



Mission: History

Studiorum Historiam Praemium Est

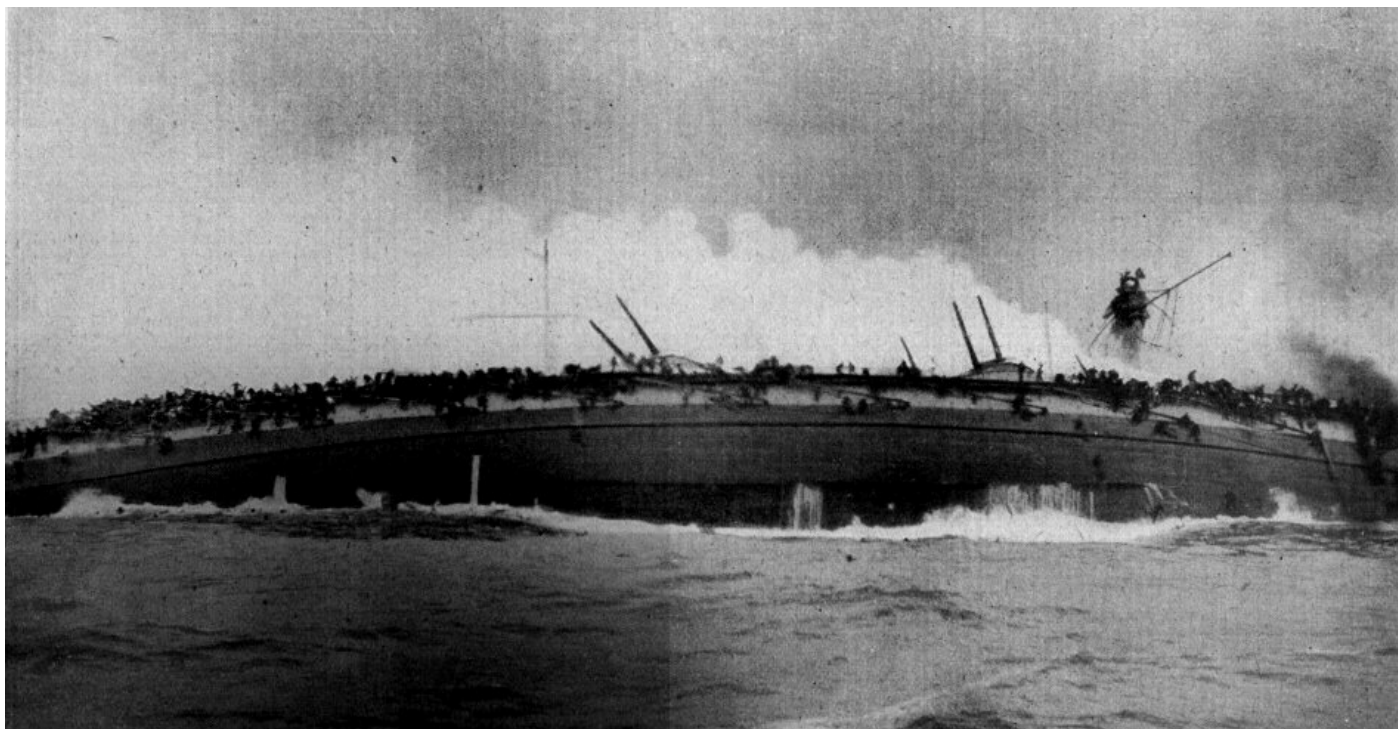


8 January 2001

★★★★★

Volume 3, Number 1

1915: Battle Cruisers Clash



IT'S THE END OF THE LINE for the German armored cruiser *Blücher* after she took a pummeling from five Royal Navy battle cruisers. Poor *Blücher*! As the result of misunderstood signals and a lack of initiative on the part of a commander, the entire British squadron concentrated on sinking the old armored cruiser instead of dealing with three of the Kaiser's modern battle cruisers. One of those ships, *Derflinger*, would destroy HMS *Invincible* during the Battle of Jutland a year later, and the other two, *Moltke* and *Seydlitz*, would acquit themselves well.

Dogger Bank: Crossroads in the North Sea

Dogger Bank is a crossroads in the North Sea, approximately equidistant from the east coast of England, the west coast of Denmark and the north coasts of the Low Countries and Germany. It is also the preferred fishing grounds for fishermen of all north European countries, affording sizeable quantities of plaice, cod, dabs, herring, haddock and turbot.

The shoal is an extensive flat sand-bank about 160 miles long and averaging some 40 miles in width. The sea is generally less than 120 feet deep and, at the

western end nearest England, it is only 50 feet deep.

In addition to the 1915 battle between British and German battle cruisers, Dogger Bank has been the scene of numerous naval engagements, most notably a 1781 action between English and Dutch forces.

The oddest naval action to take place at Dogger Bank occurred in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War. Russia's Baltic Fleet under Admiral Zinovy Rozhdestvensky, ordered to the Far East, was crossing the bank when it fired on a Brit-

(Continued on page 3)

No Knockout Punch In Dogger Bank Fight

Neither Side Admits Loss In Inconclusive Battle

In early 1915, there was widespread dissatisfaction in both Germany and England with the return on investment in the respective countries' navies.

