Acknowledgements

This project is not the paper that I proposed at the beginning of my MA studies. It is, as a result of those studies, much more focused in purpose, conception, and execution. This paper reflects the transition from classic naval historian to cultural historian and is the result of supervision by Professors Roger Sarty, Elizabeth Ewan, George Urbaniak, Geoffrey Hayes and Greta Kroeker. Their combined efforts led me to re-evaluate my historical interests and approach, and helped me to discover the importance of historical complexity as the foundation of understanding. Thanks also to the members of the Canadian Nautical Research Society who responded to my presentation of this paper at the society's annual conference in June 2010 with helpful comments and recommendations. Finally, thanks again to Professor Roger Sarty for his patience and aid in the final stages of this project.

Introduction

During the first part of the Second World War, Sir Herbert Richmond, professor at Cambridge University and the leading British naval historian, asserted that old-fashioned historical education of the Royal Navy's officers had a deleterious effect on the navy's operational performance. This paper is an examination of the impact of what Richmond called the "Blood and Thunder" school of history on the Royal Navy's professional culture, and the effects of that culture on tactical decision-making during the period 1939 to 1943. The objective is to gain further insight into the institutional culture of the Royal Navy, greater understanding of how officers made tactical decisions, but most importantly endeavour to test more precisely the linkages between professional culture and decision-making in battle. Accordingly this paper will answer the following questions:

1) What was the "Blood and Thunder" school of history that Richmond decried?

2) How might "Blood and Thunder" have influenced the culture of the Royal Navy?

3) What do Richmond and his allies' criticisms reveal about Royal Navy educational culture?

4) How can tactical decisions in the Second World War be better understood in light of the influence of "Blood and Thunder" ideas on the Royal Navy's culture?

This paper will argue that there is insufficient proof to demonstrate that the "Blood and Thunder" school of history directly effected Royal Navy tactical decisions as Richmond claimed.

Biographical Information

Instructor Lieutenant-Commander Gerald S. Graham, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, kept a diary during his service liaison trip to England in the summer of 1942 that provides a first-hand view into the conflict over naval historical education. Lt. Cdr. Graham was a particularly useful commentator; he had no particular stake in the British controversy and had only recently begun to focus on naval history. Still more recent was his involvement in the education of officers. He appears to have first learned of the differences among British naval history educators during his trip. Indeed, this was the purpose of the trip: to discover the views of the top experts in historical education for naval officers.

Graham's considerable academic experience enabled him to quickly grasp the issues in the controversy. Graham completed his masters and taught at Harvard, wrote his doctorate at Cambridge then joined the faculty at Queens University. Graham was a relatively young scholar (only 37 years of age in 1940) who had established himself and developed strong connections to Canadian, American and British scholars; his reputation led him to be considered for a position as Major C.P. Stacey's assistant as a Canadian Army historian. In 1941 he took up a Guggenheim fellowship to begin work on his first scholarly work focused on the Royal Navy.[1] After the establishment of the Naval college *HMCS Royal Roads* at Esquimalt in 1941, a colleague of Graham's at the University of Toronto recommended him to Commander Kenneth Ketchum, a prominent civilian educator who was enlisting staff for the new college. Ketchum recruited Graham and following his acceptance arranged, with Royal Roads Commandant J.M. Grant, for Graham's voyage to the United Kingdom.[2]

1 Roger Sarty, "Gerald S Graham and the Writing of *Empire of the North Atlantic*: Oral History and the Documentary Record,": 9.
2 Sarty, "Gerald S Graham,": 9.

Graham met Richmond for the first time shortly after he arrived in the United Kingdom, but they were acquainted. Graham's connection with Cambridge and a shared interest in sea-power forged a bond between the two academics. Graham began his career as a British Empire historian, but added naval history to his scholarly interests in the late 1930s when his study on commercial relations between Britain and North America after the American Revolution revealed the central importance of the British navigation laws. Graham showed that the main purpose of the navigation laws was to sustain the Royal Navy.[3] Graham had sought Richmond's advice on his treatment of naval policy during the creation of his 1941 monograph *Sea Power and British North America*, including a chapter of the then unfinished work.[4] The two historians shared an academic interest in the use of sea-power, and was a topic of discussion in their letters "I wish it were better understood today that we – all of us who comprise the Empire, – are dependent on Sea [?] Power."[5] This was in fact the central element in Richmond's thought: that Britain had built her empire, and defended it by centuries of determined effort to control maritime communications by ensuring the dominance of the Royal Navy. During the first part of the Second World War, he believed, Britain had suffered enormous setbacks because the government and the navy itself had forgotten the principles of sea control, and squandered resources in glorious attempts to 'muddle through'. While Graham was in England, he collected clippings of Richmond's letters to the *Times* of London that further explained points they had discussed.

