

The Jutland controversy: a case study in intra-service politics,  
with particular reference to the presentation of the Battlecruiser  
Fleet's training, conduct and command.

being a Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

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(September 1998).

## Contents.

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| List of diagrams.  | Page i   |
| Preface.   | Page 1   |
| Introduction.  | Page 13  |
| 1. The Battlecruisers: something to hide?                          | Page 43  |
| 2. The Harper ‘Record’.  | Page 84  |
| 3. The Genesis of the <i>Naval Staff Appreciation of Jutland</i> . | Page 135 |
| 4. The Official History & Admiralty <i>Narrative</i> .             | Page 175 |
| 5. Poles apart: the 5thBS and BCF at Jutland.                      | Page 212 |
| 6. A BCF take-over?  | Page 255 |
| Conclusion.  | Page 287 |
| Appendix 1. <i>The state of shells at Jutland</i> .                | Page 317 |
| Appendix 2. <i>Positioning the action from 3:47-5:00</i> .         | Page 324 |
| Appendix 3. <i>Personnel in Admiralty posts, 1919-38</i> .         | Page 331 |
| Appendix 4. <i>Signalling at the time of Jutland</i> .             | Page 335 |
| Appendix 5. <i>The Battle of Jutland: Order of Battle</i> .        | Page 342 |
| Appendix 6. <i>British and German Naval Ranks, 1916</i> .          | Page 350 |
| Notes.   | Page 351 |
| List of sources.   | Page 394 |

## **List of diagrams.**

**(Between pages 83 & 84)**

- #1. The Battle of Jutland 2:20pm.**
- #2. German advance forces 2pm.**
- #3. The Battle of Jutland 2:35-45pm.**
- #4. The Battle of Jutland 2:45-3:10pm.**
- #5. The Battle of Jutland 3:15-52pm.**
- #6. (British and German distribution of fire 3:47pm).**
- #7. The Battle of Jutland 3:47-4:06pm.**
- #8. The Battle of Jutland 4:03-26pm.**
- #9. The run to the south.**
- #10. The Battle of Jutland 4:20-5:13pm.**
- #11. The Battle of Jutland 5:13-45pm.**
- #12. Grand Fleet cruising formation 5:15pm.**
- #13. The Battle of Jutland 5:45-6:35pm.**
- #14. The BCF and 5thBS 5:00-13pm.**
- #15. The Battlefleet turn away 7:35pm.**
- #16. The BCF's 360° turn.**

## Preface.

The Battle of Jutland, 31st May-1st June 1916, was the only occasion during WWI that the main British and German Fleets met in action. Both sides responded to it differently. Subsequently, discussion in British circles, especially after the war, began to analyse the result and this rapidly led to an examination of the causes of it. The result, whilst it did not comprehensively favour either side, was a disappointment to the Royal Navy. By November 1918, the reduced likelihood of ever again fighting the German Fleet increased this disappointment. However, the German Fleet's internment at Scapa Flow somewhat relieved that disappointment. Whichever way one looked at the situation, the reality was that Germany's High Seas Fleet (HSF) would never again be a threat.

Without the subsequent actions of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty, who had commanded the Battlecruiser Fleet (BCF) at Jutland, it was unlikely that there would have been a Jutland controversy. Some debate would doubtless have taken place, but without Beatty's persistent involvement it is hard to see how it could have become as embittered as it eventually did. This was because, whilst most of the Navy realised that the action could have had a more favourable outcome, the majority had accepted that, by 1919, nothing could be done to change it. After the HSF was scuttled, on 21st June 1919, the Navy's opponent for the past five years had been neutralised more completely than could have been achieved in any battle. As far as Beatty was concerned, this was simply not sufficient.

Beatty's feelings on the prosecution of the war in general were



repeated throughout his correspondence, particularly with his wife. In 1914, he wrote to Winston Churchill (to whom Beatty had been Naval Secretary when Churchill was First Lord) that:

"Nothing less than complete annihilation can or must be allowed to satisfy us...what disturbs me is...whether we can be reasonably certain of annihilating [the First Scouting Group, composed of the German battlecruisers] without which I should feel we had failed." <sup>1</sup>

It was evident that, in light of this, although the strategic outcome of the battle had been favourable to the British, Beatty felt a sense of failure. The German Fleet had not been eliminated and this atmosphere of failure was not alleviated by time. After Jutland he noted his:

"haunting fear that we never shall [meet the HSF]...and the Grand Fleet will never be able to justify itself...[Jutland was] one of the saddest days of my life...the Navy missed one of the great opportunities of achieving the greatest and most glorious victory." <sup>2</sup>

This coloured his opinion regarding the performances of British ships and personnel, especially those of the battlefleet (BF), who Beatty felt had not supported his efforts as fully as they might have done. He also noted that the management of the Grand Fleet by its C-in-C, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, had left much to be desired, that Jellicoe was unable to select "good men", was

"half-hearted" and had "mismanaged" the action at Jutland.<sup>3</sup> There was not the personal animosity that might be imagined from Beatty's assessment, but there certainly was much frustration.

Almost every argument on the battle was the result of a response to a statement or action of Beatty's, or one made on his behalf. The majority of the service was prepared to let the unsatisfactory result of Jutland lie, but Beatty was not. Before the war Beatty had come to the attention of a public that loved heroes and whose Naval heroes were long-since dead. Essentially, Beatty was the first of a new era of heroes that concentrated public attention upon the Navy and its role defending the nation's interests. As Beatty's background and personality were the principal factors that later motivated and determined the Jutland controversy, they require some consideration.

Central to the initial phases of Jutland and the subsequent controversy, was Beatty's character and approach to the Navy. Since becoming a Cadet, in January 1884, his career was not especially distinguished until he was a Lieutenant (aged 27) commanding a gunboat in support of Kitchener's campaign to re-conquer the Sudan. His efforts won him a DSO and special promotion to Commander. Two years later, his actions in the Boxer wars saw him promoted Captain. He was then not only renowned within the service, but had been introduced to public adulation and discovered that he liked it. His six-buttoned jacket and cap worn at a slant also made him a more noticeable and familiar individual than most other officers. It was such an image that he encouraged.

Whilst recovering from wounds sustained in China, he was introduced to two more things that he liked: Ethel Tree, the only daughter of chain-store pioneer Marshall Field (who introduced such novelties as generous credit terms for customers and an in-store restaurant and whose shops permitted the return of goods) and her father's sizeable annual allowance. When Field died, on 16th January 1906, he left an estate worth approximately £30,000,000 (nominal). In addition to Ethel's annual allowance, he left separate trusts of £3,000,000, £2,000,000 and £1,000,000 for her when she reached forty.

Following her divorce from Arthur Tree, Ethel married Beatty, in 1901. He then had things that most other officers did not: fighting experience, medals and enough money to ensure that he could continue his lifestyle without ever needing to work again. Indeed, in 1905, Beatty had got into trouble for straining the engines of the cruiser *Suffolk* and Ethel remarked



that if there had been any serious damage, she would buy the Admiralty a new one. It was a true statement, one that did Beatty's increasing kudos no harm at all. However, along with others' feelings of envy, this confident attitude was, to others, mixed with an appearance that seemed to be brash, bombastic and arrogant. In a service where diffidence was prominent, if not implicitly preferred, Beatty inspired either praise or loathing.

As a Captain, Beatty had periods in which his interest in the service wavered. Ethel, like many sailors' wives, complained at his many absences. His promotion to Rear-Admiral, in 1910, made him the youngest admiral since Nelson and heroic comparisons were encouraged by many newspapers. He subsequently turned-down the offer of becoming second-in-command of the Atlantic Fleet. For a junior Rear-Admiral, an alternative appointment would be hard to come by, not to mention the Admiralty's dislike of his refusal. It was seen as arrogance by the Navy and historians alike, but there was much envy in these claims. Beatty had quite legitimately secured his worldly position and made it clear that if he were to remain in the Navy, then it would only be in a significant post or as commander of a major Fleet.

At this point, Beatty's interest in a Naval career evidently wavered again. It could well be suggested that any serious career officer would have accepted the Atlantic Fleet post without question. Beatty's personal situation in relation to his professional one is important, but especially so when he took command of the Battlecruiser Squadron (BCS), on 1st March 1913, arriving directly from a holiday in Monte Carlo. With selected friends and favoured battlecruiser captains (the two were sometimes the same thing) the

Beattys spent much of the war socialising in Lothian and Fife. At Scapa, Jellicoe spent more time moulding the battlefleet around routine and his own ideas, there being few distractions from the Navy in such a remote location. Both he and Beatty had ample opportunity, when serving, or off duty, to develop their respective forces' operational principles. However, Jellicoe was more effective than was Beatty at doing this and, leaving aside the relative merits of this, this had later repercussions for Beatty that he keenly sought to hide. It was Beatty's success in hiding these defects from his contemporaries and historians that is the subject of this work.

Beatty's appointment to the BCS command was justified on important grounds. There was little doubt that he was confident, inspired confidence in others and was, to that extent, a good leader. Few of his contemporaries had these qualities of leadership, or his action experience (albeit experience involving little actual Naval element). By 4th August 1914, the Admiralty had replaced Admiral Sir George Callaghan (C-in-C Home Fleet) with whom they thought to be a more robust, healthier and younger man — Jellicoe. The qualities of Callaghan, Jellicoe, Beatty and other potential candidates for senior commands can always be debated, but crucial to the Admiralty was effective leadership. They believed that they had this in Jellicoe and Beatty. Jellicoe was the knowledgeable technical specialist and had held important commands; Beatty was more the dashing, determined fighter. Jellicoe's seniority and experience was appropriate to his overall command. Beatty's image, confidence and experience made him the only serious candidate for such a significant command as the battlecruisers, however much others



might have carped. As was to be realised later, neither had all the benefits or defects possessed by the other, which was to cause controversy after the war. In short, Beatty lacked Jellicoe's detailed service knowledge and Jellicoe lacked Beatty's confidence and more aggressive attitude. The matter was not this simple in detail, as any attributes taken to the extreme are usually harmful, but generally, the differences in both their characters and experiences, at differing times, accounted for the survival of the German Fleet by 1st June 1916.

Since assuming command of the BCS, Beatty attempted to institute a greater freedom of action than was allowed for in Fleet Orders at the time. In fact, those Orders allowed very little freedom for individual action. As most of the Navy was used to, and preferred, the *status quo*, this marked-out Beatty as being different. His natural confidence, some might say arrogance, was doubtless encouraged by his personal situation. However, there was a positive side to this. Beatty was the most prominent senior officer to encourage such views so openly in his command of the BCS. Despite this, others in the BCS (later the BCF) were not so naturally confident or as financially secure as was Beatty. This resulted in, from Beatty's point of view, a less than satisfactory adoption of his reforms.

Whatever might be said for and against any officers of the period, although they might have had distinguished or mediocre careers until August 1914, none of the belligerents had experience of fighting the modern dreadnought-type ships that they commanded. It need not, therefore, have been a disadvantage to have been hitherto undistinguished, or *vice-versa*.

What was central to the debate regarding individual suitability, in 1914 and after the war, was the extent to which senior officers adapted to the experiences of the war.

On the outbreak of war, the British battlefleet were active conducting a series of sweeps in the southern North Sea, believing that they might encounter German ships attacking the British Expeditionary Force crossing the English Channel. On 21st and 23rd August, German ships made their first sorties into the North Sea. A plan to restrict and discourage such movements, was devised by Commodore Roger Keyes (CO 8th submarine flotilla). The Harwich Force, under Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt, would attack German patrols in the Heligoland Bight on 28th August, with the aim of inducing heavy German ships to move out, where seven D and E class submarines were lying in wait to the north and west of Heligoland, under Keyes' command in the destroyer *Lurcher*. The Battlecruiser Squadron (BCS) under Beatty's command and Commodore William Goodenough's First Light Cruiser Squadron (1stLCS) were the only support allowed by the Admiralty, but they failed to inform Keyes and Tyrwhitt of this, or Beatty and Goodenough of Keyes' and Tyrwhitt's presence.

At first light on the 28th, Tyrwhitt, by chance, encountered the 1stLCS. A few hours later, he engaged two German destroyers and light cruisers. As the action progressed, Keyes sighted the 1stLCS and reported them as enemy vessels, causing Tyrwhitt to order the 1stLCS to chase Keyes' 'enemy' cruisers. One of Keyes' submarines then attacked *Southampton*. As the 1stLCS withdrew (when Keyes recognised them), Beatty, who was delayed,



ordered them back to support Tyrwhitt. Beatty's concern was that the action was taking place only 25 miles from two major enemy bases and increased to full speed in support. Despite the whole force overwhelming the enemy destroyers and light cruisers, the BCS sank only the light cruisers *Köln* and *Ariadne* before visibility deteriorated and the action was broken-off.

Beatty emerged a hero and the battlecruisers had proved their utility as effective, heavy support for cruisers. However, the difficulty of dispatching the enemy ships, even after they had sustained serious damage, suggested that future victories might not be easy to come by, despite the Royal Navy's numerical and technical superiority. Equally significant, was the realisation of organisational blunders, essentially concerning communication. Despite this, future actions (which would prominently feature the battlecruisers) were plagued with poor communications. These were not simply of signalling, but related to understanding and communication between senior officers regarding strategy, tactics and operational effectiveness of all vessels.

For many years after the Battle of Jutland, participants and non-participants alike became immersed, to varying degrees, in disputes regarding the battle itself and what they felt that it demonstrated about the Royal Navy of the early 20th Century. The British Grand Fleet (GF) had awaited an opportunity to face the HSF for almost two years since the war began, expecting to deal it a serious blow. To the public, by 1916, the Navy seemed to be scarcely involved in the war, especially when compared to the army. This perception was the result of previously indecisive encounters with parts of the HSF.

Early on 16th December 1914, German battlecruisers of the First Scouting Group (1stSG), under *Vizeadmiral* Franz Hipper, with battleship support, bombarded the Yorkshire coast. The British Admiralty were unaware of the German battlefleet's support, and the Commander-in-Chief, Jellicoe, was directed to send only Vice-Admiral George Warrender's Second Battle Squadron (2ndBS) and Rear-Admiral William Pakenham's Third Cruiser Squadron (3rdCS), to join the Battlecruiser Fleet (BCF) commander, Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty, with his four battlecruisers, to attempt an interception. In support, were Commodore William Goodenough's First Light Cruiser Squadron (1stLCS) and Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt's Harwich Force of cruisers and destroyers. The German C-in-C (Admiral von Ingenohl) believed that he was about to encounter the British battlefleet and headed home at 05:45. By this time, Whitby and Scarborough (both undefended) had been attacked by the battlecruisers *Derfflinger* and *Von der Tann*, whilst Hartlepool had been attacked by *Moltke*, *Seydlitz* and the armoured cruiser

*Blücher*. The light cruiser *Kolberg* laid mines off Filey.

The Germans' potential lines of retreat through the east coast minefields were barred by the 2ndBS, Tyrwhitt to the south, Beatty in the centre, and Vice-Admiral Bradford's pre-dreadnought Third Battle Squadron (3rdBS) to the north. Hipper chose the centre for his escape. In poor visibility and rain squalls his ships were seen by Goodenough, who was ahead of Beatty. Beatty then ordered Goodenough's squadron to resume its cruising station, but did not intend the signal for Goodenough himself, in *Southampton*, or for *Birmingham*. As he obeyed the signal, Goodenough quickly lost contact with the German ships. Second-in-Command of the 2ndBS, in *Orion*, was Rear-Admiral Sir Robert Arbuthnot. Soon after Goodenough lost touch, Arbuthnot saw Hipper's ships. His Flag-Captain, Frederic Dreyer, asked permission to open fire, but this was denied by Arbuthnot without a signal from Warrender.

Following the raid, a recruiting poster showed a wrecked house and asked:

"Men of Britain! will you stand this? No. 2  
Wykeham Street, SCARBOROUGH, after the  
German bombardment on Dec.r 16th. It was the  
home of a working man. Four people were killed  
in this house including the Wife, aged 58, and  
Two Children, the youngest aged 5. 78 Women &  
Children were killed and 228 Women and  
Children were wounded by the German raiders."

Whilst it was stirring, it also reflected the Navy's operational problems encountered on the 16th December and general criticism of the Navy. Many newspapers were quick to question how the Navy had allowed the Germans to escape and why it seemed that little could be done to prevent such raids recurring. On 24th January 1915, the BCF engaged the 1stSG off Dogger Bank. The BCF were in pursuit of the fleeing Germans and closing on them, heavily damaging *Blücher*. Then, Beatty's flagship, *Lion*, was disabled. He signalled to the other four battlecruisers to engage the enemy bearing NE. Beatty's second-in-command, Rear-Admiral Archibald Moore (in *New Zealand*), led the BCF to the target bearing NE, the damaged *Blücher*, which was later sunk. During this, the 1stSG were drawing out of range and later reached port. Beatty was livid. He claimed that it was obvious that his signal referred to the 1stSG, not *Blücher* alone. Similar claims were made by Beatty regarding what he thought others should have done at Jutland to effect a defeat of German forces. They were to rankle with him for the rest of his life.



## Introduction.

A few months after the Dogger Bank engagement, a recruiting poster featured a picture of a luscious red/orange sunset over ships of the fleet. In the right hand corner, was a picture of Nelson. Between the dates 1805 and 1915 was written "England Expects" above "Are YOU doing YOUR duty to-day?" Coupled with the Scarborough raid and Dogger Bank action, there was much irony in this poster. The Royal Navy had reached a pinnacle with Trafalgar, in 1805, and Nelson's achievements were particularly feted. In 1914, Britain expected the Royal Navy to continue such successes where Nelson had left off. However, much had changed since 1805. Apart from the many technical and industrial advances that had changed warships beyond recognition since 1805, the Navy's approach to strategy, tactics and training was radically different. Dr. Gordon's *The Rules of the Game*, sought to explore "how, while the Royal Navy was undergoing its fifty-year conversion from oak and canvas to steel and turbines, its once clear, empiricist understanding of 'product' was pilfered from the lay-apart store by the vested interests of 'process'..."<sup>1</sup> and how this affected Jutland. The profound effect of the fatal collision between the Flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet, *Victoria*, and *Camperdown*, in June 1893, was seen as the end to the efforts of Admiral Sir George Tryon (C-in-C) to encourage initiative. The result was a Navy enmeshed in restrictive subject detail, with a fearful obedience to authority that stifled the initiative that had been evident in the late 18th/early 19th Centuries and which was immortalised in Nelson. The lack of success at Scarborough and Dogger Bank re-opened the question of whether or not

prewar practices were appropriate to the practicalities of war. The Jutland controversy perpetuated this underlying dispute between initiative and efforts to urge reform on the one hand — Beatty's echoing Tryon's — and maintaining the *status quo* on the other — which was largely embodied in Jellicoe's views.

On 31st May 1916, Grand Fleet ships engaged those of the HSF, the result being tactically inconclusive. On 3rd June, the British Admiralty issued a brief account of the battle that suggested a partial British defeat. Much of the account was involved with listing British losses, rather than noting British successes (which were uncertain). More British ships and lives had been lost than German, but strategically, Britain was in no worse a position than before the battle and could justifiably claim to have strengthened its position. In fact, 24 hours after the battle, the surviving Grand Fleet ships were ready for sea, which was not true for the German Fleet. Some German ships were not fit to sail for five months.

In contrast to the British Admiralty's announcement, the Kaiser claimed "a great victory in the North Sea".<sup>2</sup> In one sense, this was correct. From a German perspective, they had managed to achieve their perception of victory, by inflicting more material damage than they received, and partially fulfilled their aim to have reduced some of the Royal Navy's fighting capability. However, although they caused relatively little material damage compared to British over all fighting capability, the Germans were more aware from the end of the battle that the perception of what had been achieved was equally important (possibly more so from their perspective)

than what had actually happened.

In early June 1916, debate began in British and German journals regarding what had been achieved and who had won the engagement. From the British perspective, several aspects had gone seriously wrong. Most importantly, they had failed to inflict the sufficient and decisive permanent damage to the HSF that they had hoped for. Central to this, were issues relating to the operation of the Navy, its training, composition, tactics, strategy and personnel. In short, the whole organisation of the Navy came to be questioned from within and outside the service. Issues that had been discussed previously to Jutland, such as the study of history, the influence of technological developments, personal attributes, tactics and strategy, were all analysed with a view to suggesting improvements to enable the service to fight a future action to a more successful conclusion than at Jutland.

Following the battle, the Royal Navy began to polarise around two already familiar bodies of opinion. Some individuals believed that the study of history was neglected, being largely subjugated to technological advancements. Operational orders for the centralised system of command that existed, were seen as too numerous and inflexible, leading to dangerous restrictions on actions in battle. Central to this reforming point of view, was the aim of establishing a clear set of principles, based upon historical study, that gave commanders much more freedom to use their initiative and judgement in order to bring about a successful action. It was a concern that this flexibility had been lacking at Scarborough, Dogger Bank and Jutland. Before and after Jutland the most prominent and senior exponent of such



views, was the BCF commander, Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty.

The opposing body of opinion believed that the *status quo* had served the Navy well and should continue to do so. Those sharing this view believed that a detailed knowledge of technology, along with obedience to higher authority, were crucial to maintaining the Naval mastery developed throughout the Victorian era. The study of technical subjects and practical subject specialisms was favoured above that of history. Close, centralised control of the fleet, using many signals, was favoured above greater individual freedom of action. This was embodied in the Grand Fleet Battle Orders (GFBO) of the C-in-C (Jellicoe). Jellicoe's supporters felt that Jutland had vindicated both these ideas and Jellicoe's conduct at the battle. This view was not shared by Beatty and his supporters.

To many, the Jutland controversy has focused essentially upon who won, or came closest to it, the merits of the battlefleet's deployment, Jellicoe's lack of resolve in pursuing the action, as opposed to Beatty's dash, and the heated arguments expressed in many subsequent articles regarding why Jutland was not a conclusive success. Carlyon Bellairs's most effective contribution to understanding the dispute, was the title of his book, *The Battle of Jutland: The Sowing and the Reaping*, which was a summary of what the controversy was really about. Officers' education; technical and material advances (or lack of them); the Navy's preparations for war, its prosecution of it and developments in light of the experiences of the war, were all rightly referred to because the development of the battle itself was largely a product of prewar education and practice. These factors were under

debate before, during and after Jutland, and although they are important to the development of the controversy, they are not, contrary to popular belief, the whole issue.

After the war, those urging reform within the service often used Jutland to show where improvements were required, which, by their nature, included inherent criticisms of the architects and managers of the Navy as it was by 1916. These issues and their relevance to Jutland have been discussed before. However, there still remain significant and unaddressed omissions. Without knowledge there are no solutions, and subsequent statements regarding any issues that Jutland raises or involves, can only depend for their accuracy upon the accuracy of the evidence from which they derive. A fundamental impediment to understanding any event as fully as possible, is the availability of sufficient evidence and whether or not it is accurate and reliable enough to reflect what actually happened. David Beatty was well aware that interpretation of the evidence would decide how the Navy developed after Jutland. Therefore, he sought to influence the Jutland histories to his advantage — to support his reforms and enhance his image — by corrupting the evidence upon which contemporary perceptions of the battle were based.

For many years after Jutland, newspapers featured critical and controversial articles on the battle, referring to the absence or presence of tactical prowess and personal courage. These ephemera were widely assumed to have been significant in later disputes, and although they reflected and abetted strong expressions of opinion, they had little actual effect on the

Navy. Newspapers must sell copies; they do not exist as a neutral platform for outside debates, nor do they exist to provide and objectively analyse the varied, detailed and classified data that is required for a thorough understanding of an event (as far as this is ever possible). Although there was passionate debate, little was based upon a reasonably sound factual understanding.

That strong feelings were expressed in publications regarding Jutland was true, but a crucial distinction needs to be asserted. Views publicly expressed reflected the feelings of retired and serving officers alike, but were based upon little factual evidence. However, having strong opinions on Jutland did not necessarily mean that these had any actual affect upon the conduct, discipline and promotion of officers, or the operational conduct of the service. Contrasting views abounded in the 1920s reflecting opinion within the service.<sup>3</sup> However, contrary to almost every account of Jutland, these were not a close reflection of the intra-service controversy. In the 1920s, few had any detailed knowledge of what had happened at the battle. Indeed, the desire to rectify this by producing an official account had itself initiated the controversy. Jutland caused much well-known and heated debate. However, this was separate from the controversial, and less well-known, intra-service manoeuvrings to use the histories to influence wider perceptions of the battle. There is a big difference between a point of view and an opinion that actually alters something.

It is understandable that Bellairs's and Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon's Jutland books were charged with emotion, given their strong sympathies with

Beatty and Jellicoe respectively. These reflected popular expressions of opinion. However, they did not reflect, to any significant degree, the intra-service manoeuvrings to change perceptions of the battle, or the means employed to do so (essentially because all authors were ignorant of this). All works on Jutland have suffered by not recognising this sufficiently, if at all. Most recognised that defining accurately what happened and reconciling extant evidence was, and still is, difficult. The most serious defects in this area have still not been detailed sufficiently, yet are crucial to a more complete understanding. Any defects in the sources are almost universally considered to be natural historiographical discrepancies, which is most erroneous.

Natural historiographical discrepancies there are, but what still remains to be examined are the deliberate alterations to the evidence and the efforts to make it appear to be authentic. Most of these were instigated by Beatty. It is these actions and their consequences for the Navy that need study. They are significant, because to legitimise his favourable idea of his own performance and the principles he wished to see adopted by the Fleet, Beatty knew that there had to be an account that endorsed his views, which was also endorsed by the Admiralty and which was generally accepted as accurate.

The OED defines "Politics" as "Conduct of private affairs...scheming, planning" and the "political principles...or sympathies of a person or party"; "Politic" as "In a sinister sense, scheming, crafty, cunning...artfully contriving or contrived". These are the definitions that most accurately reflect the subject; the "sinister" aspects, the "scheming" and "contriving" to influence the histories in a particular interest.



The ultimate effectiveness of military institutions depends strongly upon the interaction of specialists. In the Royal Navy of the early 20th Century, these specialisms were mostly technical and scientific. This was a major difficulty that supporters of history had to overcome. The most prominent supporters of history and reform, and, therefore, supporters of Beatty, were Lieutenants Herbert Richmond, Kenneth and Alfred Dewar and Reginald Plunkett (later Plunkett Ernle-Erle-Drax). In 1912, Plunkett wrote in his diary that:

"I cannot help thinking that Richmond, Dewar, I  
and a few others must try to undertake the  
regeneration of the British Navy." <sup>4</sup>

It was a major task, but even allowing for some exuberance, this was what Plunkett and others sharing similar ideas attempted. Perhaps the most significant impediment Plunkett had already realised — that there were literally only a "few" keen to promote the cause. Including the names he gave, there totalled approximately ten historians to compete with the thousands of technical specialists. However, this was not the set-back that it might have seemed. This was because their cause was supported by a high-profile officer — Beatty. It was thanks to Beatty's rapid rise through important posts — the First Lord's secretary (1911), BCF commander (1913), C-in-C GF (1916) and First Sea Lord (1919) in under ten years, that Plunkett's and others' objective of the "regeneration" of the Navy had a good chance of being achieved.

Analysis of the largest Naval engagement of the war was to be central to this regeneration. In his unpublished biographical notes on Beatty, his

friend Sir Shane Leslie defined the source of the controversy. He wrote that following Jutland "Beatty knew the battle was with history". <sup>5</sup> The importance of this as the keystone of the affair, has been overlooked thus far.

Following the raids on Yorkshire in December 1914 and Dogger Bank, the BCF received public criticism for not intercepting the enemy raiders. Beatty then wrote-up and sent away his reports of the two actions. Following Jutland, he complained to the First Lord of the Admiralty (A.J. Balfour):

"I have now had occasion to write three sets of despatches...In the first two instances my reports were distorted and cut about, so that what eventually appeared in the press bore a considerably different sense from what I wrote...I have a very vivid recollection of one...very pungent article [finishing with] "The British Admiral let the enemy escape...Admiral Beatty's report...proves on his own showing that he deserves not glory, but a Court Martial...with the ghost of Admiral Byng present as an interested spectator"! My written despatch...was so altered that I asked that an announcement should be made in the Gazette that it was an abridged copy." <sup>6</sup>

Between the 19th and 20th June 1916, <sup>7</sup> Beatty corresponded with Jellicoe. In this exchange he feared that "quotations may not fully explain the movements

of the Force under my command" and that:

"I fear greatly that quotation will never clear the movements etc. of my little lot. They can always be twisted and turned. I have already had unpleasant experiences in this matter...This caused considerable adverse criticism...I was stigmatised as [a] rotter...it cannot be good...to be always put down as a bloody fool...Again on this occasion I have already been the subject of a considerable amount of adverse criticism and am looking to the publication of the Despatch to knock it out." <sup>8</sup>

Jellicoe responded, informing the First Sea Lord (Admiral Sir Henry Jackson):

"It is surely not his business to edit it or to have anything to do with the plans which it is proposed to publish...my view would have been for the Admiralty to have told him that the plan [of his Flagship, *Lion*] was not his business." <sup>9</sup>

This exchange contained the beginnings of the controversy. Beatty was highly sensitive to his role in command of the BCF, because it was counter to his broader case to admit to major failings. The battle had not shown him in as good a light as he had wished, nor had it endorsed his BCF tactical regime sufficiently to support its wider implementation. As Beatty experienced



difficulty in stating his case to the public and the service at large, his fear was not simply of unjustified personal criticism, but that his underlying aim to use Jutland to support his reforms would falter or fail.

In light of this exchange, recalling Shane Leslie's words, the conclusion that Beatty was determined to see to it that his view of his part in the action would be told as he wanted it to be told is clear. It is also clear from the above exchange, that Beatty did not trust others to do this. So, he himself schemed to achieve it.

When Beatty became First Sea Lord, on 1st November 1919, the opportunity to assert his view of his role in the proposed official account was one that he could not resist. Apart from expressing his personal views when others were not permitted to express theirs, he also hid crucial defects in his management of the BCF that had contributed to the results at Scarborough, Dogger Bank and Jutland. This was important to sustaining Beatty's post-Jutland image and ensuring that the BCF should avoid close scrutiny, lest the operational defects be found out and weaken the general impression of his much vaunted, self-stated success in the action. Equally important, was that tactical reform would not suffer because of the perception that Beatty's operational principles were fundamentally flawed.

Essentially, the problem in understanding the controversy is in understanding the histories — upon which many reformers and conservatives alike based their views — and how they were composed. Beatty pursued a deliberate course of action to alter the official accounts of the battle, by insisting upon his views being inserted whether or not the extant evidence

supported him. The manner in which he attempted to do this has not yet been given the consideration it requires, but the extent to which it affects many significant assertions regarding the battle is important. The fact that there were only ever a few people involved in this has led all authors to assume, erroneously and to varying degrees, that the disputes concerning the composition of the histories were not important. This meant that subsequent understanding of the controversy has suffered. An examination of the most significant literature is illustrative of this and indicates the areas in need of investigation.

In February 1919, the First Sea Lord (Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss) initiated the preparation of a basic account of ships' movements at Jutland, under a committee led by the Director of Navigation, Captain John Harper. Following the controversial decision not to publish this committee's report, Beatty achieved his greatest coup — and might not ever have realised its full extent — by arranging the publication, in 1920, of original despatches, track charts, a list of signals and miscellaneous information, commonly referred to as the Jutland *Despatches*. This appeared to offer the basic and objective evidence of the battle, but there was a problem. Most people did not, and could not be expected to, have the knowledge or sufficient time and patience to disseminate this voluminous raw information into an understandable account. This had been Harper's task. This fact was also true of a collection of accounts from survivors published, in 1921, in Fawcett & Hooper's *The Fighting at Jutland*.

Because of this persisting complexity with the raw information, Beatty

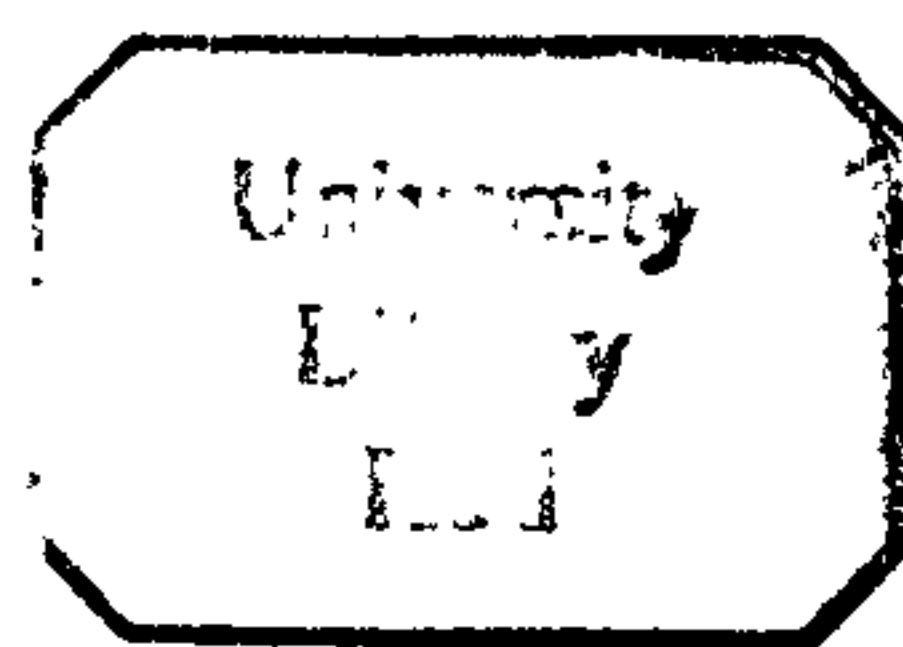
needed an analytical narrative of the battle that would be superficially objective but, in reality, favourable to his views. However, all was not well. Details of Beatty's involvement with Captain Harper — ordering him to make alterations — had leaked out. Opponents of Beatty were alarmed that he seemed to be surreptitiously writing his own, biased account. They thought that Beatty would try to pass-off his limited and erroneous views under the guise of it being the considered verdict of the Admiralty. This idea originated because Captain Kenneth Dewar and his brother, Commander Alfred, had been chosen by Beatty to write a confidential account with liberty to comment as they wished. It was no secret that the brothers had been supporters of Beatty for many years and the work's title, the *Naval Staff Appreciation of Jutland*, supported the concern of Beatty's opponents that it was not a reflection of the whole Naval Staff's views. The stridency of the work's criticisms of Jellicoe and the battlefleet, however, precluded wider circulation.

Commander Bellairs's 1920 book endorsed Beatty's view of his own role at Jutland, but Bellairs's opinions were seen, by opponents of Beatty, to be unfairly weighted in his favour. A counter was needed. It came in the form of the first published official account, in 1923, written by naval historian and former War College lecturer, Sir Julian Corbett, as the third volume of the *Official History of the War at Sea*. His account of the action was sufficiently accurate, given the restraints on classified information at the time, but suffered too much from the author's close personal friendship with Jellicoe. The conclusions reached were highly coloured to both Jellicoe's and Corbett's own views. This was widely recognised and detracted from the work's impact

as a balanced account. However, unlike the Dewars' work, it was widely available and widely read. Many, therefore, gained a more favourable impression of Jellicoe than that given by Bellairs.

Beatty had lost out in the race to publish his own 'official' version first. However, the Dewars' *Appreciation* was edited — even more sympathetically to Beatty — and became, in 1924, the Admiralty *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*. This made highly questionable and spiteful criticisms of Jellicoe and his supporters' actions at Jutland, and was economical with the truth to the point of fabrication. Jellicoe's friend and supporter, Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, was incensed at the *Narrative* and published, also in 1924, a harsh, and, in many cases ridiculous, but occasionally accurate, riposte, *The Jutland Scandal*. This work berated Beatty and his role at Jutland and was popular enough to run to at least four editions.<sup>10</sup> It seemed, therefore, at least to partisans favourable to Jellicoe, that the balance had been somewhat redressed.

Largely overlooked in this hostile atmosphere, was the publication of German accounts, the official history of the war at sea, *Der Krieg in der Nordsee*, in 1920, and *Korvettenkapitän Georg von Hase's* (Gunnery Officer of the battlecruiser *Derfflinger* at Jutland) *Kiel and Jutland*, in 1921. This seriously undermined a better understanding of the battle. Beatty had made much of an absence of German evidence preventing the true nature of his part in the battle being understood. He did so until these publications suggested that his beliefs were erroneous. Thereafter, he did not seek to advertise his longing for German sources, especially as they showed that the





BCF had not been at all impressive. By 1925, Beatty's eldest son felt that hostility towards his father had reached its peak and subsided thereafter.<sup>11</sup> It had, in one sense, in that most serving officers debated Jutland less frequently and vehemently. However, the effects of Beatty's involvement with the histories were subtle, far-reaching and endured well beyond the 1920s.

Harper indicated Beatty's corruption of the first proposed account (his 'Record') in his *The Truth About Jutland*, in 1927. It was a work which, given Harper's troubled experiences with Beatty, was moderate and balanced. However, most readers then and since thought it to be tainted with what was wrongly assumed to be Harper's inherent dislike of Beatty. Whatever Harper thought of Beatty, the book dealt with their troubled relationship moderately, accurately informing the reader of how the public had been seriously "misled."<sup>12</sup> For reasons including carelessness and neglect, the accuracy of Harper's work and its main theme was missed by subsequent authors. With this, the true nature of the controversy was also missed. Moreover, Harper helped neither the cause of history, nor his reputation, by co-writing, with Langhorne-Gibson, in 1934, *The Riddle of Jutland*, after over six years in retirement. Here, the balance, reasoning and moderate tone of his first work deserted him.

During the 1930s, accounts of the battle were written by E. Altham, Commander H.H. Frost and Rev. J.L. Pastfield, whose title, *New Light on Jutland* was misleading as it added nothing new, except a moderation of tone. Reginald Bacon's 1936 biography of his old friend, Jellicoe, was equally sterile. At this point, it seemed as if all the significant evidence had come to

light and all that remained for any future author, was to clearly assess what had happened and to evaluate the merits of individuals' actions. One major, unrecognised, assumption stood in the way. Every author up to his point, whether or not they knew of Beatty's interference, assumed that the basic material used in the official accounts — mainly from the *Despatches* — was accurate. No-one tested the validity and accuracy of this evidence. The Dewars did not, Corbett did not, and the Admiralty *Narrative* certainly did not. Neither did Bellairs, Bacon, Altham, Frost or Pastfield. Harper had provided a sure indication of where authors should have looked if they had wanted a better understanding of the issue, but they assumed that Harper's views were corrupted because of his poor opinion of Beatty. This was a serious and erroneous mistake.

The two German accounts, cited above, contained simple facts that have stood unchecked to the present day, but which alone cast a very different light upon what had happened. This is especially so if the accounts are juxtaposed with evidence that Beatty and others denied to Harper. They showed that the most significant statements made by Beatty regarding the battlecruiser action in claiming to have inflicted serious damage — where he was most sensitive — are erroneous. Because people assumed that the controversy was solely reflected in an immediate post-war atmosphere of heated debates about strategy, tactics, education and individuals' characteristics, the most significant point — how the BCF actually performed — was missed. David Beatty contrived to control the supply of the most significant information upon which these arguments were based. Later on,

Harper even told people about it, but was not believed. The lack of a thorough analysis of the histories and their composition led to the battle being misunderstood.

Subsequent accounts continued, often accidentally, to perpetuate this flaw. Lord Chatfield's (Beatty's former Flag-Captain) autobiography, *The Navy and Defence*, of 1942, might have provided more information, but he was especially careful when referring to important points on Jutland, to write in such a way that no mischievous inferences could be drawn from them to anyone's detriment. He might have elucidated much, but elaborated upon nothing. In 1951, Beatty's former assistant navigator, (now Rear-Admiral) William Chalmers, published his *Life and Letters of David, Earl Beatty*. Much was revealed regarding Beatty's personal life, but little was added to a more thorough understanding of the controversy. The book also suffered from Chalmers being closely monitored by the second Earl Beatty, who took active steps to avoid controversy over Jutland. Much that might have clarified the subject was suppressed because of this.

In 1957, Captain Donald Macintyre published *Jutland*. This was followed, in 1964, by Captain Geoffrey Bennett's *Battle of Jutland*. Both were, and still are, good, thorough accounts. Yet, not enough was done in either work to test the validity and accuracy of the evidence upon which the accounts were based. In 1966, Professor Arthur Marder issued his volume on Jutland, as part of his *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* series. He included new sources, including many interviews with survivors, but as with every author before him, he neglected sufficiently to test the validity of



officially endorsed evidence which formed the basic structure of his account. Captain Stephen Roskill's 1981 biography of Beatty utilised Marder's work, but also replicated some of the erroneous assertions he had made. However, Roskill's work was an informative and balanced biography of Beatty, not an extensive treatise on Jutland alone.

Roskill also mentioned the latest work on the crucial aspect of gunnery and fire-control. This had been introduced with the publication of Anthony Pollen's *The Great Gunnery Scandal*, in 1980, and was reinforced by Professor Jon Sumida's *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, in 1989. Another, hitherto neglected, facet which called for attention was a detailed examination of the actual fighting. This was dealt with by N.J.M. Campbell's *Jutland: An Analysis of the Fighting*, in 1986. Progress was certainly being made, but there was still one significant flaw. Up to this point, all works utilised the *Despatches* without question, either directly, or derived their information from accounts that did.

In 1991, Eric Grove's *Fleet to Fleet Encounters* reassessed previous understanding, covering such aspects as the battlecruiser losses and fire-control methods and equipment, utilising much new evidence. However, the possibility of further advancement was well and truly reversed in Correlli Barnett's *Engage The Enemy More Closely*, in 1991. This book impeded a better understanding by accepting too readily the erroneous assertions made in early works on Jutland — essentially that German material was superior to British. V.E. Tarrant's *Jutland: The German Perspective*, in 1995, gave an account from the German side for the first time, but missed a good

opportunity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of both British and German sources. Like most before him, he placed too much faith in the information that filtered its way from the *Despatches* and German evidence of equivalent age and type into subsequent works. Andrew Gordon's *The Rules of the Game*, in 1996, went some way to remedying compositional and factual flaws in the evidence, by questioning some evidence for many important events. It promised much, but the Jutland aspects reached too many conventional conclusions to be of significant help.

There is still a serious, and largely unaddressed, problem with the evidence relating to Jutland. Harper indicated this in the early 1920s and more fully in 1927, but his main assertions that Beatty deliberately corrupted evidence and interpretations, remain significantly untested. All accounts suffer from not examining them. Harper knew that there had been a deliberate ploy on Beatty's part to hide and fabricate evidence, and had some indication as to why. Beatty was sensitive regarding the BCF and its conduct and, knowing that he had to battle with history to protect his image and aims, he did just that.

All despatches and plans from ships attached to the BCF were sent initially to Beatty. A few weeks after the battle, the senior survivor from *Invincible*, the Gunnery Officer, Commander Hubert Dannreuther, took them with him to London, to show to the King and the Admiralty.<sup>13</sup> It is by no means certain to what extent the material in the published *Despatches* reflects what was actually written by each captain; much original material has long-since been destroyed. Nor is it certain to what extent even the original

despatches are an accurate reflection of what happened.

After the battle, the only requirement for a captain was to submit a plan and report to which he was happy to put his name. He was under no obligation to make it as accurate as possible or use as much evidence as possible. He was not obliged to sit down with range and fire-control data, to assess whether or not the times quoted were synchronous, or to check his information with other personnel or ships to produce a report or chart. As Jellicoe indicated above, what was published was done according to the Admiralty's wishes. The reports, charts and other information, were written by Naval personnel, on Navy paper, using Navy pens, pencils and typewriters. In the days before asserting moral rights to works, it was solely a matter for the Navy, as the owner of the evidence, to decide what it would, if at all, publish. This is one more reason to question the accuracy of the evidence.

Most despatches recorded personal experiences, which were naturally limited, and many accounts span hours over the space of a few paragraphs without noting times. However, it is this information which is frequently used, being thought unquestionable. Achieving publication of the *Despatches* was a significant advantage to Beatty, because he chose in 1916 (as BCF C-in-C) and 1920 (as First Sea Lord), what evidence went into them. Indeed, in at least one case, he even re-wrote a portion to suit his views. Much of the extant evidence held by the Admiralty had been seen by Harper before publication of the *Despatches*. However, as he was to find out, there was a good deal more not disclosed by 1920 which proved that Beatty had something to hide regarding his command in the BCF.

It has been part of received and assumed understanding since 1916, that the service was significantly effected internally by wrangling over Jutland. However, information to substantiate the existence of bitter factional disputes, as implied by Bacon and Bellairs and stated in newspaper articles, is conspicuous by its absence. Nowhere in currently available service records is there any hint of bias because of Jutland. The likelihood of all such evidence having been deliberately destroyed with a uniform thoroughness by the many individuals concerned, or their many relatives, to save it from others' prying eyes and any perceived or imagined embarrassment, when so much else remained, is highly implausible. Nowhere in surviving papers, is there any evidence to confirm any severe factional disputes, nor do many relatives of those involved or implicated in controversy, some of whom served in the inter-war Navy, recall any such great rift. <sup>14</sup> What is much more likely, is that this absence of supporting evidence indicates an absence of supposed general inter-personal or professional rifts.

Attention must, then, focus upon the central issue — Beatty's efforts to assert his own views of the battle and why he did this. Jutland saw the repetition of major BCF errors that had been identified at Dogger Bank. After Jutland, Beatty contrived to cover-up defects of the BCF's operations that were his responsibility. He was abetted in this in later years when some former BCF officers succeeded to influential Admiralty posts under Beatty as First Sea Lord. Those who actively sought to alter the Jutland accounts to protect their reputations as individuals and that of the BCF as a whole, were limited in number. They not only misled the public, but their actions created



a detrimental image of others, which sometimes had serious personal effects.

When Beatty became First Sea Lord, one of the many tasks he oversaw was the compilation of the proposed official account of Jutland. In 1916, he had used his position in the BCF to control some evidence of the battle. In 1919, he could influence the evidence far more by virtue of his position to affect the perception of the Navy's performance and its policies. Some officers knew, or suspected, that sinister moves were afoot to corrupt perceptions of Jutland, but remained silent, hoping problems would fade away or never arise. This helped reduce opposition to Beatty's cause in the early stages. Analysis of what really did happen suffered from apathy, ignorance and the growing revulsion of most against criticising others about Jutland. With the reluctance of many to criticise others, the views of the historical school stood a realistic chance of instituting reform.

Despite Beatty's new appointment, reform was not necessarily inevitable. The Navy of the early 1920s was reduced in the post-war disarmament atmosphere. The newly-formed Royal Air Force controlled Naval aviation in addition to competing for resources and attention with the other armed forces. Much of Beatty's time was spent defending the Navy from those who sought to detract from it, either to augment the other forces, or for political ends. At this time, the Navy needed as much support as it could get. A publication espousing the successes of Jutland would show that the large expenditure on the Navy was justified and that its strategy, tactics and management during the war had been vindicated. It would also be a persuasive argument for maintaining the Navy as far as the Washington

Treaty, expenditure and politics would allow.

However, although a favourable publication on Jutland would be beneficial to the service, this was very much an ancillary issue. There is no evidence to deny that the original motivation in composing a general official account was simply to clarify what had happened at Jutland. This emphasis on clarity was infiltrated by Beatty, principally to cover-up operational defects regarding his management of the BCF. Throughout Beatty's and others' papers, there is no mention that the motivation in writing about Jutland was the desire to defend the Navy's performance in the war, nor its financing or composition afterwards. It was to show the BCF in as favourable a light as possible.

Because this was the case, much of the emphasis on the battle refers to those parts of the action in which Beatty and the BCF featured most prominently. The battle itself can be divided into five phases:

- ① the preliminary movements of both sides before action was joined;
- ② the battlecruiser action and intervention of the 5thBS (the run to the south);
- ③ the intervention of the German battlefleet (the run to the north);
- ④ the intervention of the British battlefleet and the two German attempts at escape from 6:15-7:30pm;
- ⑤ the night actions.

To concentrate so much on the BCF, essentially the first three phases, more than eighty years after the battle, might appear to present a highly imbalanced account. The tactical significance of the battlecruiser action, compared to the involvement of the battlefleet, was minimal. Only the BCF and its sympathisers did not, at least not publicly, admit this afterwards. This is why, for the purposes of examining the controversy, this emphasis, or rather over-emphasis, on the BCF is essential. The main thrust of Beatty's argument was that the BCF were in action for longer than the battlefleet, sustained and inflicted heavy damage, and led the German Fleet up to the rest of the Grand Fleet, where it should have been seriously damaged. That the HSF was not so damaged, Beatty attributed to Jellicoe's tactical irresolution and the battlefleet's reluctance to continue the action that he had so gallantly begun. In Beatty's opinion, the battlefleet's involvement was limited to a few sporadic bursts of fire that he never thought was justified by the term 'action'. However, the effect on the HSF of the appearance of the GF was decisive. The German Navy never intended to engage the GF in full, or near full, strength. Until approximately 6:15pm, when the British battlefleet arrived on the scene, the Germans had relished the chase of the British advanced forces centred upon the BCF. After learning of the presence of at least part of the GF, they eagerly sought to disengage.

In the histories, when the descriptions of the action reached the intervention of the battlefleet, Beatty sought to minimise its role by emphasising its lack of involvement in the fighting. In contrast, he sought to maximise the BCF's actions prior to 6:15pm. This was where he began to get

into difficulties in justifying himself. Such evidence as there was by no means supported him unequivocally. So, if he wanted to appear to be the Jutland hero, he had to force his opinion. If necessary, this was to be at the expense of what the evidence showed.

There was general agreement that the night actions were not fertile ground for serious criticism. In 1916, the Royal Navy was not prepared to fight at night. No-one suggested that a refusal to seek action during the night of 31st May-1st June 1916 was an unforgivable act of negligence. All that was criticised, were the actions of some in not reporting definite sightings of the HSF so that Jellicoe could arrange to open action the following morning. Furthermore, there were inherent difficulties in producing a detailed analysis of the night action. So much happened in the night as ships blundered into each other and engaged in many brief, confused and fierce actions. Not only was there heavy loss of life, but many ships did not survive the night, taking their documentation with them. Over all, the night action was a series of so many confused, violent and heroic skirmishes, that it is impossible to provide anything but a general narrative.

This brought attention back to the period from 6:15-9:00pm. It was an important criticism of the battlefleet by Beatty, that, had the battlefleet and Jellicoe shown more resolution at this time, the action might well have been decided in favour of the British before nightfall. By focusing on the battlecruiser action *versus* the role of the battlefleet, Beatty felt sure that he could convince the service and the public of the legitimacy of his views.

The controversy began with Harper claiming Beatty's interference with



the text produced by his committee. Curiously, exactly what happened with regard to this has never been properly explained. At best, it has only been briefly referred to in some subsequent works. The over all impression given, for example, in the works of Bennett, Marder, Roskill, Tarrant and Gordon, is that, although Beatty did tamper with Harper's work, this was to very little effect because the original 'Record' was never circulated. Such works omitted to clarify Beatty's involvement with Harper's 'Record' and subsequent accounts, concluding that the causes of the dispute were simply those concerning interpretations of evidence.

The general progress of the action was not doubted. However, the controversy did not concern the general movements, but the details of certain points. Disputes over the battle resulted from the fact that inherent deficiencies regarding the evidence meant that it could never be conclusive. However, that evidence could be suppressed, destroyed, altered, manipulated and controlled. In 1916, Jellicoe and the Admiralty had a clear indication that Beatty was both highly sensitive to how the evidence might be used and that he had attempted to control it after every previous engagement he had been involved in. No author mentioned this subsequently. It is a curious omission because later, when Harper drew attention to Beatty's interference, Harper was not making any claim that had not previously come to the attention of the Admiralty. Subsequently, Beatty interfered with every one of the official publications. It is, therefore, by no means certain to what extent every subsequent account of Jutland has been biased by Beatty's interference and, if so, why. Assessing this significant aspect is the basis of the following work.

After Harper's 'Record' was shelved, it was used in the accounts compiled by the Dewars and Corbett. All later accounts used, to varying degrees, Corbett's Official History, the *Narrative* — edited from the Dewars' original *Appreciation* — and, occasionally, the *Appreciation* itself. Therefore, as these drew their basic facts from the Harper committee's work, it follows that, as Beatty interfered with that committee's work, all subsequent works might be based, to varying degrees, upon evidence of doubtful authenticity.

The Jutland histories, therefore, must be subject to a more than casual examination to establish in detail how the facts were arrived at, and whether or not this process was in any way corrupted. This must be the primary task in any modern academic analysis and must be distinguished from merely producing a new interpretation of that evidence. So far, in existing literature, differing interpretations have obscured the fact that there is much room to question the validity of the very evidence upon which those interpretations are based. An analysis of the histories will explain how and why the original evidence was corrupted and how this affected subsequent works.

Hitherto, it has been widely believed that Beatty ordered Harper to alter his 'Record' because it did not reflect what Beatty believed had happened. In short, it was seen to be only a difference of interpretation based upon generally accepted evidence. Be this as it may, it has not yet been ascertained whether or not the motivation for Beatty's persistence to see to it that an account favourable to himself should be issued was simply a matter of personal pride, or if there were other reasons for this. There was enough evidence in Captain Roskill's biography to strongly support the view that

Beatty was a very vain individual, more so than most, if not all, of his contemporaries. This alone would offer sufficient explanation. However, although prestige was important to Beatty, studying the histories reveals that there was a highly significant underlying reason why Beatty took the path that he did — his less than successful management of the BCF. It also reveals why he persisted so vehemently with his assertions about the BCF's role at Jutland.

As the controversy began with the dispute over Harper's 'Record', any analysis must first deal with the issues it raised. This work, therefore, will examine the functioning of the BCF up to, and including, Jutland. It will then be possible to ascertain whether or not there were any grounds to support Harper's claim that the evidence, rather than interpretation, did not support the BCF's role as it was believed by Beatty. This will also determine the extent to which Beatty was justified in trying to correct the over all impression that Harper's 'Record' gave.

By analysis of subsequent accounts of the inter-war period, Beatty's involvement will be traced to determine the extent to which his influence effected understanding of the battle. Most works written after 1930 used, to varying degrees, those previous works which had been the centre of so much controversy in the 1920s. It is important to clarify the integrity of those works of the 1920s, because all other works were derived from the information they contained. They are first generation accounts. That is, they were composed from original documents not utilised in later works. The opinions of the post-1930 works can largely be excluded because they gave secondary

opinions and interpretations based upon the printed evidence, rather than an analysis of it. However, they are useful in some instances. This work, therefore, will be restricted to a detailed analysis of the much-disputed works of the 1920s — when the bulk of the basic printed evidence was generated.

As the various Jutland accounts were being debated, in the 1920s, it was a concern to many that their conclusions might be disruptive to the service in general. However, this general disruption did not materialise. In certain respects, however, the histories seriously affected some individuals' lives. Beatty's insistence upon asserting his own views of the BCF's role, despite contrary evidence, had a serious adverse affect upon the health of Sir Hugh Evan-Thomas, who commanded the 5thBS at Jutland in support of the BCF. This is discussed, in Chapter 5, as an important example of Beatty's over all attitude and the fact that the controversy was not simply an academic dispute. Throughout, personal and service interests were essential to how Jutland was presented.

Beatty's actions regarding Jutland were aimed at achieving a favourable public image of the BCF's role to suggest that his operational ideas had been more successful than they actually were, thus making them appear preferable to Jellicoe's. This was important because, if this image of success in action was generally accepted, it would also help to endorse Plunkett's move for the "regeneration" of the Navy in a way favourable to Beatty's views of greater freedom. Support for reform reprised the conflict evident in Tryon's push for greater freedom some twenty years previously. Although the Jutland controversy concerned the battle and the histories, the



underlying motivation in the controversy was to use Jutland to endorse differing operational principles.

The events and facts of the battle need fresh examination, but so do the uses to which they were put — to support operational principles — as this was a significant reason why the evidence was initially interfered with. This also explains why the controversy lasted as long as it did and why Beatty persisted so vehemently to have his views accepted. Beatty wanted to be both the hero of Jutland and to have his Naval views adopted throughout the Fleet. It was, therefore, vital to him that evidence suggesting his mistakes should not be revealed, regardless of who suffered by its suppression.

The final chapter assesses the extent to which the contemporary view that former BCF members dominated the Admiralty and instituted any of Beatty's reforms in the inter-war years was accurate. In order to give effect to reform, Beatty needed to show that adopting his views would be advantageous to the Navy. Along with showing that his views had been successful in action, Beatty needed sufficient support in influential Admiralty posts to implement reform. The chapter reveals the extent to which this was the case by assessing how promotions were made. This is, then, the end of a political process that began with the BCF's operation before Jutland.

## 1. The Battlecruisers: something to hide?

Following the Falklands battle, on 8th December 1914, battlecruisers did not see action again until the engagement off Dogger Bank on 24th January 1915 and no battlecruiser would be present at both battles. None of the battlecruisers that carried 13.5" guns were present at the Falklands, nor had they previously engaged enemy vessels of the same type. Dogger Bank would, then, be the first time that the battlecruisers had been in action with a remotely equal force. This was also the first test of the fighting powers of these types.

The possibilities that advances in fire-control devices had given to the battlecruisers, in theory, had given them the power to commence effective hitting beyond the effective range of the enemy. However, it was to the surprise of the Germans that, at Jutland, the British battlecruisers did not take advantage of the extra range that the 13.5" gun possessed over their 12". It is often assumed that poor visibility played major a part in this and that the BCF could not open fire sooner as the targets could not be distinguished properly. Yet, if one compares the firing of the 5thBS at the 1stSG at the limits of visibility (roughly 23,000 yards), it was curious why the battlecruisers did not begin firing until the range was estimated to be just over 18,000 yards (although it was actually nearer 16,000).

In his despatch after Dogger Bank, *Lion's* captain, Ernle Chatfield, noted that *Lion* had straddled *Blücher* at around 20,000 yards and established hitting about 15 minutes later (roughly the same time that it took the enemy to do so), but that "It was impossible to distinguish hits at this

distance." <sup>1</sup> He suggested that Grand Fleet Orders dealing with gunnery should state that unless large structural damage was caused, hits could not be seen and that overs were hardly ever seen. <sup>2</sup> The difficulties of spotting at such long ranges caused some concern and the conclusion was reached that Falklands and Dogger Bank:

"have proved that hits can be made without difficulty at 19,000 or 20,000 yards, but this range is not decisive, and the percentage of hits too small.

An hour's fighting may find guns disabled and ammunition running short with no decisive result obtained; therefore there is no harm in slow firing at long range, but we must try to get in closer without delay. Probably 12,000 to 14,000 yards would suit us well, this being outside the effective range of enemy's torpedoes and 6-inch guns...We must try to combine early hits with decisive hitting soon afterwards." <sup>3</sup>

It would, therefore, appear that there was much in the German official history's comment that British fire-control had not kept sufficient pace with greater gun ranges and sizes. <sup>4</sup> Chatfield continued that a very small spread of shots in any salvo made straddling difficult, thus affecting spotting. There was the possibility that a slightly larger spread of shots, if generally accurate, provided a better chance of a hit and Chatfield concluded that if the enemy

had had a wider spread, many more hits on *Lion* would have been experienced.

Differences in fire-control should be mentioned. Director-firing involved the use of centrally supplied data to lay and fire the guns, which were fired by one man in a director control tower at a high point in the ship as his sights came 'on'. Individual firing could make use of the same data transmitted to the turrets, as it had done before the introduction of directors, but with the turret crews actually laying and firing the guns. At close range the crews could range, spot and fire individually on their own, if required. There is some evidence that the introduction of director-firing had not been without its problems. These stemmed from its very effectiveness in aiming all the ship's guns at the same point; this assumed a highly accurate fire-control solution, one which was beyond the capabilities of most British capital ships given the weaknesses of their fire-control equipment. Prior to the war, Lt. Geoffrey Blake was charged with experiments with one of the first director installations in an *Iron Duke* class battleship. In one test, at 15,000 yards, under undemanding conditions that allowed relatively good shooting, the spread of shot was so narrow that thought was given to deliberately widening it.<sup>5</sup> Given the inherent inaccuracies of long range fire from one fast, moving platform to another, over many miles distance, a relatively wide spread of shot had its advantages in scoring at least some hits. Hipper is often quoted regarding the British battlecruisers' wide spread of shot at Jutland when compared to that of the 5thBS. This assumed that good shooting equated with a narrow spread of shot. This was not the whole issue, and it should not



necessarily be assumed that Hipper's observations are proof of good and bad shooting on the part of the BCF. A wide spread of shot seems to have been intended. It was a mark of a difference in doctrine not a deficiency in practice.

Nevertheless, whatever the doctrines and instruments controlling its employment, battlecruiser gunnery was not effective enough during the run to the south to damage or distract the enemy sufficiently for the Germans to be unable to inflict disproportionate damage on Beatty's forces. This had serious repercussions both for the Royal Navy and for the battlecruiser's reputation as a type. After Jutland, it was concluded that the ideal type of capital ship should be a hybrid of a battleship's heavy armour and a battlecruiser's speed — a combination that necessitated the much greater size of HMS *Hood* and her projected sisters. This was largely based upon a misunderstanding of why the battlecruisers proved vulnerable compared to the battleships viz. that practical fire-control equipment was not sufficient to ensure good enough shooting at long enough range to prevent accurate German shooting exploiting fatal deficiencies in the BCF's ammunition handling arrangements. This alibi covered up two major defects that the BCF and later the Admiralty thought best forgotten: that BCF gunnery had been poor for varying reasons and that ammunition safety practices had been poor throughout the Fleet, but with especially disastrous consequences for the BCF. The decision to move to shorter ranges had not had the benefits expected and had proved almost disastrous.

A conscious decision had indeed been taken by the BCF at Jutland,

to compensate for defective long-range firing by exploring the benefits of shorter ranges, below c.17,000 yards. Although long range hitting was desirable — if possible — it might not be practical. There were suggestions that medium-ranges (c.12,000-16,000 yards) had the greatest overall potential. Dogger Bank had shown that damage could be caused to the enemy at very long ranges, but the predominant conclusion from the action was the more dubious one that fighting at shorter ranges would enable more effective hitting. However, success at this type of firing depended upon making effective fire faster than the enemy and there were many tactical factors that might undermine such a system (as was to become evident at Jutland). The battlecruisers had little opportunity to test their gunnery doctrines other than in action. Yet Beatty, Chatfield and the rest of the BCF had to make decisions for an action that might be imminent at any time. Given the uncertainties of the BCF's command structure (see below) it is, perhaps, not too surprising that the solutions developed were in retrospect muddled, inconsistent and in the end ineffective, embarrassingly so for at least two future First Sea Lords (Beatty and Chatfield).

In his report on the action at Dogger Bank, Chatfield noted that:

"at any range under about 22,000 yards hitting can be attained within a few minutes. The mistake made was in not at once going into rapid independent and putting forth our whole volume of fire, regardless of ammunition expenditure. Enemy would then have been overwhelmed and

never recovered...The general feeling when *Derfflinger* was on fire...was that we had her...There seemed therefore plenty of time, and that it was better to continue deliberate salvos and not to throw away ammunition at the long range.

This proved an error." <sup>6</sup>

Chatfield thus highlighted the difficulties in long-range firing and the benefits of rapid fire. It had been mentioned that independent firing at such long ranges was, for practical purposes, very difficult. So, the question seemed to resolve itself into two solutions. Either firing could be commenced and continued slowly at long range, or if the rate was to be increased, shorter ranges only would be of assistance to the rapid independent firing necessary for action within the range of the enemy. Whatever was decided upon in action, it does seem that a slow rate of fire under any circumstances was not a popular idea, however accurate it might have been, and that rapid fire seemed to marry frequent hitting to better spotting.

The opinions of most who took part in the action at Dogger Bank were made with the fact that of the battlecruisers, only *Tiger* was equipped for director-firing (all the 13.5" battlecruisers had their directors by the beginning of 1916). *Tiger's* captain, Henry Pelly, made his most significant comment that the scale on the Dreyer table (which calculated the target's range) only reached 17,000 yards, <sup>7</sup> nearly 7,000 short of the maximum gun range. A common note in many reports was the interference of spray covering sights during independent firing (due to the speed of the battle and

spray thrown up by gun blast from wet decks) and that the blast from guns at such close quarters seriously affected vision from the turrets. All of these were good arguments to support director-firing. Beatty also commented that many of *Tiger's* salvos were reported as being a long way over with a smaller spread than those of the other battlecruisers. Again, the smaller spread attained with director-firing was evident, but the idea that seemingly formed in Beatty's and others' minds was that a close spread might be very well if hits are achieved, but if not, all shells would miss with equal accuracy. 'Overs' were hard to spot and of little use. Introducing a deliberate spread seemed to have been seen as providing a better chance of more effective spotting and hitting. This was thought to be easier to achieve at medium ranges under each turret's independent control.

In theory and judging from Beatty's prewar comments regarding the development of use of battlecruisers, they were believed to represent a vessel capable of selecting the range at which to fight, keeping it and having heavier guns to out-reach the enemy equivalents. It was an absence of adequate means — both mechanical and methodological — to effectively out-reach the 1stSG that contributed to the result of the battlecruiser action at Jutland, which subsequently became such an embittered and disputed point. There was, however, little mention of inadequate fire-control or ranging accuracy in the post-war literature until the works of Pollen and Sumida half a century or so later. Where gunnery was mentioned, it was merely referred to as good or bad according to the number of hits achieved (or estimated), without there being too much of an examination into the causes of this and the reasons



behind the approaches to gunnery. Ultimately though, it was the number of hits and damage to the enemy that really mattered and, whichever method of firing the battlecruisers adopted as a group or individually, their lack of success was the matter at issue, less so why they were not successful (the reasons for which their commanders were not keen to advertise).

During the war, the fact that Beatty had encouraged development of a less rigid tactical system amongst his ships, led to the belief that the battlecruisers could achieve great things with such flexibility governing their actions and such speed and fire power at their disposal. This was often seen as a favourable contrast to the system under which the battlefleet operated and such were embodied, in many peoples' opinions, in the characters and approaches of the BF and BCF commanders. The realisation of the battlecruisers' potential, however, lay largely in the hands of battlefleet men, who were not enthusiastically supported by some BCF personnel. Prior to the war, they had been instrumental in establishing Dreyer's fire-control devices in the Fleet. These devices were cheaper than those offered by Arthur Pollen and adopted largely because it was thought that they could do the task required just as well. Yet, the perception of just what gunnery was supposed to achieve and how it was to be achieved was the heart of the matter.

Pollen's equipment took measured ranges and bearings of a target. With the firing ship's speed and course, the target's estimated speed and course, and measurements of wind speed, air temperature and density, plus other ballistic factors, it could, with a good degree of accuracy, calculate the future range of the target. <sup>8</sup> Such rapid course changes and varying rates as

Pollen's devices could cope with, were not thought to be required principally because it was not expected that the constantly varying conditions for which they allowed would materialise in any battle. So, Dreyer's equipment, which was slower in operation and relied less upon mechanical calculations, fulfilled two important considerations: it did the required job and was cheap. As far as advancing gunnery effectiveness was concerned:

"the Dreyer system abetted an inhibition about one's own movements, at the expense of a proactive interest in those of the enemy, and compounded the Grand Fleet's psychosomatic command-and-control constraints." <sup>9</sup>

Thinking along such lines as being restrained to the single line of battle and of not acting without an order — the predominant view — only helped support the limitations that Dreyer's system could deal with.

By and large, those in the battlecruisers were encouraged to take advantage of what opportunities offered themselves in action. This was allowed for in the battlefleet as well, but seldom, if ever, practised, largely due to preconditioning. It was realised in the BCF that current deficiencies in equipment could adversely affect fighting ability. However, the predominant feeling in the Fleet was that the High Seas Fleet would conform to British movements on parallel lines and stay in range long enough to be sunk, thus this was the expected contingency. Those who prior to, during and after the war had advocated a more flexible tactical system found little in Jellicoe and his orders to please them, yet much in Beatty's approach. The Dreyer

equipment could well be seen as a battlefleet-sponsored limitation on the movements and effectiveness of ships in battle and the BCF had some experience of this limit to their fighting capability. More and more, in the opinions of those in the BCF, it was realised that the enemy would have to be sought and forced into action if they should be met and that one could not afford the luxury of waiting for the enemy to come to the slaughter. It irked some in the BCF that many thought that the enemy would do just that.

