John Jellicoe, 1st Earl Jellicoe

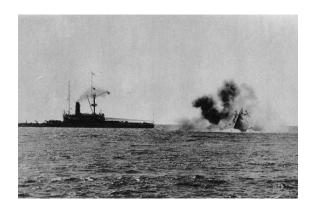
Admiral of the Fleet John Rushworth Jellicoe, 1st Earl Jellicoe, GCB, OM, GCVO, SGM, DL (5 December 1859 – 20 November 1935) was a Royal Navy officer. He fought in the Anglo-Egyptian War and the Boxer Rebellion and commanded the Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland in May 1916 during the First World War. His handling of the fleet at that battle was controversial: he made no serious mistakes and the German High Seas Fleet retreated to port – at a time when defeat would have been catastrophic for Britain - but the British public was disappointed that the Royal Navy had not won a victory on the scale of the Battle of Trafalgar. Jellicoe later served as First Sea Lord, overseeing the expansion of the Naval Staff at the Admiralty and the introduction of convoys, but was removed at the end of 1917. He also served as the Governor-General of New Zealand in the early 1920s.

1 Early career

Born the son of John Henry Jellicoe, a captain in the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, and Lucy Henrietta Jellicoe (née Keele) and educated at Field House School in Rottingdean, Jellicoe joined the Royal Navy as a cadet in the training ship HMS *Britannia* in 1872.^[1] He was made a midshipman in the steam frigate HMS *Newcastle* in September 1874 before transferring to the ironclad HMS *Agincourt* in the Mediterranean Fleet in July 1877.^[1] Promoted to sub-lieutenant on 5 December 1878, he joined HMS *Alexandra*, flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet, as signal sub-lieutenant in 1880.^[1] Promoted to lieutenant on 23 September 1880,^[2] he returned to HMS *Agincourt* in February 1881 and commanded a rifle company of the Naval Brigade at Ismailia during the Egyptian war of 1882.^[1]

Jellicoe qualified as a gunnery officer in 1883 and was appointed to the staff of the gunnery school HMS *Excellent* in May 1884.^[1] He joined the turret ship HMS *Monarch* as gunnery officer in September 1885 and was awarded the Board of Trade Silver Medal for rescuing the crew of a capsized steamer near Gibraltar in May 1886.^[3] He joined the battleship HMS *Colossus* (1882) in April 1886 and was put in charge of the experimental department at HMS *Excellent* in December 1886 before being appointed assistant to the Director of Naval Ordnance in September 1889.^[4]

Promoted to commander on 30 June 1891, Jellicoe joined the battleship HMS *Sans Pareil* in the Mediterranean Fleet in March 1892.^[4] He transferred to the battleship



The battleship HMS Victoria sinking

HMS *Victoria* in 1893 (the flagship of the Commanderin-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, Vice Admiral Sir George Tryon) and was aboard when it collided with HMS *Camperdown* and was wrecked off Tripoli in Lebanon on 22 June 1893.^[4] He was then appointed to the new flagship, HMS *Ramillies*, in October 1893.^[4]

Promoted to captain on 1 January 1897, [5] Jellicoe became a member of the Admiralty's Ordnance Committee.^[4] He served as Captain of the battleship HMS Centurion and chief of staff to Vice Admiral Sir Edward Seymour during the Seymour Expedition to relieve the legations at Peking during the Boxer Rebellion in June 1900.^[4] He was badly wounded during the Battle of Beicang^[6] and told he would die but confounded the attending doctor and chaplain by living.^[7] He was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath and given the German Order of the Red Eagle, 2nd class, with Crossed Swords for services rendered in China.^[8] Centurion returned to the United Kingdom in August 1901, and was paid off the following month, when Captain Jellicoe and the crew went on leave. [9] He became Naval Assistant to Third Naval Lord and Controller of the Navy in February 1902^[10] and was given command of the armoured cruiser HMS Drake on the North America and West Indies Station in August 1903.^[4]

2 High command

As a protege of Admiral John Fisher, Jellicoe became Director of Naval Ordnance in 1905 and, having been appointed a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order on the occasion of launching of HMS *Dreadnought* on 10 February 1906,^[11] he was also made an Aide-de-

2 3 FIRST WORLD WAR



Jellicoe as Captain, in command of HMS Centurion, flagship on the China Station (his depiction on a contemporary cigarette card shows he was in the public eye long before becoming an admiral).

