

BRITISH SQUADRON. "Invincible" (V.A. Sturdee), "Inflexible" (Capt Phillimore)  
"CARNARVON" (R.A. Stoddart), "CORNWALL" (Ellerton),  
"KENT" (Capt Allen), "GLASGOW" (Capt Luce),  
"BRISTOL" (Capt Ranshaw),

GERMAN SQUADRON. "SCHARNHORST" (V.A. Count Von Spree), "GNEISENAU",  
"DRESDEN", "NURNBERG", "LEIPZIG".  
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The British left Abrolhos Rocks on Saturday 28th November and arrived at Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, on Monday 7th December, having steamed about 2,400 miles: our Colliers were about 3 days behind us under escort of the "Crama", but we found 3 Colliers at Port Stanley and the "Carnarvon", "Bristol" and "Glasgow" started coaling on arrival. The "Canopus" had been here since about 15th November and had laid mines in the entrance to the harbour and established look-outs at various points on the Island: she herself resting on the bottom and joined up by telephone with an observation hut, formed a very useful shore battery.

At 8-15am on 8th December the "look-out" on Sapper's Hill reported two warships approaching Port Stanley from the southward (we learned afterwards that these were the "Gneisenau" and "Nurnberg") and the smoke of others in the distance and our Squadron immediately proceeded to weigh anchor. The "Inflexible" had begun to coal and had taken in about 300 tons and the "Invincible", "Kent" and "Cornwall" were prepared for coaling: we had only 500 tons on board. The "Gneisenau" and "Nurnberg" continued to approach the harbour and at 9-20am the "Canopus" fired 4 rounds of 12" which however did not harm: the enemy, as we afterwards heard, had no information as to the strength of our Squadron and only expected to find ships of the "Cornwall" or "Glasgow" class, but when the man at the masthead of the "Gneisenau" saw the tripod masts of our battle cruisers, the "Gneisenau" and "Nurnberg" retreated hastily and joined the rest of their Squadron which were about 20 miles to the southward.

If the "Gneisenau" and "Nurnberg" had been more enterprising and had steamed to the entrance to the harbour where our ships were anchored in single line in a narrow channel, some of them adjusting engines, some coaling or preparing for coaling, they could have inflicted very serious damage on our ships before it was possible for them to get then away, and the day might have had a very different ending. As it was, we were allowed to get out of harbour quickly and quietly and by 10-15am we were outside and chasing the enemy who were hull down on our starboard bow, about 25 miles off. The "Glasgow" was first off the mark and was soon streaking after them at full speed, anxious no doubt to avenge the defeat of 1st November: when the "Good Hope" and "Monmouth" were sunk and she probably only escaped owing to the darkness: then came the "Inflexible" and "Invincible" emitting volumes of black smoke from their oil fuel and quickly working up to 25 knots followed by the "Kent", "Cornwall" and "Carnarvon": the "Bristol" had been repairing her main engines and was some 15 miles astern: she and the "Macedonia" were ordered by the Commander in Chief to go and destroy the enemy's transports which had been reported South of the Island: it was hard luck on the "Bristol" not to be allowed to have a smack at the enemy, but she did her job and sunk two transports.

The weather conditions were excellent: smooth sea, slight northerly breeze, beautifully clear, and altogether a glorious day to die for on's Country.

At 1pm the position was roughly that on diagram I when the "Inflexible" opened fire on the "Leipzig" at a range of 16,700 yards, firing about 8 rounds, but got no hit. At 1-20 pm the "German Flagship Scharnhorst" made a signal to say that the "Scharnhorst" and "Gneisenau" would engage our Battle Cruisers and that the light cruisers were to try to save themselves as

as best they could. Accordingly about 1-25 pm the "Scharhorst" and "Gneisenau" turned to port and closing on the "Invincible" and "Inflexible" opened fire on them: at the same time the "Dresden", "Nurnberg" and "Leipzig" turned to starboard and went off at full speed in a direction about due South, followed by the "Glasgow", "Cornwall" and "Kent": at this stage the "Carnarvon" was out of it as she had four boilers under repair and could only do 18 knots, so she acted as Chief Umpire for some time, and afterwards proved useful in picking up survivors from the "Gneisenau": as a matter of fact she did join up in the fight towards the end and fired some rounds at the sinking "Scharhorst", and after the action a careful examination showed a distinct hole in her funnel, two inches in diameter, proving conclusively that she had been under fire.

From 1-20 pm the action developed into a fight between our two Battle Cruisers and the enemy's two Armoured Cruisers, and the chase of their Light Cruisers - two of which were brought to action and sunk - by the "Glasgow", "Cornwall" and "Kent". The diagram II gives some idea of the state of affairs about 3-0 pm.