The battlecruisers had, by the time of Jutland, been in action with the enemy more than once, which led to their feeling that they were more involved in the war as compared to the battlefleet. It was a source of friction then and after the war that the BCF had practical experience of how their ships behaved in battle that the battleships did not. What action they had seen had shown that improvements in gunnery technique and equipment were needed, even if extemporary, and that fighting would probably not develop as one might expect or hope that it would. Beatty's Battlecruiser Fleet Orders legislated for this slightly better than did Jellicoe's GFBOs. However, when the big day came, the BCF had not solved the problems of gunnery and communications that had presented themselves at Dogger Bank, many of which were to be repeated at Jutland. This was substantially Beatty's fault.

Throughout the Fleet, there was a justified confidence in the ability of each ship to score successful hits on the enemy. In the BCF especially, it would seem to have been felt that the British would dictate the fighting, having the larger guns and speed to do so. The fault in this belief was that effective gunnery did not depend upon speed, the larger size of guns or

weight of projectile alone. The range at which firing commenced would, as suggested by Chatfield, be critical. Visibility was also important, in addition to communicating under fire and in periods of intense excitement. Although these other factors were recognised as being important in developing tactical cohesion, they do not seem to have received such attention with a view to improvement as did the development of methods of shooting which alone would, it was thought, ensure better chances of hitting. Although BCF gunnery was severely criticised during, but more so after, the war, the BCF's ability to score hits was severely hampered by the tactical position in which they began the battle at Jutland — within the enemy's gun range. This had resulted from perceived limitations with fire-control equipment when director-firing.

With regard to Dogger Bank, there were three significant mistakes made which adversely affected the action. Firstly, although firing commenced at over 20,000 yards, it was felt to have been too slow. The possibilities envisaged for success resulting from a more rapid rate at the beginning of an action influenced BCF thinking at the time of Jutland. Secondly, distribution of fire had been inconsistent, allowing enemy ships to escape bombardment. This was recognised (see Chatfield below) but the problem recurred at Jutland. Thirdly, confusion as a result of signals being misread or misinterpreted had led to Moore breaking off the chase. At Jutland, lax signalling or difficulties experienced with flag signals, accounted for crucial errors just as much as did the absence of signals. It was all too often assumed that communications related to signals between ships. Yet, faults equally



arose from the fact that communications between officers were not sufficiently clear or frequent. If anyone wished to diminish the use of signals, then the necessity for personal contact and understanding became imperative. One might suggest that had Evan-Thomas been appraised in person by Beatty of the principles which governed the BCF, the outcome of the battlecruiser phase would have been somewhat different. <sup>10</sup>

It would appear from the raid on Scarborough, in 1914, that Beatty had not appraised any commanders beyond those of his battlecruisers alone of what would be his guiding principles in action. Yet, at Jutland, he expected Evan-Thomas to comply with his intentions at a key point at the opening of a major action. It seems strange to have expected compliance with certain views if these were not properly explained. In later years, Beatty was to criticise what he saw as others' failings, but these were the result of his own lax management; it was scarcely justifiable to blame others for not being telepathic. This defect even affected his own forces, however. At Jutland, confusing communications, opening fire too late and incorrect distribution of fire all combined to disadvantage the battlecruisers seriously. All of the above difficulties were rooted in Beatty's lack of clarity.

Following the turn to SSE of the battlecruisers at 2:35 at Jutland (see diagrams #1-6), it became evident that the enemy could not avoid action. It was also evident that the British battlecruisers could have opened fire much sooner than 3:47. *New Zealand* reported that at 3:15 (*Despatches*) 5 enemy ships could be seen (the 1stSG) and at 3:25 (*Despatches*) *Lion* reported the enemy in sight. *New Zealand* was 3 miles from *Lion* and according to

Chatfield's notes the range at 3:31 was 23,000 yards from *Lion* to the 1stSG. <sup>11</sup> At this point, *New Zealand* was out of gun range, but *Lion* was not. At Dogger Bank, firing commenced as the targets presented themselves, with each ship shifting up fire when the next enemy vessel up the line appeared. This was not the case at Jutland. Chatfield noted:

"3:35 [2 enemy] "quite distinct to me."

3:40 "I can see 4 enemy port bow."

3:44 [5 enemy seen]." <sup>12</sup>

However, firing had still not commenced. Another 3½ minutes were to pass before fire was returned, by which time the range was roughly 16,000 yards. So, roughly 22½ minutes elapsed between *Lion* first sighting the enemy and its opening fire. In that time, the range closed by 8,000 yards and more targets were seen.

Georg von Hase noted that, whilst searching for the enemy:

"The horizon ahead of us grew clear of smoke [from the cruisers], and we could now make out some English light cruisers...suddenly my periscope revealed some big ships...They were still a long way off...they showed up clearly on the horizon." <sup>13</sup>

He identified the six British battlecruisers. For this to have been possible, all the battlecruisers must have been slightly below the horizon in order for him to be able to count them; they must also have been clearly identifiable to note the classes and disposition. Given this, they must have been about 10

miles away at least, but their approach had been hidden by smoke, explaining why they all came to view so suddenly. From *New Zealand's* report of 5 ships at 3:15, it was evident, contrary to what many later assumed, that the British saw the Germans first. *Lion* at this point was over the horizon and out of sight of the enemy. The German official history noted that when the British battlecruisers were seen "much to everyone's surprise, the enemy's guns remained silent".<sup>14</sup> Georg von Hase noted that the Germans thought Beatty's steaming into their range was a daring move.

Chatfield had noted that the mistake made at Dogger Bank was, after opening fire, not going into rapid independent firing as quickly as possible. It is not clear just what the resulting BCF gunnery doctrine really was at Jutland, if indeed there was one at all and if it was uniform. Steaming closer to the enemy was consistent with the view that rapid firing was the most beneficial, but this did not necessarily mean that fire had to be withheld until the range was well within the maximum. Confusingly, there was the implication in Chatfield's comments that rapid-fire could be achieved at long ranges, as he noted that after opening fire at Dogger Bank (at over 20,000 yards) rapid firing should have begun. If rapid fire was only to be effective at shorter ranges, then he did not explain that one cannot leap instantly from over 20,000 yards to about 15,000. It would seem that he advocated deliberately getting under 20,000 yards, despite the capabilities for director-firing over this range, to ensure better results from rapid firing. Even so, withholding fire for so long, especially when the enemy were out-ranged, was something that was not explained. More importantly, it was not even

examined after the battle. It must have been deliberate, especially when one notes that, at 4:11, Chatfield recorded a straddle being made on the enemy, when the range was almost 23,000 yards.

Those writing about the battle too often seemed content to accept the BCF's versions of events without question. Perhaps it was felt that after the sudden losses of two of the class, it was in bad taste to question exactly what had happened. Yet matters of taste would surely not obscure such an examination of the BCF's tactics. That the losses were the direct result of cordite explosions seemed to be a sufficient answer. Yet, is one really to believe that no-one considered how and why the battlecruisers had got into the position that they did and the part that this might have played in the downfall of two of the type? The latter was attributed more to luck and bad design. Although initial firing may have been slow, this was no handicap when shooting at an enemy that could not shoot back. The 13.5" gun out-ranged the 11" of *Von der Tann* by over 3,000 yards and the 12" German gun by roughly 4,000. On both sides there were deficiencies in finding the initial range, but for the British, this seemed to be harder to overcome.

Following Dogger Bank, Chatfield noted:

"That *rapidity of fire* is essential. The difficulties in controlling it are nothing compared to the disadvantages that ensue once the enemy's volume of shorts is greater than your own...Shorts are the only guide, and the great value of them must be impressed on control officers. The main object



when opening fire must not be the straddle, but to obtain a big volume of fire short, and then work it up by small "ups"...Directors must fire rapid double salvos as soon as the range is found...That no enemy must be left unfired at must be further driven home. Sights of 13.5-inch guns...to be graduated up to 25,000 yards."<sup>15</sup>

Jutland brought out the many ironies and defects in these comments. The part relating to rapid fire, as it turned out, was true, but demonstrated by the Germans. With regard to the start of the action at Jutland, the German official history noted that:

"In the German Navy great stress has always been laid on the importance of finding the target quickly and of maintaining the highest possible rate of discharge during "rapid fire". The soundness of this practice was now proved up to the hilt...[and the 1stSG] were able to establish fire superiority over the enemy shortly after finding the range." <sup>16</sup>

Although rapid early fire was stressed in Germany, it seemed to have been mentioned only to varying degrees amongst the British battlecruisers and was not necessarily widely adhered to. Aided by better visibility, resulting in clearer images at longer ranges, the opening German fire was both rapid and accurate and created the situation for the enemy that Chatfield had hoped it

would for the British, so the positions were reversed. By the time *Lion* altered course, at about 4:02, it had been hit 6 times; *Tiger* received 9 heavy hits in this phase (from *Moltke*) from 3:47-56 (four in the space of a few seconds, two of which temporarily disabled X and Q turrets). *Princess Royal* had guns put out of action (one permanently), *Indefatigable* suffered from early hitting and would soon sink and there were many shorts that hampered an effective return of fire, again, just as Chatfield had predicted, or hoped, would be inflicted upon the enemy. By the most kind of any standards, the British battlecruisers could scarcely have got into a worse position.

Another recommendation was that a large volume of shorts should at first be the objective. At Jutland the range was over estimated by roughly 2,000 yards, but the real defect was in not correcting swiftly enough. Far from starting short and working up, as Chatfield had previously urged, *Lion's* Control Top and Transmitting Station recorded highly erratic shooting (see Table 1, end of Chapter). <sup>17</sup> This was not as good a start as had been desired and when firing commenced, matters became much worse for *Lion*. The sizes of the range corrections show that *Lion* at least was shooting, in most cases, much too short or much too long and certainly could not hold on to the target, particularly under helm. Thus, subsequent corrections would be adversely affected, especially if the ship was not starting short with the aim of working up, as Chatfield had felt desirable.

Chatfield's notes give some idea of the effects of German fire upon his ship:

3:49 enemy over 3:50½ hit sustained 3:52 hit sustained 3:54 enemy short

3:54½ enemy short 3:57 2 enemy over, 1 short 3:57½ straddled  
 3:58 "Tell fore top we are short." 3:59 straddled 3:59½ straddled  
 4:00 Q turret hit 4:01 hit sustained 4:01½ hit sustained. "I think  
 Indefatigable blew up about now." 4:02 straddled, a/c 1pt S  
 4:03 hit sustained 4:09 range 21,000 4:11 a/c P 4:12 enemy short,  
 course SSE 4:12½ course SE 4:17 enemy over 4:19 enemy over  
 4:20 a/c SSE 4:24 2 hits sustained 4:24½ hit sustained  
 4:28 fire around Q turret 4:29 Port 5 4:32 enemy short 4:33 a/c SSE  
 4:34 enemy over 4:43 Course N 4:48 re-opened fire 4:51 a/c 1pt S  
 5:01 hit sustained 5:02 hit sustained 5:09 fire reported:X turret. <sup>18</sup>

There was much in this to suggest that *Lion* played less of a role in the battle than was claimed. Following the hit at 4:03 (see diagram #8), the ship turned over 50°, out of sight and out of enemy range from 4:07-16, during which time only two of six 13.5" guns that were available were bearing on the enemy until 4:09/10. <sup>19</sup> It was little wonder that the BCF were so keen to defend their actions afterwards and to admit the effectiveness of enemy fire as little as possible. Where they had to admit it, they flatly retorted that their fire was just as damaging.

In contrast to *Lion*'s shooting, that of *Invincible* was undoubtedly the best of the battlecruisers, crippling *Lützow*. In an account of the battle, AB E. Danridge (*Invincible*'s range taker) noted that firing commenced roughly 1,200 yards short, but small ups were made until the range found and kept. <sup>20</sup> Admittedly the range was shorter than earlier in the day, but it was good evidence of Chatfield's feelings regarding the benefits of starting short then

working up, and of the practice undergone by the 3rdBCS at Scapa the day before the battle. However, this seemed to further suggest that each battlecruiser was using whatever methods the Captain or Gunnery Officer thought appropriate for whatever reasons. Midshipman Frank Layard was working a dumaresq (a fire-control instrument) aboard *Inflexible* and noted some telling facts:

"We had only done one test firing with our new firing system a day or two before leaving Scapa. The Gunnery Officer therefore had a difficult decision to make. Should he use the new system which, though more efficient, was virtually untried, or...revert to the old less accurate but well tested system of gunlayer firing? He decided not to risk using the new Director System and so, throughout the action, guns and turrets were individually laid and trained." <sup>21</sup>

It was evident that the "new" system was director-firing, but it was curious that, in 1916, this should be seen as particularly "new" for a member of the supposed spear-point of the fleet (old ships or not). Yet, it explains why the BCF behaved as they did at Jutland, because they had not yet reached, collectively or individually, a sufficient standard of gunnery to replace the more doubtful efficacy of individual firing as a last resort. Moreover, given the poor reputation of the BCF's gunnery it seems probable that the BCF had not sufficiently mastered even individual firing to the extent of full



efficiency.

Layard admitted that individual firing was inferior, but for his ship, gunnery was simply a case of better the devil that the gunnery officer knew. In contrast, Dannreuther, in *Invincible*, made excellent use of director-firing, as supported by Danridge's comments, but such a discrepancy in the methods of two ships in the same squadron is worrying. That a known inferior system was preferred simply because the gunnery officer was familiar with it, when they had just been at practice with the newer, illustrates the non-existence of uniform gunnery policy or method in the BCF. One would suspect Rear-Admiral the Hon. Horace Hood (CO 3rd BCS) to have been immediately responsible for this lack of uniformity, but it was ultimately Beatty's direction (or not) in BCF matters.

Layard also noted that:

"Captains and Admirals in those days were remote and mysterious people...were seldom seen...there was never an occasion that I can recall, when the Captain fell the men in to give them a pep talk. During my two years only once did the admiral of our squadron come on board and not once did we see Admiral Beatty; not even after Jutland. How different it is today." <sup>22</sup>

Whilst it was by no means obligatory for Admirals to make regular visits, when one considers that Beatty did not seem to be too keen to meet Evan-Thomas, it seemed that Admirals being scarcely seen, or scarcely seeing

each other, was not uncommon. Naturally, junior officers would not be too aware of Captains' or Admirals' movements, but considering what is known of the workings of the BCF, it seemed very much as if Beatty was content to trust his Admirals and Captains to bring the ships up to standard, without actually checking what was done in much, if any, detail. It was true that if he had anything important to impart, then others would visit him, but even these occasions were few and far between. This undoubtedly led to the discrepancies and irregularities in the functioning of the BCF seen at Jutland. The 13.5"-gunned battlecruisers, however, all began the action under director control. Whether or not this was through individual choice is uncertain, but most likely.

The British received roughly four times as many hits as were achieved in the battlecruiser phase. Later, the effects of poor quality shell provided some of the answer to why the 1stSG did not suffer more damage. Hipper, however, noted that there were many shells that appeared to have very irregular flight patterns, as if from ricochets.<sup>23</sup> There were ricochets on both sides, but the high number noted by Hipper, led him to suggest that this might have been due to there not being sufficient gas pressure and muzzle velocity to set the fuses of British shells. This would have explained the irregular flights and poor explosive power. Such could essentially only result from the fact that there was not enough energy as was required, to set the fuse, spin the projectile and to give it sufficient energy to reach the target. No guns were reported as misfiring, which might explain the problem, yet so would the scenario that reduced charges were being used.

For *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Princess Royal* and *Queen Mary*, the full charge for a 13.5" gun (Mk V) was 293lbs<sup>24</sup> which gave a maximum range at 20° elevation of 23,800 yards. The reduced charge was 219¾ (a reduction of ¼) giving a maximum range of 17,850 yards. Such reductions would lead to a slower spin and slower speed of flight, which would result in the resistance from the air slowing the shell sooner. Given that the range varied from c.14,000-19,000 yards (for the majority of this phase), the use of reduced charges in certain cases, would preclude there being too many (if any) overs, which Chatfield had felt were a waste of shell. *Lion's* range corrections only served to indicate that spotting overs was very difficult indeed and that insufficient corrections of range were made at first, partly due to this excess of overs. Reduced charge firing could help prevent this, but only if the enemy were near the maximum range of a reduced charge gun. Although Hipper did not specify when these irregular shells were seen, or from which ships, it would seem that he referred to the whole phase of the battle at differing times. Judging by the amount of overs when *Lion* opened fire and the adverse effects that this had on effective gunnery, reduced charge firing might have been seen as a good answer to the problems that were experienced with ranging, but might not have been successful. One must not be led off the scent too much by Hipper's equating good gunnery with small spread of shot, contrasting the BCF and 5thBS as poor and excellent respectively, as each were using different equipment and differing methods to achieve hits.

With regard to ranging, the Barr & Stroud FQ2 (9' base length) rangefinders in the battlecruisers were shorter than the FT24 (15'), yet the

FT24 was carried only in ships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class (5thBS) onwards. The FT24 was, however, accurate to within 168 yards at 20,000 yards (223 at 23,000), three times more accurate than the FQ2, which also accounted for the good marksmanship of the 5thBS. The fact that *Lion's* gun sights only went up to 20,200 yards was a mitigating factor, but this did not explain or excuse why some shots were not fired when the enemy first came into range.

The lack of damage to the 5thBS from the 1stSG in this phase was also due to the fact that, in Hipper's words:

"Reply to the effective fire of these ships which were right under the sun [c.20° above the horizon]...was impossible, only an immediate turn away saved the situation." <sup>25</sup>

Chatfield's post-battle sensitivity concerning gunnery incorporated all the above factors and his real and alleged role in the BCF, not just as the Captain of one ship. Despite being a former Captain of the gunnery school, HMS *Excellent*, Chatfield's reputation as a gunnery officer was not unquestionable, nor unquestioned in the Fleet (at least after Jutland).

The fact that, at Jutland, a ship — *Derfflinger* — went 10 minutes without being fired upon was a repeat of another weakness identified, but not remedied after Dogger Bank. Von Hase noted that after firing commenced:

"I laughed grimly and now I began to engage our enemy with complete calm, as at gun practice, and with continually increasing accuracy." <sup>26</sup>

Had he been under fire, it is reasonable to assume that his shooting would



not have been as good. Little, if anything, had been done after Dogger Bank to prevent the repetition of this serious error, which at Jutland had such disastrous consequences.

It is not too clear to what extent Beatty controlled the action between the battlecruisers at Jutland and how far Chatfield's views, stated above, were practised. A major bone of contention, even up to the early 1970s, was the extent to which Chatfield was responsible for the gunnery of the battlecruisers. His sensitivity regarding their shooting at Jutland, after the war especially, was largely the result of it being suggested that he was responsible for defects in gunnery, when these were not, in most cases, within his powers or authority to remedy. It was often assumed that as Jellicoe's Flag-Captain was Fleet Gunnery Officer, then Beatty's must be Battlecruiser Fleet Gunnery Officer, but this was far from being certain. Admiral Sir William James, in 1968, recalled his experience as Commander aboard *Queen Mary* and stated that Chatfield was definitely not responsible for the gunnery efficiency of the battlecruisers.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the situation is so obscure, as to question whether or not there actually was an individual responsible for the whole BCF gunnery at all. If there was, he performed appallingly.

Each battlecruiser was, then, responsible for its own gunnery. It must not be too readily assumed that this was a critical defect in the management of the battlecruisers as a force, but it would result in a lack of uniformity which might disadvantage some ships more than others, thus weakening the strength of the force as a whole. If standards differed widely, then this could well affect the force in action. The responsibility for ensuring certain

standards in the force was Beatty's and it was an odd oversight (if that is what it was) that he gave consideration to how he hoped the force would act in battle, but did not seem to ensure that the means to achieve his aims were in place. In the absence of much detailed evidence, it would appear that Beatty was content for each ship's captain to ensure that his ship could meet all requirements. In this, he was disappointed.

Being the Flagship for the battlecruisers, *Lion* would be the leader to be followed and be guided ultimately by the senior officer (SO) of the force. The ship, though, was Chatfield's responsibility, not Beatty's. Chatfield indirectly ensured the safety of his ship from the end that befell three of the same type (and one of similar class), but it was obviously not his place to insist upon this being the case in other ships. Without Beatty's support, he could not tell other Captains (he was not the senior Captain in the force either) how to run their ships. Even if they were aware of *Lion*'s ammunition handling system, developed by the Chief Gunner, WO Alexander Grant, which enabled the rapid supply of ammunition whilst maximising safety, they might not have approved, or thought it suitable for their ship. One should wonder why these evident differences, amongst so many others, were allowed to persist.

Signalling was another area that was to plague the battlecruisers in action, there being little guidance from Beatty in this as well. Had Beatty appointed a qualified signals expert to deal with the BCF's signalling, one might suggest that he could have reduced the probability of errors. Appointing a competent staff officer to ensure the BCF's signalling or

gunnery standards and methods would have aided easier identification of weaknesses and the consequent seeking of remedies for them. Some might suggest such appointments to be essential, which no careful admiral would overlook.

At Jutland, although enemy ships were in sight for some time before firing commenced, the other battlecruisers seemed to be waiting to follow the Flagship's lead. This could have resulted from the fact that Chatfield's ideas regarding rapid fire were being practised (and possibly supported by Beatty) and there might have been some feeling in the other ships, that the Flagship would, or should, dictate how the action was to be pursued. However, the BCFOs had encouraged individual action should there be suitable opportunity. One could suggest that there was more than ample opportunity for this. It was stressed that no enemy ship should be left un-fired at, yet this only seemed to have been interpreted as relating to the distribution of fire after firing commenced (this had, after all, inspired the instruction).

For over 22 minutes the 13.5"-gunned battlecruisers had seen the enemy, but did not open fire, even though the enemy were within range. Although Beatty and others were later to criticise alleged sloth, reluctance and mismanagement in the battlefleet, they seemed unaware of such errors of their own. It could be mentioned that when *Marlborough* opened fire, at 6:17, it was not felt to be necessary to wait to see if the Fleet Flagship was firing first. In fact, of all firing that took place during the daylight hours, the battlecruisers are the only ones who withheld fire on capital ships after the enemy had been identified. By 6:00, visibility had deteriorated and despite

some tactical inhibitions, most battleships fired immediately they could see a target. This was not the case in the BCF.

After the war battlecruiser personnel, as their evasiveness suggested, were all too aware of their collective and personal failings and adopted the offensive in the war of words hopefully to blind the opposition — as they had hoped to do, yet failed, at Jutland — and they succeeded with this in the early 1920s. If they did not consider the battlecruiser action to have been mismanaged, then the reasons for acting as they did and the resultant successes, needed to be explained. This, they did not do. After the war, much criticism was made of Evan-Thomas and of his late entry into the engagement, although he opened fire as soon as he was in range. However, Beatty was late in entering the battle too and he withheld fire when in range. That the battlecruisers threw away an important advantage over the enemy, to trade punches on more equal terms, required justification and it was some measure of their success in the war of words conducted after the war, that they were able to obscure the issue so much, as to blame battlecruiser design (amongst other things) for lack of success, which was not the case.

Prior to the battle, it was common in the Fleet for there to be a large amount of ready-to-use charges, exposed in the magazines. This aided the rapid rate of firing that it was thought essential, particularly in the early stages of an action. Chatfield was just one of those who felt that this rapid rate of early fire was essential and experience from Dogger Bank, only underlined this in his view. He consented to *Lion's* Chief Gunner, Grant, limiting the amounts of ready-to-use charges and insisting that any doors



between the magazine and guns be closed except for the feeding of ammunition and charges. Although Grant ran the risk of Chatfield's displeasure (and later, his praise) by potentially slowing the rate of fire, Chatfield's endorsement of Grant's system showed that it was feasible to achieve as rapid a fire as was possible, in addition to securing the safety of the ship and its crew. This being the case, one wonders if he ever mentioned this to Beatty and if he did, why did Beatty not act upon it? If he did not mention it, one might ask why not? One is left again to wonder at the exact role that Chatfield played in the force with regard to gunnery, despite what many erroneously assumed that he did — that of the BCF's formal gunnery officer. It almost beggars belief though, that for something of this magnitude, Chatfield did not mention it, but equally, so does Beatty's apparent non-intervention. However, one should bear in mind that Beatty might have disapproved of Grant's system.

Grant's régime, perhaps deliberately, was far from being common knowledge at the time. When Grant's memoirs were used by Marder, in the 1960s, Vice-Admiral Geoffrey Blake (who had been on Jellicoe's staff at Jutland) felt that Marder had been inventive. He told Vice-Admiral Aubrey Mansergh (editor of the *Naval Review*):

"I am quite sure that [Grant] would have certainly mentioned the drill to me, as I saw him very shortly after the action." <sup>28</sup>

However, perhaps Grant assumed that Blake already knew about such a vital matter. What seems only too clear is that, given the way each battlecruiser

operated, there were aspects of the running of the ships of the BCF that were not considered to be sufficiently important to be communicated to officers outside the individual units. Beatty did, of course, make it clear that he did not want excessive centralisation of mundane issues, but seemed to go to the other extreme — of laxity. As a result, the effectiveness of the whole force suffered. Chatfield stated that:

"The ship [*Lion*] has been in commission for so long, and the men so highly trained...that even in action they can do almost anything without their officers".<sup>29</sup>

Chatfield had allowed his ship to get well into the enemy's range before opening fire, when as rapid a rate as possible could have been achieved from maximum range downwards. This ran the risk of having to compete on similar terms with the enemy — terms which their methods favoured — which was evidently the plan of action, but it was far better to have used the range advantage his guns had. That this was not done suggests that the 13.5" gun without adequate fire-control mechanisms, was not seen so much as a device designed mainly to give range advantage, but to provide a heavier projectile to fire at a similar range to that at which the enemy was firing. If, indeed, it was decided to forsake the range advantage, Fisher's motto to hit first, hit hard and keep hitting, was of crucial importance. The BCF failed in all three of these respects.

Although Beatty's encouragement of initiative was admirable, the use of initiative was just as prone as any other system to lead to problems if not

used appropriately and there were limits to its benefits. In later years, when the two apparently different battlefleet and battlecruiser systems were held to represent both the good and bad in tactics, strategy and training, these systems were used in limited ways to suit particular causes. Unless there was a uniformity in understanding just what initiative was and how others might use it, problems of misunderstanding and misinterpretation would appear, just as they did before and during the battle. The nature of whatever system was in place was of less importance than its efficacy when in use, but all too often it was assumed that the mere existence of less strict procedures equated with improved operating efficiency. However, this efficiency depended upon Beatty ensuring that all his captains knew what he wanted and how this was going to be achieved; this was where the failure occurred.

When the BCF did open fire it was evident, from German accounts, that *Lion*, at least, was adhering to Chatfield's views regarding rapid fire and using a larger spread. The necessity for having to correct in the first few minutes for over estimating the range, reduced the effect that rapid fire might have had upon *Lützow*. It is worth noting that prior to the battle, there were concerns over the accuracy of the battlecruisers' shooting and they had only limited opportunities to practice frequently. The full-calibre firing they needed was not practicable in such a populated area and securing the mouth of the Forth against submarines was difficult. Despite this, the crews did know how to use a gun, and the problems faced in the first 20 minutes of the action at Jutland, were more the result of poor and confused gunnery and operational methods, than they were due to poor marksmanship alone. All

too often the two are separated, but the adverse effects upon marksmanship were the results of the faulty tactical application of the vessels.

The tactical considerations themselves were largely based upon the uncertainties of the fire-control equipment carried, which, by and large:

"tended to emphasise the importance of simple spotting of fall of shot as the keystone of accurate gunnery...Some [fire control officers] indeed detected the weaknesses of the non-Argo Dreyer tables and went so far as to practically dismantle them, trusting to cruder methods of spotting guns on to the target." <sup>30</sup>

This weakness could be traced back to those of the battlefleet who had supported Dreyer's devices. As far as the post-war arguments were concerned, much ill-feeling felt by former BCF men and their sympathisers had resulted from perceived and actual constraints initiated by battlefleet men. Fire-control pervaded the development of battlecruiser theory and application and its practical limitations, in 1916, led to the limitations imposed on what it was hoped they could achieve. This meant that the BCF had to find other ways to overcome this handicap, but they were not helped at all by extremely piecemeal doctrinal development and failure to collate the significant findings of Dogger Bank. Although Beatty and his sympathisers criticised centralisation, it did not mean that a less rigid system could be achieved by less work, but Beatty's actions, or rather his evident lack of action, suggested that he thought that with common understanding between



himself and his captains, the whole system would automatically turn out to function as he desired. His relations with some of his immediate subordinates were far from cordial. Many were also reluctant to adopt his principles of greater tactical freedom, which played a large part in the poor functioning of the BCF at Jutland.

The issue of the Fifth Battle Squadron sheds some light on BCF gunnery doctrine. Beatty had been asking for these ships for some time prior to the battle. His reasoning was often varied and confused, and he also enlisted the help of other battlecruiser commanders to petition the Admiralty. The basic reason given for his desire for some or all of these ships was that, with the *Queen Elizabeths*, the BCF would have an overwhelming advantage over the 1stSG, almost guaranteeing the outcome of any engagement. Even including the possibility that *Hindenburg* (with reputedly 15" or 17" guns) had been added to the 1stSG, the British battlecruisers were superior to their German counterparts theoretically. The British battlecruisers were faster and more heavily armed than each German equivalent class and should have been superior in practice. Yet, serious doubts existed as to whether this was really the case. The action off the Falklands had shown that the battlecruisers, although successful, had taken far too long to establish accurate fire. There, they were pitted more correctly against armoured cruisers of an earlier generation, but they evidently could not afford to take so long against similar types. By the time of Jutland, they were no nearer to solving the problem of accurate fire-control, which meant that such fire power as was boasted and widely believed to have existed, was not actually achievable. They needed the *Queen Elizabeth* class to make good this collective deficiency. The 13.5"-gunned battlecruisers were, however, still superior if used correctly, but were hampered in this respect by poor fire-control methods and equipment. The addition of the 5thBS augmented Beatty's force to make it more powerful than most other nations' entire navies. However, the Grand Fleet

could do this without weakening the rest of the battlefleet. For the BCF, the 5thBS was, in reality, an essential item.

It is understandable that anyone who had seen action and been part of a force that suffered such losses as did the battlecruisers, might not take too kindly to anyone suggesting that their efforts were largely unsuccessful. There was a feeling in the BCF after Jutland that it was necessary to emphasise any successes that were scored over the enemy, largely to satisfy themselves that the enemy had not escaped undamaged. Yet, this developed into a situation whereby they were reluctant to admit to many of their failings and to deny that the battlefleet played any significant role. This largely came about, because Jutland had seen deficiencies identified at Dogger Bank being repeated and this cannot have been easy to accept. Beatty and others were aware of these failings and of the responsibility for their occurrences. The battlecruiser action and the damage inflicted upon the BCF, largely explained the sensitivity of former members, in later years, to any criticism. What undoubtedly made such criticism harder to accept was the repetition of errors already made. That these mistakes were known only made acceptance and admittance of responsibility harder. Chatfield, for example, must have been aware that better ammunition handling measures would almost certainly have saved the 3 battlecruisers, especially following the near loss of his own (and probably his life).

Grant's initiative meant that *Lion* was able to survive three serious incidents in less than 45 minutes. Without it, the first would have claimed the ship. The hit on Q turret, at 4:00, caused potentially catastrophic fire. At 4:28,

cordite ignited in the turret trunking and, later, Chatfield noted:

"the Battlecruisers altered course 180 degrees to the northward, bringing what wind there was ahead. It was at that moment that the other charges (eight in number), in the supply hoist caught fire and a considerable explosion took place, a flame shooting up as high as the masthead." <sup>31</sup>

He might well have felt in some way responsible in that he had not mentioned Grant's system to any other captain. Beatty cannot have been unaware of the factors that disadvantaged his force and might well have felt that his aims and wishes had not been adequately practised, which was largely his own fault. This might have made him more aware of the fact that he did not meet Evan-Thomas before the battle, or that he might have been wrong to place undue reliance upon his captains to ensure that their ships were up to his desired standard. That the BCF seemed not to have learned much of any use at Dogger Bank, when there was much to learn, would only add to such feelings of guilt as existed. There was little that Jutland had shown up that Dogger Bank had not.

Whatever redeeming features there were in the BCF organisation, if there were any, one cannot share Professor Marder's view that:

"Beatty did everything possible to improve battle-cruiser gunnery, as by carefully studying the lessons of Heligoland Bight and the Dogger Bank...[his] immediate adviser on gunnery



matters was Chatfield...Everything considered, the Battle Cruiser Fleet was quite an efficient unit when the day of Jutland arrived". <sup>32</sup>

Beatty certainly did not learn the useful lessons that the two actions gave, even if he "carefully" studied them and, whereas Chatfield was his advisor, one must not suppose that this was synonymous with being BCF Gunnery Officer. As to the last comment, it was clearly something of an overstatement.

It is hard to draw comparisons between Jellicoe's battlefleet gunnery and that of the BCF, or to assert that one was better than the other. The essentially two 15-20 minute periods of battlefleet firing were enough to give the HSF the fright of their lives, to which many of them attested, but more so because it undoubtedly announced the presence of the battlefleet, at which Scheer sought escape. Had conditions been clearer, the greater weight of British fire would almost certainly have decided the action, but as is the case with victories, little analysis is done as to what could have been done better. The battleships might have shot poorly, yet still sunk every German equivalent. It was only necessary to be as good as was needed to sink as many ships as possible and this might not necessarily have required a very high standard. Had the battlefleet been obliged to be engaged for as long as the BCF, the results would be interesting and make more accurate comparison possible. Most fire-control equipment was the same and some of the best equipped battleships in this respect were not in action for very long at all and did not even open fire until an hour after *Marlborough*.

Any comparison of the battleships' and battlecruisers' gunnery

effectiveness suffers from other factors outside pure ordnance. Much criticism of the battlefleet stemmed from the fact that the Royal Navy was greatly superior to any other Navy, more so than many contemporaries felt. The odds were that it would be folly to seek action with it, or if action was joined, it would be brief. As a unit, the Grand Fleet was so powerful that just by being "in being" it was unlikely ever to be fully tested. The BCF alone did not suffer from this and were tested. However, over all, it could be convincingly claimed that the result of the action with the 1stSG was equal for both sides. Of the surviving battlecruisers, the Germans had more guns out of action during the run to the north, *Von der Tann* lost all guns and, along with *Seydlitz*, was taking-in water. The point to bear in mind, is just how much better it might have been, within the knowledge and powers of the individuals concerned and it was here where the serious flaws lay.

It is not unusual that after such crucial events, people often examine where they made mistakes and torment themselves with what might have been but for simple flaws. Often there is much that they are responsible for, but it is not unusual that people blame themselves for things over which they could have had no control. As BCF CO, Beatty seemed to have felt much of the responsibility for the way his ships fought, which was not surprising given his position. He would have been unintelligent not to have reflected on the battle, where faults occurred and the extent to which he might have prevented these, had he done this or that. His actions following the battle, especially as First Sea Lord, must always be seen with this in mind and it must not be forgotten that it is a very unusual person indeed who admits all

his flaws openly and encourages public criticism of them.

There was much in the fact that the BCF felt that they had seen the greater part of action in the war and at Jutland had been let down by the battlefleet. However, this was partly due to the fact that, although the battlefleet was seen to be unadventurous in seeking the enemy and using the advantage of its greater numbers, the BCF let slip their advantage over the 1stSG, which was almost entirely their own fault. It rankled with them and they needed to hide this. The post-war controversy began, rather innocuously, with Beatty's objections to some of the statements made by the Harper committee. Yet, Harper's objections to Beatty's ordered alterations awakened old sensitivities to criticism with regard to what had happened at the battle.

Table 1.

*Notes from Lion's Transmitting Station at Jutland.*

| <u>Bearing(enemy)</u>         | <u>RF Range (yards)</u>                             | <u>Spotting observations</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 3:47                          | a/c [alter course] 1pt [1 point=11.25°] S[tarboard] |                              |
| 3:47½ R42 [Red=port, 42° aft] |   | D800                         |
| 3:49½                         |   | D600                         |
| 3:50 R57                      | 15,500 a/c S  |                              |
| 3:51 R78                      |   |                              |
| 3:51½                         |   | D800                         |
| 3:52 R89                      |   | D100                         |
| 3:52½                         | a/c S   |                              |
| 3:53 R108                     |   | D400                         |
| 3:54 R107                     | 14,500  |                              |
| 3:55                          | a/c S   |                              |
| 3:56½                         |   | D200                         |
| 3:57                          |   | U800                         |
| 3:57½                         |   | U200                         |
| 3:58 R114                     |   | U600                         |
| 4:00 R114                     | a/c S   | U200                         |
| 4:01 R129                     | 16,750  | U800                         |
| 4:02 R144                     |   |                              |
| 4:03 "A&B not bearing"        |   |                              |
| 4:04 R125                     |   | U400                         |
| 4:07 R127                     |   | U200                         |



|       |      |               |  |
|-------|------|---------------|--|
| 4:08  | R127 | 21,400        | U200   |
| 4:09  | R120 | a/c P         | U400   |
| 4:11  | R103 | Straddle made |  |
| 4:11½ |      | a/c P         | D400   |
| 4:12  | R91  | 23,000        |  |
| 4:12½ | R81  |               | D400   |
| 4:14  | R78  |               | D800   |
| 4:15  | R80  | 21,275        | D400   |
| 4:16  | R80  | 21,000        |  |
| 4:17  | R84  |               | D800   |
| 4:18  | R87  |               | D800   |
| 4:18½ |      | a/c S         |  |
| 4:19  | R107 |               |  |
| 4:20  | R106 | 18,800        | D1000  |
| 4:21  |      |               | D1000  |
| 4:24  |      | 16,000        |  |
| 4:25  | R110 |               | D800   |
| 4:25½ |      | a/c S         |  |
| 4:26½ |      |               | D800   |
| 4:27  | R132 |               | U400   |
| 4:28  |      | a/c S         |  |
| 4:29  |      |               | U400 "Smoke obscuring target A & B not bearing." |
| 4:32  |      | a/c P         | D1000  |

|       |                       |        |  |
|-------|-----------------------|--------|--|
| 4:33  | enemy a/c P           | D1000  |  |
| 4:36  | 16 point turn         |        |  |
| 4:48  | G78 [Green=starboard] | 20,300 | U800 "Target has 2<br>derricks on after funnel." |
| 4:49  |                       | D400   |  |
| 4:50  | 20,000 a/c P          |        |  |
| 4:50½ |                       | U400   |  |
| 4:51  | G101                  | D500   |  |
| 4:54  | "A&B not hearing"     |        |  |
| 4:58  | 21,000                |        |  |
| 4:58½ | a/c P                 |        |  |
| 5:00  |                       | D800   |  |
| 5:02  | G124                  | U800   |  |
| 5:03  | 16,250                | U400   |  |
| 5:04  | a/c S                 | U400   |  |

PHAETON  
GALA

1<sup>st</sup>  
FLOTILLA  
FEARLESS  
BARHAM  
VALIANT  
WARSPITE  
MALAYA  
(5<sup>th</sup> BS)

(1<sup>st</sup> LCS)

13<sup>th</sup>  
FLOTILLA  
CHAMPION  
9<sup>th</sup> + 10<sup>th</sup> FLOTILLAS  
NEW ZEALAND  
INDEFATIGABLE  
LION  
PRINCESS ROYAL  
QUEEN MARY  
TIGER  
(BCF)

CORDELIA  
INCONSTANT

ENGADINE

BIRKENHEAD  
GLOUCESTER

YARMOUTH

(3<sup>rd</sup> LCS)

FALMOUTH

0 1 2 3  
1cm = 1nm



#1

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND, 2:20pm

NOTTINGHAM  
DUBLIN

(2<sup>nd</sup> LCS)

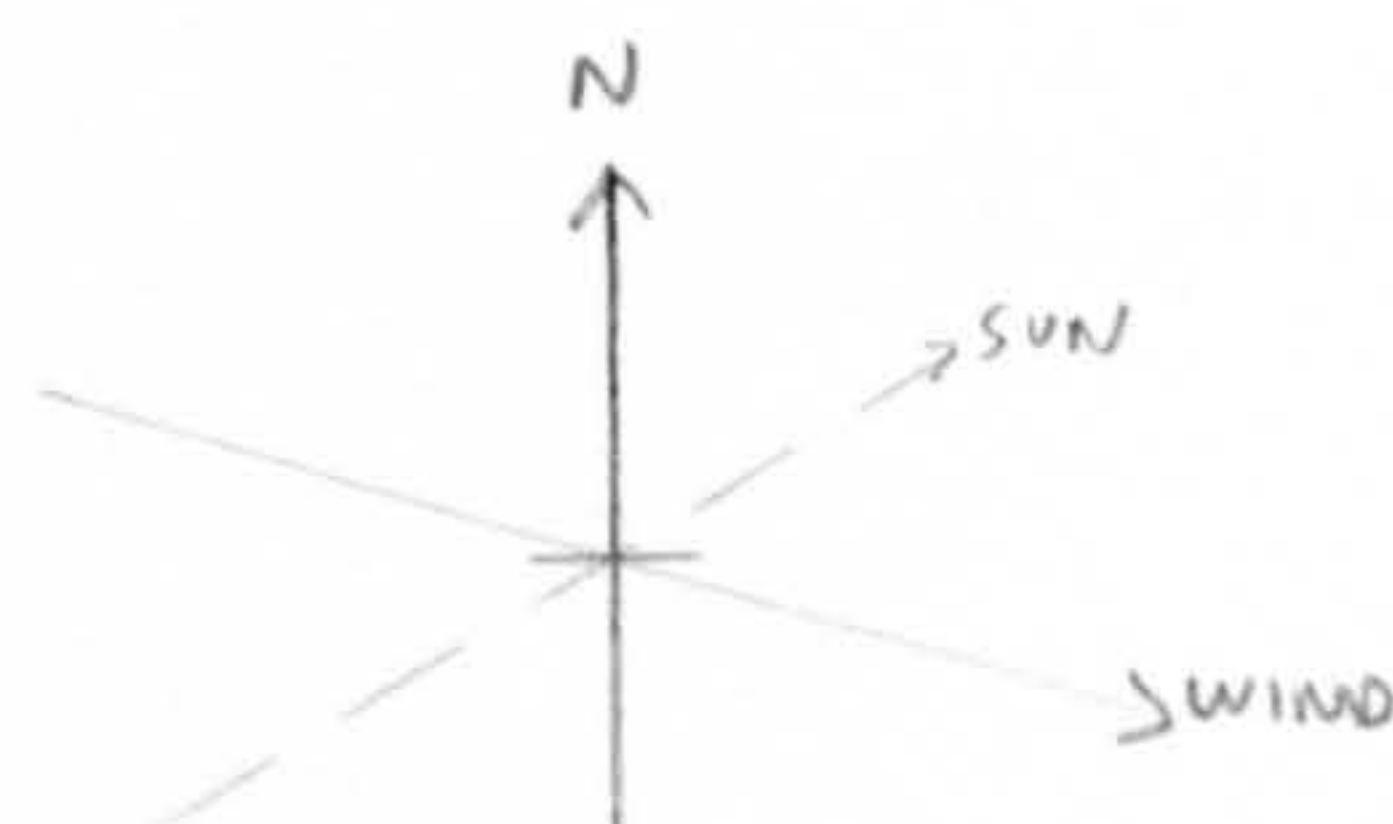
SOUTHAMPTON  
BIRMINGHAM

B109 | B110 | B97 | B98 | V45 | V69 | G41 | V44 | G101 | G102  
 | | | | | | | | | |  
 | ELBING | | PILLAU | | FRANKFURT | | WEISBADEN | | REGENSBURG  
 | | | | | | | | | |  
 B111 | B112 | V46 | 580 | 487 | 486 | G103 | G104  
 | | | 437 | | | | | |  
 (2nd SG)

| | | | |  
 | | | | |  
 | | | | |  
 | | | | |  
 IX FLOTILLA | | LÜTZOW | |  
 | | | | |  
 | | | DERFFLINGER | |  
 | | | SEIDLITZ | |  
 | | | MOLTKE | | (1st SG)  
 | | | VON DER TANN | |

#2 GERMAN ADVANCE FORCES, 2 PM.  
 (NOT TO SCALE)

41 - 42  
 40 | 43  
 | 44  
 139 | 45  
 138  
 137  
 136  
 BARHAM  
 VALIANT  
 WARSPITE  
 MALAYA  
 (5th BS)



(BCF)

36 37  
 NEW ZEALAND | 38  
 INDEFATIGABLE | 39  
 | 40  
 | 41  
 | 42  
 | 43  
 | 44  
 | 45  
 36 37  
 LION | 38  
 PRINCESS ROYAL | 39  
 QUEEN MARY | 40  
 TIGER | 41  
 | 42  
 | 43  
 | 44  
 | 45

ENEMY C. 25m

#3 THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND, 2:35-4:50 PM. (TIMES SHOW LEADING SHIPS)

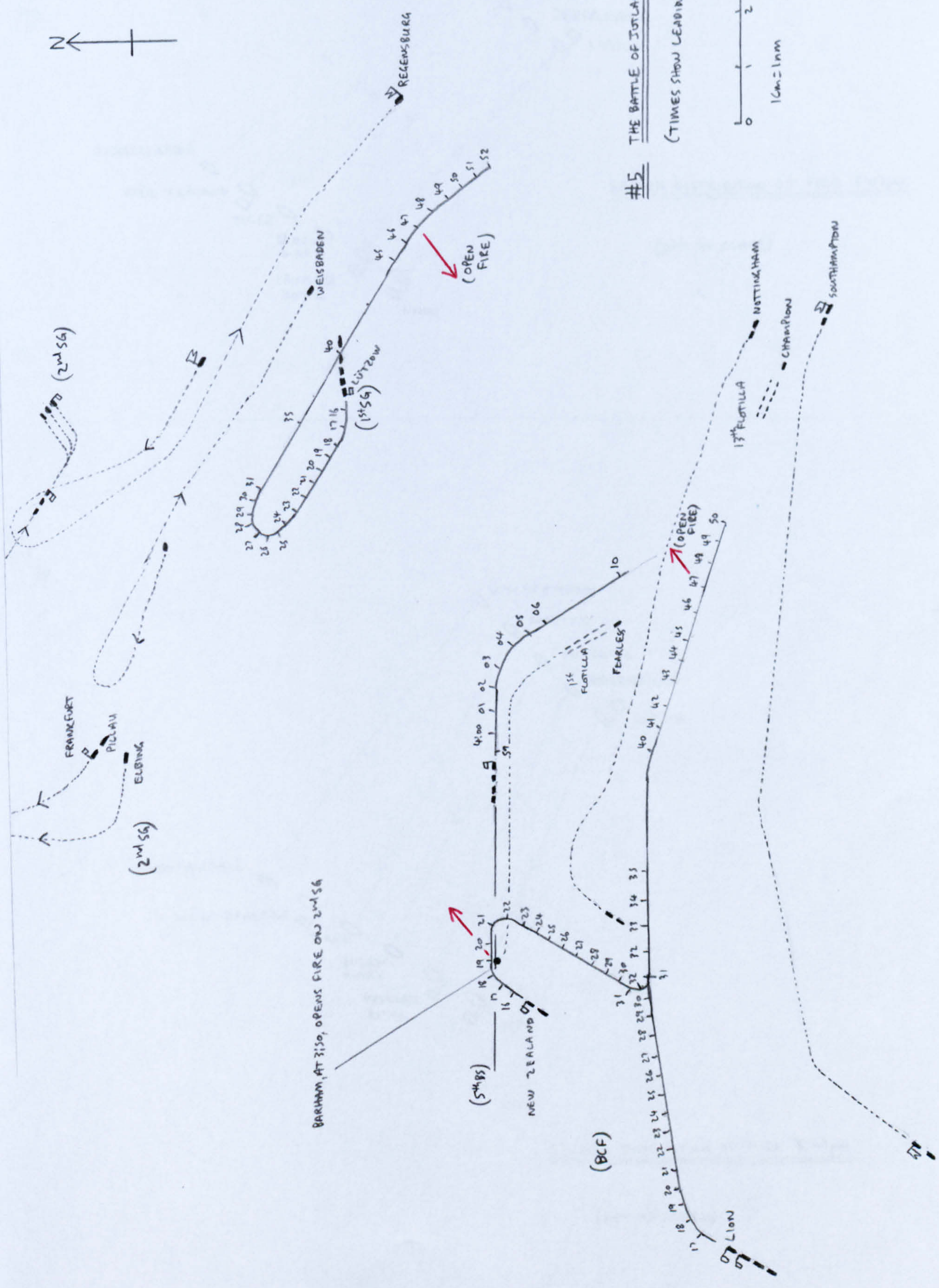
0 1 2 3

1cm = 1nm





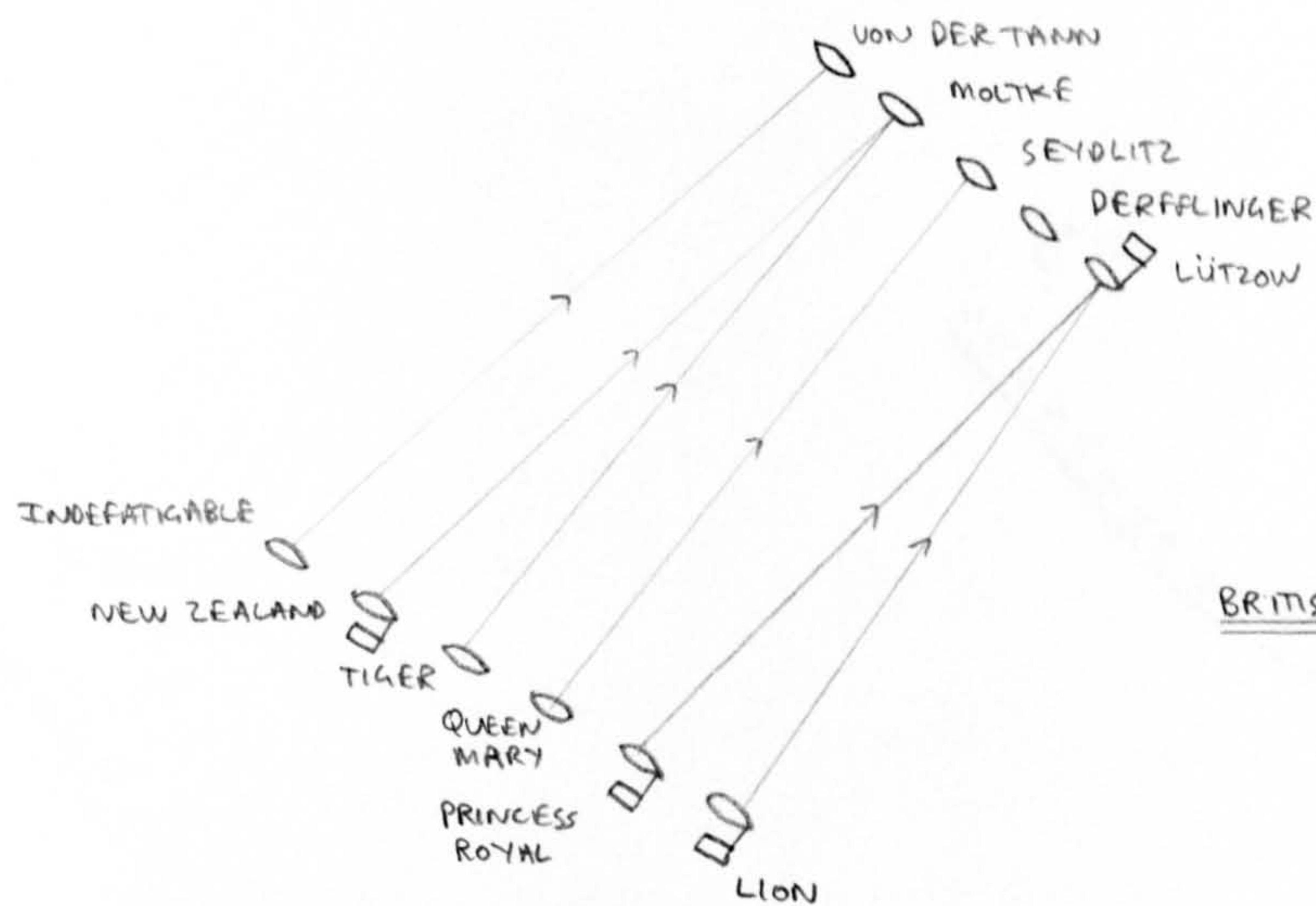




#5 THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND, 3:15-5:20 PM  
(TIMES SHOW LEADING SHIPS)

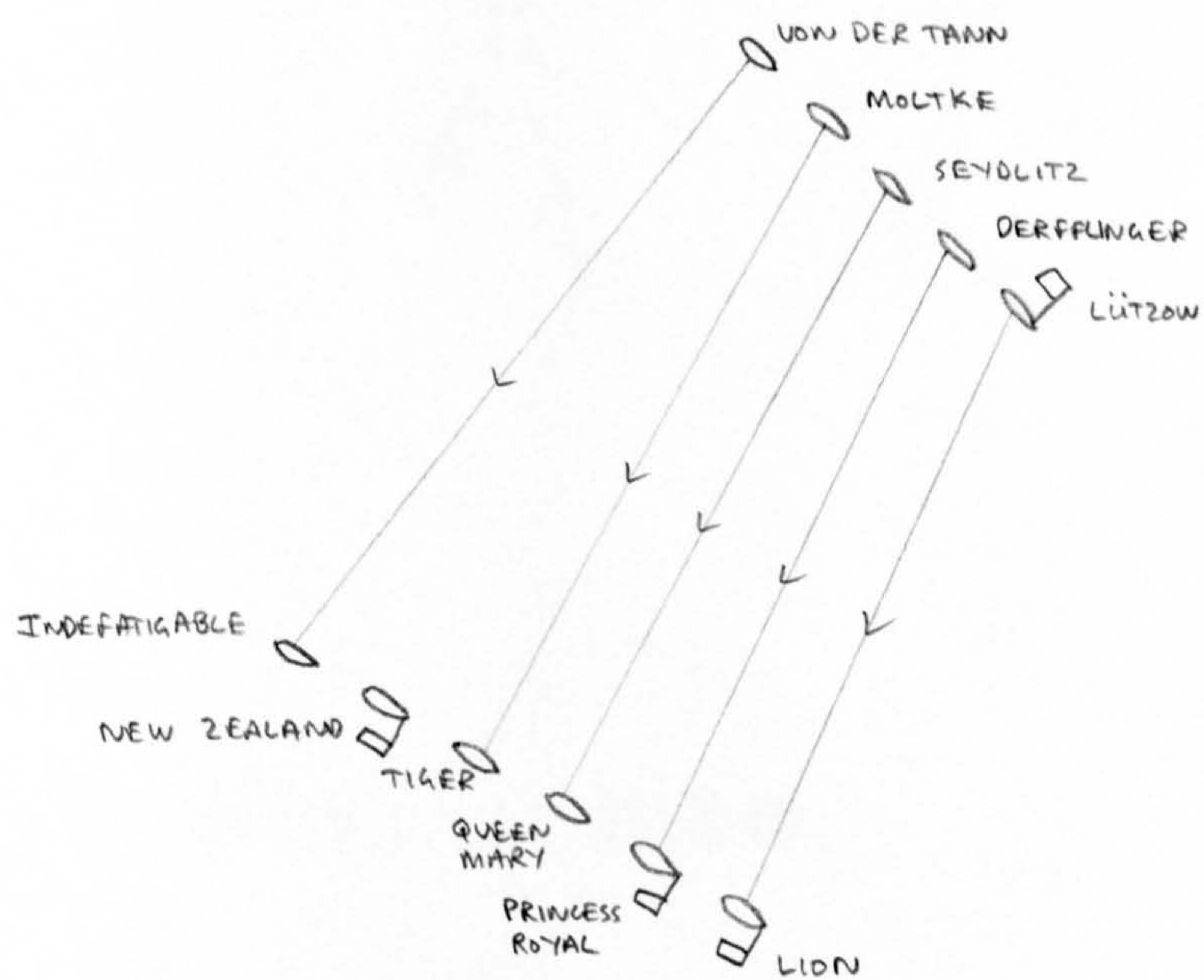


#6



BRITISH DISTRIBUTION OF FIRE 3:47pm.

(NOT TO SCALE)



GERMAN DISTRIBUTION OF FIRE 3:47pm.

(NOT TO SCALE)

5



#7 THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND 3:47-4:06pm.

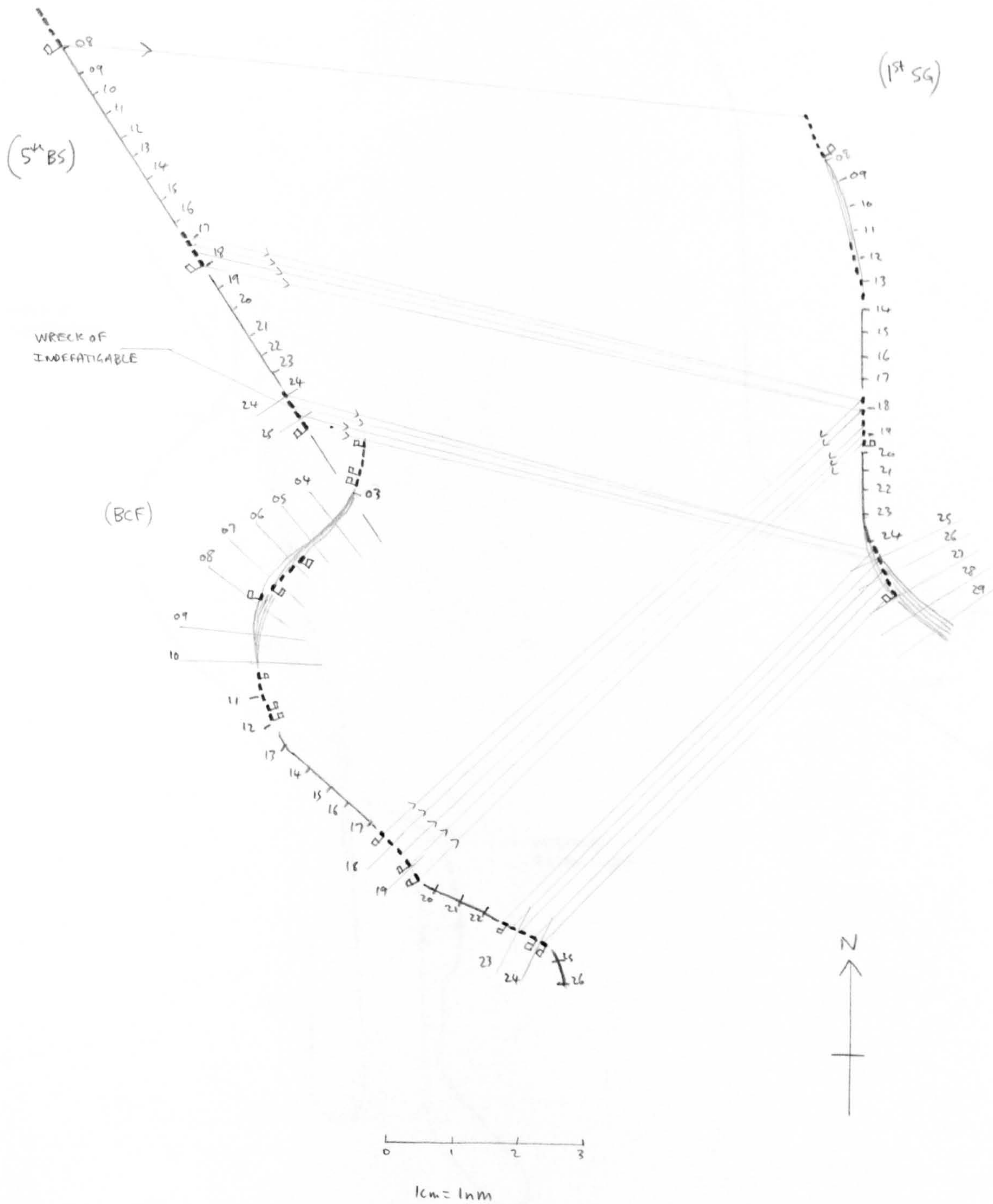
0 1 2 3

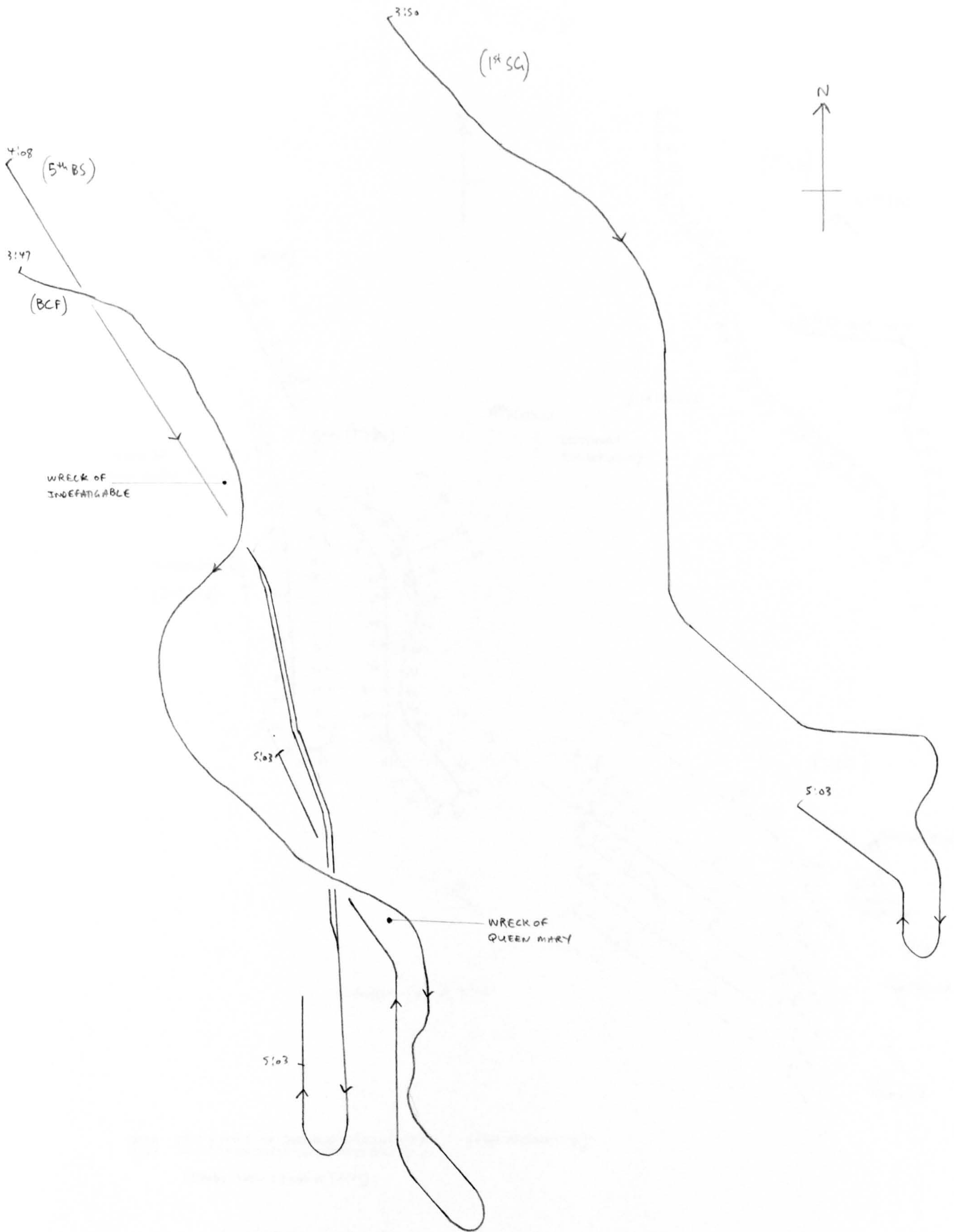
1cm = 1nm



#8

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND 4:03-26pm.

