading force was limited to the capture of all vessels found within or attempting to gain access to the blockaded area.

Such, however, is not the case.

The attempt to break a blockade is regarded as a hostile act, and it is therefore punishable by the condemnation of both ship and cargo (Art.21); but common justice suggests that no punishable offence can be committed unless a knowledge of the blockade exists, and consequently capture is not allowed, unless the ship has actual or presumptive knowledge of the blockade (Art.14), which can only be assumed if the ship left a neutral port subsequent to the Declaration being conveyed to the power owning the port. Similarly the cargo is innocent of offence if the shipper neither knew nor could have known of the intention to break the blockade. (Art.21)

The action to be taken is simple:

(a) If the ship has actual or presumptive knowledge of the blockade, capture her and leave the question of the cargo to the decision of the Prize Courts.

(b) If she has not this knowledge, give it to her officially by an insertion in her log, being careful to state the date, hour, and geographical position of the ship. (Art. 16), and then allow her to proceed on her way; but naturally not into the blockaded area.

Finally, the extent to which a ship is liable to be punished for her offence is limited, success being held to remit the offence entirely, and consequently an offending ship is only liable to capture so long as she is pursued by a ship of the blockading force; and if pursuit is abandoned, or the blockade raised her capture is no longer legal. (Art.20)<sup>3</sup>

The preceding paragraphs have been extracted directly from Egerton's pocket book intended to help boarding officers involved in blockade tasks. They combine the intended requirements of the Declaration of London, to which the Article numbers refer, and some practical advice on the application of those requirements. The Articles clearly refer to the concept of a close blockade and the differences between such requirements and actions of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron are clear. These differences were used by Germany as grounds for claiming the British 'distant' blockade was illegal. As the blockade progressed, the British chose to 'fine tune' the requirements by the issue of Orders in Council detailing further modifications and additions.<sup>4</sup>

### **Contraband, the Essential Definitions**

A key outcome from the Declaration of London was the setting up two lists: one of 'absolute contraband' and the other deemed 'conditional contraband'. There was also a 'Free List' containing articles that could not be made contraband.<sup>5</sup> Article 22 of the Declaration detailed a comprehensive list of eleven classes of 'absolute contraband', the items being:

1. Arms of all kinds, including arms for sporting purposes, and their distinctive component parts.
2. Projectiles, charges and cartridges of all kinds, and their distinctive component parts.
3. Powder and explosives specially prepared for use in war.
4. Gun mountings, limber boxes, limbers, military wagons, field forges, and their distinctive component parts.
5. Clothing and equipment of a distinctively military character.
6. All kinds of harness of a distinctively military character.

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<sup>3</sup> Egerton, *Contraband of War* 1-4

<sup>4</sup> Egerton, *Contraband of War* 31-34

<sup>5</sup> Consett, M.W.W.P. *The Triumph Of Unarmed Forces (1914-1918)* (London 1923) 12

7. Saddle, draught, and pack animals suitable for use in war.
8. Articles of camp equipment, and their distinctive component parts.
9. Armour plates.
10. Warships, including boats and their distinctive component parts of such a nature that they can only be used on a vessel of war.
11. Implements and apparatus designed exclusively for the manufacture of munitions of war, for the manufacture or repair of arms, or war material for use on land or sea.

Articles for the exclusive use in war could be added to the list by further declarations but Article 23 laid down that a notification made after the outbreak of hostilities need only be addressed to neutral powers.<sup>6</sup>

Article 24 of the Declaration detailed a comprehensive list of eleven classes of 'conditional contraband' which were articles having value for either war or peace. The items were:

1. Foodstuffs.
2. Forage and grain, suitable for feeding animals.
3. Clothing, fabrics for clothing, and boots and shoes, suitable for use in war.
4. Gold and silver in coin or bullion; paper money.
5. Vehicles of all kinds available for use in war, and their component parts.
6. Vessels, craft, and boats of all kinds; floating docks, parts of docks and their component parts.
7. Railway material, both fixed and rolling-stock, and material for telegraphs, wireless telegraphs, and telephones.
8. Balloons and flying machines and their distinctive component parts, together with accessories and articles recognizable as intended for use in connexion with balloons and flying machines.
9. Fuel; lubricants.
10. Powder and explosives not specially prepared for use in war.
11. Barbed wire and implements for fixing and cutting the same.
12. Horseshoes and shoeing materials.
13. Harness and saddlery.
14. Field glasses, telescopes, chronometers, and all kinds of nautical instruments.

Like the 'absolute contraband' list, the 'conditional list' could be varied by declarations as laid down in Article 23.<sup>7</sup> The 'conditional' list is comprehensive but reveals the

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<sup>6</sup> Pyke, H.R. *The Law Of Contraband Of War* (Oxford 1915) 167

Note the expected heavy reliance by belligerents on horses and horse drawn vehicles rather than the developing motor transport.

<sup>7</sup> Pyke *The Law Of Contraband Of War* 170

potential for the new technologies such as aircraft and wireless becoming an important aspect of war. However, industrialisation and the twentieth century had started to absorb many other goods and supplies into the performance of war.<sup>8</sup> The concept of war being conducted on a belligerent's behalf in some remote battlefield or country was changing. The arrival of World War I zeppelin raids and coastal bombardment brought war to Britain's doorstep. The ever increasing use of goods and factories employing more and more civilians to produce an ever increasing range of warlike weapons and materials made the idea of total war a reality. It was this reason the Declaration allowed the 'absolute' and 'conditional' lists to be varied as a belligerent saw fit. This meant that neutral shipping had a problem in keeping up to date with the contraband lists if it was to avoid being stopped by blockading ships and becoming embroiled with the prize courts. It was no small challenge to the squadron's boarding officers to keep themselves up to date with any new changes in the lists.

The Declaration's Article 27 had laid down that articles not 'susceptible of use in war' could not be declared as contraband and Article 28 specified seventeen classes of article on the so called 'Free List'. The items were:

1. Raw cotton, wool, silk, jute, flax, hemp, and other raw materials of textile industries, and yarns of the same.
2. Oil seeds and nuts; copra.
3. Rubber, resins, gums and lacs, hops.
4. Raw hides and horns, bones, and ivory.
5. Natural and artificial manures, including nitrates and phosphates for agricultural purposes.
6. Metallic ores.
7. Earths, clays, lime, chalk, stone, including marble, bricks, slates and tiles.
8. Chinaware and glass.
9. Paper and paper-making materials.
10. Soap, paint, and colours, including articles exclusively used in their manufacture, and varnish.
11. Bleaching powder, soda ash, caustic soda, salt cake, ammonia, and sulphate of copper.
12. Agricultural, mining, textile, and printing machinery.
13. Precious and semi-precious stones, pearls, mother of pearl, and coral.
14. Clocks and watches, other than chronometers.
15. Fashion and fancy goods.
16. Feathers of all kinds, hairs, and bristles.

17. Articles of household furniture and decoration; office furniture and requisites.<sup>9</sup>

Whilst most items on this list clearly belong to peaceful activities, debate developed over items such as machinery, rubber and particularly fertilisers for a Germany which was not self sufficient in this commodity. Cotton was especially controversial since it had use in clothing but more especially its use in gun cotton. The leading neutral cotton supplier was the United States of America, the very nation which Britain sought to upset least of all.

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<sup>9</sup> Pyke *The Law Of Contraband Of War* 174-175

Ship <sup>1</sup>	Built	Line	Gross Reg. Tons	Max Tons Coal	Full Spd	Radius @	Armament
Commanding Officers					Max Pos. Lng Trip	10Kts 12Kts Full Speed	Patrol
<i>Alcantara</i>	1914	RMSP	16,034		17		
Cdr. TE Wardle							
<i>Almanzora</i>	1915	RMSP	16,034		17		
Cpt. WD Church							
<u><i>Alsatian</i></u>	1913	Allan	18,500	3,400	19.5	12,000 11,000 8,000	8 x 6" BL VII 2 x 6 pdr.
Cpt. VEB Phillimore 1. Cpt. V Trewby 2. Cpt. HH Smith 3.					18		A
<u><i>Ambrose</i></u>	1903	Booth	4,590	1,531	15	9,100 8,000 6,200	8 x 4.7" 2 x 6 pdr.
Cdr. CW Bruton 1. Cdr. VL Bowring 2.					14.5		D
<i>Andes</i>	1913	RMSP	15,620		17		
Cdr. CW Trousdale 1. Cpt. GBW Young 2.							
<i>Arlanza</i>	1911	RMSP	15,044		17		
Cpt. DT Norris 1. Cpt. GM Marston 2.							
<i>Armada</i>	1903	U.C.	12,973		14		8x 4.7" QF
<i>Castle</i> R.Ad. OF Gillett 1. Cdr. SAG Hill 2. Cpt. JF Grant-Dalton 3.							
<i>Avenger</i>	1915	U.S.S.	13,415		17		
Cdr. AL Ashby							
<u><i>Bayano</i></u>	1912	E & F	6,100	1,300	15.5	10,000 8,600 6,000	6 x 6" QF 2 x 3 pdr
Cpt. HC Carr					14		C

<sup>1</sup> Sources: Navy Lists, Mercantile Navy Lists, Lloyds Register, Company War Histories and Ships' Logbooks

Note: Vessels underlined formed the original components of the 10th Cruiser Squadron others were replacements for losses or unsuitable vessels.

*Oceanic* is included for completeness.

Armed Merchant Cruisers of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron.

Appendix 4.

Ship	Built	Line	Gross Reg. Tons	Max Tons Coal	Full Spd	Radius	Armament
Commanding Officers					Max Pos. Lng Trip	@ 10Kts 12Kts Full Speed	Patrol
<u><i>Calyx</i></u> (Ex <i>Calypso</i> ) Cdr. TE Wardle	1904	Wilson	2,870	525	14 13.5	5,000 4,000 3,700	8 x 4.7 “ 2 x 3 pdr.  <b>D</b>
<u><i>Caribbean</i></u> (Ex <i>Dunnotar Castle</i> ) Cdr. FH Walter	1889	RMSP	5,820	1,577	16 15	10,800 9,500 6,100	8 x 4.7 “ 2 x 6 pdr.  <b>B</b>
<u><i>Cedric</i></u> Capt. RER Benson	1903	WS	21,000	5,400	17 16	15,000 12,600 8,000	8 x 6” QF 2 x 6 pdr.  <b>B</b>
<u><i>Changuinola</i></u> Cdr HCCR Brocklebank	1912	E & F	6,200	1,100	15.5 14	8,100 6,900 4,800	6 x 6” QF 2 x 3 pdr.  <b>C</b>
<u><i>Clan Mcnaughton</i></u> Cdr. R Jeffreys	1911	Clan	4,980	1,550	13.5 13	9,500 7,400 6,600	8 x 4.7” 2 x 3 pdr.  <b>D</b>
<u><i>Columbella</i></u> 1902 (Ex <i>Columbia</i> ) Cpt. HLP Heard 1. Cpt. A Bromley 2. Cpt. HL Watt-Jones 3. Cpt. GE Corbett 4.	1902	Anchor	8,290	2,500	18 16.5	14,500 11,900 7,000	6 x 6” QF 2 x 3 pdr.  <b>A</b>
<u><i>Digby</i></u> (Re-named <i>Artois</i> )* Cdr. RFHH Mahon 1. Cdr. AG Warren 2. Cpt. de Frégate J de Marguéray 3. Cdr. H Cardale 4.	1913	FW	3,960	1,350	14.5 13	8,500 8,000 4,500	5 x 6” QF 2 x 6 pdr.  <b>C</b>
<u><i>Ebro</i></u> Cdr. EVFR Dugmore 1. Cdr. CAW Wrightson 2.	1914	RMSP	8,489		-----		
<u><i>Eskimo</i></u> Cdr. CW Trousdale	1910	Wilson	3,320	600	17 16	5,500 4,500 2,700	4 x 6” QF 2 x 6 pdr.  <b>D</b>

Armed Merchant Cruisers of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron.

Appendix 4.

Ship	Built	Line	Gross Reg. Tons	Max Tons Coal	Full Spd	Radius @	Armament
Commanding Officers					Max Pos. Lng Trip	10Kts 12Kts Full Speed	Patrol
<i>Gloucestershire</i> 1910 Cdr. NL Stanley 1. Cdr. TA Williams 2.		Bibby	8,124		15		
<i>Hilary</i> 1908 Cdr. RH Bather 1. Cpt. FW Dean 2.		Booth	6,330	1,781	15 14.5	8,800 8,000 6,700	6 x 6" BL 2 x 6 pdr. <b>C</b>
<i>Hildebrand</i> 1911 Cpt. H Edwards 1. Cpt. JF Grant-Dalton 2. Cpt. HC Watson 3.		Booth	6,990	2,197	15.5 14.5	10,900 9,700 8,300	8 x 4.7" 2 x 6 pdr. <b>D</b>
<i>India</i> 1896 Cdr. WGA Kennedy		P & O	7,940		-----		
<i>Kildonan Castle</i> 1899 Cdr. HS Cardale 1. Cpt. JF Warton 2.		U. C.	9,692		16		
<i>Laurentic</i> Cpt. VG Gurner 1. Cpt. RA Norton 2.		WS	14,900	4,200	17.5 16.5	15,600 13,000 8,000	8 x 6" QF 2 x 6 pdr. <b>A</b>
<i>Mantua</i> 1909 Cpt. C Tibbits 1. Cpt. GM Marston 2. Cpt. ABF Dawson 3.		P & O	10,900	2,500	17.5 16	10,000 9,000 5,500	8 x 4.7" 2 x 6 pdr. <b>A</b>
<i>Moldavia</i> 1899 Cdr. AH Smyth		P & O	9,500		17		
<i>Motagua</i> 1912 Cpt. VEB Phillimore 1. Cpt. JA Webster 2. Cpt. LL Dundas 3.		E & F	6,200	1,100	15.5 14	8,100 6,900 4,800	6 x 6" QF 2 x 3 pdr. <b>C</b>
<i>Oceanic</i> 1899 Cpt. W Slayter		WS	17,274		19.5		
<i>Orcoma</i> 1908 Cdr. CW Bruton 1. Cpt. RH Coppinger 2.		PSNC	11,546		14.5		

Armed Merchant Cruisers of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron.