Our two Battle Cruisers were engaged intermittently with the "Scharhorst" and "Gneisenau" from 1-30 pm to 6-0 pm. At 3-30 pm the "Scharhorst's" third funnel was shot away: at 4-0 pm she was seen to be listing badly to Port and at 4-0 pm she sank: no one was saved: The "Gneisenau" was still fighting all her guns at this time so of course no attempt could be made to rescue survivors from the "Scharhorst". Admiral Von Spee and his two sons - one in the "Gneisenau" and the other in the "Nurnberg" - were all lost. The "Gneisenau" was now getting badly hammered by both "Invincible" and "Inflexible": by 5-9 pm her fore funnel was shot away: at 5-30 pm she had a bad list to Starboard and at 6-0 pm she sank in Lat: 52-40 S. Long: 56-20 W. about 200 were saved including the Commander and some 30 Officers. One of the rescued Officers, who was a cousin of Admiral Stoddart's, was told when leaving Germany (long before the War broke out) to be sure and look up his English relations if ever he had an opportunity: he was picked up by the "Carnarvon", so he and his Admiral cousin met under somewhat extraordinary circumstances.

The "Invincible" had no casualties, though she had some very hard knocks one shell struck her below the water line and made a hole in her side 7 ft by 2 ft: another burst in the Ward room and completely wrecked it - chairs, table, sideboard, everything was shattered. The "Inflexible" had one man killed, but otherwise sustained very slight damage.

While our Battle Cruisers were thus successfully engaged some 20 miles distant the "Glasgow", "Cornwall" and "Kent" were busy chasing the "Dresden", "Nurnberg" and "Leipzig" which were steaming for all they were worth in a southerly direction. The "Dresden", the fastest of the three, had a long start and always looked like getting away; though it is just possible that the "Glasgow", who was full of coal and oil fuel and had recently been docked at Rio de Janeiro might have overhauled her if she had hung on: however, for some reason or other she didn't, and the "Dresden" got clear away without ever being brought to action and gave a lot of trouble afterwards.

The "Glasgow" got within range of the "Leipzig" at 2-45 pm and shortly afterwards they exchanged shots but apparently no damage was done to either ship, and they continued firing at each other intermittently until 4- pm when they were hotly engaged.

Meanwhile the "Cornwall" was rapidly overhauling the "Leipzig" and about 4-15 pm opened fire on her at a range of 10,500 yards; the enemy now shifted her fire on to us and the "Glasgow" turned back and took up station on our starboard quarter and from the friendly shelter of our smoke continued

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continued to blaze away merrily, while we took the whole of the "Leipzig's" fire. Our first obvious hit was at 4-30 pm when we shot away her fore-top-gallant mast which fell on her fore-top, killing the Gunnery Lieutenant who was spotting there, as we afterwards learned from her Torpedo Lieutenant whom we rescued. We closed to about 8,000 yards but as that range favoured her 4-1" guns we soon opened again to 10,000 but even at that range she hit us no less than nine times in five minutes, though of course her projectiles could'nt do much damage at such a distance: her firing was splendid always and in selvo after selvo the shots fell within a few yards of each other and perilously close to us. At 5-30 pm the weather got misty and it was difficult to spot the fall of shot: at 6-15 pm we closed to 8,500 and fired Lyddite which seemed to bother them a good deal and their fire slackened a good deal very much. At 7-15 pm she was on fire badly both fore and aft and there were small explosions, which would probably have been big ones had she not practically exhausted her ammunition so that her magazine was empty shortly afterwards she ceased firing.

blazing fiercely everywhere and the poor fellows on board must have seen in a pitiful plight indeed between fire, water and lyddite. Her Captain told the crew to do whatever they liked as they could fight no longer, and about 60 of them jumped overboard, preferring water to fire. She still made no signal to surrender and refused to haul down her Flag so we were compelled to go on pounding them with lyddite until about 8-45 pm they sent up white and green lights: we and the "Glasgow" immediately lowered boats: there were only 18 men ~~are~~ alive on board at this stage - one of them was the Captain and we picked up 16, four Officers and 12 men: unfortunately the Captain was not among them.

We were hit 18 times but had no casualties: one shell struck the ship below the water line and caused a leak into a bunker which gave us a list to Port: another fell on the quarter deck, cutting the hose, which it carried through into the Torpedo Lieutenant's cabin and flooded: it then passed through the main deck and out through the ships side in a cabin on the deck below: another wrecked the Ward Room gallery and wrought sad havoc with the pots and pans and kettles there, killing the canary - the only life we lost in the action. The "Leipzig" sank at 9-23 pm, about 180 miles S.E. of the Falkland Islands.

In the meantime the "Kent" was busy with the "Nurnberg": their action started about 4-20 pm and the "Kent", in order to prevent mistakes, closed into a range of less than 3,000 yards, and blazed away vigorously: she herself of course hit frequently, her wireless carried away, her boats were riddled with holes etc, but as a rule the German shells failed to burst and no serious damage was done. The "Nurnberg" on the hand was very badly battered and set on fire and sunk at 7-20 pm. Only four of her crew were saved as the "Kent's" boats were unseaworthy.

The "Kent" had 5 men killed and 6 seven injured, not by the enemy but by an explosion in one of the case mates, the whole of the guns crew were "laid out" five of them were killed outright and two died in hospital at Port Stanley afterwards.