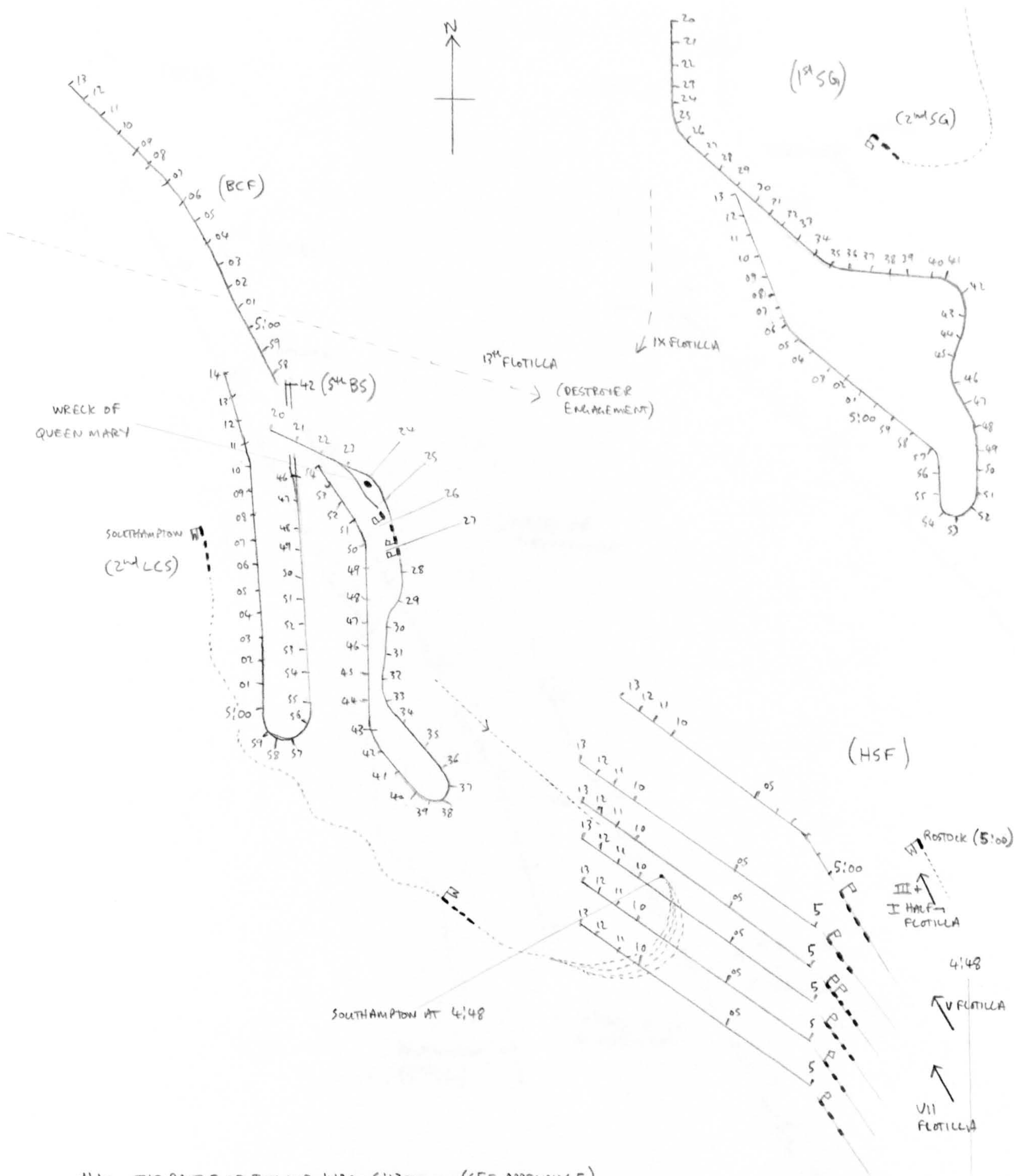




#9 THE RUN TO THE SOUTH

0 1 2 3

1cm = 1nm



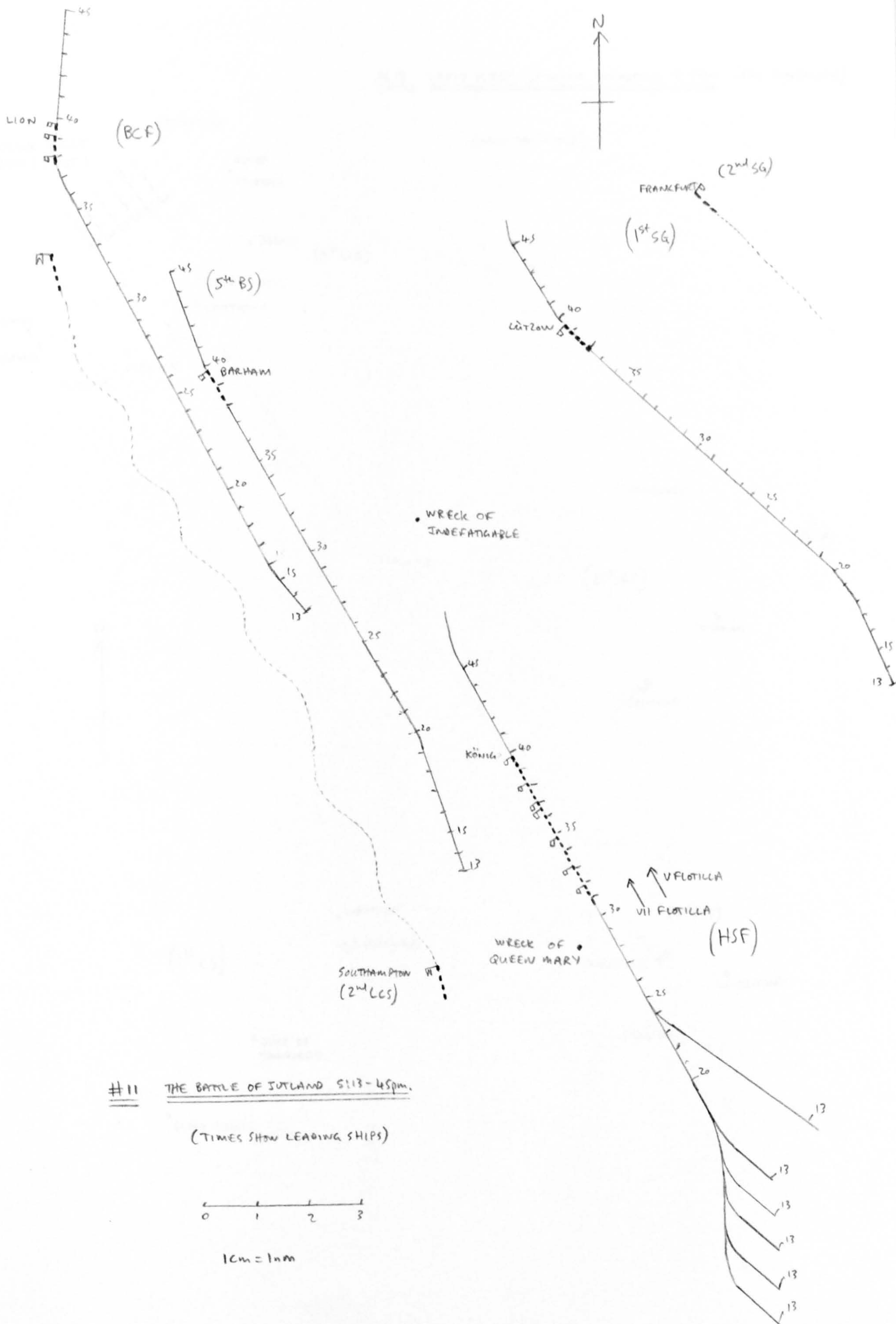
#10 THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND 4:20-5:13pm. (SEE APPENDIX 5)

(TIMES SHOW LEADING SHIPS)

0 1 2 3

1cm = 1nm





# #11 THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND 5:13-4:5pm.

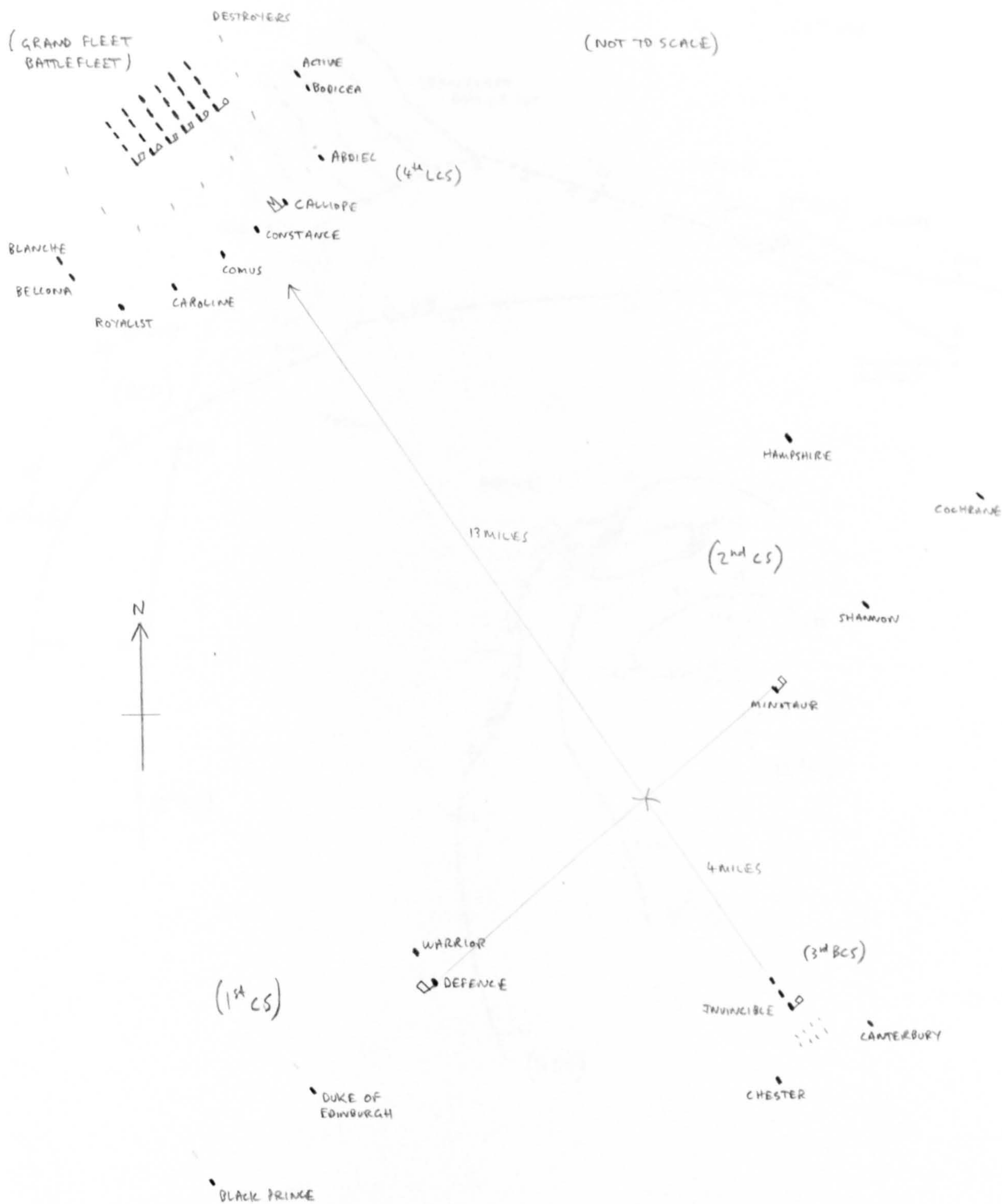
(TIMES SHOW LEADING SHIPS)

0 1 2 3

1cm = 1nm

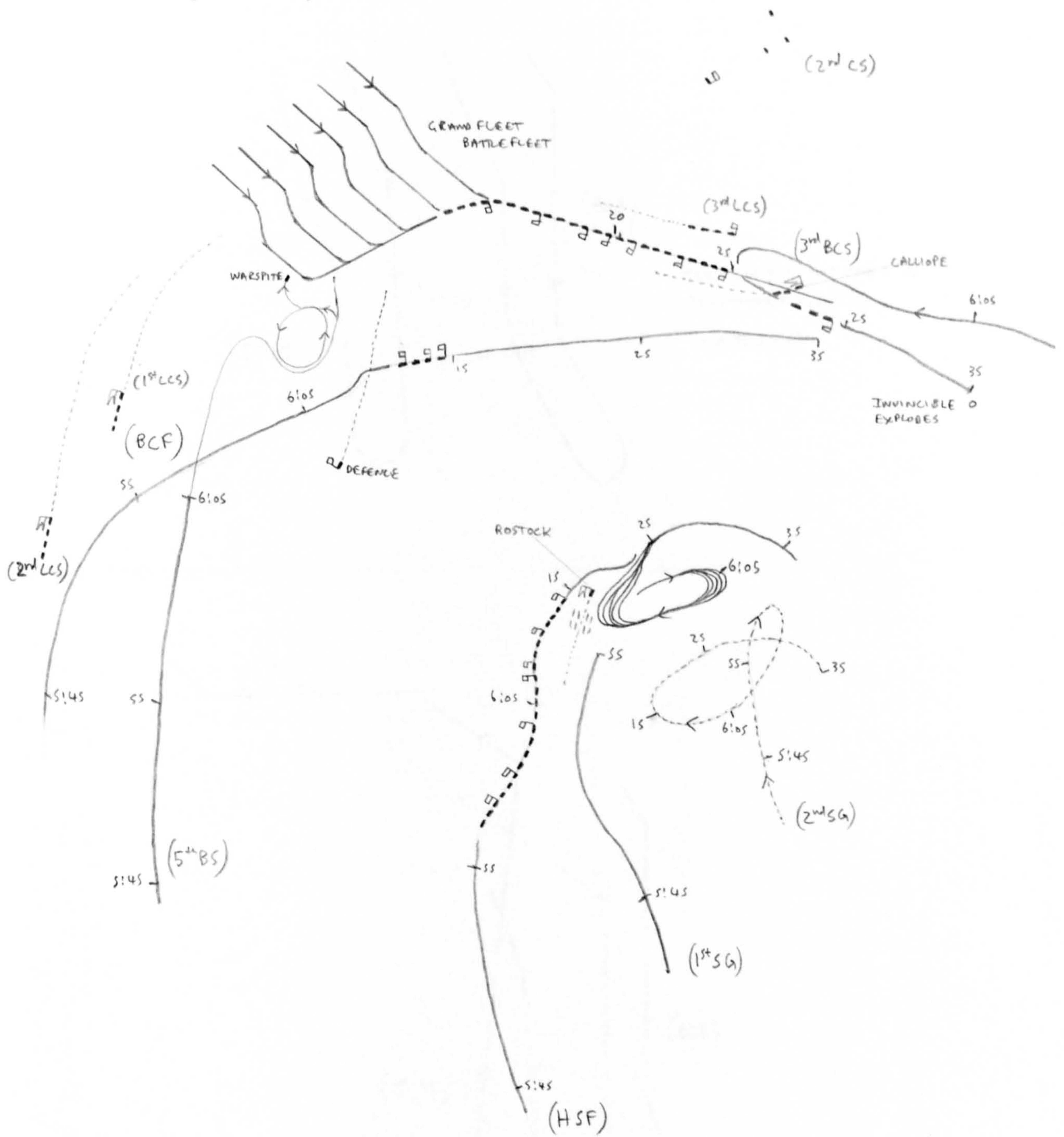


#12 GRAND FLEET CRUISING FORMATION 5:15pm. (SEE APPENDIX 5)

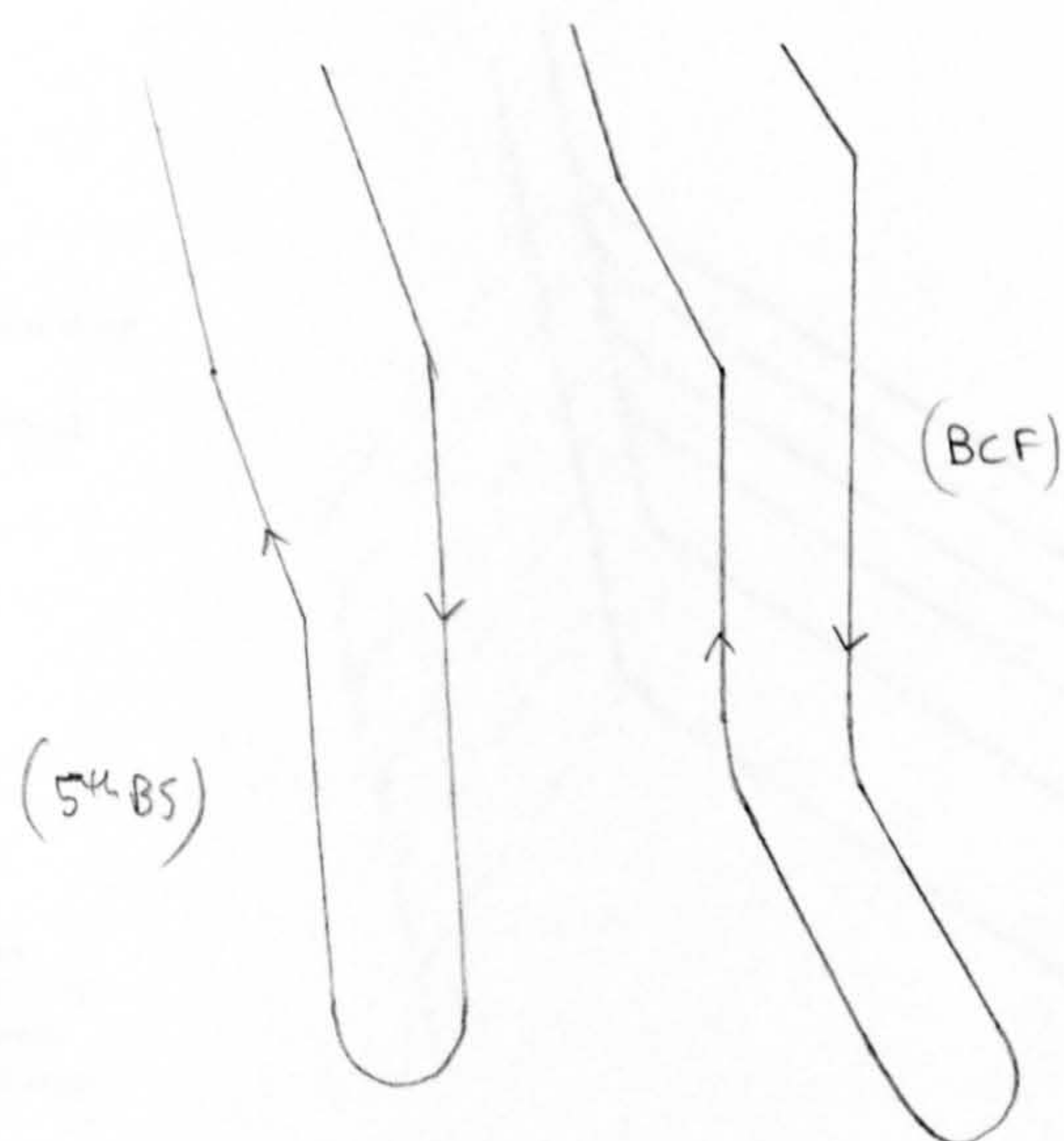


# #13 THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND 5:45-6:35 pm.

(NOT TO SCALE)

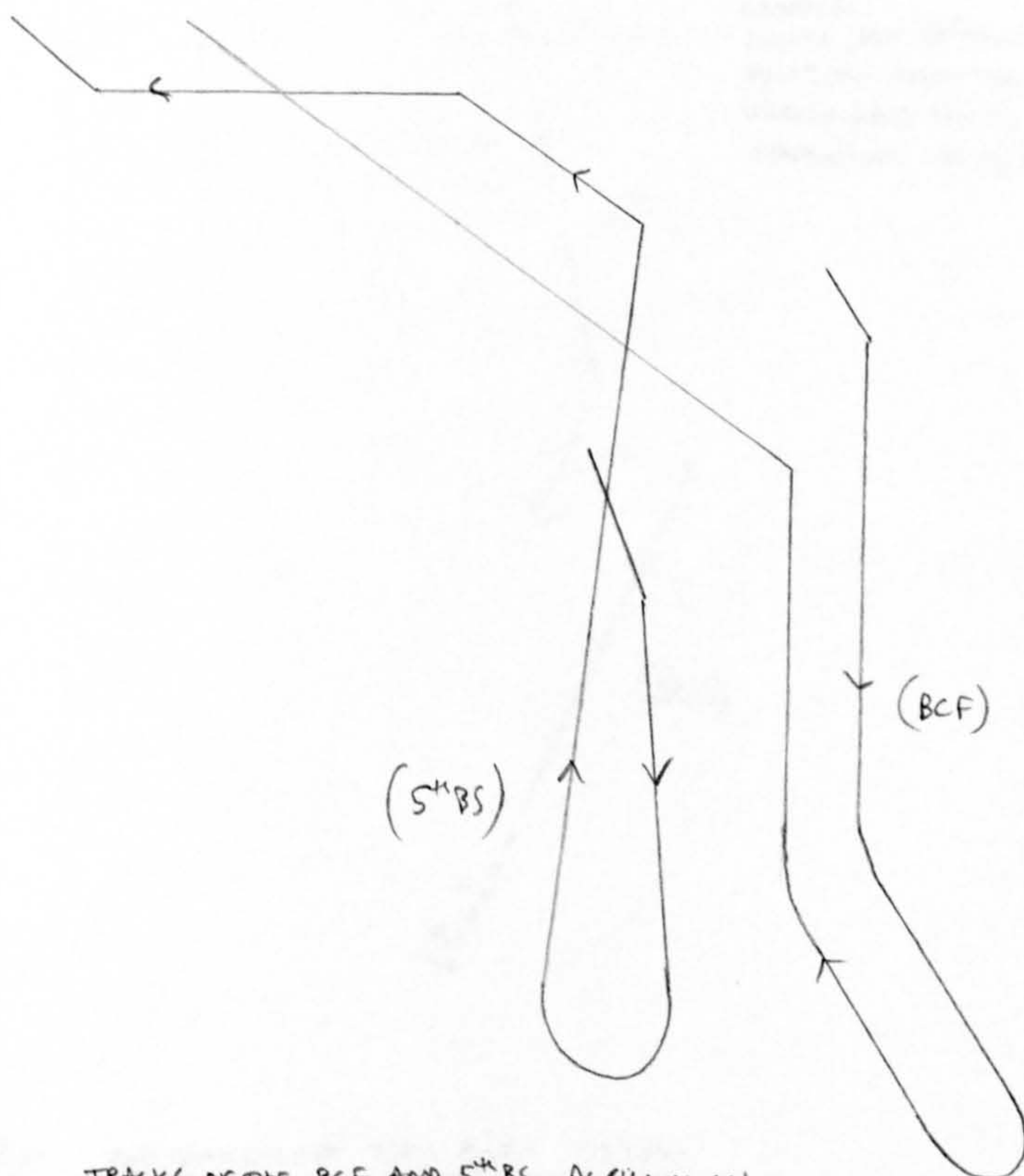


#14 THE BCF AND 5<sup>th</sup> BS 5:00-13 pm.



TRACKS OF THE BCF AND 5<sup>th</sup> BS  
AS COMMONLY DEPICTED.

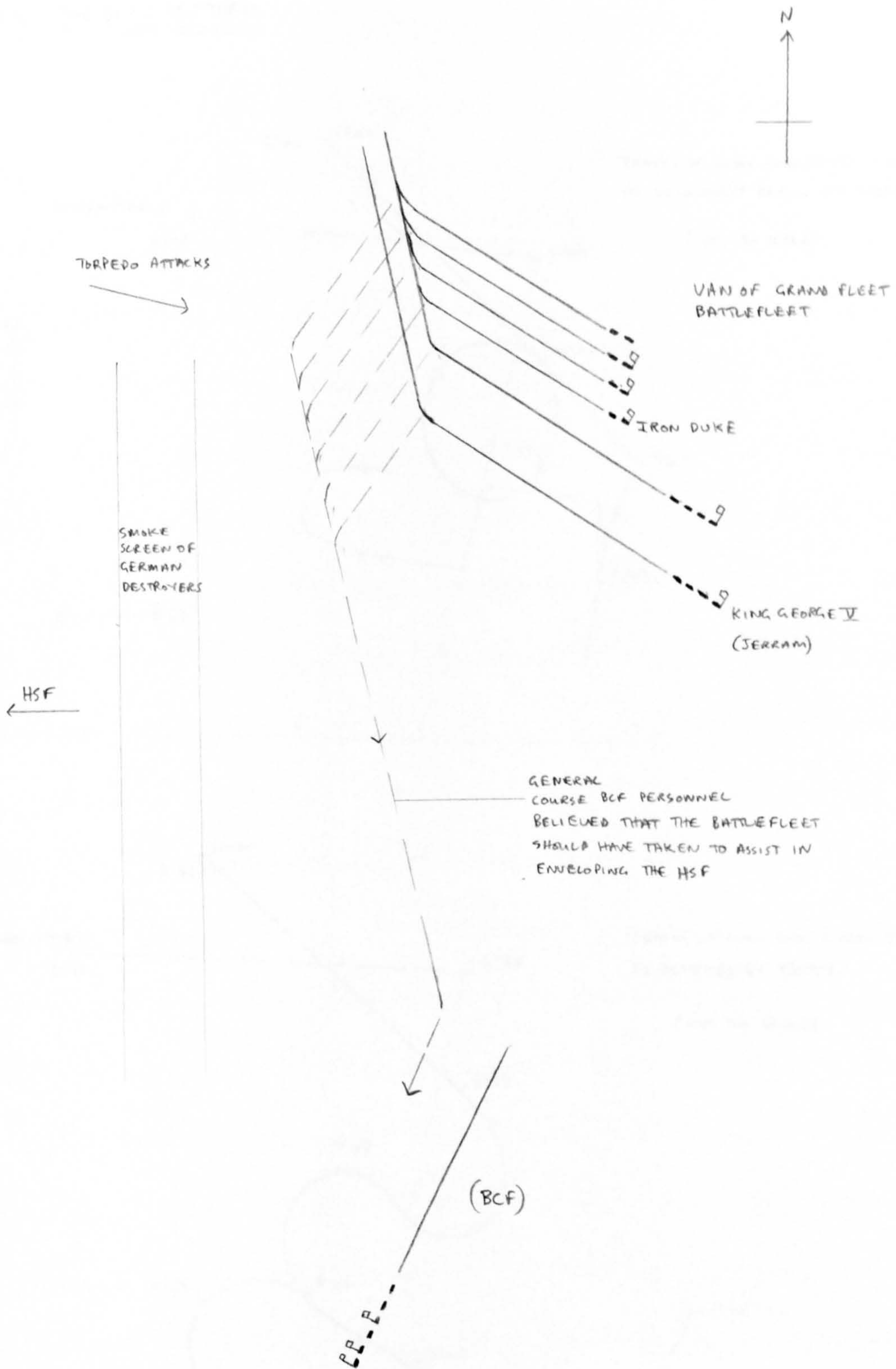
(NOT TO SCALE)



TRACKS OF THE BCF AND 5<sup>th</sup> BS AS SHOWN ON  
HARPER'S ORIGINAL CHART.

(NOT TO SCALE)



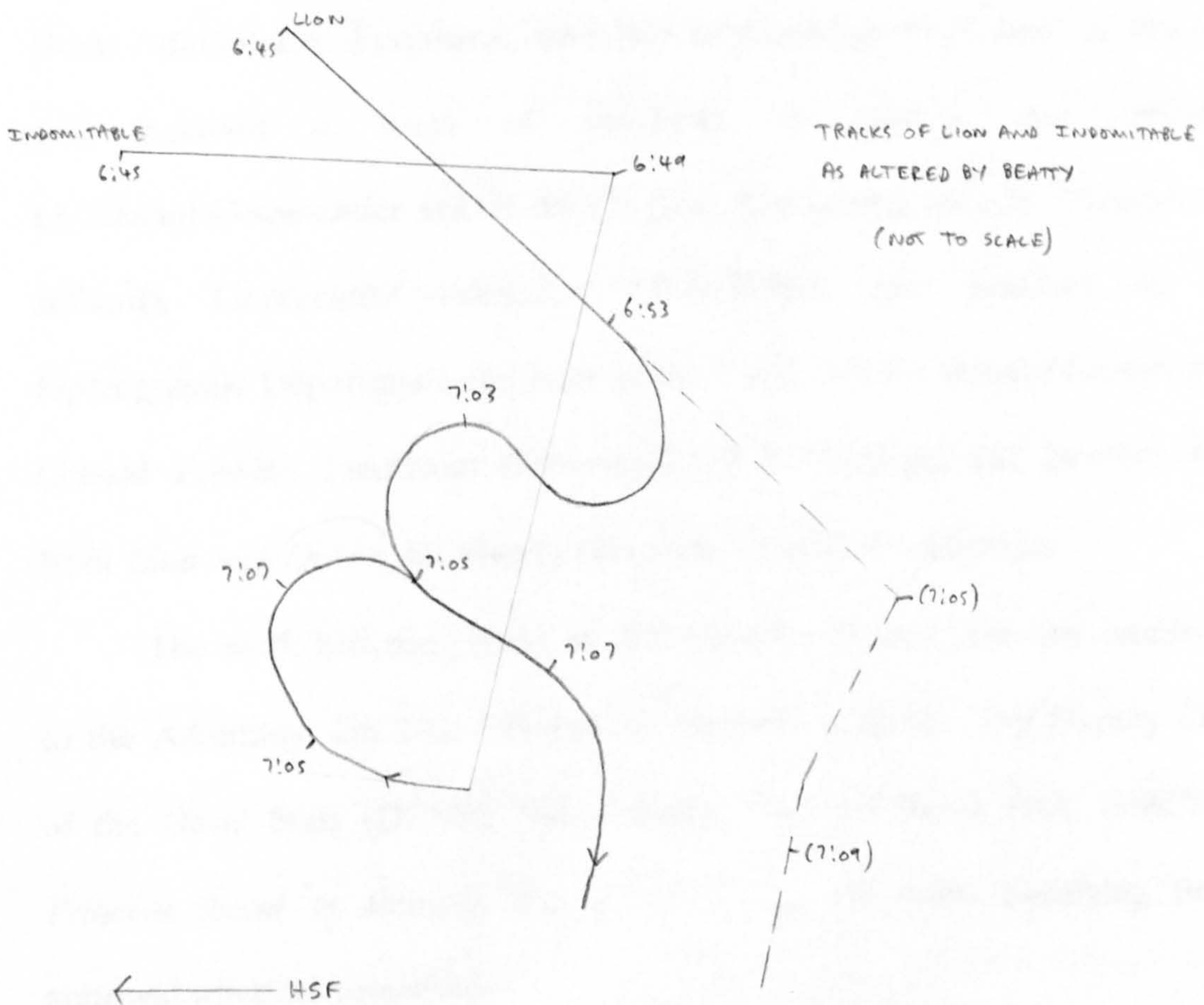
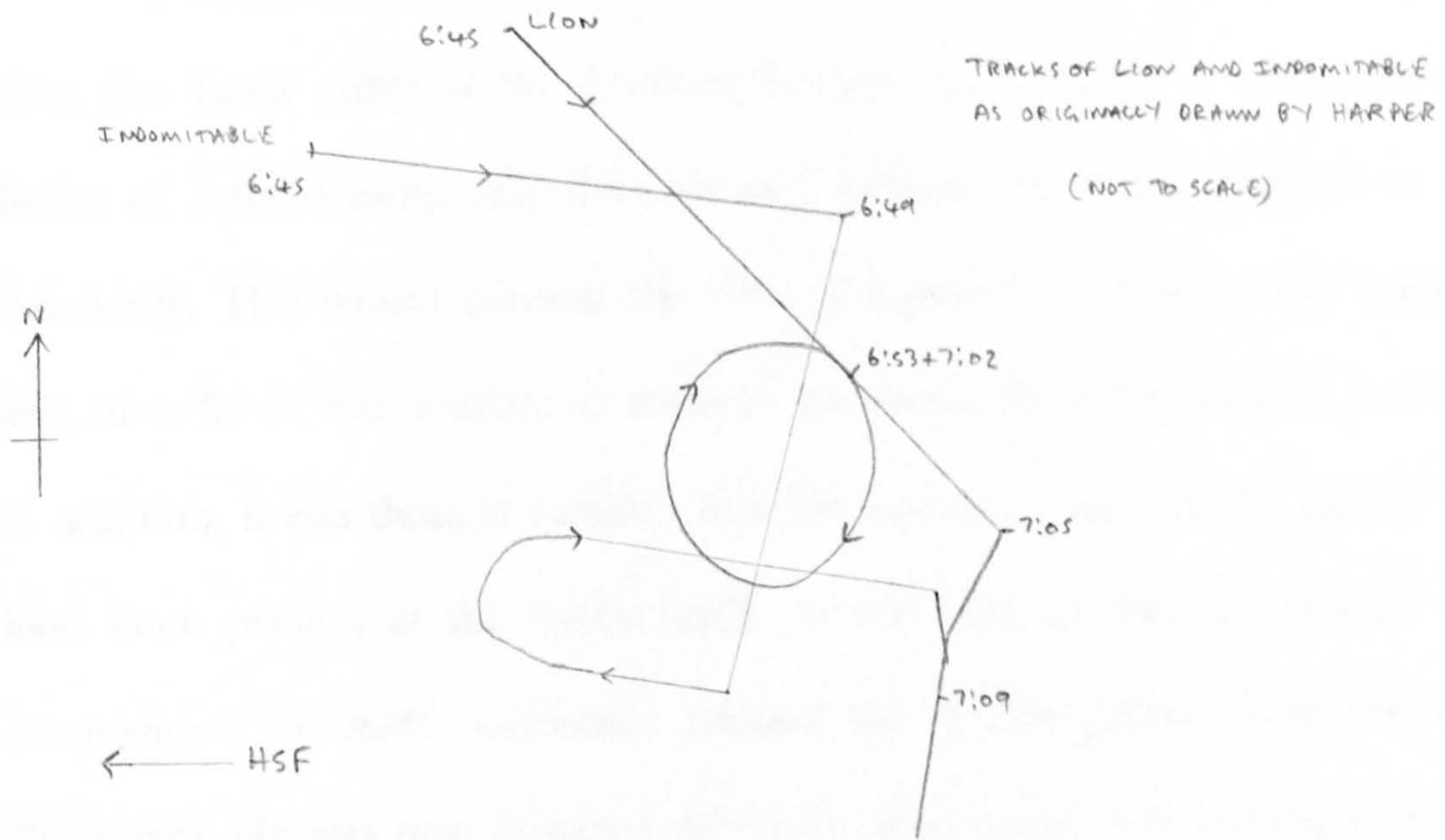


#15 THE BATTLEFLEET TURN AWAY 7:35 pm.

(NOT TO SCALE)



#16 THE BCF'S 360° TURN.



## 2. The Harper Record.

In early 1919 Captain John Ernest Troyte Harper <sup>1</sup> was chosen by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, to compose a record of the Battle of Jutland using only documentary evidence that was available at the Admiralty. This would become the official expression of Admiralty opinion and, in as far as was possible so close to the event, the most accurate account. In addition, it was thought suitable that the author of the account should not have been present at the battle itself. At the time of Jutland, Harper had commanded the AMC *Carmania* (famed for its engagement with the *Cap Trafalgar*). He was now Director of Navigation, adequately qualified for the task that lay ahead, although he could scarcely have been prepared for what happened. Work began on 6th February under the supervision of the ACNS (Rear-Admiral J.A. Fergusson, who had commanded *Thunderer* at Jutland) and included a team of assistants to Harper that included Lieutenant-Commander H.C.B. Pison (who had served aboard *Téméraire* at Jutland), Lieutenant-Commander J.F.H. Pollen (an assistant at the Hydrographic Department and later at the CID) and Lieutenant-Commander Oswald Frewen. Lieutenant-Commander W.S. Chalmers (of Beatty's staff from *Lion* and *Queen Elizabeth*) also assisted with the diagrams.

The work was completed on 2nd October of that year and handed in to the Admiralty. On 24th October, in Harper's presence, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff (DCNS), Vice-Admiral Osmond Brock (RA 1stBCS, in *Princess Royal* at Jutland) was about to sign his name signifying Board approval when he remarked:



"As Lord Beatty is assuming office as First Sea Lord in a few days it must wait for his approval." <sup>2</sup>

This marked, in Harper's view, the start of a long and bitter series of events which need not have happened had Brock not hesitated. It is true that events might have taken a different course if Brock had signed, yet with the battle itself being such a significant part in the lives of many, some controversy was inevitable, especially as events had not proceed according to how the Navy had hoped. Indeed, in a letter to the First Lord, W.H. Long, Wemyss noted that Jellicoe had been asked to postpone the release of his forthcoming account of his part in the war, but had refused. He thought that this decision might cause controversy since the two accounts of Jutland would almost certainly differ enough for questions to be raised regarding what had actually happened. <sup>3</sup> It would seem, then, that Wemyss recognised that some dispute would arise, but hoped that the speedy issue of the account prepared by Harper would help neutralise any wild claims about what happened at Jutland and whether or not the whole story was being told.

Although only Admiralty evidence was used and no oral testimonies were allowed, such limitations to the work were bound to result in the accuracy of the work being questioned. Wemyss was attempting to minimise controversy, but he assumed that purely plotting ships' movements could be accurately accomplished with evidence of such limited scope and that the problem over Jutland was simply establishing the movements of ships. No matter how brief any record of the battle was to be, the deliberate exclusion

of evidence that could corroborate or shed light upon any uncertain matters, however much time it might save, was a mistake bound to lead to such a dispute as arose. Admiral Sir William James (who served on *Benbow* at Jutland) told the second Earl Beatty, in 1968, that:

"The mistake Wemyss made was in getting his old navigating officer, of no distinction, to prepare a record on Jutland, before the German reports of the battle were available." 4

Although the omission of German material is by no means the whole issue, it does point to the selective use of sources. Wemyss, if he sensed that disputes would arise, was somewhat naive if he felt that excluding personal accounts or opinions would do anything to help placate matters. The matter was controversial anyway and it should have been realised that it was far better to produce as detailed and accurate a historical account as was possible rather than to produce an unsatisfactory work which would only inspire other works of varying accuracy and purpose.

The 'Record' appeared to be the considered verdict of Harper's committee, basically detailing the movements of ships present with some details of gunnery. To help explain events, colour charts were also produced. The initial disagreements between Harper and Beatty touched on only a few points of the battlecruisers' actions, yet there are inconsistencies in the text which were overlooked in the later dispute. Of the section concerning the actions of the battlecruisers up to junction with the battlefleet, there is no examination of the confusion with the 5thBS at 2:32 and scarcely any mention



of it at all. However, it had yet to become such a disputed issue. There is no mention of *Lion*'s falling out of line just after 4:00, but given these absences, it is not surprising to find that Beatty only disagreed with three main points at this time. These were, in his view, the lack of prominence given to the BCF; the over-emphasis on the battlefleet and the BCF's 360° turn at approximately 7pm at Jutland.

A discussion of the above matters was strictly not part of Harper's job and he refrained from doing this. He did, though, allow himself, or lapsed into, one comment of some truth that Beatty expunged:

"The disturbing feature of the Battle Cruiser action is the fact that 5 German Battle Cruisers engaging 6...supported after the first 20 minutes, although at great range...were yet able to sink the *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable*. It is true that the enemy suffered very heavily later...but even so, the result cannot be other than unpalatable...But it is also undoubted that the gunnery of the German Battle Cruisers in the early stages was of a very high standard." <sup>5</sup>

One can hardly be surprised at this. It was conspicuous for the fact that it was an unusual personal comment, even though it was accurate, and, therefore, encouraged the reader to concur with the author's opinion. This should not, however, be assumed to be evidence that Harper was intent on portraying the BCF in the worst light possible. In general, the account reads as it was

intended to be — a basic account of events.

Despite allegedly having all the available logs, charts and despatches to work from, Harper was handicapped by a lack of comparative detail from German sources. In general, this did not affect the work quite as much as one might at first assume. The most significant defect in the work concerned inconsistencies with particular events in various parts of the work. For example, the section dealing with the battlecruiser action up to 6:00 noted that the 5thBS opened fire at a range of 20,000 yards at 4:08.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the section dealing with the movements of the 5thBS has them opening fire at 4:11 at 19,000 yards.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of which was correct, one would at least expect consistency in the work. This flaw appeared again when the 5thBS turned north on sighting the HSF. The events concerning the BCF and 5thBS in the period between 2:20 and 5:00 pervaded the controversy, particularly in the early years, and it is instructive to examine the references to these at varying times.

The section dealing with the battlecruiser action noted that, at 4:53:

"the Fifth Battle Squadron was passing steering in the opposite direction, and a signal was made ordering them to alter course 16 points."<sup>8</sup>

Yet, the 5thBS section noted that, at 4:50:

"*Lion* approached the Fifth Battle Squadron...with the signal flying...to turn 16 points...This turn was made at 4:56pm after our Battle Cruisers had passed."<sup>9</sup>

This had serious implications for the movements between the two forces at this juncture. Only one paragraph noted the time of the turn (4:56), but one would expect consistency and accuracy in the way the information was given. If the time was known, there was no reason why there should be such a discrepancy and vagueness in accounts that were supposed to indicate the same event. Any discrepancies in the sources should have been analysed and discussed before being set-down in the text. Harper's task was, as editor-in-chief, to coordinate the effort and finalise the work. There are essentially only two explanations to cover these oddities in referring to the same events. Either Harper forgot himself in writing up the account, or the two sections were written by different authors and not carefully checked. One would suppose the evidence to favour the latter reason, which was surprising. In any event, the work was inconsistent and not thoroughly checked.

The first quote noted that a signal was made, but did not say when — this was the crucial issue concerning this point. The second quote was more accurate, in that the signal had been hoisted (at 4:48), but it was not made executive for some minutes. In the first quote, the executive was seemingly made at 4:53. Other sources differed slightly,<sup>10</sup> but by 4:56, the turn was under way, so the second quote was accurate in one sense, yet not as precise as it should have been. However, the references all point to the turn being later than the much-quoted 4:48. This matter was not trivial and called for an accuracy that the evidence available to the committee could easily have given. Yet, faults in the method of construction confused the account and confused later writings that used evidence prepared by the committee. It must be



admitted, however, that Harper's work was the first to admit to the later timing of *Lion's* signal and for many decades was the only one. Had the record been published as was hoped, such disputed points might never have become so inflamed. Many criticised Evan-Thomas for slowness of mind, but the evidence in 1919 suggested very much that the responsibility for the delay in his squadron's turning to follow the BCF, lay with *Lion* making the signal later than was required and later than subsequent accounts stated. However, this was suppressed with the account and all manner of criticism was made about Evan-Thomas based upon poorly constructed subsequent accounts by many authors.

Harper's task was to provide a basic account of the movements at the battle and the committee was chosen with this in mind. However, it was perhaps naively assumed to be purely a matter of cartography. Other evidence could conflict with that from navigational details and mistakes began to creep in. Equally important sources were gunnery ranges and signal logs, yet these were, in many cases, misinterpreted and under-used, had they been fully understandable to the members of the committee. The committee were not helped by the fact that evidence could not be checked in any way with personal recollections. On the committee, there sat the Director of Navigation, an ex-member of the Hydrographic department (Pollen), a navigation specialist (Frewen), one from the battlefleet (Pipon) and Chalmers (another). There was no signals or gunnery specialist to explain those sources. Had there been, some factual errors and assumptions might not have been made.

The compiler of the list of signals (Pollen) might not have been fully aware of signalling practices, but his task, and that of the committee, was not to question the nature and accuracy of the evidence before them, but simply to prepare an account from it. Flag signals in the list of messages, when hoisted, were often confused with being made executive and, even worse, turned into navigational times. Yet, it did not always follow that obedience to a signal was instantaneous, nor that the signal itself was instant.

At 4:48, the list of messages showed *Lion* making the signal to *Barham* to about turn. Curiously, this differed from the information in the text. Pollen almost certainly recorded it as the executive that the source showed, but the compiler of this fair signal log from *Lion* might well have deliberately confused the preparatory with the executive. Even the written account suggested this, but it must be wondered in what state were *Lion's* rough notes to have caused, or aided, this misunderstanding. The signals staff would know not to record the signal until it was hauled down and it was a simple three flags signal. However, there was enough uncertainty over the accuracy of the fair logs for this confusion to have arisen naturally and been recorded quite honestly, let alone with human assistance. It is possible that the signal was hoisted at the dip, but mistaken for having been fully hoisted by the individual who recorded it. If it was moved up or down slightly to ensure that other signals could be seen this might have been confused with the executive. During this time *Lion* was making many signals in only a few minutes and it must be remembered that signalling speed and clarity were not *Lion's* strengths. The timing also depended upon the synchrony of whatever



watch or clocks were being used with the actual real time.

One must conclude that Harper was content with obvious inconsistencies in the text and signals, or did not think the discrepancies significant. This meant that, with the sources long since unavailable to others, the committee misinterpreted them and these originals cannot now be checked with the evidence used to compile the account. The only way to attempt to verify the accuracy of the times and movements given, is by using many other sources, but if the originals had been properly used, any weaknesses could be better identified. It is now impossible to know just how much is correct, but in some cases, accuracy can be improved. Of all the accounts the Harper committee had access to much of what was, by the mid-1920s, to be destroyed without being seen by anyone else.

In light of later comments and accusations regarding Jutland, it might seem that to question the accuracy of such evidence as above, is merely a device to undermine what is known to be accurate, simply because it does not fit a preferred set of suppositions. The conclusions to be drawn from the evidence would always be disputed, given an individual's sympathies, but as the conclusions can only be accurately made on accurate evidence, the state of the evidence must be understood before any comment is made on it. The accuracy and authenticity of that evidence was not universally agreed upon. Debate upon this only added to the dispute.

In April 1919, it was reported that *Iron Duke's* log could not be found and the matter was investigated by, amongst others, Jellicoe's secretary (H.H. Share) who felt that the log had been sent to *Cyclops* or *Imperieuse* (Depot



ships at Scapa) "for safe custody." <sup>11</sup> If this was true, which is more than likely, it would seem that whoever was responsible for disposing of the log in the correct manner, knew that the recognised procedure was not being adhered to. <sup>12</sup> However, he might have had no idea what ultimately happened to it. The attention of the Royal Victoria Yard at Deptford was not drawn, as it should have been, to the fact that the log was on its way "and the absence of any such notification removes the possibility of the Log having been lost in transit". <sup>13</sup> So, it would seem that someone suspected that once the log left the care of *Iron Duke*, it might well fall into hands that could alter the contents maliciously to denigrate Jellicoe's performance. One must wonder what motivated the person responsible for the log take such steps. Do his actions mean that it was felt that the log would not be safe from interference in transit or at Deptford?

Whilst the Harper committee was working, it came to the attention of the Board of Admiralty that:

"the drawing up of a narrative of the Battle of Jutland from official documents is being much impeded owing to the fact that the Signal Log of the C-in-C's Flagship *Iron Duke* cannot be found, and that enquiries at Deptford, whither under King's Regulations it should have been sent, and at the Admiralty, had failed to trace it. As the log is an historical document of very great importance it was agreed that a formal Inquiry as to its

disappearance should be held at the Admiralty at which evidence can be taken from the various Officers of the Fleet whose duties brought them in any way in contact with the Signal Log." <sup>14</sup>

Therefore, it would appear that the proper procedure was not being followed and that this was recognised as not being a trivial matter, or one based on groundless rumour. The log had gone missing in mysterious circumstances. Apart from being the important document stated, the disappearance did not seem to have caused undue alarm. As Admiral Montague Browning (Second Sea Lord) felt, its disappearance only hampered the compilation of basic facts. No other inference was drawn, nor did foul play seem to have been suspected at this time. When the subject of alterations to the 'Record' came to light, this fact suggested that there was much more significance in the log's disappearance, not to mention what had, or might have, happened to other ships' logs. By 1919, it was evident that although the controversy had yet to become a raging public and service issue, there was suspicion that the log of the former Fleet Flagship might come to be tampered with. This might have led to caution regarding its disposal, but it was highly irregular to have behaved in this way with it. Such a step would scarcely have been taken without very good reason and this strongly suggests that, within the service, some seemed set about fixing the evidence.

According to enquiries made regarding the log, Jellicoe and his staff stated that they knew nothing of the log's disposal. On 19th June 1919, the ACNS raised the issue again (probably at Harper's request) and concurred in

Oswyn Murray's proposal for a formal Inquiry.<sup>15</sup> Captain G.W. Vivian and Lt-Cdr E.L.B. Oliphant investigated and reported, on the 6th August, that the log had not been found. Admiral Madden was questioned about this, on the 24th July, and replied that:

"the boxes mentioned had been unpacked by the Staff of the late Commander-in-Chief [Beatty] and there was no record in *Queen Elizabeth* of what was in them."<sup>16</sup>

This led to *Cyclops*, *Imperieuse*, Deptford and Rosyth Dockyards being searched. On the same day that Harper handed in the record, 2nd October, all Admiralty departments were ordered to conduct a search. All ended with the same negative result.

On 13th November, Captain M.H. Hodges (Madden's COS) reported that the log had been found and sent to the Admiralty. Suggestion followed for an Inquiry being launched in connection with this seemingly miraculous recovery. This does not appear to have been carried out, but the Board minutes of 26th November noted that:

"On 13th November, however, the reference to enquiry made last July and subsequent correspondence, enquiries had been made of certain members of the staff of the late Commander-in-Chief Grand Fleet [both Beatty or Jellicoe could be meant], and after further search the Logs had been found on board HMS *Queen*



*Elizabeth*. The Board noted the reappearance of the Logs and directed that [Harper should be informed]."<sup>17</sup>

Many questions, however, were raised that will almost certainly never be answered. It was difficult enough for the Board to divine that this much had happened and the extant memoranda are by no means comprehensive. From what there is there are two obvious explanations. The first search was either not thorough and the logs too well hidden, or that the search was thorough and the logs were not aboard the ship then, being subsequently replaced. The latter explanation is the most unlikely, but this was an unusual case. As Jellicoe's staff professed to know nothing, there seemed to be a mysterious third party acting as Jellicoe's protector.

To further complicate matters, Harper noted that the log was used in the Communications Division concerning the Record of Messages and was subsequently sent to *Queen Elizabeth*.<sup>18</sup> It would appear that after the above searches, the log was returned whence it came, which only adds more confusion. Whatever exactly happened to the log is unclear for, under the *Instructions* for its handling, it had no business being anywhere except in *Iron Duke* or at Deptford. It should never have been sent to the depot ship, let alone *Queen Elizabeth*, but to return it there only compounded the procedural errors. Having the log returned to the ship now flying Admiral Madden's (now C-in-C GI) Flag might have been a similar security measure, as was sending the log to the depot ship. However, someone must have known this to be in error and it is surprising to find that the Board did not

think the matter worth investigating further. There had been a blatant disregard of procedure and this is suggestive.

One must always be wary of drawing inferences from an absence of evidence, but it appeared that the Board were not satisfied simply that the log had been found and used. However, they were dissuaded from pursuing the matter further. The orders for searches of ships and Admiralty Departments were made whilst Wemyss was First Sea Lord, but when the logs were reported as being found, Beatty had replaced him only thirteen days before and no more was heard of the matter by the Board. One can only guess as to the coincidence of this.

Any matter out of the ordinary that concerns Jutland is worth looking at in depth and this incident with the logs is instructive. There are basically only two explanations that cover the apparent loss of the logs: negligence or deliberate actions. The former can be discounted on the grounds that it is extremely unlikely that all the different people who came into contact with the logs did not know what should have been done with them, surely at least one would have been aware that something was amiss. Having the logs sent to the depot ships seems to be a pointless move, since one might just as well send them to Deptford according to procedure. What was most likely was that they went with Beatty and his staff from *Iron Duke* to *Queen Elizabeth*. In any event, they were acquired by *Queen Elizabeth* before 7th April 1919 when Beatty hauled down his Union Flag. The only other evidence for the logs comes from Commander A.R.W. Woods (Grand Fleet Signal Officer), who made a copy reported by the Board memoranda to be "inaccurate and

incomplete", but on whose authority this was based was not noted in the Board memoranda.

In the later *Staff Appreciation*, it was noted that *Iron Duke's* log was:

"written in ink and from an historical point of view bears all the signs of having been compiled subsequently to the battle from other signal logs...only two contemporary signal logs proper of *Iron Duke* have been seen...both omitting a number of important signals." <sup>19</sup>

The work added that *Iron Duke's* was one of the most incomplete logs. The authors invited the conclusion that the former C-in-C and his staff (or both) attempted to fabricate evidence of the battle by hiding certain aspects of their conduct. However, the Dewars made no mention (because they did not know) of the logs having been missing, nor do they even appear to have been aware of how logs were kept. <sup>20</sup> Such ignorance of the state of evidence only hampered further works on the battle.

When the 'Record' had been completed, it contained an extract from *Lion's* log:

"4:55pm-Most of the records of the outgoing visual signals were lost and destroyed in the action. The records had been sent down to the Port Signal Station to be logged but, on account of bursting shells and smoke and fire, they got lost or damaged." <sup>21</sup>



It was highly convenient that the very signals apparently lost here were those that were subsequently most hotly debated — the log takes great pains to stress "outgoing visual signals" — but the Dewars, given their sympathies with Beatty, chose not to deal with this. Many years later, Admiral John Godfrey noted that Colonel Daniel (Secretary of the Historical Section of the CID):

"finally told me that the only reliable written evidence was that of the signal boys who wrote up the signal+W/T logs as they were the only people who had no axe to grind and were therefore "unaligned"." <sup>22</sup>

This is highly doubtful. Why, of all those in the service the "signal boys" were immune from any allegiances, is too much to expect. If anything, they were the ones with most opportunity to access the logs. However, this comment is significant for suggesting that the signallers are unlikely to have been a party to tampering: the implication is that others might have been.

Logs, however, were not the only evidence to be subject to doubtful influences. It was also noted in Board memoranda that "It is understood however that there are several [original] copies of the BCF plans in the private possession of officials at the Admiralty...including the First Sea Lord" for which there was no excuse. Some might produce "for safe keeping" as a defence, but one cannot help thinking that there was something in these sources of perceived embarrassment at the very least, or that they were taken away to be altered to suit, to be removed from scrutiny to wait for interest to wane, or to be destroyed. When the *Despatches* were being prepared, Beatty

unsuccessfully attempted to switch *Lion's* chart to one he found more convenient. It must always be remembered that he remained very sensitive to his own role and that of the BCF at the battle, and that these were by no means the last attempts to tamper with the account.

Many authors have assumed Harper to have been too sensitive where his role in the committee was mentioned and many others have followed this assumption blindly. He is exonerated from this charge by the above dealings and it is evident that the difficulties he faced regarding accuracy were not imaginary or insignificant. Commander Geoffrey Blake recalled that:

"I am inclined to think that any lack of good feeling which existed among the junior officers was stirred up by Dreyer, Charles Forbes and myself, being sent down to Rosyth early on. We had to examine the plots of the Battle Cruisers and the (G) officers did not care for this." <sup>23</sup>

So, it is evident that, even a few weeks after the battle, there was unease in BCF circles over the general outcome and what existing evidence showed. It has been seen (in Chapter 1) what the withheld evidence proved about the battle and given this, it was no wonder the (G) officers did not take too kindly to having the BCF examined so closely. Already, there was a clear understanding in the BCF of certain faults in the progress of the battle. Some of those within who would be seen to be responsible for aspects of the BCF's performance were subsequently as evasive and prohibitive as they could get away with being. Pressure from the Board, in 1919, had flushed out *Iron*



*Duke's* logs, but only because they were identified specifically as missing. Although there was good reason to suspect that these items were not the only victims, it was not widely suspected until later on. On the 2nd June 1916, Jellicoe had ordered all logs to be secured under lock and key, but some, plus other evidence, was bound to fall through the net. Although Harper encountered such difficulties with the evidence, not to mention the limitations imposed by Wemyss, and remembering that the work does have some flaws, his general conclusions were largely correct. However, this made some former BCF officers as uncomfortable in 1920 as they had been in 1916.

After the manuscript was submitted, it was not long before Beatty (who became First Sea Lord on 1st November) had read it. During December 1919 Beatty held interviews with Harper and sent instructions via his additional secretary, former Flag-Lieutenant and devotee Commander Ralph Seymour, regarding alterations which Harper was to make to Beatty's satisfaction. It is often stated that the reason Beatty began to alter the work was that the series of events as portrayed by Harper was highly erroneous, especially concerning the BCF. The reason that Harper had initially been instructed not to accept any oral testimonies was to prevent the very situation that arose. Every personal testimony was bound to differ even if true and could always have been tailored to suit any purpose. The account now began to deviate in the use of source material, to which Harper took exception and a brave stance in doing so. His name had been given to the House of Commons as the author of the 'Record', so the contents would be seen as expressing his approval that Beatty's preferred version was a true account of



the action. Harper had to obey orders from his senior, but these contradicted the instructions under which he had begun the work. He objected to this with good reason. Harper's dilemma was either to have complete authority over the contents, or to have his name removed from any responsibility for them. Had the world not been aware that Harper was the author, he might have objected less strenuously to Beatty's interference, but he would still be associated within the service with the account. One must not ignore Harper's integrity. He had been given a specific job and intended to complete it according to the original instructions. However, he realised Beatty's motives — that moves were afoot to hoodwink the reader and public at large into believing Beatty's preferred version of Jutland — and was not prepared to be a party to endorsing what he saw as a fabrication.

From the evidence then available at the Admiralty, Harper had compiled an account which was not as accurate as it might have been, but it did portray what had happened accurately enough. To be fair to Beatty, one must consider his point of view that:

"These plans & diagrams when received by those who were present, were found to be in some instances entirely inaccurate and not in accordance with the facts as known to them, & subsequently were discarded, which caused Harper to be disgruntled...Further later information...not available to Harper showed that in many cases the deductions drawn by Harper

were inaccurate & misleading, & consequently it was considered premature to issue an Official Record until all the detailed information was available." <sup>24</sup>

This seemed to suggest a departure from the original instructions regarding evidence. Beatty seemed to be judging the record submitted by Harper by much wider criteria than those indicated in Wemyss's original instructions. Harper had only used such British material as he had been given, so his account could only have been as good as this allowed. One must also remember that Wemyss was no longer First Sea Lord and Beatty was under no obligation at all to abide by Wemyss's decisions. In fact, it could be convincingly argued that when Beatty admitted personal information, albeit only that which he himself admitted, he had recognised that Wemyss's original instructions to Harper had been far too limiting.

It has been written that under different conditions Beatty would have deplored such actions as he was now taking <sup>25</sup> and that:

"The sad fact is that Beatty had emerged from the action tinged with heroism at the time, yet he subsequently found the verdict of historians going against him...Beatty, in the 1920's, must have been outraged at what looked like a conspiracy to denigrate what, in his opinion, was his finest naval hour. This sense of injustice and a real desire that the men in his ships should feel no reason for

shame made him react." <sup>26</sup>

This is an accurate assessment of the situation as Beatty saw it. Although he might have felt that altering the 'Record' was wrong in principle, in his opinion, issuing it as it stood would be a greater wrong to the BCF. This was his justification of his actions. That there was no reason for any shame to be felt was true, yet the public view of the success of the BCF at Jutland had, in truth, been based upon little more than wishful thinking. As will be seen, the new evidence from Germany and Britain was far from flattering about the role of the BCF and its performance. The realisation that a myth had been believed for three years would be the subject of much public disappointment. With three battlecruisers being lost with nearly all hands, the battle was a bitter blow. In the BCF's opinion, this was relieved somewhat by the fact that they had engaged enemy capital ships for longer than did the battlefleet later in the day. This was where the myth that the battlefleet played an insignificant part by comparison to the BCF began to be forcefully encouraged by Beatty and Seymour. The main thrust then became that the battlefleet failed the BCF's heroic efforts. For the purposes of what those within the BCF believed the whole picture mattered little.

Soon after the battle it should have been made clear what exactly had been achieved, but, due to a lack of evidence, this absence of an accurate narrative allowed the suppositions made on the day to persist. The longer something is believed to be true, the longer it takes to disprove and the greater resistance it meets in doing this.

Harper recalled from his own experience that:



"During the last of the interviews (18th December) I had with Commander Seymour he made the following remark in explanation for the reason of the proposed deletions: "We do not wish to advertise the fact that the Battle Fleet was in action more than we can help." " 27

One might assume that this statement was made solely because he experienced difficulties at this time and wished to cast slurs by way of revenge, but one must remember that this source was a sworn oath detailing Harper's involvement with Beatty, written a few years afterwards. Although the tone was far from complimentary to Beatty, this did not make it an unreliable account. In fact, examination of it shows it to be accurate in the main points it made.

Seymour's comment fitted exactly with what it was hoped the alterations to the 'Record' would do — minimise the role of the battlefleet and endorse the belief that the battlecruisers alone had repelled the Germans so effectively that by the time the battlefleet arrived on the scene the action was all but over. Although there were chances for a major victory after 6pm, they proved inconclusive for many reasons. Harper's account stated this as the narrative developed, but Beatty wanted the account to be written from the stance that the most dramatic and spectacular action — involving the BCF — must be the most important aspect. He found it hard to come to terms with the fact that he was being proved wrong in his beliefs. Since 1916, the BCF believed that they were the sole heroes of that day. Beatty sought to

perpetuate this in the histories. Harper was threatening this view.

One of the most contentious issues that arose in the early stages of the controversy, was that concerning the actions of the battlecruisers a little before 7pm on the day of the action. Harper's 'Record' noted that, at 6:53:

"a turn was made in succession to starboard  
through a complete circle and speed reduced to  
18 knots to keep station on the Battle Fleet." <sup>28</sup>

Beatty replied that such a turn was never made, despite evidence to the contrary from his former Flag-Captain, his navigator, Harper's staff and others who later explored the incident. That the turn was made as told by Harper is undoubted. Yet, it must have seemed very odd to many that Beatty should have denied the evidence and the experiences of those present in the BCF who knew that such a turn had been made. The incriminating statement from Beatty was made in response to Harper requesting, with the help of Brock and Chatfield, oral evidence to aid in substituting *Lion's* original track (which showed the 360° turn) and it gave away Beatty's intentions that:

"All the evidence in the world will not alter the  
FACT that we did not turn 32 points to  
starboard...The object was to turn 8 points to see  
what the Battle Fleet were doing." <sup>29</sup>

This committed to paper Beatty's intentions that wherever the facts were unpalatable, his will would become evidence of a far more genuine nature. The sad fact was that all the evidence in the world was not required to prove the turn, but it was selectively chosen to create a particular image that did not destroy the myth of the battlecruisers at Jutland.



The tracing with which Beatty eventually concurred, showed *Lion* turning through an "S", but *Indomitable* and *Inflexible* turn through a complete circle (see diagram #16).<sup>30</sup> In attempting to alter the evidence, Beatty ignored its impact upon the rest of the work. By concentrating solely upon his ship to ensure that he should not be criticised, he ignored the movements of other ships. His attempts here only complicated the picture of how the BCF turned at this time. Beatty thought that he had exonerated himself, but remained unaware of the evidence that remained to confirm his guilt. The unpublished 'Record' stated that this revised track was uncertain as evidence was conflicting. It was not, it only conflicted with what Beatty wanted to believe. The significance, if any, of this is that at the time the battlecruisers were out of sight of the battlefleet and they did not see the enemy. The BCF, therefore, must have been out of the action. The horror that this should be discovered motivated Beatty's editing.

Harper later suggested an explanation for Beatty's actions:

"An element of mystery has always been made about this turn, though why the battle-cruisers should not turn through 360°, if so desired, is not clear. They were not in action. No possible danger of any collision would be involved...[and in order to gain touch with the main fleet] what more natural, therefore, than to turn, and having turned nearly 180° before realising that there was no necessity to continue any further to the

Northward, to resume the original course...through 360°. This matter is not one which can be swept aside as of no importance, if accuracy in plotting the ships's tracks is required." <sup>31</sup>

This illustrated that the battlecruisers were not so close to the action as Beatty would have had others believe. This showed Beatty's intentions with regard to the work. For Beatty to deliberately try to obscure an event about which evidence was unusually clear, was to be wondered at, especially when so much about the battle was unclear. By now, Harper clearly knew Beatty's intentions and Beatty knew that Harper realised this. A trial of stubbornness ensued.

There is no doubt that Beatty wanted to have an account faithful to his recollections, but he sought this in a way which ultimately proved fruitless. It was significant that Jellicoe had used his time since his dismissal as First Sea Lord, in December 1917, to compose an account of his time with the Grand Fleet. However, Beatty was in no position to write his own account and suspected that he and the BCF might not gain the prominence that he felt was justified if accounts that implicitly or overtly favoured the battlefleet were issued. Jellicoe might, for all Beatty knew in 1919, neglect the role of the BCF. That Beatty should want the true story told was natural, yet this was not dependent upon anyone's point of view and sympathies. What had happened had happened, regardless of what one felt or supposed had occurred. The truth, as evidence was coming to light, was that others were aware that the

battlecruisers had not performed as well as they had supposed and that the battlefleet did have a significant, if intermittent, effect upon the enemy. As Beatty had no means of safe expression to the public, to ensure that Harper's account told the story according to his view was within his means and would have to suffice.

The fact was that the truth to Beatty and that as dictated by the evidence were, in some places, different things entirely. His view throughout was largely conditioned by his experiences aboard *Lion*, which at best were limited. He also failed to accept that there were factors in the battle of which he could not have been aware at the time, nor could anyone have expected this of him. From his point of view after the war evidence was emerging that, as it did not square with his recollections, must be incorrect. So, he sought to change the official 'Record' according to his views.

The obvious sense of disappointment that was felt in the BCF was ably explained by Walter Cowan (Captain of *Princess Royal*), who noted that approaching 6pm on the day of the battle:

"the advanced screen of the Grand Fleet hove in sight and...we felt like throwing our caps in the air, it looked a certainty we had them...[the Germans were] confronted by our splendid fresh and preponderant Battle Fleet all wild for blood after nearly two years of monotonous waiting." <sup>32</sup>

This at least hinted at the fact that not all in the BCF were unaware of the tactical significance of the arrival of the battlefleet. From this, it is evident



that expectations were great, but a little later:

"It was a disappointment for us in the Battle Cruisers. We had found the enemy, fought them and led them up into the jaws of our main Fleet." <sup>33</sup>

This, coupled with heavy losses, did not leave pleasant memories. A similar view was expressed by Lt. William Tennant (of *Nottingham*), but which explained in a little more detail the feelings of the time. He noted that, at 3:50, "[we] could not help wondering where were the 5th Battle Sq. where was the C-in-C +the Grand Fleet." <sup>34</sup> This was a sentiment shared by others and it cannot have been too comforting to realise that the battlecruisers and supporting forces were going into battle without the support of the 5thBS or GF that they had expected to have. Following the destruction of *Indefatigable*, Tennant noted that "the German from what we could see had had it all his own way" but soon after the 5thBS came into the action and were the four ships "that saved the day." <sup>35</sup> It should be remembered, when examining the shooting of the 5thBS and BCF, the impression and effects that their respective firing made upon the enemy at the time. The Germans were not complimentary about BCF gunnery.

From 4:30, it was evident that the situation for the BCF was becoming desperate and this did not escape the eyes of those present, but soon after:

"our joy was great when we heard that he [Jellicoe] was coming down to the eastward of the Germans+so getting the "light." " <sup>36</sup>

This echoed the sentiments noted by Cowan, that whatever had happened initially expectations were great for when the battlefleet would appear. These expectations were, of course, dashed and coupled with the news of the losses of the battlecruisers, cruisers and destroyers:

"This was not very cheering and particularly for us  
who had been in that part of the action where the  
losses had been heaviest." <sup>37</sup>

This doubtless contributed to the feeling that the battle had been mishandled by the BF after a good initial BCF performance. It was one which many shared and which came to summarise the argument over the action. To have been deflated after having such high expectations left scars for many, but Beatty only made matters worse when he insisted upon alterations to the 'Record'. Instead of making events seem more favourable and less painful — which was his intention — his requests were met with evidence that proved his view of the battle, and his role in it, were erroneous. Despite this, he fought fiercely to deny it.

As Beatty seemed intent upon emphasising the facts of his personal experiences at the battle, he would have to diminish the role played by other forces to maintain any coherence in the 'Record'. A significant point arose when he questioned the necessity of it being recorded that:

"As *Hercules* started to turn into line of battle she  
was straddled...The enemy's shell were also  
falling close to *Vanguard* and *Revenge*." <sup>38</sup>

Harper, Jellicoe and Long all insisted that the correct impression was given

that parts of the battlefleet were within enemy range, which Beatty was loath to accept, as it was firm evidence that the battlefleet were in a position to play a part. Long told Beatty that "straddled" gave the correct impression to the general reader as well as the seaman. Beatty then made the telling remark " "If Jellicoe writes books I do not see why I should not do so." " <sup>39</sup> In doing so, he betrayed his real intentions. As previously stated, he wanted an account that reflected his views and was frustrated at the fact that none could be produced, so he had to alter Harper's account or do nothing. He wrongly assumed that unless he did something to alter this account, then the role of the BCF would be forgotten. Perhaps this was his way of justifying his actions to himself.

His notes on the 'Record' relating to this incident of salvoes and the battlefleet in action stated that "it ill becomes the Admiralty to holster up what is already a shattered illusion". <sup>40</sup> This was the irony of the affair. The illusion was not the fact that the battlefleet was in action, but that the battlecruisers alone had repulsed the German attack. It would seem that Beatty was in a minority in believing this, for even Cowan evidenced a better appreciation of the situation although he, like many others, was just as disappointed as was Beatty. Beatty's friends and colleagues almost certainly knew that he was wrong to believe that all the faults lay with the BF, but Beatty acted as if fixing the account to suit himself would make the BCF's disappointment vanish. However, he could have known all too well that doctoring the official account was a much better way of stating his case. By its very nature, many readers would assume that it was an unbiased,



unimpassioned, factual account of what happened, making it hard to dispute. So, if any criticism was made of himself or his battlecruisers, then Beatty could claim that the official record was not likely to lie. This was more convincing than having his own account, under his own name, which people would realise was limited ultimately to his opinion. Thus, he could well and truly claim that he had right on his side. Although he never published his own account, he attempted, with some success, to press his views through Bellairs, the Dewar brothers, the Admiralty *Narrative* and tried, but failed, to alter significantly the account of Sir Julian Corbett.

When the subject of Beatty's proposed alterations came to the attention of the First Lord, Walter Long, he ordered Beatty to cancel his orders to Harper. This was done on 11th March 1920 and it then looked as if printing would soon begin, but Beatty was not prepared to give up a fight that was almost a lone battle. On 26th May, Harper received a list of alterations similar to those that he had initially been told to make and an impasse was again reached.<sup>41</sup> It was agreed by the Board that proposals would be invited from the Sea Lords as a basis for discussion, to which Harper would have the opportunity to respond, with a decision then being reached. A meeting was held on 21st June, with the Sea Lords, Brock, Chatfield, Long and Harper present in an attempt to finalise the account. Remarks from Chatfield (ACNS) centre around the fact that the account "reads rather, as a record of disasters and misfortunes",<sup>42</sup> and was based upon British evidence, which was not flattering. Brock (DCNS) ventured a little further, in that the impression was given that a great battle had occurred with the enemy having the

advantage, to which he disagreed. <sup>43</sup> He added that the German retreat was not stated with the emphasis that many felt it deserved. However, this would have meant emphasising the role of the BF, which Beatty did not want. In Brock's opinion, it would have to suffice that:

"if we are bound to issue an official account, this account...must be published, but I feel that it will do the Navy no good...On the whole I think it best to say *nothing*." <sup>44</sup>

Brock and Chatfield, both having been present in the BCF, might have been expected to follow the line set by Beatty, but their comments related to the work as an account of the battle as a whole and they made valid historical points. Nowhere was there a hint of the type of comments from Beatty that the battlefleet was not really involved, or that they felt that the role of the BCF appeared to be under-played. There was no reference to the fact that the 32 point turn did not occur, nor any attempt to suggest that the role of the BCF be enhanced.

