

# The Royal Navy's strategy discourse up to the Great War – in outline



Map from a Swedish winter 1912-1913 General Staff study marked with potential British or German naval bases. (Swedish War Archives)

## **General<sup>1</sup>**

The article has been developed on a combination of fresh studies of surviving Royal Navy War Plans files, files from Danish and Swedish archives and the author's personal analytic prism based on more than twenty years of active staff and lecturing work with operational concepts and at the interface of politicians and armed service leaders. It has been a pleasure and relief to notice that the analysis of the Royal Navy strategic planning in a longer period conducted by Shawn Grimes parallel to my work has reached most of the same conclusions.<sup>2</sup>

There were two reasons why I had to analyse the Royal Navy planning in a book about Danish reactions to the crises of 1911 and 1912-13. *Firstly* because the threat to Denmark (and Western Sweden) in a war depended on what was planned for Jutland and the Kattegat in the implementation of the British blockade. That again depended completely on the blockade's mission and ambition and on how active and forward it would be conducted. The issue was what risks were appropriate to take to make the naval and trade blockade effective. It was hotly debated and remained unsolved right up to August 1914. *Secondly* it was essential to understand British plans in order judge the accuracy of the German, Danish and Swedish perceptions of what the Royal Navy intended.

The internal discussion in the Senior Service was not a simple and one-dimensional one between a trade war strategy and an active and forward deployed traditional naval blockade. Such matters never are. The first dimension of the discussion was the degree to which the service could and should focus all preparations on the possible war with Germany. If other conflicts were probable, conflicts where Great Britain could have other opponents, it should not be too tied-up with France, and it would be wise to keep a significant fleet in the Mediterranean. In conflicts where Britain remained a neutral, it would be in her interest to accept the strict limitations of contraband in the London Declaration. In this discussion Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty and his original mentor John Fisher were clearly focusing against Germany.

A different but related dimension of disagreement was the rarely voiced views about the likely, acceptable or desirable length of the war. Was a long war sustainable and desirable in spite of the pressure and disruptions it would cause in society? If not, more risky alternatives to trade war had to be chosen. This concern seems to have been a key element in Admiral Arthur Wilson's rejection of economic war as the core strategy.

---

<sup>1</sup> The article started as a summary of the Royal Navy-related chapters of my book: "Det lille land før den Store Krig. De danske farvande, stormagtsstrategier, efterretninger og forsvarsforberedelser omkring kriserne 1911-13" (*The Small Country Before the Great War. The Danish Waters, Great Power Strategies, Intelligence and Defence Preparation during the International Crises 1911-13*) (Odense May 2012). Here it has been annotated and lengthened following supplementary research.

<sup>2</sup> Shawn T. Grimes: *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918*. (Melton, Suffolk 2012).



Admiral John "Jacky" Fisher drove the discourse from 1904 until his retirement in 1910.  
(cimsec.org)

A separate and again integrated dimension was the dominating role of the decisive naval battle in any naval strategy of the time. The withdrawal from the North Sea to distant blockade lines with the battle fleet(s) deployed to react to the German High Seas fleet by ambush or interdiction of its withdrawal route meant the acceptance of the risks of landing and bombardment raids against the British east coast or even the possibility of a surprise invasion. There were different opinions about whether such a risk was acceptable. Churchill, who preferred any risks linked to offensive action to those of the defensive, disagreed with his mentor, John Fisher. Another related dimension was the proud Nelsonian service gut-ruled ethos of automatic aggressive behaviour that conflicted with the cool analysis of the civilian Julian Corbett and the like-minded intellectual officers George Ballard and Maurice Hankey. It seems natural that the former hussar officer Churchill should agree with the Nelson hopefuls.

Another dimension was the problem many naval officers had with the separate and independent continental strategic role that the British Army had chosen and for which succeeded in achieving a tentative political endorsement. It seemed inappropriate to naval officers and it limited the navy's role to blue water operations.

Churchill was unresolved here, because on one hand the continental role for the army had become a political semi-reality when he took office, and on the other hand he needed land forces for his aggressive coastal operations he sought for his fleet.

The final and very significant dimension was the desirable degree of operational centralization. Many key figures the deep belief of central bureaucrats of all times that they know best. Only they are close to the decision-makers and have the full picture. The just needed to be supplied with real-time information. At the time this attitude was combined with unbridled optimism about the emerging technological possibilities. It led to a move to concentrate authority and responsibility at the Admiralty and reduce the traditionally necessary delegation to fleet C-in-Cs and squadron flag officers. Fisher and Wilson never doubted that maximum centralization enhanced the chances of achieving the destruction of the German High Seas Fleet.

This situation was only gradually brought into a sensible balance in 1912-13 due to the general respect felt for the Home Fleets C-in-C Admiral Callaghan and thereafter consolidated by his successor Jellicoe. It was fortunate because by mid-1914 Churchill, another natural centralizer, had removed most obstacles to his direct control from the Admiralty by purging independent minded officers with the character to stand up to him.

The narrative of the '*War Plans*'-development thus highlighted that previous works up this book and Grimes' analysis have been too one-dimensional. This was even the case with Avner Offer's otherwise ground-breaking analysis. Others were myth-ridden, influenced by Marder's reading of Richmond and Dewar, who were outsiders during most of the development work and by Churchill's deliberate silence about his power-manoeuvring from early 1913 onwards in this '*World Crisis*'.

To understand what happened in the planning process it is necessary to see and accept the much less formal interaction in policymaking that characterised the small informal networks of the day, the co-operation so aptly outlined by Steve Cobb in the first part of his book.<sup>3</sup>

The reader also has to grasp how ideas influenced decision-makers such as Fisher. The First Sea Lord was primarily a practical, common-sense man who had an uncommonly acute talent for identifying key areas in need of reform or revolutionary change to make his service efficient, who thereafter manoeuvred and manipulated astutely politically and bureaucratically with the necessary brutality to

---

<sup>3</sup> In: Preparing for Blockade 1885-1914. Naval Contingency for Economic Warfare. (Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series), Farnham, Surrey 2013.

achieve results. He inspired the bright men around him such as Slade, Jackson, Ballard, Hankey, Ottley, Richmond and Corbett to theorise and write, and thereafter used what they produced if and when appropriate to his agenda. People like Fisher and young Churchill were more like somewhat enlightened, absolute princes of the Machiavellian time and breed than later, committee oriented, consensus seeking and managing leaders. They challenged their hand-picked courtiers to come up with useful ideas and service, demanding complete personal loyalty.

## ***Phase 1905-07: the Ballard Committee plan studies.***

The First Moroccan Crisis highlighted the risks of a war with Germany, and the Assistant Director of Naval Intelligence, Captain George Ballard, became involved in a correspondence with Colonel Charles Callwell from the General Staff in August-October 1905, meant to brainstorm about the implications and British options in such a conflict. Callwell was a leading army intellectual, who published his classic '*Military Operations and Maritime Preponderance* in that year', a major work on the necessity and requirements of army-navy operational co-operation. Since his start in Naval Intelligence in 1902, Ballard had analysed a possible German-British naval war. The brainstorming was brought to an abrupt end by Callwell's superiors, who sought an independent role for the army in such a war.

In early December Admiral John Fisher asked Ballard to chair a quick development of a 'War Plans'-paper, working directly for the admiral, which made the captain a key person in two phases of the war plans development up to the war. His role ended only three months before the war started, when, as later described, he was replaced by an officer more in line with Churchill's way of thinking. In the small committee Ballard he was joined by the Royal Marine Artillery officer, Captain Maurice Hankey, who later proved his extraordinary abilities as a pro-active and brilliant secretary of policy work during the next four decades. The leading naval theorist of the 20th Century, the naval historian Julian Corbett contributed by writing the theoretical introduction He had extracted the ideas that came to dominate the committee report during his lecturing at the Naval War College. Neither the committee, nor Corbett, were entirely free to write what they agreed among themselves. The College Commandant, Captain Edmond Slade, and the Director of the Admiralty Naval Intelligence Division, Captain Charles Ottley, supplied much of the foundation of the report, and Fisher as looking over their shoulders of all. The work of the committee generated outline strategic plans for the Royal Navy effort against Germany in both a situation where Great Britain was fighting Germany alone and one where Britain was allied to France.

The new and controversial part of the report was that of the four outline strategies, one assumed that Germany could be defeated by trade warfare, where the central element was '*cordon's* across the entrances to the North Sea in the Channel and between Scotland and Norway. The option mirrored the '*Observation Blockade*' of Corbett's 1906 Naval War College lecture compendium. The second strategy assumed that additional pressure by stopping neutral shipping to German ports would be required to make Germany give in. A third strategy added pressure by offensive operations such as coastal bombardments. A fourth assumed that Germany had taken the Danish islands of Zeeland and Funen, which would expose the lines of communication to those islands to British attack.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> A summary of: Det lille land..., pp.33-41, with a discussion and analysis based on: **TNA. ADM 116/1043B1**, pp. 194-306, 338-348; **ADM 116/1043B2**, pp. 193-213. 'Part II. A Preamble. General Remarks on War with Germany; pp. 225-243: 'Notes on attached "War Plans".'; pp. 293-329 'Secret. War Plans. Part I. Matthew S. Seligmann (ed.): Naval Intelligence from Germany. The Reports of the British Naval Attachés in Berlin. (London 2007), Document number 21. N.A. Report 59/06. Berlin 13-11-1906. Document number 41. N.A. Report 54/07. Berlin 3-10-1907; G. P. Gooch & Harold Temperley (eds.): British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. VI. Anglo-German Tension. Armaments and Negotiation, 1907-12. (London 1930), pp. 769-778, APPENDIX II.

## ***Phase 1907-08: Editing the studies, centralisation and first reactions to the Ballard-Corbett heresy.***

The Ballard Committee Report should be considered an admiralty study paper rather than a plan meant as a guidance or directive for concrete war preparations. Although it was an internal paper, the report could be sent for comments to respected senior operational fleet commander such as Arthur Wilson, the just retired C-in-C of the Channel Fleet. In the opinion of the Fisher Admiralty there was no longer any need for war plans directives to guide operations in the North Sea. The now available wireless telegraphy technology meant that fleet operations here could and should be controlled from the recently established 'War Room'. It now seemed to be possible to command from that centre. Decisions could be based on wireless reports from picket submarines and cruisers, squadrons and fleets as well as results from signals intelligence generated by enemy use of radio. Thereafter the units could be tasked and controlled through wireless telegraphy. The C-in-C afloat would never have the combination of an understanding of the political situation, the latest intelligence and powerful radio transmitters available at the admiralty. By monitoring transmissions of others, the fleet and squadron commanders and ship captains should be able to understand the situation, but the manoeuvring of the fleets and flotillas to trap and defeat the High Seas fleet could be done much better from the War Room than from the fleet flagship, a standard battleship without work space for the necessary staff. Therefore war plans and orders should be limited to allotment of ships to flag officers and bases.