Appendix 4.

Ship	Built	Line	Gross Reg. Tons	Max Tons Coal	Full Spd	Radius @	Armament
Commanding Officers					Max Pos. Lng Trip	10Kts 12Kts Full Speed	Patrol
<u>Oropesa</u> (Re-named <u>Champagne</u> ) ** Cdr. NL Stanley 1. Cpt. de Frégate C Berthelot 2. Cpt. PG Brown 3.	1895	PSNC	5,360	1,665	14.5 13.7 5	10,500 7,600 6,000	6 x 6" QF 2 x 6 pdr.  <b>C</b>
<u>Orotava</u> Cdr. GE Corbett	1899	RMSP	5,980	1,859	15 14	12,000 8,300 6,500	5 x 6" QF 2 x 6 pdr.  <b>B</b>
<u>Orvieto</u> Cpt. HH Smyth 1. Cpt. GP England 2. R Ad. Morgan Singer 3. Cpt. GP England 3. (Flag)	1909	Orient	12,130		----		
<u>Otway</u> Cpt. EL Booty 1. Cpt. PH Colomb 2.	1909	Orient	12,000	3,150	18.5 17.5	17,000 14,300 7,300	8 x 6" QF 2 x 6 pdr.  <b>A</b>
<u>Patia</u> Cpt. GW Vivian 1. Cdr. RFH Hartland-Mahon 2. Cdr. VL Bowring 3. Cdr. WG Howard 4.	1913	E & F	6,100	1,300	15.5 14	10,000 8,600 6,000	6 x 6" QF 2 x 3 pdr.  <b>B</b>
<u>Patuca</u> Cdr. CH France-Hayhurst (Died) 1. Lt.Cdr. JH Nield 2. Cdr. PG Brown 3. Cdr. T Dannreuther 4	1913	E & F	6,100	1,300	15.5 14	10,000 8,600 6,000	6 x 6" QF 2 x 3 pdr  <b>D</b>
<u>Teutonic</u> Cpt. H Chatterton 1. Cpt. GP Ross 2. Cdr. AH Smyth 3. Cpt. RER Benson 4. Cpt. JS Luard 5.	1889	W.S.	10,000	4,500	19 18	15,000 14,000 8,000	8 x 6" QF 2 x 6 pdr  <b>B</b>
<u>Victorian</u> Cpt. HBJ Somerville 1. Cdr. FH Walter 2.	1904	Allan	10,635		18		8 x 4.7" QF

Ship	Built	Line	Gross Reg. Tons	Max Tons Coal	Full Spd	Radius @	Armament
Commanding Officers					Max Pos. Lng Trip	10Kts 12Kts Full Speed	Patrol
<u>Viknor</u> (Ex <u>Viking</u> ) Cdr. EO Ballantyne	1888	Viking	5,380	1,700	15 14	8,100 7,400 7,000	8 x 4.7" 2 x 3 pdr. <b>B</b>
<u>Virginian</u> Cpt. GN Garnett 1. Cdr. H.H.Smith 2.	1905	Allan	11,000	3,040	17.5 16.5	8,100 7,300 5,400	8 x 4.7" 2 x 6 pdr. <b>A</b>

Allan	Allan Steamship
Anchor	Anchor Line
Bibby	Bibby
Clan	Clan Line
E&F	Elders & Fyffes
FW	Furness, Withy & Co
Orient	Orient Steam Navigation Company
P&O	Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
PSNC	Pacific Steam Navigation Company
RMSF	Royal Mail Steam Packet Company
UC	Union Castle
Viking	Viking Cruising Co.
Wilson	Wilson Line
WS	White Star Line

\* *Digby/Artois*

\*\* *Oropesa/Champagne*

The name changes for *Digby* and *Oropesa* were the result of American influence in making the point that a more 'Allied appearance' to the Squadron might make the blockade more acceptable to the neutral powers. In February 1915, the American Ambassador in London indicated the planned interception of the Hamburg-Amerika liner *Dacia*, bound for Rotterdam with cotton and flying the American flag, might be better challenged by a French cruiser. *Dacia* was taken in to a French port and no protest came from the United States. The vessel was condemned by the French Prize Court which felt no cause for any leniency. Subsequently, in October 1915, *Digby* was renamed *Artois* and placed under a French crew and continued to work with the Squadron but not without difficulties. In December 1915, *Oropesa* was renamed *Champagne* and placed under a French crew. Much of her time was spent working between France and Archangel under French orders.<sup>2</sup>

The transfer to French control was another Foreign Office act to placate American officialdom but the 'hint' by the American Ambassador showed that behind the 'party line' some sympathy existed for the British approach to the blockade. In June 1917, both *Artois* and *Champagne* were re-commissioned with British crews for further service with the Squadron.

<sup>2</sup> De Chair, *The Sea is Strong* 203-204

<b>NAME<sup>1</sup> Admiralty No. Port Register</b>	<b>Grs Reg. Tns</b>	<b>Blt.</b>	<b>Owners</b>	<b>Naval Commanding Officers</b>	<b>Armament</b>
<i>Arley</i> 591 FD44	304	1914	Wyre S .T.C. Fleetwood	Lt. RJ Mortimer RNR	1x 12 pdr. 1x 6 pdr 1x 7.5" Bomb Thrower (A/S Howitzer)
<i>Robert Smith</i> --- ---	211	1915	---	Lt. J Macintosh RNR	-----
<i>Rushcoe</i> 1546 GY522	338	1915	Earl S.F.C. Grimsby	Skipper SJ Brittain RNR	1x 12 pdr.
<i>Saxon II</i> 627 FD 159	239	1907	Saxon S.T.L. Fleetwood	Skipper J Glentworth RNR	1x 12 pdr. 1x 7.5" Bomb Thrower (A/S Howitzer)
<i>Tenby Castle</i> 977 SA 53	256	1908	Consolidat ed Fisheries, Grimsby	Lt. WA Smith RNR	1x 12 pdr. 1x 7.5" Bomb Thrower (A/S Howitzer)
<i>Walpole</i> 1625 GY 269	302	1914	---	Skipper JW Austen RNR	1x 12 pdr. 1x 7.5" Bomb Thrower (A/S Howitzer)
<i>Corrie Roy</i> 3218 GY 635	327	1915	Orient S.F.C. Grimsby	Skipper EB Timby RNR	1x 12 pdr. 1x 7.5" Bomb Thrower (A/S Howitzer)
<i>Sitvel</i> 197 FD 49	290	1914	Marr Fleetwood	Skipper J Ford RNR	1x 12 pdr. 1x 7.5" Bomb Thrower (A/S Howitzer)
<i>St.Denis</i> 3326 H 228	294	1915	J.F. Storr Hull	Skipper E Jefferson RNR	1x 12 pdr.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: Navy Lists, Toghill, G. *Royal Navy Trawlers part 2* and  
Grainger *The Maritime Blockade of Germany in the Great War.*

Ship Officers	R N	R N R	R N V R	Sea- men	Boys	Mar- -ines	Eng. Room	Other Rates	Tot. Rat- ings	Est 'mt
<i>Alcantara</i>	3	34	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	300	338
<i>Almanzora</i>				n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		
<u><i>Alsatian</i></u> <u><i>As Flagship</i></u>	1 7	48	2	124 <u>171</u>	- <u>27</u>	39 <u>48</u>	128 <u>128</u>	38 <u>83</u>		371 <u>524</u>
<u><i>Ambrose</i></u>	3	29	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	260	293
<i>Andes</i>	4	33	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	300	338
<i>Arlanza</i>	4	33	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	220	258
<i>Armadale Castle</i>	3	26	2	120	-	38	115	6	279	310
<i>Avenger</i>	3	34	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<u><i>Bayano</i></u>	3	14	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<u><i>Calyx</i></u> <u>(Ex Calypso)</u>	3	14	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<u><i>Caribbean</i></u>	3	25	2	106	42	36	53	28	265	295
<u><i>Cedric</i></u>	5	42	-	139	-	38	91	60	338	375
<u><i>Changuinola</i></u>	4	14	1	110	-	22	37	33	202	221
<u><i>Clan Mcnaughton</i></u>	5	15	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	257	277
<u><i>Columbella</i></u>	4	22	-	112	16	26	76	42	272	298
<u><i>Digby</i></u> (Re-named <u><i>Artois</i></u> )	3	19	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	210	233
<i>Ebro</i>	3	28	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	230	262
<u><i>Eskimo</i></u>	4	19	-	57	28	22	41	38	186	209
<i>Gloucestershire</i>	3	29	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Ship Officers	R N	R N R	R N V R	Sea- men	Boys	Mar- -ines	Eng. Room	Other Rates	Tot. Rat- ings	Est 'mt
<u>Hilary</u>	4	22	-	90	29	22	36	40	217	243
<u>Hildebrand</u>	3	26	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	270	300
<i>India</i>	3	28	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	270	302
<i>Kildonan Castle</i>	2	34	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<u>Laurentic</u>				n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<u>Mantua</u>	3	40	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	320	364
<i>Moldavia</i>	3	31	2	n/a	n/a	28	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<u>Motagua</u>	4	14	1	n/a	n/a	22	n/a	n/a	200	219
<i>Oceanic</i>				115	-	38	186	51	390	439
<i>Orcoma</i>	4	33	1	n/a	20	n/a	n/a	n/a	280	318
<u>Oropesa</u> (Re-named <u>Champagne</u> )	3	30	1	90	26	22	40	41	219	253
<u>Orotava</u> <u>Subsidised</u>	3	21	2	76	28	22	48 <u>26</u>	37 <u>25</u>	211	237
<i>Orvieto</i>	9	19	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<u>Otway</u>	4	39	-	137	-	38	85	46	306	349
<u>Patia</u>	5	14	-	108	23	21	48	15	215	234
<u>Patuca</u>	4	18	-	108	22	22	32	26	210	232
<i>Teutonic</i>	4	48	1	137	-	38	185	47	407	460
<u>Victorian</u>	3	39	2	114	-	38	75	44	271	315
<u>Viknor</u>	4	17	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<u>Virginian</u>	4	35	-	155	15	38	86	31	325	364

Source: Collated from Navy Lists (NMM), Establishments set out in Ship's Logs (TNA) and where these were not available recourse was made to Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 171



Fig. 59 Muckle Flugga Lighthouse

**Light Established**  
1854

**Engineer**  
Thomas & David Stevenson

**Position**  
Latitude 60° 51.3'N  
Longitude 00° 53.0'W

**Character**  
Flashing (2) White every 20 secs

**Elevation**  
66 metres

**Nominal Range**  
22 miles

**Structure**  
White tower 20 metres high. There are 71 steps to top of tower.

### History

The establishment of a lighthouse at Muckle Flugga, which is the most northerly rock in the British Isles, was considered by the Commissioners as far back as 1851, but due to difficulties in determining the exact site for the Lighthouse, no work had been undertaken by 1854. During the Crimean War the Commissioners were urged by the Government to erect a light at Muckle Flugga with a view to the protection of Her Majesty's ships. A temporary light was therefore established and first lighted on 11 October 1854. The light sits on a jagged outcrop of Skerries a mile north of Unst and right in the path of the Atlantic storms. It was first named "North Unst" but changed in 1964 to Muckle Flugga. The lighthouse cost £32,000 and was automated in March 1995.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.nlb.org.uk/ourlights/history/muckle.htm](http://www.nlb.org.uk/ourlights/history/muckle.htm)

Name	Times	Usual Bridge Watchkeeper
Middle	0000-0400	Second Officer
Morning	0400-0800	Chief Officer
Forenoon	0800-1200	Third Officer
Afternoon	1200-1600	Second Officer
Dogs	1600-2000	Chief Officer
First	2000-2359	Third Officer

**1. Standard Merchant Navy System**

Inflexible hours based on one watch on and two watches off. Allocated on the basis the least experienced officer is on duty when the Master is likely to be up and about. Constant Middle watch for Second Officer becomes very tiring. Each watch-keeper always keeps 8 hours in every 24. Ratings follow similar pattern but change watches part way through a voyage. Officers and Engineers

always kept the same watch.

**2. Normal Royal Navy Three Watch System (Red, White, Blue)**

Name	Times	Day 1			Day 2			Day 3			
		R	W	B	R	W	B	R	W	B	
Middle	0000-0400	*				*					*
Morning	0400-0800		*				*		*		
Forenoon	0800-1200			*	*					*	
Afternoon	1200-1600	*				*					*
First Dog	1600-1800		*				*		*		
Last Dog	1800-2000			*	*					*	
First	2000-2359	*				*					*
<b>Hours</b>	<b>per Day =</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>

Follows the same principle of one watch on and two watches off, but by splitting the ‘Dogs’ the watch-keeping hours ‘cycle’ round. Once in every three days each watch has a 12 hour stint but two days out of three each watch avoids the graveyard Middle watch. Officers and ratings keep the same ‘colour’ watch and this allows a closer team building opportunity. (\* indicates watch on duty)

**3. Four Watch System (Red,White,Blue,Green) HMS Alsatian**

Name	Times	Day 1				Day 2				Day 3			
		R	W	B	G	R	W	B	G	R	W	B	G
Middle	0000-0400	*							*				
Morning	0400-0800		*			*							*
Forenoon	0800-1200			*			*			*			
Afternoon	1200-1600				*			*			*		
First Dog	1600-1800	*							*			*	
Last Dog	1800-2000		*			*							*
First	2000-2359			*			*			*			
<b>Hours</b>	<b>per Day =</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

This watch system seemed to have been exclusive to *Alsatian* for her bridge watch-keeping officers

**Ordinary Daily Routine.<sup>1</sup>**

7 to 9 a.m. - Clean ship, breakfast, etc.