This suggested that both were mainly in agreement with what Harper had written and were not so much criticising his work, but the limited nature of the evidence used and what this showed. So, it was more the suitability of issuing any half-baked account which they questioned. There are in these comments no hints that Beatty might have asked the two to support his opinions and alterations — if he did they refused — or that he tried to build-up support to have his way. In fact, Brock's statement that it was best to say nothing could not have been further from what Beatty would have hoped.

It was realised by some that any account issued when the battle was a living controversial issue would not reduce controversy, however impartial it was. The whole subject of the alterations was a personal crusade of Beatty's to impose his opinion in response to imagined or anticipated criticisms of his conduct at Jutland. He obviously suspected that his image as a fighter could be undermined and that he could then have been accused of fostering an image that he knew was erroneous, thus finding himself in an embarrassing situation at the very least.

At the above mentioned meeting of Harper and the Sea Lords, the subject of including a foreword to the work arose. The meaning of this, Harper was led to believe, was to "remove the incorrect impression which might be caused by the predominance of British evidence."<sup>45</sup> There was nothing wrong in attempting to point out this fact to the general reader, but it became another means by which Beatty tried to bias the record in his favour. Harper had drafted three such potential introductions:

"on the lines believed to be desired, one of which the Board may desire to insert in the official record."

1. "some time before the advanced forces under Sir David Beatty were reinforced by our Battlefleet, the enemy became so demoralised that, on meeting our Battlefleet, every opportunity was taken to avoid action."

2. "[the enemy were] demoralised before meeting



our Battlefleet, and after this meeting, the enemy assisted by poor visibility, succeeded in avoiding a great battle. The small amount of firing which took place between the opposing Battlefleets being sufficient to cause the enemy to return."

3. "if the enemy had realised the proximity of our Battlefleet, the return to harbour would have been made before." <sup>46</sup>

These extracts did not show that a wrong impression might be given by the preponderance of British evidence, but sought to lead the reader into believing that when the main battlefleets met the most significant action was over. The first two paragraphs gave the general impression that the meeting of the main fleets was brief in comparison to the battlecruiser action earlier in the day. Underlying this was the implication that the battlefleet played little part in the action, which was what Beatty always maintained. This was probably what Harper meant when he mentioned their being "on the lines believed to be desired" i.e. to suit Beatty.

Underlying each piece, prominent in the third, was the fact that a small amount of fire from the battleships was sufficient to cause the enemy to seek to avoid action, whereas for over two hours the Germans seem to have relished the prospect of engaging Beatty's force and were not discouraged from pursuing the action. What Beatty seemingly did not consider was that the enemy believed that they had achieved their objective of bringing an inferior force to action with no support from the Grand Fleet. This was the

decisive point. These pieces, then, were not suitable to Beatty and something more favourable to the battlecruisers was required.

The piece that was decided upon was proposed by Beatty. It began that the battlecruisers and their supporting forces were greatly inferior in numbers by comparison to the enemy and that:

"On learning of the approach of the British main Fleet the Germans avoided further action and returned to base — The enemy has acknowledged that the 1st Scouting Group was unfit for further action on the 1st June, as a result of the Battle Cruiser action, whereas the efficiency of the British ships to which they had been opposed was not seriously impaired." <sup>47</sup>

These were the most contentious statements, largely because they were factually inaccurate. The general impression was more suited to how Beatty wanted it to be. Even in proposing his own piece, the fallacies of Beatty's beliefs can be seen. It was being confronted by the Grand Fleet that led the enemy to avoid action, not learning of the approach. Had this been known, they would almost certainly have retired sooner and more easily.

The second draft paragraph was designed to give the impression that the battlecruisers alone, without the 5thBS, had successfully engaged and destroyed the opposition. The truth was that the 1stSG was heavily hit by battleships and battlecruisers as the battle progressed. Any false statements could be detected by those that made a point of examining the text, but

reading it without much prior knowledge, or with little persistence, would lead one to share Beatty's views regarding what had happened. The fact, then, was that any comments that invited the reader to form an opinion as suited Beatty, would be incorrect if the evidence itself did not wholly endorse his opinion. If the account had carried such a foreword and omitted most of the deletions which Beatty tried to make, then the introduction would contradict the information in the text. The account, from Beatty's point of view, needed to be altered to suit. Any introduction that was inserted would have to obviate any doubt that might arise regarding what the evidence really showed. Above all else, Beatty wanted the introduction to be a summary of his views to prepare the reader to accept them throughout the text.

The subject of including a foreword had been first suggested in February 1920, and Seymour drafted such a piece. He stated that, as members of the Board took part in the battle, it would be "unseemly" for them to give an opinion of the actions of other officers, their seniors and opponents.<sup>48</sup> This was ironic. Had this been included and the account published, the impression would be that there had been due restraint from making any personal observations. However, it did not mention the fact that the account could have been subject to interference before publication. Thus, it could express opinions from beginning to end because it had been tailored to suit, but these would be less overt.

Another half-truth was told when it was mentioned that:

"At no time has the policy of the Admiralty been  
to conceal the facts of this battle from the British



public." 49

This was erroneous, but, in the minds of some, what was "fact" was that idea of the battle that existed only in their own minds, regardless of any evidence to the contrary. Beatty's actions essentially centred upon whether or not he was genuinely convinced of what he believed had really happened and saw it as his duty to prevent the wrong picture being given to the public, or that he knew that he was not completely correct and deliberately pursued a course of action to suit his own ideas of how the battle should have proceeded.

A familiar theme emerged in this foreword, as it had in meetings between Harper and Beatty — the role played by the battlefleet. Seymour went further than the pieces suggested by Harper and Beatty later on in the year. He did not leave to doubt that of an engagement between battlefleets:

"There was no such engagement. From the evidence of...Scheer's report it is established that the German Battle Fleet never saw the British Main Fleet, and neither fired their guns or torpedoes at it. From the evidence of the British Main Fleet it is established that a small number of rounds were fired from the main armament of certain ships, at what were then thought to be ships of the enemy's battle fleet...the majority of these rounds were actually fired at enemy Light Cruisers." 50

This stated as obviously as possible what some felt to be the case. That the

Germans never saw the British battlefleet can be taken in more than one way. There was no doubt that gun flashes from a wide arc could be seen by enemy battlecruisers and battleships, and that they concluded from the fall of shot that this could only mean that the Grand Fleet was more or less in front of them. If Seymour expected the reader to believe that not seeing the Grand Fleet meant that the Germans were unaware that it was present, this was untrue. The battlefleet did fire at, and hit, enemy battleships and battlecruisers when they could be seen. Although sightings were intermittent and brief there was little doubt that this made the enemy attempt to use the poor weather conditions to help effect an escape. That no ships of the High Seas Fleet fired at the British battlefleet is really neither here nor there, but by comparison to the battlecruisers, who had been hit much more often, some assumed that this meant that the battlefleet played little or no part. Later, the BCF were intent on proving it in spite of evidence to the contrary.

The claim that the majority of rounds fired were at light cruisers had a little more to support it. They and the First Scouting Group were in the van, so that they should have received most hits in poor visibility was not surprising. Approximately twice as many of the British battleships noted that they felt they were engaging "battlecruisers", than those that reported they were engaging "battleships".<sup>51</sup> There was little doubt that a perusal of the evidence proved that the battlefleet was engaged. Beatty and Seymour privately knew it, but publicly disagreed. So, the only solution that remained was to question the accuracy of the evidence, or, more correctly, to contradict it when it could not be proved erroneous.

Beatty had noted that the title "General Fleet Action" in Harper's account was misleading, as such had not occurred. As was typical of events, he made the claim based upon his opinion and Harper replied with evidence that:

"during the time (6:15pm to 7.25pm) dealt with under this heading every squadron [*sic*] was taking more or less active part in engaging the enemy...This was the only period during 31st May that all squadrons were engaged." <sup>52</sup>

This was obviously contrary to what Beatty wanted to believe. In conjunction with this, Beatty also suggested that the list of ranges and times of opening fire be omitted, as they "are very misleading and of no apparent value". <sup>53</sup> Harper rightly disagreed with this. Their value was in proving that the battlefleet was engaged and the extent of that involvement in the battle. It must be wondered in what way they were misleading, unless one did not wish to give credit where it was due.

Beatty's disagreement with the time span of the "General Fleet Action" depended upon interpretation. From tables prepared by the Harper committee *Marlborough* opened fire at 6:17, but it was not until 7:17 that *King George V* — in the van, further away from the action — opened fire. Harper's title covered this period, but Beatty, with justification, noted that the battleships engaged the enemy, essentially in two short spells and not all simultaneously. Harper's title gave the impression that fire was opened and general between these times quoted. This was certainly disputable. Seymour's



foreword continued to be more biased and erroneous as it progressed, with perhaps the worst statement being that:

"Whilst maintaining contact the action of the British advanced forces, according to the testimony of the German Commander-in-Chief, was such as to render those vessels of the enemy with which they were engaged incapable of further fighting, and to produce such an impression throughout the remainder of the enemy's fleet [that the reported presence of the Grand Fleet was sufficient to make the enemy return to base]." <sup>54</sup>

This was far from being the truth.

A common feature regarding how the battlecruiser action was written, was that the 5thBS was selectively mentioned, if at all, and its effect upon the battle was often attributed to the battlecruisers. That the 1stSG was incapable of further fighting as a result of the battlecruiser action was a fallacy. It was surprising that such a claim could have been expected to be believed by anyone who had read the 'Record'. Far from being perturbed by the effect of the fire of the British advanced forces, the Germans pursued what they believed was an unsupported force, but this fact was not mentioned. The conclusion must be that the alleged effectiveness of the advanced forces generally was a fallacy. It was obviously counter to the interests of those making a case for the BCF to mention evidence that might contradict the

statements being made.

Beatty did not seem to have been perturbed by the obvious unsuitability of these proposed forewords and sought other ways in which to lead the reader to certain conclusions. On 9th August, the official historian, Sir Julian Corbett, received a telegram from Beatty regarding "important matters." Three days later, they met to discuss a proposed foreword. Beatty wanted it to:

"explain how good our gunnery was...[and failed  
only because of] bad shell against good  
armour-mean to get out of doing it if I can." <sup>55</sup>

The following day, Corbett told Brock that his publishers (Longmans) would object to his writing this foreword. However, he was less willing to refuse a more tempting offer regarding the history of Jutland made soon afterwards (in Chapter 3). What was also clear, was that Beatty was determined to have BCF gunnery officially vindicated and still saw the problem solely as one of poor British shells being resisted by strong German armour. Despite all these efforts, no foreword was issued and another scheme had failed to produce the desired result for Beatty.

From German evidence, it was the fire of the 5thBS and battleships that was more impressive and effective, not that of the BCF. In July 1916, Hipper wrote to Scheer that:

"The fire of the English battle-cruisers has not  
caused to our battle-cruisers damage of  
considerable gravity. Since the fall of shot was

rarely in close proximity to our own ships it is not possible to judge very accurately as to the "spread" of the shot...the fire of the *Malaya* battleships (5th BS) and equally later on, that of the bulk of the enemy, produced an excellent impression. The salvoes arrived absolutely dense (with no spread)." <sup>56</sup>

This was contrary to what both Seymour and Beatty were trying to insert into the 'Record'. They could no longer maintain that an absence of German evidence made the account incomplete and inaccurate. That evidence only confirmed generally what Harper had written. Beatty and others had recognised that an account based purely on British evidence was limited and pursued this partly as an excuse to delay issue of the 'Record' and alter the contents. When evidence was forthcoming from Germany, it was obviously hoped that it would prove that Harper had not been able to give an accurate account. This at least would have been an excuse to alter it. As it was, although the Harper committee did not produce as accurate a piece of work as they might have done, they had worked under restrictive conditions and their basic assertions were correct.

Had Harper been obliged to use German evidence, the picture would have looked much less favourable to Beatty and the BCF. So, it would seem to have been wisest to have issued the 'Record' as quickly as possible after October 1919, or not to have issued it at all. In waiting for some evidence which he hoped would contradict Harper, Beatty drew attention to his



interference whilst no good came to him from doing it. In fact, this further weakened his case. In the face of such evidence, Beatty's actions are not easily excused or explained away. Had he conceded that he had been wrong, then he could at least have claimed that he had been looking for the truth and now accepted that it had not been as he had supposed.

If the shooting of the battlecruisers during the run to the south is discussed, it is worth bearing in mind the action as seen from the German perspective. The German official history noted that:

"From *Lützow* it appeared about this time [4:06/7]  
as if the British flagship hauled out of the  
line...she seemed to disappear behind other  
vessels in a thick pall of smoke...At times the  
enemy's fire ceased altogether and tactical  
cohesion of the British line appeared to be  
seriously shaken." <sup>57</sup>

At this time the destroyer *Landrail* reported a periscope on the disengaged side, whilst the light cruiser *Nottingham* made similar reports. One can dismiss the supposition that this quote might just be the Germans boasting of how they disarranged their opponents. At the time the Harper 'Record' was being debated, it was commonly thought that the battlecruiser action was one where both sides fought along more or less parallel lines. However, the addition of German evidence, far from proving Harper wrong, as Beatty had hoped, showed that the 'Record' did not go far enough.

One cannot criticise too much the actions of ships suffering from the

effects of fire in action, but the actions of individuals in later years to suggest that the action was a running fight where the firing was continuous and the line unbroken, were suspect. Much of this was doubtless caused by the fact that some did not want it known that in the initial phase of the battle the BCF were much more seriously effected than they cared to admit. German evidence supported Harper's case, endorsing *Lion's* movements as seen in Chapter 1, much more than it did Beatty's.

On 20th July, a meeting took place at which Harper, Chatfield, Algernon Boyle (4th Sea Lord and Captain of *Malaya* at Jutland) and Spickernell were present to further discuss the contents of the 'Record'. No evidence was produced to prove Harper wrong in what he had written:

"except oral evidence from the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff and Fourth Sea Lord, which depended on memory...the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff produced a written memo, from the First Sea Lord, instructing him what decisions were to be arrived at. This did not, however, influence the other members." <sup>58</sup>

In general, this seemed to indicate that Beatty was not strongly supported in his actions. It was agreed that the 32 point turn was made, but Chatfield, more from duty than allegiance to Beatty, felt bound to obey. Whatever were the relations between Beatty and the others present, they do not seem to have been so deep as to mean that others would have willingly countenanced such actions as Beatty was taking. The implication was that if Chatfield had

not been ordered in this case, then he too would not have supported Beatty. It was probable that Beatty was becoming increasingly aware of just how unsupported he was, but it would seem that this encouraged him even more to fix the account. As Chatfield's view of the action differed from Beatty's, it further weakened Beatty's case as the two were in almost the same position at the battle. If Chatfield had to be ordered to reach certain conclusions, he was probably unwilling to countenance lies, or Beatty was making sure that in his absence from this meeting his will would prevail and Chatfield was just the messenger. Even so, it seemed that Beatty felt that he could not rely upon the Sea Lords endorsing his view, much as he would have liked them to have done.

Although Chatfield agreed with Harper's general conclusions regarding the battle, he took a stubborn stance akin to Beatty's when BCF gunnery was questioned. The Director of the Gunnery Division was Dreyer, Jellicoe's former Flag-Captain, and Chatfield refused to accept gunnery evidence because of this fact.<sup>59</sup> It did seem that it was one thing to agree with documents in general, but another where the actions and abilities of an individual might come into question. Chatfield agreed with the general facts of the battle, but the battlecruisers' standards of gunnery were ultimately seen to be his responsibility, just as the actions of the BCF as a whole were that of Beatty. The gunnery records did not support the views of Beatty, Brock and Chatfield as to the relative positions and effectiveness of the battlefleet and battlecruisers. Beatty then chose to disregard the gunnery records, an action that was:



"typical of the policy followed throughout all the meetings. Oral evidence...was expected to be accepted from the First Sea Lord...but documentary evidence from the Commander-in-Chief or the Battleships was objected to." <sup>60</sup>

With this, it was becoming evident that it would be almost impossible to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

On 22nd September, Oswyn Murray (Secretary of the Admiralty) told Harper that the First Lord had suggested that publication should not go ahead. This found favour with all the Sea Lords except Beatty. He suggested that the original despatches, charts and signals be published. <sup>61</sup> On 27th October, the House was informed that the Admiralty would not publish the account and that it was to be handed to Corbett. On 21st June 1921, Corbett noted that "Harper came to leave with me all his papers re. Beatty's efforts to cook the Jutland [account]+the Sea Lord's comments". <sup>62</sup> A few months later the Dewar brothers also received a copy. The *Despatches* were later issued. They did little to clarify what had happened and largely only confused the majority of readers. Various letters to newspapers and questions in the House produced conflicting replies and did nothing to clarify the situation as to when, or if, Harper's 'Record' would be published. <sup>63</sup> If it were to be published, then discrepancies between some charts and evidence in the *Despatches* as compared to the evidence in Harper's 'Record' would have been evident, a fact which worried Harper further.

It was decided by Beatty, Chatfield and the new First Lord (Lee) that the charts would not carry the author's name if published, despite Harper's protests that the work was associated with him personally even though it was officially an Admiralty account. It would seem that despite a year of protesting the accuracy of his work, Harper was no nearer seeing the truth told, or, if an altered account was issued, in proving that he was not responsible for any alterations. As it turned out, handing the account to Corbett had extricated the Admiralty from a difficult situation that would never have been resolved to universal satisfaction.

To some, the non-appearance of the 'Record' naturally suggested that it had been shelved because it either contained excessively critical comments, or that it told unpalatable truths to those at the Admiralty that could affect its composition and issue. In truth, although Beatty had attempted to alter it to suit his limited view, he gave Harper and others the opportunity to state their cases and objections. It is true that this was the case when his actions came to the attention of Long, but even so, he seemed to realise that it was more satisfactory to reach a compromise with Harper and obtain general Board agreement, if only to portray an image to others that all agreed in general what had happened at the battle. A compromise might have succeeded had Beatty moderated his requirements,<sup>64</sup> but to have done this would, in his opinion, have been as ineffectual as if he had done nothing at all.

Beatty had tried to have information relating to his role in the battle omitted or altered where it showed him in anything less than a competent light. It had been shown that Beatty had not performed as well as he wished



others to believe. Yet, he evidently felt that if others saw how he had actually acted and how this differed with what he led many to think that he had done, then he would be in some way discredited. It is a strong person who can endure any criticism willingly. Beatty was in a position where he could easily question the work and raise objections, but even as First Sea Lord this course was plagued with difficulties. He evidently did not expect that Harper would have put up so much resistance.

More than a year fighting the head of the service cannot have been easy and Harper noted in 1920 that he was "full of Beatty's bullying attitude".<sup>65</sup> Both men, however, acted in a similarly stubborn manner. Harper was as convinced of his case just as much as was Beatty and each obviously felt the other to be rather obstinate. Harper was more accurate in his conclusions, which Beatty probably suspected. Beatty seemed to think that continually making demands would eventually weaken Harper's resolve. It was evident that Beatty could not do whatever he pleased and could not necessarily coerce others into doing as he wished by virtue of his rank and office.

He might have been the head of the service, but the Navy was not Beatty's personal possession. Beatty might well have wondered just what he had to do to tell his side of the story. The situation ultimately resulted in there being little room for manoeuvre for either himself or Harper. For either to have conceded to the other would have made a nonsense of the proceedings since late 1919. It doubtless came as a relief to both parties that the matter was now over.



In the 1960s, Professor Marder wrote to the second Earl Beatty that:

"I happen to know that Harper began his work  
with a pro-Jellicoe bias and an anti-Beatty bias." <sup>66</sup>

If true, this contradicts common understanding of the dispute over the 'Record'. In another letter, Marder remarked that Pipon, who had been on Harper's committee, "could if he wanted to tell you a thing or three about Harper's outlook *vis-à-vis* D.B. & J.R.J." <sup>67</sup> This suggested that Beatty did have genuine reason to take issue with Harper over what he had written. The implication was that Harper had all along been intent upon biasing the account in Jellicoe's favour. Having said this, there was very little to which Beatty could have taken genuine exception and it is worth bearing in mind that Beatty might have been aware of Harper's views as suggested by Pipon. If this was so, before he read the account for the first time, Beatty could have been alerted to look for defects and areas of bias, if not to expect them. Regardless of this, he soon found much to disagree with.

That the battle did not proceed as was felt it should have done was a widely held opinion, but many did not criticise others' actions publicly as no actual good could have come from it. When Beatty began to suggest that he was the hero of the day at the expense of others' reputations, those who were slighted, such as Jellicoe, Evan-Thomas and other BF officers, naturally resented the fact that Beatty had taken advantage of their silence. Beatty also criticised Vice-Admiral Sir Martyn Jerram, who, when leading the BF from 7pm, did not, in Beatty's opinion, evidence sufficient initiative. Cowan noted that:

"What we were hoping for was for one of their [BF's] Divisions of 8, to tail in astern of us, just to give a bit more weight of gunfire." <sup>68</sup>

Drax echoed this in his paper *Lessons from the Battle of 31st May 1916*:

"the van Divisions should steam at high speed so as to assist the Battle-Cruisers in enveloping the enemy's flank." <sup>69</sup>

This helped explain the resentment felt by the BCF that the BF had failed to fully support their efforts in seeking the enemy (see diagram #15). Subsequently, Jerram was distinctly out of favour with Beatty. A little after Jutland, a concert was held on board *King George V*:

"and Beatty markedly cut Jerram dead...His bitterness was reserved for Admiral Jerram...Jerram remained in the line. This Beatty never forgave." <sup>70</sup>

Jerram had been singled-out by Beatty, but he also resented that Jerram's lack of initiative, from his point of view, had been repeated elsewhere in the BF. This failure by Jerram to join with the BCF was an important point. However, despite Drax and Cowan noting the tactical advantages, there is no evidence that this issue was ever raised outside the BCF. It was one more factor that rankled with the BCF and conditioned Beatty's actions when discussing Harper's 'Record'.

Beatty's opponents were all too aware of his failings, but were reluctant to say so. What followed was a press campaign, supported by books

from partisans, to heap praise onto Beatty and disparage the role played by Jellicoe and others, not only at Jutland, but throughout the war in general. It was unfortunate that this was allowed to carry on unchecked for so long.

One can understand that many wished to maintain a silence to prevent a distasteful war of words, but it is to be wondered if this is the policy to follow when others persist in stating claims that go unchecked. When such claims are made, it is best that replies are made sooner rather than later. Damage is inevitable, but it is advisable that one side is not allowed to gain such an advantage as that body of opinion that surrounded Beatty. Late responses are often associated with guilt.



### 3. The Genesis of the *Naval Staff Appreciation of Jutland*.

It was largely true that "Until 1867 naval history, other than a record of battles, could hardly be said to have existed", <sup>1</sup> when Captain John Colomb (aided by his brother, Admiral Philip Colomb) began to study history with a view to the formation of strategic policy. This was in response to what they saw as a limited approach by the Admiralty to meet the requirements of modern war. <sup>2</sup> It also became a common theme for future historians. The same could be said of the Dewar brothers in the early 20th Century, with the exception that they were part of a small, but increasing, number of historically-minded officers. The general reaction to the subject in Naval circles that the Dewars met, was much like that which faced the Colombes — that their audiences were ultimately unconvinced of the utility of history to the modern service. The dependence of officers on technical and material subjects and their prowess in this area had, from the materialist point of view, negated the utility of accounts of sailing ships in a bygone era. The numbers of materialists grew with increasing material and its increasing complexity. Not for the first, nor the last, time, there was a widespread feeling that the future lay in the hands of these specialists and that no-one else had anything useful to offer.

The Dewars and Richmond realised that this feeling still dominated the Navy and both attempted to modify the reliance on detailed technical matters at the expense of a wider strategic view. In a wider sense, they realised that subject specialisms were becoming too self-concerned (if not self-important), losing sight of the reasons why the Navy was composed of

such vessels as it was and how these might be used in a future war. That, in itself, was enough to increase the general suspicion of history, because it questioned the extent to which each specialism alone was sufficient to meet the country's strategic ends. It also forced many of these specialists to wonder, at least privately, how the Navy would actually conduct a future war in detail. Many had neglected the wider strategic picture, which was understandable when careers were based upon technical prowess. What worried the historical officers was that this wider picture had actually been completely lost.

Naval historians, be they civilian or serving officers, faced a struggle to be accepted amongst technical specialists because they held different views and because of a perception by technical specialists that any deviation from technical issues undermined their effectiveness and, therefore, the Navy's ability to fight. Those that opposed history seldom showed signs of a detailed, reasoned objection. This further encouraged historical officers to promote history. Opponents of history were usually blindly dismissive through fear of change, or because they genuinely did not fully appreciate the didactic potential of history. For essentially these reasons, history was seen as a threat rather than a useful addition to knowledge.

In one sense, this was understandable. None of the officers in the war had previously fought the modern ships in which they served. All would have to see how the war developed and act to correct any defects as best they could. To the historians, and increasingly to a wider body, in such events as the losses of the cruisers *Aboukir*, *Cressy* and *Hogue* (to U-9 in September



1914), it could at least have been expected that three closely-stationed ships predictably cruising the Broad Fourteens (off the Dutch coast) was a potentially dangerous situation. History was used to illustrate that patterns can emerge from a serious study and although they could not prescribe future actions, analysing problems (real or perceived) could be of use, if only to stimulate analytical thought. It was much lamented that original thought had been largely stifled by 1914. The most striking example of the time of the confusion that could arise from uncertainties over independent thought was the loss of *Victoria* in 1893. Along with others sharing an interest in history and analysis, Richmond was instrumental in founding the *Naval Review*, where any naval views could be aired, anonymously if so desired. Corbett, the Dewars and Richmond sought to increase and improve the study of history and analytical thought, but subordinated this aim to encouraging the adoption of their own naval views.

What caused many to be suspicious of history was that original thought might subvert discipline. It is easy with hindsight to dismiss this, but it was an important consideration. Advocates of history had to be careful not to appear only to be encouraging sharp criticism of any policy, actions or individuals simply for its own sake. They were seldom successful in this. Indeed, many senior figures (especially Jellicoe) believed themselves to be criticised by individuals who had not taken into account the true nature of the complexities that were faced. This was mainly due to a selective approach on behalf of the authors, but also because of a lack of evidence. A serious, thorough approach to history should have lessened this supposition, but,



especially with regard to the Dewars' and Richmond's writings, their criticism did not appear to be balanced or adequately supported by facts.

History was something of a novelty compared to other naval subjects; to many it was viewed as a subject for cranks. When Jutland was examined, discussion of the differences in the approaches of differing characters and individuals to war was bound to be potentially disputable, if not disruptive. Those whom the Dewars and Richmond criticised over Jutland were, in some instances, over-sensitive. However, responding to such criticisms helped increase an over all detailed, factual and critical analysis of the Navy and the battle. Raw evidence was pored over and debated. For many technical specialists, their first attempts at historical, or any serious, analysis were made defending themselves or their ideas regarding Jutland. The study of history in the service during the war, and later over Jutland, was part of a realisation that war needed detailed analysis to create a greater general awareness of the strategic and tactical aims. The lack of detail in the BCF's operations, therefore, had a profound affect upon the service. Not only was operational understanding vague, but, due to a lack of evidence, it was difficult for any author to delineate any benefits or defects in the free-thinking approach encouraged in the BCF. This was an important contradiction. Later, Beatty and his supporters wanted evidence to endorse their views. However, Beatty's suppression of evidence made this difficult.

As it was realised that interpretations and evidence differed, Beatty's liking for history waned. Any attempt to analyse Jutland in an unimpassioned manner would probably have highlighted faults and faults usually meant

blame. This might explain why serving officers were not fond of history, especially contemporary history. The Dewars and Richmond were not interested in history for its own sake. Ultimately, this lay at the heart of their failure to promote historical study in the Navy. To those with differing views to the Dewars and Richmond, their various analyses seemed little more than criticism based upon selective and misunderstood evidence. It appeared, if anything, as detailed propaganda, or incomplete history.

Although history had a purpose, its widespread adoption as a serious subject depended largely on the manner in which the Dewars, Richmond and Corbett presented it. If history as a subject, rather than as a device to support limited ideas, had been supported, the potential for impartial assessment might have been recognised by more of those whom the historians sought to convince. Instead, Dewar and Richmond supported reform with what appeared to their opponents as spiteful, wisdom-after-the-event criticism. It was not history that they were writing and history in the service suffered for this.

The Dewar brothers have been much maligned for the parts they played in recording the events at Jutland and there are few complimentary opinions regarding their motives or suitability to judge such an event. Their combined lack of sea experience compared to many officers about whom they were writing was a convenient excuse for many to dismiss what they had to say out of hand. There was a common belief that they had been selected by Beatty not simply to write an account favourable to his part in the action, but to write what Beatty dictated. Being unreliable, biased and ill-qualified to comment in the opinions of many — usually Jellicoe's supporters — meant that much of what they did say in their *Appreciation* of Jutland did not reach many eyes due to its limited circulation. However, it echoed a side to the argument that had much to support it.

The selection of the brothers was Beatty's responsibility, but they were by no means the first choice. On 22nd September 1920, Sir Julian Corbett was informed by Herbert Richmond that Harper's 'Record' was not going to be released. On 5th October, Corbett saw Oswyn Murray who:

"showed me correspondence between him, Beatty and Long...against Adty. Jutland report. [Said?] they wished me to take on whole thing...(according to Beatty version)+the charts in one appreciation with liberty to comment when I thought it not in accordance to [*sic*] evidence. Pointed out difficulty of bulk, but said I would consider their proposal with Capt. Harper,



Daniel...lunch at club with [amongst others]...Harper who was full of Beatty's bullying attitude.

[7th October] Interview with Murray+Harper as to what could be done to take my view. Told him he c[oul]d say I agreed to take over subject to certain conditions.

[15th October, from Daniel] notified proposed to give me a free hand.

[16th October] Drafted Murray letter re. what I was prepared to do about Jutland. [Some time between these dates, Corbett rejected Beatty's offer]

[13th November] also Richmond to tell me seen [sic]...Beatty had sent for him to do my abandoned job+how he said he could not do it-too much work. Also know B wanted a clear statement from him [regarding his views on the future of battleships]...R said we had not completely agreed as to their necessity. Also how he explained to B that I was not for what they call the Defensive School." <sup>3</sup>

This does not square with common understanding at all. Following his earlier approach to Corbett, Beatty, or at least someone acting on his behalf, felt

that it would be a *coup* if Corbett could work with all the available material and submit a work that pleased Beatty. Corbett evidently relished the possibilities that this free rein would have given him. Although any published work would still have been censored, Corbett seemed to have felt that it was better to remain outside direct Admiralty control, or where their interference would create greater problems for them than if he had worked solely under their auspices. As regards the publicly available finished product, he evidently felt that if there were to be censorship, it would probably make little difference for whom he worked. He was still contracted to work for Longmans, who had exclusive rights to the Official History, so his decision seemed to resolve itself around how wide an audience the work would ultimately receive.

Corbett had often met with Harper and, therefore, knew all about Beatty's efforts to tamper with the 'Record'. This was almost certainly a discouragement, not simply due to his possible reluctance in working in such an atmosphere, but that he might not be allowed to reach his own conclusions unless they agreed with Beatty's. It will be seen later just how he managed to contrive to receive the promised secret information anyway, so neglecting to accept this offer was probably in his better interests (certainly commercially). At the very least, he could always have applied pressure via Longmans if any major crisis regarding content arose. He could not have applied such, if any, working directly under Beatty.

With Corbett's rejection of the offer, Richmond was evidently somewhere below on the list of choices. It was convenient for Beatty that he

claimed to have too much work at the time, especially as his views supporting smaller battleships and capital ship design were causing the Navy concern in the disarmament atmosphere of the early 1920s. Had Beatty chosen him, it seemed to have been thought likely that Richmond would write something along the lines that big battleships were expensive, useless and that the indecisive result of Jutland proved that they were ultimately ineffectual. This was not the thing to say in the disarmament atmosphere of the early 1920s. So, it fell to the Dewars to write this account with the freedom to comment on the evidence and action. It was Beatty's best choice of the three possibilities, especially given that his views and the Dewars' were in agreement, although Corbett and Richmond were more widely known as established naval experts.

Prior to their undertaking to write the *Appreciation*, the Dewar brothers had developed an interest in the study of history and felt it to be an important part of Naval training. This did not endear them to the many who felt that a sound knowledge of contemporary material was all important. After the war they drew attention to the fact that the Navy spent £250,000 each year on scientific research as compared to £1,000 spent on the historical section which "indicates the enormous strength of the material school." <sup>4</sup> As their own interest was history, this naturally did not meet with their approval, yet they failed to fully appreciate why the material school was so large and acquired large sums of money. Technological advances in warfare had meant that many new factors needed to be understood and to fail to do this would have meant to fall behind in comparison with other nations. Ships were



becoming obsolete much quicker than even ten years previously and it is scarcely surprising that as all aspects in the functioning of ships were changing rapidly, many needed to be acquainted with new devices and their use.

In this atmosphere, the Dewars rightly perceived that the study of history and its use in developing tactics and strategy was being neglected to the detriment of the service. Undue reliance, it seemed, was being placed upon new devices at the expense of developing an individual's understanding of war and how best to act in battle. Obeying orders was seen as preferable to exercising initiative, officers' self-confidence had suffered and, in their opinion, this had resulted in the unpalatable outcome of Jutland. If history were studied it was hoped that officers and, therefore, the Navy would be more able to force a favourable outcome in future.

However, a large number of officers had been brought up in an environment where obedience to orders was paramount and in which little was done to experiment with new ideas regarding tactics. Incidents such as the loss of *Victoria*, in 1893, not only discouraged such experimentation, but highlighted the great difficulty in training officers in such a way and in coordinating their actions. Alfred Dewar remarked to his brother:

"Do you remember Tryon's case 1893? nothing like obeying orders then you can't go wrong, even if the ship is sunk." <sup>5</sup>

The brothers thought that this attitude needed rectifying. For many to have preferred a more conservative system which reduced the theoretical

likelihood of misunderstandings was not a surprising thing. Yet, to the Dewars and those of similar opinions, this was not a good enough reason to maintain the *status quo*.

A little before Jutland, Kenneth Dewar wrote:

"I don't think that there will be any real fundamental reforms in naval education and organisation unless the pressure of public opinion is brought to bear in the right direction. Those who will direct affairs after the war will be of much the same type as their predecessors...If a few officers writing together could publish a suitable book after the war much good could come of it." <sup>6</sup>

In stating this, he was obviously aware that, in the existing climate, such change as he desired was unlikely unless others could be made aware of their case and realise its importance. Rather than being merely a difference of opinion, what Dewar wished to change was a system so apparently injurious to the prospects of improved tactics, strategy and in individual action of officers. Much good could come from writing a book bringing out the lessons to be learned from the war, if that book endorsed Kenneth Dewar's views. He would later be given the chance to develop and demonstrate his ideas and opinions.

The difficulty in trying to change such a significant factor in the structure of the Navy as education lay not so much in the difficulties of

developing attitudes and adapting to a new system, but in undermining the basis of acquired knowledge and experience. For change to come about and in any way be effective, the majority would have to be convinced of its feasibility. Dewar was a little optimistic to have thought that pressure in the right area, presumably at the Admiralty or similar high position, would help bring about his aim. The "right direction" was to appeal to that part of the Navy unconvinced of such ideas. To appeal to some distinguished officers who would encourage reform on a larger scale, overlooked the fact that such measures needed the conviction of the majority who would work under the new regime. That majority were not convinced that greater tactical freedom was preferable to the current order.

In early June 1916, Kenneth Dewar wrote to Richmond that:

"I should like to know more about the Jutland Battle. It seems strange that we should have had to engage in such superior force [with the result being so inconclusive]...The epic deeds of this war are all connected with withdrawals...the attack of Beatty's BC's and the 5thBS on the whole of the G.H.S.F. affords another example of the same kind. Evidently the co-ordination and [function?] of a large fleet is not as simple as our P.Z. exercises would have us believe. I went on board the *Barham* a few days ago. The 6" magazines had a narrow escape and it is easy to understand the



destruction of the *Queen Mary* and *Indefatigable*...I wonder if we shall ever get any intelligent criticism of the Battle of Jutland." <sup>7</sup>

In this, one can detect his opinions forming regarding the action and how they linked to his theme of education and the principles of war. The reference to Beatty showed, even at this early stage, how the battlecruiser myth had started to develop. <sup>8</sup> His last statement was ironic from many points of view and was, perhaps, said in the hope that he might at some point contribute to an understanding of Jutland. Even from these few words, his opinions and sympathies were evident, just as they were expressed later in the *Staff Appreciation*.

Other important concerns were illustrated in another letter to Richmond:

"In your last letter you seemed to think that only the opinions of those who had taken part in the various North Sea actions would carry any weight after the war. I don't agree with that idea. I think your views on reform will carry [equal?] weight with the rising generation quite independently of what ship you happened to serve in...But despite desperate efforts to compare it [Jutland] to Trafalgar...we know in our heart of hearts that it was a serious reverse...[Rushton] says that the Germans are superior to us in ship design,

gunnery and command, but especially in command." <sup>9</sup>

To continue the irony a little further, this statement seemed to anticipate that any views an individual put forward for discussion would be dealt with solely on their merits. One would have to say that Richmond's assessment of the situation was much more accurate and Dewar's a little idealistic. It would be more accurate, however, to say that if views on reform were suggested by someone who took part in any of the North Sea engagements as opposed to someone who had not, many might incline to favour the participant of one or more of the battles purely for that fact, believing, however erroneously, that battle experience strengthens a case because those involved in battles must know better by virtue of seeing action. Many reputations were enhanced by battle, but not always accurately. It was always difficult to escape the feeling that those having seen action were exalted in some way, which was what Dewar feared, as expressed in his letters. If one attempts to say that service in battle is irrelevant in formulating changes, the retort is usually that these are efforts to undermine, ignore, or insult, heroes, which is hard to overcome. Dewar's last statement was evidence at least that he was not alone in sharing views regarding what was seen as deficient command and the ability of officers to act effectively against the enemy.

Kenneth Dewar's *Lecture on Historical Method* <sup>10</sup> set out what he and his brother, Alfred, believed to be the purpose of historical study. It was tailored so as to encourage the use of history for practical purposes — to show that original thought could lead to greater operational freedom and,

therefore, success. So much writing on Jutland suffered from what Dewar was keen to overcome, that:

"Individual action covers only a small field and to become available for general use must be collected with the experience of others and reduced to historical form." <sup>11</sup>

This was nothing startling, but it did not pretend to be. Dewar's point, to those unfamiliar with, and suspicious of, history, raised the fundamental questions regarding how history is written, for what purpose and whether or not the form of the work is suitable if an analysis was required. Dewar was attempting to clarify historical method whilst suggesting that original thought should be applied to assessing Jutland. Harper's task was to avoid judgements, but in the opinion of some, such as Dewar, he did not bring out the true picture of events because of this. It was this that the *Appreciation* sought to rectify.

When Beatty asked Kenneth Dewar, aided by Alfred, to compose an account to bring out the lessons of the battle, he had chosen the authors with a vastly different reason in mind than had Wemyss. Contrary to popular dogma, the Dewars had not been selected merely to put into words Beatty's side of the battle. <sup>12</sup> It is unfair to both the Dewars and Beatty to say that they were chosen to comply unquestioningly with the First Sea Lord's wishes. They were chosen to compose a very different type of account. Beatty was, however, aware of their views on Naval matters, which were akin to his own.

Difficulties arose with the Dewars' work because of the issues it raised



and its manner of expression. Personal criticisms appeared that Jellicoe's supporters thought to be too strong for publication, even if Beatty's supporters thought them to be justified. The major actors in the *Appreciation* were still alive and serving in the fleet, and the principles upon which the Navy in the 1920s functioned were being seriously questioned. The *Appreciation* thus had the potential to be damaging if misinterpreted and in the prevailing hostile atmosphere, it was almost certain to have been, intentionally or otherwise. The parts criticising Jellicoe found favour with Beatty's supporters, but even Beatty's supporters thought that whilst the work was accurate, issue of it would have caused disputes rather than encouraging reform.

What comes to light in a comparison of the work of the Dewars and of Harper is how different types of history can cause such debate and ill-feeling. The question regarding the Dewars' work was the desirability of having an analytical account composed so close to the event in question. Cases could be made to attack or defend any side, which may not have been made to portray the truth, but to support or attack a cause. In this, clarity in the depiction of the battle would certainly be lost. Although the Dewars' work did have some defects, it was essentially moderate as an analysis of the battle. Nevertheless, its criticisms of the principles upon which the Navy functioned, without offering workable alternatives, led to its very limited circulation. To Jellicoe's supporters, Harper's work was a plain narrative of events which was sufficient for the time. To Beatty's supporters, the *Staff Appreciation* represented what should have been written to begin with, a far

more accurate and informative account. This marked the beginning of works that further blurred the battle itself with wider service issues and these works suffered as objective analyses of the events of the battle because of this.

Dewar's lecture made many points that later appeared in the *Staff Appreciation*. The advantages of decentralised command were stressed, this being part of what Dewar hoped would be a Navy better able to fight successfully in future, with officers having the freedom and confidence to form their own judgements, based on historical analyses, and act upon them. Without such analyses Dewar believed that:

"you may wander for months in a maze,  
dependent on your meagre stock of knowledge on  
what someone is prepared to dole out to you." <sup>13</sup>

This may have been true, but not everyone has the time or inclination to go so deep into the past as perhaps they should. Therefore, they must rely to some extent upon what they are given. This repeated Dewar's point regarding how history is written, for what purpose and by whom. The obvious implication was that there was not enough historical information supplied, or in enough depth, by the Navy in 1919. This needed rectifying if progress was ever to be made. It might also be mentioned that at this time, access to official documents was very much restricted. Thanks largely to the efforts of Sir J.K. Laughton at the end of the 19th Century, and the Navy Records Society, moves were made to remedy this situation. Although Dewar's comment here appears to be obvious to any historian, sufficient evidence to produce detailed history was not accessible to most in the 1920s, even Naval



officers of the Historical Section.

This opened a much wider debate regarding education within the Navy and the consequences of encouraging criticism and developing new ideas. Dewar, Richmond, Plunkett and others long since shared similar views, whose pursuit they hoped would lead to less centralised tactics and command, which Beatty undoubtedly preferred. Others argued that too much individual action and greater freedom of manoeuvre would lead to disunity and, therefore, disaster. If this were to happen in battle, the results could well be disastrous. The often quoted "Nelsonic" qualities are always cited as desirable and admirable. Yet, in practice, it seemed that the Navy had been happy to encourage admiration of Nelson, providing that few, if anyone, actually behaved like him. This did not please the Dewars. The Dewars, however, like many others, failed to realise that a systematic analysis, for example, of Nelson's major actions — St. Vincent, Aboukir and Trafalgar — would not have reflected the 20th Century assumption that initiative alone led to success and would do in future. Nelson's heroism was held as an example to all junior, and many senior, officers of courage and initiative. However, it was not mentioned that his most famous battle — Trafalgar — although successful, had little real strategic effect. History, to the Dewars, was all well and good if it appeared to reflect their opinions, but was of little utility if it did not. It was not sufficient simply to concentrate upon general conclusions, as the Dewars tended to do.

Improvements of the kind the Dewars desired could only be made by encouraging greater individual responsibility, but all too often this was feared



as being an influence which undermined sound ideas: not heresy perhaps, but potentially damaging if everyone aspired to and practised it. Ultimately, it was a question of emphasis as to how far individual skill should rate in obeying orders, although the brothers do not seem to have seen the problem in this way. The Dewars were advocating a change which, if implemented, would significantly alter the Navy's approach to education and warfare and as is usual, conservatism had the greatest number of advocates. In fact, it was just as difficult to make each system work effectively, especially one which involved such a large number of vessels and personnel. There was also the vexed question of when it was advisable to conform to orders or use initiative, how to know when to use it and to what extent. In the climate of the early 1920s it was too much to expect unity of action without having a highly effective communications system. That was where the problem lay. Even the later predominance of radio-based tactical devices could not prevent misunderstandings or tactical blunders. An excellent understanding of tactics, born of frequent and lucid communications between commanders, will make any system much more likely to function as required, regardless of whether or not it involves an emphasis on initiative or central command.

Just as commonplace was the erroneous belief that in such arguments, there was room only for one set of beliefs, as if the two were incompatible. This was the essence of Jutland arguments. The side that favoured decentralisation of command and an increase in the study of history, did so without seeing, or fully admitting to, possible defects in this approach. This was true of those favouring central control and greater familiarity with

technical developments. Had compromise been possible, the Royal Navy would have been nearer to an adequate solution.

Kenneth Dewar raised an important point, which was to be of significance after the *Staff Appreciation* was completed, when he stated:

"We require provisional histories of events...not necessarily definitive, but so far as they go, substantially correct...Its object is to increase efficiency by close examination of the work actually done...My argument for the utility of this resolves itself into an advocacy for the history of the present [i.e. immediate past]." <sup>14</sup>

This highlighted a crucial difference of current opinion. One may well question how a history can be accurate enough to be of value so close to the event in question, taking personal perceptions and interests into account, but the Dewars knew that many years must not be allowed to pass before an objective analysis could be made. It was evident that any lessons to be learned had to be done nevertheless when they were still of value, or else the defects they perceived would only be perpetuated.

Kenneth Dewar also noted that a holder of information:

"may possess a monopoly of the information and is very often averse to anything in the form of history which might disturb that monopoly.

History represents the pooling of experience." <sup>15</sup>

It would seem that he meant that anyone holding certain views did not like to

be furnished with proof that they were erroneous or had little foundation in fact. This was understandable to a certain extent and especially applicable to the Jutland histories. The brothers thought that pooling experience would mean that solutions to problems could be arrived at through examining all available information. This ignored personal factors, opposing views and the means applied to compose the history. Kenneth Dewar did not explain in sufficient depth, here or elsewhere, how information was gathered, how facts were determined or how these factors could so easily distort the picture of events. He fell victim to factual defects in evidence in his works at this time.

In a lecture entitled *The Growth of pre-Jutland Tactics*,<sup>16</sup> by Commander Russell Grenfell, many points were made similar to those held by the Dewars and their supporters. From a reformer's point of view, an alarming statement was made that:

"the great majority of officers had not open minds  
on the subject of tactics; they had empty  
minds."<sup>17</sup>

Such reformers believed that they had much to do to achieve a satisfactory system. That empty minds were seen to abound, reflected a lack of sufficient effort to teach history, or offer any encouragement to develop ideas. Without any new ideas, the assumption was that orders would be obeyed unquestioningly according to current doctrine.

Systematic study of warfare and tactics was essential, yet was not encouraged. So, if the compilation of battle orders was left to a very few senior officers and little or no discussion on tactics or strategy took place in



the subordinate ranks, then there must, the Dewars argued, come a point when those rising to high commands had little, if any, different ideas to add. This being the case, most would then perpetuate the ideas and beliefs that they had held for many years, without knowing any different means.

After Jutland many retained the same Naval opinions they had possessed before. Some claimed that a disaster had skilfully been avoided and victory denied by cruel luck. Others claimed that a restrictive system of tactics and command had wasted an excellent opportunity for victory. The potential for strengthening Britain's strategic position in the war was, in reformers' eyes, achievable, but was denied by the restrictive ideas predominant in the BF, to which they were opposed. During the inter-war years, the recording of events at Jutland was more often used either to support reform or to maintain the *status quo*, rather than recording the events accurately for posterity.

When work began on the *Staff Appreciation*, on 1st November 1920, the Dewars already had in mind the approach they would take and the points that they would amplify by way of educating the reader to developing their ideas of warfare. Upon reading it, one cannot escape the implicit conclusion that there needed to be a great reform within the service, particularly regarding education, tactics and strategy, if the Fleet was ever to act with the freedom and skill necessary in any future engagement. The purpose was to draw out the lessons from the battle however unpalatable they might at first appear. In doing this it was inevitable that wider issues than the battle itself would be addressed in some way. It was, perhaps, impossible to write a work

without making some criticisms or comments that could be construed as personal attacks. As the actions of individuals at Jutland were largely a result of the extant Battle Orders and training, to criticise either the BF system or individuals within it was to criticise both.

As distribution of the *Appreciation* to a wider audience was considered, one may well wonder what was the real intended purpose of the book. If it was to express any individual's or body's opinions then its limited circulation cannot have been much help in furthering the cause. This might be a false assumption. The mere knowledge of a secret book and hints of what it contained could cause all manner of differences of opinions and criticisms of the way in which study of the battle was being used. However, it would be difficult to ensure constructive criticism in such a climate, which might easily lead to the opposite effects than those desired. When one considers that the *Despatches* had already been published and that the Official History would soon follow, the existence of a secret book might well have led some to suppose that something was being hidden and that this could be important. Publication of Harper's 'Record' was being delayed and many articles in the press saw this as part of the "hush-up" over the whole affair. On 29th November 1920, the *Evening News* told of the compilation of a new account of Jutland (the supposed "secret" account) and concluded that:

"The idea of suppressing the work of a costly committee and having it done over again by a single officer naturally suggests that there is something to be hidden."

As newspapers often do, the *Evening News* jumped to the wrong conclusion by being too eager to find something that was suspicious. Although Harper's work was suppressed, the Dewars had used it as the basis for their work — and it lost very much in the process.



Many misunderstandings occurred in later years as to the reasons why another account was produced and then suppressed, but these were based upon an ignorance of the instructions upon which the authors worked and the ultimate purpose of the work. Shortly after Dewar began his work, Brock wrote that:

"You are desired to write a full appreciation of the battle of Jutland. to serve as a groundwork for a further staff appreciation. Your appreciation is to include...a full analysis of the movements of the British Fleet." <sup>18</sup>

Brock added a memorandum that there was to be one appreciation for restricted circulation, suitable to be issued to the Fleet and another founded on the original. but with no criticism or secret information. thus being safe for general publication. Contrary to popular belief, the *Admiralty Narrative* — edited from the *Appreciation* — was not a substitute for an account that was too controversial to be issued, but part of the plan to issue a publicly available account which was seen as being long overdue. It was all too often assumed that the Dewars' account was so controversial that it had to be edited in order for it to be published, but it was never intended that the original would be issued except in a very limited way. The mistake made by many was in assuming general publication to be the intention. There was criticism that the apparent suppression of the account indicated that sinister doings were taking place, but it is significant that these claims were greatly distorted. The Dewars' *Appreciation* was intended for limited circulation, for

a particular purpose and was the first stage of a planned issue of different Admiralty accounts on Jutland.

The work went through various drafts, with the MSS of the previous drafts being destroyed when superseded. Shortly before printing, the first six chapters, Kenneth Dewar — who did the majority of work on the *Appreciation* — was informed:

"have now been revised in accordance with the directions of the DCNS, all the parts criticised by the CNS and ACNS having either been omitted or modified." <sup>19</sup>

So Beatty, Brock and Chatfield did have some influence as to the final contents, though in exactly what way is not possible to say. What is worth noting is that with all their other duties, Beatty and Brock (later Keyes, but less so Chatfield if he could avoid it) always found time to cast an eye over the contents at crucial points in its development. The influence of one, usually both, was detectable whenever the contents were examined with a view to issue. Beatty felt that this was the account that should be issued to the public, not an edited version, as it reflected his view and the views of other BCF personnel better than did Harper's work. He also felt that there was nothing wrong with the idea of making issue of it more general.

It was noted by the Assistant DNI (Captain E.D. Cochrane) that issue would be decided by the Board as and when the need arose. <sup>20</sup> This implied that issue was a sensitive subject and that a public issue would necessitate alterations being made. Only a few were considered to be suitable recipients

of the work as it stood. Beatty felt differently. He and others members of his staff had seen the work and made comments upon it, so he felt that all the necessary editing had been done. Further editing would only emasculate the account, in his view, and failing to publish it would be disastrous.

Publication of the work as it stood originally, or wider distribution of it, it should be remembered, was not the intention, but Beatty later remarked to Brock:

"We decided not to distribute it for many good reasons i.e. that it contained comments and strictures which might cause heart burnings and ill feeling and not because it was inaccurate...[its destruction] is a crime against contemporary history. I was Chief of Staff responsible for it's [*sic*] production and had at my disposal the most competent staff which included Yourself...representing as it did the many units of the Fleet that took part in the battle...to produce a proper appreciation of a great Historical occasion...I think it would be monstrous to destroy the one authentic and carefully prepared publication." <sup>21</sup>

He seemed disappointed that the account did not reach more eyes. The *Appreciation* was compiled by two brothers who did not represent any units of the Fleet and Lt-Cdr John Pollen who had arrived to help explain Harper's



‘Record’, upon which the account was based, and to prepare the diagrams. <sup>22</sup> Perhaps Beatty was genuinely convinced of his statement — it would help explain why he so strongly felt that the work was the most accurate representation of the battle. As First Sea Lord, Beatty seemed to have believed that those under him were ultimately to do as they were told and that Harper and his helpers were not an independent body. <sup>23</sup> The phrase above that he "had at my disposal" was consistent with this view that the account was his responsibility, and that he could detail work to whoever he chose and suggest the lines upon which it was to be written. Beatty was doing with the Dewars what he felt that he was entitled to do with Harper, the difference being that the brothers complied, as he suspected they would.

In desiring wider distribution, Beatty seemed not to have given too much thought to the possible effects of the work, or if he did, then not to have cared much. It was, however, consistent with his opinion that this only reflected what had really happened at the battle and that there was no reason why others should not know it. Apart from the potential to affect relations, it did overtly question much regarding the Navy and the way in which it would behave in a future battle. It was Keyes (now DCNS) and Chatfield who felt that the latter issue was significant. The issue of this account with the approval of the Admiralty had the potential to "rend the service to its foundations." <sup>24</sup> This would have been disastrous.

Perhaps the most important point was that the Dewars questioned the idea of fighting ships in a single line. However, it was not so much the single line itself being criticised, but its size at Jutland. Problems that the authors

saw at Jutland were largely due to the complexities of movements of the Grand Fleet, magnified by large numbers of vessels over such distances. The strategic position and concentration of the Fleet in the war could scarcely have been helped, but in the absence of any other tactical ideas, the single line had to stay, like it or not. If this work had been issued, criticising Fleet tactics and the principles upon which the Fleet would continue to work, there was a feeling that impressionable officers might assume that the single line was the cause of all problems. However, this seemed to be used more as an excuse to prevent publication and wider debate of the issue. A major rift may well have been avoided by Keyes and Chatfield in their willingness to prevent any controversy from spreading, particularly from within the service. However, this was not to say that they disagreed with what had been written. The priority was not necessarily to produce the most accurate account, but one which caused least damage, real or imagined.

The comments of Keyes and Chatfield are worth examining a little further with regard to the possible effects of wider circulation for the work. Chatfield noted that the:

"criticism is written in a somewhat severe style;  
and it is open to suggestion whether this is  
desirable...I think it very desirable that the service  
should be told the reason why the British ships  
were blown up...namely, because the British shell  
were of inferior make." <sup>25</sup>

He noted that this could present problems, but his own favourite subject, he

felt, should be included, as it would aid his defence of the BCF's poor gunnery at Jutland. It is also interesting that, as in his dealings with Harper, he seemed not to have become too interested until BCF gunnery was examined, as it was of particular importance to him.

Both Chatfield and Keyes concluded that:

"While not approving of the tone in which this book is written...we are in entire agreement with the main conclusions of the writer." <sup>26</sup>

Although both agreed with what had been written, they realised that allowing the Fleet to know that the Naval Staff endorsed those views within could have made matters much worse, especially as public criticism of Jellicoe was then common. Both found the edited version unsatisfactory as it did not represent the views of the present Naval Staff:

"and we might be compelled to defend an incomplete and half hearted account which did not adequately express our personal convictions." <sup>27</sup>

So, they felt it best not to advise any issue, hoping that any potential troubles would never emerge. Underlying these comments was the feeling that the whole affair was unsavoury and that a plain narrative was, if at all, the best possible type of work to issue at present. Agreeing what should be said was the point that seemed unsolvable.

It was clear that while they supported Beatty, they did not approve of the lengths to which he was prepared to go. A chief reason was that only an



account which passed as the opinion of the Naval Staff and Board of Admiralty should be issued, which was not the case. Above all, the intention may have been to provide a piece for posterity which recorded certain views: that not all copies were returned for destruction is suggestive in itself.<sup>28</sup> There seemed to have been an expectation of some disastrous controversy and that this was best forestalled, but this great rift never emerged.

Although the original *Appreciation* received no further issue, production of an account that all could read was begun. When Brock was still DCNS, he felt that after Corbett's work was published, there would not be any need for another Jutland account. However, Kenneth Dewar noted that he:

"pointed out however that Pollen who had helped Harper and myself and done very painstaking work on the diagrams would now be out of a job+would have to revert to his pre-war pension of £100 a year or thereabouts and I asked that if possible the Admiralty might do something to keep him on for a few more months...I suggested he might edit my appreciation so as to produce a plain narrative...I think that [revision] was Admiral Brock's intention, but yesterday I found that Pollen had been told to prepare a narrative without criticism...[Pollen could then either] produce a hash up of my appreciation which I do

not think fair...or after a very long time he produces another one...My appreciation was prepared so that the criticism+comments could easily be eliminated so as to have the plain narrative...[the original] met with the entire approval of the CNS+DCNS+both he [Alfred Dewar] and I would feel extremely hurt if someone else is told to prepare a new narrative." <sup>29</sup>

Those comments carefully crafted with editing in mind, were now duly deleted. Given the above quotation, Kenneth Dewar could hardly have been upset or surprised at this editing being done.

Pollen had been instructed to use the Dewars' account and to adhere as closely as possible to their wording in the edited version. <sup>30</sup> Captain Ellerton (DTSD) had told Pollen that he was to consult Dewar if need be and to consider Oswald Tuck as his representative regarding the editing. <sup>31</sup> Although this would have to suffice, Beatty's supporters felt it to be a poor substitute. Captain Frank Spickernell wrote to Dewar that "So far as I know, the accuracy of your work has not been questioned in any way." <sup>32</sup> Yet, this depended upon with whom he had been conversing, which must surely have been Beatty and his immediate circle of supporters. <sup>33</sup> The real irony in the affair was that this account utilised much of the work which Harper had produced, with the brothers adding their comments and expressing views. The Dewars knew that they had much wider scope than Harper and Beatty could

confidently rely upon their making comments more in keeping with his views. Despite this, a compromise had to be worked to enable wider issue, which, by the nature of compromise, ultimately failed to satisfy both sides completely.

Early in 1922, Sir Julian Corbett, who was writing the third volume of the Official History, including Jutland, commented to Jellicoe regarding the *Staff Appreciation* that:

"The presentation of the facts seemed to me so faulty...but in a few days I was informed that the issue was to be stopped." <sup>34</sup>

He was then informed that an abridged edition was expected in two weeks. In early July, Captain Vernon Haggard (DTSD) wrote to Keyes and Chatfield that editing the work had proved "a matter of considerable difficulty." <sup>35</sup> He had overseen the alterations and was ultimately responsible for the contents. Many potential points of issue still remained, but it must be remembered that it was not the intention to take all of them out. Corbett later wrote to Jellicoe:

"the revision was entrusted to an officer who is attached to my staff [Pollen] and who thoroughly agreed with my own view of this burlesque of history." <sup>36</sup>

Given what was said above and remembering that he also felt that the Harper 'Record' was the most accurate yet produced, editing the work must have called for great restraint from Pollen. It should perhaps not be doubted that if Pollen had been any more extreme in editing than he had been, then



another editor may well have been sought, thus continuing the "burlesque of history." Throughout the affair, what many quoted as the "Admiralty" view of any event, was really the personal view of Beatty.

In letters to Jellicoe, Admiral Sir Charles Madden mentioned that "I hear J.C.'s account is not at all appreciated by Beatty", <sup>37</sup> which was in keeping with Beatty's view on the histories. Corbett also claimed to have insisted on using Harper's work wherever possible to elucidate the facts, but did not seem to have questioned it with regard to its accuracy. He remarked to Jellicoe that members of his staff had said that:

"the Harper charts give, as you say, an accurate interpretation of all the existing records of what took place." <sup>38</sup>

They were accurate, but Corbett's interpretations differed in some significant areas. Jellicoe, Harper, Corbett and Pollen amongst many others, were all of a similar mind regarding what happened at Jutland. One can scarcely be surprised that Beatty, the Dewars, Chatfield, Keyes and others did not share their opinions. The close inter-relations between those of both sides, only helped convince them that their particular views were accurate.

These differences explain much regarding the comments of both sides and these help identify the authors of decisions regarding the Jutland histories. Madden expanded his previous comment to Jellicoe in that:

"So far both the Corbett and Dewar accounts are at the Admiralty, the former not at all appreciated there...I impressed on him [the First Lord,

Amery] the fact that the bulk of the officers and men in the Navy served in Scapa Force...[if there were differences in Corbett's and the Dewars' accounts] there would be little difficulty in selecting the more accurate one [i.e. Corbett's]." <sup>39</sup>

This made a crucial point. Due to the respective sizes of the two forces, those in the Battlefleet greatly outnumbered those in the BCF and it seemed as if a few of the latter, now at the head of the Admiralty, were trying to impose a view of the battle that the majority knew not to be accurate. The manner in which this was done did not help matters either. When Madden mentioned the "Admiralty", he quite clearly referred to Beatty, Keyes, Chatfield and those of the BCF who shared their views.

Many would naturally not have agreed with one work (Corbett's or the Dewars') where they favoured the other, but the authors of the works did not sit idly by in the affair either. Corbett had discouraged wider circulation of the Dewars' work, but whether or not this had any effect is hard to say. The Dewars, later in 1922, received some disturbing news. Alfred Dewar wrote to Kenneth that:

"I understand Corbett did not finish Jutland and I am inclined to think that Whitehall Gardens [the address of the Historical Section] [is?] biassed [*sic*] against our report. Pollen says its facts no doubt are correct as if we got our facts from them [presumably Harper's account which they

had]...the German fleet in Harper's diagrams was entirely wrong." <sup>40</sup>

This only endorsed the fact that although a few agreed with the Dewars, it did not find general approval in Whitehall. It was also notable that Harper's diagrams and facts were criticised as being faulty, but they were the least faulty compared to later works. This was further evidence that those who had any opinion in the affair wholly believed the point of view of one side only, there being no room for any so-called middle ground.

Just as Corbett attempted to persuade the Admiralty against the wider use of the Dewars' account, so they did his. Alfred Dewar wrote to Kenneth that:

"Corbett appears to have resented the attack on J by Beatty's [?] and makes a firm counter attack in which I believe B is assailed for having dared to attack Hipper...I saw Roger B <sup>41</sup> and advised him strongly that the admly. refuse to have anything to do with the text of a chapter which differs so profoundly from the opinions of the naval staff. Unfortunately our monograph is regarded by almost everyone as much too strong and there can be no doubt that it would have served its purpose much better if we had distributed it, as it is, it isn't going out and there is all the trouble of writing another. I strongly advise the preparation



of a clear account based on the monograph with  
[the?] diagrams and Jellicoe's remarks...I think  
there is room for grave objection to be taken...to  
Corbett's having used our monograph (as he  
certainly did) to establish another opinion without  
a word of thanks." <sup>42</sup>

This endorsed Madden's comments that Corbett's account was not appreciated by the Admiralty and it was easy to understand why and who exactly did not appreciate it. What was different about Corbett's account was that it was the first one published which did not square with the popular view that had been created by Beatty's supporters regarding the respective roles and characters of Beatty and Jellicoe.

Dewar's comments to Bellairs may have been a contributing factor in the issuing by the Admiralty of the disclaimer at the start of Corbett's work (see Chapter 4), but it was likely that he was not alone in making such suggestions. One cannot really agree with Dewar regarding issuing the *Staff Appreciation*, unless of course, its purpose was to create debate and a possible schism in the service. It is difficult to see what good could have come from its issue. Although the public had been made aware that another work on Jutland was being compiled, the Admiralty wished to keep it as secret as possible, perhaps in the hope that it would be forgotten. For Corbett to have mentioned it would have given away the existence of a work which many in the Admiralty were keen to bury. Corbett's work might, if they were lucky, eclipse it, clearing the way for a riposte.

The use of Naval history was, at this time, very limited within the service. Great victories were held as examples of fine seamanship and courage, but in a way that suggested one was to admire, rather than analyse or learn from them. Defeats were seldom examined or even mentioned and the strategic elements and purpose of wars received scant attention. It was not surprising that some felt there was a gap in the education and understanding of what a Navy was and could be used for. Geoffrey Callendar's lectures to boys in their early teens encouraged admiration and there was often some theatrical element in the lecturer's delivery which was popular with many. This was all very well, yet some, especially Richmond, felt that although this might be acceptable for young boys, it was not so for young Lieutenants. Unless past events were fully examined in a more scholarly sense, some rightly argued that erroneous and insufficient conclusions would be drawn.

It could be said that the manner in which the Dewars set about their proposed reform was clumsy, but they seemed to have been devoid of any ideas beyond the fact that there had to be some change. They showed signs of being against something, without supporting anything specifically or convincingly. They seemed to think that history would provide easily applicable solutions, but showed little evidence in their historical studies that they realised how to find them and convince others of the need for reform.

The brothers' lack of formal training in history was not necessarily a defect, but serious errors in methodology and analysis resulted from their prejudice for reform. Most of the supposed inflammatory points resulted



from phrasing that was not as precise as it should have been, allowing the Dewars' opponents to take offence. This could have been negated by the Dewars admitting that there were alternative views to theirs. This would have lessened the scope for opponents to criticise them. They could have endorsed Beatty and their own reforms just as firmly, but the work would have appeared more balanced and reasoned. Because of their imprecise approach, however, the main points appeared not to be supported with sufficient proof and often read as unfounded criticisms. It was this for which they were remembered.

As there was much evidence regarding the Dewars' account, its composition and responses to it, there is a tendency to assume that the *Staff Appreciation* caused more of a dispute than it actually did. The majority of the sources can only be found in the correspondence of Jellicoe, Beatty and Kenneth Dewar and this is because they were directly concerned with the work and the events surrounding it. As those who were directly concerned were few in number, the dispute over the account was limited in its scope. However, within certain circles, the issue was hotly disputed. The amount of evidence, although of quite a large volume relating to this affair, does not indicate that the *Staff Appreciation* affected the service deeply. That it affected certain individuals is true, but in other papers of contemporary officers, the absence of material relating to the dispute indicates its very limited scope.

This work was very much an expression of the Dewars' thoughts on the battle and the service as a whole, views which they and others had formed



and held for many years. By 1923, it looked as though their hopes of making their names more familiar to others, and of educating officers, had failed. This led to some dissatisfaction, particularly for Kenneth, who continued right down to his death to advocate similar views as he had espoused in the *Appreciation* with similar vehemence. Many officers of the inter-war Navy were unaware of the Dewars, their views and support of a greater use of history in Naval education.<sup>43</sup> Although there were many lectures prepared on the battle and what could be learned from it, the reforms which had so interested the brothers did not materialise as they had wished. Despite their interest in history and their efforts, the brothers were ultimately unsuccessful in achieving their aims, or even in contributing towards them.

Many felt that any lessons worth noting had been learned by 1922 — such factors as improved procedures for protecting against ammunition fires and improved shell quality — and that some accounts purporting to draw-out lessons only aimed at trying to rewrite the battle to favour a point of view. History and studying tactics and strategy through it, was not seen as of much importance or relevance to the practical problems that were faced. It is perhaps a simple, but nonetheless important, defect of the subject that it can evidence little in the way of immediate tangible results, whereas more reliable shells and better fire-control equipment, are physical evidence of improvement and of what science and engineering can achieve. These naturally leave a more favourable impression than apparently vague historical comments upon those actually required to go to sea.