---

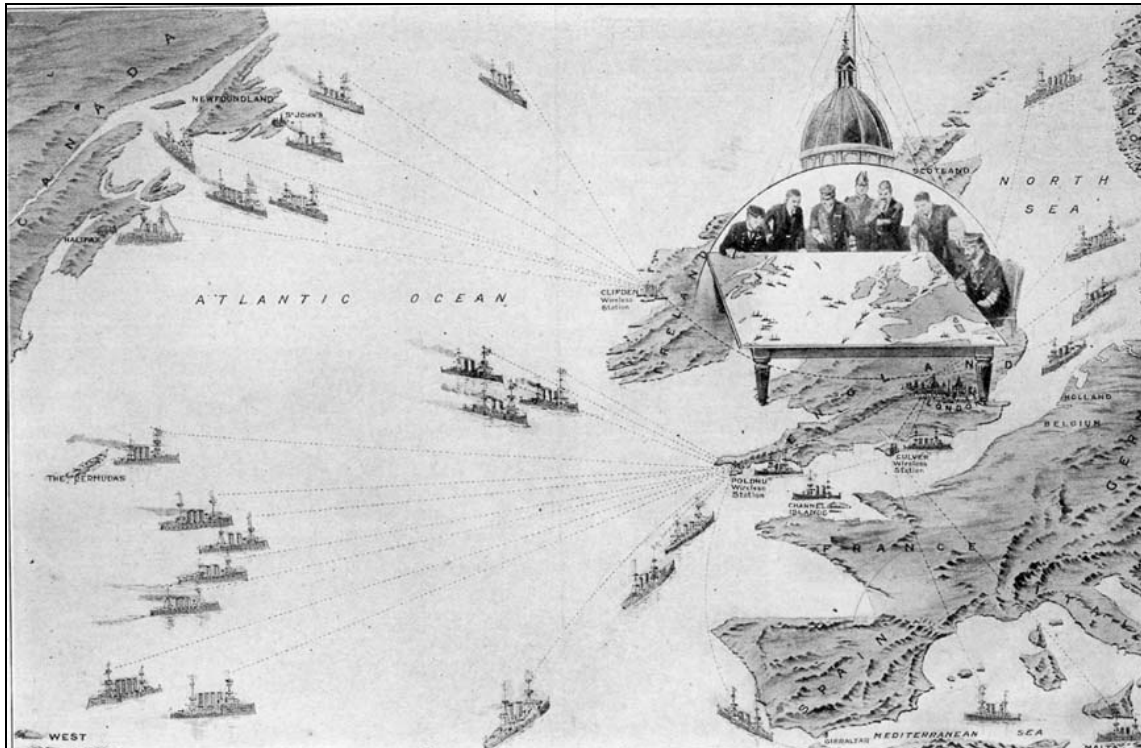
'Secret. Captain Dumas, R.N., to Sir F. Lascelles, Berlin 29-1-1907'; Gooch & Temperley (eds.): *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*. Vol. VIII. Arbitration, Neutrality and Security. (London 1932), pp. 123-129. 'Enclosure in No. 104. Captain Dumas to Sir F. Lascelles, British Embassy, Berlin. 6-3-1907' and the 'Minutes' fra Foreign Office civil servants and the minister, and pp. 129-130. 'Enclosure in No. 105, Captain Dumas to Sir F. Lascelles, British Embassy, Berlin. 17-5-1907'; Avner Offer: *The First World War. An Agrarian Interpretation*. (Oxford 1989), p. 235; Andrew Lambert: *The development of education in the Royal Navy*: Geoffrey Till (ed.). *The Development of British Naval Thinking. Essays in Memory of Bryant Ranft*. (London 2006), pp. 51-55; P. Haggie: *Royal Navy and War Planning in the Fisher Era*: Paul Kennedy (red.): *The War Plans of the Great Powers 1880-1914*. (London 1979), p. 120; Donald M. Schurman: *Julian S. Corbett 1854-1922. Historian of British Maritime Policy from Drake to Jellicoe*. (London 1981), pp. 66-67, 82; Arthur J. Marder: *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow. The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919. Volume I. The Road to War, 1904-1914*. (London 1961), p. 71; Hew Strachan: *The First World War: Volume I: To Arms*. (Oxford 2001), , p. 376. Nicholas Lambert: *Planning Armageddon*, pp. 70-74; Grimes: *Strategy and War Planning*, pp. 89-99; Robert Erskine Childers: *The Riddle of the Sands*. London 1903. Viggo Sjøqvist: Erik Scavenius. En biografi. Bind 1. Copenhagen 1973, p. 68. David W. Sweet: *The Baltic in British Diplomacy before the First World War*, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 13, no. 3 (1970), pp.462f.



Admiral Lord Charles Beresford catalysed operational centralization to the Admiralty.  
([www.dreadnoughtproject.org](http://www.dreadnoughtproject.org))

In order to get the maximum flexibility, a significant number of destroyers should be kept in centrally controlled flotillas rather than be allotted to the fleets. This dimension – the belief that rational centralist control of operations is both possible and more effective than delegation to subordinates – has been missed by the earlier works dealing with war plans development. The Fisher-Beresford conflict must have reinforced the tendency to maintain central control as it would have been unthinkable to delegate important assets to the distrusted Channel Fleet commander. It did lead to Fisher moving the 1908 follow-up work on the *'War Plans'* to another small ad hoc body, the *'Strategy Committee'* under his personal supervision, where the key development work took place at the Naval War College.





The vision of centralist plotting-table based battle management from the Admiralty. That direct First Sea Lord battle control was the central element in the agreed Fisher-Wilson strategy.  
 (net.lib.byu.edu/estu/wwi/comment/warbook/images)

The two years were used to re-edit and reorganise the war plans studies and to conduct naval war college war games to test and develop the strategy options. At the same time the British diplomats tried to clarify Denmark's position in a British-German war and in relation to the Straits. One of the 1908 games tested the option of reinforcing the Danish defence operations of Zeeland; however from then onwards the College studies became increasingly remote from the immediate problems, dealing with such scenarios as a war with a German-U.S. combination. When Rear-Admiral Lewis Bayly took over as Naval War College Commandant late 1908, the emphasis shifted clearly from the distant blockade and trade war focus of the Ballard Report to a forward and active naval and trade blockade in the German Bight and the Skagerrak. Corbett's lecture compendium was edited to eliminate his type of distant '*Observation Blockade*'.

In his 1907 comments to the Ballard Committee report, Wilson had expressed his clear scepticism. A German-British war would be long with neither of the two empires able to do the opponent much harm. He simply did not believe that a trade war would harm Germany more than it did Great Britain. Other strategy options had to be developed, including a less risky form of close naval blockade, limited offensive operations against the German harbours and coasts and a flexible employment of the British Army that would be guided by naval strategy requirements. Everything should be done that could tempt or press the Germans to risk a naval battle. Here the High Seas Fleet would be destroyed by one of the British Fleets in the North Sea cutting off its withdrawal to the bases. A war allied with France

would entail extra dangers for Britain because she had to take risks to avoid the defeat of its continental ally.

As Avner Offer has underlined, the option of an effective trade war strategy was also being undermined by the definitions of neutral rights and contraband agreed in the February 1909 London Declaration. The general character of the negotiations leading to the declaration was freed from the narrow framework of a German-British naval war, and this was one of several reasons why the two Royal Navy negotiators, Slade and Ottley, had supported the agreement in spite of the further legal restrictions if meant for the Royal Navy in a war where Britain took part.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> A summary of: Det lille land..., pp.52-66, with a discussion and analysis based on: **TNA**. [ADM 116/866B](#), pp.250-261. 'HMS HALCYON. 24-6-1909. 'Anchorage in vicinity of Esbjerg'; [ADM 116/1037](#) with most of the Beresford correspondence; [ADM 116/1043B1](#), pp. 2-21: 'War Plans and The Distribution of the Fleet'. Marked '1907 or 1908' with pencil, but as HMS SUPERB and HMS TEMERAIRE listed in the First Battle Squadron in the memo only join the fleet in May 1909, it is likely from winter 1909 or later; pp. 349-393: 'Very Secret. War Plan. Germany. W.1.' marked '19/5/08'; pp.555-584: Printing Dept. F.O. 19-08-1908. Secret. War Plan. W.3. England and France v. Germany. Part II; pp. 649-660: 'War with Germany' (Osmond De Beauvoir Brock) of 10-6-1908; pp. 741-760: Revised (Printed in the F.O., 30-6-1908); pp. 761-788: 'Very Secret. Military Expedition to Zealand in Support of the Danes against German Invasion', War College, 6-4-1908; [ADM 116/1043 B2](#), pp.126-137: 'Admiralty. Secret and Personal. 1-7-1908 to The Commander-in-Chief H.M. Ships & Vessels, CHANNEL FLEET; pp.270-272: Secret. 'Wireless Telegraphy in War'; pp. 159-184. 'Sketch of the action necessary for War with Germany alone', 'ENGLAND v. FRANCE and GERMANY' and 'Alternative Sketch Plan for War with Germany, April 1911'; pp. 275-279 (back): Secret. 'Preparation of War Plans'; pp.280-292: Most Secret. 'Remarks on War Plans, by Admiral of the Fleet Sir A. K. Wilson, V.C., G.C.B., G.C.V.O; **Rigsarkivet** (Danish State Archives). [Marinestaben 1904-1932. Emneordnede sager, pk. 34. Efterretningssager m.m.](#) Flaadens Stab, Fortroligt. 'Forskellige Oplysninger indhentede gennem Samtaler med en engelsk Søofficer (Sommeren 1910); Gooch og Temperley: British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. VI, pp. 118-131, 'German N. A. Report 5/05. Secret. British Embassy, Berlin 12-2-1908'; Gooch og Temperley: British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol. VIII, pp. 181f. 'No. 155. Minutes by Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Eyre Crowe, Mr. W. Langley and Sir C. Hardinge. 7?-5-1907'; Matthew S. Seligmann (ed.): Naval Intelligence from Germany. Document number 48 N.A. Report 9/08. Berlin 12-2-1908. Document number 57. N.A. Report 34/08. Berlin 30-7-1908; Sjøqvist: Erik Scavenius, pp.73, 76 and note 32; Grimes: Strategy and War Planning, pp. 75-82, 107-115,117, 155f; Avner Offer: The First World War, pp. 235, 240, 242-299; Nicholas Lambert: Planning Armageddon, pp. 42, 75-76, 86-137; Nicholas A. Lambert: Strategic Command and Control for Maneuver Warfare: Creation of the Royal Navy's "War Room" System 1905-1915: The Journal of Military History, Vol. 69, No. 2 (Apr., 2005), pp.387ff; Barry D. Hunt: Sailor-Scholar. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946. (Waterloo, Ontario 1982), pp.18-19; Norman Friedman: Network-Centric Warfare. How Navies Learned to Fight Smarter Through Three World Wars. (Annapolis 2009), pp. viii-ix & 1-10; Andrew Gordon: The Rules of the Game. Jutland and British Command. (London 1996), p. 369; Michael Smith: Six. SIX: A History of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service. Part 1: Murder and Mayhem 1909-1939 (London 2010), pp. 1-3; Arthur J. Marder: Portrait of an Admiral. The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond (London 1952), pp. 69-70, 75.

