

Sir Reginald Bacon

Sir Reginald Hugh Spencer Bacon (1863-1947) commanded the Dover Patrol from 1915-17 and embarked on a post-retirement career as a naval historian.

Having entered the navy in 1878 Bacon chose to specialise in a variety of areas dealing with innovations: from ship design to electricity to submarines (he conducted the first Royal Navy trials) to mining. By the year of his resignation from the navy - 1909 - he had reached the rank of Rear-Admiral, and settled into an entirely appropriate civilian career as Managing Director of the Coventry Ordnance Works, having served his last two years as Director of Naval Ordnance.

The outbreak of war in August 1914 brought Bacon's recall to active service and following a brief stint on the Western Front (using his own company's weaponry) was handed command of the Dover Patrol the following April. He was subsequently to publish in 1919 his memoirs of the Dover Patrol as he experienced it during his tenure.

Bacon's task was apparently simple: to prevent German U-boat access to the English Channel, and to facilitate the despatch of supplies, both men and materials, across to the Western Front in France. Alas for Bacon following a knighthood in 1916 his political stock dwindled the following year as German U-boat activity in the Channel dramatically increased despite his best efforts and through no real fault of his own.

Thus in December 1917 Bacon was switched from the Dover Patrol to Controller of the Inventions Department (by Churchill), a command for which he was well suited given his driving interest in all matters innovative.

In September 1918 Bacon was made full Admiral; he retired six months later in the wake of the armistice. It was at this stage that Bacon determined to try his hand as a naval historian. Aside from his Dover Patrol memoir he also published biographies of controversial Admirals Fisher and Jellicoe (whose conduct at the Battle of Jutland Bacon resolutely supported; the former also happened to be a close friend).

Bacon died in 1952.