

Research guide B11: The Royal Navy: First World War

This guide explains how to use the facilities of the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum (NMM) to research the personnel, vessels and operations of the Royal Navy and its auxiliary forces in 1914-1918. The Caird Library provides access to a wide range of archive material, publications and electronic resources useful to research on the Royal Navy.

Information on visiting the Caird Library, links to the Archive and Library catalogues, guidance on how to register and order items for viewing or copying, etc., can be found here on the Royal Museums Greenwich website: rmg.co.uk/researchers/library



Gunnery exercises on the torpedo boat destroyer HMS *Laforey*, 1915-1916 (NMM negative [N24224](#))

Please note that the principal Admiralty records from the First World War are held by The National Archives (TNA) at Kew. This includes the service records of individuals who served in the Royal Navy up to the mid-1920s, and official records of wartime events, such as log books of warships. Where relevant, this guide provides references to the important records held at TNA and elsewhere, particularly those that can be searched and viewed online. In the Caird Library reading room there is free access to most of the records that can be searched and viewed online via the TNA, Ancestry and Findmypast websites.

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1. Researching individuals

1.1 Ratings and petty officers

Royal Navy ratings were organized according to their tasks and competence, and usually formed the main body of a warship's crew. A rating's official number had an alphabetical prefix indicating the branch of the service the individual was employed in, such as communications, stokers and sick berth staff. In the rank structure, petty officers and chief petty officers were above leading ratings, but below commissioned and warrant officers.

Service records for ratings who served in the First World War are mainly held at TNA. The original records are in the form of registers of seamen's services 1873-1923 (ADM 188 series) and can be searched using the Discovery catalogue on the TNA website. For each individual they usually provide date and place of birth, service number, physical characteristics, type of engagement, a list of appointments with dates, and notes on character, awards, how discharged, etc.

The Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton in Somerset holds engagement ledgers for ratings of most branches who enlisted circa 1888-1923. A guide to service records held in the archive at Yeovilton can be found on the FAAM website: fleetairarm.com

1.2 Commissioned and warrant officers

Royal Navy officers from the rank of sub-lieutenant upwards were appointed by royal commission, usually following training as a cadet and midshipman. Warrant officers were appointed by warrant from various administrative bodies connected with their specialized duties, and came after commissioned officers in the rank structure.

Service records of commissioned officers who entered the Royal Navy in 1756-1917 are in the ADM 196 series at TNA. Warrant officers joining up to 1931 are also featured. The records can be searched and viewed online using the Discovery catalogue on the TNA website. For each officer they usually provide date and place of birth, details of family, a list of postings and promotions with dates, notes on abilities and performance written by senior officers, details of awards, how discharged, etc.

Details of the careers of commissioned officers in the Royal Navy c.1880-1950s (including those in the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and the Women's Royal Naval Service) can also be found in the series of files and service record cards numbered ADM 340. Electronic images of ADM 340/1-150 can be viewed online using the Discovery catalogue. Duplicated and additional information on many of the male officers whose records appear in the ADM 340 series can be found among earlier books and registers, such as ADM 240. The two earlier series ADM 318 and 321 contain service records of officers in the Women's Royal Naval Service during the First World War.

Service records of commissioned officers who entered the Royal Navy after May 1917 have not yet been released by the Ministry of Defence (MOD), but next-of-kin can gain access to them. See the information on requests for personal data and service records on the Government website gov.uk.

The Caird Library holds a complete run of Navy Lists which list Royal Navy officers alphabetically by name and also by seniority. As well as being useful for tracing the careers of officers, they contain details of training establishments, naval hospitals and dockyards, dress regulations, entry and examination procedures, rates of pay, pensions, medals and prizes, etc.

• **The Navy List** was compiled and published by the Admiralty. During the First World War the confidential edition (for official use only) provided details for all vessels and establishments, listing the current officers engaged. The Ancestry website has a facility for searching for names in the issues from 1888-1970.