#### 4. The Official History & Admiralty Narrative.

The publication of the third volume of the Official History of the war at sea, in 1923, did nothing to settle previous disputes regarding what had happened at Jutland. More than anything, it was criticised for favouring the role of Jellicoe and the battlefleet. Far from helping to take away the passion from the affair by producing an informed, reasonably balanced account, matters were made worse. One would suspect that, due to the title of the work, it would be as accurate and unimpassioned an account as could be produced given the limitations of the evidence at that time, which would end any doubts and suspicions as to what had really happened. Much of the criticism came, quite correctly in most places, from the fact that Corbett was very sympathetic to the situation which Jellicoe faced. In many instances the work reads to justify, if not vindicate, his actions alone, which was not what many — both Beatty's and Jellicoe's supporters — felt should have occurred in an official work. By this very fact, one would wonder whether or not any information was being concealed or distorted. Whether or not this was the case, suspicions over this existed. By this time it was quite widely known that Corbett and Jellicoe were good friends and the account must be seen with this in mind. It is important to distinguish how far, if at all, Corbett was justified in making the comments that he did and whether or not these stemmed from his relationship with Jellicoe, rather than the information at his disposal.

Shortly after the battle Corbett was already talking with the Admiralty and First Sea Lord (Admiral Sir Henry Jackson) regarding the battle and the



possibility of telling as full a tale as was possible when publication might be considered. When Jellicoe and Beatty came to London at the end of June 1916, Corbett met them both and noted that Jellicoe was very concerned as regards the possible German use of mines and torpedoes.<sup>1</sup> On the 28th, Beatty came to see him and they discussed, amongst other things, whether or not the battle should be called Jutland or Horns Reef/Riff. In any event, Corbett was "much impressed with him"<sup>2</sup> and he gave Corbett the impression that he was in much higher spirits than was Jellicoe.

Corbett's increasingly warm relationship with Jellicoe after the war was known to Beatty, and he might well have had good cause to be concerned over the official work, bearing in mind Corbett's reputation as a historian and that adverse comments about Jellicoe were common at the time. Corbett was certainly aware of both Beatty's and Jellicoe's views of the battle. Beatty's main worry was that Corbett would spring to Jellicoe's defence, especially before an account favourable to himself, or at least allowing his point of view, was issued under the auspices of the Admiralty. Corbett's rejection of the offer to write what became the *Staff Appreciation* almost certainly alerted Beatty to the fact that Corbett wanted to reach different conclusions from his and that these might accord more with Jellicoe's views when Corbett examined the evidence.

What would be said in the official account would naturally be a pressing matter. By the very title, the work appeared to be the most accurate yet produced, both in the use of sources and in composition. Not only this, but as yet, public knowledge centred upon various ill-informed, mischievous



newspaper articles, Bellairs's book, Fawcett and Hooper and the *Despatches*. This combination very much favoured Beatty. So, it fell to Corbett, as he saw it, to start to correct these misconceptions. When the work was finished, not long before Sir Julian died, it would, like the two previous volumes, come to be read by some at the Admiralty before being approved for publication. This gave Beatty another chance edit an account of Jutland. His involvement in this way did not, however, have the harmful effects that many had assumed it would. Ideally, it is never a good thing for any work to be altered by any except the author. Yet, in this case, some of the comments were excessive in favour of Jellicoe and, by implication, to the detriment of the parts played by others. Many causes for complaint were concerned with phrasing, diction and tone, less so Corbett's narrative of events, but these did result in a more than trivial effect upon the text. Some of Corbett's comments did not appear in the published version, but it still strongly favoured Jellicoe.

In early 1921, Corbett began working on Jutland. On 17th March, he met with Harper to discuss the request made by Brock, who closely supported Beatty throughout, that Harper's charts be revised. Brock told him that he "Found trouble with German [positions] as given by Scheer [which] will not tally with Harper's".<sup>3</sup> It was also agreed that Kenneth Dewar and Pollen would help him for 6-8 weeks initially, Pollen to start revising the charts, whereas Dewar seems only to have discussed the battle with him in general terms.

At some points in the work Corbett almost anticipated where Jellicoe might face the most criticism and made too strong a defence of him than was

appropriate for an official history. If any analysis should have been made, which was a questionable thing, it should have been limited to an explanation of the possibilities and situations faced by those in question, but nothing more. The main points at issue affecting Jellicoe concerned the evening of the battle. Yet, a little before, it was noted that at approximately 2:15:

"It looked indeed as though Admiral Jellicoe's dispositions were exactly what was needed, and that if nothing incalculable happened Admiral Scheer would have little chance of avoiding the battle for which he had so long been striving." <sup>4</sup>

A number of points should be made which are later repeated. The statement really had no place in a work of this nature and far from exonerating Jellicoe from blame, as was the intention, it drew attention to the fact that as the confrontation that was so desired did not emerge, excellent as the dispositions may have been, they were ultimately of little use. So, Jellicoe's abilities could be questioned. Anyone wishing to make a case against Jellicoe could point out that dispositions hours before the enemy were met, were of much less use than just before the battle and criticism was, therefore, invited. As the events of the evening unfolded, one could well argue that the incalculable did happen and that there was no sufficient counter. If Scheer did as it was hoped he would — engage in a battlefleet action — then this was all well and good, but no thought was given to what he might do that was not expected. So, Jellicoe appears to be ready only for a set-piece battle, which was not strictly true. The statement itself did not add anything to the account of



events, but invited critical examination. Its absence would not have affected the work at all.

The first significant point of issue relating to the action concerned the movements of the BCF in relation to the 5thBS shortly after the enemy was first sighted.<sup>5</sup> It was stated that *Lion's* 2:25 signal to the destroyers was repeated by searchlight to *Barham*, but that the signal might not have reached Evan-Thomas. Of the signal to alter course "repetition by searchlight would have entailed a loss of some minutes."<sup>6</sup> This could have been an attempt to be as impartial as possible about the incident, but it should be noted that Corbett might not have been fully aware of the views of those concerned in this incident (see Chapter 5). The matter was only just becoming more heated and Corbett was probably not fully appraised of the opinions and evidence regarding whether or not the signal was repeated by searchlight. It is not certain just what evidence he had for this incident, but his assumption that the repeat was made suggested that he endorsed the popularly held view. However, his uncertainty here is, at best, unhelpful.

In relation to the battlecruiser action, it was stated that regardless of the actual distance between the two forces:

"it was an intense relief to the Germans that we did not open fire from a longer distance, when the superiority which they believed our heavier guns gave us would have denied them the possibility of making an effective reply."<sup>7</sup>

Corbett added that Beatty was "bent on" paying back the Germans for



damage suffered at Dogger Bank. This was intended to imply determination on Beatty's part, but by saying that Beatty was "bent on" revenge could suggest an obsession to the exclusion of other factors in the battle, which was unfair and inaccurate. It was inaccurate to say anything more than that Beatty wished to cut-off the enemy from their bases so that they could not return without coming into action and to do this as soon as possible. The comment on the range and gunnery seemed to imply that the Germans performed much better at a closer range than the British. However, there was insufficient information at the time closely to examine the battlecruisers' gunnery and tactics, even though Corbett was right to wonder at this.

In the climate into which the book was released, many were looking for such subtle comments and to draw argumentative criticisms from them. Criticism by the author was refrained from here, but examining Beatty's role more closely should really have been part of what should have gone into the work to keep a balance in examining different commands and their effects on the action. Concentrating on admiring Jellicoe, as Corbett did, detracted from developing a balanced account and missed an important issue. Jellicoe's role was discussed with the intention of forestalling or eliminating criticism and this made parts of the work seem to be highly favourable to him. Conversely, Beatty might have been relieved not to have had his part closely scrutinised.

One of the most overt comments concerning a principal issue of the battle — battlefleet deployment — concluded that "It is scarcely to be doubted that his [Jellicoe's] reasoning was correct." <sup>8</sup> This was open to a good deal of debate and many could argue convincingly to the contrary about what

Jellicoe's actions should have been. That such an author allowed himself to say something like "scarcely to be doubted" was a mistake that could never have been totally defensible unless the facts were undoubted. More importantly, it was another beacon for those looking to criticise Jellicoe. Most did feel that the actual deployment was the only realistic move in the circumstances. However, it was also felt that some time before, the movements of the battlefleet could have been better executed to give more freedom of movement and flexibility in deciding the options available to bring all guns to bear. A slight re-wording could have made the same point without making the potential for criticism of Jellicoe.

During deployment much had been said regarding the BCF's movements to get to the van of the line at approximately 6:15pm. In the proofs of the work, Corbett stated that:

"Across his [Jellicoe's] front Admiral Beatty was steaming at 25knots and shutting-out all in an impenetrable pall of funnel smoke. Above all was the roar of the battle both ahead and to starboard and in this blind distraction Jellicoe had to make the decision on which the future of his country hung." <sup>9</sup>

In the published work the language was tempered somewhat, which highlighted the fact that some of the original work gave a less impartial view than it should have done. If one believed the proofs, this would alter the interpretation of the manoeuvre. The picture was one whereby Jellicoe was

blinded by Beatty, but the former had to make a crucial decision amongst a chaotic scene. Corbett implied that Jellicoe did well despite the obstacles he faced. Again, the situation can be plainly stated without increasing the dramatic effect, leaving the same over all impression. Corbett was really praising Jellicoe for a manoeuvre well executed — a fact which itself was doubted — rather than fully explaining it.

This incident caused stirring at the Admiralty, in 1922-3, especially as Beatty was seen to be responsible for muddying the waters. Captain Dudley Pound noted that on deployment "the Battle Cruisers did not mask the fire of *Colossus* as at that time the enemy were not in sight".<sup>10</sup> This questioned Corbett's accuracy and the extent to which the battlefleet was in action.

Corbett made further comment on the situation as the Grand Fleet was deploying into line:

"Such a mass of crossing ships were the waters at both ends of the line...officers held their breath, collisions seemed inevitable, but all was well, and in that fateful hour was reaped the harvest which in the long years of preparation had been laboriously sown by Admiral Jellicoe and his predecessors." <sup>11</sup>

The intention was clearly to suggest that the result of years of sound hard work had come to a successful fruition, although many saw the irony in this statement. The phrase had a very different meaning to those who did not sympathise with the ideas Corbett supported. It was a complete contrast to



the view of the Dewars, to whose views this work was mostly an antidote. It could easily be said that for many years prior to the war strategy and tactics had been undervalued and had not been given the prominence that they should have had, and that, as a result of centralisation of tactics, the German Fleet was aided in its escape as there was little organised action that could have been taken to counter it — such would be guaranteed to annoy Dewar and Richmond. The primacy of seeking battle was a popularly held view and Corbett was somewhat in a minority in trying to show that command of the sea did not necessarily rely upon a decisive battle. The result of Jutland showed to him that this was proof of the views he had espoused and he was keen to emphasise this.

Without any doubt Corbett was analysing the various factors that Jellicoe had to consider at such a crucial point, but the impression given to the reader was that there was little else open to Jellicoe other than to do what Corbett stated that he did. It was one thing to empathise, but Corbett did so to the point where there was little distinction between himself and Jellicoe. The extent to which this was true can be debated, but if an author intended to see into the minds of those involved, then he should at least have done so with uniformity to all. Many points relating to the battlefleet action dealt only with what Jellicoe was assumed to be thinking. This was mostly correct — to which Jellicoe attested in correspondence with Corbett — and was stated with a view to commending the actions taken, or at least not suggesting any faults. However, this limitation irked many of Jellicoe's opponents.

It was noted that Jellicoe had stated, in 1914, that he did not intend "to comply with enemy tactics by moving in the invited direction".<sup>12</sup> Corbett saw nothing wrong in this. Others often replied that adhering to what one had said two years previously did not make the management of the battle any more correct and that a little less caution could have been shown. Corbett continued that:

"it is difficult to see, even now, how the action, so well begun, could have been pushed to a decision."<sup>13</sup>

This invited suggestions that another commander could have managed the Fleet more ably so that the difficulties that were experienced in forcing the HSF into a decisive encounter would never have occurred under another. Generally speaking with Jutland at this time the more emphatically one said something, the more likely was it that it would be emphatically and insultingly challenged. Corbett's defence of Jellicoe only highlighted the difficulties faced in seeking factual clarity. In addition to saying that Jellicoe performed well, Corbett begged the reader to wonder how much better Scheer must have done to extricate himself, so the champion's laurels became withered. The author's statements were well-intended and their meaning was evident. Yet, those looking to find criticism could easily alter the emphasis of some of the wording to result in quite a damning picture of Jellicoe emerging. This would, then, work against him and the battlefleet. Indeed, one could well ask that if the shooting was so good and tactics so sound, where was the victory? This would have repeated the same arguments on the battle as had already begun.

Corbett appeared to follow Jellicoe's beliefs to the letter and attention was drawn to the fact that little seemed to have been done to force the battle to any conclusion. This again invited criticism where the author wished to praise the actions taken.

One of the most dubious statements made was that as the German ships faded away into the gloom of the evening:

"The situation was indeed so completely wrapped  
in mystery as to baffle even his [Jellicoe's]  
remarkable power of penetration." <sup>14</sup>

This did Jellicoe no service at all. Here, he was seen to be without a doubt the premier tactical brain of the Navy and it was implied that if Jellicoe was baffled, then no-one else could have presumed to know any better what was happening. It would have sufficed merely to have commented upon conditions, which would have been better in achieving neutrality in the work and focusing the reader's attention to the real point of the work — a comprehensive analysis of events. It would also have made the subject as a whole less contentious, which was what the author should have done throughout.

In commenting on the Official History it should be distinguished exactly what is being criticised. Because Corbett's and Jellicoe's opinions were the same, one should be wary of criticising Jellicoe's actions because of Corbett's style. In the 1920s, people criticised both Jellicoe's actions and Corbett's style, but many criticised Jellicoe in a response to Corbett's comments. For example, Jellicoe never claimed to be the Navy's premier



tactical brain. Beatty's supporters did not think this. Although Jellicoe helped Corbett, he cannot be held responsible for Corbett's phrasing. Many criticisms, as will be seen, were made of the work and its portrayal of Jellicoe, but these were really directed at Corbett.

Following Corbett's death, what might happen to the work was a concern to Jellicoe. He expressed the view that he:

"should like the story to be told as written by Sir Julian Corbett, and it is particularly undesirable to my mind to include alterations...This remark applies of course to any alterations which other people may wish to make...I find it difficult to express my admiration for the style of the narrative, the language in which it is expressed, and its accuracy." <sup>15</sup>

This was unsurprising and noted the undesirability of altering the work of a recently deceased historian of such repute, who just so happened to echo his own sentiments. Madden wrote to Jellicoe that:

"I have confidence in his [Amery's] fairness and I think he is too shrewd to allow Beatty to send out an obvious partisan statement which could be pulled to pieces...I don't think it can be altered and he agreed it would not be politic to do so...The Admiralty have placed themselves in a fix and I feel confident its solution will be

favourable to you and if not Bacon is ready to  
act." <sup>16</sup>

Similar sentiments were common. In addition, Corbett's family were alerted to the fact that the work might be altered significantly. The persistence of public criticism of Jellicoe contributed to Reginald Bacon taking action, writing his book, *The Jutland Scandal*, published in the following year, which contained strong criticism of Beatty's role at Jutland. Some noted that the months following the publication of Bacon's book were the most bitter of the whole dispute. <sup>17</sup> The opinion Madden had of Amery was not well founded, in fact, the opposite seemed to be true. <sup>18</sup> Beatty might well have become even more determined to issue an account more favourable to his view of the battle, especially as he could not alter Corbett's work without creating much trouble. There was, however, the basic, widespread feeling that the work was too kind to Jellicoe and that its credibility suffered because of it.

In judging the volume, many were quick to recall the close relations between Jellicoe and Corbett. Shortly after Jellicoe's *The Grand Fleet* was published, Corbett wrote to thank him:

"for the welcome present of your book. I am  
reading it with the greatest pleasure and interest  
and I may say comfort to find that from the  
official material I have been able to get as near as  
I have done to your intentions and difficulties. So  
far I find very little to modify...Pray accept my  
warm congratulations." <sup>19</sup>

The historian was obviously pleased to have deduced many of Jellicoe's thoughts, or at least those to which he admitted. It was true that Jellicoe's book helped endorse the comments later made by Corbett and that Corbett made them with the confidence that he knew that he had a good idea of what was in the C-in-C's mind. Corbett also received more tangible help in composing his account of the battle in the form of notes from Jellicoe that:

"will enable me to improve and strengthen the  
narrative in many places...it is a great satisfaction  
to have your approval of it as a whole." <sup>20</sup>

This, at the very least, helped support Jellicoe's case in a climate where the BCF were still portrayed as being the heroes of the day. With this in mind, Jellicoe wrote to Daniel that "I anticipate considerable trouble with the present Board of Admiralty over certain passages". <sup>21</sup> This clearly showed that he suspected those with sympathies for the BCF would attempt to draw emphasis away from the role of the battlefleet. However, this was made almost impossible by Corbett's death.

It must not be forgotten that since 1919, and especially after Beatty became First Sea Lord, an account favouring his version of events was being prepared. Despite all these efforts, the first official account published was one that favoured Jellicoe and the battlefleet. Corbett had done his best to deter the Admiralty from first publishing an account that he was sure would favour Beatty — the *Narrative* — and ultimately succeeded. That Beatty felt that the work did not reflect the Admiralty's views led to the need to publish an Admiralty account. Because of Corbett's support of his own views of the



correct place of battle in war — it being not an absolute necessity — it was felt desirable to draw attention to the fact that, ultimately, the *raison d'être* of a Navy was to sink on sight enemy vessels, or, failing that, to inflict the utmost damage. Corbett believed that battle was not essential and felt that Jutland went a long way towards proving this. This caused serious concern at the Admiralty.

If it seemed that the Admiralty was endorsing this view, or not opposing it, the fear was that it could be assumed by many serving officers and men to mean concurrence with Corbett's view. Thus, it might be thought that engaging the enemy would assume less importance in the minds of many present and future commanders. Many have said that as Corbett's account could not really be altered, the Admiralty's issuing of the disclaimer at the beginning of the work was a vindictive stab at Corbett.<sup>22</sup> This was erroneous. Primarily, the Admiralty had to maintain adherence to the belief in seeking confrontation with enemy forces as the only sure way of maintaining supremacy at sea, even though Corbett's view had much to commend it. It was admittedly a view which Beatty and others favoured, in that it implied aggressive strategy and tactics. Yet, there was hardly an officer that did not agree that damaging as many enemy vessels as possible was the best way to ensure success. Basically, the problem was one of degree as to where the emphasis on strategy should be placed. Although both views had merit, it was thought to be better to encourage the idea that being content with not losing mastery was insufficient.

The foreword itself would, in Captain Pound's opinion, "be subjected

to much more intense criticism than anything in the book itself." <sup>23</sup> However, it was essential in the contemporary circumstances. Its inclusion was agreed to by, amongst others, Keyes, Field and Brock, and it was not merely a device by battlecruiser sympathisers to attempt to detract from the pro-Jellicoe text.

It has been suggested that Corbett:

"acknowledged that the concerted pursuit of these two central objectives of "Mahanian" maritime strategy [commanding the sea and seeking decisive battle] was usually valid. It was only his willingness to say that sometimes it might not be so, that got him into trouble with the Admiralty." <sup>24</sup>

This was just what happened here.

As the account could be read by anyone with the inclination to open a copy, many were naturally anxious regarding what had been said or implied. The DTSD, Captain Haggard, felt that in this type of work:

"the author must decide on his viewpoint. Either he must be entirely detached or he must associate himself with one or other of the units engaged...[Corbett] selected as his observation post the bridge of the Fleet Flagship and the account is written entirely from the point of view of the C-in-C...it is most unfair to take advantage of the select viewpoint to criticise the actions of subordinate commanders...[some passages] give

the wrong impression which subsequent and more authoritative accounts may be powerless to remove...The most ill-judged criticisms in the account are those concerning the alleged interference of the Battlecruisers with the deployment." <sup>25</sup>

This reflected that the work was not universally well-received and was another source of potentially damaging views. Corbett's standpoint understandably disturbed the officer responsible for training. There was too, a feeling that the best Jutland account would really come from within the service, as it would be composed by professional seamen. This implied, to a wider public, a superior knowledge of all Naval matters. After all, *Der Krieg in der Nordsee* was composed by *Von der Tann's* navigation officer — *Fregattenkapitän* Otto Groos — under the guidance of Erich Raeder. The irony of this appeared to have been missed. The Navy's self-styled historians — such as Richmond and the Dewars — had previously stressed that Naval officers by no means excelled at history.

Some might have resented Corbett being allowed access to official material to produce the "official" work purporting to express the opinion of the Naval Staff. Many felt that it was far from a true representation of feeling in the service and of the battle itself. Another felt that criticism in the work:

"has in fact been entirely confined to the conduct of the Vice-Admiral commanding the Battle Cruiser Fleet. Certain passages show a strong bias



on the part of the author for which it is not easy  
to account. Praise on the other hand is reserved  
for the Commander-in-Chief and the energy,  
reserve and daring shown by the V.A.C.B.C.F.  
receives no recognition." <sup>26</sup>

This was mainly accurate. There was not as much criticism of Beatty as was implied here, but more importantly for the controversy, as for all the other works, it was not so much what the work said that was important, but how it was perceived.

Beatty and those with similar views did not like Corbett's work at all. Given the latter's sympathies, they had reason not to. The proofs of Corbett's account had been seen by Beatty and at least one member of his staff. In certain parts, the wording was objected to. Few alterations were made for the published account, but the comments made on the proofs reflected a familiar theme in the affair. It was noted by Corbett that "The *Lützow* was completely disabled." <sup>27</sup> The response to this remark was "by the Battle Cruisers!!" This was known not to be entirely correct, although *Lützow* did receive some damage in the battlecruiser phase and, later, from *Invincible*. Here again was evidence of the belief that some did not like to admit to the fact that the battlefleet played a part in the battle. One can sympathise with the desire for the shooting of the battlecruisers to be praised, but not to be praised for something the BCF did not actually achieve. The statement clearly implied that the damage was from battlecruisers alone, which amounted to another small attempt to under-play the role of the battlefleet.

Corbett continued that "The *Derfflinger* was little better off".<sup>28</sup> This prompted the remark "also by the B.C.'s+5th B.S.(not the B.F.)", which was an odd remark. Corbett was referring to the total damage sustained by the ship in the action and this included the battlefleet action. The author of the remark apparently was aware of precise information as to hits received by German ships, but limits the comments to the battlecruiser action. At the time this was impossible to state with such accuracy. One must remember the BCF's gunnery practices and tactical muddles, which suggested that this comment was wishful thinking to suit a preconceived view of the effectiveness of the shooting of the battlecruisers. It was yet another attempt to state that all the damage that was done occurred before the battlefleet came into action, but this could not have been known with such certainty. A reluctance to admit any battlefleet involvement pervaded these comments and was testament to the fact that feelings were as divided as they had been since the battle. The same arguments were, therefore, being repeated. The curious trait of neglecting the 5thBS completely when it suited BCF sympathisers to do so still persisted, yet this comment was a rare mention for Evan-Thomas's squadron by a BCF supporter.

In examining and commenting upon these proofs, Beatty and his friends or staff at least had the opportunity to correct obvious excesses. As has been seen, this was justified in some instances. Although one might not agree that the work should have come before the eyes of some at the Admiralty, some modest good did come from it, even if it was hard to know who exactly had done what and with what motive. Even Harper thought that:



"Very few of the alterations were made by Admiralty request...As the account now stands it is greatly improved, the original was not worthy of Corbett as it showed some bias. The altered wording, however, puts Beatty's actions in a better light than Corbett considered justified." <sup>29</sup>

Corbett, as he worked towards the end of this section of the history, doubtless wanted to support Jellicoe wherever possible, but he also wanted to strengthen his own position to the maximum extent. He had taken advantage of the stalemate between Harper and Beatty, not only to get Harper's 'Record', but it benefited him because a work by another author had not been released before his. He criticised the Dewars' *Appreciation*, as seen in the previous chapter, but it is hard not to suspect that he did this to help discourage the Admiralty from considering releasing this, or a work derived from it, before he had released his. Longmans had mentioned that they had exclusive rights to publish the Official History and both publisher and author did their best to ensure that they were not upstaged. Had the information in Harper's work been published, it would have helped provide a more accurate picture of the battle earlier on. However, Corbett's attempts to suppress prior release of accounts by others retarded a more complete understanding of the battle at a point where elucidation was most needed, and allowed the publication of scurrilous books and articles that influenced much public feeling against the battlefleet and Jellicoe's role. As a result, the faults in his and other works of the 1920s have persisted largely unchallenged, hampering



a better understanding of Jutland for many years after. The official account began to alter the popular image of Beatty's and the BCF's heroics. Inspired by this, BCF sympathisers felt that the truer picture of the battle had still not been told. So, they set about telling it more powerfully than they had previously.

In June 1924, after nearly five years, the edited version of the Dewars' *Appreciation* — the *Narrative* — became the Admiralty-approved account of the battle of Jutland. That many would disagree with what was written was evident by the presence of comments from Jellicoe that highlighted areas that some felt had not been fully understood or explained, and which others — BCF supporters — felt were an accurate statement of the events. Since Harper submitted his work, it seemed that an account that at least satisfied all concerned in the affair that they had been accurately represented would be impossible to produce. Many, indeed, might have wondered if one would ever be published. The Admiralty account did not improve relations or enlighten a still rather unenlightened public regarding what had happened at Jutland. In most parts, it read as an often spiteful re-statement of the views of BCF supporters at the Admiralty.

The first page of the text noted that, with a few exceptions, all signals of the battle were published in the *Despatches*.<sup>30</sup> This was clearly not true. This might be taken to mean that all the signals of any importance were already published and that this should be taken at face value. One was then given to wonder what constituted an important signal and who decided that it was such. A contentious statement like this was not too good a start for a work that hoped to describe the battle in an unimpassioned manner. It should have alerted the reader that much was not as it would seem, although he was already being flatly told to accept that whatever was stated here was correct.

One comment that was worth noting with regard to all the Jutland

histories, was that, in plotting ships' movements, a continuous plot implied an accuracy that it was not possible to achieve, and that a track was "not based on any one record, but was more of the nature of a complicated mosaic or puzzle picture".<sup>31</sup> It is true that the most accurate tracks were more likely to be mean plots from more than one source, but this was not always the case. It might have been assumed that where a track differed from any information in the text, the more accurate view could be gained from the text. However, a sensitive issue could be conveniently obscured to forestall criticism on the grounds of there being insufficient, or conflicting, evidence. The Dewars had not examined the logs, charts and details of gun ranges and were content to avoid detailed references to positions and scaled plans. However, if plans were included in any work, they must have been accurate enough to bear out what was written in the text, or *vice-versa*, unless they served no purpose except to confuse, deliberately or not. The statement quoted above was correct as to the nature of the charts, but it was possible to verify accuracy by comparison with other sources and possibly to discount the value of some plans. Here, the remark was used as a convenient excuse for making comments about the action, which other evidence did not support, so using inherent inaccuracies in the charts as excuses as and when required.

An issue of the battle that would not die, was the failure of the 5thBS to turn to follow the battlecruisers at 2:32 on that afternoon. The *Narrative* noted that:

"the *Lion's* alter course signal having been received, the *Barham* turned back fifteen points



to SSE." <sup>32</sup>

Unusually, there was felt to be the need to elaborate on this point:

"At 2:30pm *Barham* had received a signal indicating the course that the Vice-Admiral intended to steer: the actual "executive" signal is logged as having been received at 2:37pm *vide*.

*Barham* (s)." <sup>33</sup>

No similar detail as to other ships' turns was entered into. It was very odd that, after reporting receipt of the signal, the authors felt the need to prove what was said, or to amplify the matter. This could only mean that the authors were aware that the issue was hotly contested and that they sought to support Beatty in this respect. As a result, it only made Evan-Thomas's actions then, and since, seem to be suspect. The details will be dealt with later (and in Chapter 5), but recording the matter in this way was gratuitous, unless it was to ultimately raise doubts regarding Evan-Thomas's handling of his ships. The time quoted obviously comes from the log that was altered (dealt with in Chapter 5) and the authors might have assumed that this was accurate, but checking facts was not part of the editor's job. The Dewars were unaware of tampering with the logs, or at least were willing to believe what they said to comply with their preconceived notions. This also showed negligence in their examination of the evidence. The over all result of this was not good for Evan-Thomas. There was no need for the note other than to be mischievous. No other signal had a footnote to confirm its receipt. This was highly irregular.

It was noted in the opening pages of the *Narrative* that Harper's work had been of great assistance.<sup>34</sup> All the accounts contained obvious evidence to this fact. When the battlecruisers opened fire "The firing was hot and effective".<sup>35</sup> This exactly quoted Harper and the Dewars who copied it. When the 5thBS opened fire each account noted "It was some minutes before their fire became effective, for the light was difficult."<sup>36</sup> At approximately 4:33, it was reported that Hipper's ships were all in a condition to renew action. A note followed that:

"The damage done to the German Battle Cruisers in this phase was considerable, but German information on the point is not conclusive."<sup>37</sup>

This was another dubious statement. The reader was invited to believe that damage was considerable, but German sources, for their own reasons, denied this. The implication was that the "considerable" damage was inflicted by the battlecruisers. What was not mentioned, was that information did exist to prove that the 5thBS fired effectively from the outset. German evidence strengthened the view that the 1stSG was not seriously damaged by the BCF during the battlecruiser phase and that the most effective firing was achieved by the battleships of the 5thBS and later from the BF. So, if the damage was "considerable" one would scarcely expect German ships to have been capable of continuing action. It was a remark to foster the belief that the battlecruisers inflicted more damage than they actually had. However, checking evidence was not Pollen's task.

Following completion of the Dewars' *Appreciation*, copies had been

circulated amongst the few who needed to be made aware of the contents, or who held prominent positions at the battle. Jellicoe did not find the account suitable and informed London — he was by then Governor-General of New Zealand — that there were a mass of inaccuracies and that if publication was to be considered, the work must undergo grave alterations. He told Oswald Frewen:

"The carelessness and inaccuracy of the document are outstanding, and the charts or diagrams are even worse. Few of them have a scale attached, although supposed to be drawn to scale. Latitude and longitude are conspicuous by their absence, and successive diagrams illustrating events occurring at the same time show ships in quite different relative positions...I don't know what the Admiralty will do when my comments arrive. I shall request that they be published alongside the narrative unless the latter is corrected to meet my criticisms, but in view of the nature of my comments I hardly think the Admiralty will care to publish them." <sup>38</sup>

Regardless of one's view of the battle, it must be said that this view of the account was accurate. When Jellicoe stated that he felt that his comments would probably not be published, it suggested that he thought that someone would make sure that his views were not expressed. Alternatively, and



perhaps more likely, was the feeling that they were too contradictory to suit inclusion in such a work. Despite Jellicoe's thoughts, efforts were made to entertain his suggestions and the account altered, yet not enough to satisfy his objections. This indicated the influence of a Beatty sympathiser.

General criticism from Jellicoe was pertinent and he informed Their Lordships:

"I fully realise the difficulty of reconciling conflicting evidence but the narrative contains implications which are based on a far greater knowledge of German and some British movements than was within the cognisance of the Commander-in-Chief at the time...It is with sincere regret that I feel compelled to express dissent in any form." <sup>39</sup>

Yet, some, or all, of the Sea Lords did not feel that they should wait until Jellicoe was completely satisfied.

On 23rd January 1924, the Board of Admiralty considered whether or not publication should wait until Evan-Thomas's health had improved sufficiently — he had suffered a stroke after his brief meeting with Amery regarding the work (see Chapter 5) — to ask if he concurred in the account being published as it stood. It was decided:

"that this step should not be taken for the following reasons:

1. It might result in the publication being further

delayed for an indefinite time,

2. Viscount Jellicoe is known to have been in communication with Admiral Evan-Thomas,

3. There could be no certainty that the erroneous views expressed in the Appendix would not be published at some future time when the Admiralty would not have the same opportunity of correcting them." <sup>40</sup>

This clearly explained the Admiralty's view. It must be remembered that the delay referred to was approaching five years and Corbett had already published. Jellicoe had written several times to Evan-Thomas that he objected to the implication that he was responsible for the late turns of his squadron to follow the BCF. <sup>41</sup> The Admiralty might have assumed that Jellicoe's protests on Evan-Thomas's behalf would be little different if Evan-Thomas himself had submitted his own remarks. Thus, with this decision arrived at, it only remained to respond to Jellicoe's criticisms.

Board agreement was reached that Jellicoe's views were "erroneous" and that this needed explaining to the reader of the work. One of Jellicoe's main objections was that the work:

"is most misleading in deductions drawn, and in its attempt to indicate what was apparent or should have been apparent to the Commander-in-Chief from the information at his disposal at the time...in my view the picture of the action at

present presented is inaccurate and misleading, the ideas attributed to me are in many cases entirely unjustified." <sup>42</sup>

However, to those with differing views on the battle, the new work did represent what had happened much more accurately. Jellicoe had been informed that his:

"comments thereon have been found most useful. It is the wish of Their Lordships that no pains should be spared to make the book an accurate narrative of fact...Some of the amendments proposed by you cannot, however, be accepted...as they conflict with the latest evidence; wherever possible your criticisms have been met...Purely conjectural matter, such as that in connection with the deductions which were or might have been drawn by you during the battle from the information apparently available, has been omitted or amended...Should you still be in disagreement with any of the statements made...My Lords request that you will communicate...and those objections which My Lords then find themselves unable to meet will be inserted in an appendix in accordance with your desire." <sup>43</sup>



It would, therefore, appear that the Admiralty had some idea of when publication would be, as Jellicoe was being given one last chance to fight his corner.

Following Long's promise to Jellicoe and Evan-Thomas that they should approve the account, the Admiralty were obliged to consult Jellicoe. An obvious delay occurred regarding Jellicoe's detailed criticisms reaching London, let alone in examining them. It had been the Admiralty's intention to publish their account as close as possible to Corbett's who, then, was doing his best to have his issued first. It was suggested that Jellicoe be politely requested to send his final remarks to facilitate as early as possible a publication. <sup>44</sup> It was the opinion of Captain Haggard that:

"As this Narrative will be the basis for all future histories and appreciations, too much care cannot be taken to ensure accuracy." <sup>45</sup>

However, he also noted that:

"The undertaking given by Lord Long that no narrative should be published to which Lord Jellicoe did not agree gives Lord Jellicoe the power to represent or suppress the facts in accordance with his own ideas and removes entirely the element of impartiality which should predominate in an account of this description." <sup>46</sup>

There was much to support this view. It was very similar to the methods employed by Beatty with Harper and as there had to be publication some

time, the Admiralty could not necessarily wait until Jellicoe was satisfied.

Brock felt that Jellicoe had been allowed too much influence and Beatty did not like the delay that this was causing.<sup>47</sup> It was quite understandable that some should feel like this, but it must be remembered that Beatty felt that his ideas were not sufficiently stated in any official account and both he and Jellicoe were desirous to have the most correct account published. This did depend upon one's point of view, disputes over which created the very situation that Wemyss had wanted to avoid. Up to this point, in making comments or adjustments, each side sought to correct the views of the other, which, in their view, was the true picture. In Beatty's defence, it might be said that he was alarmed at the fact that Long had prevented him from altering Harper's 'Record', but had given Jellicoe permission to alter the revised Dewar account. It was, however, evident that although Beatty was strongly supported in limited parts of the Admiralty, Jellicoe, although he was half way around the world, was even more strongly supported than was Beatty at home.

That conjectural matter had been "omitted or amended" would seem to have met the objections raised to such material appearing. However, such parts of the text that were thus affected were as inflammatory as they had been in the original. A solution that satisfied both sides was probably not expected, given that there were such differences between those who had taken part in the battle. The result was always likely to have been an unsatisfactory compromise and it was exactly that. Neither those who supported and shared Beatty's views could agree that the work was as

accurate as it should have been. Jellicoe and many others sharing his views stated that many fallacies were still being perpetrated, despite Jellicoe registering a protest that was relegated to an appendix.

As the work was issued under the auspices of the Admiralty, any comments or explanatory remarks regarding the material within would have to maintain a sense of continuity based upon a particular position. In order to reinforce the tone of the work, the introduction to Jellicoe's comments, in Appendix G, stated that:

"Notes have been added, where necessary, mainly  
in amplification or elucidation of the text criticised  
in the Appendix." <sup>48</sup>

This actually meant that attempts were made to reinforce the comments made in the text, simply by contradicting Jellicoe. They did not amplify or elucidate the text. If anything, they made it more confused.

The first criticism regarded events of which Jellicoe could not have been aware throughout the battle and the inferences drawn by the author. The response to this was that:

"Their Lordships are satisfied that the compilers  
of the Narrative have kept to the facts, and that  
inferences and implications have been strictly  
repressed." <sup>49</sup>

In a similarly abrupt response, when Jellicoe noted that Evan-Thomas was not at fault in handling his squadron, it was said "The facts are clearly stated in the Narrative." <sup>50</sup> This neither explained, amplified or elucidated the text or



Jellicoe's comment. It merely stated the Admiralty's support for the views expressed, which were already known. The real fact of the matter was that this part of the battle was a genuinely contested issue and there was evidence to both support and deny the claims against Evan-Thomas. The comment gave the impression that there was no doubt as to the actions surrounding the two turns. This made Jellicoe and Evan-Thomas appear to be still believing in events that had conclusively been proven fallacious, which was not the case.

Whether or not *Barham* could read flag signals from *Lion* was next to be mentioned.<sup>51</sup> It was followed by Jellicoe's complaint regarding what it was claimed he could and should have deduced when a fleet action approached:

"The differences arising from the receipt of the various reports are not realised or brought-out, and a false impression is thereby created."<sup>52</sup>

There then followed almost a page of notes regarding how it was possible for Jellicoe to have estimated the position of the German Fleet and how this could, and implies should, have been done from the information available. This was one of the worst instances of being wise after the event. Jellicoe had less than 90 minutes to ascertain this and was not in possession of all the information that the editor used.

The confusion experienced during the night action was cause for another objection. The report from *Birmingham* placing battlecruisers — which could only have been German — astern of *Iron Duke* at 11:30, according to the account, was supposed to have indicated the enemy's course. Jellicoe rightly remarked that the report:

"read correctly by the Commander-in-Chief, also gave the impression that the Battle Fleet was between the enemy and his intended route home." <sup>53</sup>

In masterful irony, the reply was:

"This is another instance in which an inference drawn by Lord Jellicoe is omitted from the narrative, because it is an inference and not a plain statement of fact." <sup>54</sup>

If this was the case, then Jellicoe should not have been attributed with being able to have easily determined the position of the enemy earlier in the day, as this was an inference, not a plain statement of fact. It must be said that the author of these remarks (Kenneth Dewar) was not being consistent with the main text and was happy to use what he felt was a fact to prove something when it suited his view; other evidence was ignored or poorly explained away.

The reply to Jellicoe was based on only one interpretation of the signal. The *Narrative* did not venture to explore the various possibilities that the C-in-C faced. It was biased essentially because it was ill-informed, amongst other faults. Previously, it had been stated that the intention was to make the work as accurate as was possible, but the authors did not understand that they needed to explore the situation in greater depth, or at least allow for differences in the perception of information by the participants in the battle. Had this been appreciated, what happened at the battle would have been better understood. Possibly, this might have reduced the extent of

the resulting disputes. However, it seemed that the intention was not to understand, but to make cases appropriate to the interests of some individuals.

Another example of the lack of attention to the details of the battle and how this led to unjustified criticism, came when Jellicoe noted that many signals were not quoted completely and were, as a result, "liable to mislead." <sup>55</sup> The *Narrative* stated that "it is not considered that these *précis* are misleading". <sup>56</sup> One must wonder why there were so many summaries of signals, when they had a crucial bearing on understanding of the affair. If they were not misleading (they often were, in fact), then those responsible for the summaries were trusted not to have omitted any relevant parts. However, most signals themselves were not so long that they could not have been recorded in full. This again pointed to the Dewars and the fact that they were rather confused by the volume and scope of the evidence. By being highly partial and seeking simplification, their work lost accuracy. There was also enough of a hint to suggest that some, or all, at the Admiralty were content to endorse fudging of this nature, even though accuracy had been stressed as a primary aim.

As with Corbett's account, a good deal of criticism regarding the actions of individuals at the battle stemmed from the way in which it was being recorded. The new account, although edited, suffered like many histories of the battle suffer, in that the authors were keen to stress a point or fact where it coincided with their views or researches and, therefore, saw some justification of their views in the event. This was true both of the



Dewars and Corbett, but this was, perhaps, less of a criticism than it might seem. The differing views and methods of recording the events highlighted that with Jutland and many other historical disputes, there was much to support both sides from an examination of the evidence. As further evidence emerged, it became apparent that the views of those supporting the BCF at Jutland were based upon dubious evidence. Yet, the extent to which the supporters of these BCF opinions doggedly held onto them despite conflicting evidence was revealing. It was also indicative that all documents of the battle and personal views never completely agreed as to precisely what happened, if they ever could.

Much of the controversy that surrounded the Dewars' work stemmed from that rather dubious phrase regarding bringing out the "lessons" of Jutland. At face value, this seemed to have given the author *carte blanche* to make any criticisms. One might well agree that to work freely should be a requirement if the most accurate picture was to be attained. It did, however, give the author the freedom to run riot as well. This *Narrative* was some attempt at limiting the excesses as appeared in the original *Appreciation*, although the aim was to include as much criticism of the BF as was possible. What lessons there were to be learned naturally depended upon the teacher. It must be wondered if any two teachers can teach the same lesson — a point often made by Kenneth Dewar. By 1924, Jutland had been used both to support Beatty and the views of former BCF men, and by those supporting Jellicoe. It was used by the Dewars to show the supposed folly of placing too much faith in material matters alone and to advance the subject of history.

Yet, the outcome from all the accounts added little to a better understanding of what had happened, because every author subjugated the search for the required accuracy to his own concerns. Future disputes only illustrated how a dearth of knowledge made matters worse for some.

## 5. Poles apart: The 5thBS and BCF at Jutland.

As the controversy wore on through the 1920s, some aspects became increasingly personal and not only involved heated debates, but had serious physical effects upon some of those involved. This was a direct result of the fact that, despite evidence to show that Beatty was not as correct in his view of the action as he led others to believe, Beatty's deliberate efforts to distort the battle were succeeding, thanks largely to shelving the work of Harper's committee. Beatty and those sympathetic to him took advantage of this. The assertions made against Evan-Thomas, relating to his part in the battlecruiser phase of Jutland, were especially fallacious. The subsequent effects which they had upon his health showed the importance of trying to establish as accurate a picture of the battle as was possible.

At Jutland, shortly after the enemy had first been sighted, it is commonly believed that the signal made by flags from *Lion*, at 2:32, to turn SSE, was only read and acted upon by the battlecruisers, as, due to the distance and increasing smoke, the 5thBS did not receive the signal until it was repeated by searchlight (see diagrams #1-4). This opened the gap between them, delaying the battleships coming into action. Yet, before this, Beatty noted that:

"there was ample opportunity for the 5th B.S. to close the B.C.'s...That they did not do so was due to the fact that I could not get a signal to them...not stated at the meeting as I had no wish to impute bad manoeuvring on the part of the



R.A. 5th B.S. who had supported me so well." <sup>1</sup>

So, contrary to popular belief, Beatty was accepting the principal responsibility for not closing the battleships. He did commend Evan-Thomas for the way in which he handled his ships in the battle and did not abuse him for not turning with *Lion*. Indeed, he only referred to this in the 1920s when his own position was under great scrutiny. He could have prevented attacks on Evan-Thomas, yet doing this would have meant admitting negligence or incompetence on his part and that of staff, which, not surprisingly, he did not want to do as Admiral of the Fleet, Earl, First Sea Lord and international Naval hero. There was, above all, an explicit admission that the confusion was the result of his own actions and that he did not expect Evan-Thomas to use his initiative. However, Beatty later made different claims. This must mean that he took time to consider his actions and this has other implications.

Beatty knew that no signal had been received, even though he had tried to make one and he had followed GFBOs by attempting to get it to Evan-Thomas. Presumably, he was aware that his staff were at least trying to follow the correct procedure. So, Beatty was justified to some extent in shielding Seymour from blame over the 2:32 failure to turn the 5thBS. Perhaps this was an unusually selfless act on his part, in that he was shouldering the greater part of the blame, but it was only admitted in restricted company and the others at this meeting, in 1916, failed to see the real importance.

What seemed remarkable was that Beatty was unable to get any signal through, which can only be due to one or more serious failures. If personal

communications had broken down between the admiral and his signallers, if searchlights would not work, if flags would not fly or the wireless was not in a working state, with no-one being able to semaphore, then this is explicable. However, before and after this, *Lion* sent messages by searchlight, flags and WT and there was no record of a complete signalling failure.

Since reports of sighting the enemy were first received from *Galatea*, there was a gap of 10 minutes before the battlecruisers turned SSE to meet the enemy, although some always maintained that they turned immediately, as did Beatty in his despatch. The signal for the battleships to assume a position 5 miles from *Lion* had been made at 1:30.<sup>2</sup> Beatty wished to reduce that 5 mile gap as action was imminent. The time of the difficult signal to which Beatty referred, must encompass 2:20 to 2:32. So, on hearing of the enemy, some difficulty was experienced in the BCF's procedures and Beatty almost certainly knew he had failed to communicate with Evan-Thomas, which he also knew was important. Far from rushing into space at the enemy, as some have suggested, Beatty waited for about 8 poorly accounted for minutes, but without much success due to signalling difficulties, excitement and dither, hence the poor explanation. If there were difficulties with the searchlight or wireless, other methods could have been used in the meantime, even firing a gun for attention if the matter was felt to be so urgent. That this was not so, suggested that there was no equipment fault and that Beatty only became aware of the difficulty regarding the 5thBS after the turn. As always, when battlecruiser signalling is discussed, blame always falls on the unfortunate Ralph Seymour, but others might have been responsible in those vital few

minutes after 2:20. Any one of a number of people could have made a mistake, however small in itself, which led to a breakdown in signalling. With the signal to turn SSE being followed by the battlecruisers, the responsibility for repeating it to the battleships would seem to have fallen on *Tiger*, but again, assumptions should not be made upon a superficial appreciation of events.

The BCF and 5thBS had not previously worked together and this fact determined the original disposition of five miles apart. If there had existed any opportunity to train together, Beatty was sure that:

"the R.A. would have done the right thing  
instinctively without orders as was done by every  
other squadron commander and ship." <sup>3</sup>

This illustrated the significant difference in thinking which was so much a feature of the controversy. It confirmed that Beatty knew that Evan-Thomas expected to be signalled, so he made an effort to do so. However, the signalling organisation encountered difficulties that meant that the signal was never made. It is worth bearing in mind that although Beatty ordered the signal, he might not have been aware that a problem with the searchlight repeat had arisen until afterwards. As repeats had been made without error up to that point, he would have had little reason to doubt that the signal had got through. He obviously became aware of the fault soon afterwards.

With the distance from the battlecruisers being roughly 5 miles, some, such as Bacon, believed that this made the 5thBS part of the screening force and not the BCF itself. If this was the case, which is doubtful, then the



actions of *Tiger* in not repeating signals to *Barham*, suggested that it might have been felt in *Tiger* that the battleships were not an extension of the BCF in this situation, but a separate force. Therefore, signals would not automatically be repeated to the 5thBS; that would be the responsibility of the Flagship. The use of flags might well indicate that the intention in the Flagship was to use this method only to pass signals amongst the BCF. Yet, over greater distances, this would not be the case and so WT or the searchlight would be used. For all Evan-Thomas knew, he was not an intended recipient of all flag signals.

It is well known that Beatty did not want his ships to miss opportunities by commanders waiting for orders and introduced a system whereby initiative was encouraged. Evan-Thomas, though he might have been generally aware of this practice, would not expect to change course without direct orders, whereas those in the battlecruisers would. From Beatty's comment, it was evident that he knew the BCF's methods to be different from those of the 5thBS and was at fault for not making Evan-Thomas aware of how the BCF and Evan-Thomas himself might act in battle when working with the BCF. This meant that Beatty understood the necessity for closing the battleships rather than in relying upon Evan-Thomas to act as would the battlecruisers. Other battlecruisers might have assumed that when action seemed imminent, Evan-Thomas would act as did they and follow without definite signals, or that Evan-Thomas had been instructed how to act in that case. This was where defects in communication arose, not merely due to the battlecruisers not reporting the signal to the battleships,<sup>4</sup> but due to

incompatible assumptions and ill-defined procedures. It will remain a mystery as to what exactly occurred on board *Lion* and, as the battleships did eventually turn, at 2:40, it might have been hoped that any faults could be played-down. After all, it could only have invited criticism and examination for *Lion* to have admitted to being responsible in any way.

The failure in signalling was almost certainly due to muddles on board *Lion*. If, prior to 2:20, searchlights had been used, one must wonder why there was a sudden change to flags alone and if efforts were made to signal, some error must provide the reason for the absence of a repeat.

Evan-Thomas noted that:

"as *Lion* had been signalling to *Barham* with a searchlight previously to the turn, and had made all alterations of course by that method, there was no reason why a signal should not have been made for *Barham* to turn with *Lion*, by searchlight, if not by wireless." <sup>5</sup>

Whatever was the reason on *Lion*'s part, something went wrong that needs more explaining than merely suggesting that Evan-Thomas should have known what was happening on board *Lion* and reacted as Beatty would have wished, when he actually had no idea of what was happening. Admiral Sir Charles Madden later wrote to Evan-Thomas, regarding the Admiralty *Narrative*, that:

"It might be expected that VABCF would have stationed the 5thBS for action, or at least ordered

it to close...but the Battlecruisers & 5thBS were not manoeuvred as a unit and the late arrival of the 5thBS in action is mainly attributed to this departure from Fleet custom. At least in favour to you the account should state that neither previous to sighting the enemy, or during the battle-cruiser action, did you receive instructions stationing your squadron in action...This & the fact that flag signals could not be read in *Barham* & the fact that they were not repeated...reduced the support that squadron should have been able to afford the battlecruisers." <sup>6</sup>

For reasons already stated, Beatty did not disclose the attempt to signal *Barham* to close, so the view expressed by Madden was correct as far as he knew, in that his information must have come from someone on *Barham*. His comment regarding signalling in action indicated that Beatty might have hoped that Evan-Thomas would act as did the other commanders under his command. However, all the accounts should have noted that the evidence allowed for Evan-Thomas's explanations, just as well as Beatty's. It was possible that, as *Barham* reported that the battlecruisers' turn could not be distinguished until it was well under way, *Lion* might not have distinguished that the 5thBS had not made the appropriate turn until the distance opened even more. That flag signals could not be read in *Barham* was something that all those aboard confirmed, but, for unexplained reasons, others not present



later disagreed.

There was some irony in the turn north, in that Beatty had begged to be allowed to have the 5thBS with him in such an engagement, but was also instrumental in allowing the gap between them to open, from 2:32, to almost 10 miles from *Lion*. Evan-Thomas then did his utmost to both close the enemy and Beatty, only to find that when the battlecruisers had turned north and *Barham* and *Lion* were abeam, in opposite directions, the gap of roughly 1 mile was allowed to open by over 3 more miles before the 5thBS turned; a manoeuvre executed disturbingly close to the enemy. This was obviously not what Beatty meant when he wanted them with him, but after the fuss he made about needing them, on the two occasions when correct signalling mattered most to their unity, it failed. The responsibility, ultimately, was Beatty's.

In Appendix G of the *Narrative*, it was stated by Jellicoe that *Barham* could not read flag signals, with a contradictory sting that "This assumption does not appear to be justified".<sup>7</sup> This statement could only have been made if the author knew something that most did not. Shortly before the end of Beatty's term as First Sea Lord, it was placed on record in *Hansard* that (as put by the *Evening News*):

"signals from Lord Beatty which Sir Hugh said he never received were entered in the signal log of the *Barham* as having been received."<sup>8</sup>

On 15th March 1927, the First Lord, William Bridgeman, replied to a question from Carlyon Bellairs, stating that the signal for destroyer

re-stationing was in *Barham's* log, received at 2:30 by searchlight from *Lion*, and that the executive signal to turn was recorded as received, at 2:37, by flags from *Lion*. It also mentioned that *Barham* signalled her destroyers to take station for screening on altering course.<sup>9</sup> In a letter dated 13.12.59, Alfred Dewar wrote to his brother, Kenneth, that of the destroyer re-stationing and 2:32 signal to turn SSE:

"Both signals were taken in in HMS *Barham*...recorded in her signal log as received at 2.40pm [*Barham's* signal log Deptford no23346 in 1927] The point is this as the executive of a flag signal is the hauling down, the flags...were hauled down at 2.32pm [not repeated by any other ship] the signal must have been received at 2.32 though evidently not recorded and acted upon till 2.40 by the *Barham*." <sup>10</sup>

Hence, both sources apparently made the error for the battleships' failure to turn the responsibility of Evan-Thomas and his staff, and it appears to be damning evidence. Whilst C-in-C Nore, Evan-Thomas had suspected that *Barham's* log had been tampered with <sup>11</sup> and it can be proved that he was not wrong in this.

It must be odd that two statements which purported to quote *Barham's* log — although there is no genuine quote in existence, usually the evidence given was merely a summary — differ in the time of the signal being received. From the language used, it would seem that Dewar did not have

any *verbatim* quote from the log. He did not doubt that the signal was received, so he seemed to have seen the (or rather, *a*) log containing these signals. Whoever supplied Bridgeman with his answer to Bellairs would also appear to have seen the log, or, more likely, the Official History or the *Narrative* which showed the same time (2:37). If this was the case, the time would have been changed either before or after it was seen by Dewar. Yet, the reply given to Bellairs' question need not have actually come from the log in existence in 1927. The *Narrative* noted that it would seem that flag signals could not be read in *Barham*. Evan-Thomas was sure that they could not, so an alteration to the log must have been made by mid-1922 at the latest, after Dewar finished the *Appreciation* and before Corbett's account went to print. If the log had always contained these signals, it must be wondered why no mention was made in any account, especially in the *Appreciation*, of the fact that signals were received which, if true, made Evan-Thomas an undoubted liar and exonerated Beatty. After all, the authors of the latter account mentioned *Iron Duke's* log well enough and invited the reader to believe that they saw *Barham's* as well. They also implied that they saw many, if not all, extant logs, but their imprecision was misleading.

With regard to the *Narrative*, Evan-Thomas wrote to Jellicoe that:

"Nowhere is it mentioned that no signal had been made to me to turn...and we all thought that we were intended to go on & that a signal would be made to us directly how to steer to cut something off...was our idea...It was quite out of the



question for us to see flags...A great mistake was made by the Admiral commanding (Admiral, of course including his staff) but he must be responsible." <sup>12</sup>

This maintained the view he held all along. The *Narrative* suggested otherwise, but did not state why or give any proof, merely hints. Serious historians would normally balk at accepting such statements at face value. It was unlikely that Evan-Thomas maintained publicly and privately that no signal was received without this being the truth. <sup>13</sup> It has been suggested that the signal could have been received as being made by flags, but listed by *Barham's* signal staff as a searchlight repeat when the log came to be written up with the timing fudged. <sup>14</sup> This is very plausible in light of the newspaper reports, but Evan-Thomas remained firm that no signal was made to turn, so this would surely discount a searchlight repeat.

The evidence from *Lion's* actions both then and in the turn north suggested that the searchlight was not used as, if it had been, it would surely have been seen in *Barham*. In fact, it would have taken 1/37,280th of a second, or 0.000218 seconds, to have begun to read the repeat. If the flag signal had been read, and supposing that Alfred Dewar was correct, there could have been a delay or error in *Barham's* dealing with it. If this was not resolved by the time *Barham* turned at 2:40, the staff might have thought it necessary only to record the actual movement rather than advertise their error. There was little doubt that Dewar believed what he said quite honestly, if misguidedly, but behind all this was Beatty's admittance of signalling

difficulties.

If one examines some of the messages contained in the original record and *Despatches* one can gain some idea of how signals were made from *Lion* around the time in question:

| Time | To              | Method | Summary of signal                  |
|------|-----------------|--------|------------------------------------|
| 2:15 | <i>Barham</i>   | SL     | Look out for enemy cruisers.       |
| 2:33 | General         | Fl     | BCF intend to proceed at 22 knots. |
| 2:38 | General         | Fl     | Action stations all day.           |
| 2:47 | <i>Engadine</i> | SL     | Send up seaplane.                  |
| 3:00 | 2LCS            | Fl     | Prepare to attack van of enemy.    |
| 3:01 | General         | Fl     | Course E.                          |
| 3:27 | General         | Fl     | Ready for action.                  |
| 3:33 | <i>Galatea</i>  | WT     | Request bearing of enemy.          |
| 3:35 | General         | Fl     | Speed and course.                  |
| 3:35 | <i>Barham</i>   | SL     | Ready for action, enemy in sight.  |
| 3:35 | General         | Fl     | Speed and bearing of enemy.        |
| 3:47 | General         | Fl     | Open fire.                         |

From this it is evident that when Beatty made general signals (i.e. to all ships in sight) he used flags. This confirms the system that all eyes were on the Flagship enabling the fleet (except cruisers) to adjust quickly as a whole. When a signal specific to a ship was to be made, then either the searchlight or WT was used. Both recorded signals to Evan-Thomas were made by searchlight either side of the turn towards the enemy at 2:32, suggesting that nothing was wrong physically with the searchlight at those times. As

Evan-Thomas was aware that this method had been used before and after the turn to signal his ship specifically, it would scarcely have escaped his attention if the 2:32 signal had been signalled to him. If the above method was in force, then Evan-Thomas could have had no reason to suspect that Beatty wished him to turn at 2:32, as no specific signal was sent as had so recently been the custom. There was, too, the fact that at 2:15, *Barham* was closer to *Lion* than at 3:35. Conditions did not change drastically, so if *Barham* could see the searchlight at 3:35, then one must conclude that it could be seen at a shorter distance. It would seem, then, that there was a definite signalling procedure amongst the BCF, which was perhaps less slipshod than some would have others believe. Although this did not explain why Evan-Thomas was not signalled at 2:32, it at least supported his explanations of the event.

Of the two disputed signals, the first, by flags, repeated by searchlight to the destroyers, was certainly received by *Barham* as recorded at 2:30. It would seem that the 2:30 signal was not seen by Evan-Thomas, but that he must have arrived on the bridge very soon after. The signal to alter course was hoisted after the first was hauled down and was itself hauled down at about 2:34/5, when the BCF began to turn. At this time *Barham* had begun the zig-zag, course NbW. Shortly afterwards came the supposed suggestion by *Barham's* captain, Arthur Craig, that the battleships turn in the direction of the BCF, <sup>15</sup> probably 1-2 minutes after 2:35/6. It seems likely that it was here that Evan-Thomas felt that a different course would soon be indicated. This not forthcoming, the turn was made to SSE, according to *Barham's* log at 2:38, others put it at 2:40, as did Dewar. It was possible, however, that



*Barham* turned to starboard at 2:38, the squadron came back into line around 2:40 and *Barham* simply continued its turn.

Commander Geoffrey Blake <sup>16</sup> noted that comments made by Craig to the *Naval Review*, in 1927, stated that the destroyer re-stationing signal was made to *Barham* by searchlight, but not the 2:32 to turn. <sup>17</sup> This, Craig believed, was intended to inform Evan-Thomas of the BCF's turn, even though he could not read it either. This meant that he saw the situation as did Evan-Thomas and probably expected a signal to follow, so he would scarcely have urged him to follow then. Above, it will be noted that Evan-Thomas mentioned that the expected indication of another course for the 5thBS to steer "was *our* idea" and that "we all thought that we were intended to go on." This implied that the opinion was at least shared by one other, if not more. If Craig did inquire as to whether or not they should follow, it must have been done when another signal from Beatty looked not to be coming and Evan-Thomas surely reached the same conclusion at the same time. The only source for this alleged plea of Craig's seems to come from Craig himself and was almost certainly an afterthought in light of the events of the 1920s, designed to distance himself from any blame, which inadvertently put more onto Evan-Thomas.

Craig's account has led commentators on the battle into endorsing the view of Evan-Thomas as a rigid adherent to procedure at the expense of the obvious, but it is based on one highly flawed premise: Craig's word for it. What has resulted, is the implication that Evan-Thomas was a liar. His word was doubted, but for some reason, Craig's was not, simply because the latter's

fitted in with what was commonly accepted. It was not possible to prove that Evan-Thomas was wrong, but nor was it that Craig was correct. As it turned-out, Evan-Thomas was correct. Indeed, Craig had admitted, in 1927, that he did not know any more at the time than did Evan-Thomas and that the absence of the repeat led him to the same conclusion. It is likely that Craig's reported plea or suggestion to Evan-Thomas was the wishful result of hindsight to place on record the action that he would have liked to have taken.

One must also wonder how likely was it for one of Evan-Thomas's staff, possibly more, quickly to use his initiative in suggesting that they follow the turn when it was obvious that it was being made; it would seem to be out of character, given the events of the equally disputed turn north later in the battle. When the two Flagships were passing on opposite courses around 4:50-3, *Barham* steering for the enemy, surely this would have been an incident requiring initiative in pleading for a turn north without waiting for an order. Craig would seem to be urging Evan-Thomas to follow Beatty at 2:32, when there was only a report of a few enemy vessels, yet was seemingly content to steam towards 8-12 German battleships shooting close to them, without feeling the urge to register a protest supporting a turn to follow the battlecruisers.

The confusion at this time certainly came from the fact that *Lion* was keeping the 5thBS under control at 2:30, but Evan-Thomas would have had no way of knowing if some difficulty arose in the next 2-3 minutes. In this time he assumed that if Beatty did not make a signal, then there was nothing

to do but carry on until ordered otherwise. As flags could not be distinguished, then no-one in the 5thBS could have had any inkling of the possible meaning of the signal, unless they were aware of the enemy report at 2:32, so they would need to wait for the searchlight repeat. If this did not come, they would have been justified to assume that it was simply another signal to the BCF, or at least one not intended for them. This would then make one wonder what exactly Evan-Thomas assumed or guessed was happening. His belief, stated in later years, that another course would soon be indicated was plausible and understandable, as it seemed that Beatty was deliberately not signalling the 5thBS regarding this turn. At worst, if he had followed immediately, he could have been ordered onto this new course without any significant loss of time or position. Yet, he had been receiving orders clearly right up until 2:32 and there was nothing to suggest that this was going to change, so the absence of a signal would mean that none was being made.

Given the information at his disposal at the time, Evan-Thomas gave thought to what might happen (i.e. be given a new course) and was given no reason at 2:32 to suppose that Beatty wished him to deviate from what he was doing. As it turned-out, being given a new course had many possible advantages. When the 1stSG was spotted, if Beatty had sailed to cut off the Germans from their bases, which he rightly tried to do, to position the 5thBS so that the enemy could not escape around the Skagerrak, thus trapping them between a rock and a hard place, could have ensured a bag of 5 battlecruisers and more smaller vessels. Neither C-in-C knew of the presence of the others'



battlefleet, so a fleet action was still a possibility after such a success. This is not so much being wise after the event, but considering the possibilities of how forces might have been deployed and it was odd that Evan-Thomas never mentioned such a scenario as part of his defence. It did, after all, fit-in nicely with his expectations of being given another course. As he did not fabricate reasons for his actions, it is likely that he was being honest in his recollection of events and had no cause to serve but to tell what had actually happened.

Evan-Thomas's post-war explanations for what was happening at this time should not be seen so much in light of his trying to find excuses, but of his trying to think what exactly went on aboard *Lion*. He was baffled in later years as to what this might have been. By suggesting possibilities such as being signalled a different course, he did not help himself, even though he was trying to get to the bottom of the confusion. If he had been aware of *Galatea's* report, *Lion's* new course suggested the possible direction of the enemy. However, by turning to NbW, he was steering close to the opposite direction. Given this, for every second that the two steered away from each other at such divergence, the less chance they had of executing a possible pincer movement and the greater the chance the enemy had of slipping away by virtue of it. Had he been less honest, he might have withheld this view.

What can be stated from all this, is that the signal to turn SSE was never signalled by searchlight to *Barham*; Craig, Evan-Thomas and Beatty confirmed this. Craig confirmed the receipt of the destroyer re-stationing by searchlight (although Evan-Thomas was almost certainly not on the bridge at

the time, hence his conviction that he felt it was not received), but both noted that the 2:32 was not repeated and they must be correct in this. Craig had just seen one searchlight repeat and both were looking at *Lion*. Regardless of whether or not one believes a searchlight repeat was made from *Lion*, when the BCF began to turn, Beatty must have been aware that the signal had not been received.<sup>18</sup> His admission that he could not get a signal through confirmed that no repeat was made and that he knew this. Thus, none could have been received in *Barham* and none logged.

That this signal was not repeated by *Tiger* might have been for the very same reason that Evan-Thomas waited for a searchlight from *Lion* — that a different course would be indicated to them. If *Tiger* did not receive the signal either, it would naturally just conform to the turn, whereas Evan-Thomas would not. One must not forget that the reason *Tiger* did not repeat the signal was because it was evidently thought that it was not intended for the 5thBS, so it would have been folly to have repeated it. This did not account for the fact that it could not have been known that *Lion* had failed to repeat it. In Bridgeman's answer to Bellairs, there was a 5 minute gap between the signal being made executive and its being recorded. If this were genuine and the signal was seen, it is unlikely that such a gap would exist. It was logged 3 minutes before the turn and Evan-Thomas would not have waited.

Whatever the possibilities, one must then wonder why the signal was seen by some and not others. In Dewar's letter, his explanation was plausible, but one must believe that if the signal had been received it would have been

logged at 2:33/4. There cannot, then, have been such a signal received. If Beatty knew that he could not get a signal through and Evan-Thomas and Craig were certain that none was made, then it was impossible that the signal could have been seen and recorded at the time in *Barham*. It is impossible to log a signal that was never made, so these quotes from Bridgeman and Dewar must result from fabrications. It would be folly to deny that signals were received when it was known that they had been and nobody in any other ship ever reported seeing the repeat. The statement in the *Evening News* was true as far as the author knew, but did not state how those signals got there. It obviously implied that they were recorded at the time and most would have believed this, yet this cannot have been the case. So, *Barham*'s log must have been altered after it left the ship.

In the list of signals in the *Despatches*, nowhere was any signal ordering Evan-Thomas to comply with the turn recorded. It might be assumed the 2:32 signal was seen and applied to the 5thBS as well, but this is very doubtful. A signal of this importance cannot have been omitted, especially as the *Narrative* (page 1) boasted, mischievously and erroneously, that all signals made at the battle were recorded in the *Despatches*. This being the case, where in the *Despatches* is this unmissable signal, so strongly asserted in the *Narrative* as being in *Barham*'s log at 2:37 (and used in answer to Bellairs's question)? And why, despite the movements of Beatty's and Evan-Thomas's squadrons being controversial already, was this never mentioned until 1923, in Corbett's work, when it appeared to support Beatty's actions? It is not there because it was never recorded and it was not recorded



because it was not made.

As Dewar made no mention of it in the *Staff Appreciation*,<sup>19</sup> which one must suspect he would have done, it must have been inserted after Dewar completed his work and before the draft of the official history went to the printers in early 1923. This was almost certainly done when protestations regarding the movements of *Barham* and *Lion* became more actively disputed in 1923. It was then considered necessary to produce a plausible solution to remedy the situation, by atypically forcing the point of the signal's receipt to the reader, and it appeared to be successful.

Assuming *Barham* to have turned at 2:40, it seemed to have been calculated that from receipt of the signal in the ship to it coming to Evan-Thomas's attention, 3 minutes elapsed. If this was so, *Lion's* repeat flash was at least five minutes late. If *Barham's* staff altered the timing in the log, they must have known something that Beatty, Evan-Thomas and the Captain did not. Even if they did not see the flash, could someone else not have told them? If the flash was seen, the turn would have begun almost instantly, so there would have been no need to fudge the timing at all, because the ship's staff would then have appeared to be too slow to react. If the repeat was made at 2:33, Evan-Thomas would not possibly have held on. Such a clear instruction to one so well drilled in clear instructions, as detractors are quick to point out when it suits them to do so, could not have been mistaken. So, the staff could then have been rebuked for being slow to record the signal accurately, but this is as unlikely as the signal being acted upon too late.