Camp to the King on 8 March 1906.^[12] Promoted to rear admiral on 8 February 1907,^[13] he pushed hard for funds to modernise the navy, supporting the construction of new *Dreadnought*-type battleships and *Invincible*-class battlecruisers.^[14] He supported F. C. Dreyer's improvements in gunnery fire-control systems, and favoured the adoption of Dreyer's "Fire Control Table", a form of mechanical computer for calculating firing solutions for warships.^[15] Jellicoe arranged for the output of naval ordnance to be transferred from the War Office to the Admiralty.^[16]

Jellicoe was appointed second-in-command of the Atlantic Fleet in August 1907, hoisting his flag in the battleship HMS *Albemarle*.^[14] He was appointed Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order on the occasion of the King's Review of the Home Fleet in the Solent on 3 August 1907. ^[17] He went on to be Third Sea Lord and Controller of the Navy in October 1908 and, having taken part in the funeral of King Edward VII in May 1910, ^[18] he became Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet in December 1910, hoisting his flag in the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales*. ^[14] He advanced to Knight Com-



Admiral, or as the French knew him: Amiralissime Jellicoe

mander of the Order of the Bath on the Coronation of King George V on 19 June 1911 and confirmed in the rank of vice admiral on 18 September 1911. [14] He went on to be Second-in-Command of the Home Fleet, hoisting his flag in the battleship HMS *Hercules*, in December 1911 and, having also been appointed commander of the 2nd Battle Squadron in May 1912, joined an inquiry into the supply and storage of liquid fuels in peace and war on 1 August 1912. [19] He became Second Sea Lord in December 1912. [14]

3 First World War

3.1 Grand Fleet

At the start of the First World War, the First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, removed Admiral George Callaghan, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet^[14] (August 1914). Jellicoe was promoted to full admiral on 4 August 1914 and assigned command of the renamed Grand Fleet in Admiral Callaghan's place, though he was appalled by the treatment of his predecessor.^[14] He was advanced to Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath on 8 February 1915.^[20]

When Fisher (First Sea Lord) and Churchill (First Lord

of the Admiralty) both had to leave office (May 1915) after their quarrel over the Dardanelles, Jellicoe wrote to Fisher: "We owe you a debt of gratitude for having saved the Navy from a continuance in office of Mr Churchill, and I hope that never again will any politician be allowed to usurp the functions that he took upon himself to exercise".^[16]

Jellicoe commanded the British Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland in May 1916, the largest (and only major) clash of dreadnoughts, albeit an indecisive one.[14] His handling of the Grand Fleet during the battle remains controversial, with some historians characterising Jellicoe as too cautious and other historians faulting the battlecruiser commander, Admiral David Beatty, for making various tactical errors.^[21] Jellicoe certainly made no significant mistakes during the battle: based on limited intelligence, he correctly deployed the Grand Fleet with a turn to port so as to "cross the T" of the German High Seas Fleet as it appeared.^[22] After suffering heavy damage from shells, the German fleet turned 180 degrees and headed away from the battle.^[23] At the time the British public expressed disappointment that the Royal Navy had not won a victory on the scale of the 1805 Battle of Trafalgar. [14] Churchill described Jellicoe later as "the only man on either side who could lose the war in an afternoon"essentially hinting that Jellicoe's decision to prefer caution was strategically correct.^[14] Nevertheless, he was appointed a member of the Order of Merit on 31 May 1916,^[24] advanced to Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order on 17 June 1916^[25] and awarded the Grand Cross of the French Legion of Honour on 15 September 1916.^[26]

3.2 First Sea Lord

Jellicoe was appointed First Sea Lord in November 1916. [14] His term of office role saw Britain brought within danger of starvation by German unrestricted U-Boat warfare. [27]

At the War Committee (a Cabinet Committee which discussed strategy in 1915-16) in November 1916, the admirals present, including Jellicoe, told Lloyd George that convoys presented too large a target for enemy ships, and that merchant ship masters lacked the discipline to "keep station" in a convoy. In February 1917, Maurice Hankey wrote a memorandum for Lloyd George calling for the introduction of "scientifically organised convoys", almost certainly after being persuaded by Commander Henderson and the Shipping Ministry officials with whom he was in contact. After a breakfast meeting (13 February 1917) with Lloyd George, Carson (First Lord of the Admiralty) and Admirals Jellicoe and Duff agreed to "conduct experiments". However, convoys were not in general use until August 1917, by which time shipping losses to U-boats were already falling from their April peak.^[28]



A 1935 portrait of Jellicoe by Reginald Grenville Eves.