## ***Phase 1909-11: From Fisher to Wilson.***



As Fisher's short serving successor, Arthur Wilson focused on winning the North Sea battle, monitoring the Heligoland Bight and with centralized control of the battle squadrons.  
(From Marder. *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Vol. I)

When the War Plans studies and development had lasted four years since the winter 1904-05 and the results of the work had reached a sum of 780 pages, it was summarized by Fisher in his late 1908 memo "*War Plans and The Distribution of the Fleet*". It was written and during the Bosnian Crisis that had brought an increased risk of war that not only made it unacceptable to keep a Commander-in-Chief not trusted by the service leadership. The crisis must also have made Fisher realise the requirement to move beyond the sequence of various plan studies that his bright assistants had made and war gamed. Now he actually had to decide on a concept of operations.

For the very good reasons already noted, Fisher's memorandum quoted Wilson's remarks extensively, including that the purpose of dividing the battleships between two fleets "*should be to get one of these Fleets between the German Fleet and their ports if they once come out so as to prevent their return*". In brackets it noted: "*This will be the objective in the Grand Manoeuvres of next summer*", which would mean the 1909 manoeuvres, where Wilson was appointed to act as Chief Umpire. It was possible now to test the centralised control concept because it would be the flexible gentleman Admiral William May

rather than Beresford who commanded the Red - British - side. This was the last time the two fleet trap was mentioned making it likely that it was a part of the Fisher spring 1907 “programming” of Wilson that failed as too sophisticated or theoretical to guide the old, practical naval warrior.

Sir William Henry May had been Second Sea Lord for Fisher during the Beresford controversy, and in spite of some derogatory remarks by the old admiral, he was clearly trusted to work loyally in the testing and implementation of parts the operational concept. To assist William May in his task, Fisher issued him with a directive for a close observation blockade of the German North Sea bases.

During summer 1909, the navy investigated the possibility of supporting that blockade from an off shore destroyer protected anchorage covered by Horn’s Reef outside Danish territorial waters at Esbjerg.



Admiral Sir William Henry May - a relaxed, open minded, accommodating gentleman - the *Red* Fleet Commander-in-Chief during the 1909 and 1910 manoeuvres. However, as Chief Umpire in the 1912 and 1913 Manoeuvres, he criticized centralized control as its weaknesses became apparent.

([www.dreadnoughtproject.org](http://www.dreadnoughtproject.org))

The 1909 manoeuvres took place off Scotland with the West Scotland acting as the German North Sea Coast. The exercise played a situation of “*strained relations*” and the first days of war. The mission of

the *Red* fleet was to destroy the enemy *Blue* and *White* fleets, the latter being the part of the High Seas Fleet that had to use the Skagerrak to make a junction with the Blue due to the reconstruction of the Kiel Canal that would last from 1907 to 1914. *Red* should observe the strongly fortified *Blue* coast closely; if possible prevent the junction of the two enemy fleets (meaning if this had not been accomplished before the outbreak of the war). If the junction had been affected, the combined enemy fleets should be brought to action. The general idea for the manoeuvres does not describe how. The exercise would last a full week.

Captain Herbert Richmond, the Commander-in-Chief's Flag Captain of the HMS DREADNOUGHT commented critically about the quality of command during the exercises in his diary entries on 8 and 14 July. The fleet did not use its cruisers and destroyers properly. The mission of the British side was to prevent the escape of the enemy fleet, but due to incompetent screening and bad weather his battle fleet broke through the British lines. The captain also criticised the fleet for controlling its cruisers far too tightly.

During autumn 1909 Fisher successfully blocked the creating of an Admiralty operational war planning staff. He was certain how the trap-battle should be conducted with minimum friction and delay and maximum flexibility. A staff could only lead to bureaucracy, need to argue and thereby unacceptable delay. He knew that he (and his successor Wilson) could control the operations in the best way directly from plotting table in the War Room. There was absolutely no requirement for the proposed staff to orchestrate and manage the expected battle, and after the destruction of the High Seas Fleet, everything would become simple.

Late December 1909 Fisher described his and Wilson's co-operation and their attitude to the war plan as follows: "*We have talked a lot about the War Plan for the Navy... he told ... that only he and I knew of the War Plan, which is quite true... He would sooner die than disclose it*". It meant that the two admirals agreed that only the Admiralty leadership could have a full basis for employing the two battle fleets based on the east coast and Channel bases in a way so that one fleet met and engaged the German fleet while the other moved to a position between that fleet and its bases. The authority and responsibility could and should not be delegated to a self-important subordinate such as Beresford. As underlined in the 1908 Wireless Telegraphy memo, written by the Director of Naval Intelligence, Edmond Slade, only the centre with the Naval Intelligence Department with the developing wireless intercept element could combine updated knowledge about the international situation and cabinet intentions with signals intelligence and reports from the radio equipped patrolling cruisers off the German bases. The observation forces that included any new patrol submarines and most of the flotillas of modern destroyers were kept under central Admiralty control, as it was considered to have a far better situation picture than the fleets' Commanders-in-Chiefs. All radio-equipped units could and would benefit from the Admiralty information and orders broadcasts. The admirals could and should only control the ships and vessels of their own formation. In a situation where the enemy intention was unknown, central control could ensure maximum flexibility of response, and it would be counter-productive to produce War Plans or War Orders that did more than inform the subordinate commanders of what units they were responsible for training. Only the small submarines and some

torpedo boats and first generation destroyers were placed under the direct command of the “*Admiral of Patrols*” responsible for coastal and forward base defence.

During Fisher’s first term as First Sea Lord he had emphasized long range heavy, scientifically controlled gunnery, and he had been close to fanatic in his demand for battleship speed. Superior speed and long range hitting power would make it theoretically possible to develop any engagement of the British and German battle fleets brought about by the war room control into a situation where the Germans were out-manoeuvred, cut off and destroyed. Wilson, who had taken a key role in supporting the fire control system development, could be trusted to understand this. The same was the case with John Jellicoe, who had managed the system development, and whom Fisher successfully lobbied to have appointed fleet commander-in-chief in the coming war.

In the first - spring - part of the exercises of the combined Home and Atlantic Fleet in 1910 after Wilson’s take-over, the planned observational blockade of destroyers supported by cruisers off the German coast was tested and found to be too close and risky, and the method was thereafter adjusted to the looser form already outlined by Wilson in his 1907 “*Remarks*”. The second part tested fleet offensive operations. On 29 May 1910, after the combined exercises, Captain Herbert Richmond had a conversation with the First Lord, Reginald McKenna. He noted in his diary that the talk had been free and wide-ranging. It had also covered the fleet war plan. Fisher and Wilson had apparently convinced McKenna that their war plan was perfect; the Germans were checkmated from the outset.

The 1910 fleet manoeuvres took place in July in approximately the same waters off West Scotland as in the previous year and can thus be seen as a direct follow-up to the 1909 test of the war plan. During the manoeuvres, Sir Arthur Wilson, now first Sea Lord, exercised command in the way outlined by the Wireless Telegraphy memo. It was his first chance to do so, and he used the opportunity fully. He did not trust assistants to act in his spirit and moved a bed into his room in the Admiralty, where he controlled the fleet units directly by wireless.

This manoeuvre also played the first week of a naval war against Germany, however, the scenario had been developed. The Blue - enemy - fleet was ordered to act offensively against the Red (English West and Irish) coast and trade, thereby exposing it to higher risk of losses. The main fleet that consisted of the Commander-in-Chief’s flagship HMS DREADNOUGHT and all the “Red” Pre-Dreadnoughts cruised out of harm’s way off southwest Ireland. Admiral Sir William May’s second-in-command, Vice-Admiral Berkeley Milne’s, Second Battleship Division, was part of this main fleet. Cruiser squadrons were detached to the waters that acted as the Straits of Dover (northern entry to the Irish Sea) and Skagerrak (North Minch). A very strong squadron that included the INVINCIBLE-class ships cruised covering the area that acted as the southern part of the North Sea (between Dubh Artach and Rathkin Island off the Irish North Coast), backing-up the destroyer-light cruiser force in the observation blockade, ready as the two other squadrons to report and follow Blue battle fleet forces and destroy lighter units. The Mull Sound acted like the Kiel Canal and was used for sending Blue Sixth Cruiser Squadron on raiding operations. The six new Dreadnoughts were formed into two three ship detached fast battle squadrons; one further west in “the Channel” (south in the Irish Sea), the other off “the Humber” (north-west coast of Ireland). If the Blue battle fleet sallied in their direction, they would

support the cruiser forces in front of them and engage the enemy fleet until the main fleet could be brought into action. Not keeping the Dreadnoughts together with their superior speed and combat power advantage undermined any chance of outmanoeuvring and cutting-off the enemy battle fleet. Wilson (or May with Wilson's approval) simply preferred to use their superior speed in the role that would later be given to the INVINCIBLE-class and the purpose built battle-cruisers.

The manoeuvres ended with a Blue battle fleet sally into "the Channel", which must have ended with an engagement between the main fleets. Here Wilson gave orders about the ship's formation, course, speed and expected navigational problems directly to Vice-Admiral Milne's Second Division, bypassing Admiral May. This may have nourished the critical attitude that surfaced in May's 1912 and 1913 Chief Umpire reports described later in the paper. The direct orders from the Admiralty to his ships may have triggered Milne's cynical note that "*They pay me to be an admiral; they don't pay me to think!*" As with all centralized operational or tactical management concepts, a very serious weakness is the castration of initiative among subordinates and loss of ability to adjust to unforeseeable developments.