In Germany, the "All Highest War Lord," as the Kaiser called himself, was unwilling to risk his ships in a general engagement unless the deck had been carefully stacked in favor of the High

(Continued on page 2)

Britons, Germans Chafe as Expensive Navies Sit

British Public in Uproar As Germans Shell Coast, Call for Retaliation

(Continued from page 1)

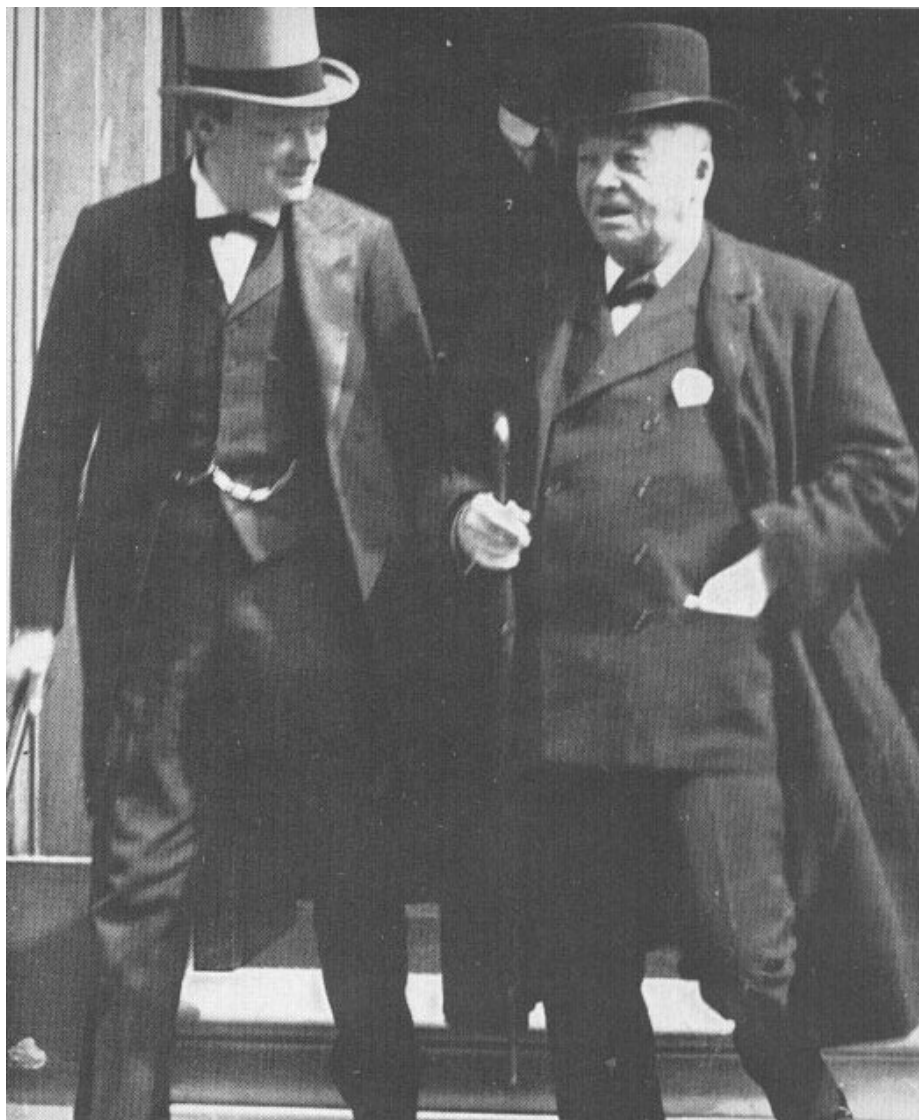
Seas Fleet. His naval commanders chafed as they saw their ships rusting in the Jade, the large protected bay on which Wilhelmshaven sits.

In Britain, Englishmen saw their Grand Fleet lying safely out of harm's way at Scapa Flow and were dismayed that on the morning of 16 December 1914 the city of Scarborough had been shelled by two German battle cruisers with no apparent retaliation. The entire German High Seas Fleet had put to sea for the Scarborough raid, but why a town on the north coast of Yorkshire was chosen as a target remains a mystery. And countermeasures had been taken, but had proved ineffectual.

The British Admiralty had scored some important gains that the public could not know about. With Winston Churchill as First Lord, Vice Admiral Henry Oliver had started a cryptographic section in August 1914. On the night of 13 August 1914, one of the best German cruisers, *Magdeburg*, ran aground in the fog on the reefs off Odensholm Island in the Baltic. Russian sailors from *Pallada* and *Bogatyr* captured *Magdeburg's* commander and 56 crewmen. The most valuable items confiscated were signal logs and code tables. These found their way to Oliver's code-breakers and were later used for decoding radio transmissions.

On 8 November, Churchill ordered a member of the War Staff to "analyze and compare with what followed" German signals that were intercepted and decoded. Knowledge of this cryptographic section, called "Room 40" in the British way, was a secret held closely among very few senior officers.

The information produced by Room 40 had alerted the Admiralty to the Scarborough raid and ships had been dispatched to meet and engage the German ships. Some shots were exchanged, but the engagement never took place, due in part to foul weather but mostly to misunderstood signals from the commander



FIRST LORD AND FIRST SEA LORD, Winston S. Churchill and Admiral Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher. Jacky Fisher came out of retirement at Churchill's request following the sacking of Prince Louis Alexander of Battenburg, GCB, GCVO, KCMB, PC, on charges of disloyalty. Battenburg was a scapegoat for British naval losses early in the Great War and a craven government acceded to demands for his ouster. His son, Lord Louis Mountbatten, would vindicate him.

afloat, Admiral Sir David Beatty. Beatty's signals officer had never been trained as such and had great difficulty translating the admiral's occasionally abstruse orders into intelligible signals. It was an odd situation in the Royal Navy, where Admiral Lord Richard Howe had devised the first system of naval signals in the 18th Century. The problem of misunderstood signals by forces engaged would plague the Royal Navy again. And again.

