



The Battle of Jutland

Holloway H. Frost

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A century on from the Great War, there are still many lessons historians and military tacticians can learn from.

In one of the most penetrating accounts of any battle of the war, Holloway H. Frost presents a minute-by-minute account of the sea-battle of Jutland 1916, 'the greatest naval battle of modern times'.

Researched until his death in 1935, Frost places the story of the battle in the overall context of World War I and in British naval history. Far from asserting its dominance, the British navy was beginning to adopt a more negative approach, and Jutland was a key outlining of this philosophy, given the British could have been more positive in their attacks.

Before the battle, exchanges from the air show that the German airships were expert at scouting and bombing, but at little else, as they attempted to bomb British ships on the waters below. Operations on April 25 and May 4 prompted much discussion of the attacks on German airship hangars and setting traps, led by Commander Jellicoe, in the run-up to May 31, the day of battle.

The British had no unified system of tactical command, which meant they more or less had two fleets operated independently of one another. The Germans, led by Scheer, had a chance to test a fleet that had been assembled at great expense and earn a fabled early victory in the war. Frost is complimentary of their cohesion, courage, self-sacrifice and loyalty, and the morale boost the battle had on Germany's troops on land.

Frost gives equal time and criticism to the affairs of both sides, concluding that Jellicoe 'executed a poor conception of war excellently, while Scheer executed an excellent conception of war poorly'.

At Jutland the British ships had a geographical advantage. At stake was the naval command of the Baltic Sea and potential alliance with Russia, cutting off German supplies from Sweden and forcing them to break into their reserves.

The battle was full of errors in communication and missed opportunities to capitalise on good positions, which Frost describes with precise details. He lays bare the importance of accurate information in transmissions between ships, complete definite articles to denote the enemy. He also refutes any idea that submarines played a role in the battle, even though many of the participants imagined them to be present. Submarines would replace above-water vessels in future naval conflicts.

There can be no more comprehensive account of one particular sea battle, and for this reason Frost's account stands as an accurate and balanced picture.

Holloway H. Frost served in the US Navy, rising to Assistant Chief of Staff, Commander Naval Forces Operating in European waters and then onto Commander. He served on board several vessels, commanding the USS Toucey and navigator of the USS California. He taught at the Army War College in Washington. He was awarded the Navy Cross for services to the forces, in particular 'the development of the tactics of surface vessels and aircraft in combined operations against submarines'. He died in 1935, and his book on

the Battle of Jutland was published posthumously.

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