9.15 a.m. - Divisions, inspection of the men, prayers, inspection of the ship below deck.

9.30 to 11.30 a.m. - Various drills and cleaning various parts of the ship.

11.30 a.m. - Clear up decks.

12 noon - Dinner and pipe down until 3.30 p.m.

3.40 p.m. - Clear up decks.

4.0 p.m. - Quarters, inspection of men and mess decks  
Physical drill, etc.

4.15 p.m. - Supper recreation.

9.0 p.m. - Pipe down for the night.

This routine represented a framework for the day. The activities would be subject many short notice changes such as action stations for a boarding or trimming coal in the holds. The afternoon break after dinner was unlikely to be any sort of siesta.

Mercantile Ratings and any new R.N.V.R. would need to learn quickly the meaning of the various calls from bugle and bo'sun's pipe.

**Boarding Routine**

Boarding boats were manned by Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve men.

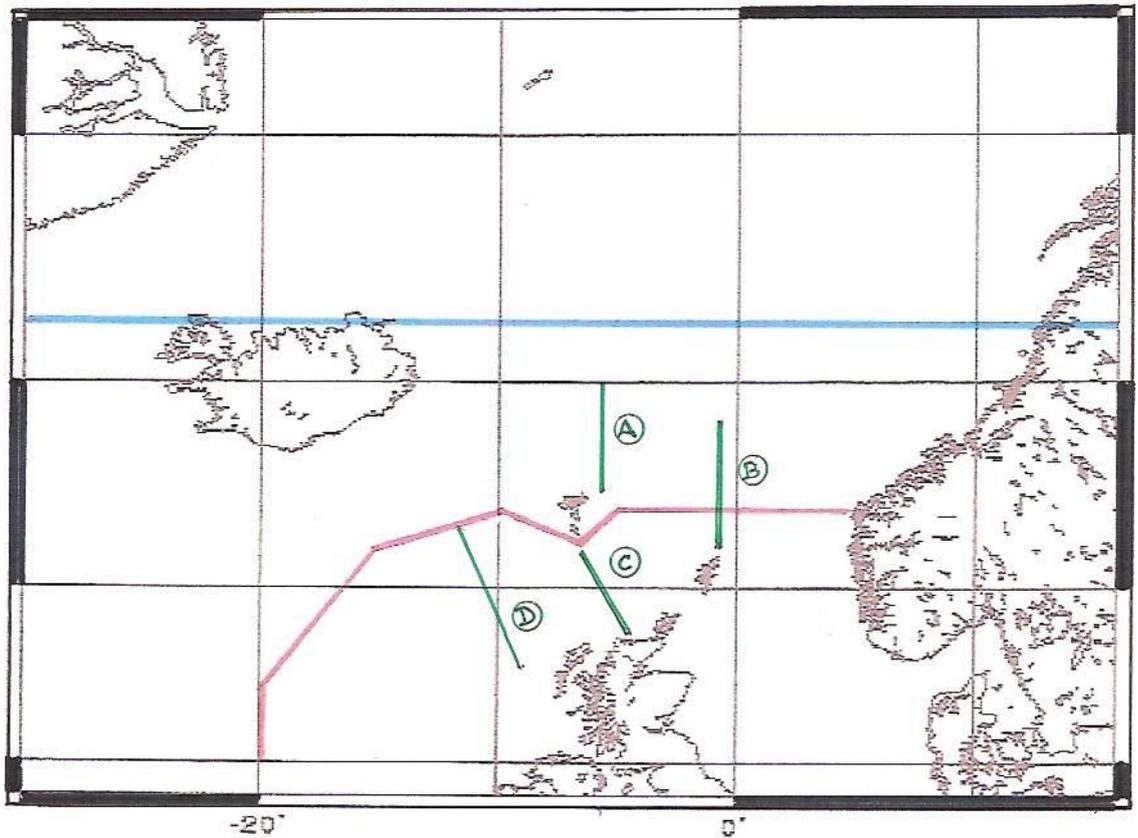
For an ordinary moderate sizes steamer the armed search party was made up of one lieutenant or sub-lieutenant with a midshipman and six or eight men, in addition to the boarding officer. Officers carried revolvers; the men had rifles, bayonets and ammunition.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 237

<sup>2</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 240

Fig. 60 Patrol Lines as at 1 January 1915<sup>1</sup>



Arctic Circle ——— Patrol Lines ———

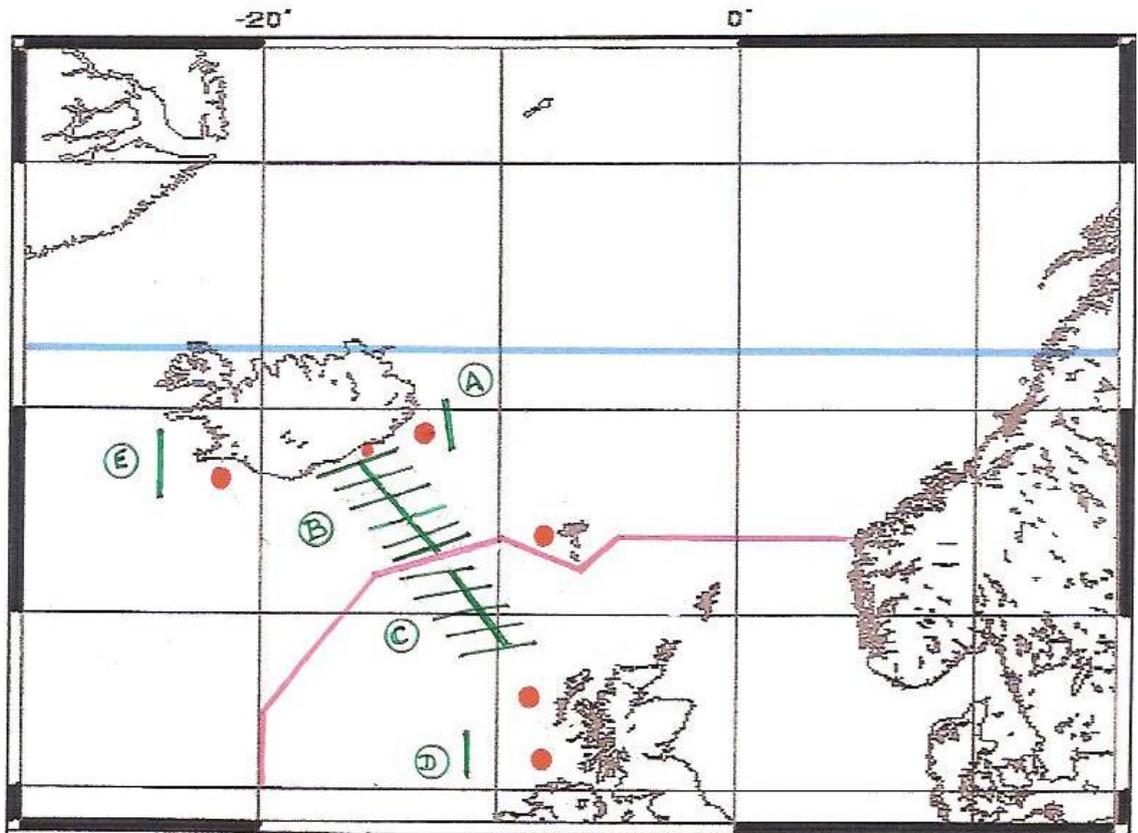
Any vessel inside this line would be torpedoed on sight by Germans ———

Area	Eastern Base Line of Area	Ships allotted to area.
A. Between Faroes and Iceland	Meridian of 5°30'W	<i>Alsatian</i> <i>Mantua</i> <i>Otway</i> <i>Virginian, Columbella</i>
B. North of Shetland Islands	Meridian of 1° 00'W	<i>Teutonic</i> <i>Cedric</i> <i>Caribbean, Patia</i> <i>Orotava, Viknor</i>
C. South of Faroe Islands	Line joining Sydero and Sule Skerry	<i>Motagua</i> <i>Oropesa</i> <i>Bayano, Chamguinola</i> <i>Digby, Hilary</i>
D. West of Hebrides	NNW from St. Kilda	<i>Hildebrand, Calyx</i> <i>Eskimo, Ambrose</i> <i>Clan McNaughton, Patuca</i>

<sup>1</sup> TNA ADM 137/1081 C-in-C Home Fleet to Admiralty 1 January 1915 10-12  
Chatterton, *The Big Blockade* 86

This initial disposition shows that neutrals passing north of the Faroes will encounter two patrol lines. Likewise, those intending to pass through the Fair Island passage or the Pentland Firth will also meet two patrol lines. Note that Patrol Areas C and D are inside the danger line which Germany would soon afterwards declare. Not all allotted ships would be on patrol together. There would be gaps whilst vessels returned to the Clyde or Liverpool for coaling and repairs. At this time of year the Denmark Strait between Iceland and Greenland would be frozen.

Fig.61 Patrol Areas as at October/November 1917 <sup>2</sup>



Arctic Circle \_\_\_\_\_ Patrol Lines \_\_\_\_\_ Two Armed Trawlers ●

Any vessel inside this line would be torpedoed on sight by German forces \_\_\_\_\_

A Patrol *Teutonic*,

B Patrol *Alsatian, Patuca, Orcoma, Hildebrand, Victorian, Patia*  
30 miles apart, steering 070° and 250° crossing the line at noon and midnight

C Patrol *Virginian, Columbella, Artois, Ebro, Arlanza*  
30 miles apart, steering 080° and 260° crossing the line at noon and 6 p.m.

D Patrol *Changuinola, Champagne*

E Patrol No allocation

Speed 13 Knots

Note: A, D, E are examples of the Cross Patrol (Line Ahead)  
B, C are examples of the In and Out Patrol.

<sup>2</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* extracted from map facing page 246  
By this date, the Squadron was nearing the end of its existence and increasing use was made of armed trawlers. The shipping traffic was decreasing and as the Armed Merchant Cruisers were withdrawn for convoy escort duties, the remaining ships and trawlers made use of bogus wireless traffic between themselves. This was to create the impression of a greater number of vessels were on patrol to approaching neutrals and was another early use electronic warfare.

Different authors reproduce different patrol charts (e.g. Chatterton, Grainger and Hurd) and the explanation for this lies in the following:

Patrol Configurations were often moved 30 or 40 miles eastward or westward depending on the perceived submarine threat as advised by the C-in-C.

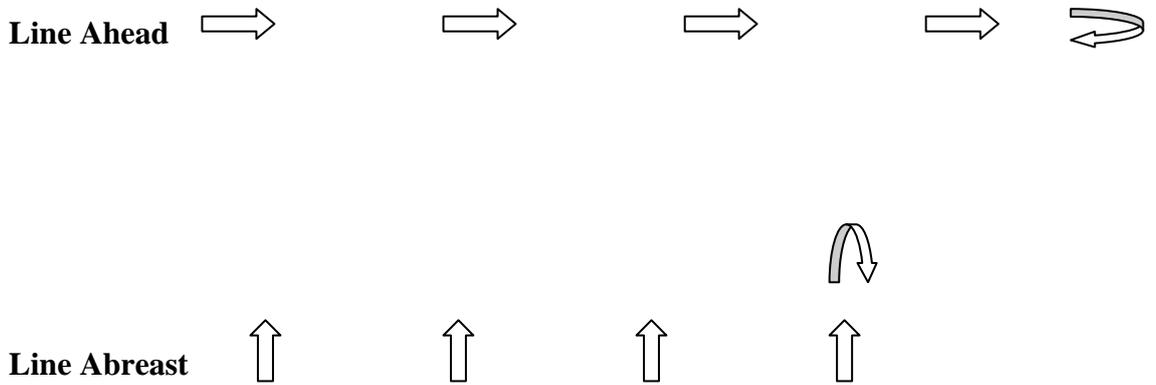
Patrols were often moved to provide an element of surprise to approaching neutral shipping.

Seasonal changes were made to the positioning, for example in the ice season patrols around Iceland and of the Denmark Strait were suspended.

In the worst winter months, the armed trawlers were withdrawn closer to the Orkneys and Shetlands.

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**Fig 62 Ship Formations**



**Declaration of London.**

Article 32 of the Declaration of London provides that the ship's papers are conclusive proof as to the voyage on which a vessel is engaged unless she has deviated in a manner that cannot be satisfactorily explained. This assumes the papers to be correct and no evidence of fraud having taken place.<sup>1</sup> R.N. officers have little experience of this documentation and it was another reason which made the R.N.R officers, with their Mercantile Marine origins, better suited for the task of Boarding Officer. The papers reveal everything about the vessel and her cargo needed by the Boarding Officer and, if needs be, the Prize Court. Namely:

- Her Nationality.
- Date of Registry.
- The nature of her cargo.
- Where and when the cargo was shipped.
- The port or ports of discharge.
- To whom the goods are consigned.
- The weight, freight, volume and value of the cargo.<sup>2</sup>

The usual papers found aboard a British merchant ship and their purpose, are given below. Similar documents were found on foreign vessels.<sup>3</sup>

(1) **Certificate of Registry.** British vessels are required by law to carry a Certificate of Registry, which may be described as the Birth Certificate and Life History Sheet of the vessel. It shows the nationality of the vessel, and therefore regulates the flag which she is entitled to fly, and further, in the case of transfer, it shows when the transfer took place and the previous nationality of the vessel. The ship's name must be painted on both bows, the port to which she belongs on her stern and her official number and tonnage must be cut into her main beam

(2) **Agreement with Crew.** This contains the nature and duration of the voyage or engagement, and the number and description of the crew and the capacity in which each is to serve. At the commencement of each voyage a copy must be posted in the ship in a position accessible to the crew.