A signal that was fully understood in Room 40 was that of Admiral Friedrich von Ingenohl, sent at 1025 on 23 January 1915 to Rear Admiral Franz von

Hipper, ordering him to take the German battle cruisers into the North Sea to destroy British scouting forces and elements of the Royal Navy protecting the fishing fleets at Dogger Bank. It had been decoded by Oliver's group by noon. Churchill describes the occasion in *The World Crisis*:

...in marched Sir Arthur Wilson unannounced. He looked at me intently and there was a glow in his eye. Behind him came Oliver with charts and compasses.

'First Lord, these fellows are coming out again.'

'When?'

'Tonight. We have just got time to get Beatty there.'

(Continued on page 6)

1777: Reprisal Carries Ben Franklin to France, Then Takes Five Prizes

In January of 1777, the Continental brig *Reprisal*, a ship of 18 guns under the command of Captain Lambert Wickes, while on a cruise mostly in the Bay of Biscay, took five prizes from the British. It was to be expected of Wickes and his ship, for he had stopped to take two prizes while on a voyage to France with his most valuable cargo.

The Maritime Committee of the Continental Congress had purchased the merchantman *Molly* in March of 1776, renamed her *Reprisal*, fitted some guns and given her to the command of Wickes. Wickes first task was to convey William Bingham to Martinique, where he would be agent for the American colonies, and return with arms for George Washington. Incidental to that task, Wickes captured a number of small British vessels in the West Indies.

The next job for *Reprisal* was to convey none other than Benjamin Franklin, just appointed Commissioner to France, to his new post. The ship departed Philadelphia on 26 October 1776 and Franklin, despite knowing he would be hanged as a traitor if captured, brought two grandsons with him. On 27 November, Wickes sighted, chased and captured two British prizes and brought them into Quiberon Bay on the 29th. After waiting onboard for four days for winds to take *Reprisal* to Nantes, Franklin debarked with his grandsons and hired a carriage for the journey.

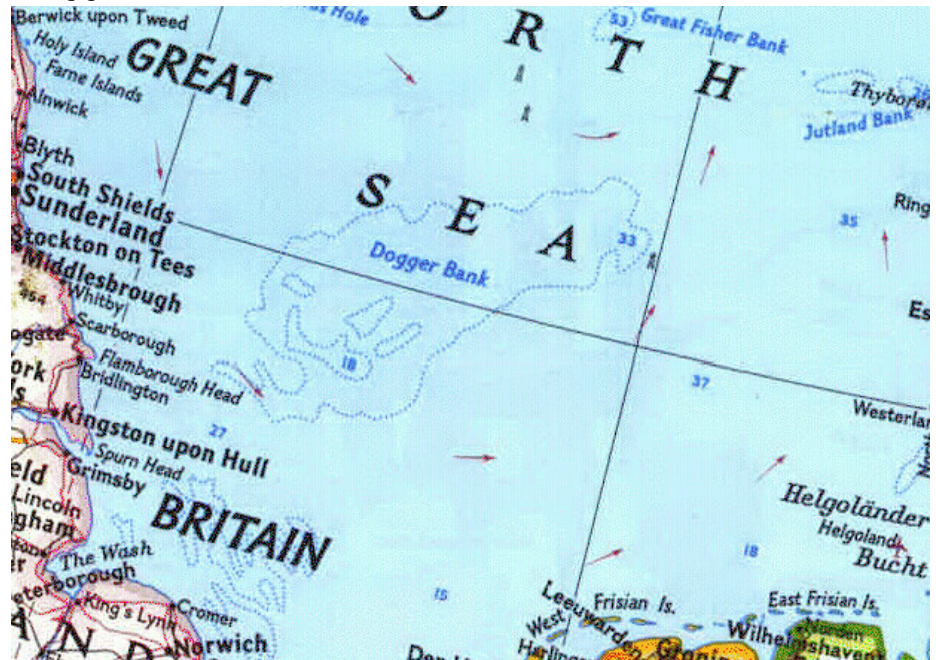
In Paris, Franklin led the commission which received a secret subsidy of two million livres. They then sent Wickes out in *Reprisal* in the second week of January 1777 and within a month he returned with five British ships, which were sold at Lorient.

Reprisal was then joined by the Continental vessels *Lexington* of 16 guns and *Dolphin*, 10. This squadron, under the command of Wickes, cruised the Irish Sea and made 18 captures.

En route to the United States, *Reprisal* foundered off the Newfoundland Banks on around 1 October 1777. All hands, save the cook, were lost.

Unfortunately, all details about *Reprisal*'s adventures were also lost.

Dogger Bank - Where it is, What it is, and More



DOGGER BANK, lying off England's Yorkshire coast, has been the scene of many historic events, including the most severe earthquake in the history of the United Kingdom. It is also a bountiful fishing grounds, open to fishermen from England, the Low Countries, Germany and Denmark. It is about 120 miles long and averages 45 miles in width.

Russian Battle Squadron Fires on Dogger Bank Fishing Boats Believed to be Japanese Submarines

(Continued from page 1)

ish fishing fleet under the inexplicable delusion that the fishing boats were enemy submarines, sent halfway around the world to torpedo the Czar's battle squadron. The incident was arbitrated by an international commission and Russia paid damages.

On 7 June 1931, Dogger Bank was the epicenter of the largest-ever United Kingdom earthquake for which a magnitude can be calculated. The 6.1 quake shook all of Great Britain, the east of Ireland, northern France, Belgium, the Netherlands, parts of northwest Germany, Denmark and southwest Norway. There were curious reports of lights seen in the sky at the time of the shock and one woman in Hull, England, died of a heart attack.

The name Dogger Bank is, according to etymologists, "o.o.o." which means "of obscure origin." That means they don't know where the name came from, but we think we do.

