

Jutland 2018 After Action Report

By Stuart Machin and David Manley

Photographs by Stuart Machin, David Manley and Mark Day

On 14 April, the battle of Jutland was refought at the Berkeley Vale club in Slimbridge. This was organised by Stuart Machin. Stuart and David Manley have been working on a WW1 set of fast play rules for a while now, drawing on David's "Jutland in a Day" project, his pre-dreadnought "Broadside and Salvo" rules and the extensive work that Stuart put in to organising the NWS Jutland game at the NMRN on the battle's centenary.

Before the game itself, a preliminary mini-campaign was run with Jellicoe (Richard Gent), Beatty (Keith McGlynn), Hipper (David Nicholas) and Scheer (Mark Day) manoeuvring their forces within the broad command intent and information available to them at the time.

Compared to history, the Germans deployed closer together and some distance East of their historical position. They had sent two scouting units further to the West and (wisely) left the pre-dreadnoughts behind at Horns Reef. Beatty and Jellicoe arrived at their historical positions on time and without being spotted by the U boats waiting for them. They then prepared to move South for a sweep towards Horn Reef with the 3 BCS on the left flank of the Grand Fleet and the Battlecruiser fleet ahead of them.

As they moved into position, at 1600 Galatea spotted a German cruiser and the 1 LCS went off in pursuit to the SE. The battlecruisers headed E whilst the Grand Fleet continued on 168 degrees at 18 knots. Not knowing that the Grand Fleet was nearby, the High Seas Fleet moved up aft of Hipper, who was moving towards his cruiser, *Pillau*, that was being chased.

At 1624, L31, a Zeppelin gave a spotting report of 4 battlecruisers (they missed the other 3 BCs in possible visible range) and the Germans moved towards them. At the same time, the British cruisers pursuing *Pillau* spotted the German battlecruisers. Battle was now joined. Beatty was about 27 nm from Hipper and Jellicoe 60 nm from Hipper.

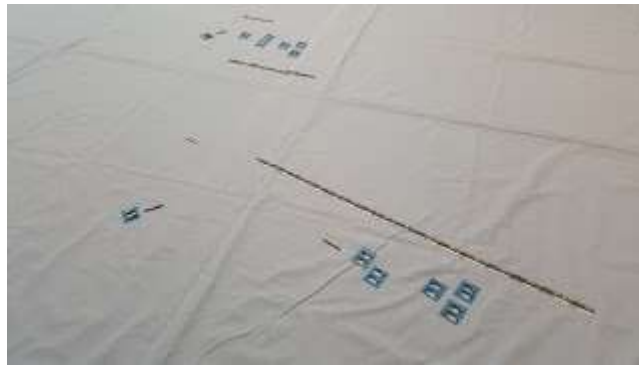
Setup was completed at 1000, first moves at 1030 once a few players had downed a hearty breakfast supplied by the venue (the Tudor Arms pub in Slimbridge, home of the BV club and the site of a very nice skittle alley which serves as the games room). With the pre-dreadnoughts and escorting cruisers and destroyers left behind, the High Seas Fleet looked rather small when compared with the Grand Fleet.



The Grand Fleet deployed in squadrons in line ahead. The ships used were Stuart's collection of 1/6000 Hallmark models, so no sneezing!



Ahead of the Grand Fleet, Beatty's battlecruisers and the super-dreadnoughts of 5th BS probe towards the Germans. Contact has already been made between the light forces of both sides.



The High Seas Fleet - the German plan was to maintain much closer liaison between the main fleet (closer) and the battlecruisers (middle top). This was to prove to be a most useful decision



Initial exchanges proved costly to the light cruisers of both sides, which at times were the only targets for the enemy's battlecruisers. Echoing Heligoland Bight they were often rapidly dispatched.



Pillars of smoke denote the final resting place of two British light cruisers. To the right of the shot the battlecruisers prepare to engage each other.



Between the line of the German BCs (lower) and the RN's BCs and 5th BS (top) a vicious destroyer melee is fought out. Both sides attempted to launch torpedo attacks on the heavy ships of their opponents, but these were frequently frustrated, the few attacks that were launched all failed at this stage of the battle. However, this early destroyer battle was to set the norm for the day where the larger, better armed British destroyers continually got the better of their German opposite numbers.



The battleships of the High Seas Fleet turn in echelon towards the battlecruiser action, seeking to engage 5th BS. Beatty's cruiser screen now saw the leading elements of the High Seas Fleet and alerted Jellicoe and Beatty. Jellicoe hoisted "Fleet Action Imminent" and moved the Grand Fleet SE and into line ahead with the KGV and Orion superdreadnoughts in the lead.