The supposed 2:37 repeat suffers from flaws on all sides of the argument. If it ever was accurate, it would support just one interpretation convincingly and it fails to do this, which was the forger's error — a post-dated effort to cloud the affairs of a few minutes. The events either side of 2:37 prove it to be fraudulent. To disregard the forgery leaves the facts in accordance. To accept it, one must explain, amongst many other things, why the staff suddenly lapsed into slovenly standards regarding their work and then reverted to accuracy and competence. Yet, even then, the inconsistencies do not correspond to the mass of other evidence.

This, then, makes one question the reasons as to why all this should have been done. There can be little doubt that some person or group favourably disposed to Beatty, probably without his knowledge, instituted the alteration of *Barham's* log to the detriment of Evan-Thomas and, therefore, to the advantage of Beatty. When the disappearance of *Iron Duke's* log is remembered and its inclusion in the Dewars' *Appreciation* for criticism, although in ignorance of how logs were kept, it is likely that malicious forces were at work. One cannot doubt that something peculiar had taken place and, coupled with Evan-Thomas's suspicions, it was evident that dubious actions surrounded some logs from the battle. As all logs are destroyed after a certain period it might have been, for some, an opportunity at forgery to make a point, knowing that the evidence would not last for long afterwards and that few would actually see it. However, the fact that no signal was received in the battleships is evident, but the author of the addition to *Barham's* log was not aware of the facts on both sides; that was where the

mistake was made. However desperately one may try to assert that the signal was received, the cases to be made by forging fall apart in Beatty's admission of signalling difficulties in a paper in his private possession that few, if any, could have seen.

That Beatty was the author or instigator of such alterations should be doubted, <sup>20</sup> but he must have been aware of Evan-Thomas's opinion that he did not receive a signal to turn. He certainly knew that one was never sent and that the log of *Barham* was later seen to state this to be false. Thus, he allowed the publication of evidence, the validity of which he almost certainly doubted, which seemed to exonerate him and implicated Evan-Thomas. He was at least prepared to go this far to have people believe that he was not at fault. In all likelihood, the failure of the 5thBS to turn with the BCF to SSE was the result of a genuine misunderstanding by two forces working under different principles, not made easier by the difficulties which they faced at the time. The reasons for subsequent manoeuvrings are less easily explained.

The importance of this incident, before action was under way, is often over-estimated. After the battle, claims of negligence and incompetence could be made to suit the individual, or a body of opinion, but as far as the actual importance of the event is concerned, it really mattered much less than some would have one believe. Had the battleships turned with the battlecruisers, the 5 mile gap would have opened from 3:30, when Beatty ordered 25 knots for the BCF and in the 18 minutes before fire was opened, the BCF would have increased the gap anyway, despite the battleships cutting corners. When the battleships might have opened fire depended upon where Beatty might



have stationed them, which is purely conjectural, but the list of possibilities is not extensive. By ordering a speed that he knew the battleships could scarcely make, it was evident that Beatty's intention was, correctly, to engage enemy ships as soon as was possible. Had the battleships been with him when action began, it would not necessarily have guaranteed success. The Germans knew that with the 6 battlecruisers they faced they were already inferior, but this did not prevent them from trying to score such success as they could in leading Beatty to Scheer.

However many possible scenarios are examined, it cannot convincingly be claimed that the presence of the battleships sooner in the action would have prevented the losses of *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary*. The enemy would doubtless have been under a heavier fire earlier, which they would have been obliged to return, with difficulty, but the battlecruisers were lost from 1 or 2 hits each, which could have happened at any time. One only needs to consider the damage to *Lion*'s Q turret, at 4:00, through no design faults, but operational faults. It is convenient to note the lack of support from the 5thBS, but Beatty allowed the 1stSG over 20 minutes to adjust their fire-control data, when they could have been fired upon, unable to make any reply and being outnumbered. One must bear in mind the possibility that Hipper might not have accepted action with both the BCF and 5thBS in range simultaneously. As it was, he could have divined from Bödicker's report that the 5thBS were not likely to instantly assist the British battlecruisers, or if he was resigned to it, simply to have run to Scheer. He could still have maintained some firing, but he knew that whatever happened, heavy support

was not far away. This part of the controversy (at 2:32-40) did appear to be important, but, *ceteris paribus*, neither Beatty or Evan-Thomas could have done much more by way of positioning than they did to score success had events proceeded without a hitch.

It is worth noting that the gap that opened between the two Admirals was not really the issue. If Beatty was intending to have the 5thBS in line, the matter of the distance between *Barham* and *Tiger* is the issue, which was a little over 8 miles at 2:40. Supposing *Barham* to have been 5 miles behind when Beatty ordered 25 knots, it would have begun to fall astern anyway and *New Zealand* and *Indefatigable* needed to be stationed astern of *Tiger*. The speed of the slower ships surely precluded them from being stationed in the van; in any event, Beatty would want to lead the line. One must remember that the battleships would be falling astern anyway, so, at best, the distance between the two forces would not have been much less than that which it had been at 2:30. The real sore point was that the initial gap at 2:40 was the same at 3:47. It was more significant that *Barham* opened fire as soon as the targets came into maximum range, at targets that were very hard to see. The BCF opened fire well within their maximum range, to the relief of the Germans.

To be fair to both Beatty and Evan-Thomas, in the absence of clear signals, little time was actually lost that was unavoidable, following the signalling hiccup. It would not become obvious that the BCF was turning until *Princess Royal* began to follow *Lion*, at roughly 2:36/7. If one believes *Barham's* deck log, the turn was followed only a minute or so later, at 2:38.

Most other sources quote 2:40, which was only a loss of 3-4 minutes at worst and only about a minute after *Tiger* turned by commonly accepted timing (2:40). So, the distance lost at this point was not so great as it would have appeared and could have been greater. The real distance lost was the extra 2½-3 miles from *Tiger* at 2:40, not another 5 from *Lion*.

When the turn was made, it was noted by Craig in the *Despatches*, that the BCF "were out of sight for some time." Craig cannot have written this. The visibility to the east was approximately 11½ miles. At 2:40, *Lion* was 10 miles away and *Tiger* around 8 miles. Craig had his eyes on the BCF from at least 2:30. He did not forget what had happened in the following week or so until his report was submitted and suddenly remembered thereafter, nor did he shut his eyes. The ships involved did not suddenly develop speeds in excess of their designed maximum. The scenario of the BCF being lost to sight was physically and spatially impossible. As the 5thBS followed the BCF, one might well ask how they knew the course to follow to try to cut the distance if they could not see to anticipate the moves, and why *Lion* made visual signals to the 5thBS. If Craig could not see, this must apply to the rest. This remark was inserted after the event, to invite the conclusion that whilst the BCF pursued the enemy, the 5thBS dithered.



Once the action was under way, the subject of signalling recurred as a much disputed point (see diagrams #8-11). Whilst pursuing the 1stSG, the BCF caught sight of the approaching German Fleet. SMS *Rostock*, leading the HSF, had been reported at 4:30, by *Southampton*, and a few minutes later, the HSF itself was seen. It is commonly stated that the BCF's 16 point turn away began at 4:40. However, this was another example of the flaws in the evidence given to those compiling the list of signals. When Beatty sighted the HSF, he did not dither regarding what action he should take, it being obvious that he could not engage it alone, this was also contrary to his own BCFOs and GFBOs. The BCF turned, as *Lion's* TS noted (see Table 1, Chapter 1), at 4:36. This also gave the lie to the popular image expressed by Hood, who stated that if Beatty had the 5thBS with him "I think it is a great mistake...nothing will stop him from taking on the whole German Fleet." <sup>21</sup> Beatty was not as rash as many supposed, although he was in some way responsible for nurturing this belief, yet one could always argue that such a move was simply common sense. That such a senior officer as Hood had this erroneous opinion of Beatty was worrying. It suggested that even Squadron commanders were unaware of how exactly the BCF would be fought as a unit.

The turn was completed at roughly 4:40, when *Barham* was approximately 8 miles away. <sup>22</sup> Yet, a little over two minutes later, Beatty turned north, completing this by 4:43/4 (see diagram #10). This took him on a course past the 5thBS on the port side and directly at *Queen Mary's* wreckage. Following the war, the usual recriminations surrounded the events of the next 15 minutes, Beatty being blamed for not signalling a turn to

Evan-Thomas sooner than he did and Evan-Thomas for not reading the situation correctly quickly enough. When Beatty completed the 16 point turn, the 5thBS turned to starboard. It is not clear how Beatty intended to pass the 5thBS, to port or starboard, but his turn at 4:42 suggested that to port was his intention. Evan-Thomas's change of course seemed to suggest that he felt this was what Beatty wanted. Had Evan-Thomas not turned, the two squadrons would have come close to colliding. Shortly after the 5thBS were on their new course, they were ordered to form into line ahead (they had been in sub-divisions since 4:30, *Barham* leading *Valiant*, *Warspite* leading *Malaya*). Had Beatty simply continued his course at 4:40, he would have passed the 5thBS to starboard and not only maintained the most desirable course, but it would have meant the 5thBS turning less, less sharply and so more quickly, to follow the BCF.

The advantages to an enemy firing at a turning point in a line, were in 1916, considered a dangerous possibility. This has been dismissed and endorsed at varying times since the battle, but the practicalities of such a move as the 5thBS were ordered to undertake, jeopardised the squadron and would be as real now as then. Any object reversing the direction in which it is travelling, must at some point, cease to go forward and start to go in the opposing direction; at that point, it stops. The closer it is to that apex, the slower it must be travelling forward and the greater the distance from the target, the slower it will be relatively. From 20,000 yards away, the target at that point is, for practical purposes still and, therefore, easy to range, but it is also still until the last ship has steadied onto the new course. When the first

ship turning reaches its new course, the parabola defines the point of aim; the tighter the parabola, the slower, if smaller the target. Once under way, the 180° turn itself means that no ship can go very far out of line without risking collision and if they cannot do this, they cannot be manoeuvred to throw out enemy fire or to shift out of range. It was surely greeted with relief that more damage was not done to the squadron under helm. It might be worthwhile mentioning that, contrary to Campbell's assertions, no enemy battlecruiser scored a hit on the squadron whilst it turned, because they were out of range.

The signal from Beatty ordering the turn was hoisted at 4:48 — this time stated in the list of signals as being the executive was not Pollen's fault — and remained flying at 4:55/6 at least. <sup>23</sup> The *Despatches* recorded that, at 4:55, Evan-Thomas signalled, by flags, "Observe attentively the Admiral's motions". This indicated that the 5thBS was prepared to change course or speed without being signalled first, as explained in the *Signal Book* of 1898 "Observe very attentively the Admiral's motions as he will probably alter his course, increase or decrease speed...with or without signals, as may be most convenient" (TA). This can only mean that *Lion* was still flying the signal at 4:55 and that Evan-Thomas had, with the memory of the 2:32 signal doubtless in mind, at last decided to act on his own. The 4:48 signal had been acknowledged by *Barham*, the rest of the 5thBS were aware of it and, by hoisting TA, Evan-Thomas was turning the squadron under his own direction, the signal not being hauled down in *Lion*. In fact, it was likely that the signal was only made executive from *Lion* when the 5thBS were seen to turn, but by then, it did not matter. If the 5thBS was acting upon the executive from



*Lion*, then the use of TA was pointless. The only explanation for its use, is that matters were becoming ever more dangerous and it required the squadron's SO to execute the turn in the absence of direction from SOBCF. Evan-Thomas was only prepared to wait a limited time for the signal to come through and an injustice was done to him, in the suggestions that he would probably have held on, whatever the cost, until told to turn. He has been criticised as being a slavish adherent to procedure, but the evident danger he was in did not escape him, nor did the fact that Beatty seemed to have forgotten him. Far from being ponderous, he knew procedures well enough to know that TA existed, what its purpose was and was not afraid to invoke it. It was no wonder in later years that he was to feel very bitter about Beatty's handling of the squadron and the suggestions that he had jeopardised the 5thBS because he did not have the presence of mind or independence of character to do anything unless Beatty told him to do so.

This was another example of how accounts on Jutland suffered from too superficial an examination of existing evidence, largely to suit erroneous assumptions or preconceived ideas. Pollen had available the logs of both *Lion* and *Barham* and recorded many less significant signals between these ships. So, if the 4:48 signal was made executive, he could scarcely have missed it, or felt TA to be more important. One must also remember that the turn is assumed to have been on *Lion*'s executive, but it was not recorded in the log and no-one present actually said that they saw the signal hauled down, or responded to it. There is probable proof in Evan-Thomas's defence of his actions at this point, when he stated that:

"The signal was "Compass 16" which was not  
hailed down some time after *Lion* had passed; so  
it should be stated." <sup>24</sup>

At 4:55 (see diagram #10), *Lion* was 4¼ miles astern at a bearing of Red 178 and with the wind, funnel smoke, smoke from fires and angle, it would have been hard to see anyway; at 2:32 they were 4½ miles away. Not only did Evan-Thomas make the turn on his own, but, by using TA, he was free to take the squadron anywhere away from enemy fire after the turn without having to waste time making more signals. There was also the fact that, should anything have gone seriously wrong subsequently that led to an Inquiry, Evan-Thomas could have mentioned that he was awaiting Beatty's executive, but acted according to procedure by using TA rather than executing Beatty's signal before Beatty had done so. However, all this does not change the fact that he had waited for the signal, lost ground on Beatty and gained it on the HSF.

Beatty's signalling at crucial moments in the war had the combined effects of allowing enemy ships to escape; this was true in December 1914, January 1915 and at Jutland. Although he had wanted less signalling, it was ironic that it was attempts to make precise signals at crucial times on these dates, that confused officers (Goodenough, Moore and Evan-Thomas especially) who otherwise were fully aware of what to do. That they gave priority to these signals (which in 1914 and at Dogger Bank were ambiguous) was the result of Beatty not making his intentions clearly understood then, or before hand. One might mention that the signal which led to the combined

attack on *Blücher* at Dogger Bank was not only badly made, but pointless. After all, one must wonder at the utility of a signal that orders ships to engage the enemy that they were already engaging. Yet, as at Jutland, the signal had the effect of diverting the attention of ships and officers from the job that they should have continued to do and almost certainly would have done if left to it. It was also odd that at Jutland it was thought necessary to signal the distribution of fire. If the BCF had functioned as Beatty had hoped, this would have been unnecessary. It confused the obviously correct distribution, but was attributed to defective signalling. Signalling had nothing to do with it. The defect could have been offset by the BCF's initiative, which Beatty thought existed in his force.

The blame for the late turns of the 5thBS in the 1920s was apportioned to either Evan-Thomas or Beatty. Since 2:30 at Jutland, Evan-Thomas had been in control of his squadron and received no significant instruction from Beatty. Yet, at 4:48, Beatty, by hoisting the signal, was taking definite control. By ordering his ships to form into line, Evan-Thomas had obviously deduced that a similar reversal of course on his part was a strong possibility. This was, however, very different from knowing exactly what it was that Beatty wanted him to do and he had good reason to suppose that as he was being signalled, Beatty was in control of what was happening. It is a little too easy to suggest that Evan-Thomas should have turned immediately upon passing the BCF, although that would have helped matters. The late turn was a combination of Beatty seemingly wanting to pass to port, of ordering the turn too late, in not making it a turn together and Evan-Thomas waiting for



the executive regardless of the approach of the German Fleet. It is difficult to say whether or not these circumstances could have been different. Had the 5thBS been ordered to turn sooner and together, the German Fleet coming into gun range was still likely and the rearmost ships might well have come into enemy range anyway. Unless the 5thBS was turning while the BCF passed, to port, it was unlikely that they could have avoided the German Fleet altogether. <sup>25</sup>

The effects that this turn and the one at 2:35 had on the engagement are ironic. By trying to signal the 5thBS at both times, Beatty was doing only what one would have expected, but this was not helped by the fact that he had given them no signal since the action began. This had the result of confusing Evan-Thomas for a few minutes at a time when it was most important that confusion should not have arisen. Until 4:48, he had been doing fine without any signals and, had Beatty not signalled at all, he would almost certainly not have felt obliged to wait for the executive once he knew why the BCF had reversed their course. What is often lost in these episodes, is that, as Beatty was attempting make specific signals, he was not only reasonably sure that they could be sent and received, but that he was not relying upon others' initiative. To later say that it was fairly obvious what Evan-Thomas should have done, forgets the fact that when a specific signal is made, what was obvious was of lesser importance than the subject of the signal and the signal must take priority over the apparently obvious. Although Beatty (following the raid on Scarborough) had noted that a captain might be in a position where he was more fully aware of the situation than the admiral,

there was no reason to suppose that Evan-Thomas had been encouraged by Beatty to disregard signals if, in his own judgement, they did not best apply to the situation.

It was all very well to accept credit when things proceeded according to plan, but when they did not, it was not acceptable to claim that others should have acted upon their own initiative to correct any defects. This belief relied solely on the fact that others must know when to disregard apparently faulty instructions. Yet, if they could not be made aware that there are difficulties aboard the signalling ship, they could not know to act independently, as this required knowledge that it was not possible to impart because of those difficulties. At 2:32, Evan-Thomas could have had no idea that there were signalling difficulties, precisely because he could not be signalled. As this was the only means of communication, it was no more possible for him to know that there were difficulties, than it was for Beatty to have imparted the subject of the proposed signal. Beatty's system of allowing initiative depended upon clear communication, between the commanding officers and between ships, but he wrongly assumed that a clear understanding between his officers existed and that this was all that was required. If one was to use initiative, then it must be obvious when it must be used and this was the great difficulty. What one assumes is obvious, might not be so for another and one might, or might not, have knowledge of something that prevents the use of initiative or the execution of a particular signal and needs to impart this to another for them to appreciate the problem and act accordingly. So, it was in this area where communications were most

important and were most lacking in the BCF. Their signalling could have been much more efficient, but even if it had been, there was no means for communicating other than the signalling methods of the time. As these were faulty, one cannot have expected the system to have functioned any better than it did.

Such failures as there were resulted from the fact that communications depend upon putting into words and encryption the thoughts and experiences of others and much can be lost and gained in translation and transliteration, which often leads to misinterpretation. Even so, quick and understandable communications must be made before the events which they concern change. To solve these problems, all must be completely and simultaneously aware of all relevant phenomena with the same level of understanding. It is to be wondered just how far one can expect this to be the case. Facilities for sufficient real-time communications were certainly not technologically possible in 1916. All the post-battle bickering overlooked the fact that if something was known to be so obvious, why signal?

Once the turn was complete, the BCF sought to open the range by small alterations to port and the 5thBS now drew much of the fire of the HSF, contrary to what many claimed in the inter-war years. This was another source of controversy, especially as Evan-Thomas was seen in many accounts to have sheltered his squadron on *New Zealand's* port quarter, away from the action. In fact, he did the opposite, being on its starboard quarter until junction with the Grand Fleet. It was stated by the Harper committee, but was generally ignored, that after the 16 point turn:



"the Fifth Battle Squadron altered course a little further to starboard to follow and support the Battle Cruisers...The enemy opened fire on the turning point, so *Malaya* turned short...*Malaya* drew out a little to port at 5:05 as the enemy had her range exactly." <sup>26</sup>

This, whilst the battlecruisers pulled away. The accompanying charts noted this, but were in error in showing that the 5thBS then passed to the BCF's port side. The plan for 2-9:15 (see diagram #14) placed the 5thBS from starboard to port at 5:17, yet another only showed the 5thBS to starboard for about two minutes. <sup>27</sup> The text gave no reason why they should have crossed the BCF's wake again. After *Lion* re-opened fire, at 4:48, the BCF steered further away from their counterparts and the frequency and detail of the notes made in the control top and TS rapidly became sparse. In fact, it had been noted that the target had two derricks on the after funnel. This could only have been one of the three 11"-gunned battlecruisers and since it had been engaged with a 12" since 3:47, it would suggest that they were further away from the action than the 5thBS, and not altogether sure of the identity of the target. They did not wish to advertise this.

In fact, in later years, Beatty wanted the distances reduced when being recorded in the 'Record', which Harper was unwilling to do. <sup>28</sup> It was, following the turn, actually 20,800 yards (20,300 rangefinder), Dreyer had notes that quoted it as 20,400. <sup>29</sup> Opening the range to this extent aided the 5thBS in crossing the BCF's wake to starboard under Evan-Thomas's

personal direction, to cover the battlecruisers. Had Evan-Thomas obeyed the 4:48 signal, he would have placed his ships away from where they were likely to be most helpful and beyond the range of the German guns that were actually firing upon the 5thBS. Later, he received no recognition for his initiative in taking station on the BCF's starboard quarter.

Soon after the battle, these two instances of muddled signalling and misunderstanding between the BCF and 5thBS were put down to their not having previously worked together, or of confusion arising from being in action. There was truth in both of these. Yet, after the war, Beatty and those with similar views began to express more fully that there were some ideological or institutional reasons behind these two turns, which accounted for that phase of the action not being as successful as had been hoped. Beatty accepted that Evan-Thomas would not have acted as would those of the BCF in action and that he had served him as best he could. Later on, his view changed, but the exact processes of his thought to reach this conclusion were far from clear. Even before the war, Beatty's views set him apart from most other officers and, as the war progressed, he increasingly thought that battlefleet men had been too slow to appreciate and deal with what crises arose.

Having had a good deal of time to reflect upon Jutland, his changing attitude to Evan-Thomas's actions might well have reflected his growing dissatisfaction with those battlefleet officers who had a major influence upon the study of strategy and tactics, ordnance, signalling and other specialisms before and during the war. It was certainly possible, if one was in such a

frame of mind, to have concluded that those who held conservative views with regard to the Navy were responsible for retarding the development of such aspects as encouragement of initiative in action, less complex signalling and more effective and accurate gunnery. Given these possibilities, it was easy for Beatty to overlook the failings within his own staff at the battle, and elsewhere, as he could think that, had Evan-Thomas and others operated along the lines that he desired, such confusion with specific signals would not have arisen, because the underlying principles governing each others' movements would be self-evident and a mistake in signalling aboard the Flagship would be immaterial, instead of being of life saving importance.

After the battle, Evan-Thomas was publicly seen to have neglected his role as commander of the BCF's supporting battleships. A full analysis of what had happened between the 5thBS and BCF was not undertaken. In Chapter 4 it was seen that, in the Admiralty *Narrative*, Evan-Thomas was unquestionably blamed for not supporting the BCF sufficiently, despite Jellicoe's protestations. Whilst the Dewars' *Appreciation* was being edited for publication, as the *Narrative*, Evan-Thomas attempted to put his side of the events to the First Lord, Leo Amery. He wanted nothing more than a hearing, hoping that this would be enough to convince Amery that the disputed events were not entirely as Beatty had claimed.

Shortly after the battle, Beatty wrote to Evan-Thomas to:

"thank you from the bottom of my heart for your  
gallant and effective support on Wednesday. It  
was fine to see your fine squadron sail down as it



did. Your coming down in support...will remain in  
my mind forever." <sup>30</sup>

Years afterwards, Beatty never personally made any attempt to state otherwise. Written soon after the battle, it was an honest statement by Beatty in which he firmly admitted that the 5thBS provided him "gallant and effective support." Evan-Thomas and others with the BCF at Jutland, for example, Tennant and Cowan, all realised the effectiveness of the 5thBS as noted by Beatty in 1916. Many present, including Beatty, were aware that the 5thBS made a, if not *the*, significant contribution to the action up to the junction with the battlefleet. That this was not being mentioned in the early 1920s alarmed Evan-Thomas and battlefleet supporters.

Whilst Evan-Thomas was C-in-C Nore (March 1921-4) "it was known that something was worrying him very much indeed". <sup>31</sup> This concerned the attempts by Beatty to enhance his image at the expense of others in publications. A meeting with Amery was arranged for 3rd December 1923, to discuss the proposed *Narrative*. How the meeting progressed is difficult to discern because the only accounts were written by Evan-Thomas in the summer of 1926. However, they are generally in accord. Beatty was determined that Evan-Thomas should not have a chance to make his case, or at least to prevent Amery from realising the full extent of his involvement with the Jutland accounts.

Shortly after the meeting began, Beatty appeared:

"To push me out of his [Amery's] room before I  
had been in there two minutes for fear I might

tell him the truth...it is becoming difficult for the Beatty party to keep up the lies they spread, to try to hide the too awful mistakes of their Chief — by trying to shift it onto others...[but with Beatty as First Sea Lord it is] very difficult to prevent his lies being believed." <sup>32</sup>

It would seem that some kind of farce was being played out in the First Lord's office. In the earlier account, Evan-Thomas had written to Jellicoe that:

"I spoke to him [Amery] for some three or four minutes, I think less, when he was informed that he *must* see the *First Sea Lord* — so I was shown out." <sup>33</sup>

In this account, Beatty did not appear, but it was clear that Evan-Thomas had not the time to make his case. What was also strange, if not bizarre, was that the First Lord (Beatty's superior) was being ordered to see Beatty and that he seemed to comply with that order. Beatty and Amery might have arranged this convenient interruption between themselves, possibly to postpone a future meeting. In this time, it might have been hoped that the *Narrative* would have been published, so that Evan-Thomas would never have had his say.

It is possible that Beatty, given his previous praise for Evan-Thomas, could not face Evan-Thomas directly in any discussion and was determined not to explain why he was now influencing the *Narrative* to suggest that

Evan-Thomas was at fault at Jutland when he knew this not to be the case. Throughout the affair, if not before, it seemed that Beatty had a much higher regard for Evan-Thomas than Evan-Thomas had for him. Evan-Thomas's nephew (Vice-Admiral Geoffrey Barnard) later noted that it was:

"evident that he could have had nothing in common personally with Beatty, with his riches, his wife's yacht etc. etc., and I am certain that he did not like him personally because of his "Montgomery like" flair for publicity and dress and also because he was "Winston Churchill's pet." " 34

In general, then, it would seem that the two had no common grounds for amiable relations other than service loyalty. However, even on service issues his sympathy for Beatty was not strong. Evan-Thomas's views and sympathies were very much with Jellicoe. Furthermore, Barnard noted that Evan-Thomas had:

"rather strict moral principles about any question of divorce or extra-matrimonial entanglements." 35

So, there were strong personal reasons why Evan-Thomas should feel aggrieved at the action Beatty took at the meeting with Amery.

This was sufficient to explain Evan-Thomas's attitude in December 1923, but during the war, and especially just before Jutland, two officers who were required to be aware of the same operational principles were not especially enthusiastic about seeking each other's company to discuss how



they would act together. There is no evidence in either *Lion's* or *Barham's* deck logs to show that Evan-Thomas and Beatty ever met before Jutland. Neither is there any evidence to show that Evan-Thomas had, or had read, a copy of BCF Orders, or even knew the general outline of BCFOs.

It is possible that Evan-Thomas might have sought a meeting with Beatty. However, if Beatty was, for whatever reason, unavailable or unwilling, there was little that Evan-Thomas could have done. Evan-Thomas was a genteel and diffident character and was not one to force himself upon anyone, especially a senior officer.

Beatty's personality and background were significant factors in his management of the BCF, as referred to in the Preface. In practice, he encouraged free-thinking and confidence inspired by his own confidence. It might appear obvious that it was crucial that two such commanders should have met to discuss how they intended to act. However, Beatty took free-thinking and decentralisation of command to dangerous limits by relaxing too much control. The BCF's officers spent most of their afternoons at leisure and it was not impossible — in fact, it was more than likely — that Beatty preferred indulging in "extra-matrimonial entanglements" rather than seeking a meeting with an individual who did not like extrovert characters, let alone one who had married a rich divorcee, both of whom had "extra-matrimonial entanglements".

Those who were being slandered by Beatty and his supporters after the war, found common cause in that fact. This encouraged mutual support, which was often expressed in articles. Given that a few BCF sympathisers

controlled, or at least influenced, the proposed Jutland publications, to deny those with differing views — battlefleet supporters — an expression of them, encouraged an informal, but numerous, movement against Beatty and the BCF. Equally important was that battlefleet supporters out-numbered BCF supporters. In corrupting the Jutland accounts, therefore, Beatty upset more people than he pleased.

Following Evan-Thomas's meeting with Amery, Beatty angered people even further. This was because Evan-Thomas suffered a partial stroke — that was to end his career — a few hours after Beatty had seen to his ejection from Amery's office. It is difficult to doubt that this further lowered Evan-Thomas's opinion of Beatty. Barnard noted that of letters between Evan-Thomas and his wife, Hilda, he was sure that they were all burned. Those of 1922-8 were said to be so "hot" that, when being sent to the British Library, the Library were advised to treat them as reserved.<sup>36</sup> However, Barnard noted that:

"there is no breath of anything adverse about  
Beatty in any of his letters to my father and  
mother throughout the war."<sup>37</sup>

This could just mean that Evan-Thomas wanted to keep his views private. It was also noted that Hilda "came to hate the Navy at the end".<sup>38</sup> Given her husband's experiences and the fact that she was herself not fond of the Navy, this can well be believed.

Since hearing of the proposed publication of the *Narrative*, Evan-Thomas worried over it. However, "he certainly never told anyone

about the row until after he retired".<sup>39</sup> This suited Beatty perfectly. There was a general feeling that the Silent Service should continue to remain silent. That this was not so on Beatty's part, aided a deterioration of relations between Beatty and Evan-Thomas that were never close anyway.

Without their brief interactions at Jutland, there is no evidence to suggest that Beatty and Evan-Thomas would have been mentioned in the same context. Jutland and Beatty had plagued Evan-Thomas since June 1916. Ultimately, they combined to end his career and might well have contributed to his death, aged only 66, in 1928.



## 6. A BCF take-over?

Since 1919, there were suggestions that those who had served in the BCF and then battlefleet under Beatty, having found favour with him and others of similar opinions, were rewarded with promotion when he became First Sea Lord. It was also claimed that he surrounded himself with close service associates in important posts. The implication was that, regardless of an individual's ability, close friendship or other ties with former battlecruiser men had more weight when promotions were decided upon. Especially after the war, this meant, at least to battlefleet sympathisers (as Jellicoe believed), that Beatty's disciples shared high office purely by virtue of their loyalty to him. Towards the end of Beatty's term as First Sea Lord, the *Sunday Express* summed-up the growing public and service feeling against Beatty as the self-styled hero of Jutland:

"His frequent photographs, his cap nautically cocked on one side of his head, his appearance of the great strong man, boomed for his dash and energy by all his friends with frantic talk of the Nelson touch (though anything less like Nelson's than the strategy of Beatty can hardly be imagined), the full-in-the-limelight, the hell-for-leather, slap-dash society's darling, he came to be contrasted with an assumed timid admiral, hiding up in Scapa Flow, enclosing his ships in cotton wool, and afraid to produce that

easy Nile or Trafalgar which every Englishman desired...[Beatty's former associates] have been appointed to the Admiralty because they have been of the Beatty school." <sup>1</sup>

The article went on to state that Beatty had abandoned Evan-Thomas at Jutland because he wanted to fight the 1stSG on his own. Even allowing for journalistic hyperbole, there was much in this article, not least as expression of popular opinion. Bellairs had dedicated his book to Beatty as "the man who will give the Royal Navy a real war staff." <sup>2</sup> He too had expected the Admiralty to be made up of former BCF men and sympathisers and, in 1920, it certainly appeared that Beatty was dominating the Admiralty by surrounding himself with former BCF officers. However, despite his position and the fact that former BCF men were Deputy and Assistant CNS, Beatty encountered problems in implementing his views of Naval reform, but particularly on Jutland. It had seemed to him to be so easy to simply order Harper to make suitable alterations to his 'Record', but this led to involving the First Lord (Long) and Jellicoe's allies in opposing Beatty. They combined to ruin Beatty's immediate plans for the 'Record'. Evidently this "Beatty school" was either not as influential as Bellairs had hoped, or as large. Examining the extent of Beatty's influence on the Royal Navy in the 1920s will lead to an understanding of the ultimate success of Beatty's efforts to establish his view of Jutland in print.

With the recent experience of bitter controversy, when Fisher was First Sea Lord and bickering with Lord Charles Beresford, it was thought that

appointments would be made in a similarly adversarial way to the assumptions made about Beatty — to endorse each others' views within the service, so that the appointments of favourites of these two had a high profile. Some serving from 1904 (when Fisher became First Sea Lord) came to be seen as belonging to some kind of Fisher or Beresford "school" as it was frequently called. This opinion survived and just as those such as Jellicoe, Bacon and Jackson were seen as Fisher's men, so Dreyer, Cecil Burney, Goodenough and Evan-Thomas (amongst many others), came to be seen as Jellicoe men. Chatfield, Brock, Drax, Keyes, Richmond and Dewar, amongst others, were seen to be Beatty men. However, opinions regarding how appointments were made and who might or might not have been seen to have been someone's close followers, were more the result of how appointments and relations were perceived by others than about how they were actually made.

It is not unusual that senior figures in any organisation choose people to administer it with whom they are familiar and in whom they have confidence. Jellicoe did so as C-in-C Grand Fleet and First Sea Lord, as did Beatty in these positions and as commander of the BCF. In making these choices, personal friendship, shared social interests, Naval views and especially service specialisms were involved to varying degrees that are difficult to fully determine due to their inherent complexity.

The Navy in which all officers of this period served, was dominated by the big gun. Critics of the Admiralty and Jellicoe, especially Bellairs and Dewar, held Jellicoe responsible when, as DNO, he maintained "stereotyped



gunlayer's tests...against the advice of those who urged a more realistic system." <sup>3</sup> Bellairs's general criticism was that "tactics were made subordinate to gunnery by the materialist," <sup>4</sup> that is, the study of history and consequent tactical liberation were overwhelmed by the narrow views of material specialists like Jellicoe. Much of the controversy over Jutland stemmed from the struggle to assert the influence of differing specialisms — both material and historical — on operational policy. Many materialists were also gunnery specialists and, by 1919, were senior officers and supporters of Jellicoe. The lack of effectiveness of the use of other weapons at Jutland, such as torpedoes, irked both the Dewars, in the *Staff Appreciation*, and Bellairs, who urged greater tactical freedom in destroyer operations. <sup>5</sup> However, many other specialists were equally desirous as were the historians to usurp the prominence held by gunnery officers in the early 20th Century.

Before the war, Lt. Robert Falcon Scott frequently avoided even walking near to his ship's gunnery Lieutenant, Hubert Dannreuther (later of *Invincible* at Jutland), and although he had nothing against him personally, would not speak to Dannreuther because it was not well-received amongst other torpedo men that the torpedo officer should converse with a gunner. <sup>6</sup> This quasi-hostile inter-specialist friction existed long after Jutland. Similar hostilities are always evident in other large organisations, but common to all in the Navy was a desire for each specialism to assume as much prominence and influence over the service as was possible. The historical champions were no different in principle, but they were hampered in a fundamental way. There was no historical 'specialism' as such and its supporters were dissident

members of the established specialist groups, with all the institutional lack of interest that implied. Neither the *Naval Review* nor the Navy Records Society nor even the War College were as central to Naval society as were HMS *Excellent* or HMS *Vernon* (the torpedo school).

Bellairs and Dewar discussed gunnery, signals and torpedoes and their use at Jutland, but their efforts were all to a single end, to counter the fact that "the one thing lacking was the offensive spirit...in the high places of Admiralty." <sup>7</sup> Aided by historical study — which they would provide — they hoped that Beatty would put that offensive spirit into the Admiralty. Simply because Beatty was First Sea Lord, Bellairs thought that the desired changes espoused by himself, the Dewars, Richmond and other supporters would be implemented, especially with former BCF personnel at the Admiralty to support Beatty. Examining the way in which appointments were made sheds much light upon the extent of the assertions that there was a "Beatty school" and what, if anything, it achieved.

The Navy still suffered from the aftermath of allegations and suspicions that careers were being sabotaged as when Fisher was First Sea Lord. For example, Lt. Barry Domvile had disagreed with Fisher's views on dreadnoughts, subsequently being the apparent victim of a campaign by Fisher to oust him from the service by hook or by crook, although he later reached Flag rank. This was, perhaps, a sign that patronage can also have negative effects. Vice-Admiral Doveton Sturdee (Beresford's former COS and CO 4thBS at Jutland) was the man Fisher held responsible for not releasing the battlecruisers sooner to support Cradock's force in South

America. He went on to preside over victory at the Falkland Islands, which did not please Fisher, who tried hard, but in vain, to prevent Sturdee reaping any reward. With regard to the *Staff Appreciation*, there was some indication that this nature of personal bickering and recrimination might be re-kindled regarding Jutland. It was certainly feared, as shown by Chatfield's and Keyes' concerns over the advisability of publication of the *Staff Appreciation* (seen in Chapter 3). The Fisher-Beresford feud was within living memory to many, especially Chatfield, and the manner in which inter-war promotions were actually made suggested that stability throughout the service was the prime concern, rather than patronage to implement ideas. However, in 1919, promotions were still seen in some way as a continuation of the differences between two factions of the Navy, with the chief proponents in this case polarising around Jellicoe and Beatty and what they represented.

It does not necessarily follow that sharing the views and friendship of one person means that promotion and high office are guaranteed. If this were true, from 1919, Beatty would have filled all posts at the Admiralty with ex-BCF and BF officers who shared his opinions and objectives. However, apart from Chatfield, Brock and later Keyes, the Admiralty was not packed with Beatty men, as a brief glance at the *Navy List* demonstrates (see Appendix 3). Service records also showed that all appointments were made on an individual basis by ability and achievement. Any attempt to make use of personal or service links to establish a pattern leads to many difficulties, principally because the detailed reports on officers are not yet publicly available. However, there is enough to at least provide a good view of how



promotions were made and affected the service.

Chatfield was a well-known supporter of Beatty, so his promotion to Fourth Sea Lord and then ACNS, in 1919, could be said by opponents to have been influenced solely by Beatty. His service record, however, was exemplary, so it was doubtful if he would have needed such patronage alone to succeed. He certainly did not need it before he met Beatty. The only blemish on his record was where he incurred Their Lordships' "severe displeasure" for taking the destroyer *Zebra* up the Thames "at an excessive rate of speed" — on 6th July 1901. After that, he was rapidly promoted Commander and then Captain, and was a highly successful Flag-Captain to both Sir Colin Keppel and then Beatty. For services as Grand Fleet Gunnery Officer he received the KCMG and a good service pension of £100 pa, was appointed ADC to the King, commended for his help at the Washington Conference, was subsequently C-in-C Atlantic and Mediterranean and became First Sea Lord. <sup>8</sup> He would have done well regardless of any political influence.

Walter Cowan was another close, old friend of Beatty and was once his partner in bullying a young cadet, traumatising him so much that he left the service. Rear-Admiral Lewis Bayly noted that Cowan:

"lacks experience at sea. Not a good judge of off[ice]rs or men. Handles his ship v.well, is just-not tactful." <sup>9</sup>

Brock confirmed Cowan's good handling of his ship, which "is in excellent order in all respects, +is a model man of war." <sup>10</sup> Cowan was described

accurately, if unkindly, as a "ferocious midget" <sup>11</sup> which might explain the on board discipline and lack of tact. The service placed much emphasis on leadership and throughout all records for officers in this period, it was this ability that predominated in deciding promotion. Jutland or favouritism were not significant factors. It must be remembered that it was unusual for any admiral to have risen within the service and not to have influenced his subordinates at some point. In 1920, Cowan was recommended for his Baltic command (supporting the White Army forces following the revolution in Russia) by Madden, a Jellicoe supporter. Cowan also reported favourably on Dreyer (a Jellicoe supporter and his former Flag-Captain) in 1923. Regardless of differences of Naval opinions, the leadership element predominated and Beatty's and Jellicoe's supporters did not prejudice each others' careers simply for their respective sympathies. Throughout this, there was no indication at all that there was a "Beatty school" or a gathering of cronies around Beatty, nor, for that matter, one surrounding Jellicoe. Individuals would always have sympathised with one more than the other, but not to the extent that operations or policy would have been affected.

Perhaps the most notable case regarding claims of prejudice in promotions after the war concerned Harper, who suspected that Beatty had been instrumental in preventing his promotion from captain and determining his employment (or lack of it) as a result of the difficulties that arose over Beatty's orders to alter the official 'Record' of the battle of Jutland. Following the end of his work on the 'Record', Harper took command of the battleship *Resolution* from August 1922 until April 1924. Then, he stated that

"much to my surprise, [I] was retained on the Active List." <sup>12</sup> The reason for this surprise was that he suspected that Beatty had orchestrated some plot to prevent his further employment (less so the fact that he might not have felt that his command was successful). During this appointment, however, it was noted that Harper "gives me the impression of being an officer who is little inclined to take responsibility". <sup>13</sup> So, it would seem that there were strong grounds for doubting Beatty's supposed involvement in Harper's promotion. As taking responsibility and demonstrating leadership were essential to the service, Harper seemed to be less suitable than he would have had people believe for further employment as captain at sea or higher promotion. If he shunned responsibility, or was reluctant to take it, what would cause more surprise was the fact that he was retained on the Active List.

In December 1923, Brock (C-in-C Mediterranean) reported to Beatty on Harper, in light of which Harper was considered "for shore appointment only." <sup>14</sup> What this report said in detail is hard to tell, but if it was similar to the above quote (or stronger) and had substance, there cannot be much surprise at the decision. It was rare for this step to be taken, there being less than ten such referrals to the Admiralty from 1919-39. <sup>15</sup> If Beatty had wanted to force Harper to retire or determine his employment, it is hard to see how he could actually have done this. There was a definite chain of command and a procedure for reporting on officers that could not be disturbed or circumvented for personal vendettas. The latter required authority and power that no First Sea Lord ever exercised.

Rear-Admiral Alexander-Sinclair (Com 2ndLCS *Galatea* at Jutland)



noted that Harper:

"Handles his ship with marked ability +is loyal and capable. Possibly he is of rather discontented temperament+is inclined to complain. This may be the reason for the [high] no. of adverse reports on his officers [those under his command not] being above average ability. Average ability." <sup>16</sup>

This, too, would seem to be consistent with other assessments of Harper's abilities. That he was seen to be discontented, could well have been a result of his experiences with the compilation of the 'Record'. At least they must have played some part in contributing to an obviously unhappy state and this affected his work in *Resolution*. Apart from having the dark clouds of Beatty and other senior officers over him, it was decided later (8.3.23) that he would only be retained on the Active List if a favourable report was forthcoming from his C-in-C. <sup>17</sup> Such a move was not unheard of, but was by no means commonplace <sup>18</sup> and was serious enough to come to the attention of the Board. So, there were serious doubts about his suitability even to continue, let alone proceed any higher or further.

Beatty had already satisfied himself that that no unfavourable Jutland account was issued. As long as Harper could not get his way over the account, that was enough for Beatty. Harper's future career was dealt with by forces outside the complete control of Beatty or himself.

On 16th May 1926, Harper was informed that he was considered suitable for employment and, on 3rd June, that he would probably go to a

dockyard. On 25th November, however, he was informed that no employment would be offered to him and, on 1st February 1927, was placed on the Retired List. <sup>19</sup> To Harper:

"This came as no great surprise as Lord Beatty was still in office and his influence in regard to the employment of Flag officers was considerable." <sup>20</sup>

So, more than five years on, Harper still believed himself victimised, but the fact remained that Harper had received negative reports on more than one occasion. Peter Beatty (youngest son), writing to Langhorne Gibson regarding his and Harper's *The Riddle of Jutland*, stated that:

"As to the animosity which has been displayed in the production of this book, I cannot understand why you should be guilty of such; as to your joint author (it is understandable, because my father as First Sea Lord received so unfavourable a report of the qualifications of Admiral Harper for higher command, that he could not recommend his...[promotion])." <sup>21</sup>

This was consistent with other reports. He was only confirming the facts of the reports, but these support the opinion that Harper was not suitably qualified for advancement. Beatty, if he had any say over the matter — which he did not directly — would have to have taken account of such reports.

What is questionable, is the rather abrupt *volte-face* when Harper,

after being told he was suitable for employment, was later informed otherwise. It must be questioned on what authority Harper was told about his future employment (he did not say from whom he learned this). This false reassurance might well have been informal and ill-informed, giving Harper false hopes which led him to suspect a conspiracy when the truth became known to him. The intricacies of conspiracy are often elaborate (not to say implausible) and, especially given the dearth of evidence in Harper's case, conspiracy can be ruled out. However, there is evidence to suggest that with a change of First Sea Lord, Harper would have been employed. Harper, writing to Oswald Frewen, noted that Madden had told him "if I get there you will be given a job" <sup>22</sup> but that Beatty kept on and Harper "faded out". In light of the previous reports on Harper, it would seem that Madden would have secured his employment regardless of Harper's seniors' doubts regarding his suitability. This suggested that Madden felt that Harper had been badly and unfairly treated whilst Beatty was CNS and that a job was in some way compensation for his treatment. This came from someone who sympathised more with Jellicoe and Harper for taking such a stand against Beatty regarding the recording of the events at Jutland. If there is any evidence of favouritism, it is more anti- than pro-Beatty.

With regard to the publication of Harper's accounts of his dealings with Beatty, in 1968, <sup>23</sup> the Second Earl Beatty noted that:

"1. Harper's promotion (lot of hearsay).

2. Suspect unsupported by printed documents." <sup>24</sup>

Although he went to excessive lengths to protect his father's reputation —



often flatly denying the facts, as had his father in the 1920s — one must share Lord Beatty's opinion. There was bound to be much hearsay, yet Harper's troubled relationship with Beatty was coincidental with meagre reports as to his suitability for higher office. One was not a product of the other. In 1927, it was noted that:

"I understand from an officer who knew him intimately that RA Harper has always suffered from an almost insane fear of being found to blame for something." <sup>25</sup>

This certainly supported the nature of the comments above and might have been suggestive as to some of Harper's actions taken regarding the 'Record' of Jutland. After the 'Record' was shelved, Harper went to great pains to ensure that he would not be held responsible for what it said, if it was ever published. His contemporaries thought this slightly irrational, but his surviving papers detailing his actions are accurate documents, little tainted and not corrupted by his dislike of Beatty. <sup>26</sup> Promotions and appointments do not seem to have been influenced by differences over opinions on Jutland as much as Harper believed his case was. Promotion depended largely upon individual ability regardless of where one served, or what opinions they had on Naval matters. As might also be expected, good performances in engagements with the enemy were looked upon favourably. Any claims of bias were more likely to have been the result of individuals' disappointments.

Kenneth Dewar reflected charges of favouritism when he wrote to Herbert Richmond, in late 1916, that:

"Dreyer has been appointed to deal with the submarine question. It shows that such appointments only depend upon the personal friendships and acquaintance of those who happen to be in authority." <sup>27</sup>

This sentiment is common in many organisations outside the Navy — that failure to achieve what is wanted in terms of promotion is often attributed to being out of favour with those who make the decisions. This could be true in some cases, but there is little, if any, evidence to suggest that it was so for the Navy.

Dewar obviously felt differently, that Dreyer's having been Flag-Captain to Jellicoe alone seemed to have secured him the appointment. <sup>28</sup> This, however, ignored the fact that he was thought suitable by others as well. Jellicoe would, in any event, have been foolish if he had felt Dreyer to be suitable, but not allowed his employment in this role simply for fear of charges of favouritism. All promotions, however, could be subjected to the same criticism and all opinions are relative, but Dewar chose not to think that Jellicoe might have had little or nothing to do with Dreyer's appointment — they were condemned in Dewar's mind by their past association alone. However, leadership was crucial and Dreyer received favourable reports on his abilities in this respect.

Dewar's comment also showed obvious symptoms of someone evidently considered by his contemporaries and superiors to be unsuitable for a post, carping at those that were, purely for personal comfort. Upon

receiving the list of promotions, in late 1916, Richmond wrote to Dewar that it was:

"A very short list, one half of them [from] battleships of the Grand Fleet...Promotion is reserved for the ablest officers: the ablest officers are in the Grand Fleet...How satisfactory it is to know [-] that the talent of this Navy is all in one place: and how stimulating...to know that if we had more ability we should be in the Grand Fleet!

It's a rum world." <sup>29</sup>

There did seem to be a perception that the Grand Fleet (irrespective of battleships or battlecruisers) was seen to comprise the *élite* of the Navy, both in personnel and weaponry — at least to some outside wishing to get inside. This view was mostly imaginary, with both seemingly refusing to analyse themselves as harshly (or honestly) as they did others. All their comments about favouritism could be said about themselves by opponents. Dewar replied to Richmond:

"The Grand Fleet is as you say the only path to early promotion at present...like calls to like and in the junior promotions this time we can plainly discuss the Jacksons, Jellicoes...of the next generation! The condition of original sin attached to those who were not in the Grand Fleet at the beginning of the war is somewhat difficult to



overcome...I asked Calthorpe the Second Sea Lord to send me to one of the GF ships which was vacant at the time-the *Tiger* I think-From what he told me I could only guess that the decks of GF ships had to be scrubbed in a certain way...[and that] could not be learned by an outsider like myself." <sup>30</sup>

This echoed similar feelings whilst giving an example (in which there was some irony). From the frequent correspondence between the two, it is evident that Richmond was not pleased simply with being captain of the pre-dreadnought *Commonwealth*, with the 3rdBS on the Thames, and both himself and Dewar felt that his talents were under-used. This doubtless added to feelings of being side-lined. During 1916-7, Corbett often told Richmond that he was "keeping you in Hankey's mind" <sup>31</sup> for a job (seemingly historical) more suited to his interests and talents. Instead, in April 1917, Richmond obtained a posting to the Grand Fleet, briefly commanding *Conqueror*, 2ndBS. It is not surprising that Richmond and Dewar felt aggrieved to be denied the appointments that they desired, but there were good reasons for this.

In Richmond's case, he had only himself to blame for his successes and failures. As is common, he took most of the credit for his successes and blamed others for his failure to get the positions he wanted. He was a rare example of both a serving officer and historian of some ability, as was Dewar, to some extent. It has been claimed that:

"His mistake was to come out as a 'brain' at too early a rank...One can understand, perhaps, why the authoritarians sought to sideline Richmond away from the centre of power." <sup>32</sup>

It is a view common to historians who like to champion Richmond's sailor-scholar abilities, but it ignores how his seniors and contemporaries (who knew him better) viewed him, and more importantly, exactly why he was seen to have been side-lined. Admiral John de Robeck noted that he "would make a v.g. staff officer." <sup>33</sup> In April 1918, a suitable position became available, as the newly-formed Director of Training and Staff Duties. For someone with an interest in history, and supporter of Beatty, this promised a sound beginning for the desired reforms in tactics and education — if managed correctly. Admiralty Secretary, Oswyn Murray, tried many times to dissuade the First Lord (Sir Eric Geddes) from appointing Richmond, on the grounds that the fleet "would be against it." <sup>34</sup> As DTSD, his views were felt to be too controversial and he left the Division at the end of 1918 to take up command of the battleship *Erin*. On 1st December 1919, he was back in the TSD, but not as Director. Later, in 1931, after a formal reprimand for expressing his views (in two articles in *The Times*, November 1929, regarding smaller navies and smaller capital ships) he retired at his own request.

Although he received favourable comments for his intellectual abilities, the leadership element was not so prominent. Certainly, he did not seem to be able to settle in those posts for which he craved. Whatever mistakes he made, coming out as a "brain" too early was not one of them; persistently

upsetting senior officers was. Intelligent he certainly was, but although he was a "clever boy from a family of high intellectual ability", <sup>35</sup> he had evidently not the temperament or persuasive abilities that successful reformers possess. His historical work was thorough, but it would seem that he learned little of inter-personal politics from it.

As Beatty was later aware, Richmond had radical views regarding the future of capital ships (as seen in Chapter 3) and that such a free-thinker as Beatty had reservations in allowing him official expressions of his views, shows that Dr. Gordon is totally wrong to feel that authoritarians "sought to sideline" him. This might easily be imagined, but the very person that Dr. Gordon claims that Richmond would naturally "gravitate" towards, the least authoritarian — Beatty, sought to distance himself from Richmond in the cause of using Jutland to endorse his tactical beliefs. After all, it was some measure of the suspicion that surrounded Richmond, that most of the Fleet was against his appointment as DTSD and he did not succeed in the positions he frequently told Dewar that he wanted and eventually succeeded in obtaining.

Richmond's service record sheds more light upon his career path and gives little evidence of a vendetta. He had commanded *Dreadnought*, but subsequently commanded only two second class protected cruisers, *Vindictive* and *Furious*, <sup>36</sup> then served as Assistant DNO. Throughout his career he also turned-down an Antarctic mission, the command of *Iris* (second class protected cruiser) and a post on the staff of the Naval War College, Portsmouth. <sup>37</sup> It can be understood that commanding small ships did not give



him sufficient outlet for his abilities, but if he wanted to further his career anywhere in the service, refusing just one position was not at all helpful. Throughout his career, he criticised the system of training Cadets and commented that education was too badly planned and disconnected. Ultimately, his failure to progress was due to his refusal of certain posts and because he was "incapable of subduing his critical faculties".<sup>38</sup> A truly intelligent reformer would have known when, and when not, to have voiced his beliefs.

Subsequent events only showed that Richmond did not truly recognise the technological nature of warfare, nor the economic and political dynamics of peacetime Naval competition, which led him to pursue a mistaken concept of arms limitation that was both impractical and unhelpful to those struggling to maintain the security of the Empire.<sup>39</sup> Chatfield later wrote anonymously, in *The Times*, that Richmond and his small ships theory had a malign influence on the service.<sup>40</sup> For an alleged forward-thinker and radical, claiming that long-range gunnery did not give accuracy, was not a proposition that was seriously entertained in the 1920s. Although Richmond demonstrated competent analytical skills, they were subordinated to his radical, deliberately critical personal opinions on Naval issues.

Richmond may not have realised the full extent to which his views were considered potentially dangerous. He was never popular amongst his contemporaries. In 1917, the Prime Minister (Lloyd George) privately canvassed Richmond's Naval views, during which Richmond recommended that Jellicoe be replaced by Wemyss<sup>41</sup> as part of making the Admiralty seem

more aggressive in its approach to the war. Had others been aware of Richmond's role here, his reputation would not have been enhanced in most other sailors' views. Thus, it can well be believed that the Fleet was against him, but he only had himself to blame for this.

During and after the war, Richmond was highly critical of Admiralty policy. In 1913, he edited the NRS volume *The Loss of Minorca*, the introduction to which was a typical expression of Richmond's criticism of the Admiralty. Even though the Admiralty being pilloried was over 150 years old, it could just as easily have been the Admiralty of 1913, which Richmond probably intended. Promotion depended on other considerations than just ability and the desire to hold important offices, suitability was largely judged by leadership skills or their potential. Richmond's own actions disqualified himself from significant offices. He was not the victim of any anti-Richmond campaign; his own actions persistently put him out of favour with his seniors and contemporaries.

The irony in his letter to Dewar, was that it was perfectly reasonable to assess Richmond, on the basis of his insufficient qualifications, as not the most able or most suitable of officers for the Grand Fleet. This was naturally unpalatable to him and he found it difficult to admit to this. When he stated that "like calls to like" it was clear what he meant — that someone gathers his cronies around him — yet it was more correct to say that those with similar views will always attract support and friendship from others. This was just as true of Dewar and his associates. Richmond and Dewar complained, in 1916-7, because their views differed from those of Jellicoe and his supporters,

but when Beatty became C-in-C and then First Sea Lord, they could not use the charge of cronyism for their failures any more. All this doubtless fuelled Richmond's desire for reform and dislike of higher authority. This manifested itself throughout his writing.

Dewar, in the above letter, seemed just as reluctant to accept similar criticism by failing to grasp the subtlety of Calthorpe's comment and what it implied. He was being told in the face of obvious persistence, that he was not considered desirable for this post. Indeed, it could be argued that this inability to sense Calthorpe's meaning was evidence that this judgement was correct. Dewar and Richmond believed some kind of secret club existed from which they were barred simply because their faces did not fit, but the only debarment was lack of suitability, which was frequently commented upon by their seniors.

After the war, it was felt that when Beatty became First Sea Lord, he would bring with him his trusty followers from the battlecruisers and *Queen Elizabeth* and reward them with significant positions, just as it was felt that Jellicoe had done in 1917. Evidence indicated that the opposite was true and many important positions at the Admiralty (see Appendix 3) reflected the respective sizes of the battlefleet to that of the BCF, in that those who served in the battlefleet at Jutland and after out-numbered those in the same positions from the BCF by over 4:1 between 1919 and 1938. It is worth noting that of the ships in service directly after Jutland, there were 30 battleships (excluding *Dreadnought*) and 7 battlecruisers, so the respective sizes of the two forces is mirrored at the Admiralty (roughly 4:1). There were others who



were not in Grand Fleet positions at the time of Jutland who also held these positions. The general conclusion is that "zeal", ability and leadership together, led to promotion and Beatty certainly did not pack the Admiralty with his henchmen. In fact, by selecting a few, and it was only a few, old shipmates, he did nothing that had not been done by others many times before and he certainly did not unbalance the service in making his selections. Overall, those of the BF, BCF and those outside in 1916, held subsequent posts in proportion to their numbers.

For the first three years of Beatty's time as First Sea Lord, the posts of DCNS and ACNS were filled with close associates from battlecruiser days: Keyes, Brock and Chatfield. There was little protest at this from those supporting Jellicoe. For Beatty to have held onto Keyes and Chatfield for 6-7 years, would have been to deny them opportunities for different experiences and, therefore, advancement. He would not have wanted to do this and to imagine that this might be so (as did Bellairs and many newspapers) is fallacious. Both Brock and Chatfield later became C-in-C Mediterranean, advancement which would have been retarded if they had stayed where they were until Beatty retired. Beatty did lend his support to Keyes' bid to succeed Madden as First Sea Lord. <sup>42</sup> For the first few years after Beatty's succession as CNS, Keyes, Chatfield and Brock were the only members of this "Beatty school" in influential positions in the Admiralty, situations for which they were admirably qualified on their own merits. Beatty's secretary (Frank Spickernell) remained with him until retirement and only Seymour, as Additional Naval Assistant, was appointed by association. In light of this, the

claims of a Beatty/BCF dominated Admiralty cannot be sustained.

Towards the end of his period in office, Beatty's Deputy and Assistant were Frederic Field, Dreyer and Pound, all battlefleet (and Jellicoe) men.

Dreyer:

"was a strong supporter of Jellicoe; but he knew Beatty well...[he] had a great admiration for Beatty." <sup>43</sup>

So, if the popularly believed picture of battlefleet personnel not liking battlecruiser personnel were true, then this would hardly have been the case. An important point is that Dreyer, Chatfield, Keyes, Pound and others might have favoured either Jellicoe or Beatty, but all were adaptable to work with each other. As Brock, Chatfield and Keyes confirmed regarding the *Staff Appreciation*, they put service unity before supporting their own beliefs. This was also true of other officers.

The only recipient of Beatty's long-lasting personal support with regard to his work was his secretary, the Navy's youngest captain, Frank Spickernell. It was by no means unusual that an officer and his secretary formed a long working relationship. It would, indeed, have been unusual if the relationship was good, which in this case it was, to have broken it simply because a certain period of time had passed, or that it was time for others to take turns. Following Beatty's retirement, Sir Frank Spickernell became secretary to Lord Alfred Mond at the Mond Nickel Company and Beatty later became godfather to Spickernell's daughter. <sup>44</sup>

To further prove the absence of such a rift between two schools, as

imagined by the *Sunday Express*, Chatfield said of Dreyer that he "should be of immense value to the service in future. Ability exceptional".<sup>45</sup> Chatfield's assessments of any officer's suitability for promotion were based on other factors than allegiance to his old chief. Chatfield, in 1930, noted that H.W. Parker (Captain of *Benbow* at Jutland):

"is inclined to ride roughshod over those who oppose his views +this is a serious defect in his character which limits his suitability for the highest commands in peace."<sup>46</sup>

Once more, a serious character defect adversely affected Parker's leadership qualities. Chatfield also felt that Drax was a little shy and therefore not ideally suited to be a great, inspiring leader, but that he was at least a "leader in thought," which was something.<sup>47</sup> If the assumption of inter-school rivalry and cronyism is examined again, people would expect from Chatfield glowing reviews of Drax and damning ones of Dreyer, but simple honesty prevailed. Although Drax was considered able, his apparent reluctance to present himself as a forceful character was an issue of leadership — the most desirable element. The important factor was finding suitable positions, which matched individuals' abilities and desires with the needs and good of the service. This was always foremost in senior officers' minds. Personal differences there might have been, but these did not adversely affect any advancement where it was justified.

Kenneth Dewar's record did not record the disfavour in which he perceived he was held, but did note some areas to which it was felt he was



better suited. Pakenham noted that he was:

"Somewhat wanting in experience with the  
working Navy, powerful, attentive,  
+considerate...Average ability." <sup>48</sup>

Despite what Dewar felt, the comment on his lack of fleet experience was common, a remark made by those who knew him better than any historian (Dewar did lack practical experience). He might have argued, however, that this was not due to want of trying to get into a prominent position. Two other comments are also worth noting:

"He does not unfortunately possess the power of  
handling offrs. and men+is out of sympathy with  
his ship's company. His great and understated  
ability would be of more use to the service in  
organising and staff appts" -Culme-Seymour

"he is perhaps uncompromising & occasionally  
unsympathetic to people with slow brains.  
Leadership not very striking-not sufficiently  
sympathetic: influence considerable owing to  
ability & power of expression: tact considerable in  
spite of his strong opinions and anxiety to reform"

-Hotham. <sup>49</sup>

All of these emphasised leadership. Far from being destructive, Culme-Seymour (to whose father Jellicoe had been Flag-Commander) was suggesting how best Dewar could serve the service. He might not have been a

potentially great leader, but others were not necessarily great organisers or reformers — which was also said of Richmond. Contrary to many opinions expressed about his abilities and nature, he was seemingly considered tactful despite an obvious forceful personality, especially where reform (a favourite concern) was concerned. In many ways an individual's method of expression can be seen as disruptive, regardless of content, especially if it is forceful and dramatic. This often tends to count against the cause, even if it has much to commend it in itself. Richmond, and, to some extent, the Dewars, continually showed how not to express opinions for easy acceptance and seemed to take some delight in this. Richmond and the Dewars might have felt that, as few seemed to take notice of them, the only solution left was to be dramatic, but anyone doing this must have known how the service would react, especially its senior, conservative figures.

What was to be avoided in the service as a whole, was the wild expression of controversial views or comments which could be disruptive of discipline. Regardless of how well-intended any comments might have been, or how correct, the fact of having to maintain discipline on a daily basis was highly important, which people often forget when they support great causes. Failing to approach reform in a manner suitable to the service it is intended to improve can easily cause serious problems, and any who make rash or erroneous comments which could be dangerous, naturally cast doubt over their ability to handle men or situations properly; two important qualities if promotion is desired. In light of the incident on the *Royal Oak* when Dewar was captain, the comments above about his not very striking leadership could

be said to have been proved. This was further evidence that Dewar's advancement depended upon his ability to lead and that he was not a victim of some vendetta. In connection with this, Rear-Admiral Collard's (RA 1stBS Mediterranean) record noted that:

"the regrettable incidents leading to [the] trial in question were largely occasioned by [a] lack of self-control+ particularly of temper on his part." <sup>50</sup>

Again, this emphasised leadership skill. Chatfield reported favourably on Charles Forbes (Jellicoe's Flag-Commander at Jutland) along with many others. <sup>51</sup> He also chose former BCF member William James as his COS in the Mediterranean. Howard Kelly felt that James was not quite First Sea Lord material, but, curiously, that his wife would help socially in any appointment. <sup>52</sup> James was an unusual figure in assessing his Jutland sympathies. He served in the battleship *Benbow* as Flag-Commander to Sturdee at Jutland, but he had only held this post for a day, having come from *Queen Mary* on 30th May. His sympathies were very much with the BCF and Beatty, but it shows how difficult it is to know for certain if serving under someone necessarily meant that their views were shared. By contrast, Hubert Dannreuther, the BCF member entrusted by Beatty to take the BCF's plans to the Admiralty in 1916, was a supporter of Jellicoe.

Lt. William Tennant, in his lecture *Jutland, some suggested lessons*, in addition to points made regarding the battle itself, stated that:

"In these days of fearful competition for



promotion...do we not see officers...unwilling to  
take responsibility if it can be handed onto  
someone else?" <sup>53</sup>

This echoes a trait common to all organisations, that there exist many who are satisfied with their lot and have little, if any, desire for rapid promotion or more responsibility in their jobs than the minimum required. A job may not be seen as an opportunity for advancement of position, but a post where if nothing serious goes wrong, then a comfortable life will ensue. In any event, not all want to, or can, proceed at the same pace and an apparent failure to be promoted might be nothing more than reluctance and misfortune, not bias. Should anyone be unwilling or unable to work towards further rank, one cannot criticise others who do want promotion and are prepared to work for it, for achieving their goals and promotion. Richmond, for example, carped at Dreyer, but the latter received many favourable reports, whereas Richmond did not.

Charges of favouritism were ill-founded and almost always stemmed from disappointment or frustration. The charge that old acquaintances flocked together, should not be surprising and can always be made if two or more are seen to have any ideological, personal or service connections. Any charges of being out of favour (as with Richmond) usually indicate a trend of being seen to be unsuitable or disruptive. That Richmond was seen to be side-lined, only shows a misunderstanding of the fact that extensive reports noted his unsuitability for senior commands. To try to assert this to be a deliberate ploy by authoritarians, borders on accepting highly implausible

conspiracy theories. It can be seen quite easily from service records and the *Navy List*, that many individuals from the BCF or Grand Fleet served together at some point, however briefly, but never for very long and there was nothing unusual in this within the Navy. The respective sizes of the battlefleet and the BCF are reflected in the ratio of Admiralty positions taken by those with each background in the inter-war period, and the large part of the Navy that owed neither allegiance. Promotions to posts after the war reflected a balance of officers from the service as a whole, with no noticeable bias to any area.

Throughout an examination of promotions, there is no evidence that Jutland played a significant part, nor that cliques surrounding Jellicoe and Beatty exercised influence in appointments. In order to have instituted the system that Bellairs imagined, or hoped for, it would have taken an extensive and elaborate network of personnel to ensure, let alone convince, senior officers that certain officers be lined-up for positions under men whose sympathies they shared. The lack of this indicated that Beatty did not attempt to give prominent positions to those who supported his objectives simply because of the fact that they had served with him in the BCF, nor did he have the authority to do this extensively. Rewarding sympathisers with important jobs was not the way in which he intended to carry through his reforms.

After becoming First Sea Lord, Beatty lost close control over the Fleet. Beatty simply did not have the numerical strength or the authority to position favourites in Admiralty posts to encourage his ideas. After becoming

First Sea Lord, he also had other important responsibilities. He would not be the first to have been diverted from his earlier aims by the demands of senior office. The RAF was a constant problem, especially in relation to the struggle for a sufficient Fleet Air Arm, as was financing a Navy to defend the Empire from no immediate threat.

Even if Beatty had packed the Admiralty with his acolytes, it would have taken some time for their views to be adopted, if they ever would have been. Having Richmond responsible for training promised much, but Richmond himself ruined that opportunity. Because the First Sea Lord could not directly influence all departments, he needed men like Richmond in subordinate posts to influence others. As was stated in the Introduction, the men who actively supported Naval reform were very few in number. As Tennant noted, in his lecture, many officers did not want extra responsibilities or to cause any agitation. The majority of officers continued to be conservatives and were apathetic to the reforms desired by a few, largely unknown, individuals. Many of Beatty's supporters, such as Richmond and Dewar, were not thought capable for senior posts, which weakened the overall reform effort. Numerical strength was not with Beatty, so he could not thus organise the institutional acceptance of his views. Because of the lack of bureaucratic domination of Beatty and his supporters (Bellairs, Dewar, Richmond and others), they encouraged, via the histories based on selective evidence and interpretation, a belief in the view that Jutland showed the defects of current practice — a situation to which they had the remedy. The only serious hope for reform after the war, was in portraying the fallacies in



need of correction to as large an audience as possible. Jutland, reformers thought, was a widely-accepted example of events that should have proceeded better.