(3) **Official Log Book.** This is required to be kept in a Board of Trade format and records certain matters required by law on the conduct of the voyage. Separate and distinct from the Official Logbook is the **Ship's Deck Log Book.** This is kept in a format laid down by the owners and covers the navigation, weather experienced, cargo loading or discharge and other commercial events. The navigational data is material to the Boarding Officer to check the vessel has followed a course appropriate for her declared destination.

(4) **Builders Contract.** This will usually be found on a vessel which has not changed hands since she was built.

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<sup>1</sup> Pyke, *The Law Of Contraband Of War* 168

<sup>2</sup> Egerton, *Contraband of War* 23

<sup>3</sup> Hall, *The Law of Naval Warfare* 114-116

(5) **Bill of Sale.** This is the document by which a vessel is transferred to a purchaser. In the case of an alleged transfer, the date of it will enable the visiting officer to judge whether the transfer is to be recognised as valid or not. [e.g. Was it made in anticipation of hostilities or of convenience to minimise interception such as German tankers transferred to Standard Oil and the US flag.]

(6) **Clearance Certificate.** This must be obtained from Customs by every vessel sailing from a British port. It cannot be obtained until the master of such a vessel has declared to Customs the name of the nation to which he claims the vessel belongs whereby the Customs Officer will enter that name on the clearance.

(7) **Charter Party.** Only held if the vessel is chartered. This document is the written contract for the hiring of the vessel made between the owner or master and the charterer. It may be for a specific voyage or a given time and usually contains the names of the owner or master, the charterer and the vessel, the port in which she was at the time it was made, the nature of the cargo, the place of loading and delivery. It may also show the amount of freight to be paid.

(8) **Bill of Lading.** This is a receipt given by the master of the ship to each shipper of a parcel of goods. It is usually made out in triplicate and one copy is retained by the master. It specifies the name of the master and the vessel, the name of the shipper and place of shipment, the name of the consignee and place of delivery, and the nature and amount of the goods. It is a document of title and can be negotiable so that the ultimate owner may not be known until the ship arrives at the discharge port. This attribute could have added to the workload of the Contraband Committee in any investigations.

(9) **Manifest.** This is made up from the various bills of lading and is a schedule of the whole cargo containing the particulars set out in the bills of lading.

(10) **Bill of Health.** The Bill of Health states to what port the ship is bound and a fresh one is necessary on leaving each and every port of call, it can form a useful source from which to corroborate the apparent destination of a vessel as indicated in the Bills of Lading.

All the necessary information can be taken from these papers. If they show any inconsistency which might be lawful grounds for capture the vessel should be detained. If the ship is clearly innocent she should be released immediately.

It rests with the commanding officer of the warship to decide whether the vessel visited should be detained. Where the evidence derived from the vessel herself, her cargo, her papers or her position affords him reasonable ground for believing her to be guilty, he should detain every vessel, whatever her nationality which:

Is guilty of spoilation of papers.

Carries false papers.

Carries defective or irregular papers, without satisfactory explanation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hall, *The Law of Naval Warfare* 118

Midshipman Francis Poole R.N.R., has left a full description of the fire control arrangements aboard *Alcantara* which were replicated throughout the squadron:

I had a very interesting job – in charge of the T.S. or Transmitting Station, the heart of the gunnery system. The T.S. (Transmitting Station) was a large room two decks below the navigating bridge. Originally the officer’s quarters, it had been gutted out for the purpose. In the centre was a table and chair (for me) and on the table was a range clock and a Dumaresq. The only instruments I had to operate with.

Around the steel bulkhead were six 3” in diameter flexible steel voice-pipes, one for each gun with a boy seaman voice-pipe operator manning each. Above my head was the voice-pipe from the Gunnery Control Officer (G.C.O.) at his station on top of the bridge. He being the brains of the gunnery system.

The range clock, 12 inches in diameter and six inches high, sat on a heavy rubber ring to negative vibration. From it was taken the corrected ranges to be passed via the v.p. (Voice pipe) operator to the sight-setter at each gun. Four on the foredeck, two each side and one each side aft.

The ranges were ‘cut in’ in hundreds of yards on the black clock face. An inch apart and at right angles to the outer rim. A large black pointer, a little shorter than the diameter of the clock, which was adjustable, was balanced in the centre and it’s speed actuated by the rate (taken from the Dumaresq) and adjusted at the side of the clock. The larger the rate the faster the clock ran. As the needle circled, when it pointed to a range that was the correct range to send down to the guns.

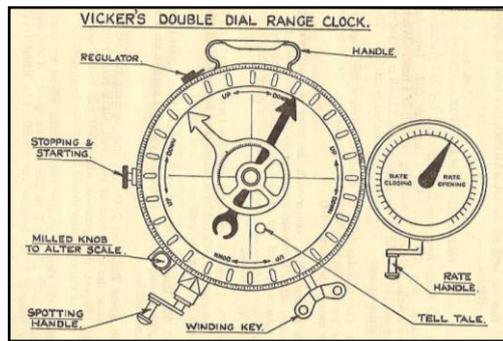


Fig.63 A Range Clock <sup>1</sup>

The Dumaresq (pronounced dumerrick after the naval officer who invented it) stood alongside the clock. From it was taken the rate of speed for the clock and the deflection. The latter being the adjustment to be placed on the gunsight to compensate for the enemy’s movement to the right or left of his line of bearing from us.

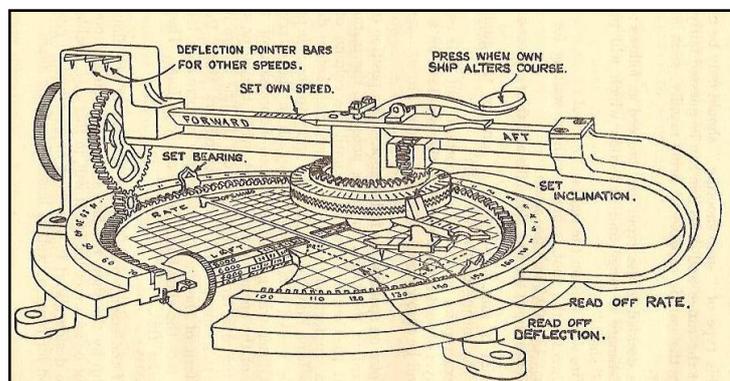


Fig.64 A Typical Dumaresq <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Admiralty, *Notes on Gunnery for Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships* 55

The data used to get these two were – A. Our own ship's speed; B -- the estimated speed of the enemy and C – the inclination of the enemy's course to the right or left of his line of bearing. If head directly away, it would be zero. If at right angles to the left, it would be OH NINE OH LEFT (90 degrees) if 43 degrees to the right it would be OH FOUR THREE RIGHT.

The Dumaresq was a light circular metal plate fitted on a heavy circular metal base, a little over 12 inches in diameter, with criss cross lines cut in it. One set of lines were read off for the rate the other for the deflection. A heavy wide inverted "U" shaped bar was secured over the top marked plate with its centre six inches above it. On this were two small adjustable bars – one for our own speed and the other for the enemy's speed and inclination. These were connected to a vertical pointer which pointed down to the criss cross markings from which the rate and deflection were read off.

In ACTION the G.C.O. would first order me to start the clock (with no adjustments) to see if it was working correctly. He would then call down the initial range, which I put on the clock, then the data from the Dumaresq. In a matter of seconds I had read off the rate and deflection from the Dumaresq and informed him as I adjusted the clock for the rate. He would then order –SHOOT! At that I would call out the ranges as the pointer came to them; actually a second or so before to allow for the time lag, plus the deflection for the first one, such as – Range FIVE FOUR DOUBLE OH (5400 yards) ONE FIVE RIGHT – SHOOT. This the v.p. operators passed down to the sightsetters standing on the right hand side of the guns, who repeated them as they adjusted their sights. Incidentally, when the ranges arrived at the highest on the clock face, by turning a knurled knob, the next set of ranges were brought into sight.

Meanwhile the gun-layers, seated on the left of the gun, adjusted their guns vertically to keep the cross wires of their telescopic sights on the target. The trainers, seated on the right of the gun, training it to the right or left to keep their cross wires on. When the gun-layer saw both vertical and horizontal cross-wires on the target – they pressed the trigger.

The reason for the order SHOOT instead of FIRE is obvious.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile I continued to call out the change of range. When the G.C.O. observed the fall of shot (splashes) from the salvo, if it was a straddle (all round the target) he would order SALVOES!

At that the gun-layers would continue as fast as their guns were loaded and the cross wires on the target.

Should the salvo fall short, G.C.O. would make a correction upwards, such as – UP EIGHT HUNDRED – SHOOT! Always an even hundred. If it was over it would be DOWN EIGHT HUNDRED SHOOT! (800 yards). If it fell to the right he would order a correction to the deflection of say – LEFT TEN – or whatever it was in knots to bring the guns back in line again. I would then call out DEFLECTION FIVE RIGHT – applying the correction to the original deflection to be passed to the guns. At the same time adjust the correction to the deflection on the Dumaresq which would give a new rate which I immediately applied to the clock, informing the G.C.O. accordingly.

Immediately I received a range correction I would adjust it on the outer superimposed ring on the clock face marked in ranges of a hundred yards up or down as necessary. Then with a small handle bring the original ranges on the clock face to agree with the superimposed ring then continue to call out the ranges showing on the clock face.

<sup>2</sup> Admiralty, *Notes on Gunnery for Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships* 52

<sup>3</sup> The call FIRE will result in crew grabbing extinguishers, fire buckets and hose. The word is followed with the location e.g. 'FIRE in the galley flat'. Since fire could occur at any time, the order SHOOT is used to commence firing at Action Stations.

This all may sound a little complicated but actually it was a simple operation taking very little time and perfectly suitable for the type of Action we would be expected to fight. Why I have been so particular in describing it is because it actually proved its worth when WE DID GO INTO ACTION as you will read later.<sup>4</sup>

This was known as the 'bracket' or 'spotting' system. Slow and tortuous though it may have seemed, Poole made the point that it was used at the Battle of Jutland but proved too slow for a battle with big ships.

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<sup>4</sup> IWM DS/MISC/98 Microfilm Mid. Francis Poole R.N.R. H.M.S. *Alcantara* 16-20  
Poole, born in Hartlepool in 1896, was an apprentice with a North East of England shipowner in January, 1914. He joined the Royal Navy in October, 1915 as a Midshipman R.N.R., after the Admiralty had invited applications from Merchant Navy apprentices with one year's sea service. Attendance at a mess dinner in Chatham Barracks, where he attended a gunnery course, had been a cultural revelation for Poole. *Alcantara* was his first naval ship and must have been a huge contrast with life in a tramp steamer. His service aboard *Alcantara* provided experiences more than many have in a lifetime. (See also Chapter 6, page 157)

**Part A Warrant Analysis**

<b>Ship</b>	<b>No. Months Observed</b>	<b>Total Warrants Read</b>	<b>Monthly Average Read</b>
Commanding Officers			
<b><u>Alcantara</u></b> Cdr. TE Wardle	10	18	1.8
<b><u>Almanzora</u></b> Cpt. WD Church	26	42	1.6
<b><u>Alsatian</u></b> Cpt. VEB Phillimore 1. Cpt. V Trewby (Flag) 2. Cpt. HH Smith (Flag) 3.	39	138	3.5
<b><u>Ambrose</u></b> Cdr. CW Bruton 1. Cdr. VL Bowring 2.	14	19	1.4
<b><u>Andes</u></b> Cdr. CW Trousdale 1. Cpt. GBW Young 2.	31	51	1.7
<b><u>Arlanza</u></b> Cpt. DT Norris 1. Cpt. GM Marston 2.	31	139	4.5
<b><u>Avenger</u></b> Cdr. AL Ashby	9	15	1.7
<b><u>Caribbean</u></b> (Ex <i>Dunnotar Castle</i> ) Cdr. FH Walter	5	31	6.1
<b><u>Cedric</u></b> Capt. RER Benson	15	31	2.1
<b><u>Changuinola</u></b> Cdr HCCR Brocklebank	29	105	3.6
<b><u>Columbella</u></b> (Ex <i>Columbia</i> ) Cpt. HLP Heard 1. Cpt. A Bromley 2. Cpt. HLWatt-Jones 3. Cpt. GE Corbett 4.	3	9	3
<b><u>Ebro</u></b> Cdr. EVFR Dugmore 1. Cdr. CAW Wrightson 2.	24	98	4
<b><u>Eskimo</u></b> Cdr. CW Trousdale	4	2	0.5
<b><u>Hilary</u></b> Cdr. RH Bather 1. Cpt. FW Dean 2.	30	43	1.4
<b><u>Hildebrand</u></b> Cpt. H Edwards 1. Cpt. JF Grant-Dalton 2. Cpt. HC Watson 3.	35	92	2.6

**Part A Warrant Analysis (Cont.)**

Ship	No. Months Observed	Total Warrants Read	Monthly Average Read
Commanding Officers			
<b><u>Kildonan Castle</u></b>	13	33	2.5
Cdr. HS Cardale 1.			
Cpt. JF Warton 2.			
<b><u>Mantua</u></b>	25	54	2.2
Cpt. C Tibbits 1.			
Cpt. GM Marston 2.			
Cpt. ABF Dawson 3.			
<b><u>Motagua</u></b>	35	58	1.7
Cpt. VEB Phillimore 1.			
Cpt. JA Webster 2.			
Cpt. LL Dundas 3.			
<b><u>Oceanic</u></b>	1	3	3
Cpt. W Slayter			
<b><u>Orcoma</u></b>	31	56	1.8
Cdr. CW Bruton 1.			
Cpt. RH Coppinger 2.			
<b><u>Orotava</u></b>	35	63	1.8
Cdr. GE Corbett			
<b><u>Otway</u></b>	30	59	1.9
Cpt. EL Booty 1.			
Cpt. PH Colomb 2.			
<b><u>Patia</u></b>	36	78	2.2
Cpt. GW Vivian 1.			
Cdr. RFH Hartland-Mahon 2.			
Cdr. VL Bowring 3.			
Cdr. WG Howard 4.			
<b><u>Patuca</u></b>	35	72	2.1
Cdr. CH France-Hayhurst 1.			
Lt.Cdr. JH Nield 2.			
Cdr. PG Brown 3.			
Cdr. T Dannreuther 4.			
<b><u>Virginian</u></b>	2	5	2.5
Cpt. GN Garnett 1.			
Cdr. H.H. Smith 2.			

