



# Colorado Military Historians

Newsletter

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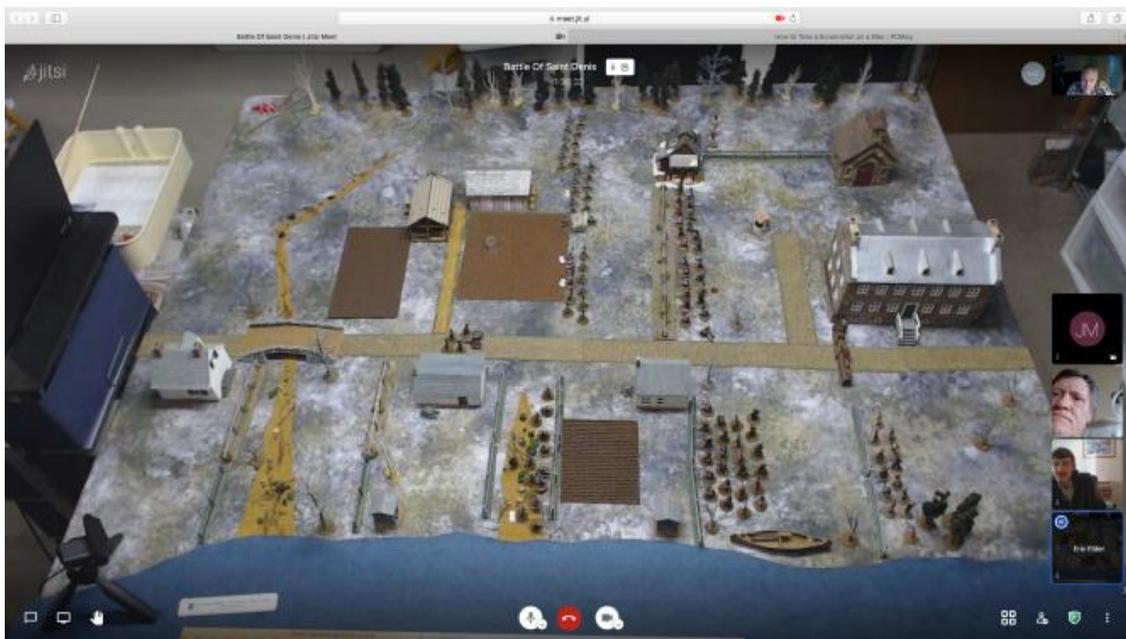
# News and Views

*Message from CMH Secretary  
Eric Elder*

This month we have multiple contributors. Evan Bale shares his images of his Altar of Freedom game “The Battle of Stones River” shown on this newsletter cover. John Owen has written an article on British and German navies. Terry Shockey found a good wargaming meme. Thank you and I continue to welcome contributions

In November our club participated in the HMGS Cyber Wars online convention. Both the Vassal and Tabletop Simulator programs were used to run the games. Skype or Zoom programs were used for voice. Nate mentioned “In addition to games, there were many panels and video painting demonstrations that folks could attend. Additionally, several vendors had their links advertised supporting the Cyber Wars event and offering sales on some of their stuff.” Sounds like another successful Cyber Wars convention.

I ran a live miniature online test game with friends using two webcams. I used the Jitsi program to run the live stream game. It may not be familiar, but it works almost the same as Streamyard. I recommend it. The game I ran was a Rebels and Patriots rules 1837 Canadian rebellion battle using 28mm miniatures. I would not go smaller than 28mm as they just will not show up well. As Nate has mentioned on our Groups.IO site, it takes more work to run miniature games online and I certainly recommend keeping the rules simple. The GM is kept busy. I also recommend having an assistant (in person) to help (i.e. do all the camera work).



Soon we should hear about what our 2021 contract will look like with Hyland Hills. We have no clue when they will reopen Baker Community Center for us to game in person. Maybe by Spring? I look forward to seeing what everyone has been painting up and what games members will setup.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