A major problem for the reformers, however, was the manner in which they made their case. Reformers are often viewed with suspicion for behaving differently from the majority. They often fall into the trap of appealing to those they wish to convert in a manner that is neither understandable nor palatable. Beatty, Richmond and the Dewars were pleased with partisan accounts that supported their views, as has been seen, but that was their failing. The reformers did not have to be convinced, the mass of the service did. Bellairs, Richmond and Dewar were frustrated with the current service, but this frustration was directed into accounts that, to their target audience, seemed to be constructed simply to insult Jellicoe and the many thousands who shared his views.

The fact that Jutland was not a cataclysmic defeat also failed to help the reformers' cause. Beatty and his supporters, throughout the 1920s, met with a growing rebuttal of their partisan views, in books and articles, from those whom they aimed to convert. Indeed, by 1927, when Beatty's term as First Sea Lord ended, much public and service opinion was sympathetic to Jellicoe. In the early 1920s, Beatty's influence over the Jutland histories had set in motion a counter-reaction for which support was overwhelming. Ultimately, it overwhelmed the reformers. The reformers' partisan accounts reflected a perception of bureaucratic weakness rather than strength. Although there were many improvements in the Admiralty under Beatty's

leadership, it cannot be said that he fostered the kind of major reform that Richmond and the Dewars wanted. Perhaps this was just as well. As Jellicoe's supporters were keen to point-out, Beatty and his acolytes had not performed with the distinction that they would have wished in the war just past, hence the need to doctor the official account to maintain the First Sea Lord's prestige. With his authority thus reinforced, Beatty could act as the professional head of a broad church of policy makers responsible for making Naval policy in the 1920s. The Admiralty under Beatty was a much more successful organisation than the BCF had ever been.

## Conclusion.

The controversy surrounding Jutland scarcely affected the service in any major way. Some important operational lessons were learned and implemented soon afterwards, such as in ammunition handling. However, all the major difficulties regarding signalling, the latent ambiguity in the detail of orders, cooperative understanding within and between ships, and in tactics and strategy, had not been resolved. It would take disarmament and reduced spending, along with aircraft development and technological advances that could benefit all fighting ships to alter the Navy significantly, in terms of size, structure, types of ships and operational ideas.<sup>1</sup> After 1945, Kenneth Dewar was still enthusiastically advocating greater use of history with the aim of formulating flexible operational policy and ideas.<sup>2</sup> Whilst this was admirable, he failed to refer to the material changes made in the inter-war Navy and especially during WWII.

When Kenneth Dewar was writing the *Staff Appreciation*, in 1920/1, he was advocating Beatty's basic ideas so that they might be widely implemented within the service. However, by 1939, the Navy was much smaller than it had been in 1919 and would subsequently have to deal with varied situations in many theatres. That alone aided the greater freedom of action and adaptation to the practicalities of war that Dewar had advocated. Dewar had failed to fully appreciate that Britain's strategic position in WWI — necessitating most of the Grand Fleet being based in the North Sea — was as significant a factor as was Jellicoe's apparent reluctance to seek to engage the fleeing HSF. As well as his favouring centralisation in fleet movements,



Jellicoe's difficulties were compounded by the large numbers of ships that it was necessary to coordinate. That fact alone increased the likelihood of misunderstandings and has been understated ever since. It is now recognised that the Grand Fleet was a controversial concept before the First World War. Doubts were expressed about the ability to be controlled by a single Flag officer. The HSF, despite German protestations of defending any future empire, was designed solely for North Sea combat. After Jutland, Jellicoe's tactics were seen as limiting and his behaviour too cautious, but it was not technologically possible for him to have improved upon the wireless, searchlights, or flags signals that were then in use to enable more effective coordination. Even if more could have been done to clarify how the fleet would be coordinated in battle, contemporary technology would have had to be relied upon. The use of initiative was one thing, but that was of little utility in coordinating 150 ships, most of which were beyond visual range of each other. There were some things that initiative could not overcome. Historical study and the use of initiative were not the miracle cures that Dewar believed. Dewar had thought this to be so, because he allowed his dislike of Jellicoe's views to blind him to all the difficulties that Jellicoe faced during the war. Subsequently, Dewar only commented upon those difficulties that he thought Beatty might have dealt with better, but even then, what Beatty might have done was only conjectural. Above all, Dewar and his supporters could not guarantee that the use of initiative would always prove superior to obedience to signals. Initiative was a much-discussed point during and after the war, but its failure to gain widespread acceptance into

operational doctrine was because many realised the potential difficulties if individuals had incompatible views of how initiative was to be used. This had been a feature in the BCF — that anticipating others' actions caused confusion — so much so that many actually took refuge in obedience to specific signals despite Beatty's encouragement of initiative.

Furthermore, many, such as Dewar, in the 1920s, criticised Jellicoe and his supporters without realising that the same difficulties of coordination and awareness between 150 ships that plagued Jellicoe in trying to bring the battlefleet to action also plagued Scheer as he tried to extricate himself from it. Beatty, via Bellairs and the Dewars, tried to style the argument about battlefleet deployment as one where Jellicoe bungled his approach to a fleet action whilst Scheer nimbly fled. This diverted attention from his role in the BCF and implicitly admitted, despite the content of the proposed forewords to Harper's 'Record', that the battlefleet action was more significant than the battlecruiser action. It was, therefore, contradictory to assert that the BCF played the significant part, which Beatty did when it suited his own image, when he sought to criticise Jellicoe and the battlefleet, asserting that he had prepared the Germans preliminary to Jellicoe delivering the *coup de grâce*. It was the failure of the battlefleet to do this which showed that Beatty realised, but would not admit, that the BCF had not played the significant part. Together with this disappointment and disbelief, Beatty could easily imagine the failure to have been Jellicoe's.

In 1919, Harper threatened to ruin this belief by stating that there were faults on both sides. Beatty's attempts to prevent the true picture

emerging had begun with his efforts, in 1916, to control what was said to the public. However, in 1919, the same restrictions on publishing what had happened did not exist and Harper had discovered much to argue that Beatty's actual role was not as favourable as he had claimed. The suppression of accuracy in the proposed official publications and its substitution for Beatty's preferred version of events led to his public image being greatly enhanced, usually at others' expense.

This self-image was highly important to Beatty on its own, but when used to support his own operational principles, it was important to show that personal determination and freedom of action were vital for success. Therefore, the action at Jutland had to be seen to reflect this — that the battlecruiser action and the BCF had performed with distinction, whereas the battlefleet had not (at least not as much). However, this view existed only in the minds of Beatty and his supporters. Opponents of Beatty's views realised that initiative had failed real tests, such as Dogger Bank and Jutland, not hypothetical ones. It was one reason why the service was not enthusiastic about adopting the BCF's principles.

Once Beatty's attempts to stifle expression of views contrary to his own became known, this caused a counter-movement. This then led Beatty, via the *Narrative*, to assert even more forcefully than he had previously what he believed to be true about his and the BCF's role in the war. The movement against Beatty then increased. Officers who had hitherto remained silent now publicly defended Jellicoe and the battlefleet. This revealed the feeling that the service at large realised that Beatty had not performed as well as he had



publicly claimed, but that feeling was denied expression on two counts. Beatty was First Sea Lord and senior to many, who would defer to that authority, and many shared a dislike of public disputes, especially where personal criticism was made to no practical effect. The public, however, knew little more than what publications had told them. Therefore, in the early 1920s, they believed that Beatty was the hero he claimed to be.

Had Beatty allowed publication of Harper's 'Record', in 1920, it might have reduced the likelihood of any subsequent disputes becoming so embittered. However, it might also have resulted in an unfavourable view of the BCF and Beatty emerging in 1920, which Beatty might have found difficult to rectify. By 1920, Beatty had much public support and he was somewhat psychologically disposed towards encouraging public adulation regardless of whether or not it was justified. Few took exception to the BCF being shown in a favourable light, but they did take exception to others' roles being under-played and disparaged. Beatty wanted his role at Jutland to be legitimised in official works regardless of whether or not it was supported by any evidence.

This work, therefore, has examined why this was so — Beatty's sensitivity to faults in his command of the BCF — and exactly how Beatty sought to force his opinions by influencing the histories. It also reveals that although Beatty's efforts to influence the official accounts were known, the influence of this upon later works has not been sufficiently recognised. After 1925, much of the passion over Jutland waned. It was realised that Beatty had not done so well at Jutland, but this conclusion, although accurate, was

arrived at largely as a sympathetic response to the previously harsh manner in which Jellicoe had been dealt with in print, not an analysis of the evidence. What receives little mention here, are Beatty's roles as C-in-C Grand Fleet (1916-19) and as First Sea Lord (1919-27). This is largely because Jutland was the main issue with which Beatty persisted so strongly, but also because there had not been any subsequent actions to significantly support his operational principles. In itself, this is important. Beatty did not want excessive centralisation of mundane issues, but the basic principles of freedom that governed the BCF appeared to many within as being only applicable to actions with the enemy. There is little evidence that Beatty succeeded in encouraging initiative in all aspects, or that he realised that this had not been achieved. Had initiative been practised on a daily basis, it might have been better used when action arrived.

If he was to succeed in fostering a favourable public image and encouraging reform, Beatty had to stand or fall by how Jutland was perceived. As C-in-C GF, Beatty made little significant improvement upon Jellicoe's operational principles and attempts to suggest otherwise, such as those made by Dr. Gordon, were considerably overstated.<sup>3</sup> In short, the only example that Beatty could have used to convincingly support his image was Jutland. As was seen in the Preface, Beatty's desire to "annihilate" the 1stSG showed that action in battle was how he judged success, rather than skill in administration or strategy. Only annihilation in battle was satisfactory to Beatty. He was seemingly unimpressed by the HSF's self-annihilation in June 1919.

It has been stated that Jutland dominated the Navy's thinking in the

inter-war years, but the disputes dealt with here had little direct relevance to this.<sup>4</sup> However, Naval disputes did have some impact. Kenneth Dewar seemed to have failed to realise that although his views were not widely adopted, the general controversial atmosphere surrounding the whole war at sea did go some way towards the partial realisation of his aims. Discussing Jutland, personal performances and the war as a whole stimulated critical thinking. It was often stifled by personal interest, passion for a point of view, and was rendered largely ineffectual by limiting studies to these aspects, but it had been an avowed aim of the historians to increase critical powers. What was not palatable to Dewar, was that critical thinking could also lead to arguments being constructed against his case. Richmond and the Dewars believed that once the Navy was shown the potential utility of history, it would lead to others endorsing their own views. It did not do so as much as they would have liked, because they could not predict or control how these desired and newly-developed critical powers would be used by others. As they did not want officers to be rigid adherents to any ideas, this also applied to support of history. Both had to accept that opinion might form against them. They were reluctant to accept this, often believing dissenters to be misinformed, misguided, or intellectually deficient.

The war had certainly indicated areas in need of development and improvement. Subsequently, discussion on Naval matters did learn from the past, but not obviously, which Dewar did not recognise. The missed opportunities of the war had been hard-learned lessons, but the most important factor that Dewar, Richmond and others did not realise, was that



there was a widespread awareness of the fact that the Navy should adapt to possible and real future circumstances. They also failed to realise that the Navy had indeed already done this in 1914. What was overlooked by Beatty, the Dewars and Richmond was the fact that both the British *and* Germans were not as proficient in manoeuvring most of their respective fleets together in action as they would have liked. Each had only one opportunity to demonstrate this and neither had performed particularly well. Beatty and Hipper, however, had more than one experience of action and this showed that Beatty had not only performed no better than had Jellicoe at Jutland, but that he had repeated previous mistakes. At Jutland, this was very much to Hipper's advantage, which Hipper contrived to realise. Adapting to the requirements of war was a familiar theme of Beatty's, the Dewars' and Richmond's. This required means and opportunity, that is, some real indication of exactly to what, and how, one should adapt. The criticism of these three against centralisation and obedience to orders appeared, to their opponents, dangerous and ill-founded. They were thought dangerous on the grounds of a loss of over all discipline, but, importantly, in an ability to coordinate fleet movements. The BCF's experiences did not suggest that their much-vaunted initiative in action amounted to a more effective system. If anything, they suggested that the BCF's system was worse.

The historians and reformers also overlooked the fact that the strategic situation in the war was a real solution to a real problem. Opponents of history, or those with no interest, were bewildered to be told by Richmond, Bellairs and Dewar that history led to principles and these led to effective

operational policies. The historians' principles seemed to be directed towards hypothetical situations and possible scenarios. Their opponents simply reacted to the reality of the war. This might not have been executed as effectively as it could have been, but the reformers could not provide a convincing alternative. When the reformers made a case, it was directed, with apparent hostility, against the current scenario. This appeared, to the reformers' opponents, to neglect an allowance of all the strategic and tactical factors involved which had to be dealt with in reality, in favour of selected points that were used solely for criticism. There was some element of truth in this, because history was only useful to reformers if certain aspects of it supported their views and aims. Any inconvenient aspects were omitted from discussion. This selective approach was realised by others, so it was not surprising that the history as portrayed by the Dewars and Richmond was not enthusiastically endorsed. Those not interested in history also showed that they realised that the selective use of evidence was not good for any subject — including history. The historians ignored this and did not credit their opponents with the intelligence to have realised this.

Many officers thought that they were sufficiently aware of Naval policy without needing to study it formally. The loss of ships resulting from the Washington Treaty concentrated thought on future planning, what the service was expected to do and could achieve. That no obvious changes were made in the early 1920s, which irked Dewar and Richmond, was essentially because there were no obvious or immediate reasons to do so, nor indications of how exactly to change. Indeed, most countries did not expect another war for at

least ten years.

The use of a work showing the lessons that Beatty, the Dewars and Richmond believed that Jutland had to teach was instituted primarily to endorse basic principles of freedom of action. However, this increasingly came to be realised independently of the Dewars and Richmond, but not overtly. A future action like Jutland also became increasingly unlikely. In 1917, an aircraft had landed on board a ship under way, which led to the commissioning of carriers with flush flight decks that could launch and recover aircraft without stopping. Not only would scouting over greater distances be possible (even if reliably reporting the information over such distances remained a problem), but so would the means of delivering an attack. The potential to carry-out such attacks and defend against them had to be considered. The Navy did not find the RAF's control over Naval aircraft easy to cope with, or the perception that, in future, the most important ships might well be only vehicles for the deployment of aircraft.

Although the Jutland works of the 1920s understandably concentrated upon the battle and the prewar development of the service, they faltered in their attempts to serve an obvious didactic purpose. Works favouring Beatty were especially critical of the battlefleet's conduct at Jutland and urged its examination to teach lessons, but this all had a familiar ring to it. Had the works thought about the Naval future and how to use Jutland to help the service adapt to be more familiar with flexibility, they might have been better received, both as critiques of the battle and persons involved, and as Naval doctrine. As it was, most appeared to be retrospective criticism to no



purposeful end. Richmond had made much of the fact that Naval history had been little more than a celebration of heroic deeds, but the presentation of Jutland, in the 1920s, appeared as an indulgent squabble. A good opportunity to draw parallels between Jutland and other actions to concentrate upon generally applicable principles was the historians' main aim, but these parallels were not made. The accounts of the Dewars and Bellairs were just as limited in their approach as the previous histories which they criticised. In the early 20th Century, it was wondered what was the relevance of the history of sailing ships. After 1919, many wondered what was the relevance of works on Jutland that only picked-over certain defects whilst being highly critical of certain individuals.

After making so much of the potential utility of history, Kenneth Dewar (as seen in Chapter 3) had allowed his own bias towards Beatty too much expression, which all readers noticed. Richmond would even have gone further than Dewar with his criticism of the service and, throughout the 1920s, his views were a serious impediment to his career and to the Admiralty trying to defend the size of the Navy. When Beatty became First Sea Lord, his support for tactical liberation was essentially left in the hands of the Dewars and Richmond. Although it was important, from 1919, there were other great demands made upon Beatty, such as the role of the Navy in the immediate and more distant future. However, amidst the work load that this necessitated, Beatty always maintained a keen interest in the Jutland histories, especially where his role was concerned.

Beatty's public image was always important to him and whereas most

are sensitive to criticism, few have reacted as vehemently and persistently against their critics as did Beatty. It is also true that few were in such a position that they could manufacture a favourable image of themselves and had the means to advertise this image. Not only was this a matter of vanity and prestige, but there were other benefits of perpetuating a favourable image. After the war, Beatty was awarded £100,000 and became an Earl; Jellicoe received £50,000 and became a Viscount. As Countess Jellicoe was later to point-out, Beatty had not commanded the Fleet in any action, nor had he been First Sea Lord during hostilities.<sup>5</sup> It is uncertain to what extent Beatty's public image led to the awards, but the alleged hero of Jutland who subsequently presided over the surrender of the HSF (to which Jellicoe was not invited) certainly sought and received more attention. With some of his award, Beatty bought Chicheley Hall, in Northamptonshire, to add to the family's collection of large houses. It was only after his term as Governor-General of New Zealand, in 1924, that Jellicoe was elevated to an Earldom. To Jellicoe's supporters, Beatty had taken over the GF moulded by Jellicoe, did little to improve it and was never tested in battle.

The publicly-perceived differences between the awards to, and subsequent actions of, Jellicoe and Beatty over Jutland and the war as a whole added to controversy. By 1927, and the publication of Harper's *The Truth About Jutland*, much public (and certainly Naval) opinion had begun to realise that, with regard to Jutland, Beatty had made unfair and inaccurate claims about the roles of himself and others. Jellicoe's reputation as a steady, sensible leader had been mostly restored, but assessing the merits of what

had happened at Jutland still remained difficult due to Beatty's active involvement in infiltrating the histories with his opinions and corrupting evidence to endorse them. Jutland seldom fails to invoke controversy over eighty years afterwards, but much of the passion for the dispute is a reaction against Beatty's shameless criticism of his former colleagues (which stunned them in the 1920s) and surreptitious support for works that disparaged them.

So, the controversy is very much centred upon Beatty's character and self-image, the evidence of what happened and the presentation of it. This was why Jutland concerned Beatty so much and why studying the histories is so important. Distinguishing between differences of opinion and factual differences is crucial, because they have been very much blurred to a tangled and confusing effect. This was Beatty's intention — he achieved that confusion — but the clearer the evidence and histories are understood, the more this can be seen. The confusion was designed by Beatty to avert analysis from his unsuccessful operational procedures. This work shows how Beatty succeeded in hiding the truth regarding his actions from his contemporaries and subsequent authors — which has hitherto been obscured.

Throughout Beatty's time in the BCF and as C-in-C GF, his aim was to encourage tactical freedom. However, this mission was only partially successful. It depended largely upon ships' captains in the BCF to encourage it and to be themselves encouraged, but few were ever imbued with Beatty's basic principles. Even those who actively supported Beatty, such as Brock and Cowan, did not implement the initiative in action that Beatty had encouraged. Those who were not enthusiastic about Beatty and his ideas preformed no



better or worse than those who were. The success of Beatty's ideas depended upon how well he explained to, and encouraged, others and how fully they understood his aims. It must not be assumed that the fault was entirely Beatty's for this lack of success. Orders and his battle reports constantly emphasised that initiative must be exercised. However, unless this was followed-up with more personal explanation and encouragement from Beatty, the initiative aspects of the Orders were only a few paragraphs amongst many. Too many historians were carried away with the image fostered by Beatty's supporters that BCF Orders and operations were so much better than Jellicoe's. Beatty only separated general manoeuvring instructions from general principles towards the end of the war, from 1918, in BF Instructions and BF Manoeuvring Orders. The manner in which this was done showed that wholesale *reform* was not achieved by Beatty, only some *refinement* of emphasis upon orders.

The battles of Heligoland and Dogger Bank were examples of a defective application of initiative and it is a wonder that Beatty did not clarify his intentions by changing BCFOs and drafting separate manoeuvring instructions and general principles in 1915. Alternatively, it was evident that, for whatever reasons, his aims were not being implemented and it was his responsibility to see to it that they were. It could be argued that Beatty could have been more forceful in this respect, and it might seem surprising that Beatty could have been anything other than forceful, given what is known of his personality. He could have flatly insisted that his aims were to have been executed regardless of whether or not his subordinates shared his views, and

he would not have been the first military figure to have asserted this. However, this strong approach could only succeed where precise instructions were rigidly enforced. As he encouraged initiative, a forceful ordering of initiative to be practised would probably have been counter-productive. Ordering initiative required it, firstly, to exist with subordinates, for subordinates to have had a good idea of how each other might have acted in battle, and not to have been afraid to use it through fear of reprimand (or worse) if things did not go according to the chief's wishes. Beatty's financial background and confident manner did not extend to most in the BCF. Hence, although initiative was a preferred option of Beatty's, many, in the subsequent actions, deferred to the belief that literally obeying and not amending an order which was evidently defective, was technically forgivable because it endorsed the overriding principle of obedience. It would also have been difficult to subject to reprimand any action not taken resulting from signalling difficulties for which the admiral was in any way responsible. For example, at Dogger Bank, Moore's failure to lead the battlecruisers to chase the 1stSG could be criticised, but he had a sound defence in the fact that he was obeying an order as it was signalled and sank an enemy ship.

Although Beatty made confusing specific signals, he invariably blamed the intended recipients for their failure to execute his wishes. By encouraging initiative in his Orders, Beatty was also covering himself from possible blame. At Dogger Bank, his signal to Moore, ordering the attack of the enemy bearing NE, gave Moore only a general indication of what to do. However, it also absolved Beatty from sole responsibility because it was itself ambiguous,

and because Beatty had his order formally recorded. He also had his principles as support. So, he could have criticised Moore if he had used his initiative to disregard the signal and this had ultimately proved fruitless just as much as he could have if Moore had failed to disregard that formal signal, as happened. Rather than encouraging his subordinates, Beatty was frightening them. This might appear to be a cynical analysis, but this was how Beatty operated. In all the actions that Beatty was involved in, the failures, from his point of view, were the responsibility of others. Beatty's actions regarding Evan-Thomas's role at Jutland showed that, regardless of what had happened, he was prepared to blame anyone but himself and took whatever measures were necessary to do this.

Initiative was allowed for and encouraged to differing degrees throughout the Fleet, but any reluctance to use it could only be remedied by either encouraging its future use, or by issuing a directive that orders were conditional or optional (the gist of what reformers were urging). It is not surprising to find that the service viewed the latter as heresy.

Throughout the war, although Beatty sought tactical liberation, he did so against a widespread background of rigid obedience to formal orders and ideas. To help break free from this, he wanted his chosen BCF captains to share his views, but — as with Cecil Prowse, of *Queen Mary*, and Pelly — not all wanted, or were able, to accept this. So, even in the BCF, there was not sufficient majority support for a widespread implementation of Beatty's aims and those aims had not proved to be easily workable. When Beatty became C-in-C GF, much of the Fleet endorsed Jellicoe's beliefs and carried



on doing so. So, there was even less support for Beatty's aims, not to mention an absence of the will to implement them. Not only that, but the BCF's self-stated success at Jutland was itself a factor that made the majority ill-disposed towards Beatty. When Beatty became First Sea Lord, much support still favoured Jellicoe, but Beatty no longer had regular direct control over Fleet instructions. In short, Beatty had missed his best opportunity at reform by 1919. From then on, he was concerned with wider issues and left Jutland mainly to Bellairs and the Dewars. Given the stridency of the latter's criticisms, especially against Jellicoe, many became even less well-disposed towards Beatty.

Those closely involved with the battle or the histories were largely defending their reputations or promoting a general cause, with mixed success. Much of the service felt let-down and embarrassed by Jutland. After the war, it was realised that the Navy had done what it had to do — even if this reads like an apologist's insipid excuse — however distasteful that might have been to some, especially reformers. By the early 1930s, the developments of the Japanese and US navies, added to a reduction in spending, precipitated the development of strategy and tactics to suit the Navy's fighting capabilities. It was not committed to a future battlefleet action at the expense of future developments, as some supposed.

In this sense, Beatty's support of greater tactical liberation eventually took hold. However, this was not the result of an ideological conversion. It was because the Navy faced very different circumstances in 1939 with less resources than in 1914, having ultimately to adapt to meet differing demands

worldwide. Compared with the Navy of the 1880s/90s, that of 1914 had changed significantly, especially since 1906 and *Dreadnought*. In eight years (1906-14) Naval tactics had changed markedly because of the new types of capital ship. Admittedly, the service could have done more to think about how a future war might have been fought both before and after 1906. Indeed, a common criticism of the Navy is that rigid late 19th Century peacetime practices, which were insufficient to cope with a modern war, were still prevalent in 1914.

The main motivation for Plunkett's "regeneration" of the service was to use historical study to promote critical thinking on current issues. However, this came across as support for history more so than analysis of contemporary affairs. The difficulty in encouraging critical thinking on contemporary affairs was that any divergence from the predominant view of central control on the part of reformers, saw them being viewed as disruptive. This was largely a device used by conservatives to stifle or dismiss other opinions. From 1914, it became evident that whatever opinions one had, or which specialism was favoured, arguing over the importance these factors had obscured the fact that the new dreadnought types were not being used to full advantage. There was the opinion that action was preferable at ranges under c.17,000 yards, as Chatfield endorsed. Despite the fact that the guns of all dreadnought types could reach at least 19,000 yards (some up to 24,000 yards), material weaknesses — mainly in fire-control devices — had led to a belief that tactics should be controlled by these weaknesses. This found easy acceptance because most officers were familiar with pre-dreadnought methods of

gunnery (as seen in Chapter 1) and used dreadnought types in this way — well within maximum gun range — even when visibility permitted the British to use their guns beyond the range of the Germans' guns. The only exception to this was the 5thBS at Jutland (see Appendix 2). A lack of over all analysis of the Navy and how to take advantage of superior gun ranges led to a reliance upon the fact that, in action, the greater numbers of guns and weight of shell possessed by the British would hopefully enable a German defeat before the British were defeated. This, then, relied upon the prewar building programme rather than superior and flexible tactics. To the reformers this was worrying because no tactical situation could rely wholly upon events proceeding as planned, or imagined. During the 1920s, this was a worry, to Kenneth Dewar especially, because superiority in numbers no longer existed. This motivated the Dewars' writing on tactical reform. However, they failed to fully realise that the Navy was beginning to adapt to circumstances whilst they were criticising Jellicoe for not behaving as they would have preferred him to have done at Jutland. That was why the *Staff Appreciation* was not well-received, except by Beatty — it appeared to offer nothing of use, only personal criticism.

A thoughtful approach to an anticipated conflict is one thing, but any armed force can only enhance its effectiveness by responding to real developments. The naval scene from 1889 to 1914 had seen major changes in the technology of maritime warfare and a transformation in the nature and tactical reach of the Fleet. This had tended to emphasise technical rather than operational skills. Prewar training and attitudes have been criticised,



especially the importance attached to appearance, and the Navy could have done more to broaden its assessment of the merits of officers beyond paint work and general drills. Officers in 1914 were, however, able to function well enough within their own specialisms. The main weakness suspected by reformers such as Beatty and Richmond, was that because of the importance attached to drills and appearance, most were not adequately prepared to adapt to operational requirements with sufficient speed once hostilities commenced. Coordinating their efforts was also difficult and Beatty's actions within the BCF and GF were testament to the fact that flexible ideas were one thing, but implementing them was a quite different challenge. Beatty also showed that, despite his flexible ideas, ideas were not enough. Compared to previous wars and WWII, the war at sea (1914-8) offered little opportunity to hone the Navy's fighting and operational skills.

Historically, the Royal Navy in WWI could be compared with the English fleet in the Armada battles of 1588, with its major units assembled in home waters under one command. Success then had become the basis for (perhaps exaggerated) tales of heroism, but the victorious outcome of 1918, likewise achieving the desired strategic aim, was not celebrated with as much enthusiasm. It was widely realised in WWI (for example, by Keyes, Jellicoe and Chatfield) that it was difficult to force the HSF to fight and not really necessary. Historically and strategically this was sound, but such was not referred to in most post-war accounts of Jutland because Beatty, and Beatty alone, could not accept this.

The Dewars and Bellairs referred to those aspects of the prewar years

which they found distasteful, and they blamed Jellicoe for the perceived failure at Jutland. A comprehensive history of the war was not being properly composed, and the didactic purpose of those studies that were written suffered because of various authors' preferences for contemporary propaganda rather than history. The Dewars and Bellairs led their readers to believe that Jutland was the culmination of faulty practices which extended the war. An important lesson Jutland taught, was that a strength in one area (supremacy of the battlefleet) encouraged the enemy to seek to gain advantages in another. The increased use of submarines and the efficacy of German attacks on trade in the first half of 1917, eventually forced a countervailing response in this area. It can always be argued that trade defence problems could have been dealt with more effectively and more rapidly, but important lessons were learned that were not lost in the inter-war years.

Distorting the evidence to suit a personal defence or cause, was essentially what the Jutland controversy was about, not differing interpretations of agreed data. This distortion was carried out by either suppressing original documents, destroying, or altering them. The various manoeuvrings in many cases were bizarre and often leave one wondering just what was the point of it all and if there was a point, was it one of any significance. Why should Beatty, with all that occupied his time as First Sea Lord, take pains to be present at, or send a representative to every meeting regarding the Harper record (even arranging meetings outside of normal hours)? Ultimately, it must be attributed to vanity.

Without a doubt, appearance was especially important to Beatty, not simply regarding his dress and posturing in public (although that was important), but of how well he was perceived to have performed. The subject of this work is that the controversy was driven by Beatty's refusal to accept what he perceived as a failure at Jutland. It was sickening, to the BCF especially, that when coming up the Forth on 2nd June 1916:

"all the railway people were lined on [the bridge].

To our dismay they shouted "cowards! cowards, you ran away" and chucked lumps of coal at us.

We were received at Rosyth with very, very great disapproval by the local people." <sup>6</sup>

This was from one of *Warspite's* crew, the BCF were even more sensitive to this criticism, which led to the impetus to present a favourable public image. The same day, Commander Dannreuther wrote despondently to his mother and that he was to see Beatty the following day. No thanks to the Admiralty's morose communique on the 3rd, it looked as if the railway workers' opinions had some foundation. Dannreuther:

"spent an hour or more in his cabin while he walked up and down talking about the action in a very excited manner and criticising in strong terms the actions of...[Jellicoe] in not supporting him!" <sup>7</sup>

This belief of Beatty's, that he had been let-down by Jellicoe, stayed with him. Earl Mountbatten also noted that the BCF were seen by the battlefleet to have let-down the Fleet at Jutland. <sup>8</sup> Yet, one must not suggest that grown



men should not have taken such comments so personally. All had risked their lives and were downcast. Prior to their arrival in the Forth, the BCF had weathered, on 1st June, a storm which left Beatty and Spickernell seasick on their return. This, added to any distress, might well have made Beatty even more determined to see to it that the BCF were not dismissed in posterity as abject failures. All felt that more might have been achieved.

Jutland was by no means unique in spawning legends. The Battle of Plataea, in 479BC, repelled the Persian advance into Greece. It was won by the Spartan army despite the want of apparent cohesion and great tactical skill. However, the well-known account by Herodotus sought to attribute this to the Athenian army. The Athenian army (facing the Persians' Greek allies) was seen to be urged by the Spartans (on the flank facing the Persians) to swap places to allow Athens the greater privilege of fighting the great enemy, whose methods, the account noted, the Athenians were more familiar with. It was felt by many Athenians that, since their defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Marathon, in 490BC, they were the natural leaders of Greeks against Persians. This deliberately confused two important issues. At the battle, the Spartans were engaged whilst most of their allies were not. By the time the Spartans and some of their allies had won the battle, most of the Greek allies, including the Athenians, had not arrived at the scene. More importantly, from an Athenian viewpoint, was that the Spartans had frequently been extremely reluctant to become involved in affairs outside the Peloponnese (even when Athens had been ravaged), and it was only the threat of having the Peloponnese exposed if Athens was forced to accept

Persian terms that finally moved Sparta. A message from the Persian commander (of questionable authenticity) recorded that he was not impressed with the Spartans' behaviour in the battle. Contrary to the facts, the Athenians, just like Beatty, did not want it known that they had played little part in a decisive event. Herodotus wished to diminish the Spartans' true role and augment that of the Athenians. That Athens played the significant part is an unlikely tale, just as are Beatty's claims to have defeated the 1stSG and frightened-off the HSF with accurate and effective gunnery. Both accounts disregarded what actually happened and encouraged a favourable, but erroneous, partisan view that few could ever verify. This example shows that, despite the magnitude of any event, or the fame of the individuals involved, deliberately misrepresenting events to create a favourable impression is nothing new. It also shows that these misrepresentations can easily become popular fixations, which are often hard to redress. Thanks largely to Harper's protestations, re-assessing Beatty's role is possible.

No matter who wrote about Jutland, the public were asked to take the events of that day in good faith from the accounts and that is why an apparent trivial bickering over a few words, gun ranges and distances here and there assumed the importance that it did. In fact, it is all important. More to the point, if evidence did prove what Beatty insisted that it did, his reluctance to have it scrutinised is suggestive. That the sons and heirs of some should have continued arguing in the same vein, was testament to the fact that painful suggestions of professional reluctance and incompetence seriously undermine self-image. To illustrate the blindness to the facts whilst

encouraging (and succeeding in establishing) a popular image, it was noted in David Beatty's entry in *Nigel Dempster's Address Book*, that he was the "Son of the victor of the Battle of Jutland." <sup>9</sup> It would surprise many that there was actually a victor of Jutland, that he was British, and nowhere does Mr. Dempster describe George Jellicoe in relation to his father's role at Jutland.

By the late 1930s, most realised that Jellicoe and Beatty had done great work and were universally admired for it. In 1938, Dreyer wrote to Chalmers that "The muck thrown...at Jellicoe and Beatty, has done awful harm-as I found". <sup>10</sup> This summarised much of the controversy, in that it was (at least from about 1923) a general muck-throwing exercise to enforce opinions and ill-founded assertions. Geoffrey Blake confirmed that:

"it is obvious that among the junior officers there was a good deal of feeling. A great deal of it was fostered by the press and other cheap comments which were hurled about indiscriminately." <sup>11</sup>

Many survivors and their families attest to the fact that many young officers remembered the embittered disputes throughout their lives, but it is often furious gunroom or wardroom debates (often after dinner) that are recalled. <sup>12</sup> One must see these in perspective.

As has been seen, the importance of the battle, to Beatty at least, was far from imaginary. Chalmers's comment that Beatty stated that there was something wrong with the ships and "something wrong with our system" <sup>13</sup> is instructive. This "system" is always assumed to be the Navy's system as a whole and there is some truth in this. However, it is much more likely that



Beatty was stressing the BCF when he said "our system", because, however he looked at it, he realised that his system (particularly as seen in Chapters 1 & 5) had failed. Many post-WWII accounts have assumed that Beatty's sensitivity concerned simply the public perception of the battle, because his recollections differed from what Harper had written, but there was much more to it than this, as revealed here. If one asks exactly how and why the BCF fought as they did, and why Beatty was so concerned with regard to the histories, the line of questioning always leads back to Beatty's management of the force. He knew this and wanted to avoid examination of it. He also knew that, aside from his own failings, the losses the BCF suffered could have occurred to the battlefleet, had it been in action longer, hence much talk of the battlefleet not getting their feet wet and of failing to support the BCF.

In order to assess the battle fully, the wrecks would have had to have been examined and a detailed examination held. Not only would this have presented logistical difficulties, but Jellicoe and the Admiralty of 1916 were at pains not to make an unsatisfactory affair any worse, with a risk to morale. Having said this, it must be wondered what any examination would have discovered that was not already generally known. Defective ammunition handling arrangements were the basic causes of the battlecruiser losses, but, as Commander Dannreuther noted, *Invincible* was conforming to typical Fleet practice with regard to these. Beatty and Chatfield must have realised that Grant's system had saved their lives and that an absence of it in other ships left over 3,000 BCF men dead. Grant's extraordinary promotion of his system removed him from the BCF and allowed the majority to take refuge in

the conviction that more armour plate could have prevented the explosions, or that the ships' design was basically flawed. This absolved Beatty and other officers from responsibility. If the matter was one of attributing blame, by making poor design the culprit and by not blaming individuals, then no-one could really have been held responsible. Many are absolved if no-one in particular is held to be accountable.

With this in mind, one must wonder whether or not the Navy really wanted to discover the actual reasons for the losses. It must have occurred to many reasonably intelligent men that the chances of three battlecruisers all succumbing to the same disaster might not have been due to design, but one must then wonder why others survived. This was often attributed to luck, again because it was comforting to accept, but luck aside, few recorded their views on whether or not measures could have been taken to prevent the losses. There was no doubt from witnesses that only one or two shells caused the losses in each ship. However, it might well have been realised that, due to operational procedures, most ships were only one shell away from oblivion. To then have charged deceased officers and men with negligence that led to their deaths, could have been felt to have been an insult to the dead, as most battlecruisers operated in a similar way. As more stringent safety measures were adopted afterwards, the risk of such catastrophic losses being repeated had been diminished, suggesting that the defects were known. The problem was thus seen to be solved, obviating the need for any inquiry.

One must also wonder if the Navy knew what questions should have been asked about the action, and whether or not it would have created an

uncomfortable atmosphere to have asked them. If suitable questions were asked, then there was the problem of collating the answers and, ultimately, of the extent to which the Navy would change in light of this. A flawed analysis of Dogger Bank failed the Fleet and battlecruisers especially, so it should not be too surprising to find that examination of Jutland was as confused. However, as Beatty succeeded as C-in-C, operational improvements were made, such as ammunition handling measures and ammunition being improved to a safer standard. Despite this, there was no special reason for confidence that the faults of the Falklands, Dogger Bank and Jutland could not easily have been repeated. For example, had Scheer accepted action on 19th August 1916, extant evidence did not suggest that all the defects identified at Jutland had been rectified.

Using Jutland to promote reform or endorse the success of the Navy in the war, deviated attention from fully assessing what had happened. Reformers usually urged for less rigid tactics, signalling and operational instructions. However, Jutland did not disclose anything remarkably new, even if it indicated areas needing development. The outcome of Jutland was not sufficiently clear to endorse the radical reform supported by the Dewars and Richmond. Urging reform led to the selective use of evidence, which undermined the case for it.

This examination of the dynamics involved in the composition of the histories, shows that there was something painful to hide about the battle, notably the defects in the functioning of the BCF. It also shows that there *were* some real adverse effects resulting from accounts being tampered with



and that close examination of the histories, far from being an exercise in pointless minutiae, shows that much previous understanding was based upon highly flawed evidence. Individuals suffered at the time from a want of clarity of information, especially Evan-Thomas, but historians have also suffered. This was because Beatty's preferred version of events persisted so long as the evidence he corrupted went unexamined.

Yet, one should not over-estimate the over all impact of the Jutland controversy. The extant evidence clearly shows that Jutland did not significantly affect the service, especially not in the universal manner erroneously implied in many previous accounts. This claim was simply a product of supposition. In fact, with regard to influencing promotions, policy and friendships, it is evident that Jutland had no unusual affect.

The greater detail surrounding the controversy, particularly the inter-relationships of less prominent figures, is at present unclear largely due to a dearth of evidence. The BCF's operational faults have been shown here, but, as with inter-personal relations, the greater detail to enable a fuller understanding of the daily, or weekly operations and policy decisions at command level is, at present, lacking. It is telling that there is more evidence regarding the BCF's functioning in private papers — mainly Beatty's and Drax's — than in public collections, but even the evidence in existence is not extensive. In 1920, it was known that BCF evidence was removed from official files by former personnel. It still remains uncertain if all this evidence exists and what exactly it is. Future examination might shed light upon these and other aspects. The functioning of the 5thBS with the BCF is tantalisingly

vague, as are the thoughts of those serving within those forces about Jutland and each other. In the mid-1990s, the discovery of Alexander Grant's autobiography revealed significant hitherto unknown facts regarding ammunition handling, suggesting why the BCF were so sensitive to analysis of the operations. In 1968, Captain Bennett wrote that:

"In short, the Jutland controversy has been dead since 1940; since then it has been possible to tell the full story..." <sup>14</sup>

This is quite clearly not correct.

The motto of *Iron Duke* (*Virtutis Fortuna Comes*-Fortune is the companion of valour) might be seen to be ironic in many ways by Jellicoe's opponents, in that more valour on his part would have seen Fortune favour the British. However, valour or not at Jutland, the war was won convincingly at sea. What Jutland might have been, how close the Navy came to doing much better, consumed many in subsequent years, but the attempts to justify reputations by suppressing what had actually happened, did little to draw the correct lessons. The dispute resulted from a corruption of historical methodology for essentially political ends. The way history was composed and understood — or misunderstood — by authors and readers alike was not helped by the deliberate actions of a few to disguise the more accurate picture. *Lion's* motto (*Concordant Nomine Facta*-The facts agree with the name) is most ironic. For Beatty, the facts had to agree with the name and what it symbolised, to show that good fortune had accompanied his valour.

## Appendix 1.

### *The state of shells at Jutland.*

The deficiency in shell quality was the defence of Chatfield and others against criticisms of the effectiveness of the battlecruisers' shooting. Chatfield stated in his autobiography (p.158), that few ever knew of this problem at the time and that the public view was that the battlecruisers simply did not score enough hits. This seemed to be the singular defence, but the accuracy of this statement on the action is not borne out by any evidence. German sources, especially von Hase and their official history, confirmed that the problem was that the battlecruisers could not make hits with enough accuracy and frequency, although poor quality shell obviously did not help.

The deficiency was believed to lie with the fact that armour-piercing shells, rather than entering the ship and exploding internally, detonated upon impact, or not at all, thus reducing the damage done and making it almost impossible to damage enemy vessels. There were many defective shells, a problem that was partially remedied after the battle, but the effect of a 13.5" or 15" shell, weighing 1,250-1,950lbs travelling close to the speed of sound, coming to an almost instant halt and exploding was not inconsiderable. Upon the Germans' return to harbour, *Derfflinger* was barely recognisable, with just some of the damage being described:

"Two 15" shells had penetrated the armour...and one of them exploded inside. The other still lay unexploded...the best example of the power of these shells was to be seen at the bow. One shell



had entered the port side and had gone through the forward battery carrying an entire armour plate with it...it may or may not have exploded on the outside." (in (ed.) Horn, p.214).

Even a shell that might only have exploded outside the ship shows just how much damage could have been done in similar cases and there is evidence of shells being able to penetrate armour. The problems did not lie solely with poor shell.

A similar instance was noted that *Helgoland* was hit during the night by "a heavy projectile on her side armour above the waterline. The shot punched out a piece of armour about 3¼ feet radius. This flew inboard. The shot itself did not enter the ship, but broke up outboard" (quoted in Tarrant, p.290.). Although this was not serious, it was significant. Not all shells suffered from the same defects, so the criticism cannot be applied in all cases and it must always be remembered that there was no guarantee on either side that all shell would do what they were supposed to do.

The introduction of cordite had led to a feeling that it was much harder to ignite than powder, as Alexander Grant's memoirs testify. In connection with this, Dogger Bank had bred a feeling of the inferiority of German shell and the damage that they could cause. Chatfield's despatch noted:

"The other shell that struck the ship...in several cases did not burst, nor was any important damage done by them." (BTY 4/6/7.)

In *Notes re lessons learned from action on January 24, 1915.*, it was recorded that:

"German shell, for incendiary effect and damage to personnel, are far inferior to ours. Their only good lies in armour penetration and damage to material. On this it is necessary to consider most carefully the effect of any possible damage and the best means to localise it." (*Ibid.*)

Rear-Admiral Archibald Moore noted:

"The first thing that strikes one is the very limited explosive power of German shells...This is a matter of much comfort to us...If they know how little damage they do they will very soon take steps to improve burster and fuze. The blast from any large shell exploding is so great that *all* armoured doors and shutters fitted as protection against shellfire should be properly closed at all times...There does not appear to be much danger of fire being caused by enemy's shell." (*Ibid.*)

[underlining added].

This endorsed the belief that although German shells might hole ships and cause flooding, or damage equipment when exploding, they did not possess adequate ignitive qualities. The amount of explosive needed to burst a large shell was not large, but that did not matter. Even heat or sparks from a

partially exploded shell could be sufficient, given British ammunition handling practices, to cause further, more serious ignition. It was not realised that it was not necessary for enemy shells to have a large incendiary effect, they only needed to be sufficient to ignite a few charges in order for there to be a danger due to the amount of cordite unprotected and open magazine doors. Moore seemed to feel that danger came from damage caused more by concussion of the air than the ignitive possibilities of heat sources. *Lion* and others were holed below the waterline at Dogger Bank, but as there was not much incendiary damage, this led to a confidence in the ships to withstand the effects of German fire. Other captains echoed the same points, so it seemed as if nothing needed to be improved upon, although it was largely Beatty's job to assess the reports, not simply to accept them.

Following Jutland, the importance of shell quality assumed an importance over other factors regarding ammunition handling and gunnery. The general conclusions in the months afterwards made little mention of these and, rather than suggesting such practices be modified, the interim report of the Committee on Construction to Beatty (BTY 6/14/4. 23.6.16.) recommended that new capital ships should be of *Queen Elizabeth* type, not battlecruisers, and that armour plating should be thickened. The evidence could suggest that this was a good idea, but it also pointed to the fact that the problem with all ships was that no amount of armour thickness then carried could guarantee to prevent a shell from entering the ship, nor could it have prevented problems posed by exposed cordite (the loss of *Defence* appears to have been attributed to obsolete design). Hubert Dannreuther noted that



*Invincible* was hit by one shell which pierced Q turret, causing the explosion that led to its loss.

However, producing more fast battleships or thickening armour could not stop this recurring. On 28th October 1914, it was noted that at least 16" of armour was needed to keep out a 13.5" shell at 20,000 yards (8" for a MkXI 12" shell). The increase of potential ranges in battle that had begun with the torpedo boat and the obsession of some with bigger guns — and assumptions that enemy ships had the advantage here — had led to the belief that the only counter was more armour. It did not seem to have occurred to most that if ranges of battle would increase, it was necessary to ensure that the large guns could fire as accurately as possible at these ranges. Following Jutland, it was concluded that if no shells could be excluded at expected ranges of engagement, the answer was not to improve fire-control, by both mechanical and manual methods, for the long reach, but to thicken armour and engage more closely as current fire-control machinery could deal with this better.

On 10th December 1916, Beatty noted that high explosive shell "cannot be expected to reach the vitals of German Battleships by penetration of the side and turret armour, at ranges greater than 7,000 yards." (ADM 137/3834) All HE were ordered to be returned to ammunition ships and only armour-piercing common (APC) and common-pointed-capped (CPC) were to be used. The alleged instability of the explosive against concussion was also questioned and held partly to blame for premature detonation. It was concluded that a 13.5" APC (lyddite) and CPC (powder) would not penetrate

13" of armour at 20° at 7,000 yards and would only just dent 10" at 10,000 yards (*Ibid.*). Beatty then concluded "The disappointing results obtained by our gunfire [at Dogger Bank and Jutland]...are now explained." (*Ibid.*). Elsewhere he added that "it would appear that most serious damage might be inflicted on the enemy's ships at ranges between 7,000 and 16,000 yards." (ADM 137/3836). If, as in Chapter 1, it seemed as if medium to short range firing was a BCF policy, this was Beatty's self-endorsement of it and helps explain his apparent obliviousness to other factors. The shell committee noted that they had "reason to believe that the results of hits of our APC and CPC shell obtained [at Dogger Bank and Jutland] were better than is here implied." (*Ibid.*). One must favour this conclusion over Beatty's. Many wanted to believe that German shell were by far superior, but in many cases, they did not explode properly, or at all, passing through some of the lighter craft. Even in late 1916, Beatty was already reluctant to admit that uncertainty regarding shells was not the whole issue and was heading for disagreement long before Harper was appointed to write a record.

The problem was not how many times a ship was hit, but how vulnerable it was where it was hit. This seemed to be ignored and there was nothing especially wrong with battlecruiser design. They were expected to overwhelm their opponents by heavy and accurate fire at the maximum possible range, which was why they had a speed advantage over battleships. They carried less armour as even a battleship's armour could not protect them in such circumstances. Battlecruisers never functioned as they were intended to do because of a lack of sufficient effective fire-control equipment

and operational misunderstandings of what they could do. The knee-jerk reaction, thickening the armour of *Repulse* and *Renown*, was not necessarily the answer to the battlecruisers' problems.

There was no unfathomable secret in explaining the loss of the battlecruisers, but the faults lay in not collating the evidence that was before the eyes of many. In fact, it was so obvious as to be missed.



## Appendix 2.

### *Positioning the action from 3:47-5:00.*

It is evident from the accounts of the movements of the Germans, the BCF and 5thBS, that *Barham's* positions from 3:50 as shown in the diagrams accompanying the official history ("Prepared in the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence") cannot be correct. For example, at 3:50, *Barham* was placed  $7\frac{1}{4}$  miles from *Lion* and  $13\frac{1}{2}$  from *Lützow* (official diagram #23). At 4:00, it was still  $7\frac{1}{4}$  miles from *Lion* and  $11\frac{1}{4}$  from *Lützow*. Given *Lützow's* 4:00 position and the maximum possible distance that *Barham* could have steamed in 10 minutes (24 knots/800 yards per minute), allowing for no deviations (which there were), *Barham* must have been at the very least  $7\frac{3}{4}$  miles from *Lion* and roughly 12.2 miles from *Lützow* (not  $11\frac{1}{4}$ ). Such revised distances only serve to indicate that the errors are greater than the charts and sources would have the reader believe.

At 4:00, *Barham* must have been about 25,000 yards from *Lützow* (21 knots/750 yards per minute). By 4:06, the distance was the same, but by this time the 1stSG had begun their turn southwards together, thus making the range to *Von der Tann* about 23,500 yards (see diagrams #5, 7 & 8). By 4:08, the range was a little over 23,000 yards. The addition of fire from the 5thBS was one of the reasons for Hipper's increase in speed, but given their respective courses, the distance between the two lines was falling at almost 300 yards each minute and the continuation of this presented obvious concerns for Hipper.

To prove the extent of the error in most charts and texts regarding the

relative distances of *Lion*, *Lützow*, *Frankfurt* and *Barham*, it is necessary to compare the consensus of texts and sources (principally Harper, the *Despatches* and later Corbett, but others based largely on one or more of these) as echoed, for example, by Tarrant (p.86). Tarrant, in common with most, stated that *Barham* was roughly 7 miles astern of *Lion* during the run to the south (although his diagram showed almost 9) and when the 5thBS opened fire on the 1stSG, the range was roughly 19,000 yards. As no evidence for this was quoted, it must be assumed that the popular view, generated in the early 1920s (deriving from Harper and hardly doubted since), was shared. It was then noted that "Fortunately for the Germans, the range was so great [that it was difficult for the 5thBS to see]." Yet, this presents inconsistencies. The 5thBS might have experienced difficulties with vision, but the 1stSG was seen, be it intermittently, and when the ships were obscured, gun flashes could be seen along with the stern waves. This would not change the firing range, as there was always some target at which to aim.

It was noted that *Konteradmiral* Friedrich Bödicker (2ndSG) saw the approach of the 5thBS, masts first from over the horizon. One must also remember that Evan-Thomas noted that on his disengaged side (westwards) he could see for at least 12 miles (*Beatty Papers*, 1. #160). As *Barham* was seen approaching hull down, the distance to the horizon must have been at least 8 miles, so *Barham* must have been at least 11 miles away as could be seen from *Frankfurt*. According to Bödicker, the 5thBS opened fire just after he sent his report of enemy vessels to Hipper. So, assuming the time taken from identification — which must have been almost instant — to the report leaving

the ship to be 3 minutes, the 5thBS must have opened fire at approximately 23,000 yards at 3:50 (the two could not have converged more than a few hundred yards in this time).

To highlight a common error with the positioning of the forces at this point, Marder's diagram for 3:48-4:10 (Marder's #4) had *Barham*, at 3:48, 8 miles from *Lion*, but the text noted that *Barham* was "hull down...too far away to take part" (pp. 57-8), which must make it at least 13/14 miles (as Marder stated) from Beatty. Roskill noted that, at 3:48, the 5thBS were "hull down" (p.157.), but his diagram showed them 7 miles apart at 4:00 (pp.158-9). So, either *Barham* steamed instantly from 24 to at least 30 knots between these times, or *Lion* slowed considerably; both were simply quoting Corbett in their texts without any examination. However, if the distance apart was only 8 miles, the 5thBS was not "too far away" to join the action; Marder and others cannot have it both ways. By 4:10, Marder's chart had been adjusted to suit commonly (and erroneously) understood ranges, but in his diagram *Barham* had steamed more than a mile more than it could possibly have done if it was to have been at this point. If these are accepted at face value, the authors needed to explain why the initial gap of 8-10 miles (sources vary) closed to about 7-8 around 3:30 and then opened to 13/14 by about 3:48, only to close to between about 9 miles (some have 7) by 4:10. It was highly irregular steaming to say the least if this was actually done and impossible to have achieved in some places. Marder's, Roskill's and Tarrant's tracks here and elsewhere have been adjusted more to suit literary sources, rather than plotted according to actual speed and course.



Given the time of the 5thBS opening fire that was confirmed by Bödicker — in the list of messages *Warspite* remarked that *Barham* opened fire at 3:50 — the distance from *Barham* (around 23,200 yards) must place *Frankfurt* on *Lützow*'s port quarter, further astern, given that *Frankfurt*'s 4:10 position was roughly 10 miles from *Lützow*. For obvious reasons, Bödicker never intended to have a running fight with the 5thBS and made for full speed to escape (see diagram #5). Yet, the respective courses meant that, without a significant alteration of course, the 2ndSG would not last long. A turn of at least 80° was made, which kept the range approaching 23,000 yards, until *Frankfurt* was lost to sight a few minutes later.

At 4:06, Tarrant noted (p.86) that whilst pursuing the engagement, Evan-Thomas "suddenly caught sight of the German Battlecruisers" and turned towards them. The range at this time was roughly 23,600 yards to *Von der Tann*, shorter than that from *Frankfurt* (see diagram #7). This extreme range of 23,000 yards was confirmed (in Gordon, p.113) by Commander Walwyn in *Warspite*'s B turret and SL Caslon in *Malaya*, who gave 23,800. As this was the case, both *Barham* and *Frankfurt* are placed at least 1½ miles closer to their respective leaders than they actually were. If any other relative distances and speeds are altered, the whole picture changes to be inconsistent with any sources. Re-placing *Barham* and *Frankfurt*, as above, only confirms the general picture, but the ranges of the 5thBS's opening fire on the 2nd and 1stSGs, accepted without question in most cases, commonly given as 18,600 and 19,000 yards, are roughly 2 miles too short, *Barham* being almost 10 miles from *Lion* at 3:50.

It is interesting to note that, at 4:20, *Von der Tann*'s A-turret was put out of action (by *Tiger*) and jammed facing 30° abaft the starboard beam. If the 5thBS had been 7 or so miles astern of *Barham*, *Von der Tann* at this point would have been firing at the open sea astern of *Malaya* — clearly not correct. The extra 2 miles places the 5thBS as a target (*Von der Tann* had shifted fire from *New Zealand* to *Barham* for some 6/7 minutes from 4:17). Too often, it appears to be missed (perhaps deliberately) that if *Barham* was some 6-7½ miles from *Lion* at 3:50, the two would have turned to the north earlier than they actually did, but as the two passed at 4:50, given the speeds and courses they steered, they must have been nearly 10 miles apart at 3:50. This would then mean that the sightings of the High Seas Fleet were all in error, that *Lützow*'s positioning and course were in error and that the 2ndSG had been misplaced. *Barham*, contrary to many sources, was never to the east of *Lion* until after 5pm. It passed where *Indefatigable* sank, roughly ½ mile west at 4:26 and *Queen Mary* roughly 1¼ miles west at 4:46-7.

Had Evan-Thomas opened fire at 18,600 and 19,000 yards, it would mean that he had deliberately neglected to attack the enemy for at least 2 miles of the guns' range when the visibility was, by general consensus, roughly 23,000 yards. He did not, of course, do this and had the guns, longer base rangefinders and practised crews to achieve hitting at such long ranges as he did. Tarrant re-cycled a familiar theme, stating that, at 3:30, "Ranges were coming down from the finders- 20,000 yards, 19,000 yards. All guns were loaded, the questing muzzles...raised to their maximum elevation." (p.71). However, the maximum range of the 13.5"-gunned battlecruisers was nearly

24,000 yards, so Tarrant was wrong on at least one count. As with so many authors, he asserted the assumptions made in earlier accounts over the much more tangible calculations for ranges and contemporary evidence that show the greater ranges at maximum elevation. The longer distances are more plausibly what German sources and Hipper referred to as "portentous ranges". For a 15" gun with such elevation as was possible, one could assert that a range of 19,000 yards was not particularly great. The guns mounted in the 5thBS, with the maximum 20° elevation and full charge of medium density (428lbs) could reach 23,734 yards.

As it is known from Walwyn and Caslon that the guns were frequently against the elevation stops when firing commenced, the range can be accurately calculated. It is also known that *Barham's* first salvo fired at *Von der Tann* was over, the second short, the third straddled with a hit being achieved. If one then takes the maximum theoretical distance as above and applies a range correction of 600 down (4-600 was quite normal), the short second salvo hit the water at around 23,134 yards. The original correction would then be halved and added to the range of the second salvo ( $23,134 + 300 = 23,434$ ), so one shell found its target within tens of yards of 23,434 yards distance.

Throughout the first hour and a half at least, most shooting (except for the battlecruiser duel) began when visibility allowed and this means that the longer ranges must be accepted. This has important implications for the controversy over all, in that the 5thBS is often seen to be slow to react to opportunities to attack and that the attempts in later years to reduce the ranges to suit the notion that the BCF were closer to the enemy, were



face-saving measures, principally at the expense of Evan-Thomas. Too many authors have been led along the lines that those favourably disposed to Beatty and the battlecruisers would have wished.

### Appendix 3.

#### *Personnel in Admiralty posts, 1919-38.*

In order to establish the extent to which former BCF personnel were, or were not, posted in influential Admiralty positions with the aim of encouraging or introducing Beatty's ideas (as his contemporaries suspected, in Chapter 6), it is instructive to examine certain posts held between the wars. Those chosen are the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (DCNS), Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (ACNS), Directors, Deputy and Assistant, in the Departments of Operations, Plans, Intelligence and Ordnance. The data chosen are from 1920 to 1938. These offices were the most influential over all and their background would suggest whether or not the imagined affects on promotions were based on any factual grounds.

Listed, are the names of officers who held inter-war commands in the above posts, in which ship they served at Jutland, the post(s) that they held and the number of months served in each post to the nearest full month.

**Battlefleet at Jutland.**

- J.A. Fergusson (*Thunderer*) — ACNS 20 (4)
- W.M. James (*Benbow*) — DDNI 20 (4) DCNS 36-8 (36)
- C.V. Usbourne (*Colossus*) — DDNO 20-1 (4) DNI 30-2 (24)
- S.R. Bailey (*Erin*) — DOD 20-1 (2)
- H.W. Parker (*Benbow*) — DOD 22-3 (19)
- A.D.P.R. Pound (*Colossus*) — DOP 22-5 (32) ACNS 27-9 (24)
- J.C. Hamilton (*Superb*) — DDOP 22-4 (21)
- J.C.W. Henley (*Marlborough*) — DNO 23-5 (26)
- G.K. Chetwode (*Royal Oak*) — DDNI 23-5 (18)
- W.A. Egerton (*Barham*) — DDOP 24-5 (11) DOP 25-8 (32)
- F.C. Dreyer (*Iron Duke*) — ACNS 24-7 (29) DCNS 30-3 (30)
- F.L. Field (*King George V*) — DCNS 25-8 (35)
- F.T.B. Tower (*Barham*) — DDNO 25 (2) DNO 31-3 (27)
- C.M. Forbes (*Iron Duke*) — DNO 25-8 (34)
- W.W. Fisher (*St. Vincent*) — DNI 26-7 (7) DCNS 28-30 (25)
- S.D. Tillard (*Barham*) — DDOP 27-8 (8)
- G.F.B. Edward-Collins (*Superb*) — ADOP 27-8 (8) DDOP 28-9 (19)
- R.M. Bellairs (*Iron Duke*) — DOP 28-30 (35)
- J.F.C. Patterson (*Orion*) — DNO 28-31 (33)
- A.R. Dewar (*Hercules*) — DDNO 28-9 (17)
- A.E. Evans (*Orion*) — DDNI 29-30 (10)
- F. Elliot (*Benbow*) — DDNO 29-32 (32)
- F.H.W. Goolden (*Iron Duke*) — DDOP 31-2 (14) DOP 33-4 (12)



W.E.C. Tait (*Collingwood*) — DDNI 32-3 (19)

J.A.G. Troup (*Téméraire*) — DNI 36-8 (24+)

C.S. Daniel (*Orion*) — ADOP 37-8 (7+) = (684)

**BCF at Jutland.**

O. de. B. Brock (*Princess Royal*) — DCNS 20-1 (12)

A.E.M. Chatfield (*Lion*) — ACNS 20-3 (30)

C.D. Burke (*Princess Royal*) — DDOP 21-2 (6) ADOP 22-3 (6)

P. Macnamara (*Tiger*) — ADOP 26-7 (16)

C.B. Prickett (*Princess Royal*) — DDNI 27-9 (24)

D.B.N. North (*New Zealand*) — DOP 30-2 (30) = (124)

The total months possible to have had in the given posts (number of posts × number of months) was 2736. Former BF officers spent 25% of this period in the given posts. Former BCF officers spent 4.5% in the posts. Throughout the period, 70.5% of the time was spent by those not present at Jutland in the BCF or BF.

Former BF officers spent 5.5 (mean average) times more in total holding their posts than the total of BCF officers. Former BF officers spent a mean average of 26.3 months per person per post; former BCF officers averaged 20.6 months per person per post.

Of those who became Directors of their Divisions, the BF had 12, the BCF 1. The BF had 4.3 times more officers in given posts, than BCF officers ( $BF \div BCF$ ). After Jutland, by the same calculation, there were 4.28 times

more battleships than battlecruisers in commission. Approximately, BF officers were four times greater in number, taken from four times as many ships. In the positions given, the BF spent five times more total time than the BCF (largely by virtue of their greater numbers than duration of each appointment), but this was only as 29.5% of the total time that could have been spent. At any one time, never more than half of the posts were held by any single body.

Throughout the inter-war period, no large body of personnel imbued with BCF (or Beatty's) opinions on tactical liberation or support for history existed. Little more than 4% of the total possible tenure was filled with BCF sympathisers and even less at any one time. It is simply not true to say that the battlecruiser men took over the inter-war Admiralty.

## Appendix 4.

### *Signalling at the time of Jutland.*

All training in signals took place at sea until 1882, when the post of Qualified Signalsman was introduced (Kent, *Signal!* p.19). With the advent of wireless telegraphy (WT), in the closing years of the 19th Century, the potential to communicate beyond visual distance added an important dimension to warfare. Until July 1907 (and the formation of the Wireless Telegraphy Branch), WT was seen as an expertise in electricity and hence, was under the command of the torpedo school, HMS *Vernon*, not the signal school. The increasing fitting-out of ships with WT equipment led to the need for more WT operators and in July 1908, signal training was extended to WT use to enable signal specialists to obtain at least a working knowledge of the equipment. In 1914, WT was incorporated into the Signal Branch.

Prior to WT, all signals were made by flags, semaphore (mechanical and manual) or light. This meant that in order to see beyond the horizon, a line of ships would need to be deployed. Although this had been common for sailing ships, by 1916, WT was not sufficiently advanced, nor reliable enough, to effectively break with this tradition. The problems for any ship out of visual touch with another in reporting on an enemy, using WT, were essentially knowledge of relative positioning (which was not certain) and the fact that broadcasts could quite easily be intercepted and blocked-out. Making transmissions would also betray a presence to the enemy which, from the intensity and volume of traffic, could estimate the size and proximity of a ship or force. With the establishment of Admiralty shore receiving stations, it was



possible to locate the enemy's approximate range and position from their broadcasts. However, this was of little tactical utility in a fast-moving battle.

At the time of Jutland, all ships carried WT sets in proportion to their sizes. Battleships and battlecruisers carried a 14kw set, with a range of approximately 500 miles (Kent, p.35) in addition to an auxiliary set of 1kw. Cruisers carried a 1.5kw (100 miles) set, destroyers 1kw (50 miles) and submarines a set with approximately 30 miles range (*Ibid.*). It was, perhaps, surprising that cruisers were given such short range sets, as this limited their effective scouting range. The battlecruisers, however, were better equipped to perform their scouting role (given their speed and greater WT range), yet they did not make sufficient use of this at Jutland.

Much of the signalling at Jutland was visual and whereas flags were seen to be obsolescent, they did at least make signalling a quicker procedure than WT. The quickest method was the searchlight (SL) mounted on, or near to, the bridge. Along with flags, it could (in theory) be operated within a minute of an order from the senior officer being verbally made and be seen in the receiving ship almost as quickly. The lack of enthusiasm for WT also stemmed from the fact that it was believed by the British that because they could read German call signs and signals (having captured German signal information), the Germans could also read British signals to the same extent. The less the use of WT, it was thought, the less was the risk from being given away. This abetted the use of visual signals and, therefore, of keeping ships within visual range of each other. What also supported this was that WT depended upon electricity, which could be (and had been) lost in action.

Limitations on signalling ranges kept fleets in relatively compact formations. For the largest ships (battleships and battlecruisers) the distance to the horizon from the bridge was approximately 14 miles, and a few miles less for smaller ships. The adverse effects of this were insufficient time for the senior officer to deploy forces as he might have wished even if visibility was good, and the greater likelihood that contact between forces might have been missed because cruiser screens were not wide enough.

Concern over security with WT also extended to the searchlight when the enemy were within visual range. At Jutland, this was to be a source of concern (if not criticism) when *Lion* was alleged to have lost the identifying call sign during the evening and asked *Princess Royal* for it by SL. It was believed that a German ship saw at least part of *Princess Royal*'s reply. However, even if this was the case, it was only of limited utility to the Germans. The Germans could not have been sure that they had seen a call sign. Even so, the reply part could only have been of use if a German ship was challenged by the British, in poor visibility or the darkness, and even then the German ship would have betrayed itself when opening fire. If the Germans had suspected any vessel to be British, using part of the British call sign would possibly have delayed action, but not by much.

Signal security at Jutland was a worry to Jellicoe, but, as with many things, it was over-played by him and others of the BF. He did not want the Fleet to be betrayed by unnecessary signals, but he overlooked two important points. Signals imparted information and the attitude of favouring less rather than more had to strike a balance between discouraging the trivial and

encouraging the important. As with many Jutland issues, a lack of clarity in what was expected caused uncertainty and confusion amongst subordinates.

Beatty's Flag-Lieutenant, Ralph Seymour, has been criticised for signalling blunders by his contemporaries (predominantly Jellicoe's sympathisers) and historians such as Marder and Gordon, as has Beatty for not ensuring that Seymour was fully trained in this respect. However, failings in action due to signalling errors were not due simply to confused signals themselves, but wider aspects of the initiative that Beatty considered the essential operational requirement. Signalling had become extremely complex at the turn of the Century and Beatty correctly perceived the problem that this presented. He did not want the complexity that signalling (especially by flags) had become to cause confusion in action. To that extent, he did not want a fully-qualified Long Course signal expert, because providing that all signalling staff were conversant with the basics, this was sufficient, assuming that he could rely on his subordinates' initiative. What faults there were must be seen in the wider context of Beatty's effort to liberate the service (via the BCF initially) from unnecessary and unhelpful complexity.

Basically, flag signals were made by hoisting the relevant flags at the dip, waiting to see this repeated in other ships, then fully raising the flags. When this had been repeated, the hauling down of the flags was the order for the signal to be acted upon. All flags hauled down together formed one signal. This was to be the cause of confusion at Dogger Bank, when a lack of halyards added to the errors made.