• **Lean's Royal Navy List** includes short biographies of active and retired officers, and service summaries for ships. The final editions in 1917 were supplements providing details of service in wartime, a diary of events and Admiral Sir John R. Jellicoe's despatch on the Battle of Jutland.

Unfortunately, no such regular publications exist for other ranks in the Royal Navy.

<p>HAN. (Po.) Cruiser. <i>I.H.P. 30,000 N.D.</i> <i>16-6 inch, 12-12 pr.,</i> <i>8-3 pr.</i> <i>Chatham.</i> <i>Commissioned for service in the</i> <i>South, as Tender to 'Glory.'</i> <i>After R. G. Petre — June 14</i> <i>Bert J. A. Throck-</i> <i>orton18 May 14</i> <i>John E. Vibert12 Jan 12</i> <i>George B. Chainey.....28 Jan 13</i> <i>Mary J. Hall (act) ...22 Dec 13</i> <i>William Howes..... 6 Mar 14</i> <i>(in 'Pembroke')</i></p> <p>TY. (Ch.) Torpedo- Destroyer. <i>H.P. (24 500 F.D.)</i> <i>8-3-4 inch.</i> <i>Destroyer Flotilla.</i></p>	<p>284 LION. (Dev.) Battle Cruiser. <i>26,350 Tons. H.P. 70,000 N.D.</i> <i>Guns—8-13.5 inch, 16-4 inch, 4-3 pr.</i> <i>Flag Ship of Rear-Admiral Commanding the</i> <i>First Battle-Cruiser Squadron.</i> <i>Rear-Admiral...David Beatty, CB,</i> <i>MVO, DSO..... 1 Mar 13</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Personal Staff.</i></p> <p><i>SecretaryFrank T. Spickernell 1 Mar 13</i> <i>Flag Lieut. Ralph F. Seymour ... 1 Mar 13</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>For general Staff Duties.</i></p> <p><i>CommanderThe Hon. Reginald</i> <i>A. R. Plunkett24 Feb 13</i> <i>(For War Staff Duties.)</i> <i>Eng. Capt.Frank R. Stuttaford 31 Jan 13</i> <i>(Accommodated in 'Queen Mary.')</i> <i>Lieut. R.M.A....Harold M. Franks..... 4 June 12</i> <i>(18 Nov 11)</i></p>
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A page from *The Navy List* providing details of the officers serving on HMS *Lion* in 1914.

1.3 Individuals in the auxiliary forces

Guidance on the service records of personnel in the auxiliary forces of the Royal Navy are given in the relevant sections below. The bulk of these records are at TNA. However, the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton (mentioned above) holds some service records of ratings and officers in the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, Royal Naval Division and Royal Marines.

The careers of officers in most of these auxiliary forces can be traced using Navy Lists (see above). For example, the issues provide lists of RNR and RNVR officers arranged by seniority and alphabetically by name, as well as details of their engagements on warships, commissioned merchant vessels and auxiliary small craft.

Royal Naval Reserve (RNR)

The Royal Naval Reserve was formed of merchant seamen and fishermen. Researching an individual in the RNR will therefore often involve looking at some of the sources mentioned in our research guide on the Mercantile Marine during the First World War.

The Discovery catalogue on the TNA website provides online access to records of RNR ratings from 1908-1955 in the Board of Trade series BT 377 and some service record cards and files of RNR officers in the Admiralty series ADM 340. The BT 377 series for RNR ratings is arranged by service number, so when visiting TNA to view the records on microfiche, it is usually necessary to consult the alphabetical indexes first.

The service records of RNR officers who served in 1862-1920 are in the ADM 240 series, arranged by rank and date of commission. They show details of both merchant and naval service. An alphabetical index for the First World War period can be found in ADM 240/84-88.

The Royal Naval Reserve Trawler Section was a separate section of the RNR that deployed a fleet of trawlers as minesweepers and patrol vessels in coastal waters. Service records of ratings who served in the RNR (T) are included in the ADM 377 series.

Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR)

The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve was formed of individuals who were not seafarers in civilian life, but who undertook naval training and volunteered to serve ashore or afloat.

Service records for the RNVR in the First World War can be searched and viewed online using the Discovery catalogue on the TNA website. The original records in ADM 337 consist of service records of ratings who joined the RNVR in 1903-1919, and officers who joined in 1914-1922. Service records of some RNVR officers are in the ADM 340 series, also accessible online.

The research guide on RNVR records on the TNA website provides a table of the distinguishing letters used for divisional service numbers.

Royal Naval Division (RND)

The Royal Naval Division was raised by the Admiralty in 1914 from various branches of the Royal Navy and formed part of the land forces on the Western Front and at Gallipoli. In 1916 a shortfall in troops was filled by Army units and the RND came formally under War Office authority.

The surviving service records of ratings and officers in the RND during the First World War can be searched and viewed online using the Discovery catalogue on the TNA website. The original records are in the ADM 339 series held at TNA. Some records of RND officers are kept in the Admiralty series ADM 337 and ADM 196, also the War Office series WO 339 and WO 374.

Royal Marines (RM)

During the First World War there were two branches of marines in the Royal Navy, the Royal Marine Artillery (RMA) and Royal Marine Light Infantry (RMLI). Detachments of these forces manned some of the gun turrets on large warships such as battleships and cruisers. They also took part in operations on land, including those on the Western Front and at Gallipoli, and led the raid on Zeebrugge in April 1918. The RMA and RMLI were amalgamated into a single Corps in 1923.

Service records of non-commissioned marine ranks 1842-1925 are in the ADM 159 series at TNA. These can be searched and viewed online using the Discovery catalogue. Attestation forms and description books covering the First World War period are in ADM 157 and ADM 158 at TNA. Service records of marine officers commissioned in 1793-1925 are included in the ADM 196 series and can be viewed online, see above. Name indexes to all the records mentioned here can be found in ADM 313.

The Royal Marine Medal Roll for 1914-1920 can be searched on the Findmypast website. This database provides a complete listing of all the individuals who served in the Corps during the First World War and has service details for a large number of them.

Selected births, marriages and deaths for marines who served in the Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth Divisions are in ADM 183, ADM 184 and ADM 185 at TNA.

Some guidance for research on individuals in the Royal Marines can be found on the Royal Marines Museum website: royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk

Copies of the following publications are held in the Caird Library collection:

- *My Ancestor was a Royal Marine* by Ken Divall, Society of Genealogists Enterprises Ltd, 2008.
- *Record of Royal Marines* (PRO Readers' Guide No 10) by Garth Thomas, PRO Publications, 1994.
- *Tracing Your Royal Marine Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* by Richard Brooks and Matthew Little, Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2008.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) and Mercantile Fleet Auxiliary (MFA)

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) provides logistical support to the Royal Navy and during the First World War its vessels were mainly oil tankers. The crews were formed of civilian seafarers, though many officers were given temporary RNR/RNVR commissions in wartime. The Merchant Fleet Auxiliary (MFA) was a fleet of vessels chartered for the carrying of stores, but left under the management of commercial shipping companies.

RFA and MFA vessels had civilian crews, so some information on tracing these individuals can be found in our research guide on the Mercantile Marine in the First World War. Crew agreements for RFA and MFA vessels can sometimes be found in the Board of Trade collections at the NMM, TNA, and the Maritime History Archive (MHA) in Newfoundland: mun.ca/mha/

(120 men) U.S. R.M. 1008
 12th Regt. Royal Marines
 This agreement is to be executed in twenty pages.
 [Executed in Twenty pages.]

AGREEMENT AND ACCOUNT OF CREW.

FOREIGN-GOING SHIP.

The term "Foreign-going Ship" means every Ship employed in trading or going between some place or places in the United Kingdom and some place or places situate beyond the Coasts of the United Kingdom, the Islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Sark, Alderney, and Man and the Continent of Europe, between the River Elbe and Brest inclusive.