From the 15th Century, there was a Dutch word *doggere*, used in connection with fishing. The phrase *ten dogge varen* meant to go cod-fishing. From this came the Dutch word *dogger*, meaning a

vessel used for fishing. By the 16th Century, the words *doggermen*, for the fishermen, and *doggerfish*, for their catch, came into use. The word *dogger*, for the vessel, may be related to the French *hourque*, also the name for a type of ship.

The dogger was a two-masted ship with rounded bow and bluff stern. It was square rigged on the mainmast and had a fore-and-aft gaff-rigged sail on the mizzen. The mizzen topmast, which carried a square sail, was a separate pole. The bowsprit was rigged to one side of the stem and probably could be hauled inboard.

In any case, Dogger Bank is where doggermen went in their doggers to catch doggerfish.

1839: Manners Taught in Java

Commodore George C. Read, commander of the U.S. East India Squadron, laid waste on 1 January 1839 to Kuala Batu on Sumatra, in retaliation for the murder of the captain of a merchantman.

Cdr. T. W. Wyman of frigate *Columbia* led 360 men in destroying five forts and the town, collected indemnity.

1840: Antarctica a Continent, U.S. Navy Discovers

Lt. Charles Wilkes Leads Expedition After Four Captains Turn it Down

Charles Wilkes was a naval officer who retired as a rear admiral despite a tempestuous career that saw him relieved, court-martialed, retired and brought back. He very nearly caused Great Britain to enter the American Civil War on the side of the Confederacy (see *Mission: History*, November 2000) and men under his command often threatened mutiny. He was also the first to identify Antarctica as a continent, which he did in January 1840 as head of a U.S. Navy voyage of exploration, and a large part of that continent bears his name.

The age of the great explorations, which began with the cruise of Bartholomeu Dias around the Cape of Good Hope in 1487 – he didn't see it because of weather but found it on his return trip the following year – came to an end with the voyage in 1609 of Henry Hudson who discovered the river that flows under the George Washington Bridge and over the Lincoln Tunnel. Voyages of discovery were then replaced by expeditions aimed at finding out about the new lands found by Columbus, Cabot, Verrazano, Vespucci and others.

For half of the 18th Century and well into the 19th, the world's great sea powers, including the new United States, were engaged fighting one another. In the relative peace that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812 there was a new interest in little-known or unknown places. In response to popular demand in the United States, Congress passed on 18 May 1836 an amendment to the Naval Appropriations Bill authorizing the president to "send out a surveying and exploring expedition to the Pacific Ocean and the South Seas. Though billed as a move to aid commerce and navigation, Congress said the expedition's objective was "to extend the bounds of science and to promote knowledge."

In April 1838, the Navy assigned four ships to the expedition. USS *Vincennes*, a 780-ton sloop of war, was to be flagship and would be accompanied by USS *Pea-*

cock, a 650-ton sloop of war, USS *Porpoise*, a gun-brig of 200 tons, and the stores ship USS *Relief*. In addition to the naval vessels, two small New York pilot boats were purchased by the expedition for inshore work.

Captain Thomas ap Catesby Jones, who had been instrumental in gathering data for the expedition, was placed in command, but resigned in disgust when he learned he would be burdened with a



WILKES

collection of civilian scientists. The job was then offered to Commodore William Branford Shubrick, who had served as a lieutenant in the War of 1812 and on the Pacific coast during the Mexican War. He turned the job down as inappropriate for a fighting sailor. Next in line was Captain Lawrence Kearny, who envisioned a political morass and declined the post. He became commander of the East India Squadron in 1840 and is credited with initiatives leading to the Open Door Policy and the first American-Chinese treaty in 1841. Captain Francis H. Gregory, who had hunted pirates in the Caribbean and would become captain of USS *Raritan*, flagship of the U.S. South Atlantic Squadron, then said "no."

Despairing of finding a senior officer who would take the job, The Navy lowered its sights. The fellow who ran the Depot of Charts and Instruments was a 40-year-old lieutenant who had studied astronomy, meteorology, terrestrial magnetism and hydrography. He was also the most tactless officer in the Navy, his

pride approached hubris, and he had a brutal temper. There was one more thing that would recommend Lieutenant Charles Wilkes. He would take the job.

Wilkes set to work with vigor, and was soon dismayed that none of his ships was equipped for heavy weather and none of their hulls had been reinforced to withstand the ice which lay in their path. *Peacock*, in fact, was just about ready to be sent to the breakers. Her captain lamented that she had "been fitted ... with less regard to safety and convenience than any vessel I have ever had to do with." *Relief* had been provisioned with stores for 12 months only.

Wilkes sailed from Hampton Roads on 18 August 1838. Aboard his ships were 82 officers, 342 sailors and six unhappy civilian scientists, all of whom had learned already to dislike their commander. As the Virginia capes receded behind him, Wilkes noted in his journal that he felt "doomed to destruction." *Peacock* was leaking beyond what her pumps could handle and *Relief's* commander was incompetent. Somehow the flimsy flotilla held together and, after a six-month's voyage, the ships anchored in Orange Harbor at the southern tip of South America.

On his first probe of southern waters in February 1839, Wilkes, in *Porpoise*, was accompanied by *Sea Gull*, one of the New York pilot boats. It was immediately discerned that cold weather gear was inadequate and the ships were soon shrouded in fog and coated with ice. The two ships abandoned the expedition and *Sea Gull* was sent to Deception Island to pick up a self-registering thermometer that was left in 1829. The thermometer wasn't found and *Sea Gull* was nearly wrecked in a fierce storm.