It seems clear from the First Sea Lord's actions during the manoeuvres that even if the operational idea called for cutting off the enemy fleet, for Wilson the central part of the "plan" was the centralized control by radio that in theory gave the shortest possible reaction time and the maximum flexibility to adjust to actual German actions.

In 1910 Sir Arthur Wilson did not have to explain his ideas to his subordinates, he just commanded. He found it far more difficult – or was reluctant - to communicate his War Plans concept during the 23 August 1911 Agadir Crisis meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence and during the next weeks is perfectly understandable. One probable reason was that he would realize that he could not trust the politicians – or the army – to keep the British control capabilities and plan secret, and German certain knowledge of the Royal Navy ideas would make it rather unlikely that their fleet exposed itself to being cut-off. The other likely reason was that it would be very difficult to present the maintenance of centralized control for maximum flexibility as a "*plan*", and Wilson was no great communicator.

His combination of resistance to support a continental role of the army and unwillingness to present any clear strategy for the navy undermined his position. It meant a strong political demand for an Admiralty planning staff that could co-operate with army General Staff and develop a credible strategy for the navy's role. As Wilson refused to comply and the First Lord of the Admiralty supported him, the latter was replaced by Winston Churchill, who thereafter replaced the stubborn and aggressive old admiral with the cultured and urbane Francis Bridgeman, who had been Second Sea Lord after his time as C-in-C Home Fleet from during the Fisher-Beresford conflict

Wilson's unwillingness to tie the operations of the battle fleets to a plan did not mean that no formal plans were issued during his time as First Sea Lord. Penned by the C-in-C Sir William May, the destroyer commander, "Commodore T", was given his preliminary war orders for the "*Heligoland Bight Blockade Squadron*" in late January 1911. May's blockade orders can be considered part of the hand-over to Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman, who was to take over as C-in-C a month later.

The force that the commodore was to command consisted of his 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Destroyer Flotillas plus four armoured cruisers to back-up the light vessels. He might also get command of three THETIS-class cruisers used as minelayers, submarines deployed to the Bight and later the 3<sup>rd</sup> Destroyer Flotilla initially used to screen the British east coast. The blockading squadron should operate inshore to prevent the enemy breaking out "*without being reported and brought into action*". The blockading squadron would be supported in daylight by the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cruiser Squadrons further out in the North Sea. If the enemy battle fleet put to sea, the Commodore should report immediately to the C-in-C about that fleet's "*movement, strength, and formation*" so that the admiral could bring it into action. Later, when control of the Dover Strait had been ensured, the army mobilised and all the mobilised ships had reached their stations, the close watch of the Bight would no longer be essential. It might "*even be advisable to remove the inshore watch at time to tempt the enemy out*".<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Supplementary archival research after finishing the book – mainly inspired by Matthew Seligmann – added insight into Wilson's view of strategy and his role temporarily published on the internet in my: The War Room Managed North Sea Trap 1907-1916. The Substance, Roots and Fate of the Secret Fisher-Wilson "War Plan" ([http://www.clemmesen.org/articles/Paper\\_CIHM\\_2012.pdf](http://www.clemmesen.org/articles/Paper_CIHM_2012.pdf)). Based on: TNA. ADM 116/866B, pp. 250-261. 'HMS HALCYON. 24-6-1909.. Secret. Anchorage in the vicinity of Esbjerg; ADM 116/1043B1, pp. 1-11; ADM 116/1109, Secret. Naval Manoeuvres, 1909. (For issue to all fleets). General Idea; ADM 116/3096. Dreadnought (W.H.May) Secret of 23-1-1911. Heligoland Bight Blockade Squadron. Preliminary War Orders for Commodore T. in Command; ADM 144/32. "Naval Manoeuvres, 1910"; MSS 253/84/3; Arthur J. Marder: From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow. I, pp. 198, 244, 247, 250-251; Andrew Gordon: The Rules of the Game, p.369; Grimes, Strategy, pp. 126, 154-158, 163-164; Edward Eden Bradford & Arthur Knyvet Wilson: Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Knyvet Wilson. (London 1923), pp. 124-125; John Brooks: Dreadnought Gunnery and the Battle of Jutland. The Question of Fire Control. (London 2005). Arthur J. Marder (ed.): Fear God and Dread Nought. The Correspondence of Admiral the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone. Volume II. Years of Power 1904-1914. (London 1956), Letters to Reginald McKenna of 13-7-1909 and to Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Ottley of 29-8-1909, pp. 256, 262-263; Arthur J. Marder: Portrait of an Admiral. The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond. (London 1952), pp.55-56, 59, 70; Ruddock F. Mackay: Fisher of Kilverstone. (London 1973), pp. 429-431; Stewart Ross: Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman. The Life and Times of an Officer and a Gentleman. (Cambridge, 1998), p. 152; Nicholas A. Lambert: Strategic Command and Control for Maneuver Warfare: Creation of the Royal Navy's "War Room" System, 1905-1915 in The Journal of Military History, Vol. 69, No. 2 (Apr., 2005): pp.385f.



***Phase 1911-13: The Ballard-Callaghan development of the RN War Plans.***



The probably provokingly intellectual and independent minded George Alexander Ballard. Key planner of Royal Navy naval operations against Germany 1902-07 and 1912-14, here as Rear-Admiral after having been bureaucratically out-manoeuvred and replaced by Churchill.  
(The National Portrait Gallery)

In early December 1911 the highly respected Vice-Admiral Sir George Callaghan took over as C-in-C Home Fleet, and when the Admiralty War Staff was established in early 1912, George Ballard returned to Admiralty as Director of the new Operations Division. With Wilson removed, an independent minded professional as C-in-C, and the naval intellectual who had fathered the observational blockade 15 years earlier and five years earlier had accepted a focused distant trade war strategy directing the new policy department, the scene was set for change.

The first action taken by the new staff was to ensure early availability of the older units of the “*Second Fleet*” that were not fully manned in peacetime. They were to receive their supplementary crew form

training schools and other shore establishments without a formal declaration of increased readiness. Earlier that had only been the case with the units employed in the close blockade. In order to make the diplomatic circles used to the new situation, exercising the manning should take place at least twice annually at irregular intervals.

By mid-April 1912, Ballard was ready with an "*Explanatory Memorandum*" that outlined how the navy was to be employed in wars against Germany by Britain alone or as allied to France against Germany/Germany-Austria. A conflict would either come after a period of gradually increasing tension or as a rupture with hardly any warning.

In the first case the Admiralty could quietly make the fleets' battle squadrons ready and have them deployed close to their war bases in a way that reduced their vulnerability, one fleet off the west and one off the south coast. On the outbreak of hostilities one fleet would base itself on Scapa Flow, Cromarty or Rosyth. The other, southern, fleet of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Battle Squadrons would assemble at Spithead or Portland, and the older ships of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Battle Squadrons would assemble for exercises at Portland. The fleets were to be covered by a cruiser-destroyer linear deployment from the Norwegian to the Dutch coast.

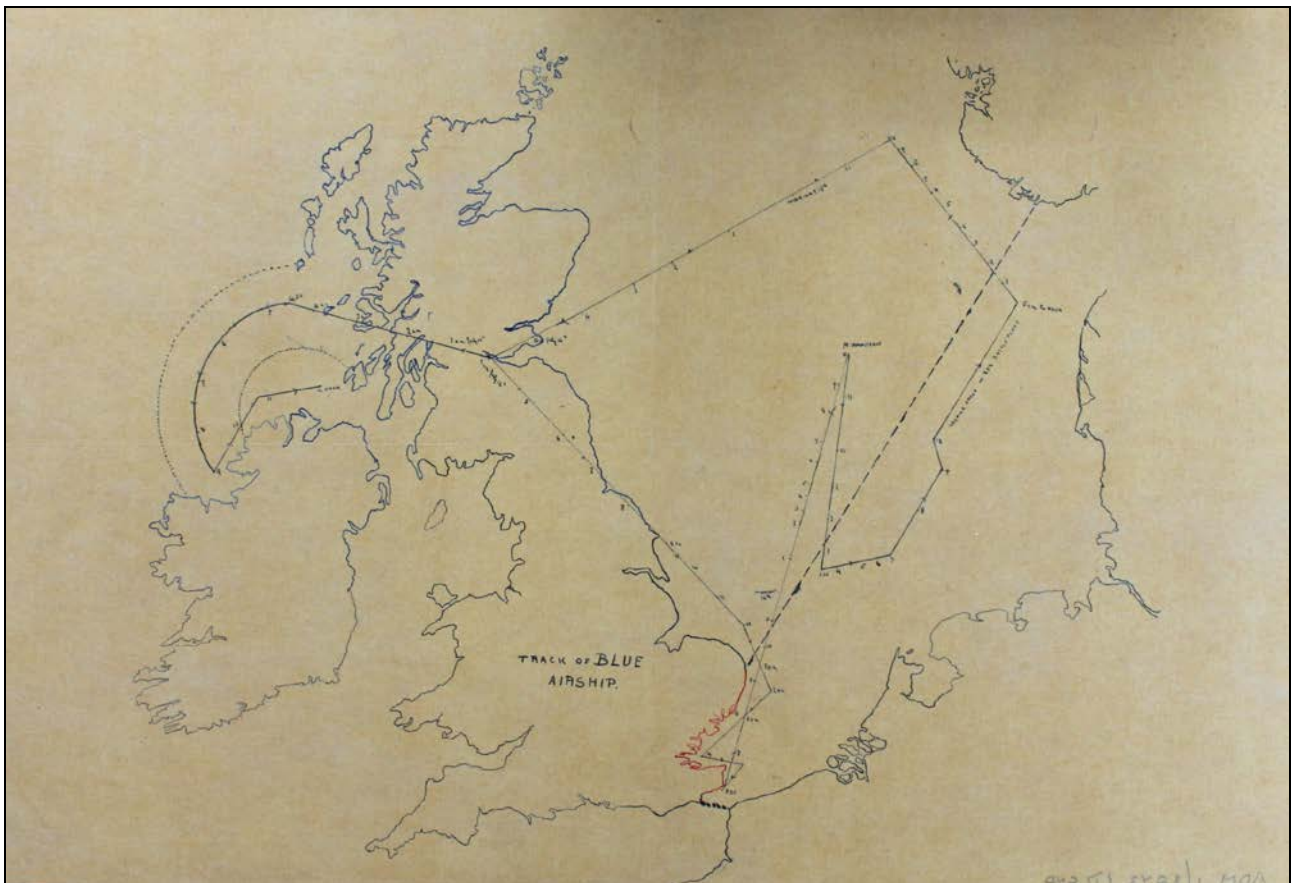
However, Ballard considered it more likely that war would break out unexpectedly with as little as 48 hours between "*ordinary peace*" and the first shots. Here the "*first essential will be to assemble in full security a battle fleet of sufficient strength to enable it to seek a battle with the whole German Navy*". No division into a northern and southern fleet would be possible during that phase. To protect the subsequent deployment of the battle squadrons to the two fleets all flotillas and cruiser squadrons would be deployed in observation and patrol, and the Dover Straits would be covered by a destroyer cordon. The latter will protect the formation of the southern fleet. No matter how the enemy operated, "*it will be their Lordships' intention to obtain a decision by battle whenever a favourable opportunity offers, the course of the war may be so dominated by the earliest events that no further forecast would be useful*".