Any Erasure, Interlineation, or Alteration in this Agreement will be void unless made with the consent of the persons interested, and attested by some Superintendent of a Mercantile Marine Office, or Consular or Colonial Officer.

Name of Ship.	Official No.	Port of Registry.	Port No. and Date of Register.	Registered Tonnage.		Nominal Horse Power of Engines (if any).
				Gross.	Net.	
R. F. A. PETROLEUM.	118493.	LONDON	163 in 1912.	4686	2855	450.
REGISTERED MANAGING OWNER OR MANAGER.			No. of Seamen for whom accommodation is certified.		FOR PARTICULARS AS TO LOAD LINE, SEE PAGE 3.	
Name.		Address. (State No. of House, Street and Town.)				
LORDS OF THE ADMIRALTY		LONDON.		46.		

The Several Persons whose names are hereto subscribed, and whose descriptions are contained herein, and of whom FOURTEEN are engaged as Sailors, hereby agree to serve on board the said Ship, in the several capacities expressed against their respective Names, on a voyage from Sheerness to Constantinople and for any ports or places within the limits of 75 degrees north latitude and 60 degrees south latitude trading in the Coasting Home, or Foreign trades until 31st December 1914 next or first arrival at a Port of discharge in the United Kingdom after that date or discharge of cargo consequent upon such arrival.

And it is also agreed, that
 The Officers and Crew shall provide themselves with Uniforms as approved by the Admiralty at their own expense.

(b.) Should any of the crew fail to join at the time specified, the Master may ship substitutes at once.

(c.) Seamen and firemen shall keep their respective forecables, water closets and wash places clean during the voyage, and shall leave them so at the termination of the voyage, under a penalty of five shillings for each case of neglect.

(d.) The seamen and firemen shall mutually assist each other in the general duties of the ship.

45 hands

A crew agreement for the RFA tanker *Petroleum* Official No 118493 (NMM collection RSS/CL).

The Fleet Air Arm Museum holds some crew books for RFA and MFA vessels circa 1915-1920. These contain alphabetical indexes of vessels, crew lists, rates of pay and next-of-kin details.

Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS)

There were some 5,500 women in the Women's Royal Naval Service during 1917-1919. They served in a variety of shore jobs at home and overseas, enabling more men to be released for active sea service.

Details of WRNS can be found in the series ADM 318 (officers) and ADM 336 (other ranks) at TNA. These records can be searched and viewed online using the Discovery catalogue. Online searches can also be made of the registers of appointments (ADM 321 series) and service record cards and files (ADM 340 series), providing details of appointments, promotions and resignations.

Some papers of Dame Katharine Furse (1875-1952), the first Director of the WRNS, are included in the NMM collection of archive material from the training establishment HMS Dauntless in Berkshire. See the items numbered with the prefix DAU in the Archive Catalogue. Many of these papers relate to her role as Commandant-in-Chief, Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) in 1914-1917.

Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS)

The majority of women who volunteered for service as naval nurses in Britain during the First World War joined the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service. They often had previous experience of nursing gained in civilian hospitals, with VAD units of the British Red Cross or in the St John Ambulance Brigade.

The service records of QARNNS nurses in the period 1884-1928 are among the records of medical staff in the ADM 104 series at TNA and can be accessed online using the Discovery catalogue. A list of the nursing sisters featured in these records can be found on the Scarlet Finders website dedicated to British military nurses: scarletfinders.co.uk

Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS)

The title Royal Naval Air Service only existed during the First World War. It was formed in July 1914 when the naval wing of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) came under Admiralty control. It merged with the RFC and became the Royal Air Force (RAF) in April 1918.

Records of RNAS ratings are included in the Registers of Seamen's Services 1873-1923 (ADM 188 series) at TNA. These can be searched and viewed online, as discussed above. RNAS ratings had service numbers with an F prefix. Those RNAS ratings who transferred to the RAF should be represented in AIR 79 series held at TNA. These RAF service records can also be searched and viewed online using the Discovery catalogue. An index to the relevant names and service numbers is in AIR 78.