Meanwhile, *Peacock* and *Flying Fish*, the other pilot boat, had been sent off in an attempt to reach a point further south than that reached by Captain James Cook a half-century earlier. The two ships became separated, but *Flying Fish* managed to reach a point within one degree latitude of Cook's southernmost penetration. When she returned to Orange Harbor, she found *Porpoise*, *Sea Gull* and *Vincennes*, but no *Relief*. *Peacock* had found herself in the Pacific and sailed to Valparaiso, Chile.

(Continued on page 5)

Wilkes Calls it Off for Winter of 1839; He'll Return to Antarctica in 1840

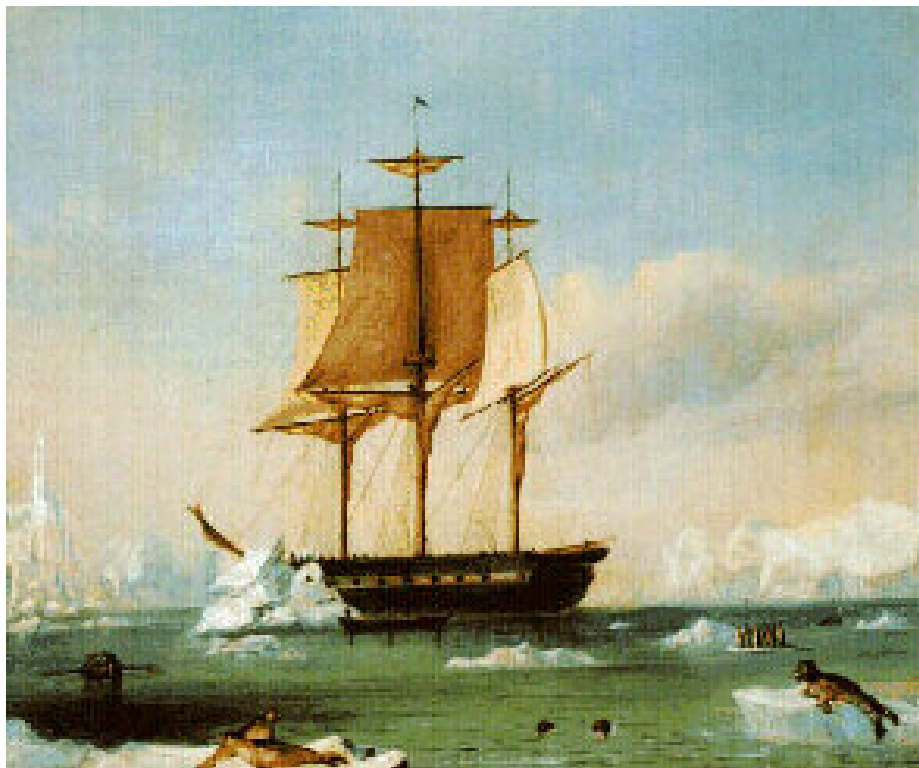
(Continued from page 4)

Relief had ventured without Wilkes' knowledge to take the civilian scientists on a mapping voyage through the Straits of Magellan. Her captain had got lost and been frightened by a storm, so he took it upon himself to head for Valparaiso as well. On April 20, Wilkes instructed *Flying Fish* and *Sea Gull* to wait at Orange Harbor for the return of *Relief*, not knowing she was in Valparaiso. He took *Porpoise* and *Vincennes* north, with orders for the other two ships to follow as soon as *Relief* showed up. On the 28th, the two pilot boats gave up their vigil and headed north themselves, riding into a nine-day gale. *Flying Fish* made it to Valparaiso but *Sea Gull* was lost with all hands.

Now Wilkes took stock of his situation. It was approaching the Antarctic winter. He would sail to the Pacific island groups, charting the waters around Tahiti, Samoa, Hawaii and other more pleasant venues, as the scientists gathered botanical, zoological and geological specimens. He sent *Relief* home and spent some of his time in the South Seas making his leaky fleet more seaworthy, for another attempt to better Cook's record. On 26 December 1839, Wilkes set sail from Sydney, Australia, with *Vincennes*, *Porpoise*, *Peacock* and *Flying Fish*.

Flying Fish soon became separated from the group, but the ships were reunited when they stopped at Macquarie Island, 800 miles south of Tasmania. The captain of *Peacock* told Wilkes that his ship was in no condition for another contest with the ice but Wilkes either convinced or ordered him to believe she could make it.

The tacky task force sighted the gelid icescape of Antarctica on 15 January 1840 and began picking its way through floating floes, hampered by storms. It was the beginning of summer. Wilkes, it turned out, was something of an artist and began sketching what he took to be a range of mountains. He named one of the peaks Ringgold's Knoll, after the captain of *Porpoise*. An officer aboard the wretched *Peacock* captured an emperor penguin, which was found to have pebbles in its stomach, confirming the presence of land. Soundings showed shallow water, indicating a possible



LYING IN DISAPPOINTMENT BAY, *Vincennes* is sketched by Wilkes. The expedition's commander had a gift for names — the bay disappointed him and was so named. When he encountered a 180-mile ice shelf he couldn't get around he named it Termination Land. A third of Antarctica bears Wilkes' name today; Termination Land bears that of Ernest Henry Shackleton, who explored Antarctica in the early 20th Century.

shelf.

But *Peacock* met with disaster on 24 January. Excited now by the prospect of discovery, her captain — a man named Hudson — took her into a small bay crowded with floes of ice. Attempting to avoid one block of ice, he ran afoul of another which crashed into his stern with sufficient force to tear his rudder from its pintles. Wilkes, determined to establish the new continent, left Hudson to his own devices. *Peacock's* carpenters worked through the night to rehang the ship's rudder, even as ice floes banged against the hull. When repairs were complete, Hudson worked free of the ice and set sail for Sydney, arriving in the first week of February.