To support and protect the two fleets' operations in the North Sea, the Shetland Islands should be protected by submarines or destroyers in a period and garrisoned in war. Norway and The Netherlands might, "*subject to State policy*" be used as bases for a patrol line of cruisers and destroyers stretching from Stavanger to the Hook of Holland supported 40 miles to the east of a look-out line of "*steam trawlers or other small vessels fitted with wireless telegraphy*". The cruiser-destroyer Mid-North Sea patrol line would be backed-up by the battlecruisers of 1<sup>st</sup> Cruiser Squadron placed 90 miles further east. This complex patrol-observation warning system would be tested – and fail – in the summer fleet manoeuvres.

With the exception of the close blockade, now moved to the west to reduce vulnerability and logistic problems, Ballard's memorandum mirrored a battle concept very similar to the Fisher-Wilson one. However, this was impossible to sustain unchanged. The need for change was directly driven by the then extremely fast development in key fields of naval technology. This was clearly recognized by the new professional Admiralty leadership. The number and endurance of the destroyers was insufficient

for maintaining the observational blockade week after week, maybe month after month. Their bases were less than ideal to support their operations. Both the destroyers and the small number of light scout cruisers had a too weak armament to defend against the threat from German light forces, and the supporting heavier cruisers meant to back them up were increasingly vulnerable. This would be of less importance if a protected anchorage would have been available at the German coast, but the British Army had politically blocked the idea of it being reduced to a force afloat, and the coastal defences on the German North Sea islands were being built-up to a level making a landing from hazardous to suicidal. Picketing the German bases to supplement the warning from signals intelligence now had to be left to a still far too small number of patrol submarines.

The initial concept developed by the new War Staff was meant to give the Admiralty the warning of a High Seas Fleet sally that would hitherto have come from the forward blockading screen. Now a picket line of cruisers would be deployed north-south in middle of the North Sea.



Trace of British ("Blue") Airship during the 1912 manoeuvres to reinforce the cruiser picket line between the British coast and Stavanger. The manoeuvres gave indication of the weakness of the theoretically ideal centralized War Room operational control.

(The National Archives)

During summer 1912 the fleet manoeuvres this concept was tested and failed due to lack of suitable units to fill the line. It would remain unrealistic until a large number of new model light cruisers –

actually very large, well-armed, long range and endurance destroyers – had been built. Until they were ready, the Grand Fleet strategy had to depend to the pressure of the blockade, signals intelligence and luck during its North Sea sweeps to catch and destroy the German fleet. The new and first comprehensive War Plans for the Home Fleets developed by Captain Ballard from November 1912 and valid until summer 1914 mirrored that reality. The Chief Umpire during the manoeuvres was the flexible and open-minded gentleman, Admiral Sir William May.

Ballard analysed the manoeuvres in a memorandum completed Mid-September. An enemy force could be met off his coast, on the way or at the place of attack. The first option was not realistic logistically with the technology of the day, and the observing force would have losses without chance of success. Capturing and using a forward base such as Heligoland, Borkum or Sylt had been considered, but rejected, as the first was without a suitable harbour and the last two could be bombarded by heavy artillery from the coast. A large force of patrol submarines might do the job, but it was not available.

If, on the other hand, the navy did not seek to meet the enemy on the way, it would have to divide its forces in squadrons covering the coast and trade at Thames, Humber, Forth, Cromarty and at Scapa Flow, undermining the possibility of making a workable operational plan. The only remaining option was to ensure that the enemy fleet was observed in time for the Grand Fleet to meet him before or just after he could reach the British coast, even in situations where that fleet had a long approach. A cruiser picket line at 3° east was a suitable compromise, but even in good weather the navy did not have vessels to cover more than 40 % of the 470 nautical miles long line. Part of the line might be covered by mine fields, but both the necessary mines, mine-layers and a suitable concept for their use was missing. The only remaining option for the Admiralty was to delegate the solution of the problem by the lack of suitable units to the fleet Commander-in-Chief.

It also became clear during the 1912 manoeuvres that the Admiralty's plan to control operations from the War Room was unworkable in practice. It had ended in failure and chaos after a couple of days.

The war plan that Ballard thereafter developed was completed as draft under the impression of the Balkan Crisis. It sent for comments to Callaghan on 25 November 1912, on the day when the part of the High Sea Fleet based in the Baltic left Kiel. In the draft the Grand Fleet was to conduct cruiser sweeps and patrols in the North Sea up to 4° east. Supplemented with the results of signals intelligence these operations replaced the fixed observation line tested and failing in the manoeuvres. The pickets that Kenneth Dewar mistook for a blockade patrol line in his uninformed criticism of pre-war Admiralty planning in his memoirs. The plan only employed one of the four available fleet destroyer flotillas in the southern part of the North Sea. The Heligoland Bight was only covered by the available patrol submarines of the D- and E-classes. The battlecruisers were part of the main fleet, but Callaghan should foresee detachments to counter threats to the trade routes. The blockade lines between Scotland and Norway and in the Channel were operated by unarmoured cruisers.



Vice-Admiral Sir George Astley Callaghan, C-in-C Home Fleets, Ballard's dialogue partner in the 1912-13 development of the War Plans from Admiralty plans studies into a true plan.  
(en.wikipedia.org)

In the outline War Plan the C-in-C was made responsible for the fleet operations. Callaghan agreed with Ballard's draft, and Mid-December the admiral was issued with both a formal War Plan and a '*War Order*'. This was the first formal war plan with premises, directives and delegation of operational authority issued for a possible war with Germany. In this final version one of the battlecruiser squadrons was detached to the Mediterranean. It made clear, that the forward cruiser sweeps and patrols in the North Sea were launched and controlled by the C-in-C.

The War Order made clear that the purpose of the operations was to exert economic pressure on Germany by cruisers controlling the access to the North Sea. The cruiser patrol lines were to be supported by two battle fleets, based able both to cover the British coast and to force the High Seas

Fleet to battle if it attacked the cruisers. If the Admiralty had information that the German fleet had left its bases, it could move or combine the two battle fleets.

The War Staff considered it possible that the Germans would establish forward bases on the Norwegian west coast or even on the Shetland Islands or Orkneys at the start of hostilities, and outlined the necessary responses. The fleet should always keep the risk of torpedo attacks on their bases in mind. High readiness should, however, be balanced so not to wear-the crews, because the war would be extended, and time was the most important British weapon.

The Home Fleets' plan and order was followed by similar documents for the other flag officers. In spring 1913 the plans and orders were supplemented with a second set that covered a situation where Britain was allied with France.

The scenario of the 1913 fleet manoeuvres that took place in August was similar to those the previous year. Again the British party failed to find the enemy fleet or prevent a raid landing on the east coast. Once more extreme centralization of operational control brought friction, confusion and inefficiency, which the Chief Umpire, Sir William May as in 1912, duly noted. In his comments to the manoeuvres, Callaghan criticized the anti-invasion framework now used in two years. The chief mission of the fleet in the North Sea was not to counter a minor invasion attempt or raid. It was to destroy the enemy main fleet. The admiral's criticism was directed directly against Churchill, who had involved himself directly in the design of the exercises. Captain Herbert Richmond, now Ballard's assistant director, supported the C-in-C in a staff paper. Raids would not decide anything. In the covering letter Callaghan suggested that a conference should be held in the Admiralty to discuss "*the North Sea Problem*" between the War Staff, himself and his key subordinate Flag Officers. The conference took place at Cromarty in early October 1913 and is likely to have inspired the War Plan revision and simplification that Ballard started later that month.

In October 1913, after having received the comments to the manoeuvres, Ballard started a thorough revision of all the war plans and war orders documents. The aim was to shorten and focus them by removing all text that was not essential: all descriptive and analytic paragraphs, such as the possibility that the Germans might use the Norwegian coast. The Admiralty should give the mission and leave the C-in-C freedom to execute. Ballard indirectly accepted Callaghan's criticism by underlining, that all plans accepted risks, but to minimise these risks, the planning should be based on a full understanding of the enemy's situation and limitations. The Chief of War Staff, Read-Admiral Henry Jackson, approved the further revised and shortened new War Order draft end December and forwarded it to Callaghan for comments. The C-in-C had no immediate significant comments.