Registers of service for officers in the RNAS are in the ADM 273 series at TNA. Many of these individuals served in the Royal Navy prior to the formation of the RNAS and details of this previous service can be found in the ADM 96 series, see above. Details of any subsequent service as an officer in the RAF in 1918-1919 will be found in the AIR 76 series. All the records mentioned in this paragraph can be accessed online using the Discovery catalogue.

Engagement ledgers for some RNAS personnel are held by the Fleet Air Arm Museum. As mentioned previously, a guide to service records held in the archive at Yeovilton can be found on the FAAM website: fleetairarm.com

Some records of RNAS pilots who trained at civilian flying schools and held Royal Aero Club certificates are held by the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon: rafmuseum.org.uk/

The following books in the Caird Library collection cover the history of the Royal Naval Air Service:

- *The RFC/RNAS Handbook 1914-18* by Peter G. Cooksley, Sutton Publishing Ltd, Stroud, 2000.
- *Royal Naval Air Service 1912-1918* by Brad King, Hikoki Publications, Aldershot, 1997.
- *Royal Navy Aircraft Serials and Units 1911-1919* by Ray Sturtivant and Gordon Page, Air-Britain (Historians) Ltd, Tonbridge, 1992.

1.4 Medals and other awards

Some sources of information on medals awarded to Royal Navy personnel are listed in [Research Guide U2: Maritime Medals: Sources of information](#).

Details of the campaign, long service and gallantry medals awarded to particular individuals can be found within the Royal Navy medal rolls 1793-1972 (ADM 171 series) held at TNA. Some records within this series can be searched and viewed on the Ancestry website. Digital microfilm copies are also available to browse and download from the Discovery catalogue on the TNA website. The campaign medals awarded to Royal Navy personnel who served in the First World War included the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal, see the examples shown below.

Details of Army gallantry medals awarded to individuals who served in the Royal Naval Division can be found in the War Office series WO 372 at TNA.



Distinguished Service Medal, 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal, and Long Service and Good Conduct Medal awarded to Able Seaman Robert John Squires (NMM collection MED2592-95).

Notices of honours and promotions, citations for some gallantry awards, etc. were normally published in *The London Gazette*. The notices relating to a particular individual can be found using the search and filter facilities on The Gazette website: thegazette.co.uk

The Caird Library has a good selection of books on medals of the First World War, often listing recipients, for example the following:

- *British Campaign Medals of the First World War* by Peter Duckers, Shire Publications Ltd, Oxford, 2011.
- *The Distinguished Service Medal* compiled and edited by W.H. Fevyer, J.B. Hayward & Son, Polstead, 1982.
- *Honours and Awards: Army, Navy and Air Force, 1914-1920*, J.B. Hayward & Son, London, 1979.
- *The 1914 Star to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines* by W.H. Fevyer and J.W. Wilson, Naval & Military Press, London, 1995.
- *VCs of the First World War: The Naval VCs* by Stephen Snelling, Sutton Publishing Ltd, Stroud, 2002.

An online medal roll for the Royal Navy in the First World War is under preparation on the Naval-History.Net website: naval-history.net

1.5 Naval hospitals and medical staff

Monthly musters of patients in naval hospitals and hospital ships, together with pay lists and accounts for staff, etc. can be found in the ADM 102 series at TNA. Other records of hospitals and medical staff can be found in ADM 104 and ADM 105. Some records of the Royal Naval Hospital at Haslar near Portsmouth are held at TNA. Some records of the Royal Naval Hospital at East Stonehouse near Plymouth are held by Plymouth and West Devon Record Office.

