

## **Sir David Beatty**

Sir David Beatty was born in Howbeck, Cheshire on 17 January 1871, and entered the Royal Navy at the age of 13, serving with distinction in Sudan from 1896-98 and in China during the Boxer Rising of 1900; even at this early stage Beatty marked himself out as a bold, aggressive officer, succeeding in becoming the youngest officer for a century to achieve flag rank at the age of 39, the last such being Lord Nelson.

He was made Rear Admiral in 1910 and served as Winston Churchill's Naval Secretary from 1911-13, after which he was appointed Commander of the Grand Fleet's Battlecruiser Squadron in 1913, a position he held at the outbreak of war in August 1914. Intended as a swift-moving reconnoitring force, the squadron's role was to locate enemy forces and to subsequently hold them at bay until the arrival of the main force.

Following up success at Heligoland Bight in the first month of the war, Beatty's scored a further victory with an action at Dogger Bank in January 1915.

Beatty's name however is most associated with possibly the greatest naval action of all, at Jutland in May 1916, where his impetuosity in attacking the German High Fleet both inflicted and suffered major losses until the arrival of the Grand Fleet. This encounter of the British and German Grand and High Fleets resulted in a German tactical victory, although strategically the British succeeded in discouraging further German offensive fleet actions for the remainder of the war.

With Sir John Jellicoe, in overall command of the action at Jutland, blamed for the lack of a clear British success, the dashing Beatty was seen by some as his natural successor. He was accordingly appointed Commander of the Grand Fleet in November 1916 following the movement of Jellicoe to First Sea Lord, although his rapid promotion caused controversy within the Royal Navy.

Beatty's policy however was not unlike Jellicoe's, in that he preferred to risk British dreadnoughts in major naval actions against Germany; he was however supported by Prime Minister Lloyd George, partly on account of Beatty's support for the convoy system favoured by the Prime Minister (and which ultimately led to Jellicoe's summary dismissal on Christmas Eve, 1917 over his disapproval of convoys).

Following the armistice declaration, on 21 November 1918 Beatty received, off the coast of Scotland at Rosyth, the surrender of the German High Fleet; comprising 90 ships plus a further 87 U-boats.

Appointed First Sea Lord in 1919 and awarded a grant of £100,000 by Parliament in recognition of his services, Beatty held the position until his retirement in 1927. Subsequently granted a peerage, Earl David Beatty died on 11 March 1936