Jellicoe continued to take a pessimistic view, advising the War Policy Committee (a Cabinet Committee which discussed strategy in 1917) during planning meetings for the Third Ypres Offensive in June and July that nothing could be done to defeat the U-boats. However, removing Jellicoe in July, as Lloyd George wanted, would have been politically impossible given Conservative anger at the return of Churchill (still blamed for the Dardanelles) to office as Minister of Munitions. In August and September Lloyd George was preoccupied with Third Ypres and the possible transfer of resources to Italy, whilst the new First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Eric Campbell Geddes, was reforming the Naval Staff (including creating a post for Wemyss as Deputy First Sea Lord). Geddes and Lloyd George met with Balfour and Carson (both former First Lords of the Admiralty) on 26 October to discuss sacking Jellicoe after he had failed to act on "secret, but absolutely reliable" information about a German attack on a Norwegian convoy, but again nothing came of this as Lloyd George was soon preoccupied by the Battle of Caporetto and the setting up of the Supreme War Council. Geddes wanted to return to his previous job in charge of military transportation in France, and by December it was clear that Lloyd George would have to sack Jellicoe or lose Geddes.[29]

Jellicoe was rather abruptly dismissed by Geddes in December 1917. [27] Before he left for leave on Christmas Eve he received a letter from Geddes demanding his resignation. Geddes' letter stated that he was still in the building and available to talk, but after consulting Admiral Halsey Jellicoe replied in writing that he would "do what was best for the service". The move became public knowledge two days later. [30]

4 7 HONOURS

The Christmas holiday, when Parliament was not sitting, provided a good opportunity to remove Jellicoe with a minimum of fuss. Geddes squared matters with the King and with the Grand Fleet commander Admiral Beatty (who had initially written to Jellicoe of his "dismay" over his sacking and promised to speak to Geddes, but then did not write to him again for a month) over the holiday. The other Sea Lords talked of resigning (although Jellicoe advised them not to do so), especially when Geddes suggested in a meeting (31 December) that Balfour and Carson had specifically recommended Jellicoe's removal at the 26 October meeting; they had not done so, although Balfour's denial was less than emphatic. There was no trouble from the generals, who had a low opinion of Jellicoe. In the end the Sea Lords remained in place, whilst Carson remained a member of the War Cabinet, resigning in January over Irish Home Rule.^[31]

Although it was pretended that the decision had been Geddes' alone, he let slip in the Naval Estimates debate (6 March 1918) that he had been conveying "the decision of the Government", i.e. of Lloyd George, who had never put the matter to the War Cabinet. MPs picked up on his slip immediately, and Bonar Law (Conservative Leader) admitted in the same debate that he too had had prior knowledge.^[32]

As First Sea Lord Jellicoe was awarded the Grand Cordon of the Belgian Order of Leopold on 21 April 1917, [33] the Russian Order of St. George, 3rd Class on 5 June 1917, [34] the Grand Cross of the Italian Military Order of Savoy on 11 August 1917^[35] and the Grand Cordon of the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun on 29 August 1917. [36]

3.3 Later war

Jellicoe was created **Viscount Jellicoe** of Scapa Flow on 7 March 1918^[37]

In June 1918, amidst concerns that—following the Treaty of Brest Litovsk—the Germans were about to requisition the Russian Black Sea Fleet, Lloyd George proposed Jellicoe as Allied Supreme Naval Commander in the Mediterranean. The French were in favour of a combined Allied naval command, but the Italians were not, so nothing came of the suggestion. [38]

4 Retirement

Jellicoe was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet on 3 April 1919.^[39] He became Governor-General of New Zealand in September 1920^[40] and while out there also served as Grand Master of New Zealand's Masonic Grand Lodge.^[41] Following his return to England, he was created **Earl Jellicoe** and **Viscount Brocas** of Southampton in the County of Southampton on 1 July 1925.^[42] He died