The service records of male medical officers and sick berth ratings employed in Royal Navy warships, hospital ships and shore establishments can be found amongst those of officers and ratings, as discussed above. A selection of journals kept by medical officers during the First World War is in the office of the Director General of the Medical Department of the Navy series ADM 101 at TNA. These are arranged by vessel or unit name.

1.6 Deaths and commemoration

The Caird Library has copies of the following published sources of information on Royal Navy personnel killed during the First World War:

- *The Cross of Sacrifice* (Volumes II, III and IV) by S.D. and D.B. Jarvis, The Naval & Military Press Ltd, Uckfield, 2000.
- *The Navy List* between October 1914 and July 1915 includes lists of officers and other ranks killed in action.
- *The Royal Naval Division Roll of Honour*, Department of Printed Books, Imperial War Museum, London, 1996.
- *Royal Navy Roll of Honour World War 1 1914-1918* (Parts 1 and 2) by Don Kindell, published by Naval-History.Net, Penarth, 2009. Part 1 is arranged alphabetically by name and Part 2 has the information arranged by date and ship/unit.
- *With Full and Grateful Hearts: A Register of Royal Marines Deaths 1914-19* by Captain J.A. Good, Royal Marines Historical Society, 1991.

The following online resources can be used for researching casualties:

- The casualty lists compiled by Don Kindell (as mentioned above), see Royal & Dominion Navy Casualties, 1914-1918 on the Naval-History.Net website.

- Some 45,000 personnel of the Royal Navy killed in action during the First World War are represented on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) website: cwgc.org
- A roll of honour for the RND 1914-1924 drawn from The Jack Clegg Memorial Database of Royal Naval Division Casualties of The Great War can be searched on the Ancestry website.

H.M.S. "Brilliant, 29th October, 1914.			
Muller, John William	...	...	Able Seaman
H.M.S. "Vestal," 30th October, 1914.			
Luxon, James	...	...	Able Seaman (R.N.R.)... ..
H.M.S. "Hermes," sunk 31st October, 1914.			
Collier, Tom Donald	...	...	Air Mechanic, 1st Grade
Greenland, George Edward	...	...	Able Seaman (R.F.R. B. 150)
Harrison, Samuel	...	...	Private, R.M.L.I. (R.F.R. B. 1110)... ..
Crodden, Alfred James	...	...	Petty Officer, 2nd Class
Darvill, A.	...	...	Private, R.M.L.I. (R.F.R. B. 1844)... ..
Dodds, John Dickenson	...	...	Chief Armourer
Ferguson, Alexander	...	...	Telegraphist, Air Service
Freeman, Alfred Wm.	...	...	Stoker, 1st Class... ..
Irvin, Ernest Sydney	...	...	do. (R.F.R. B. 8095)
Jeffers, Claude Herbert	...	...	Leading Seaman (R.F.R. 9211)
Littlefield, A. W.	...	...	Private, R.M.L.I. (R.F.R. B. 460)
MacInnes, Norman	...	...	Seaman, R.N.R.
McLeod, Donald	...	...	Seaman, R.N.R.... ..
Nash, Henry Charles	...	...	Stoker, (R.F.R. B. 1718)
Phipps, Thomas	...	...	Stoker, 1st Class

A page from *The Navy List* providing details of individuals killed in action during October 1914.

The CWGC database is particularly useful for finding the locations of graves and commemoration sites. A great many of the Royal Navy casualties were lost at sea and have no known graves, but the CWGC database provides details of the relevant panels on the naval memorials at Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth. The filters available in an advanced search make it possible to find details of the deaths relating to a particular action, such as the loss of a warship.

A card index of naval officers killed in 1914-1920 among the Admiralty records at TNA (reference ADM 242/1-5) can be searched on the Ancestry website. This includes some officers of the Royal Marines and Royal Naval Reserve, and of the Canadian and Australian navies. The other parts of ADM 242 at TNA comprise a card index of ships lost, a war graves roll, and statistical casualty books from the same period.

Registers of killed and wounded from the First World War can be found in ADM 104/145-149 at TNA.