Meanwhile, Wilkes continued to chart the edge of the land- or ice-mass, and on 30 January, having picked his way through ice floes into an inlet 60 miles deep, he wrote "I make this bay in longitude 140° 30'E, latitude 66° 45'S; and, now that all were convinced of its existence, I gave the land the name of the Antarctic Continent."

Despite the beginnings of sickness on

his ships, Wilkes continued to chart the new continent until the onset of the Antarctic winter. But he and *Vincennes* were alone, though Wilkes didn't know it. *Porpoise* had continued its charting until it reached 100 degrees East on 14 February 1840. Thereupon, Capt. Ringgold, feeling he had done his job, set sail for New Zealand. Wilkes pressed on, until he was confronted by a barrier of ice that stretched as far as the eye could see. This he named Termination Land, but it appears on maps today as Shackleton Ice Shelf.

Wilkes then sailed for Sydney, where he was reunited with his scrawny squadron, and where he declared that he had discovered the Antarctic Continent on 19 January 1840.

The next two years were spent charting Pacific islands between Australia and Hawaii and then the Oregon coast. He then sailed to the Philippines, around the Cape of Good Hope, and on to New York, where he dropped anchor after a voyage of nearly four years. He had not only discovered a continent but had circumnavigated the globe.

(Continued on page 8)

Hipper Sails with 3 Modern Battle Cruisers, 1 Armored Cruiser

Blücher Was No Match For Beatty's Battle Line, But Drew Fire from Others

(Continued from page 2)

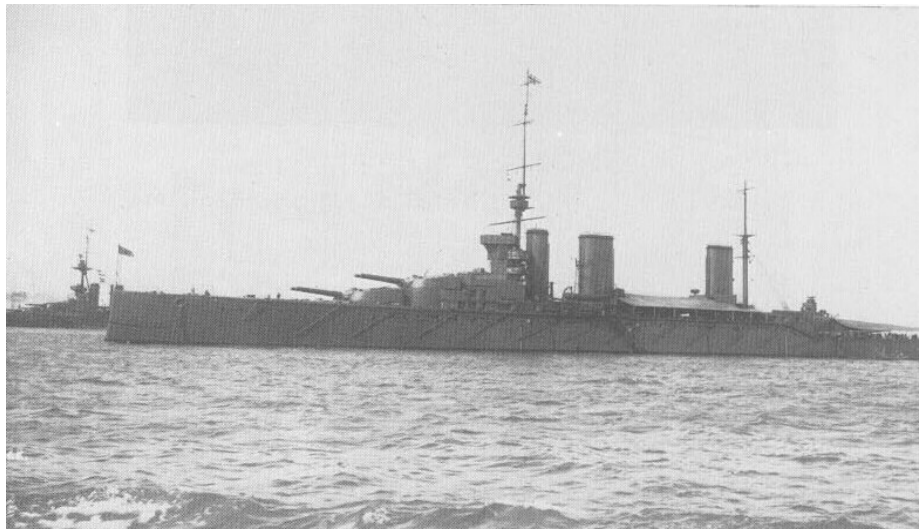
The German dreadnaughts would not be involved as they had been sent to the Baltic for gunnery practice. Hipper would have three battle cruisers, an armored cruiser, four light cruisers and a screen – plenty to deal with what he expected to find. The pilot of a German seaplane had reported on the 19th that he had seen light cruisers of the Grand Fleet nosing around northwest of Heligoland Bight.

Forewarned, the Admiralty began to lay a trap for Hipper. Orders were dispatched to forces concerned to raise steam at once and plans were laid for Beatty, with five battle cruisers and the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron to sail from the Firth of Forth and rendezvous with Commodore R. Y. Tyrwhitt who would sail with three cruisers and thirty-five destroyers from Harwich. They would meet at Dogger Bank at 0700 on the 24th. These would be the forces to deal with Hipper, but there were more. The 3rd Battle Squadron, consisting of pre-Dreadnought battleships, would also sail from the Forth to take up position north of the Dogger Banks and just over the horizon in case Hipper turned in that direction. Finally, the Grand Fleet was to move south from Scapa after dark. The planning and execution were so efficient, the British actually left port before the Germans. All were in their positions before dawn.

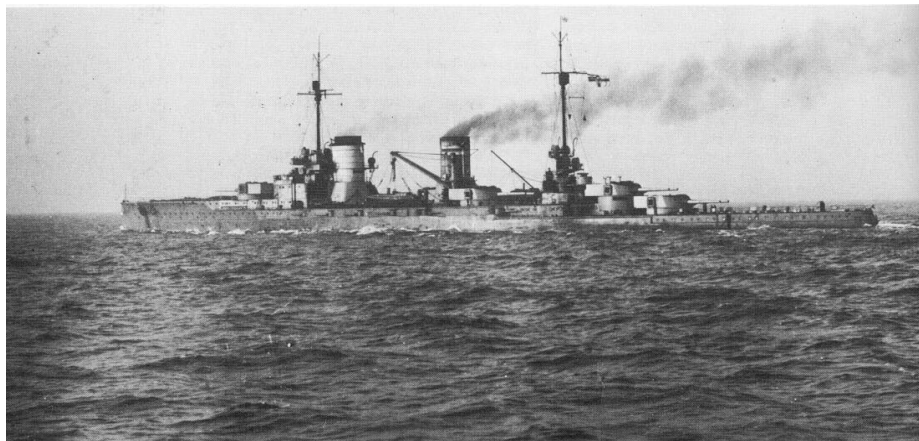
Opposing Forces

Hipper debouched from the Jade after dark on the 23rd with his flag in the battle cruiser *Seydlitz*. With him were *Moltke* and *Derflinger* which were also battle cruisers, the armored cruiser *Blücher*, four light cruisers, *Graudenz*, *Rostock*, *Stralsund* and *Kolberg*, and 19 torpedo boat destroyers. He was looking for targets of opportunity and was unaware that his orders had been intercepted, allowing the British to assemble a special force to deal with him.