When a signal was made by flags, it was usual for it to be repeated by



SL, WT, or both, unless ships were in close company (approximately 1-2 miles) in good visibility. Flags were susceptible to the wind and were often positioned near funnels, whose smoke might obscure all, or part, of them. A separate slip of paper was used to record each of the different means. Lt. Arthur Peters, of *Southampton*, recorded (in Kent, p.61) that a WT signal was coded from the signal book, then the ship's position was added from the plotting operator, given to the WT office (to which was added the ship's call sign) and then transmitted. After this, the bridge was informed by means of a buzzer of the transmission. The coding officer then decoded the signal and sent it to the bridge for confirmation. Given that this would take time, assuming there was no interference, the use of flags gave the receiving ship's bridge more time to see (and, therefore, to understand) and when made executive, could be acted upon immediately without the need for passage to a separate office. A SL signal required similar coding and decoding to WT. Most importantly, the records of signals should be taken literally. That is, a signal's time of transmission and receipt referred to that and only that. The message within was not necessarily known to the senior officer (if he was required to know it) at the recorded time of receipt.

In the BCF, Beatty used flag signals sparingly, but at least imbued in his captains the fact that the movements of the Flagship should be their guide. If the Flagship turned before the signals had either been made or received, the turn was to be followed. The recording of the signals was not as important as the movements they indicated and what was most important in action was moving against an enemy, not waiting for signals to confirm that

this should be done. Given this, it is hard to ascertain the relation of signals to the movements made in action. Particularly for the BCF, signals should not be assumed to be hard and fast indications of timing. Other evidence is available to gain greater accuracy relating to movements.

### *The recording of signals.*

In sea-going ships, all visual signals were to be recorded in the same log; WT messages had a separate log. According to the *Instructions for Keeping Signal Logs*, both logs "are to be written in pencil. They are to be kept in original only, except that in Flagships an additional copy of the signal log may also be made for the Admiral's use." This was to cause the Dewars confusion when the *Staff Appreciation* was being written. They believed that someone on Jellicoe's staff had forged *Iron Duke's* signal log, omitting signals that might have caused Jellicoe embarrassment. Much was made of the fact that the log was written in ink (see Chapter 3), but this was evidently a copy made for Jellicoe. The *Instructions* also noted that:

"When the ship is paid off, each of the books is to be labelled on the back with the name of the ship and the date. They are then to be despatched to the — DEPUTY CASHIER IN CHARGE, ROYAL VICTORIA YARD, DEPTFORD.

Signal logs of Flagships will be preserved for five years, and other Signal Logs for three years. At the end of these respective periods they will be

destroyed."

When Dewar was writing his account, none of these periods had yet expired, but it is evident that he did not have access to the logs already at Deptford, or he would have seen *Iron Duke's* pencil original. The only possible proviso to this, is that the logs reported as having been destroyed by November 1920, are only the rough notes, but this is not made clear. It is equally unclear if the destroyed logs are the originals only covering the period including Jutland. Although most of the ships at Jutland were deleted from the *Navy List* soon after the war, their logs should still have been in existence.



## Appendix 5.

### *The Battle of Jutland: Order of Battle*

#### Grand Fleet

Battlefleet (from van to rear when deployed)

#### Second Battle Squadron

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>King George V</i> | Captain F.L. Field<br>(Flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Henry <u>Martyn</u> Jerram) |
| <i>Ajax</i>          | Captain G.H. Brind   |
| <i>Centurion</i>     | Captain M. Culme-Seymour   |
| <i>Erin</i>          | Captain the Hon. V.A. Stanley  |
| <i>Orion</i>         | Captain O. Backhouse<br>(Flag of Rear-Admiral <u>Arthur</u> Cavenagh Leveson)      |
| <i>Monarch</i>       | Captain G.H. Borrett   |
| <i>Conqueror</i>     | Captain H.H.D. Tothill   |
| <i>Thunderer</i>     | Captain J.A. Fergusson   |

#### Fourth Battle Squadron

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <i>Iron Duke</i>   | Captain F.C. Dreyer<br>(Flag of Admiral Sir <u>John</u> Rushworth Jellicoe)               |
| <i>Royal Oak</i>   | Captain C. MacLachan  |
| <i>Superb</i>      | Captain E. Hyde-Parker<br>(Flag of Rear-Admiral <u>Alexander</u> Ludovic Duff)            |
| <i>Canada</i>      | Captain W.C.M. Nicholson  |
| <i>Benbow</i>      | Captain H.W. Parker<br>(Flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Frederic Charles <u>Doveton</u> Sturdee) |
| <i>Bellerophon</i> | Captain E.F. Bruen  |
| <i>Téméraire</i>   | Captain E.V. Underhill  |
| <i>Vanguard</i>    | Captain J.D. Dick   |

#### First Battle Squadron

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Colossus</i>    | Captain A.D.P.R. Pound<br>(Flag of Rear-Admiral Ernest Frederick <u>Alexander</u> Gaunt) |
| <i>Collingwood</i> | Captain J.C. Ley   |
| <i>Neptune</i>     | Captain V.H.G. Bernard   |
| <i>St. Vincent</i> | Captain W.W. Fisher  |
| <i>Marlborough</i> | Captain G.P. Ross<br>(Flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Cecil Burney)                             |
| <i>Revenge</i>     | Captain E.B. Kiddle.   |
| <i>Hercules</i>    | Captain L. Clinton-Baker   |
| <i>Agincourt</i>   | Captain H.M. Doughty   |

### Third Battlecruiser Squadron (temporarily attached)

|  |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <i>Invincible</i>  | Captain A.L. Cay            |
| (Flag of Rear-Admiral the Hon. <u>Horace</u> Lambert Alexander Hood) |                             |
| <i>Inflexible</i>  | Captain E.H.F. Heaton-Ellis |
| <i>Indomitable</i>   | Captain F.W. Kennedy        |

### First Cruiser Squadron

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| <i>Defence</i>   | Captain S.V. Ellis   |
| (Flag of Rear-Admiral Sir <u>Robert</u> Keith Arbuthnot) |                      |
| <i>Warrior</i>   | Captain V.B. Molento |
| <i>Duke of Edinburgh</i>                                 | Captain H. Blackett  |
| <i>Black Prince</i>                                      | Captain T.P. Bonham  |

### Second Cruiser Squadron

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Minotaur</i>                                     | Captain A.C.S.H. D'Aeth  |
| (Flag of Rear-Admiral <u>Herbert</u> Leopold Heath) |                          |
| <i>Hampshire</i>                                    | Captain H.J. Savill      |
| <i>Cochrane</i>                                     | Captain E. La T. Leatham |
| <i>Shannon</i>                                      | Captain J.S. Dumaresq    |

### Fourth Light Cruiser Squadron

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <i>Callipoe</i>  | Commodore <u>Charles</u> Edward Le Mesurier |
| <i>Constance</i> | Captain C.S. Townsend                       |
| <i>Caroline</i>  | Captain H.R. Crooke                         |
| <i>Royalist</i>  | Captain the Hon. H. Meade                   |
| <i>Comus</i>     | Captain A.G. Hotham                         |

(Light cruisers attached principally for repeating visual signals)

|                   |                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Active</i>     | Captain P. Withers       |
| <i>Bellona</i>    | Captain A.B.S Dutton     |
| <i>Blanche</i>    | Captain J.M. Casement    |
| <i>Boadicea</i>   | Captain L.C.S. Wollcombe |
| <i>Canterbury</i> | Captain P.M.R. Royds     |
| <i>Chester</i>    | Captain R.N. Lawson      |

#### Fourth Destroyer Flotilla

*Tipperary*                      Captain C.J. Wintour  
*Acasta, Achates, Ambuscade, Ardent, Broke, Christopher, Contest,*  
*Fortune, Garland, Hardy, Midge, Ophelia, Owl, Porpoise, Shark,*  
*Sparrowhawk, Spitfire, Unity.*

#### Eleventh Destroyer Flotilla

*Castor* (light cruiser) Commodore James Rose Price Hawkesley  
*Kempenfelt, Magic, Mandate, Manners, Marne, Martial, Michael,*  
*Milbrook, Minion, Mons, Moon, Morning Star, Mounsey,*  
*Mystic, Ossory.*

#### Twelfth Destroyer Flotilla

*Faulknor*                      Captain A.B. Stirling  
*Maenad, Marksman, Marvel, Mary, Rose, Menace, Mindful, Mischief,*  
*Munster, Nessus, Noble, Nonsuch, Obedient, Onslaught, Opal.*

*Abdiel* Minelayer

*Oak*    Destroyer tender to Fleet Flagship

#### Battlecruiser Fleet

*Lion*                              Captain A.E.M. Chatfield  
   (Flag of Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty)

#### First Battlecruiser Squadron

*Princess Royal*              Captain W.H. Cowan  
   (Flag of Rear-Admiral Osmond de Beauvoir Brock)  
*Queen Mary*                  Captain C.L. Prowse  
*Tiger*                              Captain H.B. Pelly

#### Second Battlecruiser Squadron

*New Zealand*                Captain J.F.E. Green  
   (Flag of Rear-Admiral William Christopher Pakenham)  
*Indefatigable*                Captain C.F. Sowerby



### Fifth Battle Squadron (temporarily attached)

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <i>Barham</i>   | Captain A.W. Craig<br>(Flag of Rear Admiral Sir Hugh Evan-Thomas) |
| <i>Valiant</i>  | Captain M. Woollcome  |
| <i>Warspite</i> | Captain E.M. Philpotts  |
| <i>Malaya</i>   | Captain the Hon. A.D.E.H. Boyle                                   |

### First Light Cruiser Squadron

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <i>Galatea</i>    | Commodore <u>Edwyn</u> Sinclair Alexander-Sinclair |
| <i>Phaeton</i>    | Captain J.S. Cameron                               |
| <i>Inconstant</i> | Captain B.S. Theisger                              |
| <i>Cordelia</i>   | Captain T.P.H. Beamish                             |

### Second Light Cruiser Squadron

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>Southampton</i> | Commodore <u>William</u> Edmund Goodenough |
| <i>Birmingham</i>  | Captain A.A.M. Duff                        |
| <i>Nottingham</i>  | Captain C.B. Miller                        |
| <i>Dublin</i>      | Captain A.C. Scott                         |

### Third Light Cruiser Squadron

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <i>Falmouth</i>   | Captain J.E. Edwards<br>(Flag of Rear-Admiral <u>Trevylyan</u> Dacres Willis Napier) |
| <i>Yarmouth</i>   | Captain T.D. Pratt   |
| <i>Birkenhead</i> | Captain E. Reeves  |
| <i>Gloucester</i> | Captain W.F. Blunt   |

### First Destroyer Flotilla

*Fearless* (light cruiser) Captain D.C. Roper  
*Acheron, Ariel, Attack, Badger, Defender, Goshawk, Hydra, Lapwing, Lizard.*

### Ninth and Tenth Destroyer Flotillas (combined)

*Lydiard* Commander M.L. Goldsmith  
*Landrail, Laurel, Liberty, Moorsom, Morris, Termagent, Turbulent.*

## Thirteenth Destroyer Flotilla

*Champion* (light cruiser) Captain J.U. Farie  
*Moresby, Narborough, Nerissa, Nestor, Nomad, Nicator,*  
*Obdurate, Onslow, Pelican, Petard.*

Seaplane carrier                      *Engadine*

## High Seas Fleet

Battlefleet (van to rear when deployed)

### Third Battle Squadron

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>König</i>                | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Brüninghaus<br>(Flag of <i>Konteradmiral</i> Paul Behncke)             |
| <i>Grosser Kurfürst</i>     | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> E. Goette  |
| <i>Kronprinz</i>            | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> C. Feldt   |
| <i>Markgraf</i>             | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Seiferling   |
| <i>Kaiser</i>               | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Freiherr von Keyserlingk<br>(Flag of <i>Konteradmiral</i> H. Nordmann) |
| <i>Kaiserin</i>             | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Seivers  |
| <i>Prinzregent Luitpold</i> | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> K. Heuser  |

### First Battle Squadron

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>Friedrich der Grosse</i> | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> T. Fuchs<br>(Flag of <i>Vizeadmiral</i> Reinhard Scheer) |
| <i>Ostfriesland</i>         | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> von Natzmer<br>(Flag of <i>Vizeadmiral</i> E. Schmidt)   |
| <i>Thüringen</i>            | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> H. Küssel  |
| <i>Helgoland</i>            | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> von Kameke   |
| <i>Oldenburg</i>            | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Höpfner  |
| <i>Posen</i>                | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> R. Lange<br>(Flag of <i>Konteradmiral</i> W. Engelhardt) |
| <i>Rheinland</i>            | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Rohardt  |
| <i>Nassau</i>               | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> H. Kappenbach  |
| <i>Westfalen</i>            | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Redlich  |

### Second Battle Squadron (pre-dreadnought battleships)

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Deutschland</i>        | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> H. Meurer<br>(Flag of <i>Konteradmiral</i> F. Mauve)                        |
| <i>Hessen</i>             | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> R. Bartels  |
| <i>Pommern</i>            | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Bölken  |
| <i>Hannover</i>           | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Heine<br>(Flag of <i>Konteradmiral</i> Freiherr von Dalwigk zu Lichtenfels) |
| <i>Schleisen</i>          | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> F. Behncke  |
| <i>Schleswig-Holstein</i> | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Barrentrap  |



#### Fourth Scouting Group (light cruisers)

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <i>Stettin</i>   | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> F. Reensburg<br>(Broad Pendant of <i>Kommodore</i> Ludwig von Reuter) |
| <i>München</i>   | <i>Korvettenkapitän</i> O. Böcker  |
| <i>Hamburg</i>   | <i>Korvettenkapitän</i> von Gaudecker  |
| <i>Frauenlob</i> | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> G. Hoffmann   |
| <i>Stuttgart</i> | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Hagedorn  |

#### Flotilla Leader

*Rostock* (light cruiser) *Kapitän zur see* O. Feldman  
(Broad Pendant of *Kommodore* Andreas Michelsen)

#### First Torpedoboat (half) Flotilla

*G39* *Korvettenkapitän* C. Albrecht, *G38*, *G40*, *S32*

#### Third Torpedoboat Flotilla

*S53* *Korvettenkapitän* Hollmann  
Fifth half flotilla: *V71*, *V73*, *G88* Sixth half flotilla: *S54*, *V48*, *G42*.

#### Fifth Torpedoboat Flotilla

*G11* *Korvettenkapitän* Heinecke  
Ninth half flotilla: *V1*, *V2*, *V3*, *V4*, *V6*.  
Tenth half flotilla: *V8*, *G7*, *G8*, *G9*, *G10*.

#### Seventh Torpedoboat Flotilla

*S24* *Korvettenkapitän* von Koch  
Thirteenth half flotilla: *S15*, *S16*, *S17*, *S18*, *S20*.  
Fourteenth half flotilla: *S19*, *S23*, *V186*, *V189*.

#### First Scouting Group (battlecruisers)

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>Lützow</i>       | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Harder<br>(Flag of <i>Vizeadmiral</i> Franz Hipper) |
| <i>Derfflinger</i>  | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Hartog  |
| <i>Seydlitz</i>     | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> M. von Egidy  |
| <i>Moltke</i>       | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> von Karpf   |
| <i>Von der Tann</i> | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> W. Zenker   |

## Second Scouting Group (light cruisers)

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <i>Frankfurt</i> | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> T. von Trotha<br>(Flag of <i>Konteradmiral</i> Friedrich Bödicker) |
| <i>Weisbaden</i> | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Reiss  |
| <i>Pillau</i>    | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> K. Mommsen   |
| <i>Elbing</i>    | <i>Kapitän zur see</i> Madlung  |

## Flotilla Leader

*Regensburg* (light cruiser) *Kapitän zur see* Heuberer  
(Broad Pendant of *Kommodore* Paul Heinrich)

## Second Torpedoboat Flotilla

*B98* *Kapitän zur see* Schurr  
Third half flotilla: *G101, G102, B97, B112*.  
Fourth half flotilla: *B109, B110, B111, G103, G104*.

## Sixth Torpedoboat Flotilla

*G41* *Korvettenkapitän* M. Schultz  
Eleventh half flotilla: *V47, G87, G86*.  
Twelfth half flotilla: *V45, V46, V69, S50, G37*.

## Ninth Torpedoboat Flotilla

*V28* *Korvettenkapitän* Goehle  
Seventeenth half flotilla: *V26, V27, S36, S51, S52*.  
Eighteenth half flotilla: *V29, V30, S33, S34, S35*.

## Appendix 6.

### *British and German Naval Ranks, 1916.*

| BRITISH               | GERMAN                  |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Admiral of the Fleet  | <i>Grossadmiral</i>     |
| —                     | <i>Generaladmiral</i>   |
| Admiral               | <i>Admiral</i>          |
| Vice-Admiral          | <i>Vizeadmiral</i>      |
| Rear-Admiral          | <i>Konteradmiral</i>    |
| Commodore (2nd class) | <i>Kommodore</i>        |
| Captain               | <i>Kapitän zur see</i>  |
| —                     | <i>Fregattenkapitän</i> |
| Commander             | <i>Korvettenkapitän</i> |
| Lieutenant-Commander  | <i>Kapitänleutnant</i>  |
| Lieutenant            | <i>Oberleutnant</i>     |
| Sub-Lieutenant        | <i>Leutnant</i>         |



**Notes.**

**Preface.**

1. BTY 3/2/3.

2. BTY 17/41/54-6.

3. SLGF 14/1/A.

## Introduction.

1. Gordon, A., *The Rules of the Game*, p.576.
2. Görlitz, W. (ed.), *The Kaiser and His Court, the Diaries of Georg Alexander von Müller*, entry for 2nd June, 1916.
3. Bacon, Admiral Sir R.H.S., *The Jutland Scandal*, p.65, and Bellairs, Commander C., *The Battle of Jutland: The Sowing and the Reaping*, p.18.
4. DEW 27 f.201.
5. SLGF 12/1. Leslie worked in the British Embassy in Washington from 1916-7.
6. *Beatty Papers*, 1, #167.
7. *Jellicoe Papers*, 1, pp.287-90.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.* p.290.
10. Bacon, pp.65-7.
11. BTY 21/4.
12. Harper, Rear-Admiral J.E.T., *The Truth About Jutland*, p.16.
13. Dannreuther MSS.
14. My thanks to Lord Keyes, Earl Jellicoe, Admiral Sir Charles Madden, Captain R. Dannreuther and Mrs. S. Ballance.

## 1. The Battlecruisers: something to hide?

1. BTY 6/4/7.
2. BTY 4/5/6.
3. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #120. It must be noted that the Admiralty *Progress in Naval Gunnery* (1918) (ADM 186/205) endorsed Chatfield's view of the engagement and that, at the Falklands, failure to establish early hitting was because the 9' base length rangefinders were not good enough (ADM 186/238), showing that the problem was not fully realised even after the war.
4. *Der Krieg in der Nordsee*, V, p.235.
5. BLE 12.
6. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #122.
7. *Ibid.* #123.
8. *Ibid.* #125. Although the Pollen system could not overcome the spread problem, von Hase noted that the salvoes of *Queen Mary* at Jutland, one of the few ships with a Pollen type system, had practically no spread, but were nearly always over or short. It seemed that such a close spread was thought to be most desirable, which of course it was, if the target was hit with sufficient frequency, and that with director control all guns were set to the same range, not deliberately spread. Those battlecruisers opting for individual firing with less sophisticated calculating equipment appear to have been least successful, even with an evident greater spread that was inherent in this system. The best solution to the problem did not appear to have been evident.
9. Gordon, p.567.
10. *Vide.* Gordon p.54ff.



11. HMSS 54477. Harper noted "The copy of the notes in possession of Sir A. Chatfield which he used to refer to during the arguments on Jutland." "These records, when examined by (G) experts, indicate that *Lion's* shooting was exceedingly bad." It was noted in "*Our Bloody Ships*" or "*Our Bloody System*"? N.A. Lambert, *Journal of Military History*, 62, p.41, that Jellicoe said, in 1915, that guns should not even wait for rangefinder ranges or information from a plot if there was a chance of success.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Kiel and Jutland*, p.142. A common error was repeated in Tarrant (p.69) that, at 3:22, *New Zealand* was sighted by *Seydlitz* at 16,000 yards. The fact that *New Zealand* was just becoming distinguishable through the rangefinder at this time, proves that this distance quoted was highly inaccurate. At 8 miles, the profile of the ship could have been seen easily enough and if this was the case, the ship's crew must also have seen the other column of battlecruisers. There was no mention of this, so the range must be much greater than 16,000 yards. If von Hase could see all six battlecruisers clearly through his periscope, the same would be true of other ships if they had an uninterrupted view. Marder noted that the 1stSG was seen by *New Zealand* and *Lion* respectively at 3:25 and 3:30 (p.57) 14 miles away. Roskill (p.157) agreed with him, unfortunately.

14. p.235.

15. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #122.

16. p.238. Beatty noted that the fourth German salvo hit after 1½ minutes, the British after four, leading to it being said "It is not for one moment

intended that...control officers' hands should be tied...by a hard and fast rule." (ADM 137/1946) This seemingly endorsed his previous views.

17. HMSS 54477. It may be interesting to note that extracts from *Iron Duke's* TS were published in the *Despatches* along with those of other battleships. It is commonly understood that the Harper committee was given every available piece of evidence, yet one must then wonder why the above were not used in any work that the committee produced. Chatfield's notes, in his possession, as Harper noted, should not have been withheld, unless there was some copy, but this can almost certainly be excluded. It was evident from Harper's dealings with Beatty, Chatfield and Seymour, that these two pieces were not disclosed until the 'Record' had been completed, when they were used in the battlecruisers' defence (or supposed defence) and it is almost certain that they are genuine. They not only accurately correspond to other records and accounts, but if Chatfield had forged or tampered with them, he could definitely have made a better effort at exonerating his ships.

18. *Ibid.*

19. See Appendix 2.

20. Extract from *The London Magazine*. 1916.

21. *True Glory*. (ed.) Arthur, p.75.

22. *Ibid.* p.29.

23. CAB 45/269.

24. See also DRAX 1/2.

25. CAB 45/269. It is worth noting from this, that of the many British and German reports commenting upon the excellent targets that ships to the west

made due to the sun, have been misunderstood in places. They would only show up as clear silhouettes if the viewer was looking at the target from an oblique angle. The diameter of the sun is greater than the sum of the diameters of all the planets in the solar system and even at 92.8 million miles away, if one looks directly in the direction of the sun, no size of ship could possibly be distinguished. The sun did hamper as well as help the enemy. The question of visibility itself was sometimes a convenient red herring for those wishing to magnify certain difficulties with gunnery to hide other defects, or to emphasise the excellent targets that the enemy are assumed to have had throughout this phase at least.

26. *Kiel and Jutland*, von Hase, pp.149-50.

27. It might be significant that the entry for Chatfield in *Who Was Who*, made no mention of his being responsible for BCF gunnery, but noted "Flag Capt. and Fleet Gunnery Officer to Sir David Beatty...1917-19." James did appear to be correct in his assertion — he left *Queen Mary* two days before Jutland — as Chatfield's service records endorse (ADM 196/43+89). The Admiralty noted that Jutland led to developing a way of firing "by definite rules". This implied that this was not compulsory before (ADM 186/238).

28. BLE 13. 13.2.67. When Q turret was hit above the right gun it was loaded, yet one individual killed by the explosion knocked a lever sending the hoist with a full charge down to smoulder four feet above the working chamber (ADM 137/1946). After the war, only one full charge per gun was permitted except in extreme cases, had only one full charge been in the turret for this gun, little other cordite could have been present to catch fire and fall down.



29. *Despatches*, p.146.

30. Grove, *Fleet to Fleet Encounters*, p.74. In many accounts, the inaccuracy of the ranges at which shots were fired was seen to be the fault of the rangefinders, more so those operating them. However, it should be mentioned that the ranges recorded from most rangefinders in most circumstances were as accurate as the devices allowed for. Any inaccuracies crept in due to the defects in the non-Argo Dreyer equipment not being able to cope with giving sufficient information swiftly enough to the gunlayers, so that when guns were fired, the circumstances that the information had provided for, had changed sufficiently to adversely affect shooting.

All rangefinders are extensions of the human eye, which function much like coincidence rangefinders, taking two images from slightly differing angles, with the brain combining the two. Due to this, Barr & Stroud noted "If one image is moved into coincidence with the other, it will generally be found that the image can be moved some distance further and still appear to be in true alignment." (ADM 186/205) Over 20,000 yards, the ability to cut the image was dependent on the observer's astigmatism.

31. *The Navy and Defence*, p.150. See Appendix 1. In 1934, Beatty noted that the loss of the battlecruisers was "not the fault of anybody in them, poor souls, but of faulty design...[the German battlecruisers] were too stoutly built whereas ours went up in a blue flame on the smallest provocation." (unacknowledged quote in Tarrant, p.98). It would seem that, even in 1934, Beatty was totally unaware of what had saved *Lion*. Although known to those directly involved, it seemed that *Lion's* ammunition handling system was very

much Chatfield's and Grant's secret. This was largely responsible for leading people into thinking that the ships' design was at fault and this gained universal acceptance, but it also clouded understanding of the manner in which the BCF had worked and performed. This quote from Beatty could not be more wrong, yet he had to believe it. After the war, *Seydlitz's* experience at Dogger Bank, when 62 charges had ignited and jeopardised the ship, was common knowledge. *Lion* adopted similar precautions against igniting explosives before Jutland, but not many ever seemed to make the link to the causes of the losses, which was a very painful thing to admit to. It was sufficient to most to accept the first remotely plausible answer, that the BCF were let down by poor shells and bad ship design.

32. p.73.

## 2. The Harper Record.

1. Vice-Admiral J.E.T. Harper (1874-1949); entered RN 1888; Lt. 1896; Cdr 1906; Cpt 1913; Ogaden Somali expedition 1900-1; Commander HM Yacht 1911-4; Master of the Fleet for the Naval Review of 20.7.14; various commands during the war; Director of Navigation 1919-21; Anglo-American Arbitration Board 1921-2; CO *Resolution*, Atlantic Fleet, 1922; ADC to the King 1923-4; RA 1924, but given no further employment; retired and VA 1927; Nautical Assessor for the House of Lords 1934-6; Home Guard 1940-2.

It is worth noting that the work of the Harper committee, as it was not published, did not have a formal title. It has been referred to, at certain periods, as the "record", "Record", "report", "account", "narrative", or the work of Harper's committee. In 1927, an edited version appeared, entitled the *Reproduction of the Record of the Battle of Jutland*, which implied that "Record" might have been used. As Harper always referred to it as the "Record", this has been used here.

2. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, p.464.

3. HMSS 54477 (23.1.19). The request from Wemyss suggests that the original intention was to publish Harper's work, not merely to leave it as a staff account.

4. BTY 21/3.

5. HMSS 54477 f.27.

6. *Ibid.* f.23.

7. *Ibid.* f.28.

8. HMSS 54477.



9. *Ibid.* f.29. Discrepancies (deliberate or accidental) are evident throughout the list of signals. For example, at 3:50, *Lion* remarked upon frequent hits and a turret wrecked at 4:00, yet it was not hit until 3:50½ and cannot have been remarking upon other ships without noting this to be the case. It was quite clearly a summary of this part of the action, for some reason placed under the time before the events actually happened. There was a record of the 5thBS opening fire on the 2ndSG, but not of the First. At 4:20, *Lion* remarked that *Queen Mary* blew up, six minutes before it actually happened. *Lion* also remarked that at 4:50 the 5thBS had passed, when the text showed that the Flagships had not yet come abeam. Most of those who use the 4:48 signal ordering the 5thBS to turn, use the list of messages, not any text, as evidence, which is of a highly flawed kind; the *Despatches* is certainly not a primary source. By itself, the list of messages is of highly doubtful reliability, unless corroborated by other evidence.

10. *Vide.* Gordon, pp.136-7.

11. ADM 167/56 (3.7.19).

12. *Instructions for Keeping Signal Logs.* The ease with which alterations could be made to pencil entries is obvious. See Appendix 4.

13. ADM 167/56.

14. *Ibid.*

15. BTY 9/1/1.

16. ADM 167/56. Vivian, at Jutland, had commanded *Liverpool* and was now Captain of *Collingwood*. Oliphant had been Sturdee's Flag-Lieutenant at Jutland and was now at the Signal Division of *President*.

17. *Ibid.*

18. HMSS 54477.

19. BTY 22/9 p.6. There was a comment that Woods made a complete copy of the log (ADM 137/1946).

20. The Dewars evidently saw a copy, probably the one made by Woods.

21. BTY 22/8 p.24. The condition of the log at this point is discussed in Gordon, pp.139-40, it being worthwhile to consider the convenience of damage to the log. Whatever state it was in after it had caught fire, if it had, being dowsed with water would not have helped its long term preservation. It was highly probable that the leaves dried together, possibly being defaced upon opening and, unless placed in a vacuum, the chances of it becoming mouldy would only have increased. At 4:55, it is also worth noting that *Lion* was nearly 21,000 yards from *Lützow*, when the maximum range of *Lützow's* guns was a little over 20,000.

22. TEN 37. Godfrey-Tennant (16.1.63).

23. BLE 12.

24. SLGF 6/4 Beatty to Shane Leslie, 1922.

25. Schurman, *Julian S. Corbett*, p.187.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, p.465.

28. HMSS 54477. This document did not show any signs of handwriting other than that of Harper's, which, in general, was only to make typographical corrections. There are marks in blue pencil which were made by the DCNS on the advice of the DNI, regarding signals that it was felt should not be

published. Marks in red pencil indicated parts that the First Sea Lord wished to be altered or deleted. However, these marks were not necessarily made by the individuals in question, but could have been made by someone else on their instructions. There were few marks made on the document, which suggests that either Beatty had a copy, or saw a slightly different version. Harper stated that the original MS was in Beatty's possession from November 1919 to 11th February 1920, when it was returned to him. In 1927, when it was proposed to issue the account, in abridged form, it was recorded that the original account could not be found, thus the MS with least alterations was to be issued instead. The original had been in Harper's keeping, which suggested that Beatty, or anyone else, did not have this piece, therefore no copy.

The way the marks in red have been made suggested that they were done as the account was being read for the first time, so Beatty could well have made them. If this was so, then the fact that there is little red pencil throughout the work, suggests that there were only a few points of contention at first. However, this does not square with popular understanding, although any alterations need not necessarily have been made on the MS. It seems that in Harper's meetings with Beatty, most of the alterations desired were not indicated on the MS now in 54477. Harper's copy is marked "triplicate" which suggests the least number of such originals. This does assume that the copy in 54477 was the original version, or a copy of it. If it is, then it is to be wondered why, in 1927, the original could not apparently be found from at least three. The lack of pencilling in Harper's copy suggests that the original



is not in Harper's papers. It also shows that Harper had not amended the original to Beatty's satisfaction, such as regarding the 360° turn of the BCF, because this section is marked.

29. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, p.465, the original is in BTY 9/2/71. Harper's evidence to the ACNS is in BTY 9/2/72-6. Chatfield's autobiography noted that at the time, a 180° turn to starboard commenced and that he was seeing to the wounded. He might not have been aware of the turn whilst below deck, but it can scarcely have escaped his attention later and he obviously preferred not to become involved in this dispute, nor some others. He was content to record his personal experience (p.147) and to ensure that no-one could make erroneous or mischievous inferences.

30. BTY 9/2/78. Chatfield's notes recorded that, at 6:45, Beatty sent a message to *Indomitable* that "I am altering course starboard, prolong line astern. 6:48 course SSE 6:56 180 rpm. 7:03 course SSE". Harper added "good evidence in favour of 32pt turn", which it is. Midshipman Frank Layard recorded that not long after the loss of *Invincible* "on orders from the *Lion* we turned round and took station astern of the other battle-cruisers" (Arthur, *op. cit.* p.74). This would have brought about possible collision had *Lion* turned back 180° as Beatty stated.

31. *The Truth About Jutland*, Rear-Admiral J.E.T. Harper, p.98. n.1. Jellicoe, in *The Grand Fleet*, noted that "our Battlecruisers experienced great difficulty in locating and holding the enemy after 7:20pm, even when far ahead of the Battle Fleet." (p.371.)

Harper had suggested, on 4.11.19, that more detailed diagrams could

be produced for the period of 6:30-8pm, but, unsurprisingly, "no reply was received to this". In the final version, Harper had moved *Lion* ½mile further southward at around 6:53 and moved the 1stSG to make the given ranges correspond and conform to the notion of the 180° starboard-180° to port turn.

32. COW 17/4 p.274.

33. *Ibid.* p.276.

34. TEN 4. The account was written approximately 3-4 weeks after the battle.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, p.470.

39. *Ibid.* p.471. Beatty seemed also to admit grudgingly any battlefleet involvement, with Harper also noting that he said "Well I suppose there is no harm in the public knowing that someone on the Battle Fleet got wet, as that is about all they had to do with Jutland". In stating this he contradicted what he was trying to have the 'Record' state.

40. ADM 116/2067.

41. They can be found with Harper's responses in *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.* There is a sheet of typed comments made at the meeting in CAB 45/269. Of the battlefleet's involvement, Harper agreed to note that "Action became more General" and stated that, over all, "No attempt has been made to prepare such an account as would be prepared by a Historian. Simply a record of events without criticism or comments, prepared in the first instance for the information of the Board." This assumption led to the dispute in the

first instance. Chatfield made most of the comments of those present. As a result of this meeting, *Lion's* track was altered as detailed in n.31.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, p.469.

46. ADM 116/2067.

47. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, p.469. The original is in BTY 9/1/1 f.2.

48. BTY 9/1/3 Seymour to Beatty 20.2.20.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Reproduction of the Record of the Battle of Jutland*. (Cmd.2870), p.42.

52. ADM 116/2067. From the committee's own table, firstly in HMSS 54477, from 6:17-54, 15 battleships opened fire. At 7:10, *Ajax* opened and from 7:15-7, 5 more battleships, in the van, opened fire. It is also curious that *Erin's* withholding fire was not criticised. For the action from 7:35, Harper's title was "Proceedings after the General Fleet Action ceased" but, following the first three words, someone has written in its place "enemy Battlefleet turned away". It is evident that this individual was expressing the opinion of someone more in sympathy with the BCF than the battlefleet.

53. ADM 116/2067.

54. BTY 9/1/3.

55. Diary 1920. Jellicoe had been persuaded to read the account after initially refusing, believing that none present at the battle should have read it before publication.



56. HMSS 54477 (4.7.16) in NID 21.9.20. Chatfield, in *The Navy and Defence*, stated that "The German Battlecruisers, despite their two big successes, showed themselves strangely disinclined for further fighting. They had evidently had enough." (p.144.) In conjunction with the statement that the battle "was a fight in which there was really only one serious round, the Battlecruiser action." (p.148.) This summed-up the opinions of those in the battlecruisers, but without taking note of German intentions at the battle. (See Appendix 2).

57. *Der Krieg in der Nordsee, V*, pp.241-2.

58. *Jellicoe Papers, 2*, p.472. Captain Frank Spickernell was Beatty's secretary.

59. *Ibid.* pp.474-5.

60. *Ibid.* p.475.

61. *Ibid.*

62. Diary 1921.

63. *Jellicoe Papers, 2*, pp.476-8.

64. *Ibid.* p.463.

65. Schurman *op. cit.* p.189.

66. BTY 21/3 (19.12.68).

67. BTY 21/3. Pipon's service record showed many complimentary remarks as to his abilities and enthusiasm, except that "memory exceptionally bad, has gained little knowledge of Admiralty procedure and could not be trusted to deal satisfactorily with papers. No initiative or self-reliance.-Capt. Harper." (ADM 196/48). Relations seem to have been strained. Many also erroneously assume that what criticism there is in *The Truth About Jutland* extended from events relating to the 1919 'Record', but much had happened since to

strengthen Harper's case regarding what had happened.

68. COW 17/4 p.275.

69. DRAX 1/57.

70. SLGF 12/1.

### 3. The Genesis of the *Naval Staff Appreciation of Jutland*.

1. Schurman, D.M. *The Education of a Navy*, p.1. This work also has chapters dealing with Richmond's and Corbett's contributions to history.
2. *Ibid.* pp.10-11.
3. Corbett's Diary, 1920.
4. DEW 4/2 f.176.
5. DEW 35 (24.2.56).
6. DEW 34 ff.497-8 (7.5.16) to Richmond.
7. *Ibid.* ff.501-3 (8.6.16).
8. That is the belief that the battlecruisers had been at the forefront of the action, bearing the brunt of the damage, whilst the battlefleet was not involved.
9. DEW 34 ff.509-10 (25.9.16). Captain E. Rushton (XO of *Southampton*).
10. DEW 4/2 (5.6.19).
11. *Ibid.* f.3.
12. DEW 35 (23.10.51). Alfred wrote to his brother that Chalmers's biography proved that "Beatty never intended to influence its composition."
13. DEW 4/2 f.4.
14. *Ibid.* ff.5-8.
15. *Ibid.* ff.4-5.
16. *Ibid.* 1933. Grenfell had served aboard *Revenge* at Jutland.
17. *Ibid.* f.237.
18. BTY 9/5 Brock-Kenneth and Alfred Dewar (15.11.20).
19. BTY 9/5/6 Kenneth Dewar.



20. BTY 9/5 (4.10.21).

21. ROSK 3/4.

22. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #247 (14.8.22). Lt-Cdr John Francis Hungerford Pollen had, in 1913, contracted polio and was subsequently invalided out of the service. His service record noted him to be (in April 1910) "Slow, lacking in zeal." However, improvements were noted and on 10.11.19 "TL appreciation of meritorial work in connection with Battle of Jutland." (ADM 196/53). My thanks also to Sir John Pollen.

23. Dr. E.J. Grove.

24. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #236.

25. BTY 9/5/7 (14.9.21). Following a conversation with the Swedish naval attache soon after Jutland, Chatfield became convinced that the failure to inflict greater losses upon the 1stSG especially, was due to deficient shell (see Appendix 1). The Chatfield Coat of Arms depicts a sailor accompanied by a shell and is a little evidence of the importance that he attached to this point.

26. As n.22.

27. *Ibid.*

28. The destruction of the work is undoubted, yet few seem to agree as to when the work was actually destroyed. Beatty's eldest son stated (BTY 22/9) that it was ordered to be destroyed by Madden, the date being 1928 (but this could be when the destruction was ordered, not necessarily executed).

Copy #4 (ROSK 3/13) bears the insert "When I was preparing the Jutland lectures at the War College in 1922-3 Spick. lent me this copy. He explained that D.B. (1st SL) considered it inaccurate and biased so I

understand had ordered existing copies to be burnt. It is quite certain that he stopped the issue." (Blake to Roskill 9.8.60). Alfred Dewar noted "The 250 copies of it remained in a cupboard in DTSD! room were all burnt by [?]. . . before Madden left (about 1932)." (DEW 35, to Kenneth Dewar 10.5.57). If these are put down to failing memories then the work was destroyed between late 1927-30, which is the popular understanding. If there were 250 copies in total then only 247 at most could have been burned, though Alfred Dewar might not have been aware that not all copies had been returned. It does seem as if Dewar and Blake had their facts wrong, but if one or more is right then the plot thickens. What is also significant is the way Spickernell was keen to lend his copy in this case, perhaps on his own initiative. Jellicoe was sent two copies when in New Zealand, one of which

- was to keep and he may have held onto the other. It may or may not be significant that the copies currently known to have survived belonged to Beatty, his secretary and former Flag-Captain. CHT 8/2 noted that Chatfield could keep his copy (#9) if he so desired.

29. BTY 9/5/8 K. Dewar to Ellerton (late 1921). On 6th October, Corbett noted that "Dewar came to tell me his [account] of Jutland was completed+that he expected it to be handed over to me. Also to ask if I could find some means of keeping on Pollen." On 23rd December "Tuck with Capt. Dewar re Jutland who said yesterday that he had seen Beatty+Brock+they decided I was to have all there was including his super secret appreciation unexpurgated." [Diary]. It seems that throughout this period Brock was also heavily involved (not unsurprisingly, perhaps, as

DCNS) with the work, as suggested by his reluctance to authorise the publication of Harper's work in 1919. Chatfield, however, did not seem to have sought such close involvement, if anything, he wanted to distance himself from it.

30. DEW 4/2 f.137. From Captain W. Ellerton (DTSD) to K. Dewar (28.11.21). Ellerton was succeeded by Captain Vernon Haggard.

31. BTY 9/5/8 (28.11.21). Cdr Oswald Tuck was with the Historical Section of the War Cabinet.

32. DEW 4/2 f.143 (18.2.22).

33. *Ibid.* f.145. "There is the question of the accuracy of the book-in fact I understand it is only too accurate+it has been thought better to keep the criticisms unpublished for the present...the real fact is they haven't the courage to publish it until certain people have passed away." (18.3.22).

34. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, #134 (16.3.22). On 15th February, Corbett met Haggard and told him that the *Appreciation* should not go out with the Admiralty's approval, though he doubtless felt the same. On the 22nd, Corbett learned that the work was to be destroyed. Two days later, Haggard requested that Corbett return his copy and from the 27th, Corbett sought to retain it (he had not yet reached working on the night action) and apparently succeeded. [Diary].

35. BTY 9/5/2.

36. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, #137 (18.7.22).

37. *Ibid.* #145. (14.2.23).

38. *Ibid.* #132. (13.6.21).



39. *Ibid.* #147 (25.2.23).

40. DEW 35 (3.11.22).

41. Captain (later Rear-Admiral) Roger Mowbray Bellairs (1884-1959), Cdr. Grand Fleet torpedo officer 1914-16 (*Iron Duke*); War Staff officer to Beatty 1916-9; Naval Assistant to Beatty 1919-25 (Brother of Commander Carlyon).

42. DEW 35 (28.5.23).

43. My thanks to Admiral Sir Charles Madden.

#### 4. The Official History & the Admiralty *Narrative*.

1. Diary 1916.
2. *Ibid.* Corbett also wrote a brief narrative at this time, finding universal acceptance (ADM 137/1946).
3. Diary 1921.
4. *History of the Great War: Naval Operations.*, pp.328-9.
5. Cf. Chapter 1.
6. *Official History*, p.331.
7. *Ibid.* p.334. On 27th May 1922, Corbett had written to Bentinck (Naval Assistant to the First Lord) asking why Beatty opened fire so late [Diary]. No evidence exists of a reply to this. It would have been unusual if any reply was received, but Corbett might have given this point more consideration than he did in the work. By his own wording, it was not a matter of incidental importance. It must be said that he did not have access to much evidence to prove why late opening of fire might be the case and he was certainly asking one of the people who were least likely to offer any explanations.
8. *Ibid.* p.362.
9. *Ibid.* p.361.
10. ADM 116/2067. Pound was Director of Plans.
11. *Official History*, p.364.
12. *Ibid.* p.371. It might be mentioned that there was a widespread feeling before the battle that the Germans would try to hatch some sneaky plot if ever encountered. The probability that they might bolt for home in fear of their lives if met with overwhelming force, was not apparently considered.

Jellicoe was certainly not alone in sharing this view.

13. *Ibid.* p.372.

14. *Ibid.* p.384.

15. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, #146, Jellicoe to Daniel 16.2.23. In the Corbett Papers, Box 7, it was noted by Roskill that Corbett could, perhaps, have appealed more strongly to his employers regarding the actions of the Admiralty and their reading the proofs, but apparently failed to do so. On 19th June 1922, Corbett received a "Recorded cable from Jellicoe approving all but two paragraphs I had altered with Pollen." (Diary).

16. *Ibid.* #148 14.8.23.

17. BTY 21/4. David Beatty (the Second Earl) to Temple-Patterson 6.7.67.

18. Cf. Chapter 5.

19. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, #122 13.2.19. Relations between Jellicoe and Corbett were initially far from warm. For example, on 18.1.17, he told Richmond "I am afraid there is very little chance with Jelly and still less with that jumpy neurotic inexperienced amateur 1st Lord [Carson]. Good Lord, we are lucky people to get on as well as we do." On 6th April "I had to see Jelly today to try to persuade him to let us have some more stuff for the history. He made a bad impression on me — his feet seemed very cold." (CP Box 7) Relations remained cool after the war, yet by late 1919/early 1920, Corbett was becoming ever more aware, largely from his meetings with Harper, of the fact that Beatty wanted, first and foremost, an account favourable to himself and was prepared to use some measure of chicanery to get it. Corbett admitted that it was not until he looked at Jutland in any depth, that he appreciated



more fully the task that faced Jellicoe and Beatty's actual role. It was about this time that Corbett began to look more disapprovingly upon Beatty, conversely with Jellicoe and, given that he was forewarned of Beatty's intentions for the Jutland history, over compensated in his work.

20. *Ibid.* #138 3.8.22.

21. *Ibid.* #141 2.10.22.

22. The disclaimer read "The Lord's Commissioners of the Admiralty have given the author access to official documents in the preparation of this work, but they are in no way responsible for its production or for the accuracy of its statements. Their Lordships find that some of the principles advocated in the book, especially the tendency to minimise the importance of seeking battle and of forcing it to a conclusion, are directly in conflict with their views."

23. ADM 116/2067. This view does seem not to have drawn the attention feared. C.J. Longman wrote to Lady Corbett "I am delighted with the notices in the press so far. They have been very numerous, very full and the large majority have been highly appreciative. If that ill-natured unaccountable Admiralty note was intended to influence public opinion adversely it has failed in its object. Very few of the papers have noticed it and so far as I know have endorsed its view of the book. I think you may rest assured that it will do no harm to the book: that it should injure in any way whatever Sir Julian's reputation is of course out of the question. Indeed, it will strengthen his reputation for independence of judgement and courage. It affords evidence that on some points his considered opinion ran counter to those held by the Admiralty (or someone there) at the time when the book was

being printed and that he had the courage to adhere to his own judgement against official pressure [and had Jellicoe's approval]." (November 1923). Longman may or may not have been aware of Corbett's dealings with Jellicoe.

Colonel Daniel wrote "In my honest opinion Sir Julian's "Battle of Jutland" was his crowning achievement. I only wish he could have lived to see it and to answer the foolish note which the Admiralty insisted on being inserted. If I had refused to put it in I shouldn't like to say when the book would have been published. There is a certain stamp of naval officer who never could understand Sir Julian's views on the subject of searching out the enemy and destroying him...a large number of well-informed naval officers have the highest admiration for Sir Julian, and I can assure you that his teachings have been taken seriously." to Lady Corbett. (Mockridge MSS).

24. *Corbett and the 1990's*. G. Till, in *Mahan is not enough*, p.222.

25. ADM 116/2067. Haggard-DCNS 7.2.23.

26. ADM 116/2067.

27. BTY 9/4 f.4. The author of the marginal comments was possibly one of Beatty's staff. It could have been his secretary, Frank Spickernell, but this is doubtful, or Roger Bellairs. The handwriting does not suggest that it was Seymour, Chatfield or Keyes.

28. *Ibid*.

29. Harper's marginal notes in his copy of the book (in the possession of Commander J.A. Harper).

30. *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*. (HMSO, 1924).

31. *Ibid.* p.3.

32. *Ibid.* p.12.

33. *Ibid.* n.6.

34. *Ibid.* p.2. In his article *The Jutland Scandal*, in the *Naval Review*, 1925, Dewar noted the sentiment that Harper's work was only the beginnings of a work on Jutland and that a chronological account could not bring out the lessons of the battle (p.223.). He continued that "The suggestion that Lord Beatty or his advisors edited or altered the facts in the Admiralty *Narrative* can be flatly and absolutely contradicted...The *Narrative* was written quite independently." (p.224.) He often confused the *Narrative* with the *Staff Appreciation*. He had already admitted that Harper's work had been used in his work, so the *Narrative* could not possibly have been written independently. It seemed that his intention was to mislead the readers regarding the nature of the Admiralty-approved account, which was more in tune with his own, and Beatty's, beliefs.

35. *Ibid.* p.15.

36. *Ibid.* p.17. With regard to the wording, it does suggest inaccuracies, generated by the Harper committee, which were not properly verified. Kenneth Dewar seemed to think his work was more accurate and that it would gain acceptance by repetition; something that has continued to the present day. This phrase suited the Dewars' views, but *Von der Tann* was straddled after *Barham's* second salvo and had its steering gear jammed with the third; "some minutes" was, in fact, under two.



37. *Ibid.* p.21 n.2.

38. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, #146 6.12.22. Jellicoe's objections, replies to them, the rough draft of the account, proofs, diagrams and other correspondence are in ADM 116/3188.

39. *Ibid.* #149, 6.12.23.

40. ADM 167/69. Haggard noted that "First Lord has promised adm Evan-Thomas that he shall see paras dealing with the movements of 5th B.S. while with B.C.S. before publication." (March 1923) ADM 116/3188. This suggested that this was not done purely for Evan-Thomas's information.

41. *Vide. Jellicoe Papers*, 2, #150.

42. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, #143.

43. *Ibid.* #149, 6.12.23.

44. ADM 116/3188 Oswyn Murray (23.11.23).

45. ADM 116/3188. (5.4.23).

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.* (January 1924).

48. *Narrative.* p.106.

49. *Ibid.* n.2.

50. *Ibid.* n.3.

51. Cf. Chapter 5.

52. *Narrative.* p.108 n.1.

53. *Ibid.* p.113.

54. *Ibid.* n.6.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.* n.7.

## 5. Poles apart: the 5thBS and BCF at Jutland.

1. *Beatty Papers*, 1, #174 (26.6.16). Beatty's contemporary remarks on the incident, such as this, did not blame Evan-Thomas or attempt to imply bad manoeuvring. When the matter was being recorded for public issue, his actions were somewhat different. In 1923, he had the idea from discussions with Algernon Boyle (CO *Malaya* at Jutland) that Evan-Thomas "could certainly have seen *Lion* turn to sthd and conformed without signal. The real reason for this delay was RA waited until his TBD screen assumed new position for screening...From his despatch he does not consider there was any undue delay." (ADM 116/3188). The truth of this depends upon what he actually asked Boyle. Evan-Thomas was adjusting the 5thBS's destroyer screen, not necessarily to conform to the battlecruisers' turn, but to continue their zig-zag. Beatty's comment assumed that Evan-Thomas knew why *Lion* turned, but he forced himself to believe this in the 1920s, whereas he did not feel the need to do so in 1916. This is a telling fact.

2. In the *Despatches* and DRAX 1/57. *Barham*'s ship's log (ADM 53/34796) stated "1.33 a/c 2pts to take up station 5 miles NNW of *Lion*."

3. *Beatty Papers*, 1, #174 (26.6.16). It was noted in the proofs of the Official History that "At 3.5 the *Tiger* signalled to the *Lion* that the 2:32 signal and signals made since have not been passed to the *Barham*." " (BTY 9/4). This appeared on page 331. Marder (p.52.) held *Tiger* responsible for not also repeating the signal, but added that *Lion*'s signal staff "was sorely lacking in common sense" for not making an immediate searchlight repeat. This was not exactly true. Marder, along with others, often noted the deficiencies in the



signalling arrangements and attributed them all to a bewildered Seymour (Harper had said that Seymour "was such a fool that I'm surprised he didn't hoist it at the jackstaff."-Cdr Harper.). Seymour was following common practice at this time, but to make him responsible for the BCF's signals, one must also make Beatty, amongst others, responsible for any defects in organisations under their control. Responsibility accepts taking credit when things succeed, but it must also accept any failures. As was common in Jutland accounts, many authors are eager to point to certain successes or failures in organisations under an individual's control, but do not examine the whole structure with the same criteria. Selective analysis is a paradox and has misled many writing on Jutland.

On p.68, Marder noted that the 3:35 to *Barham* was "taken in and obeyed at once". However, Marder needed to explain why the 2:32 was not acted upon. The alternative courses theories only arise *because* the 2:32 searchlight repeat was never made. Even if it was made, its subject matter was not necessarily Evan-Thomas's concern or open to his interpretation. An order is an order.

4. Following Dogger Bank, Archibald Moore had noted that "visual flag signals are very difficult to distinguish with the interference from smoke from funnels." (BTY 4/6/7.) Jellicoe and others realised this and the possible implications.

5. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #241 (14.8.23) Evan-Thomas to Haggard.

6. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #243 (19.8.23).

7. p.107, n.2.

8. (4.9.28.) in Gordon p.557.

9. *Ibid.* pp.557-8.

10. DEW 35 (Dewar's brackets). *Barham's* log read "2.38 a/c SSE. 2.40 action stations."

11. ROSK 3/3, from Barnard.

12. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #245 (30.6.26). See also #246. Evan-Thomas did admit in a letter to the editor of *The Times* that "it was impossible to distinguish flag signals...except possibly on very rare occasions." (16.2.27) Jellicoe stated that flag signals were not "apparently clearly distinguished." (*Jellicoe Papers*, 2, #144), but this seemed to result from a reaction to the baseless publicity over the incident that had even led some to begin to question their memories.

13. ROSK 3/3, Barnard.

14. Gordon, p.558.

15. Paper by Commander Michael Craig-Waller.

16. Later Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Blake (1882-1968): entered 1897; Lt. 1904; 1911-3 Lt. gunnery experiments; Cdr 1914; *Iron Duke* 1916; *Queen Elizabeth* 1917; Cpt 1918; Naval Attache to USA 1919-21; CO *Queen Elizabeth* 1921-3; War College staff 1923-5; Director RNSC 1927.

17. BLE 13. Blake to the editor of the *Naval Review*, Vice-Admiral Mansergh (28.6.66). The account is a typed sheet, with the initials "A.C.W." which he had sent to Blake. For the tale as told according to Craig see, for example, Bennett, *Naval Battles of the First World War*, p.162, (wrongly timed to 2:32). Marder (p.55) believed Craig's plea and, along with Roskill (p.156), that the repeat was made and received.

18. Paper by Commander Michael Craig-Waller.

19. Page 47 only stated that the battleships held on until 2:40 and then conformed to the turn. The evidence for this came from the reports of the 5thBS, not the signal or deck logs. On the turn to the north (p.59) it quoted *Lion's* signal log making the signal executive at 4:48, but the evidence for the 5thBS again, was only the reports of each ship. It is odd that Alfred Dewar quoted *Barham's* signal log in his letter to Kenneth, but no such quote evidenced itself here. This suggests that, in 1921, the forgery to *Barham's* signal log had not yet been made and almost certainly that Dewar had, at this time, either not seen any signal log from the 5thBS (but he implied that he saw all logs) or had seen the log which did not yet have the forged signal in it. In 1921, Kenneth Dewar, who did the majority of work on the *Appreciation*, had probably not seen the log, but Alfred definitely had not. If he ever did, he only saw it subsequently to the signal being inserted, hence his belief as stated here. It seemed that Dewar's failure to dwell on this point was due to the fact that, whilst being disputed since the battle, Beatty had not yet come under heavy criticism for it. The absence of any reference to the signal logs of the 5thBS is also odd, but, in later years, people quoted *Barham's* log with apparent familiarity as if it had always been available. However, this was usually only the 2:37 signal quoted elsewhere, which was convenient to Beatty's purpose to say the very least.

20. He had been caught out by Harper and he denied the 32 point turn that Harper, the Dewars, Chatfield and his navigator, amongst others, confirmed that he made. This might have been discouraging.

21. Dannreuther MSS. Hubert Dannreuther's notes made at a meeting on



board *Invincible* roughly a month before the battle.

22. It was likely that, with the battlecruisers being in line ahead, *Lion* began the turn whilst hoisting the signal, or just before it, with the others conforming when reaching the turning point and repeating the signal as soon as was possible to the next astern. It would not have been unusual for them to begin to follow without a signal, but such a large change of course needed to be specified. The turn must be sooner, rather than later, given the fact that visibility to the east was roughly 23,000 yards and, allowing time for a clear enough image for identification of the HSF, beginning the turn at 4:40 would have meant that the battlecruisers would have been under fire from the German battleships before *Tiger* and *New Zealand* had completed the turn. It would have meant that the two Flagships could not have passed at 4:50 and they would have been at least 2.5 miles apart. Evan-Thomas noted they were little more than a mile apart and was correct in this. Had the battlecruisers turned at 4:40, they would, by 4:43, have been to the east of *Queen Mary's* wreckage and would have made their dog-leg towards it, for no apparent purpose. Yet, they made this turn to avoid it, so they must have been heading towards it, as *Lion's* TS noted, steering north (magnetic). There was a convergence in this time (4:36-40) of about 3,000 yards (a loss of c.1,5/600 yards as the BCF turned and c.1,500 in which the HSF advanced), bringing the HSF almost into range of *New Zealand* when it steadied onto the new course. The "split second decision" which Beatty needed to make at this point, to which Chalmers referred (p.237), was exactly that.

23. *Vide.* Gordon, Ch. 8. Marder made a frequent mistake concerning this

point, in trying to fudge information from varying sources. He noted that the signal to turn was hoisted at 4:48 (p.64), but it was recorded in the source he used as the executive and he did not explain why, when quoting from the same source, the times of flag signals hitherto understood to be executive, were not so in this case. Curiously, he then quoted the executive of the signal as from the *Narrative* (4:57) and stated that the 5thBS turned at this time "or as soon as the signal was hauled down". Again, he cannot have it both ways. It was just possible that the 4:57 quoted in the *Narrative* was accurate for the signal's executive, but if it was, it was by default and one must dissociate it from actual obedience to the signal, as the 5thBS were already turning under TA. However, it was much more likely that this time was estimated to suit the purpose of the work, as nowhere was it mentioned or recorded previously. If it was genuine, it must have been recorded in 1916 and cannot have been overlooked for so long. It is also possible that the signal's (TA's) timing was misaligned in the *Despatches*, but unlikely. Even if the time was wrong, the actual sequence of events as stated here is not wrong.

The 4:48 in the *Despatches* would clearly have the reader believe this to be the time of the executive, but as it was not so stated in the *Narrative*, Marder tried to alter the evidence to hopefully explain the discrepancy and ended up explaining nothing. The 5thBS actually turned before the signal was hauled down late, precisely because Evan-Thomas was the stickler for procedure that Marder stated and waited for the executive until the advance of the HSF altered matters. It was Marder who did not commit himself to a time, rather than admit he was unsure. So, by his account, the signal was hoisted at

4:48, he was correct in this, but by default, and obeyed when it was hauled down, which might or might not have been 4:57, in which case, why quote the *Narrative*? He accepted much too readily the infallibility of the evidence, as did others, rather than attempting to construct a single sequence of events. This left the reader no wiser. Roskill (pp.161-2) stated that the signal for the battlecruisers to turn was not seen by the 5thBS, but did not say that it was not intended for them. If anything, his account relied a little too much on Marder.

24. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #241, underlining added. In Gordon, p.139, this read "*until* some time later" although Evan-Thomas was only stating that the signal was still flying when the ships passed, not giving an account of the incident. Neither version alone provided an answer to the exact sequence of events and responses to them.

25. Marder (p.65. n.31) stated that Seymour might have added to the confusion, the direction in which the 5thBS was to turn was seemingly his decision. However (in n.33), Marder noted that Beatty wanted them to pass on the disengaged side, in which case, Seymour had no choice. Again, one cannot have it both ways. Beatty's defence of Seymour was often questioned, but his comments suggested that he was soon aware that the operational system that he believed existed in the BCF never did, which explained many of his subsequent actions.

26. HMSS 54477 f.29.

27. HMSS 54479 (see also, Gordon, pp. 405-7). When it was decided, in 1927, to publish the report of the committee, the charts were not reproduced with it, the reason given being the expense involved. They were, however, made



available, upon application, to anyone who wished to see them. On 15.6.27, Oswyn Murray noted that "It would probably be disappointing to him [Harper] to know that not a single member of the public has...come to inspect the diagrams." (ADM 1/8722/290). It would seem that interest had waned considerably. A study of them would, however, have helped anyone interested in the battle and subsequent controversy.

28. HMSS 54477. A dispute arose relating to the battlecruisers re-opening fire, at around 5:40, presumably recorded from Pipon's evidence in Marder (p.74. n.49) that Harper and Beatty had a "first class row" over the ranges concerned. The ranges given and notes of brief firing are, however, highly similar for both times. At 4:50, Pelly's Report noted that the range was 18,000 yards, but the BCF were fast moving out of range, enough to check fire. Von Hase confirmed that they disappeared from sight, but the 5thBS did not (pp.172-4). He gave *Derfflinger's* maximum range (HMSS 54477) as 19,674 yards and stated that, from 4:55-5:05, the range was rarely below 19,700, which must be at least as true for the later period. At a little after 5:00 until 5:20, he recorded that he "only fired to make sure that the enemy were still out of range...The guns were trained on the upper edge of the funnels or the mastheads. At these long ranges the enemy's shooting was not good either." (see pp.171-2).

*Lion's* TS noted at 4:50 "20,000...a/c P" and at 4:50½ that a correction of 400 up be applied. Harper's notes recorded that the range at 5:46 was recorded as 14,000 "by time of flight" to which he noted "(?J.E.T.H.)". This was probably where the dispute with Beatty, told by Pipon to Marder, arose. The convenience of this short range with Beatty's erroneous views that the BCF

were at continuous close action can scarcely be doubted and only confirmed his attitude to the battle that Harper already knew.

Incidentally, at 6:21½, when Beatty and his supporters, especially Bellairs, would have one believe that he was leading his ships and the battlefleet into action with the HSF, *Lion's* TS noted "Enemy going into mist, can't see" and from 6:38-7:13½ there was no entry. At 7:20, it was noted by Harper that *Princess Royal* recorded 18,000 yards, *Tiger* 20,000, *Lion's* rangefinder 17,500 with a range correction of 800 up, i.e. around 18,300. However, Beatty noted *Lion* firing at 16,400 ("!!! JETH"). From roughly 5:00, the BCF remained further away from the enemy than they claimed and Harper was justified in stating that Beatty was trying to falsely emphasise his own role and fiddle the account.

29. CAB 45/269.

30. BL 52504 (4.6.16).

31. ROSK 3/3 Barnard-Marder.

32. Evan-Thomas-"Bertha" [his sister-in-law and Barnard's mother] 10.7.26. See also BL 52505 f.190.

33. *Beatty Papers*, 2, #245. Evan-Thomas-Jellicoe 30.6.26.

34. ROSK 3/3 Barnard-Marder.

35. BL 52506. Beatty told his wife that Evan-Thomas was "alright [*sic*]", BTY 17/36/17 (4.12.16).

36. ROSK 3/3 p.4.

37. *Ibid.*

38. BL 52505.

39. *Ibid.*



## 6. A BCF take-over?

1. 6.3.27.
2. Bellairs, p.vii.
3. *Ibid.* p.17.
4. *Ibid.* p.43.
5. *Ibid.* p.70.
6. Dannreuther MSS.
7. Bellairs, p.73.
8. ADM 196/43+89.
9. ADM 196/88.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Gordon, p.28.
12. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, p.483.
13. ADM 196/89.
14. *Ibid.*
15. ADM 167, Board Minutes 1918-39.
16. ADM 196/89. (17.5.24). The comments were made in note form and might also be understood to refer to Harper alone if "this officer's" is substituted for "his officers". However, he was highly critical of subordinates — for Harper's blot on Pipon's otherwise complimentary record, see Chapter 2, n.67.
17. ADM 167/67.
18. ADM 167, Board Minutes 1918-39.
19. As n.12. He had been promoted, but not employed as Rear-Admiral.

20. *Ibid.*
21. SLGF 12/1 (21.11.34), this was not sent and the words in brackets are marked "omit".
22. ROSK 3/11 (23.12.44).
23. *Jellicoe Papers*, 2, pp.458-490.
24. BTY 21/2/18.
25. ADM 1/8722/290, ? to Oswyn Murray.
26. As did Oswyn Murray with regard to the charts.
27. DEW 34 ff.521-2. (12.12.16).
28. He was actually assistant to Rear-Admiral Alexander Duff, head of the anti-submarine division of the war staff. Shortly after taking this appointment he became DNO (his *forte*).
29. DEW 34 f.669 (31.12.16).
30. DEW 34 ff.525-6. (6.1.17).
31. CP Box 7.
32. Gordon, p.381.
33. ADM 196/89.
34. DEW 38.
35. Schurman, *Education of a Navy*, p.117.
36. ADM196/43.
37. Schurman, *Education of a Navy*, pp.121+7.
38. *Ibid.* p.128.
39. Grove, E.J., *Richmond and Arms Control*, in *Mahan is not Enough*, pp.231-2.

40. *Ibid.* p.232.
41. Marder, A.J., *Portrait of an Admiral*, pp.257-60.
42. *The Keyes Papers*, 2, #206 (Feb. 1930 ).
43. Admiral Sir Desmond Dreyer to the author, (21.12.96).
44. My thanks to Lady Akers-Jones (*née* Jane Spickernell).
45. ADM 196/89.
46. *Ibid.* (5.3.30).
47. ADM 196/90.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. TEN 41/4.



## Conclusion.

1. Roskill, S.W. *The Navy Between the Wars*.
2. For example, see DEW 28, 29, *passim*.
3. Gordon, pp.527-9.
4. Barnett, C., *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, p.44. Barnett also holds other mistaken ideas about Jutland and its outcome (pp.5-8).
5. ADM 167/56, 96, 108.
6. Midshipman Bill Fell, in Arthur (ed.), p.83.
7. Dannreuther MSS. Dannreuther definitely supported Jellicoe more than Beatty, also having been gunnery Lieutenant when he flew his Flag in *Albemarle*.
8. BLE 12.
9. p.23.
10. ADM 203/83.
11. BLE 12.
12. My thanks principally to Admiral Sir Charles Madden; Admiral Sir Desmond Dreyer; Captain R.P. and Mrs. Dannreuther; Lord Keyes; Earl Jellicoe and Mrs. S. Ballance.
13. Chalmers, p.262.
14. Bennett, p.242.

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HMSS 54477-80 Vice-Admiral J.E.T. Harper.

52502-4 Admiral Sir H. Evan-Thomas.

National Maritime Museum.

BLE Vice-Admiral Sir G. Blake.

BTY Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty.

Commander Earl Beatty.



CHT Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield.

COW Admiral Sir. W.H. Cowan.

CP Sir Julian Corbett.

DEW Vice-Admiral K.G.B. Dewar.

JRM Vice-Admiral Sir T.H.M. Jerram.

LAR Captain. D. Larking.

MAD Admiral of the Fleet Sir C.E.M. Madden.

NRS Navy Records Society.

RIC Admiral Sir H.W. Richmond.

TEN Admiral W.G. Tennant.

Churchill College, Cambridge.

DRAX Admiral Sir R. Plunkett E-E-Drax.

ROSK Capt. S.W. Roskill.

SLGF Sir S. Leslie/ Captain B. Godfrey-Faussett.

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Commander J.A. Harper.

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Lord Keyes.

Mr. A.W.H. Pearsall.

Admiral Sir D.P. Dreyer.

Professor D.M. Schurman.

Sir J.F.H. Pollen.

Mr. P.M.H. Pollen.

Captain M.R.P. Boyle.

Mr. M. Mockridge.

Mr. J. Magrath.

Mr. J. Ehrman.

Mr. A.N. Ryan

Admiral Sir M. Layard.

Mr. R. Layard.

Mr. H.W. Drax.

Viscount Hood.

Viscount Amery.

Viscount Long.

Lieutenant-Commander D.W. Waters.

Lady Akers-Jones.

Miss. J. Spickernell.

Commander M. Craig-Waller.

Mr. G. Raleigh.

Earl of Normanton.

Mr. R. Watts.

Mr. R. Williams.

Sir D. Broughton.

Mr. J. Bingham.

Mr. D. Egerton.

Mr. WdeM. Egerton.

Rear-Admiral Sir P. Anson.

Mr. M. Rivett-Carnac.

Vice-Admiral Sir M.P. Gretton.

Vice-Admiral Sir L. Bell-Davies.

Bishop A. Weekes.

Rear-Admiral J.B. Hervey.

Dr. A. Gordon.

Commander A.J. Wilson.

Rear-Admiral J.R. Hill.

Sir A. Edmonstone.

Mrs. V. Murray.

Mr. R. Tunstall.

Earl of Shannon.



Sir W. Benyon.

Major D. Chetwode.

Mr. J. Duff.

Lord Carrington.

Rear-Admiral D. Spickernell.

Mr. J. James.

Mrs. A. Corbett.

Lady Hankey.

Lieutenant-Commander J. Gardner.