1.7 Personal papers, journals and albums

A broad survey of original material relating to the Royal Navy in the First World War would recognize that the Manuscripts collection at the NMM is particularly strong in personal papers and journals. These collections include the papers of some distinguished commanding officers, journalists, naval historians and medal recipients from the period. They also encompass eye-witness accounts of major naval actions, as well as evidence of the more routine experiences of men and women serving in the Royal Navy in wartime. In some cases, the events are recorded in visual form by scrapbooks or photograph albums.

to and intercepted by the Vice Admiral Commanding 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron on the 28th instant, your attention is called to the omission of any mention of your course and speed when giving your position, and I cannot impress on you too strongly the extreme importance of giving this information whenever reporting a position.

9.10 a.m. Received report from "LURCHER", 2 enemy Cruisers 28 August. N.W., "LURCHER'S" position 55.10N., 6.48 E., course and speed not stated.

9.41 a.m. Received signal "LURCHER" to "INVINCIBLE" - "Am being chased by 4 Light Cruisers, and am leading them in your direction"; no position, course, or speed. On enquiring from "INVINCIBLE" as to where this position was likely to be, received reply Lat. 54.30 N., Long. 4.50 E.

(sd). J. R. Jellicoe.

Beatty papers relating to the Battle of Heligoland Bight in 1914 (NMM collection [BTY/3/1](#)).

At Sea May 31st kept submarine look outs placed all the night, as it was quite light and Hun Submarines had been reported to have attacked ships lately. Inspected General Quarters and was going to do Control during dog watch. About 3pm report came the "Loud telegraph" heard. Action sounded & we sent out all the gas, eyewash, anti gas helmets & after seeing captain went into top, Steel's cousin came with me. Report came, Battle Cruisers engaging enemy's Battle Cruisers, followed by 5th B.S. Engaging also. Then signal that enemy's cruisers were falling back on High Sea Fleet. Loaded up & all ready; but a curved mist began to come down. About 5pm, heavy firing long on & shortly after fleet deployed & came into action. Very misty & a lot of alterations.

A description of the Battle of Jutland in 1916 from the diary of Commander Edward O.B.S. Osborne on the battleship HMS Conqueror (NMM collection [MSS/77/078](#)).

2. Researching naval vessels, units and operations

2.1 Key sources

Copies of the following official histories are held by the Caird Library:

- *Britain's Sea Soldiers: A Record of the Royal Marines during the War 1914-1919* compiled by General Sir H.E. Blumberg, Swiss & Co, Devonport, 1927.
- *History of the Great War based on Official Documents: Naval Operations* (5 volumes) by Sir Julian S. Corbett and Henry Newbolt, Longmans, 1920-31.
- *Naval Staff Monographs (Historical)*, Admiralty, 1920-27.
- *The Royal Naval Division* by Douglas Jerrold, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1923.

A collection of documents forming material for the official history by Corbett and Newbolt can be found in the ADM 137 series at TNA. This is arranged in three sections of papers from the Admiralty Secretariat, from commands and stations, and from Naval Staff. Some other material has been added, including war diaries of the Royal Naval Division, and papers of the Naval Intelligence Division and the Allied Naval Council.

The following books covering naval actions of the First World War are also recommended:

- *Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany, and the Winning of the Great War at Sea* by Robert K. Massie, Jonathan Cape, London, 2004.
- *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904-1919* (5 volumes) by Arthur J. Marder, Oxford University Press, London, 1961.
- *The Imperial War Museum Book of the War at Sea 1914-1918* by Julian Thompson, Sidgwick & Jackson, 2005.

The Caird Library holds key sources to help with research on Royal Navy vessels. See [Research Guide B7: The Royal Navy: Ship records](#) for some general guidance. The following books are particularly useful for the First World War period:

- *British Warships 1914-1919* by F.J. Dittmar and J.J. Colledge, Ian Allan Ltd, London, 1972.
- *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1906-1921*, Conway Maritime Press Ltd, London, 1985.
- *The Grand Fleet: Warship Design and Development 1906-1922* by David K. Brown, Caxton Editions, London, 2003.