Lord and Lady Jellicoe, 1924

of pneumonia at his home in Kensington in London on 20 November 1935 and was buried in St Paul's Cathedral. [27]

5 Legacy

In 1919, "Sleep, beneath the wave! a requiem" with words by Rev. Alfred Hall and Music by Albert Ham. was "Dedicated to Admiral Viscount Jellicoe." [43]

The attempt of his official biographer, Admiral Reginald Bacon, to portray him as the conqueror of the U-Boats is, in John Grigg's view, absurd, as the main decisions were taken by other men. Bacon also claimed that his elevation to a viscountcy on dismissal was a deliberate snub, but in fact Sir John French, the former Commanderin-Chief of the BEF, was only a viscount at the time (both he and Jellicoe became Earls subsequently), whilst Fisher was never more than a Baron. Bacon's neutrality may be questionable as he had himself been sacked by Geddes from command of the Dover Patrol, replaced by Roger Keyes, shortly after Jellicoe's removal. [38]

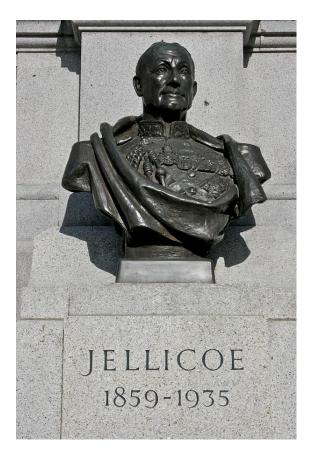
6 Family

Jellicoe married, at Holy Trinity church, Sloane Street on 1 July 1902, Florence Gwendoline Cayzer, daughter of the shipping magnate Sir Charles Cayzer. His brother Rev. Frederick Jellicoe (1858–1927) conducted the service. [44] Lord and Lady Jellicoe had a son and five daughters. [4]

7 Honours

Ribbon bar (incomplete)

7.1 Peerages 5



Bust in Trafalgar Square.



7.1 Peerages

- Viscount Jellicoe, of Scapa in the County of Orkney
 7 March 1918^[45]
- Earl Jellicoe and Viscount Brocas, of Southampton in the County of Southampton 1 July 1925^[46]

7.2 British orders

- Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath (GCB)
 8 February 1915^[20] (KCB: 19 June 1911; [47] CB: 9 November 1900^[48])
- Order of Merit (OM) 31 May 1916^[49]
- Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order (GCVO) 17 June 1916^[50] (KCVO: 3 August 1907;^[17] CVO: 13 February 1906^[11])

7.3 British decoration

• Sea Gallantry Medal (SGM) – 1886

7.4 British medals

- Egypt Medal
- China War Medal (1900)
- 1914 Star
- British War Medal
- World War I Victory Medal
- King George V Coronation Medal
- King George V Silver Jubilee Medal

7.5 International orders

- Kingdom of Prussia: Order of the Red Eagle, 2nd class with crossed swords *April* 1902^[51]
- France: Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour

 15 September 1916^[52]
- Belgium: Grand Cordon of the Order of Leopold 21 April 1917^[53]
- Russian Empire : Order of St. George, 3rd Class 5 June 1917^[54]
- Kingdom of Italy: Grand Cross of the Military Order of Savoy 11 August 1917^[55]
- Empire of Japan: Grand Cordon of the Order of the Paulownia Flowers 29 August 1917^[56]

6 9 REFERENCES

7.6 International decorations

- Navy Distinguished Service Medal of the United States – 16 September 1919^[57]
- Croix de Guerre of France 21 February 1919^[58]
- Belgian Croix de Guerre 21 April 1917^[59]

8 Ancestry, arms, residences

8.1 Ancestors

8.2 Arms



Blue plaque at 25 Draycott-place, (Blacklands Terrace), Cadogan gardens, London, SW3

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- [28] Grigg 2002, p49, 51, 53
- [29] Grigg 2002, p373
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12 External links

- Hansard 1803–2005: contributions in Parliament by the Earl Jellicoe
- The Dreadnought Project: John Jellicoe, 1st Earl Jellicoe, note the chapters to the right
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