Beatty flew his flag in the battle cruiser *Lion* and had four others, *Tiger*,



BEATTY'S FLAGSHIP, HMS *Lion*, at Rosyth opposite Edinburgh on the Firth of Forth. Because the admiral's ambiguous signals were misunderstood, and because of the timidity of his second in command, *Lion* alone bore the brunt of German gunnery, and had to be towed back to England. Beatty's signals would be misunderstood again at Jutland, with unfortunate results.



KAISER WILHELM'S armored cruiser *Seydlitz*. A shell penetrated her fourth turret, setting afire its ready ammunition and that in the ammo train from the after magazine to turrets three and four. Turret three then exploded, but the ship was saved by its quick thinking executive officer who flooded the magazine. Thereafter, the ammo train was protected in German ships.

Princess Royal, *New Zealand* and *Indomitable*. The latter two formed a separate squadron under Beatty's second in command, Rear Admiral Archibald Moore in *New Zealand*. These ships were accompanied from Rosyth by Commodore Goodenough's 1st Light Cruiser Squadron consisting of *Southampton*, his flagship, *Birmingham*, *Nottingham* and *Lowestoft*. Tyrwhitt brought three light cruisers, *Arethusa*, his flagship, *Aurora* and *Undaunted*, as well as 35 destroyers. In addition, Commodore Keyes took four submarines to Heligoland Bight, arriving there after Hipper had passed on his way north, to lie in wait for the German's return.

Add to this Vice Admiral Bradford's

old battleships from Rosyth and the Grand Fleet, which had cleared Scapa Flow at 2100 on the 23rd, and Hipper was steaming into an overwhelming force. But the battle would be between Beatty and Hipper, still a decisive advantage for the British, and one which should have dealt an annihilating defeat to the Kaiser's force.

The Battle of Dogger Bank

As the British forces proceeded in the night to their rendezvous, part of Tyrwhitt's group became detached because of fog and lagged behind. *Aurora*, some 13 miles from the meeting point and leading a flotilla of destroyers, sighted through the mist a three-funneled cruiser and four destroyers a little after 0700 on

(Continued on page 7)

Light Cruisers Exchange First Shots; Then Hipper Sees British Force, Runs

(Continued from page 6)

the 24th. Thinking he had caught up with Tyrwhitt, *Aurora's* captain took his ship closer. The cruiser was *Kolberg*, guarding the port flank of the German battle cruisers, and *Kolberg* made certain identification first, getting three quick hits on the British ship. Shaken, but not badly damaged, *Aurora* returned fire and scored a hit on *Kolberg's* bridge. *Kolberg* turned away and *Aurora*, followed by *Undaunted* and the destroyers, followed, sighting more German warships.

As the sun rose and dispelled the mists, the day promised to be beautiful and clear – ideal for gunnery. And Beatty and Goodenough spotted gunnery in progress to the south-southeast as *Aurora* duelled *Kolberg*. Goodenough



BEATTY

took his light cruisers to join the fight, but reported the Germans turning toward the southeast. In his *Great War Memoirs*, German Admiral Reinhard Scheer said that at this point "Admiral Hipper was bound therefore to assume that at the rear of these numerous light forces there must be other and stronger groups of ships." Hipper meant to retire – at



ADMIRAL DAVID BEATTY, front and center, a place he liked to occupy. Seated at right, Admiral Sir John Jellicoe seems to ponder the man who would succeed him in command of the Royal Navy. Beatty was allowed to anoint himself "Baron Beatty of the North Sea."

flank speed.

Hipper's run for the barn was hampered by *Blücher*, which was unable to bend on more than 23 knots. Rather than leave her to her fate, Hipper stayed with her, and by 0900 the British battle cruisers were within extreme range. Beatty was leading the way in *Lion*, followed by *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, *New Zealand* and *Indomitable*, and he was steaming at 28 knots. Ahead, on his port bow, was a much smaller German squadron, with Hipper in *Seydlitz*, followed by *Moltke*, *Derflinger* and the laboring *Blücher*. It was a set-up for a wipe-out.

At 0935, with the range 17,500 yards, Beatty signaled his captains to engage their opposite numbers in the German line. This was imprecise, because with four ships in the German line and five in the British it failed to make clear which ship each British captain was to concentrate on. Captain H. B. Pelly in *Tiger* counted from the back and fired on *Seydlitz*, leaving *Moltke* unattended to. The Germans concentrated the fire of their battle cruisers on the lead British ship, Beatty's *Lion*, so she came under the shellfire of *Seydlitz*, *Derflinger* and *Moltke*, with *Moltke's* gunners unhampered by fire.

Lion, firing on *Seydlitz*, had been on target from the first salvo. A 13.5-inch shell crashed through the armor protecting the German ship's number four turret and exploded among unprotected ready ammunition. Flames from the explosion shot downwards toward the tur-

ret's magazine and forward to the number three turret, exploding ammunition along the way and killing 159 men. Both turrets were put out of action and flames belched as high as the ship's main truck. Only prompt action by the executive officer who flooded the after magazines saved the ship.

But *Lion* suffered grievously from the concentrated fire, taking hits that knocked out two of her electric generators and contaminated her port fresh water tank with seawater, forcing her to shut down her port engine at 1045. By now, *Lion* had insufficient electric power to operate her signal lamps. As she dropped out of the line, Beatty thought he saw a periscope and signaled by flag for a sharp turn to port. Beatty also signaled for Moore to take over destruction of the German force.