The meaning I attach to command of the sea does not confine attention to a

3 Sarty, "Gerald S Graham," 8.
4 Sarty, "Gerald S Graham," 8.
5 Sarty, "Gerald S Graham," 8-9.

> particular form of conveyance.. it is that he who possesses command of the sea is able to send his troops and trade across the sea in reasonable safety..and to prevent his enemy from so doing. The course by which command has always been won.. It is the departure from these 'absolutely sound' principles that I deplore, and to that departure attribute our many misfortunes and losses.[6]

Or as he put it in an article that appeared a few weeks later, “We have lost ships, men, colonies, and irreplaceable supplies during the last three years, and all those losses are due to our not having obtained command of the sea.” [7] This, as the clippings in Graham’s diary show, the was nub of Richmond's case for the reform of naval education, to use history to inculcate and develop true understanding of the “absolutely sound” principles of sea control among naval officers. Graham indicated in his diary that he agreed with Richmond's assessments of the Royal Navy, as well as the Admiral's approach to historical pedagogy. “There can be no doubting his position as the first naval historian of our day.”[8]

Admiral and Professor Richmond had been an outspoken and intellectual leader of the Royal Navy for many decades. He was born into an established academic and artistic family, as his grandfather and father were artists with his father a professor at the Slade School. He joined they Royal Navy as a cadet in 1885, and began in the hydrographic service before he trained as a torpedo officer. Richmond became interested in naval history during his time in the Channel Fleet aboard *HMS Empress of India* and other ships at the end of the 19th century, with his initial efforts focusing on the Royal Navy and the War of Austrian Succession. Richmond had a distinguished career, and was a protege of Admiral Sir John Fisher. He was appointed to plum

6 Herbert Richmond, “The End And the Means: A Concentration of Arms” *The Times* of London, June 30, 1942.
7 Herbert Richmond, “Command and the Sea:Goal and the Means: Concentration on a Task,” *The Times* of London, August 13, 1942.
8 Gerald Graham, *Convoy Diary*. 29 June.

commands such as *HMS Dreadnought*, served as a trainer as the Torpedo School, served on the nascent naval staff as director of operations, and director of staff duties and training. Following the First World War Richmond was promoted to Flag Rank, and served as commandant of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, Commander-in-Chief East Indies Squadron and commandant of the Imperial Defence College. Richmond was retired from the Royal Navy in 1931, and the University of Cambridge appointed him the Vere Hamworth Professor of Imperial and Naval history shortly afterwards.[9]

Richmond's outspoken criticism of the Royal Navy establishment marked his career. In 1912, he was a member of a group of officers that created the service journal *Naval Review*. The journal allowed officers to anonymously criticize and debate in a period when doing so was strongly frowned upon and would endanger a career. Richmond's strident efforts for reform gained him much support amongst younger officers but made senior officers suspicious. For example, Admiral Wemyss was reluctant to employ Richmond on his staff following the First World War, but was unable to dismiss Richmond's talent.[10] Richmond published often in the *Times of London* as well as essays and books on many subjects, including the place of history within naval education. These publications eventually ended his career. Richmond published a criticism of the Royal Navy's official position on ships shortly before the London Naval Conference of 1930. He argued that lighter warships around 10,000 tons could replace the obsolete battleship, according to the Washington Naval Conference of 1922's classification

9 HG Thursfield, "Richmond, Sir Herbert William," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *http://www.oxforddnb.com.subzero.lib.uoguelph.ca/view/article/35743*

10 Captain Herbert S. Richmond "Letter April 15" in Arthur Marder. ed. *Portrait of an Admiral. The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond.* (London : Jonathan Cape, 1952) 310.

system.[11] The articles in the *Times of London* strengthened the position of the American negotiators at the conference and resulted in Richmond's forced retirement shortly following the conference.

