

Sir Sackville Carden

Sir Sackville Hamilton Carden (1857-1930) was given responsibility for launching the Allied naval assault upon the Dardanelles in February 1915.

Carden entered the navy in 1870 and, prior to World War One, saw active service in the Egyptian and Sudan campaigns of 1882-84. He was promoted to Rear-Admiral in 1908 and upon the outbreak of war had served as superintendent of the Malta dockyard from 1912.

His war began with an appointment (surprising to many) as commander of British naval forces in the Mediterranean in September 1914, where he replaced Sir Berkeley Milne. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill lost no time in asking Carden (in January 1915) whether he thought an entirely naval assault upon the Dardanelles was feasible.

Carden replied that while he thought a rushed approach unlikely to succeed, he believed that a sustained assault could force the Straits. Churchill used detailed plans submitted by Carden to this effect to persuade the British War Council to sanction operations using 'spare' shipping, despite reservations expressed by First Sea Lord (the mercurial) Admiral John Fisher.

Consequently Carden began a bombardment on 19 February 1915 and quickly found the operational environment for British and French shipping in the Straits to be markedly more difficult than expected. Nevertheless he was ordered to proceed by Churchill in a communiqué dated 11 March.

Having planned a major assault for 18 March Carden, a long-time sufferer from an ulcer, collapsed two days prior to its commencement. He was replaced by Admiral John de Robeck and the operation launched on schedule: it was a heavy failure, so much so that de Robeck immediately barred any steps to repeat the action (much to Churchill's chagrin).

Carden formally retired from the Royal Navy in October 1917 as a full Admiral. He died in 1917