During the two years, when Ballard developed the fleet war plans and orders that should guide both the operations in support of the trade war and other naval operations against Germany, Maurice Hankey moved up into his critical new position as Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence. He had been the Naval Assistant Secretary to the committee since 1908, but in March 1912 he took over

as leader from Ottley. He immediately started to prepare all other relevant state agencies for their role in the implementation of trade war in his *'War Book'*.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> **TNA.** ADM 137/818, pp. 9-81; ADM 116/866B, pp.284-299. 'Observation Force in North Sea. Remarks on War Orders for, in connection with lessons of 1912 Manoeuver. Capt G A Ballard D.O.D.; ADM 116/1169. Draft. Criticisms of the 1913 Manoeuvres. Notes from Military Reports on the 1913 Manoeuvres. C.O.S. short memo 20-9-1913 to First Sea Lord and First Lord 'Reports of Military Officers ...'; ADM 116/1214. No. 1266/ H.F. 7 S. Secret of 28-8-1913 "NEPTUNE" at Portsmouth to The Secretary of the Admiralty. 'Remarks on Comments by the Commander-in-Chief on the 1913 Manoeuvres (M. 0045)'. 1472/ H.F. 7 S. Secret of 2-10-1913 "NEPTUNE" at Cromarty to The Secretary of the Admiralty. Brig. Gen. Henderson. 29-8-1913. 'Report on Naval Manoeuvres 1913'; ADM 116/3096. COS Confidential 22-2-1912 to First Sea Lord. Admiralty Secret M0010/1912 Explanatory Memorandum. Memorandum to Accompany War Orders; ADM 116/3130. 'Naval Manoeuvres, 1913. Remarks on North Sea Strategy; ADM 116/3412. War Plans and War Orders. Home Fleets and Detached Squadrons. November 1912 to December 1913, pp.7-26, Admiralty. Secret & Personal N-0020/12 of 25-11-1912 to Admiral Sir George A. Callaghan, GCVO, KCB, H.M.S. NEPTUNE; pp.27-45, 'War Plans M 0020/12'; p. 1 and pp.47-185, 'Secret. War Orders. The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleets, 16-12-1912', 'War Plans. Issue to Home Ports', 19-12-1912, 'War Orders – Admiral of Patrols', 9-1-1913; War Plans. Issue to Commodore (T)' 9-1-1913; 'War Orders – 4<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron' 10-1-1913; 'Memorandum – Defence of Home Ports' 11-2-1913; 'Memorandum of Commander in Chief Home Fleets on disposition of Cruiser Squadrons and Flotillas' 12-2-1913; 'Draft Orders for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Cruiser Squadrons and First Fleet Flotillas – Receipt and return of', 12-2-1918; 'Revised War Plans, Revised pages of War Orders', 18-2-1913; pp. 230-242 and Lord Grey's letter of 11-4-1913; pp. 493-503; Norman Friedman: Network-Centric Warfare, pp. 10-12, 264 (notes 22-23); Nicholas A. Lambert: Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution, pp. 285-286.

***Phase 1913-1914: Churchill's opposition and phased usurpation of the war planning.***

Churchill was always willing to take risks to achieve quick results and expected his enemy to do the same. Like most he expected a short war and saw the necessity for both the Royal Navy and his personal political ambitions that the service was seen to make a highly visible contribution. Thus even if he recognised the effectiveness of trade warfare backed up by the battle fleets, he was emotionally incapable of – and considered it politically unacceptable – just waiting for the results. The trade war strategy should be supplemented by constant aggressive activity that could justify the massive national investment during the previous decade. Aggressive operations would also reduce the risk of enemy operations against the British coast. The staff officers might consider raids with a limited landing operation as militarily unimportant, but he had to see them as a politically intolerable humiliation.



The appointment of Prince Louis of Battenberg as First Sea Lord gave Churchill the chance to seek direct control of Royal Navy operations.  
(staticflickr.com)



As later in his career he quickly mastered the technical details of the service he led, and as Sir Francis Bridgeman resisted Churchill's increasing interference in what the admiral considered the purely professional matters of the navy, Bridgeman was replaced in December 1912 by the far younger Prince Louis of Battenberg, who was even less able or willing to stand-up to the dynamic and forceful First Lord.

Churchill's counteroffensive against the new War Plan, its originator Ballard and his ally Callaghan as well as the new Chief of War Staff, Sir Henry Jackson, started a few weeks after the plan had been issued in December 1912. The First Lord's campaign culminated in late spring and summer 1914 when he replaced all three. In the 1½ years effort he sought inspiration and arguments from younger, traditionally minded naval officers such as his initial Private Naval Secretary, Rear-Admiral David Beatty and the submarine service chief, Commodore Roger Keyes, as well as the older Lewis Bayly and the retired Arthur Wilson and Reginald Custance.

At New Year 1913 Churchill asked Beatty about his opinion about the War Plan. The young admiral found that the plan was passive, defensive. The fleet should be used offensively against the enemy coast. He missed an analysis of German intent. Likely places for enemy landings should be identified. The local defence forces along the British coast should be placed under Callaghan. The possibility of taking a base on the Norwegian coast used to block the Skagerrak should be considered. Three weeks into 1913 Churchill sent the critical comments to Battenberg and Jackson for staffing. At the end of the month Churchill recruited Bayly during a visit to his battlecruiser squadron in Cromarty. Bayly was about to hand over his squadron to Beatty, and he accepted Churchill's challenge to study the possibilities of starting British naval operations in a war by taking a base for destroyer and submarine operations on the German or neutral Dutch, Danish, Norwegian or Swedish coasts.

Churchill's choice of Bayly was logical. The former Naval War College Commandant was known as an extremely aggressive commander, and he had the necessary seniority as a candidate for later fleet command. The admiral was assisted by the Royal Marine specialist in amphibious operations, Brigadier General Sir George Aston, and by the naval officer, Captain Arthur Leveson. However, the impatient First Lord could not wait for the result of Bayly's work, Mid-February he underline that the blockade would only work if aggressive British operations such as blocking the Elbe made the Germans fear the Royal Navy.

In his staffing of the Beatty-Churchill comments to the War Plan, Ballard wrote that Churchill simply failed to understand the limitations of the British destroyer force, and aggressive Admiralty led operations into the German Bight would undermine the delegation of authority to the Callaghan that had been decided after the 1912 manoeuvres. The new Assistant Director, Captain Herbert Richmond, was also involved. He noted that Churchill simply failed to understand the character of fleet operations. The idea to place the local defence forces under Callaghan would be a serious mistake, as it would reduce the fleet freedom of action. However, the Chief of War Staff, Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Jackson's, comments to the First Lord was far more diplomatic than the notes of the two captains. The War Plan would be adjusted, especially for the situation where Britain was allied to France.



The aggressive traditionalist Lewis Bayly contained the move towards a mainly blockading strategy during his time as Naval War College Commandant.  
(From his auto-biography: Pull Together)

On Jackson's request Bayly's initial response to his study mission came mid-March, just only two weeks after he had commenced his work. Taking a forward base would encourage the British public opinion, force the Germans to focus on defence rather than offensives against Britain, and it would be the most certain way forcing the High Seas Fleet to accept battle. In the letter forwarding Bayly's notes to Battenberg and Churchill, Jackson criticised Bayly for being too narrow-minded.

During spring 1913 the War Staff completed the version of the War Plan that covered an alliance with France. Churchill tried to force the Admiralty to see a sudden German invasion of South-East England and other attacks against the British coast linked to a motorised coup against Belgium as a real option. Involving Bayly he had developed the "*Bolt from the Grey*"-scenario that the level-headed Jackson judged to be totally unrealistic.

The five reports from Bayly's study group were ready in late June 1913. The general first report underlined as in March that the main object of taking a forward base remained to lure the German fleet out for destruction, but such an operation would also tie-up enemy forces and create a platform for later naval or landing operations. The group underlined that the operations required the construction

of special landing craft and preparation of the supporting ship artillery. It thereafter listed the possible places for bases on the Dutch North Sea coast, the Swedish and Norwegian Kattegat-Skagerrak coasts and off the Danish Kattegat island Læsø. The two next reports covered the German islands of Borkum and Sylt, the fourth the occupation and use of the Danish port Esbjerg. It would require a defending army force of a reinforced Army Corps. The final report rejected taking Heligoland as unrealistic. After less than two weeks Ballard concluded that the reports proved that all of operations were so risky that dealing with them would be outside the serious preparations for war that otherwise occupied the War Staff. A supplementary report from General Aston in November actually underlined the risk, as it noted that coastal defences on the German islands covering all the chosen landing places was about to be completed.

Ballard was always supported by Jackson, and it must have been clear to Churchill that a change of the War Plan in the direction he wanted required the removal of the stubbornly intellectual captain. The general problem the First Lord had in the Admiralty in late 1913, where his leadership style was close to provoke a collective resignation by the professional board members, may have delayed his reaction, as the focus he had to keep during the winter to handle the naval estimates crisis.

However, it did happen on 1 May 1914, when he was replaced as Director of the Operations Division by Bayly's study group deputy, Arthur Leveson. It was probably one of the "staff questions" that he mentioned in his letter to Battenberg from Madrid on 14 April that he finally had had leisure to consider.<sup>8</sup>

Ballard's departure removed the intellectual backbone of the War Staff that was completed with Jackson's exodus two months later. This destroyed the robust professional resistant framework that Churchill needed all his time as First Lord and later as Defence Minister to counter or guide his dynamic and restless strategic brilliance, self-confidence and will-power.

The D.O.D.'s departure happened quietly. After having been searching for the confrontational issue that led to the replacement in the Admiralty planning files from January-March 1914, it became clear that the most likely reason why the change took place without drama is that Ballard somehow became convinced that he should ask for another posting.

A very likely candidate cause for such a request is Churchill's memorandum from 14 April 1914 where he proposed a dramatic reorganisation of the War Staff in the guise of a comments to the Report from the Slade Committee with proposals for an enhanced training of naval officers to prepare them for staff postings in the Admiralty and on Fleet Flag Ship's staffs.

I shall come back to the substance of Churchill's proposed changes below, but initially it is sufficient to quote the note from 28 April, after Ballard's departure had become clear: "*It is also necessary to show the Treasury that in rearranging the duties of the War Staff full regard has been to economy. The change*

---

<sup>8</sup> Randolph S. Churchill (ed.): Winston S. Churchill. Companion Volume II, Part 3. 1911-1914. (London 1969), pp. 1796-98, Chapter 23, and p. 1975.

*as regards the D.O.D. will make it difficult to argue for the retention of the salary of £1,500 which is not yet approved for Captain Ballard's successor ...*" The Admiralty leaders understood what was proposed was a reduction of the role of the Operations Division.

In order to understand why the First Lord's proposal was likely to have provoked Ballard's departure, it is necessary to understand that during the previous two years he had been the main catalyst, organiser and critic of the development of the operational naval plan against Germany. He had led the organisation of the annual fleet exercises to test operational methods, thereafter conducted the critical analysis of the results and finally implemented the lessons learnt in the drafting of the new War Plan, the War Orders and the mobilisation plans for the fleets – all in a direct and trustful interaction with Callaghan. The fleet exercises had constantly had a key role in the operational concept and plan development.

