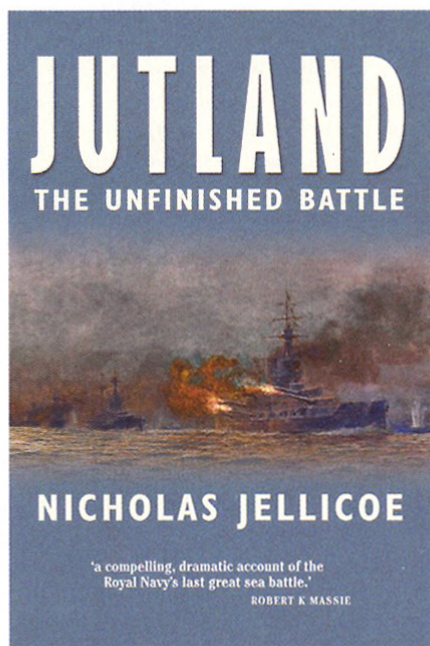


The following article appeared in the
February 2017 issue of *Naval History*.



Jutland: The Unfinished Battle

Nicholas Jellicoe. Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing/Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2016. 402 pp. Intro. Maps. Illus. Photos. Notes. Index. \$35.95.

Reviewed by Rear Admiral Joseph F. Callo, U.S. Navy (Retired)

The Battle of Jutland occurred at a time when the sea power theories of retired Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan and Sir Julian Corbett intersected with the industrialization of naval warfare. Nothing marked that junction more dramatically than the naval actions of 31 May and 1 June 1916, off the northwest coast of Denmark. The combat there involved steam propulsion, iron hulls, armor plate, torpedoes, gunfire control, explosive shells, advanced mines, and—above all—rapid-fire, long-barrel, turret-mounted, large-caliber, long-range naval guns.

Jutland also was a naval arena for a smoldering German aspiration: namely, the end of Great Britain's dominance at sea. Britain saw Jutland as an opportunity to preserve or enhance that dominance. For Germany, with 99 ships in the battle, it was the overdue opportunity to end the thrall of Trafalgar. For England, with 151 ships involved, it was a chance to extend a century-long dominance at sea. After the smell of cordite had dissipated in the naval operating areas off Jutland, Britain's strategic objective had been achieved; Germany's had not.

In his preface, Nicholas Jellicoe, grandson of one of the battle's principals, then-Admiral John Jellicoe, writes:

The battle was complex. . . and the story of its tactics, technology and personalities told through both British and German eyes. . . Jutland was the first real test for the tactics and naval and military technologies which had been developed in the years of peace and not yet proven under the stress of war. It was a test faced by two very different navies, one only a generation old, the other steeped in, and bound by, the traditions of centuries.

Given the family connection, it's not surprising that Jellicoe particularly focuses on the leaders of the British and German forces involved. The commander of the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet, Admiral Jellicoe, and the leader of the British Battle Cruiser Fleet, Vice Admiral David Beatty, are given a chapter provocatively labeled "A Contradiction, Not a Team." By contrast, commander of the German High Seas Fleet Admiral Reinhard Scheer and leader of the German scouting forces Vice Admiral Franz Hipper are identified as "Men from the Same Mould."

The author takes us beyond the din of combat, which often distracts from war's larger lessons, and focuses on the main players at Jutland, who are at least as important to understanding the battle as the sequence events. He augments his analyses with firsthand accounts, many from noncommissioned seamen, of the horrors they experienced during combat. Jellicoe uses charts and diagrams to illustrate the details of the 12-hour battle, during which 14 British and 11 German ships were sunk.

One of the battle's lessons was that a lack of efficient communication among a fleets' units would be costly. It can be argued that the main reason the British, despite superior numbers, failed to achieve a decisive tactical victory at Jutland was the poor communication between Jellicoe and Beatty during the actions. Those failures caused extended postbattle controversy in Great Britain. The author covers this debate in considerable detail. (Similar communication problems were reprised dramatically during the 1944 Battle of Leyte Gulf.)

Jutland emphasizes the profound importance of the personalities involved in the battle. In fact, the tensions between Jellicoe and Beatty may have been the reason the German fleet escaped Jellicoe's deadly trap.

Such lessons about flawed communi-

cations and the influence of personality on battle outcomes resound in today's world of global tensions and accelerating military technology—both of which are closely connected to the idea of "information dominance" as a military imperative.

Rear Admiral Callo is a historian and writer. His books include *Nelson in the Caribbean: The Hero Emerges, 1784-1787* (Naval Institute Press, 2003), *Nelson Speaks: Admiral Lord Nelson in His own Words* (NIP, 2001), and *Legacy of Leadership: Lessons from Admiral Lord Nelson* (Hellgate Press, 1999).