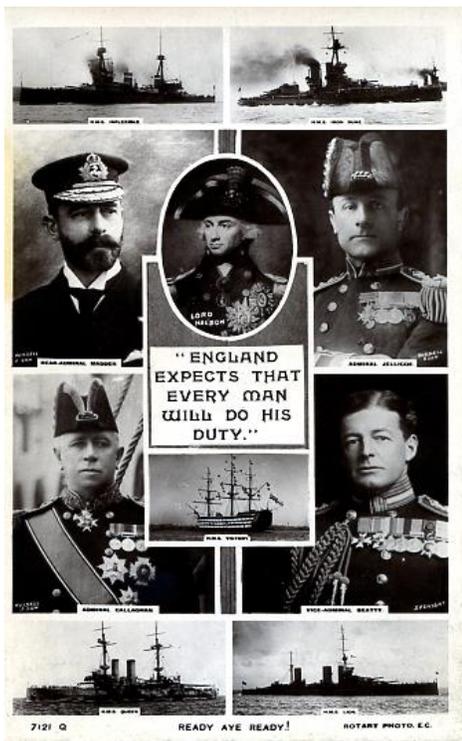
# Pre-WWI British vs. German Naval Postures

Article by CMH Member

John Owen



The two principal European naval powers, Britain's Royal Navy and Germany's High Seas Fleet, entered World War I with somewhat different approaches to naval power. In brief, the Royal Navy approach to war was based on 3 legs: Concepts, Colonies and Tradition. German Navy's were Planning, Engineering, and Training.



As the world's foremost naval power for over a century, the Royal Navy was the driving instrument of the Pax Britannica since 1815. With no serious challenger for most of that time, it stultified and its efficiency declined. Fortunately for Great Britain, a revival of sorts occurred in the decade leading up to WWI, largely attributable to the collaboration of Sir John Fisher and Winston Churchill, First Sea Lord and First Lord of the Admiralty, respectively. This saw the fruition of the brilliant concept of the Dreadnought class battleships, and later that of battle cruisers. The Dreadnoughts were revolutionary, and the only problem was that they made every previous type obsolete, negating the Royal Navy's huge numerical advantage of pre-dreadnought ships to that point.

Colonies and empire dictated the makeup of Royal Navy as well. Dependent on trade and commerce for survival, Britain had to maintain sea control and its ships were configured for that purpose. Where other navies could spend extended time in port, Royal Navy ships were dispersed to protect British possessions and ensure commerce. They performed a globe-girdling network of friendly harbors and bases to support their naval units.

Tradition unfortunately played a heavy role in Royal Navy structure and operations. With almost unbroken success in the Napoleonic era, a certain hubris infected many British senior officers – and juniors as well. On many Royal Navy ships extraordinary effort was still devoted to evolutions of the past century, such as daily scrubbing of the decks, rigorous conformance to naval protocol, and “prettying up the ship” to include much effort in polishing superfluous brightwork.

Fisher attempted to correct this but was not entirely successful. One of the revered beliefs of the Royal Navy was that sheer volume of gunfire would usually win the day. In battles with their French and Spanish counterparts in the early 19th Century, the gun crews of British ships were typically able to fire twice as fast. Since most engagements took place at 300 yards or less, aiming was less critical than volume of fire. This volume of fire, coupled with superior British ship handling, usually spelled defeat for their opponents.

For the first two years of the World War I, Royal Navy captains – and gunnery officers – in their battle cruisers emphasized firing the maximum volume of shells when engaging the enemy. To promote this, magazine and turret baffles, intended to defeat possible magazine explosions, were left open to increase speed of reloading, and this had dire consequences in more than one engagement.