Monthly Average 2.4

The logbooks for *Armada Castle, Calyx, Digby, Gloucestershire, Moldavia, Oropesa, Orvieto, Teutonic*, and *Victorian* show no entries for Warrants being read. This must have been an oversight since it is difficult to believe there were no such offences on these ships. The logbooks for *Bayano, Clan Mcnaughton, Laurentic* and *Viknor* were not available for examination.

Admiral Tupper assessed the discipline of the lower decks in the Squadron as excellent.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tupper, *Reminiscences* 265

**Part B Courts Martial<sup>2</sup>**

**No. 3054**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial November 18-19,1914 HMS *PRINCE GEORGE* at Devonport

Name BLAIR, David

Rank Lieutenant, R.N.R.

Name of Ship *OCEANIC*

Substance of Charge Preferred Negligently or by default stranding or suffering to be stranded

Sentence Proved. Adjudged to be reprimanded.

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**No. 3054**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial November 19,1914 HMS *PRINCE GEORGE* at Devonport

Name SMITH, Henry

Rank Commander, R.N.R.

Name of Ship *OCEANIC*

Charge Negligently or by default stranding or suffering to be stranded

Sentence Not proved. Acquitted.

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**No. 3054**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial November 20,1914 HMS *PRINCE GEORGE* at Devonport

Name SLAYTER, William F.

Rank Captain, R.N.

Name of Ship *OCEANIC*

Charge Negligently or by default stranding or suffering to be stranded

Sentence Not proved. Acquitted.

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<sup>2</sup> AL H.M.S.O. *Officers tried by Naval Courts Martial and Disciplinary Court from 1 January 1914-31 December 1923* (London, 1923) Trial and page numbers quoted in each case refer to this publication

**Part B Courts Martial (Cont.)****No. 3080****Court Martial**Date of Trial April 17, 1915 HMS *EAGLE*Name ARMSTRONG John J.Rank Engineer, R.N.R.Name of Ship *AMBROSE*Charge Act to the prejudice of good order and naval discipline in conversing in an improper manner with the firemen and trimmers.Sentence Not proved. Acquitted.

The Court were of opinion that the under-mentioned witnesses for the prosecution gave false evidence and conspired together to commit perjury:-

Henry GRANT, Trimmer

James DUFFY, Fireman

William CORRIGAN, Trimmer

Patrick O'FARELL, Trimmer

David GRAHAM, Fireman

Page 8**No. 3238****Court Martial**Date of Trial April 17, 1915Name WARDLE, Thomas E. and all the serving Officers and crew.Rank Captain, R.N.Name of Ship *ALCANTARA*Charge To inquire into the loss of His Majesty's Ship *ALCANTARA*

Sentence The Court found that His Majesty's Ship *ALCANTARA* was sunk in action by an enemy vessel, which was subsequently ascertained to be a German armed raider.

Fire was opened by the enemy vessel over Norwegian Colours, which were painted on her bow and quarter. The evidence was conflicting as to when the German Naval Ensign was hoisted, but it is clear that it was flying shortly after the action commenced.

The Court was of opinion that the Officers and men of His Majesty's Ship *ALCANTARA* showed promptitude and resource in the circumstances, and fought their Ship in a creditable manner, until forced to abandon her by her lying on her beam ends.

The Enemy Vessel was put out of action and abandoned by her crew. She was afterwards sunk.

The Court found that no blame was attributable to Captain Thomas E. Wardle, Royal Navy, and the Officers and crew of His Majesty's Ship *ALCANTARA* for the loss of their ship, and acquitted them accordingly.

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**Part B Courts Martial (Cont.)**

**No. 3415**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial November 21, 1916

Name DIXON, Joseph

Rank Lieutenant Commander, R.N.R.

Name of Ship ***HILDEBRAND***

Charge Drunk on board.

Sentence Pleaded guilty. Adjudged to be severely reprimanded and to be dismissed his ship

Page 41

**No. 3564**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial April 17, 1917

Name POMEROY, Harrison H.

Rank Assistant Paymaster, R.N.R.

Name of Ship ***CRESCENT*** late ***HILDEBRAND***

Charge First. Wilfully and with intent to defraud, altering a material particular in the ledger of HMS ***HILDEBRAND***.

Second. Wilfully and with intent to defraud, making a false entry in the ledger of HMS ***HILDEBRAND***.

Third. Wilfully and with intent to defraud, omitting a material particular from the ledger of HMS ***HILDEBRAND***.

Fourth. Wilfully and with intent to defraud, falsifying the Certificate of Payment to the Officers and crew of HMS ***HILDEBRAND***.

Fifth. Embezzlement.

Sixth. Dissertion.

Sentence Accused pleaded guilty. Adjudged to be imprisoned without hard labour for 12 calendar months. The Court directed that the clothes and effects which the accused might have left on board HMS ***HILDEBRAND*** should not be forfeited.

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**Part B Courts Martial (Cont.)****No. 3584****Court Martial**Date of Trial June 14-15, 1917Name MIDDLEMASS, James B.Rank Temporary Midshipman, R.N.R.Name of Ship *PATIA*Charge First. Theft of the sum of £34-14s. the property of His Majesty the King.Second. Returning on board from leave drunk.Third. Act to the prejudice of good order and naval discipline in telling a lie to the Commanding Officer of HMS *PATIA*, thereby obtaining leave under false pretences.Sentence Accused pleaded guilty to the second and third charges. First charge partly proved, in as much as he stole the sum of £13-10s the property of His Majesty. Accused adjudged to be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for 6 months, and to be dismissed with disgrace from H.M.Service.Page 56**No. 3588****Court Martial**Date of Trial June 19, 1917Name ASHBY, Arthur L., and all remaining surviving officers and crew of HMS *AVENGER*Rank Commander, R.N.Name of Ship *AVENGER*Charge To inquire into the loss of HMS *AVENGER* on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1917, and to try Commander Arthur L. ASHBY R.N., and all the remaining surviving officers and crew of that vesselSentence The Court found that on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 1917, HMS *AVENGER* was struck by a torpedo fired from an enemy submarine, and that as a result of the damage caused by the explosion the ship sank. The Court further found that no blame attached to Commander Arthur L. Ashby, R.N., or any of the remaining surviving officers and crew, and acquitted them accordingly; that special precautions were in force to provide safety against submarine attack and that after being struck, everything possible was done to try and save the ship. The Court was also of opinion that the conduct of all on board was in accordance with the tradition of the service, and that the organisation and discipline were of a high order.Page 58

**Part B Courts Martial (Cont.)**

**No. 3643**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial July 25, 1917

Name BALLARD, James

Rank Gunner, R.N.

Name of Ship *COLUMBELLA*

Charge Drunk on board.

Sentence Accused pleaded guilty. Adjudged to forfeit 6 month's seniority, to be severely reprimanded and to be dismissed his ship.

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**No. 3681**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial September 28, 1917

Name GEE, William S.

Rank Temporary Acting Lieutenant, R.N.R.

Name of Ship *MANTUA*

Charge First. Drunk on board.

Second. Conduct unbecoming the character of an officer in using obscene and disgusting language in the presence of ladies.

Third. Fraudulently converted to his own use and benefit part of a sum of money with which he had been entrusted.

Fourth. Act to the prejudice of good order and naval discipline in erasing from the Daily Wine Book of the Wardroom Mess entries showing liquor consumed by him.

Fifth. Act to the prejudice of good order and naval discipline in directing two Wardroom Wine Stewards, Mercantile Marine, not to enter liquor, which he had consumed, against him in the Wine Book.

Sentence Accused pleaded guilty to the first, second, fourth and fifth charges. Third charge not proved. Accused adjudged to be dismissed His Majesty's Service.

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**Part B Courts Martial (Cont.)**

**No. 3700**

**Disciplinary Court**

Date of Trial August 11, 1917

Name OWEN, Thomas F.

Rank Temporary Engineer Sub-Lieutenant R.N.R.

Name of Ship *MANTUA*

Charge Wilful disobedience of lawful command.

Sentence Charge proved. Accused adjudged to forfeit 12 month's seniority and to be severely reprimanded.

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**No. 3705**

**Disciplinary Court**

Date of Trial August 11, 1917

Name JONES Robert V.

Rank Temporary Engineer Sub-Lieutenant R.N.R.

Name of Ship *ANDES*

Charge First. Using insulting language to his superior officer.  
Second. Drunk on board

Sentence First charge proved. Second charge not proved. Accused adjudged to be severely reprimanded and to be dismissed his ship.

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**No. 3729**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial October 24, 1917

Name LAMB, Ernest N.

Rank Temporary Warrant Telegraphist, R.N.R.

Name of Ship *ARLANZA*

Charge First. Improperly leaving his ship.  
Second. Absence without leave.  
Third. Negligently performing the duty imposed upon him.

Sentence First and second charges proved. Third charge not proved.  
Accused adjudged to be reprimanded and to be dismissed his ship.

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**Part B Courts Martial (Cont.)****No. 3740****Court Martial**Date of Trial November 12, 1917Name BROWN Percy G., and all the surviving officers and crew of  
HMS *CHAMPAGNE*Rank Acting Captain, R.N.Name of Ship *CHAMPAGNE*Charge To enquire into the cause of the loss of HMS *CHAMPAGNE* and to try Acting Captain Percy G. Brown R.N. and all the surviving officers and crew of that ship.Sentence The Court found that on the 9<sup>th</sup> October the *CHAMPAGNE* was struck by a torpedo from an enemy submarine, the explosion causing the engine and boiler rooms to be flooded, breaking all steam pipes and stopping main engines and auxiliary machinery, and putting W/T and auxiliary sets out of action. About 15 minutes later a second torpedo struck the ship and broke her in half, the vessel sinking almost at once.

The Court was of opinion that the ship was well organised, and was only abandoned when absolutely necessary. The Court considered that no blame was attached to Acting Captain Percy George BROWN R.N., or any of the other serving officers and crew and therefore acquitted them of the same. The Court further considered that the conduct and behaviour of the officers and men of HMS *CHAMPAGNE* were all that could be desired and in accordance with the best traditions of the service. They especially desired to record the conduct of Acting Captain Percy George Brown who remained on board until his ship sank under him; also that of Able Seaman Oliver WARD R.N.V.R., Able Seaman RYAN R.N.V.R., Leading Seaman Watkins R.N.R. and Leading Seaman William John COX R.N.R. (of whom the last-named was the only survivor), when after the order to abandon the ship had been given, volunteered and manned one of the 6 inch guns and took offensive action against the submarine when the ship was actually sinking.

Page 74**No. 3747****Court Martial**Date of Trial November 26, 1917Name BICKERSTETH RoyRank Temporary Midshipman R.N.R.Name of Ship *ANDES*Charge TheftSentence Charge proved. Accused adjudged to be dismissed His Majesty's Service.Page 75

**Part B Courts Martial (Cont.)**

**No. 3827**

**Court Martial**

Date of Trial January 19, 1917

Name HART, Ronald G.

Rank Lieutenant R.N.R.

Name of Ship *ALMANZORA*

Charge Drunk on board.

Sentence Charge not proved. Accused acquitted.

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The records above were extracted from 'Officers tried by Naval Courts Martial and Disciplinary Court from 1 January 1914-31 December 1923'.

During the period 22 August 1914 and 31 December 1917 covering the lifetime of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron there were a total of 737 courts recorded. Of this total, some 301 involved R.N. officers whilst the remaining 436 involved Reserve officers. Those involving Reserve officers were mainly charges involving drink and/or absence from duty and the offenders were predominantly trawler skippers.

There were 19 courts which affected Tenth Cruiser Squadron officers, charged for many different reasons. Some are quite tragic and some sentences seem harsh by today's standards but they were intended to send a clear message to all.

Detailed economic statistics have not been included in this paper which is primarily concerned with the daily execution of the patrols of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. The following sources will provide figures which may assist researchers concerned with this aspect of the blockade.

1. Bell, A.C. *A History of the Blockade of Germany and the Countries Associated with her in the Great War, Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey, 1914-1918* (London, 1937).

This work is the official account of the blockade and was commissioned by the Historical Section, Committee of Imperial Defence. It was a classified document when written. Copies have been traced to the National Maritime Museum and the Admiralty Library, Portsmouth. It can be considered the official history and has the most extensive and detailed statistics of the publications listed here.

2. Consett, M.W.W.P., *The Triumph Of Unarmed Forces (1914-1918)* (London, 1923)

This author served as the British Naval Attaché in Sweden throughout the War. His text has several statistical tables as well as extensive appendices dealing with trade affecting all the bordering neutral countries. For researchers unable to access Bell it is a good substitute. Some opinions were seen by his contemporaries as contentious.

3. Parmalee, M *Blockade and Seapower* (London, 1924)

This American author was a member of the American delegation to the Allied Blockade Committee and held other official post connected with the blockade. Some statistical tables are used to support his account of the blockade.