Richmond was a member of a group named the "Young Turks" who had similar opinions regarding the Royal Navy's stagnation. These officers advocated a more aggressive use of the Grand Fleet during the First World War, and advocated a general modernization of the Royal Navy. The founders of the *Naval Review* in 1912 included future members of the "Young Turks", such as Richmond, Reginald Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax, Kenneth and Alfred Dewar, and Henry Thursfield. The "Young Turks" generally served the Royal Navy well, with several eventually being promoted to flag rank.

Vice Admiral Kenneth Dewar was even more outspoken and arrogant that Richmond, and ended his career in a similar way. He had served under Richmond aboard the *Dreadnought*, and helped found the *Naval Review*. Following the First World War Dewar and his brother Captain Alfred Dewar became instigated a controversy when they published a staff analysis of the battle that was sufficiently critical of Fleet Admiral Sir John Jellicoe that the Royal Navy refused to publish it, and even Richmond withdrew his support for fear of damaging the service. While Alfred Dewar began a career as Royal Navy historian that would have him meet the Canadian Graham in 1942, Kenneth Dewar's career ended in very similar circumstances to Richmond. Dewar's reputation as an officer was essentially ruined when he demanded a court-martial to clear his name following the Royal Oak affair in which he, as flag captain aboard Royal Oak,

11 Some articles and letters include: "Small Cruisers" *The Times*: March 26 1930, page 12. "Smaller Navies" *The Times*: November 21 & 22 1929, page 15 and 12 respectively. "Machines, Ships and Men" *The Times*: April 2, 1938 page 13. "Entry into the Navy" *The Times* June 10 1933, page 8.

criticized the admiral aboard for his behaviour towards a junior officer. Dewar was found guilty and reprimanded. Following a period as naval aide-de-camp to the King he was promoted to Rear-Admiral and retired.[12] Like Richmond, Dewar continued to be outspoken, and in 1939 published his memoir *The Navy From Within*. Dewar directly and vehemently criticized the Royal Navy's officer training practices based on his own time as a cadet and junior officer.

Other members of the Young Turks had more successful careers than Dewar. For example, Admiral Reginald Plunkett-Drax resisted Richmond to some degree, and became the flag officer responsible for the East Coast convoys during the Second World War.[13] Drax was an intellectual like Richmond and as strident for reform. However he understood, unlike Dewar or Richmond that to be too harsh or outspoken would result only in conflict, not improvement.[14] As he said, "Friction between officers who are required to co-operate and work together is one of the most frequent causes of failure in war. Wherever personal jealousy or disagreement begins to operate it is almost certain that injury to the State will result."[15]

Another successful member was Henry Thursfield, who was promoted to Admiral and became by the Second World War the editor of Brassey's Naval Annual. Richmond held Thursfield in such high regard that he introduced Professor Graham to him during his voyage in 1942.[16] While the officers of the "Young Turks" did not always agree with each other, they agreed on general points regarding the Royal Navy's education practices and doctrine. Together

12 Robert Glenton, *The Royal Oak Affair: The Saga of Admiral Collard and Bandmaster Barnacle* (Barsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2001) 28-34, 177-183.
13 Robert Davison, "Striking a Balance between Dissent and Discipline: Admiral Sir Reginald Drax," *The Northern Mariner* Vol. 13. No, 2, (April 2003): 47.
14 Davison, "Striking a Balance,":55.
15 Davison, "Striking a Balance,":55.
16 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 22 July 1942.

they worked to reform the doctrine, attitudes and ideas championed Sir Geoffrey Callender personified. As a result of interviews with Richmond and Thursfield, Graham was permitted access to a conflict which had persisted since at least Richmond's time at Greenwich in 1921. This aspect of the conflict between the "Young Turks" and the establishment has received little scholarly notice, particularly Callender's participation.