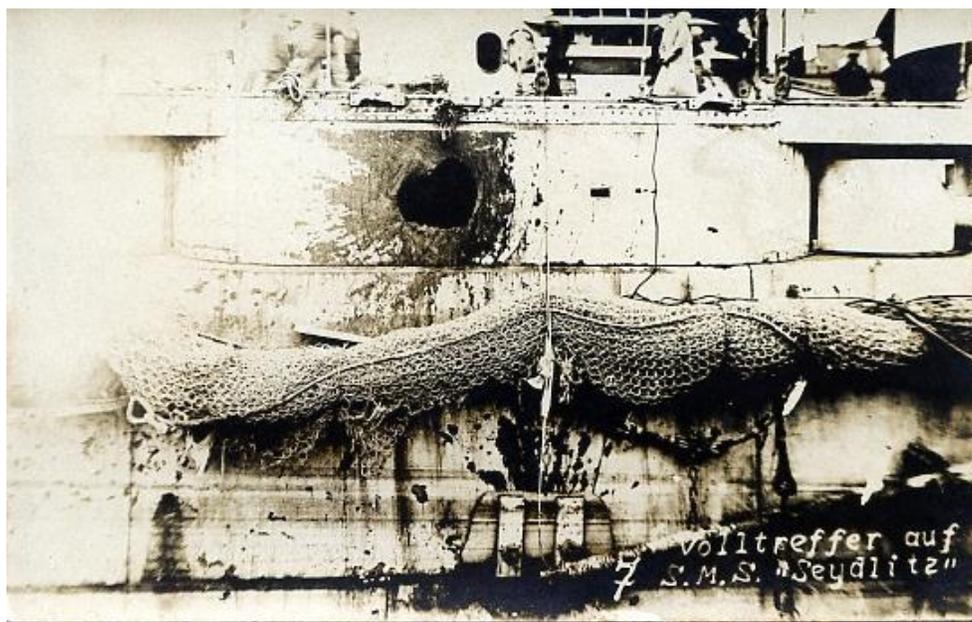
Germany, on the other hand, as relative newcomer to naval power, was free of encumbering traditions. German naval officers studied the Royal Navy, melded their conclusions with industrial expansion, and pointedly improved on British procedures. The impetus for building the German Navy came mostly from Kaiser Wilhelm II; as grandson of Queen Victoria, in his youth he spent many summers visiting the Court and personally witnessed Grand Reviews of the Royal Navy. He felt Germany also ought to have a first-class navy, although a German Chancellor was said to have remarked “The question is not how large our navy ought to be, but how small”. This astute comment recognized that a fleet rivalling Britain’s in size could only be seen as a threat by that power. Britain was wholly dependent on imports for many raw materials as well as foodstuffs whereas Germany was mostly self-sufficient in food and could get most raw materials domestically or on the Continent. Wilhelm ignored such insights and pushed on with naval expansion, degenerating into a naval arms race.

## Planning

German Admiralty recognizing that the Royal Navy was the most likely opponent. British ships devoted considerable compartment space to coal bunkering – her possessions were sometimes hundreds or thousands of miles apart, and her ships needed sufficient coal not only to reach the next base, but be able to fight a battle on the way. The Germans realized that their far-flung colonies could not support major fleet units and elected to retain much of their fleet in home waters. Due to coal carrying capacity, British ships had nearly twice the cruising range of Germany's. Dedicated colliers – merchant ships acting as navy auxiliaries – were the only way to support extended cruises absent naval bases within reach. The Germans were aware of their abilities - and limitations, having provided the colliers to support the transit of the Russian Baltic Fleet in its doomed voyage to the Far East in 1904-05 during the Russo-Japanese War.

## Engineering

Since most German ships did not require extended cruising range, they devoted more attention to watertight compartmentation – to contain battle damage – and limited crew habitability, since most of the time crews would be quartered in barracks in port. This weight savings also allowed somewhat thicker armor protection. The Germans alone created for their ships a unique Damage Control Officer post that specialized in mitigating battle damage. These factors implied their ships would be harder to sink – as Jutland later proved. Though of slightly smaller calibers, both their guns and shells were superior (though the British somewhat compensated by larger gun calibers).



## Training

Where early 19<sup>th</sup> Century naval cannons had limited effective ranges of perhaps half a mile, modern high caliber naval guns could range to 10 miles or more. The Germans recognized that this placed a premium on accuracy as opposed to volume of fire. Their range-finding equipment was unmatched, and their crews trained to a high standard. Additionally, the Germans did not neglect maneuvering their ships in battle and devised a unique “battle turn” totally beyond capability of the Royal Navy. In sum, the German Navy devoted much less time to slavish traditions and more to the business of winning engagements. Where not outnumbered or badly outmatched, they frequently did so.

The only German battlecruiser lost, the Lutzow, absorbed 24 major caliber shell hits (and possibly a torpedo) at Jutland, and was scuttled only because she drew too much draft due to flooding to return to base – but was otherwise marginally seaworthy. In contrast, a very few critical hits did in for the 3 British battlecruisers catastrophically destroyed in the battle; an instructive comparison of capital ship construction, damage control ability, and operational procedures.