- 4 Guichard, L., *The Naval Blockade 1914-1918* (New York, 1930)

This author served in the French Navy and was attached to the Historical Section of the French Ministry of Marine. Some statistics are included to illustrate the text.

5. Fayle, C.E., *Seaborne Trade Vols 1,2 & 3 + maps* (Nashville, Reprint 1997)

This series includes extensive statistics mainly connected with British shipping losses throughout the whole war and also includes tables listing the imports of major commodities as the war progressed.

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1. Statistics extracted from Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron Weekly Reports. <sup>1</sup>

<b>1915 Reports in period from 14 February to 26 December</b>	<b>Report Averages</b>	<b>Extremes Highest</b>	<b>In Period Lowest</b>
Total Ships in Squadron	22	24	17
On Patrol	13	17	8
In Transit	2	4	0
In Port (Coaling or refit)	6	11	3
Vessels Intercepted	57	115	11
Vessels Sent In	14	29	4

<b>1916 Reports in period from 2 January to 31 December</b>	<b>Report Averages</b>	<b>Extremes Highest</b>	<b>In Period Lowest</b>
Total Ships in Squadron	21	24	20
On Patrol	11	17	5
In Transit	3	6	0
In Port (Coaling or refit)	7	17	3
Vessels Intercepted	60	162	17
Vessels Sent In	17	72	5

<b>1917 Reports in period from 7 January to 22 April</b>	<b>Report Averages</b>	<b>Extremes Highest</b>	<b>In Period Lowest</b>
Total Ships in Squadron	23	25	8
On Patrol	11	14	8
In Transit	2	4	0
In Port (Coaling or refit)	11	22	7
Vessels Intercepted	43	65	23
Vessels Sent In	10	16	2

**Comment.**

The total interceptions achieved were 12,979 and this was 95.3% of the possible number. A further 2,039 vessels voluntarily reported to examination ports rather than attempt to evade the blockade.<sup>2</sup> The tables above have been constructed to show the average and extreme figures for the Squadrons activity.

2. Activities of H.M.S. *Changuinola* 1915 & 1916. <sup>3</sup>

*Changuinola* was chartered from Elders & Fyffes and was one of the smaller armed merchant cruisers in the squadron. The tables below are from figures recorded by Commander Brocklebank and give a good insight into the workload of a single ship.

<sup>1</sup> Compiled from reports cited in Grainger, *The Maritime Blockade of Germany in the Great War*

<sup>2</sup> Tupper, R. *Reminiscences* 267

<sup>3</sup> Data extracted from the diaries of Capt. Brocklebank at IWM PP/MCR/53 Capt. H.C.R. Brocklebank RN H.M.S. *Changuinola*

**H.M.S. *Changuinola* Boarding Statistics**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1915</b>	<b>1916</b>
<b>Total Ships Boarded</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>175</b>
Comprising:		
Steam	136	69
Sail	23	20
Fishing Vessels	?	86
<b>Total Ships Sent In</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>59 *</b>
Comprising:		
Steam	48	?
Sail	2	?
<b>Allowed to Proceed</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>116</b>
Comprising:		
Fishing Craft	31	?
Trading Vessels	78	?

\* With Armed Guard

**H.M.S. *Changuinola* Steaming Statistics**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1915</b>	<b>1916</b>
<b>Distance Run</b>	<b>69,991.5</b>	<b>69,446.0</b>
<b>Hours under Steam</b>	<b>6,170.9</b>	<b>5,994.9</b>
<b>Average Speed (knots)</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>11.6</b>
<b>Nights in Harbour</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>?</b>
<b>Coal Consumed (tons)</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>18,741</b>

**JSUPPLEMENT To The London Gazette Of FRIDAY, the 6<sup>th</sup> of AUGUST, 1915**  
*Admiralty, 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1915*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointments to the Distinguished Service Order and for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross to the under-mentioned Officers in recognition of their services in the Patrol Cruisers since the outbreak of war:-

*To be Companions of the Distinguished Service Order.*

Captain Hugh Lindsay Patrick Heard, R.N.  
 Captain George Trewby, R.N.  
 Captain Hugh Edwards, R.N.  
 Commander Edmund Outram, R.N.  
 Lieutenant-Commander Frank Morgan Main, R.D., R.N.R.  
 Lieutenant-Commander Henry Philip Basden Smith, R.D., R.N.R.  
 Lieutenant-Commander Sidney Kenrick Bacon, R.N.R.  
 Chief Engineer Robert Wilson, R.N.R.  
 Chief Engineer Elias Stephenson Dixon, R.N.R.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Cross*  
 Lieutenant Samuel Bolton, R.N.R.  
 Lieutenant Bernard Herbert Symns, R.N.R.  
 Lieutenant Percy Reginald Vaughan, R.N.R.  
 Lieutenant (Acting) Herbert Spencer, R.N.R.  
 Lieutenant (Acting) Charles Walter Cartwright, R.N.R.  
 Lieutenant (Acting) Edwin Alexander Stuart, R.N.R.  
 Lieutenant (Acting) Robert Hobson, R.N.R.  
 Warrant Telegraphist Samuel Lemon, R.N.R.

The following awards have also been made:-

*To receive the Distinguished Service Medal*  
 Chief Petty Officer Alfred Treadway, R.F.R.  
 O.N. 129947.  
 Chief Petty Officer William Thomas Lobb,  
 O.N. 159615.  
 Acting Chief Petty Officer William James Shilcott, O.N. 179902.  
 Chief Petty Officer Edward Thomas Hardy,  
 O.N. 159872.  
 Chief Shipwright Francis Felix Quin,  
 O.N. 138136.  
 Colour-Serjeant William Seabrook, R.M.L.I.  
 Ply./7782  
 Colour-Serjeant Thomas Boffey, R.M.L.I.  
 Ply./9579  
 Petty Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, John Hazard Cole,  
 O.N. 165163  
 Petty Officer Telegraphist Henry George Brewater, O.N. 240203

Petty Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, William Dalley Harris  
 O.N. 170438  
 Petty Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, George Jenkins, R.F.R.,  
 O.N. 111302  
 Petty Officer James Packham, O.N. D/175674  
 Petty Officer Henry Prince Skedgel,  
 O.N. 213825  
 Petty Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, Richard Putt, R.F.R.  
 O.N. 144205  
 Leading Seaman Charles Frederick Summers,  
 O.N. D/C.S. 209276  
 Leading Seaman Joseph Lesslie, R.N.R.,  
 No. 2998 B  
 Leading Seaman Timothy McCarthy,  
 O.N. 203062  
 Leading Seaman Alexander H. Dundas, R.F.R.  
 O.N. 199495  
 Leading Seaman William Downing,  
 O.N. 207726  
 Leading Seaman Bernard Squibb, R.F.R.,  
 O.N. J 603  
 Leading Seaman Albert Jarvie, R.N.R.,  
 O.N. 3688 C.  
 Leading Seaman James Magnus Johnson,  
 R.N.R., O.N. 2049 D.  
 Corporal George Finch, R.M.L.I., Ply./14220  
 Private William Reynolds, R.M.L.I.,  
 Ply./6548  
 Able Seaman Leander Green, R.N.R.,  
 (Newfoundland), No.992 X.  
 Seaman William Smith, R.N.R., No.4041 A.  
 Engine-Room Artificer Joseph Arthur Anderson, R.N.R., O.N. E.C. 120.  
 Engine-Room Artificer Thomas Dale, R.N.R.,  
 O.M. E.A. 1516.  
 Engine-Room Artificer Alexander Miller Gemmell, R.N.R., O.N. E.B. 130.  
 Engine-Room Artificer George Albert Cole, R.N.R., O.N. E.A. 1521  
 Engine-Room Artificer Robert Tytler, R.N.V.R., (Tyneside Division), O.N. 5/237.  
 Leading Fireman Thomas Miller, B.T. No. 787887  
 Leading Fireman Edward Cropper, B.T. No. 692566

The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleets, speaks in the highest terms of the manner in which the Patrol Cruisers have performed their arduous task, especially during the winter months under exceptionally bad weather conditions. They have suffered severe losses both in Officers and men, and have been exposed continually to dangers from mines and submarines.

**SUPPLEMENT To The London Gazette Of FRIDAY, the 31<sup>st</sup> of MARCH, 1916.**

CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS  
OF KNIGHTHOOD

*Lord Chamberlain's Office,  
St. James's Palace, S.W.,  
15<sup>th</sup> March, 1916.*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointment to the Most Honourable Order of the Bath in recognition of the services of the under-mentioned Officer during the War:-

*To be an Additional Member of the Military Division of the Third Class, or Companions:-*  
Commodore Robert Edmund Ross Benson, R.N.

*Admiralty, S.W., 31st March, 1916*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointments to the Distinguished Service Order and for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross to the undermentioned Officers in recognition of their services in the Patrol Cruisers, under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir Dudley R.S. De Chair, K.C.B., M.V.O., during the period ending the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1915:-

*To be Companions of the Distinguished Service Order*

Fleet Paymaster Vincent Adrian Lawford, R.N.  
Captain Edward Gillespie, R.M.L.I.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Cross*  
Lieutenant Marshal Llewelyn Clarke, R.N.  
Acting Lieutenant Percy Palfrey Crawford, R.N.R.  
Probationary Midshipman Cyril Assafrey Bamford, R.N.R.

The following awards have also been made:-

*To receive the Distinguished Service Medal*  
Chief Petty Officer John Mildon, O.N., 145115 (R.F.R., Dev/A.3659).  
Chief Petty Officer John Willey, O.N., 117899 (R.F.R., Po/A.1137).  
Chief Petty Officer Henry Charles Endacotte, O.N., 121488 (R.F.R., Ch/A.998).  
Master-at-Arms Frank Sprake, O.N., 150887  
Chief Yeoman of Signals John Burnard Gunn, O.N., 189705.  
Petty Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, John Hutchison Turner, O.N., 165656 (R.F.R., Ch/B.3910).  
Petty Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Class Arthur Hodges, O.N., 148458.  
Petty Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, Robert Niven Ritchie, O.N., 118025 (R.F.R., Po/A.1900).  
Petty Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, Alexander Kerr, O.N., 126018 (R.F.R., Dev/A.1718).

Petty Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, Percy Henry Whale, O.N., 191158 (R.F.R., Ch/B.5831).  
Leading Seaman George Boon, O.N., 172758 (R.F.R., Dev/B.1770).  
Senior Reserve Attendant Philip Charles Grills, O.N., M/9854, R.N.A.S.B.R.  
Able Seaman Cluny Cameron Campbell, O.N., 191210 (R.F.R., Ch/B.7645).  
Leading Seaman Andrew Seaward (R.N.R., 7013 A.).  
Serjeant William Samuel Elliott, R.M.L.I. (R.F.R., Ply/1499).  
Seaman Albert Gregory, R.N.R., X719 (Newfoundland).  
Greaser James Barrett (Mercantile Rating).

The following Officers and men have been mentioned in despatches by Rear-Admiral Sir Dudley De Chair for good services in the Patrol Cruisers:-

Commander Eric Valentine Frederic Radclyffe Dugmore, R.N.  
Engineer Commander Thomas Pierce Pover, R.N.R.  
Staff Surgeon Robert Bernard Scribner, R.N.  
Midshipman Peter Booth Clarke, R.N.R.  
Probationary Midshipman Sidney Albert Bagley, R.N.R.  
Chief Petty Officer William John Henry Worth, O.N., 150654., Dev/A. 4247).  
Master-at-Arms George John Marsh, O.N., 183125.  
Petty Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, Philip Arthur Grandin, O.N., 139364 (R.F.R., Po/A. 4183).  
Leading Signalmen Herbert Henry Thompson, O.N., 236433.  
Leading Seaman Daniel Keggan, R.N.R., 2025 C  
2<sup>nd</sup> Writer William Paecy Jones (Mercantile Rating)  
Seaman Murdo McKay, R.N.R., 2769 B.  
Able Seaman Robert Reginald Lawrence, R.N.V.R., O.N., London/9/2346.  
Seaman George Boutcher, R.N.R., (Newfoundland), 964 X.  
Seaman Edward James Woodrow, R.N.R., 1883 D.  
Able Seaman Henry Joseph Jordan, O.N., 194113 (R.F.R., Dev/B.4200).  
Leading Fireman George Hooper (Mercantile Rating)  
Fireman Sidney Birch (Mercantile Rating)  
Fireman Charles Davies (Mercantile Rating)  
Serjeant William Kenyon, R.M.L.I. Ply/10230  
Private Thomas Simpson, R.M.L.I. Ch/14282 (R.F.R., Ch/B.1734)  
Private Henry James Fawkes, R.M.L.I. Ch/15475

**SUPPLEMENT To The London Gazette Of FRIDAY, the 20<sup>th</sup> of APRIL, 1917**

*Admiralty, S.W., 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1917*

The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following appointments to the Distinguished Service Order and for the award of the Distinguished Service Cross to the under-mentioned Officers in recognition of their services in the Patrol Cruisers, under the command of Vice-Admiral Reginald G.O.Tupper, C.B., C.V.O., during the period 1<sup>st</sup> July- 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1916:-

*To be Companions of the Distinguished Service Order.*

Capt. Humphrey Hugh Smith, R.N.  
Eng.Cdr Walter Jordan, R.N.R.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Cross.*  
Asst. Payr. (now Payr.) Frank Lankester Horsey R.N.  
Lieut. Howard Uncles, R.N.R.  
Mid. Thomas Edwin Hunter Grove, R.N.R.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Medal*  
C.P.O. William John Curley Poole (alias William John Curley), O.N.133945 (R.F.R., Dev./A2852).

