

Battle of Jutland on 31 May, 1916

The largest naval battle in history

In the midst of the First World War, while many of the world's great powers were at war with each other, the German High Sea Fleet and the large British fleet, the Grand Fleet faced each other in battle.

The two nations had since the turn of the century been in intense competition to win control of the seas, which especially would weaken Great Britain, if German naval forces could cut off imports.

Since the onset of the First World War as a result of the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian heir to the throne and his wife in Sarajevo in 1914, Britain led the naval race with the most battleships, the biggest canons and the largest number of other vessels.

At the beginning of the war there were minor clashes between the two navies. German naval forces conducted quick attacks on British east coast cities and retreated quickly back to their German ports.

On 31 May 1916 most of the German High Sea Fleet sailed from German North Sea ports expecting to encounter a small British naval force and defeat it.

But the British Admiralty knew that something was afoot on the German side. Virtually the entire large British fleet, The Grand Fleet, sailed from Scotland and the Orkney Islands, north of Scotland, although neither of the two navies knew anything about enemy positions or intentions.

Together, the two fleets had 250 warships at sea, manned with approx. 104,000 sailors and 25 admirals, and each of the many battleships could, with their big guns, penetrate even the strongest armour plating and easily destroy a small city.

The little steamer "N. J. Fjord" from neutral Denmark was sighted by a German torpedo boat which ordered her to stop for inspection. When she did, a cloud of steam and smoke was released which was observed far away by two British light cruisers who came to investigate. Soon afterwards, battle commenced near her but the "N. J. Fjord" managed to sail away undamaged.

During the day and evening it was a cat-and-mouse game between the two sides with first the one side then the other gaining the upper hand.

During the afternoon and evening, four large battleships exploded with a loss of more than 3,500 lives. As a result of the battle, 25 warships were sunk and nearly 9,000 mariners lost their lives.

Cannon thunder was so violent it could be heard on the west coast of Jutland 100 km further east, as the fighting continued along the west coast of Jutland from Hanstholm to Blåvand.

This was the world's greatest naval battle, the Battle of Jutland.

Today there is still much discussion about who won. The Germans suffered fewer losses but, as a result of the Battle, the German High Sea Fleet greatly reduced its activities in the war at sea. This is the basis for the British argument for that the British fleet won.

Many of the dead were washed ashore on the west coast of Jutland, and are buried in cemeteries in West Jutland.

Under the direction of the diver Gert Normann Andersen, there have been several major diving expeditions to the vast number of wrecks on behalf of the Shipwreck Museum in Thorsminde. The Shipwreck Museum has also an exhibition about this great naval battle.

When the German Empire could not block the British Isles with its fleet, the Germans felt compelled to introduce the unrestricted submarine warfare whereby German submarines sank all vessels around Great Britain indiscriminately whatever their nationality.

This prompted the USA into the war and had a decisive influence on the German Empire that had to admit defeat on 11.11 at 11 o'clock 1918 which marked the end of the First World War that had resulted in unimaginable loss and suffering in many countries.

To understand the "Battle of Jutland", Danmarks Radio / TV produced a major TV show, titled "INFERNO", for the 75th anniversary of the battle in 1991, which described the circumstances of the sea battle and showed underwater footage from the wrecks and discussed the result of this historic great naval battle.



Memorial Park for the Battle of Jutland by THYBORØN



Memorial Park for the Battle of Jutland on 31. May 1916

MEMORIAL FOR THE 25 SHIPS SUNK AND THE 8647 PERSONER KILLED IN THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND ON 31. MAY 1916

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