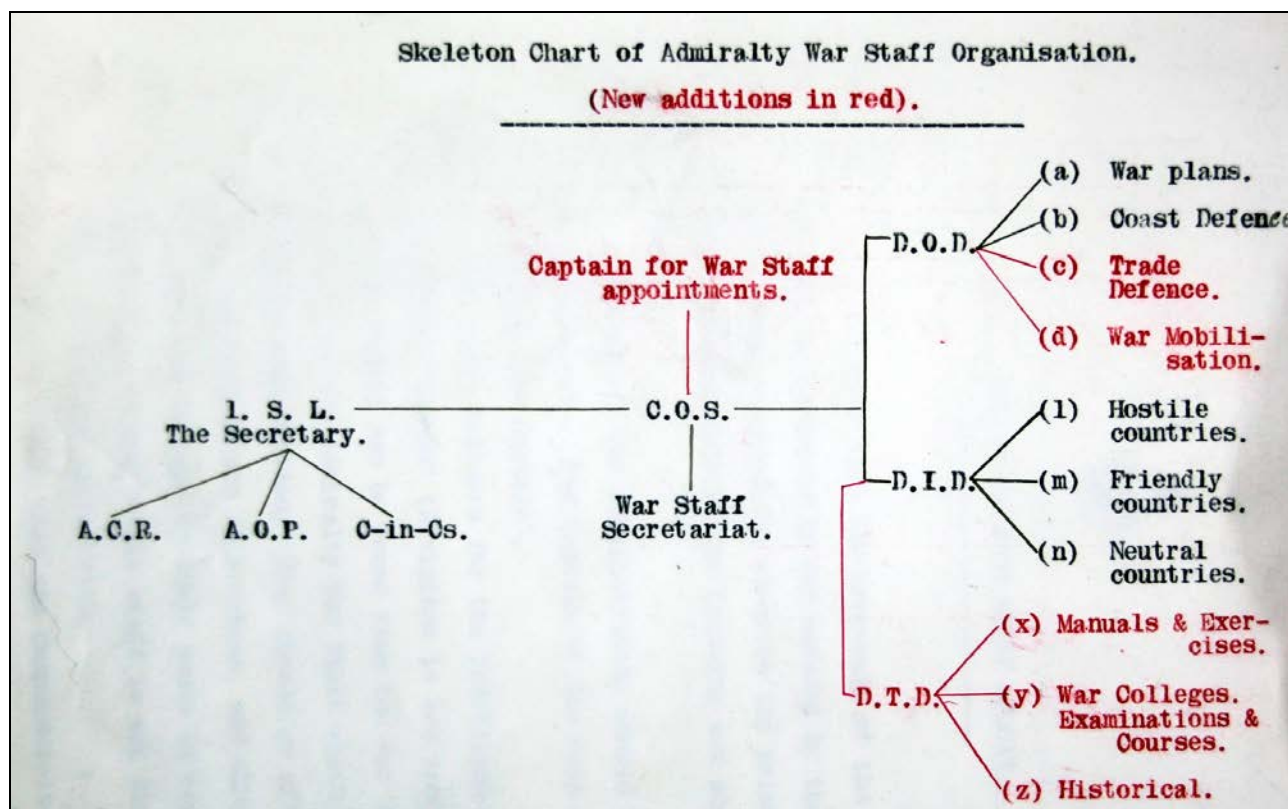
Ballard had filled the conceptual and policy supporting role that mirrored what was expected of the chief of operations department of contemporary General Staffs. Still no flag officer he had done for the navy what Churchill admired Henry Wilson for having done for the British Army.

The First Lord now proposed that the Royal Navy copied the army General Staff Officers corps system, selecting the best through competitive tests and thereafter developing them through an initially 1 years later 1½ years course. To administer the system, a new War Training Division should be established in the Admiralty War Staff.

On the surface the new organisation looked as a reinforcement of the Ballard's division. He would get the Trade Defence Section that everybody knew had to be established. It should be placed here, because according to the memo "*the defence of Trade is essentially an offensive operations against the enemy's armed ships*". The tasks of the new section included the only policy areas remaining with the division, such as all questions related to international law, food supply, arming of merchant ships and direction of trade in war. The tasks of the War Plans Section would be. "*Distribution of the Fleet. Schemes of attack of all kinds. Joint Naval and military action. C.I.D. work. War Room*". No conceptual or policy role here. The Coast Defence Section would have similar tactical and practical defence tasks. The responsibilities of the War Mobilisation Section were limited to "Supervision" and "advice" in relation to manning. It had no directive authority and no role in the preparation of materiel.

However, the decisive reduction of Ballard's role and influence was the result of putting "*Manuals & Exercises*" under the new Director of Training Division. It removed the role in operational and tactical doctrine development as well as the direct interaction between exercises, lessons learning and war plans. It removed the direct and robust "*bridge*" between the D.O.D. and C-in-C Home Fleets that had dominated the development the previous two years and frustrated Churchill's efforts to change the character of the war plans. Now the First Lord would be able to manoeuvre between two directors, especially if the Chief of War Staff would stop being stubborn.

What Churchill outlined for the Admiralty War Staff Operations Division was a dramatic limitation of responsibilities to a development of practical plans for the tactical missions that he with the First Sea Lord saw as relevant. It should just do the type of work that Bayly and Leveson had done in spring 1913. Thereafter the division would be responsible for the implementation, co-ordination and control of actual operations.



The innocently looking chart of Churchill's proposed War Staff organisation.

Ballard's small operational experimentation and improvement centre would be broken-up. From the brain of the Navy that the Operations Division had been since winter 1912 it would be reduced to the spinal cord of a board of Admiralty. No longer responsible for drafting policy it would be left with narrow operational tasks, and off course be staffed accordingly.

The conclusion is that when Ballard saw Churchill's memorandum, probably on Monday 14 April, the day of Churchill's Madrid letter to Battenberg, the D.O.D. realised that his future role would be effectively emasculated, and he asked for a transfer which was granted immediately.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> TNA. ADM 1/8377/118. "War Staff Training of Naval Officers. Memorandum by the First Lord, Mr Winston Churchill, in April 1914. Views on Military Education, with his proposals for development of Admiralty War and Fleet Flagship Staffs, consequent on Report of the Slade Committee". Secret, of 12.4.1914 to the Admiralty Secretary, First Sea Lord (and added with different colour ink) Chief of the War Staff. Here mainly the second part: "2. The development of the Admiralty War Staff", "First Lord's Minute on Development of Admiralty War Staff" of 28-4-1914.

The link between the exercises and the war planning would now rest squarely with the Chief of War Staff. However the quietly competent Henry Jackson would be replaced in couple of months later, and it left only Battenberg to stand-up to Churchill, something that he was totally incapable of doing.

With Leveson as Ballard's formal successor and Sturdee as Jackson's the scene was thus set for the First Lord's effective control of the service. Only the Intelligence Division, the traditional key planning element, might regain influence by the outlined reorganisation. However the intelligence director, Rear-Admiral Henry Oliver, personally occupied the power space left free by the First Lord after Ballard's departure. He became Churchill's Naval Secretary in October 1914 and followed Sturdee as Chief of Staff in November. Oliver repaid Churchill by failing in his job to support Fisher in winter 1915 by a proper staff work prior to the Bosphorus operation.

Oliver had served six months as Ballard's colleague in the War Staff in winter 1913-14. Their relationship was probably not positive. Oliver noticed gleefully Ballard's misfortune when the German battle cruiser raid later in 1915 once more exposed the weakness of the eastern coast local defences that had been so clearly highlighted during the 1912 and 1913 fleet manoeuvres.



The diligent naval bureaucrat, Rear-Admiral Henry Francis Oliver, gained much from Churchill's purge of War Staff leadership in the last months of peace.

Here as acting Vice-Admiral three years later.  
(Imperial War Museum)

It is likely that the Admiralty invitation to another Flag Officer conference sent 29 April 1914 can be seen as Churchill's first use of the new situation. The conference should take place at Spithead during the fleet review, and on Bayly's suggestion it took place on 24 July on the Admiralty Yacht with the First Lord in the chair. The number of Flag Officers attending became 35, and the agenda was so packed with technical issues that a meaningful policy debate was impossible. Callaghan did not know what to expect. He had not yet received response to the points that he had risen in Cromarty in October, and he did not know how the War Plan revision started then would end. As a reaction to the invitation he asked early May for personal information about any changes in the composition of the Home Fleets that was considered.



Ballard's less independent minded replacement, Rear-Admiral Arthur Leveson, who was removed by Fisher before Bosphorus and replaced by the equally limited Captain Thomas Jackson.  
(Imperial War Museum)

Callaghan's request led to a First Sea Lord directive of 11. May to Henry Jackson, then still Chief of Staff, to have the War Orders (not the War Plan) redrafted in light of the October decisions. Battenberg underlined,

*"that it is essential that immediately on the outbreak of the hostilities, the combined force of battleships, battle + other cruisers + flotillas (except those detached for special services ...) should make a forward movement towards the enemy coast, then returning by another route to the area enclosed ..., which should be regarded as the station of the main fleet when not at anchor."*

The main object of this "reconnaissance-in-force" that should be repeated with random intervals was to deter the enemy from sending raiding expeditions towards the British coast. Besides demanding the execution of these massive offensive sweeps, the First Sea Lord instructed the Chief of Staff that the order should give directive for an immediate establishment of the Northern and Dover Patrols. Battenberg had now been reduced to Churchill's mouthpiece. The War Order revision as well as the conclusion of the War Plan adjustment was carried out the same day.

This, however, was not enough for Churchill. On 11 June he directed Battenberg that both Callaghan and Jellicoe should both be asked to prepare supplements to the main war plans. The first should be for "a general drive at the outset of the war... [Plan M]". Apparently the First Lord did not know that it had been ordered already one month earlier. The second was for a close and strongly supported blockade of the German Bight to be established and maintained for at least 4-5 days, including closing the Elbe during that period. This "Plan L" had two versions: without the occupation of a base or with that base as outlined by Bayly. The third was the establishment of a cruiser + flotilla base "in the neighbourhood of Stavanger" to control Skagerrak "Plan T". Battenberg found no need for further information. He instructed Jackson to draft the necessary orders to Callaghan and Jellicoe immediately. Without any staffing, Jackson sent the directive to Callaghan and a copy to Jellicoe four days later together with the new War Plans and War Orders. Callaghan reacted quickly to the full package, giving his comments to both Plans and Orders. The only reference to the requirement supplementary plans was a reference to the neutrality of Norway. On 29 June Jackson asked the Director of the Intelligence Division to supply the information necessary for the planning of an attack on the German islands, suggest which gave the best chance of success and what number of troops would be necessary. The work was apparently never completed.

In July the Admiralty issued the revised War Plans. They kept the shorter and more focused format that Ballard had developed since October 1913, and underlined that they referred to the opening phases of a war with Germany in the North Sea. The main difference was it the "general idea" of the plan, it was now: "primarily to ensure the destruction of the enemy's naval forces and obtain command of the North Sea and Channel with the object of preventing the enemy from making any serious attack upon British territory or trade or interfering with the transport of British troops to France ..."