P.O., 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., Arthur Banfield James, O.N. 189089(R.F.R., Dev./B1202).  
P.O. William Henry Baker, O.N. 163292 (Po).  
P.O. Ernest Knight, O.N. 198006 (R.F.R., Po./B5341).  
Ldg. Sea. Howard Edward Osgood, O.N. 236853 (Po.).  
Ldg. Sea. George Francis Reddings, R.N.R., O.N. 2702A  
Sea. Charles William Victor Potter, R.N.R., O.N. 4599A  
Ldg. Sig. William Thomas Isaac, O.N. 184506 (R.F.R., Dev./B636).  
Ldg. Sig. Edgar Charles Saunders, O.N. 124595 (Dev.).  
Ch. Arm. William Henry Harrington, O.N. 143238 (Ch.).  
M.A.A. George Francis Cook, O.N. 121490 (R.F.R., Po./16833).  
Lce.-Corpl. Reginald Dennis Hale, R.M.L.I., No. Po./16833  
Pte. Richard Burns, R.M.L.I., No.Po./8167  
Ch. Carp. Alexandere R.Fraser (Mercantile Rating).  
Ldg. Fireman Robert Charles James (Mercantile Rating).  
Donkeyman Archibald McDonald (Mercantile Rating).

The following Officers and men have been mentioned in despatches by Vice-Admiral Reginald G.O.Tupper, C.B., C.V.O., for good service in the Patrol Cruisers:-

Eng.Cdr. George Thompson Greig, R.N.R.  
Asst.Payr. Jack Barton , R.N.R.  
Sub-Lieut. Charles John Leonard Haywood, R.N.R.  
Sub-Lieut. Arthur Mallorie Coleman, R.N.R.  
Sub-Lieut. William Mill Ruxton, R.N.R.  
C.P.O. Jeremiah Wafer, O.N. 140125 (R.F.R.,Po./A3089).  
P.O., 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., Thomas James Bailey, O.N. 140715 (R.F.R., Po./A3388).  
P.O. William Oliver. O.N. 198505 (R.F.R., Po./B5763).  
Ldg. Sea. James Savage, O.N. 199651 (Po.).  
Ldg. Sea. John Mackenzie, R.N.R., O.N. 2303D  
Act. Ldg. Sea. Edward Henry Shute, R.N.V.R., O.N. 2636 (Clyde)  
A.B. Ernest Bennett, O.N. 209614 (R.F.R., Ch./B4946).  
A.B. John Frederick Gaisford, O.N. 192325 (R.F.R., Dev./B3059).  
Sea. Arthur Evans, R.N.R., O.N. 5093A.  
Sea. Ence Ryan, R.N.R. (Newfoundland), O.N. 711X  
Yeo. Sigs. William Sidney Austin, O.N.204967 (R.F.R., Ch./B10156)  
Elect.Art., 4<sup>th</sup> Cl., Edward Brooks, O.N. M.10794 (Ch.).  
Ch.Arm. Edwin Norris, O.N. 114281 (Po.).  
Lce.-Corpl. Frederick Charles Louis Wye, R.M.L.I., N0. Po./19906  
Ldg. Fireman William Purseglove (Mercantile Rating).  
Ch. Carp. Alfred Martin (Mercantile Rating).

SUPPLEMENT TO THE London Gazette Of Tuesday, the 18<sup>th</sup> JUNE, 1918Admiralty, S.W., 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1918

HONOURS FOR SERVICE IN PATROL CRUISERS  
The KING has been graciously pleased to give orders for the following honour, decorations and medals for services in the Patrol Cruisers, under the command of Vice-Admiral Reginald G.O. Tupper, K.C.B., C.V.O., and Vice-Admiral Sir Montague E. Browning, K.C.B., C.V.O., during the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1917:-

*To be Companions of the Distinguished Service Order.*

Lieut.-Cdr. Harry Thring Bennett, R.N.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Cross.*

Lieut. Joseph Arthur Wallis, R.N.R.

Sub-Lieut. Charles John Leonard Hayward, R.N.R.

Asst. Payr. Thomas Johnston Elliot, R.N.R.

*To receive the Distinguished Service Medal*

Ord.Sea. Benjamin Arnold, R.N.V.R., O.N. (Tyneside), Z10332.

Ldg.Sea. Arthur Ayer, O.N. 184080 (R.F.R. Ch./B3776).

Sig. Thomas Edward Burrows, R.N.V.R., O.N. (Mersey), Z1968

A.B. David V. Cargill, O.N. 189843 (R.F.R. Ch./B6101).

Sea. Morris Cooper, R.N.R., O.N. 7373A.

Ldg. Sea. John Ferguson, R.N.R., O.N. 1928C

A.B. John Frederick Gaisford, O.N. 192325 (R.F.R. Dev./B3059)

Ldg. Sea. Daniel Keggins, R.N.R., O.N. 2025C

M.A.A. George Ledson, O.N. 128993 (R.F.R. Po./A2203).

Ldg. Sea. William Leslie, R.N.R., O.N. 2008D

Sea. Michael Lynch, R.N.R., O.N. 2486G

P.O. Charles Edward Marjoram, O.N. 189641 (Po.).

1<sup>st</sup> Engmn. Joseph Van Sertima.

Pte. John Wilson, R.M.L.I., No. Po./18744

The following Officers and men have been mentioned in despatches:-

Capt. (Cdre., 2<sup>nd</sup> Class) Contland Herbert Simpson, R.N.R. (Rear-Adml., retd.)

Capt. Henry Boyle Townshend Somerville, R.N.

Capt. Frederic Aubrey Whitehead, R.N.

Capt. William Drummond Church, R.N.

Capt. Victor Gallafent Gurner, R.N.

Capt. William Bowden Smith, R.N.

Cdr. (actg. Capt.) Godfrey Edwin Corbett, R.N.

Cdr. (actg. Capt.) Thomas Acland Williams, R.N.

Cdr. Harry Tylden Mosse, R.N.

Eng-Cdr. James Henry Barber, R.N.

Cdr. Alexander Rennie, R.N.R.

Cdr. Frederic Ernest Storey, R.D., R.N.R.

Eng-Cdr. Claud Lapsley Stewart, R.N.R.

Lieut.-Cdr. (actg. Cdr.) Harold Dallas Adair-Hall, R.N.

Lieut.-Cdr. (actg. Cdr.) Henry George Kendall, R.N.R.

Lieut.-Cdr. Jehoiada Jeafferson Brewer, R.N.

Lieut.-Cdr. Arthur Douglas Harry Dibben, R.N.

Payr. (actg. Staff Payr.) Arthur Collett Painter R.N.

Lieut.-Cdr. Alexander Riddel, R.N.R.

Lieut. (actg. Lieut.-Cdr.) John Easton Nicol, R.N.V.R.

The Revd. Alexius Calderbank (Roman Catholic Chaplain)

Lieut. Bertram Harold Davies, R.N.R.

Lieut. Edwin Frederick McLeod, R.N.R.

Lieut. David Alexander Jack, R.N.R.

Lieut. Alexander Henderson Boyd, R.N.R.

Lieut. John Manford McEwan, R.N.V.R.

Lt. John Alexander Douglas, R.N.V.R.

Payr. Reginald Stephen Willoughby, R.N.R.

Actg. Lieut. George Raleigh Gray Worcester R.N.R.

Actg. Lieut. Thomas Frank Balkwill, R.N.R.

Asst. Payr. Peter Clark Ingram, R.N.R.

Ch.Carp. (tempy. Warrt. Offr.) Frank Gallagher, M.M.

C.P.O. John Edward Addicott, O.N. 180883 (Dev.).

Greaser William Allen, M.M.R., No. 788027

Ldg. Sea. Alfred Dunford Ashdown, O.N. 201935 (R.F.R. Po./B4812).

C.P.O. Stephen Bible, O.N. 134636 (R.F.R. Po./A2801).

Sto. 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., Clive Bradley, O.N.S.S. 108758 (R.F.R. Po./B6919).Sto. 1<sup>st</sup> Cl., Harry Capewell, O.N. 104331 (R.F.R. Po./B4934).

P.O. James Clements, O.N. 229164 (Dev.).

Sea. Abraham Collings, R.N.R. (Newfoundland), O.N. 1179X).

Ldg. Sea. Richard John Francis, O.N. 201202 (R.F.R. Ch./B3686).

Sea. Michael Floody, R.N.R., O.N. 3171B

Actg. Ch. Yeo. Sigs. Thomas Hannaford, O.N. 185636 (Dev.).

Pte. Leslie George Ireland, R.M.L.I., No. Ply./20063.

Ord. Sea. Charles Lambert, O.N. J32946 (Dev.).

Sea. Donald McLeod, R.N.R., O.N. 4220B

Sergt. William Henry Middleton, R.M.L.I., No. Ply./14254

Elect.Art., 2<sup>nd</sup> Cl., Arthur Edwin Parker, O.N. M1709 (Dev.).

C.P.O. Frederick Reeds, O.N. 130964 (R.F.R. Po./A2732).

P.O. William Staples, R.N.R., O.N. 3681B.

E.R.A., 3<sup>rd</sup> Cl., Frederick Charles Valentine Waldern, O.N. M6183 (Dev.).2<sup>nd</sup> Engmn. Oliver Wilkinson

C.P.O. John Willey, D.S.M., O.N. 117899 (R.F.R. Po./A1137).

P.O. Teleg. John Henry Worsley, O.N. 240204 (Dev)

<u>Ship</u> <sup>1</sup>	Gross Tons.	Date of Loss	Cause of Loss	<u>Killed</u> of Officers	<u>Or Died</u> <u>Wounds</u> Men
<i>Viknor</i> (Ex <i>Viking</i> )	5,386	13.1.15	Lost off Irish Coast	22	272
<i>Clan MacNaughton</i>	5,000	3.2.15	Believed to have foundered in N. Atlantic	20	257
<i>Bayano</i>	5,948	11.3.15	Sunk by Submarine off Corsewall Pt. Galloway	15	182
<i>India</i>	7,940	8.8.15	Sunk by Submarine off Norwegian Coast	10	113
<i>Alcantara</i>	16,034	29.2.16	Sunk in action with the raider <i>Greif</i> in  Lat. 61° 48'N  Long. 1° 40'E	5	69
<i>Hilary</i>	6,329	25.5.17	Sunk by Submarine in Atlantic	--	4
<i>Avenger</i>	15,000	14.6.17	Torpedoed by U-69 in N. Atlantic on passage to Scapa Flow	--	1
<i>Otway</i>	12,077	23.7.17	Sunk by Submarine in N. Atlantic	--	10
<i>Oropesa</i> (Re-named <i>Champagne</i> )	5,360	9.10.17	Sunk by Submarine in Irish Sea.	5	50
<b>Totals 9 AMC's</b>	78,235	-----	6 Sunk by Submarines  1 Sunk in action  2 Lost	77  <u>26</u>  103 +  =	958  <u>104</u>  1062  <b>1165</b>
<i>Oceanic</i> <sup>2</sup>	17,274	8.9.14	Ran aground east of Foula Island and broke up there.	Nil	Nil

<sup>1</sup> Source: Tupper *Reminiscences* 288

<sup>2</sup> *Oceanic* included for completeness

**Memorials**

No specific memorial exists for the Tenth Cruiser Squadron. Probably the most tangible and poignant memorial is the derelict guns guarding the mouth of the Northern Base Swarbacks Minn on page 126.

**Royal Navy**

An Admiralty committee recommended that the three manning ports in Great Britain - Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth - should each have an identical memorial of unmistakable naval form, an obelisk, which would serve as a leading mark for shipping. The memorials were designed by Sir Robert Lorimer. They record the names of personnel belonging to these base ports and who have no grave but the sea. Memorial Books also exist recording the name information. Thus any Squadron losses from the RN, RNR and RNVR will be recorded on the memorial in the manning port of a particular ship.

**Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve**

The Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve are well remembered for in addition to entries on the Port Naval War Memorials there is a tablet in Newfoundland. Only those who have no grave but the sea are recorded. It can be deduced from one of the websites listed that 76 Newfoundland Royal Naval Reservists perished in the service of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.

**Merchant Navy War Memorial**

Located at Tower Hill, London the Merchant Navy Memorial records the names of merchant seafarers who have no grave but the sea. Their names are recorded under the names of their ships which are displayed in alphabetical order. A Memorial Book is available in the nearby Trinity House Office. None of the Squadron ships are recorded there. A likely reason is that, when lost they were armed merchant cruisers in the Navy List therefore not at merchant ships. The remembrance of seafarer losses varied enormously between companies, since often they were perceived as 'casual labour' employed for the voyage only. All staff of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company are recorded on the company's memorials. (See Page 252) However,

**Veterans Association****Royal Naval Association (RNA)**

Unlike the centrally organised Royal British Legion, the RNA post World War 1 consisted of a collection of branches known as the RN Comrades Associations which sprang up where there proved to be a demand. It was not until 1954 when a Royal Charter was granted that the RNA took on its present form. The RNA does not grant membership to Merchant Navy veterans. However, a few RNA branches do allow do ex merchant seafarers as 'Associates'.

**Merchant Navy Association (MNA)**

The MNA was not formed until 1989. By then the British Merchant Fleet was probably at its lowest and numbers of British seafarers employed was a similar level. The aim is to raise public awareness of our maritime heritage and seek more recognition for seafaring veterans. There are some 40 branches in the UK. Together with support from Lord Prescott, the Association succeeded in having September 3<sup>rd</sup> designated as Merchant Navy Day, commemorating the loss of the *Athenia* on the first day of World War 2.

Further details of each of the above can be traced in the Bibliography under the list of websites accessed.

**Abeam.**

When any place or object is at right angles to the fore and aft line of a ship.

**Astern.**

Behind or backwards.

**Awash Condition.**

When a submarine, although partly submerged, keeps the conning tower clear of the sea surface this is known as the 'awash condition'. This allows the higher surface speed to be maintained and enjoy better visibility whilst minimising her own silhouette to a surface ship's lookout.