After the turn to port, Beatty wanted to get his battle cruisers back on the chase after their German counterparts and attempted to signal Moore "Course N.E." and "Attack rear of enemy." His signals officer ran the flags up all at once and Moore read "Attack rear of enemy, course N.E." which happened to be the bearing of the unfortunate *Blücher*. Moore never saw Beatty's last signal, which was "Keep nearer the enemy." That last, incidentally, had replaced in the British signals book the much more forceful order given by Nelson at Trafalgar: "Engage the enemy more closely."

As a result of these misunderstandings, all four undamaged British battle

(Continued on page 8)

1780: Rodney's Successful Voyage in Relief of Gibraltar

The American Revolution involved England in renewed warfare with France and Spain. The principal engagements of the Continental Navy were fought off the North American coast, with John Paul Jones' victory at Flamborough Head an exception. But the Royal Navy met other navies in battle elsewhere.

The British possession of Gibraltar had as 1779 ended been under a long siege by the Spanish who then, as now, wanted the rock. As the new year broke, the Spanish fleet, which had been at Brest in support of the French navy, sailed south to support the siege. On 8 January 1780, a force of 17 ships of the line under British Admiral Sir George Rodney, ordered to the West Indies, sailed from England with a large convoy to relieve the garrison on the way.

Before reaching Gibraltar, Rodney encountered a Spanish convoy off Finis-terre. It consisted of 15 merchant vessels escorted by 5 warships, and Rodney captured all of them. He sent the armed

ships to England with prize crews and escorts. He added the merchantmen, which were laden with wheat and flour, to his convoy which relieved Gibraltar.

On 16 January, Rodney encountered a strong Spanish force of 11 ships of the line under Don Juan de Langara. It was deployed south of Cadiz to intercept Gibraltar-bound convoys such as his. Undeterred, Rodney sailed straight for the Spaniards who turned and ran. In a rising gale, the English gave chase.

In a running fight lasting well into the night, Rodney captured six of the Spaniards, another blew up and two more were driven ashore. A few days later Rodney captured the remaining two. These prizes were also sent to England under prize crews and with escorts. By now, Rodney had sent most of his warships home with prizes, so he sailed to the West Indies with four of the line.

The Spanish ships were taken into the Royal Navy and rushed to New York under Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Graves.

Beatty's Ships Concentrate on *Blücher* as Hipper Escapes

(Continued from page 7)

cruisers concentrated their fire on *Blücher*, hammering her to her grave. As British destroyers fished *Blücher's* survivors from the North Sea, Beatty dashed up in another destroyer and shifted his flag to *Princess Royal*. It was 1220, and Hipper was gone.

Following the battle, the British claimed a victory, having sunk *Blücher*, but *Lion* had to be towed home, and the Germans had learned a lesson that would serve them well at Jutland – a lesson that, unlearned by the British, would cost the Royal Navy dearly. The destruction of the two after turrets of *Seydlitz* was caused not by a 13.5-inch British shell but by the explosion of ready ammunition and ammunition in transit. From now on, German ammunition would be protected until it was loaded into a gun. In his memoirs, Scheer wrote "However regrettable was the great loss of life on board the *Seydlitz* through the fire spreading to the munitions chamber of each turret, a valuable lesson had been learned for the future dealing with reserve ammunition, and it was applied in subsequent actions." The British learned the same lesson at Jutland – at the cost of three battle cruisers.

In England, the press celebrated the battle as a victory – the royal Navy had again swept the seas clean of the enemy – but things were seen more clearly at the Admiralty. The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher, thought Moore's excuse of misreading Beatty's signal lame, and regarded his caution as "despicable." He wrote "No signals, often unintentionally ambiguous in the heat of action, can ever justify the abandonment of certain victory as offered itself here." He wanted Moore disciplined and sacked, and Pelly too. But the First Lord would not hear of it.

Churchill's view was summed up in his written comments to Fisher, who had wanted to sack a handful of senior officers following the Scarborough raid. He would not consider men being "got rid of for a single failure, unless there are other reasons for thinking they are incompetent. Men often learn by mistakes, and the anxieties of war are such that leaders must know that they will be supported, and not be worrying about their own positions and feeling themselves in personal jeopardy."

Words to live by – and not for the Royal Navy alone.

After Four-Year Expedition, Wilkes Returns Home to Face A Naval Court of Inquiry

(Continued from page 5)

One would have expected a hero's welcome and an exhausting round of celebrations. Instead, Wilkes faced a court martial on charges brought against him by two officers he had sent home. He was acquitted of those charges, but the court found him guilty of illegal punishment of seamen, based on his treatment of six members of *Relief's* crew who had stolen liquor from the captain's stores. He had ordered them flogged with more than the twelve allowable lashes. Wilkes was furious with the verdict, but devoted his energies to writing a five-volume account of his voyage. It was published in 1845, Congress allowing only 100 copies to be printed. A decent set from the second printing can be had today for about \$750.

Wilkes would be court-martialed



WILKES' NARRATIVE

again, would be relieved of his command, would be retired and returned to service, all as noted. And as noted, he would retire with a star. The same cannot be said of those who turned down the opportunity to lead the expedition.

How to Get in Touch

Mission: History has been asked to provide an address for reader communications. E-mail may be sent to this address:

navhist@pacbell.net

Mail may be sent by conventional post to:

Ric Teague
2239 Wellesley Street
Palo Alto, CA 94306

Submissions are not encouraged because of constraints on the time available for editing. If such are sent, they should be sent as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or as typewritten copy, double-spaced, accompanied by a 3½-inch diskette containing the submission in Microsoft Word for Windows.

Quite welcome are suggestions of events for coverage. Please offer suggestions two months ahead of the anniversary of an event.