Callender was a well respected if not as well known naval historian. He graduated from Merton College, Oxford in 1897 before being appointed head of History and English at Royal Naval College Osborne in 1905. Callender served as a historical instructor to Royal Navy officer cadets for nearly thirty years. In 1921, he transferred to Royal Naval College Dartmouth, and a year later transferred again to Royal Navy College Greenwich where he was appointed the first Professor of History. Callender retired prior to his 1934 appointment as the first director of the National Maritime Museum which opened to the public in 1937. He retained the position until his death in his office at the museum in 1946. Callender was a dedicated naval historian, and for the last 26 years of his life also served as honorary treasurer and secretary for the Society of Nautical Research. Through that office he led the campaigns to save and maintain *HMS Victory* and establish the National Maritime Museum.[17]

Professor Graham included details on his interviews and conversations as well as newspaper clippings from Richmond and his opponents and provided an insight to a conflict that has not yet been examined in scholarship. Graham's observations at Dartmouth as well as those of Richmond, Thursfield, other naval educators and Kenneth Dewar provide the opportunity to

17 Michael Lewis , "Callender, Sir Geoffrey Arthur Romaine," *Oxford Dictionary of Biography,* http://www.oxforddnb.com.subzero.lib.uoguelph.ca/view/article/32249.

qualify aspects of the Royal Navy's educational culture prior to the Second World War.

This paper does not simply serve to examine naval culture; it aims to highlight the advantages of cultural analysis, the importance of complexity and the primacy of understanding. H.C. Erik Midlefort states that complexity is the key to understanding history and that scholars and students of history must resist every urge to simplify history as they simplify their own lives.[18] Despite this admonition, history is constantly submitted to simplification. Consider, for example, popular history television programs, the "Very Short" historical texts, or undergraduate survey courses which focus on key information with little to no context. The ability to name the ships of the 3rd Battlecruiser Squadron at Jutland or answer "What Happened?" are insignificant compared to ability to answer "Why" and "Why Not Something Else". However, these efforts belie the creation of understanding.

The development of inter-disciplinary history and in particular the merging of hard-to-define cultural and social history with traditionally definition or classification-heavy military and political history creates a clash of academic traditions that forces historians to adapt simplification for the greater good of complexity. Historians are torn between the responsibility to engender as great an understanding as possible in their audience, and the fact that the majority of that audience may lack the basic knowledge required for a larger form of understanding and require concepts to be defined and bounded. This is a largely hopeless task and historians are faced with a Tridentine situation.[19] While it is easiest to list what is not part of a concept, efficient communication requires positive definitions to more easily create understanding.

18 Erik Midlefort, *A History of Madness in Sixteenth Century Germany* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 388.

19 The Council of Trent saw the Roman Catholic Church work to positively define Catholicism in response to the Protestant Reformations.

Culture is a complex concept that requires multiple, and overlapping definitions. Among the many identified in the *Oxford English Dictionary* , two are pertinent to the concepts behind this paper:

> 1) .., The distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular society, people, or period. Hence: a society or group characterized by such customs, etc.
> 2) The philosophy, practices, and attitudes of an institution, business, or other organization.[20]

These two definitions can in fact be hierarchical, in the sense that the culture of a particular organization will likely draw on important ideas, beliefs and practices of the larger society of which the organization forms a part.

Extrapolating, it can be posited that cultures are themselves composed of a number of sub-cultures that can be considered to be part of a hierarchy. To illustrate in a basic way, consider the following: a Royal Navy flag lieutenant would be a member of a theoretical Royal Navy culture, a Royal Navy Officer Culture, a Royal Navy staff officer culture, and a junior officer culture. To explain in terms used in this paper, the overall Royal Navy culture can be described as a widespread or macro-culture, while the more specific cultures can be described as micro-cultures.

At the core of the analysis in this paper is the fact that cultures – broad as in whole societies, or specific to an organization or a part of an organization – are dynamic, and in a complex way. On the one hand, culture is always changing – that is the behaviours, dress, attitudes develop into new forms, often in response to pressure from innovators or reformers. Yet

20 Oxford English Dictionary, "Culture," Oxford English Dictionary, http://dictionary.oed.com.remote.libproxy.wlu.ca/cgi/entry/50055634?query_type=word&queryword=culture&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=1&search_id=PMaC-8SJ6uP-1952&hilite=50055634

at the same time there are almost always groups of people who are traditionalists. They seek to define culture as static, perpetuating the cultural values and attributes of a single and specific period although this may be a constructed image, rather than a true representation of the past culture. This was the situation Graham encountered in his investigations of British naval historical education.

Historiography

The overt inclusion of cultural analysis in military history is a relatively modern phenomenon. A thematic rather than chronological approach will better demonstrate the breadth of the historiography.