**Ballast.**

Weights placed in a ship's hold instead of cargo, to ensure stability.

**Binnacle.**

A brass bowl which contains the compass, and which has a brass protecting cover with a glass front and lighting arrangements inside. Usually mounted on a pedestal stand.

**Bow.**

The front end of a ship.

**Buffer Spring.**

A type of shock absorber.

**Bulkheads.**

Partitions or inside walls dividing sections or spaces in a ship.

**Bulwarks.**

That protecting part of a ship's that runs round above the level of the upper deck like a low wall.

**Compass Error.**

The net effect of combining the values for variation and deviation. It is the number of degrees, either East or West to be applied to the True Course to establish the Compass Course to steer.

**Dead Reckoning.**

Position assumed by courses and distances run when observations are unobtainable.

**Decoy Ships**

A naval ship designed to look like ordinary merchant ships but hiding guns which were revealed and opened fire on the intercepting vessel when it came close to launch its boarding boat. E.g. *Alcantara* and *Greif*

**Derricks.**

These are swivelling booms attached to the heel of a mast to act as a crane jibs for the loading and discharge of cargo or other weights e.g. boarding boats.

'Topping derricks' is the work of raising the derricks from their normal horizontal position to the required angle for working when they are the secured in that position.

**Deviation.**

The angle between compass North and magnetic North is known as deviation. It is named either East or West and is one of the components of the error on a magnetic compass. It is caused by local magnetic fields set up from the ship's structure, possibly cargo and equipment. The value varies as the ship's course changes and so deviation must be checked on each alteration of course.

**Divisions.**

Daily muster aboard a warship of all officers and men when orders and prayers are read out.

**Down To Her Marks.**

When a ship is loaded so as to bring the Plimsoll mark, painted on her hull, down to the waterline.

**Draft/Draught**

The depth to which the ship's hull lies beneath her waterline.

**Estimated Position.**

This is the most accurate position that can be calculated utilising all the known factors that can affect the ship's progress such as leeway, wind current and tidal streams.

**Evening Quarters.**

A muster of the men at the end of the afternoon when daily work ceases and activity is confined to watch keepers.

**Falls**

The blocks and tackle (pulley system) used to raise and lower a lifeboat. The lower block has a hook.

**Fathom.**

Length of six feet.

**Fix.**

This is the position obtained by the intersection of two or more bearings from either terrestrial or celestial objects obtained simultaneously. The position lines can be from visual compass bearings, sextant observations or by means of radio aids.

**Forward or For'rd.**

Towards the bow of the ship.

**Freeboard**

The distance that the statutory deck line is above the water line

**Galley.**

Kitchen aboard a ship.

**Gyro Compass.**

The gyro compass uses the properties of gyroscopic inertia and precession and seeks to align itself in the true north-south direction. It is a mechanical device and subject to small errors which must be allowed for when in use. This type of compass was the exception in 1914-1917.

**Helm and Wheel Orders.**

The present practice of giving wheel orders in the form 'Port 10' or 'Starboard 15' was not brought into standard practice until 19128. All the 10<sup>th</sup>CS ships had a steering wheel but often commanding officer's report use the helm (or tiller) terminology associated sailing ships e.g. 'I ordered the helm to port'. Thus if the tiller was moved to port the rudder moves to starboard and the ship will turn to the right'. It was a confusing legacy from the days of sail and care should be taken when reading reports of actions taken.

**Knot.**

A measure of speed expressing the number of nautical miles per hour.  
e.g. A speed of 10 knots means a speed of 10 nautical miles per hour.

**Lead Lines.**

Used to establish the depth of water in which a ship floats. The Hand Lead weighs between 7 to 14 lbs and a line is marked up to 20 fathoms (One fathom = 6 feet): modern marking is up to 50 metres, The Deep Sea Lead weighs from 28-30 lbs., and is marked up to 100 fathoms.

**Lee Side.**

The side of ship away or sheltered from the wind.

**Leeway.**

The angle between the ship's fore and aft line and the direction made good is termed the 'leeway'. It is assessed by visually estimating the angle between the fore and aft line and the ship's wake.

**Magnetic Compass.**

The magnetic compass uses the inherent magnetic forces within and encircling the earth in order to establish direction. A magnetic needle, when freely suspended, is influenced by the earth's magnetic field and aligns itself approximately in a north-south direction. The compass is affected by the variation and deviation. The latter influence is partly compensated by corrector magnets, soft iron spheres and a Flinder's Bar of vertical cylindrical soft iron. This was the only type of compass aboard the armed merchant cruisers of the Tenth Cruiser Squadron.

**Mercantile Marine.**

The collective name given to commercially owned and operated ships, together with the professional officers and ratings employed aboard. The ships are operated under government regulations and insurer's requirements. The personnel, although paid by individual shipowners, are subject to government control in respect of licensing and medical standards, as well as overall administration by the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen.

**Metacentric Height.**

Is the distance between the centre of gravity and the metacentre. This is closely connected with the ship's righting moment or righting lever which is a measure of the vessel's ability to return to her original position.

**Mousing**

A temporary rope lashing placed across a hook to prevent the slings holding a load from being accidentally jerked clear of the hook, often causing damage or injury.

**Observed Position.**

This usually is a fix from the intersection of two or more astronomical position lines established by sextant altitudes and calculation.

**Paravane.**

A special float mechanism which streams an extra strong wire from a ship's bow and is capable of cutting mine moorings underwater.

**Patent Log.**

Effectively a milometer which records the distance run through the water and is reset to zero daily at noon. The register is a 'clock' usually mounted on the ship's rail right aft and a repeater was often fitted in the chartroom. Attached to the rail mechanism is a length of special line towed astern which is revolved by means of a rotator at the end. It was a standard fitting on all the armed merchant cruisers of the 10<sup>th</sup> CS.

**Racking.**

The transverse stresses on the ship's structure when rolling in a seaway. These stresses can be worsened if too much cargo is loaded in the lower holds.

**Radio Direction Finder. (R.D.F.)**

The principle of this type of radio aid is based on the fact that a plane vertical loop aerial possesses directive properties. These properties are derived from the varying strengths of an induced signal in the aerial dependent upon the aspect of the plane of the loop to the transmitter. In this way, *Alsatian* established the direction of a Squadron ship which transmitted a signal, when instructed, to effect a rendezvous between the two ships concerned. This was the only electronic aid available to the Squadron and was little more than a development model. Post war the system was expanded but today more advanced electronics have replaced RDF and it no longer exists.

**Rangefinder.**

The principle of the rangefinder was that by looking at a distant object from the ends of a horizontal pole the lines joining the ends of the pole to the object converge to a small angle. The Rangefinder was merely an instrument for measuring this angle and a mechanism inside the instrument converted the angle into a target range which was required for the gun sights.<sup>1</sup>

**Reciprocating Steam Engines.**

An engine which first admits steam above the piston then below the piston to return it to the original position ready for the next 'down' stroke', when steam is admitted above the piston again. This vertical movement is converted to a rotary movement to drive a propeller by a crankshaft and connecting rod arrangement.

**Royal Fleet Reserve. (R.F.R.)**

A naval reserve force drawn from former naval ratings who, after completing contractual service with the Royal Navy, were liable to recall by Royal Proclamation in times of emergency. The liability lasted for a specified numbers of years after leaving active service in the Navy.

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<sup>1</sup> Admiralty, *Notes on Gunnery for Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships* (London, 1939) 58

**Royal Naval Reserve. (R.N.R.)**

A naval reserve force drawn from professional officers and ratings of the Mercantile Marine. Membership was voluntary but many major mail steamer companies encouraged their employees to join. After basic training, further periodic training with the fleet was undertaken. A Royal Proclamation was required to call up the personnel in times of emergency.

**Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. (R.N.V.R.)**

A naval reserve force of men drawn from civilian occupations ashore. They were volunteers and not professional seafarers, somewhat similar to the Territorial Army. The volunteers carried out training in the evenings, at weekends and two weeks annual training aboard naval ships or at naval establishments. All officers were promoted from the lower deck. A Royal Proclamation was required to call up the personnel in times of emergency.

**Righting Lever.**

See Metacentric Height above.

**Runner.**

The wire rope supported by the derrick head and leading to a cargo winch. The runner has a hook and the load is suspended from it.

**Sounding Machine.**

The deep sea sounding machine consists of a small 'hand winch' with a drum holding about 300 fathoms of piano wire. To the end of the wire a sinker or lead of about 28 lbs. weight is secured. Normally fitted amidships and near the navigating bridge, the sounding wire is streamed from the end of a boom well clear of the ship's side. The machine would have been a standard fitting in the 10<sup>th</sup> CS, the method is now obsolete.

**Stiff or Crank**

A condition whereby a ship has a rapid and almost violent roll. It indicates a centre of gravity lower than optimum usually too much weight lower down in the ship. It can cause excessive racking.

**Tender.**

A condition whereby a ship has a slow gentle roll. Whilst comfortable for crew it indicates a raised centre of gravity, possibly by too much weight in the 'tween decks or on the upper deck.

**Union Purchase.**

A system using a pair of derricks. The derricks are topped to the correct angles and the two runners are joined with a proper union purchase swivel hook. One derrick plumbs the hold or deck and the other plumbs over the ship's side. By controlled use of the derricks' winches a weight, such as cargo or a boarding boat, can be hoisted up then transferred clear of the ship to be landed on the dockside or the water in the case of a boat.

**Variation.**

At any point on the earth's surface, variation is the angle between the magnetic meridian and true North. It is a value which is known and named either East or West and is one of the components of the error on a magnetic compass.

**Wardroom.**

The room in a warship for the messing of all officers of commissioned rank below the commanding officer. Also used as a casualty station or operating theatre when in action.

**Watches.**

Periods of duty or freedom. 'Watch on deck': period of duty on deck. 'Watch below': period of freedom.

**Waterline.**

The line which the surface of the water describes on a ship when she is loaded or ready for sea.

**Whips.**

A fall or rope rigged through blocks (pulleys) to form a tackle. If one block is used then it is a single whip. If two blocks are used then the mechanical advantage is increased. Whips were used as ammunition hoists in the 10<sup>th</sup>CS.

**Worn Superior.**

Worn above.

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PP/MCR/53	<b>Capt H.C.R. Brocklebank RN</b>	H.M.S. <i>Changuinola</i>
96/47/1	<b>Culme-Seymour E.V.</b>	H.M.S. <i>Alsatian</i>
DEC 3/1	<b>De Chair</b> manuscripts PP/MCR/C4	
02/2/1	Journal of Leading Signaller <b>Driscoll, J.,</b>	H.M.S. <i>Arlanza</i>
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P 389	Journal of <b>Midshipman F.L. McKeag RNR</b>	H.M.S. <i>India</i>
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P190	Diary <b>Mid. Francis Poole RNR</b>	H.M.S. <i>Alcantara</i>
JAS/1/1	Diary <b>John Shuter</b>	H.M.S. <i>Changuinola</i>
82/24/1	<b>Capt F.A. Slocum RN</b>	H.M.S. <i>Almanzora</i>

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NOR/1 H.M.S. *Arlanza* May-October 1915

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**P&O ships of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron**

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RMS/6/14 In Letter Book from Public Departments

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RMS /51/8 Newspapers Cuttings Book

**Papers of Captain G. W. Vivian R.N. (VIV)**

VIV /4 Vivian (H.M.S. *Patia*) to Rear Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron 2 February 1915

VIV /4 Vivian (H.M.S. *Patia*) to Secretary of the Admiralty 4 May 1915

VIV /4 Vivian (H.M.S. *Patia*) to Rear Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron 6 May 1915

VIV /4 Vivian (H.M.S. *Patia*) to Rear Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron 20 August 1915

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VIV /13 Vivian to Secretary of the Navy. 30 June 1914  
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### **Capt. A.H.Smyth R.N.**

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- ADM 1/8415/80 C-in-C Home Fleets to Admiral Orkneys and Shetlands and Rear-Admiral 10<sup>th</sup> CS. 21 June 1915
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- ADM 53 33355 - 33359 *Almanzora*
- ADM 53 33378 - 33384 *Alsatian*
- ADM 53 33488 - 33515 *Ambrose*
- ADM 53 33654 - 33672 *Andes*

- ADM 53 34111 - 34152 *Arlanza*  
ADM 53 34153 - 34170 *Armada Castle*  
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ADM 53 34905 - 34906 *Bayano*  
ADM 53 36739 - 36759 *Calyx*  
(Calypso)
- ADM 53 37068 - 37072 *Caribbean*  
ADM 53 37364 - 37372 *Cedric*  
ADM 53 37552 - 37556 *Changuinola*  
No logs held *Clan McNaughton*  
ADM 53 38276 - 38296 *Columbella*
- ADM 53 39947 - 39955 *Digby*  
ADM 53 34191 - 34196 (*Digby as Artois*)  
ADM 53 40533 - 40535 *Ebro*  
ADM 53 41013 - 41014 *Eskimo*  
ADM 53 43084 - 43092 *Gloucestershire*
- ADM 53 44317 - 44342 *Hilary*  
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ADM 53 44825 - 44827 *India*  
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## Paintings



‘*Teutonic* leaving Liverpool about 1890.’ by W.L. Wyllie (1851-1931)  
( Depicted wearing Blue Ensign and fitted with 4½” guns port side forward of the foremast and port side aft of the mizzen mast.)  
NMM Ref: BHC 3657



HMS *Almanzora* with Dazzle camouflage. By P Needell. (RNM)

## Ship Model



H.M.S. *Alsatian*

Full hull approx. 20”. Made by William Ball, a carpenter aboard.  
(Depicted with black hull, grey funnels and accommodation, Vice-Admiral’s flag)  
Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool. Ref: LOA0580 Cat. No. 512

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