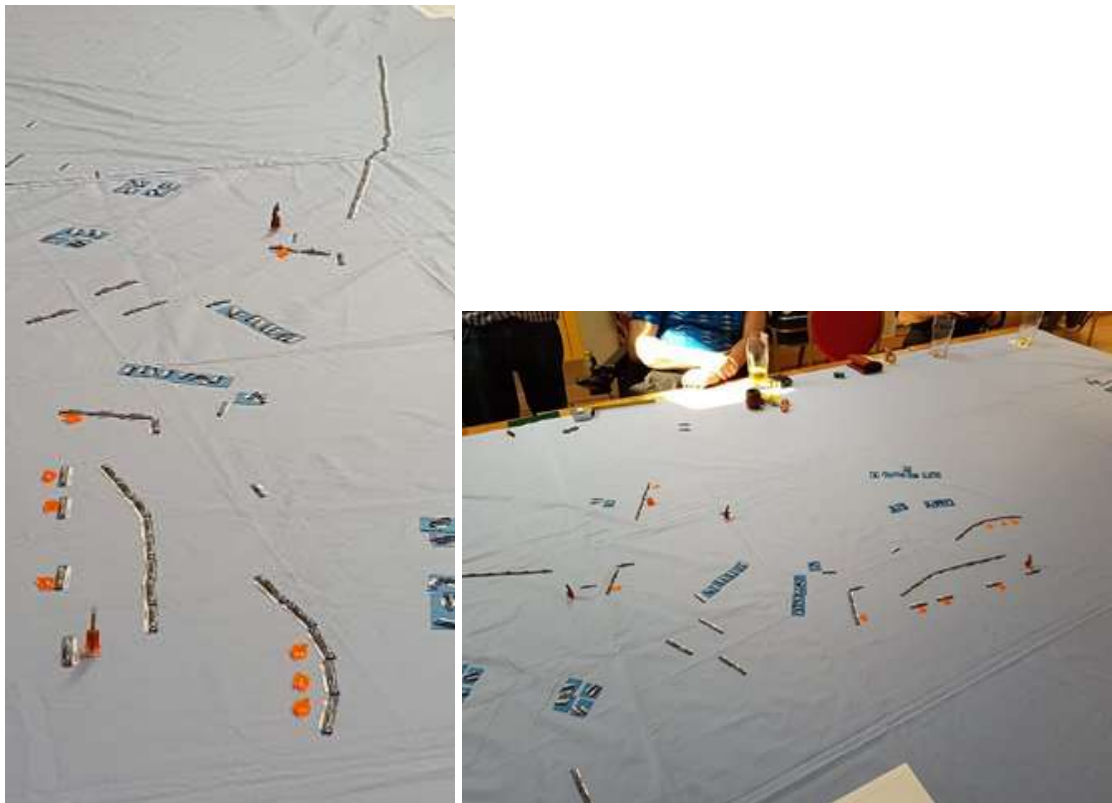


Inexplicably, and against the best traditions of the Royal Navy, Beatty turns away from the Germans and opens the range. There will be some busy redrawing of track charts in the official histories (or maybe not...) The 3rd BCS and 5th BS headed for the front of line of the High Seas Fleet line and inflicted heavy damage on the leading division.



However the QE class super-dreadnoughts, came in for some punishment themselves. *Barham*, training the line, was heavily damaged, suffered a "fire" critical hit result and was unable to stem the flames. Damage escalated and the ship was lost! If nothing else this represented a severe morale blow to the RN, and the cheers of the Germans could be heard throughout the pub!

At this stage the German BCs were at the rear of the German position, where they were coming under determined British DD attack.



With visibility still reasonable, and despite their success at putting one of the QEs on the bottom the HSF found itself in a pickle when, at 1806 the Germans saw the smoke of the Grand Fleet coming over horizon! The German BBs turn to head South by division. Discretion now being the better part of valour the decision was made to head for the hills (or at least for Horns Reef) and darkness (night was 3 hours away). However, several of the German dreadnoughts and battlecruisers had been damaged and their speed reduced slightly as a result. A tail chase was about to ensue.

British armoured cruisers advancing in front of the GF get too close and suffer the consequences. Only 3 of the 8 would survive the day.



A second disaster for the RN! Beatty decided to re-engage to sow the escape of the German battlecruisers. *Lion* found herself under heavy fire and she succumbed to multiple salvos from the 3rd BS that sent her to the bottom. Beatty himself went down with his ship (so in the event no need to amend those charts!)



However, there was an immediate riposte, as Nassau was sunk by the 5th BS and despite receiving heavy damage themselves, the 3rd BCS are also adding heavy fire against the Nassau class dreadnoughts now nearest the British forces.



As visibility drops, the head of the Grand Fleet opens fire. *Posen* and *Westfalen* are sunk by *Valiant* and *Erin* respectively. The last German DD group has been destroyed or broken off and the British DD are out of torpedoes. The gameplay finished at 1842 game time with the German 3rd BS and *Rheinland* undamaged. Three German BCs are damaged but only 4 British BCs could overtake them. The last 4 damaged German BBs of 1BS were adjudged to be run down by the British 1BS and 2BS and sunk/scuttled

Overall, 1 British BB, 1 BC, 5 ACs and many light cruisers are sunk. 7 German BB were sunk, 6 CLs and many DDs. A strong tactical victory for the British that will be celebrated long into the future. The sight of German fleet fleeing at the first sight of the Grand Fleet will be remembered by many. The grip of the blockade of Germany is strengthened with the British enjoying a post battle advantage of almost 3:1 in capital ship numbers. Whilst there will be no battle of the memoirs, the turn away of 1st BCS and 2nd BCS as they seemed to be getting the better of the German BCs will be debated for years. Alas, none of command staff from Lion survived to explain what Beatty was thinking.

The game itself ran very well. Despite all the ships being on the table (in a space equivalent of over 80 x 50 nm across, everybody behaved as they should according to the fog of war. The objective of fighting "Jutland in a Day" was ably achieved. The rules worked very well, just one or two minor glitches that were easy to resolve. Once a few turns had been played everyone knew what to do and we progressed without many hitches (mostly caused by food and drinks breaks and inadvertent shifting of the tables!).