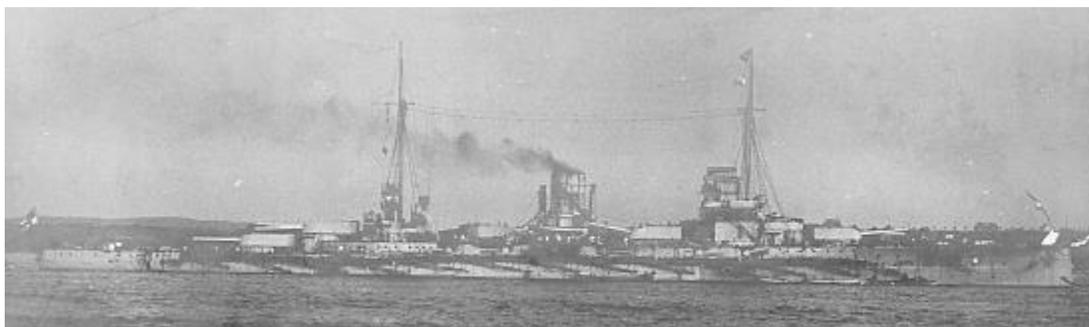
### **Strategic Considerations**

The British planned to coordinate their disparate forces to methodically hunt down and destroy (or neutralize) any German warships based outside their Baltic defenses. This would ensure communications and flow of materials and manpower from the Empire to the Home Islands. The German Admiralty realized their few far flung warships could not survive indefinitely in the event of sudden declaration of war. These vessels were therefore directed to cause as much damage to British commerce (and prestige) before succumbing to superior force.

In essence, both sides realized their aims, though the superiority of German engineering, training, and command, accomplished far more than what reasonably might have been expected; the colossal failure of the Royal Navy to bring the Goeben to heel in the Mediterranean at the outset may have spelled the eventual demise of the British Empire as well as needlessly prolonging the war. In the event, while overseas German surface warships were mostly eliminated in the first year of the war, the emergence of the submarine as the pre-eminent commerce raider more than mitigated that loss.

With the German economy stretched to the limit supporting a two front land, as well as propping up the marginal Austro-Hungarian empire, the Royal Navy was able to outbuild her rival during the war, fielding the excellent oil-fired Malaya class battleships fairly early in the conflict. Jutland, and the later arrival of a United States Navy squadron after the U.S entered the war ended Germany's possibility of achieving naval superiority in the North Sea.

Interested readers are encouraged to consult Superior Force by Geoffrey Miller – Volume I of the Straits trilogy. It explains in exhausting detail the escape of the Goeben and her consort at the outbreak of the war: <http://www.navalhistory.co.uk/>



S.M.S. Goeben

The best part of waking up is...



# Historic Location of the Month

## Cadiz, Spain

Painting by Ferrer-Dalmau showing Joseph Bonaparte (King of Spain, 1808-13) with Cádiz in the background c. 1810. Cadiz was the anchorage of the French-Spanish fleet that took part in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.



# Colorado Military Historians, Inc.

Colorado Military Historians (CMH) is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote historical wargaming and the study of military history. Founded in 1965, CMH meets monthly on the second Sunday of the month, except in May when the meeting is deferred to the third Sunday. The meeting starts at noon at the Baker Recreation Center, 6751 Irving Street (just a few blocks west of Federal Blvd), Denver, Colorado. The club also hosts gaming at least one Friday night a month, called “Friday Night Fights” (FNF) at 7:00 p.m. Friday meetings will be held at a future determined location. See website for latest information.

CMH maintains ties with numerous local, regional, and national groups to help promote the hobby. CMH is governed by member-elected officers serving on the Board of Directors (executive board). Terms of office are one year, with elections held at the May meeting. New members are accepted after attending three CMH functions and a vote of the membership. Dues are \$50.00 per year, payable in January. Members wishing to receive a snail-mailed newsletter subscription must pay an additional fee of \$15.00 per year. Authors retain ownership of articles and graphics published. CMH reserves the right to edit or reject submissions to the newsletter.

One year Adult Membership: \$50.00  
Half year Adult Membership: \$25.00  
(For NEW members who join after June 30)  
Family Membership: \$50.00 (one Adult and any number of offspring)  
Student Membership: \$25.00 (16 to 22 years old)  
Children: free (younger than 16 accompanied by member)

## Club Links:

Web Site: <https://cmhweb.org/>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/cmhgamers/>  
Groups.io Group: <https://groups.io/g/cmhweb>  
Discord: <https://discord.gg/DAP2Gn>

## CMH Newsletter

The CMH Newsletter is a monthly newsletter published by the Colorado Military Historians. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of all CMH members.

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