When Ballard had worked with the plans and orders late 1913 the general idea had still been the Corbett inspired one: "to use our geographical advantage of position to cut off all German shipping from



oceanic trade and to secure the British coasts from any serious military enterprise and incidentally but effectually to cover the transport across the Channel of an Expeditionary Force to France..." At New Year the draft war orders had underlined that the purpose was to exercise economic pressure on Germany by the distant blockade covered "by two Battle Fleets stationed so as to be in a position to bring the enemy's fleet to action should it proceed to sea with the object of driving the (blockading) off or undertaking other aggressive action." However, the Fisher-Wilson legacy of maintaining a radio controlled trap had remained in place. If the enemy fleet sighted by the patrolling cruiser squadrons "or otherwise ascertained" (sighted by submarines or plotted by signals intelligence) "these two battle fleets will be moved or concentrated by direct Admiralty orders". In principle it was up to the C-in-C to decide how "to frustrate the efforts of the enemy" against the blockade lines or the British coast "and for bringing the enemy to battle on a good occasion". If the German Fleet sailed to the northward, the Channel Fleet would probably be moved into the North Sea "with directions either to reinforce your command or cut off the enemy's retreat as the situation requires." If the enemy sailed to the southward, "the converse movements will take place". It was "imperative that the Admiralty should control the strategic situation".

The July 1914 War Plan directed that until the enemy fleet had been destroyed, "the continual movement in the North Sea of a fleet superior in all classes of vessels ... will ... as time passes inflict a steadily increasing degree of injury on German interest and credit". The Admiralty accepted that "wide powers of discretion must remain with the Commander-in-Chief", it would supply him with all available information, but it would keep control the Channel Fleet itself "in readiness to move to meet North Sea emergencies". With the new orders Callaghan was obliged to conduct the continuous sweeps that he and Ballard had come to realise as useless waste of resources.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> TNA. A summary of: Det lille land..., pp. 257-267, 433-448, with a discussion and analysis based on: ADM 137/452, pp. 7-8. M-0180/13 Admiralty, S.W. Secret and Personal of 31-1-1913 to Rear-Admiral Lewis Bayly, CVO, CB, HMS "Lion"; pp.9-15. 'Remarks by Rear Admiral Bayly' 17-3-1913. COS 'Invasion Question. Seizure of Advanced Base' of 17-3-1913 to First Sea Lord; ADM 116/1169. Draft. Criticisms of the 1913 Manoeuvres. Notes from Military Reports on 1913 Manoeuvres. C.O.S. short memo of 20-9-1913 to First Sea Lord and First Lord 'Reports of Military Officers ...'; Memo started with: Admiral Custance's criticism ...; ADM 116/1176C. War Office, Confidential 51/2034 (M.T.2.) of 18-10-1912 to The Secretary, Admiralty. First Sea Lord Secret [Manoeuvres] of 14-4-1913. Admiralty War Staff (O.D.) Confidential. 'Draft of Scheme for 1913 Manoeuvres' of 17-4-1913 to First Sea Lord, First Lord. Admiralty, Secret. M.0666/13 of 21-4-1913 to The Secretary, War Office; ADM 116/1214. No. 1266/ H.F. 7 S. Secret of 28-8-1913 "NEPTUNE" at Portsmouth to The Secretary of the Admiralty. 'Remarks on Comments by the Commander-in-Chief on the 1913 Manoeuvres (M. 0045)'; 1472/ H.F. 7 S. Secret of 2-10-1913 "NEPTUNE" at Cromarty to The Secretary of the Admiralty. Brig. Gen. Henderson. 29-8-1913. 'Report on Naval Manoeuvres 1913'; ADM 116/3130. 'Naval Manoeuvres, 1913. Remarks on North Sea Strategy; ADM 116/3412, War Plans and War Orders. Home Fleets and Detached Squadrons. November 1912 to December 1913, pp. 105-133; p. 1 and pp.147-185, 'Revised War Plans, Revised pages of War Orders', 18-2-1913; Note by 1<sup>st</sup> Lord, pp. 186-213, 17-2-1912. Beatty's memo (undated), 'Secret, My dear Prince Louis.' Cannes 17-2-1913; 'Remarks by D.O.D.' Undated. 'D.O.D. Remarks about 1<sup>st</sup> Lord's paper ... 1<sup>st</sup> Lord's letter of 17-2-1913' Undated A.D.O.D. (Richmond) to Chief of Staff: 'Secret. Remarks on War Plans and on the First Lord's Notes on the Subject. 11-3-1913; pp. 214-230, 'Secret. "Neptune" at BUNCRANA 26-2-1913 til the Secretary of the Admiralty, 'War Plans. Draft orders for the Flag Officer Commanding the Northern Blockading Patrolling Force (10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> C. Squadron) 28-2-1913. Secret & Personal. Admiralty 14-3-1913 to Commander-in Chief H.M. Ships

---

& Vessels, HOME FLEETS; pp. 230-242 and Lord Grey's letter of 11-4-1913; pp.243-492; pp. 493-503; ADM 137/452, pp. 18-163; ADM 137/818, pp. 9-81.; pp. 97-105. (M-0053/13) Secret. War Plans Retyped 15/6/14 as amended, pp. 106-107, Part II. Organisation for War, pp. 111-116. Part V. War Station No. 1 under these Plans, War Stations No. 2 under these plans 'In the event of an Anglo-French Alliance...', plus pp. 117-169 for completion and distribution; pp. 280, 308; ADM 1/8380/150 and ADM 137/1939 about the 24-7-1914 Spithead Conference, and especially ADM 116/3096 War Plans. Home Waters 1911-1914, see: C-in-C, H.F. 0312 Secret of 4-5-1912 to the Admiralty Secretary; (First Sea Lord hand-written) directive to C.O.S. of 11-5-1914 with Leveson's and Jackson's confirmation of the revision from the same day; (Churchill) to First Sea Lord. Secret. War Plans, of 11-6-1914; (Battenberg) directive to C.O.S. of 11-6-1914; Chief of War Staff, Admiralty, Secret & Personal to Admiral Sir George A. Callaghan, G.C.V.O., K.C.B., Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleets of 15-6-1914; The Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleets at Portsmouth, Secret, to the Chief of the War Staff, Admiralty of 23-6-1914; C.O.S. request for information from D.I.D. of 29-6-1914; M-0053. Secret. War Plans (War with Germany), Admiralty, July 1914; **British Library**. The Naval and Military Record: Leading article: 'Notes and Comments', in the issue from 10-1-1912; Issue 31-1-1912 in 'Notes and Comments'; Issue 26-6-1912 for information about the coming fleet manoeuvres and the issue 24-7-1912 for information about the actual exercises; Grimes: Strategy and War Planning, pp. 182-189; Randolph S. Churchill: Winston S. Churchill. Companion Volume II, Part 2, 1907-1911. (London 1969), p. 1367, '*WSC to the King (Telegram)*' 31-12-1911; pp.1724-1736; Nicholas Lambert: Planning Armageddon, pp.53-55, 181; Nicholas A. Lambert: Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution, pp. 285-286; Norman Friedman: Network-Centric Warfare, pp. 10-12, 264 (notes 22-23); W.S. Chalmers: The Life and Letters of David Beatty, Admiral of the Fleet. (London 1951), pp. 108, 120; Nicholas Black: The British Naval Staff in the First World War. (London 2009), p. 72; G. G. Aston: Letters on Amphibious Wars. (London 1911), pp. vii-xiv, 358-360; Randolph S. Churchill: Winston S. Churchill. Young Statesman 1901-1914. (London 1967), pp. 613-627; Hew Strachan: The First World War. Volume 1: To Arms (Oxford 2001), p. 382; James Goldrick: The King's Ships Were at Sea. The War in the North Sea August 1914-February 1915 (Annapolis 1984), pp.15-20.

---



Churchill in 1914-15, after having purged effective critical staff from the Admiralty War Staff.  
(from Asquith: The Genesis of the War)

The removal of Ballard had reduced the War Staff to Churchill's executive front office, and formally, the new text reduced the delegation of authority to the C-in-C from the Admiralty of the 1912 and 1913 version of the War Plans, and it asked the Home Fleet's to make the First Lord and traditional minded naval officers happy by burning coal and oil in regular sweeps of the North Sea. However, even the removal of Ballard, Jackson and Callaghan and the text changes of the War Plans could not force the C-in-C successor, Jellicoe, to take risk that he thought unacceptable. The body of strategic ideas developed and matured since early 1912 controlled Royal Navy surface operations in the North Sea until Beatty became Commander-in-Chief at the end of 1916 and increased the number of aggressive sweeps.

Fortunately for all involved, the increasing number of patrol submarines meant that forward presence sought by Churchill could be achieved in a less costly fashion than previously, led from the bridge of a destroyer by Roger Keyes, the First Sea Lord's new adoptee.

Jellicoe's attitude and stubbornness meant that Churchill had to seek avenues for his craving for action outside the C-in-C's area of responsibility: at Antwerp and the Dardanelles. Both were the strokes of a daring strategic genius, failing because of a hopeless lack of proper professional staffing, co-ordination and outside support – it was Churchill's main weakness that was to be repeated in 1919 in the intervention in the Russian Civil War, in 1940 in Norway and in 1941 in Greece.

One might wonder if it was a coincidence that Ballard was moved to the post as *'Admiral of Patrols'* with responsibility for local defence of the ports and coast that ran the direct risks related to German raids. The German battle cruiser raids next year cost the brilliant source of the Royal Navy strategic thinking for more than twenty years his further career.

The risk to Danish and Swedish neutrality would have been significant if Jellicoe had been a more traditional, risk-willing Royal Navy admiral. Then he would have been open to ideas like those of the two years older Bayly, ideas that Churchill now sought to sell to the cabinet. As it was, the first surface operations close to Danish and Swedish territory only took place late 1917, after Beatty had taken over as Home Fleets C-in-C. The German Navy was therefore left without any pretext to ask for operations against Denmark had had to fight the war with only one main approach to North Sea.

\*\*\*

In the spring 1914 German Admiralty Staff war game, the British party played very much as foreseen by Ballard's War Plan. After the destruction of the High Seas Fleet in the first game, the input was changed for a similar second game to improve the German chances. In spite of the advantage that German fleet was given, it was destroyed again. Now wonder that the staff under the capable leadership of Hugo von Pohl kept the High Seas Fleet in tight reigns during the first months of the war.