With regard to merchant vessels commissioned or chartered by the Government, please see our research guide on the Mercantile Marine in the First World War.

2.2 Warship design and shipbuilding

The Ship Plans collection at the NMM includes the following:

- Admiralty design plans for many British warships active during the First World War.
- Technical records relating to specific warship types including Admiralty ship covers (ADM 138 series) and Department of the Director of Naval Construction (DNC) workbooks.
- Archive material from commercial shipbuilding companies that built vessels for the Admiralty during the First World War, including for example, John I. Thornycroft & Co Ltd at Woolston, Vickers-Armstrongs Ltd at Barrow and J. Samuel White & Co Ltd at Cowes.

See the relevant page on our website: rmg.co.uk/researchers/collections/by-type/ship-plans

Please note that we are unable to provide access to the Historic Photographs and Ship Plans collections at the Caird Library. Applications to view items in these collections should be made in writing and sent by e-mail to plansandphotos@rmg.co.uk.

2.3 Warship histories and log books

The following two resources in the Caird Library can provide information the service histories of particular warships during the First World War:

- ***Twentieth Century Warships Service Histories*** are photocopies of an unpublished typescript compiled by the Naval Historical Branch, giving service summaries for vessels. The length of entries varies considerably and the coverage is not comprehensive.
- ***Warship Histories*** were compiled by NMM staff and cover all British warships, c.1650–1950. They outline the careers of vessels and provide names of officers in command. The information can be viewed on microfiche in the reading room.

Most of the surviving logs of Royal Navy vessels during the First World War are in the ADM 53 series at TNA. Submarine logs are in ADM 73. These have daily entries made by the officer of the watch, usually recording the position and movements of the ship, weather, other vessels sighted, ship routines, details of visitors, members of crew joined or discharged, etc. For more information see the research guide on Royal Navy operations in the First World War on the TNA website.

The official log book entries of some twentieth century warships (and merchant vessels used by the Admiralty) have been transcribed for the Old Weather Project and can be viewed on the Naval-History.Net website.

2.4 Vessels sunk by enemy action or marine causes

The Caird Library has copies of the following publications on warship losses:

- *The Admiralty Regrets: British Warship Losses of the 20th Century* by Paul Kemp, Sutton Publishing Ltd, Stroud, 1999.
- *British Warship Losses in the Ironclad Era 1860-1919* by David Hepper, Chatham Publishing, London, 2006.
- *Navy Losses* issued by HMSO in August 1919. This House of Commons paper was later combined with *Merchant Shipping (Losses)* and reprinted as *British Vessels Lost at Sea 1914–1918*, published by Patrick Stephens Ltd, 1977. It was never revised, so has some errors and omissions.

Details of courts martial and investigations into warship losses can be found among the records used for the official history of the First World War in the ADM 137 series, see above.

2.5 Unit war diaries

Some war diaries for the Royal Marines in the First World War are in the ADM 137 series at TNA.

Unit war diaries for the Royal Naval Division are in the War Office series WO 95/3118-9 and can be viewed online using the Discovery catalogue. Other RND records at TNA include war diaries and operational orders in WO 95/4290-1 and ADM 137/3063-3088d.

3. Bibliography

The following books provide useful guidance for research on individuals in the Royal Navy and relevant records held at TNA:

- *A Guide to The Naval Records in the National Archives of the UK* edited by Randolph Cock and N.A.M. Rodger, Institute of Historical Research at the University of London in conjunction with The National Archives, 2008.
- *Tracing Your Ancestors in the National Archives: The Website and Beyond* (7th revised edition) by Amanda Bevan, The National Archives, 2006.
- *Tracing Your Naval Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* by Simon Fowler, Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2011.
- *Tracing Your Naval Ancestors* by Bruno Pappalardo, Public Record Office, 2003.

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