The broadest sources of the literature are the official or general histories; specifically Captain Stephen Roskill's *The War at Sea 1939-1945*, Corelli Barnett's *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, or W.A.B. Douglas et al's recent Canadian naval history *No Higher Purpose.* The Roskill publication and *No Higher Purpose* are balanced works with only the appropriate national biases in terms of focus. However *Engage the Enemy More Closely* is a heavily biased work; Barnett indicates through the choice of words and the tone of his prose that the Royal Navy fared poorly during the Second World War largely due to incompetence, or poorly executed plans. In general survey histories avoid cultural analysis, however, *No Higher Purpose* directly discusses the Royal Canadian Navy culture in terms of the conflict with Royal Navy escort forces.[21]

21 *WAB Douglas et al. No Higher Purpose: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-1945 Volume II, Part I* (St Catherines: Vanwell Publishing Ltd. 2002) 33-34.

The second group of sources are focused works with the specific topics, whose scope allows for greater depth of analysis. Because these sources are much more focused, it is necessary to examine a greater breadth of sources in order to acquire more perspective. These sources can examine individuals, or institutions but do so over a specific time frame. The first group within this category includes studies of important individuals, in this case Sir Herbert Richmond. Barry Hunt's biography, *Sailor-Scholar,* is foremost amongst these sources and provides basic information about Richmond's character, his activities, and his impact on the Royal Navy. Hunt infers a conflict between two cultures within the Royal Navy, and provides examples of the conflict through the inclusion of letters from Richmond to Dewar that criticize Callender.[22] However, the analysis is limited as it examines only Richmond's perspective.

A broader source and exemplar of an institutional study is Captain Roskill's *Naval Policy Between the Wars*. Roskill examines the policies of the entire Royal Navy as opposed to a single person or small group of people, and provides a greater perspective in one of the least understood periods of Royal Navy history. Roskill examines events in a straightforward fashion without directly identifying developments in institutional culture. An analysis of the events does present some clues about developments in culture. In a pertinent example, Roskill examines Richmond's contributions to the formation of a naval staff, and his efforts to reduce the size of warships.[23] However Roskill does not use the concepts of cultural history or cultural development in his analysis which somewhat limits the use of his work.

A third group include studies of one facet of an institution, in this case naval education.

22 Barry Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar: Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982) 128-129.

23 Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars Vol 1: 1919-1929* : *The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism* (New York: Walker & Company, 1968) 126, 224, 315, 444.

Unlike the tight chronological focus of the previous category, these sources examine a single aspect or topic over decades or centuries and would most easily show cultural developments. The first example of this type of source is H.W. Dickinson's *Educating the Royal Navy*, published in 2007. The text is a straightforward description of the officer training program, looking at the 18th and 19th centuries. Accordingly, it ends prior to Callender's appointment, but covers Richmond's training period. A similar text is D.M. Schurman's *The Education of A Navy*, which examines training from the late 19th century to the First World War. In both cases the texts are excellent for providing information about midshipman training, inferring precepts of Royal Navy institutional culture or cultures. Schurman directly connects the education to the development of Royal Navy strategic doctrine; however, it is not treated as a cultural analysis.

The importance and nature of the Battle of the North Atlantic highlights the importance of anti-submarine warfare and inter-ally cooperation as facets whose study can illustrate naval culture. An example is Marc Milner's *U-Boat Hunters*, an evaluation of the Royal Canadian Navy that involves analysis of contemporary sources. Milner identifies two periods within the battle for the RCN which have been studied and describes the first, “The appeal of the earlier period is evident in the documents themselves, which offer a distinctly traditional, almost Nelsonic view of the Atlantic war, 'Anti-submarine warfare', especially the great convoy battles took place largely on the surface and were easily explained in familiar language.”[24] This is a significant statement as it indicates adherence to an interpretation of Nelsonic values which is inferred to have been widely understood at the time, an understanding that Milner shares without

24 Marc Milner, *The U-Boat Hunters: Royal Canadian Navy and the Offensive against Germany's Submarines* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) xiv.

qualification. It also reflects the close cultural association between the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy. Another example is Rear Admiral Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal's text *The French Navy in World War II* that focuses on the efforts of the French Navy, but also highlights interactions between the Free French and the Royal Navy.[25] The Admiral has the following to say after a discussion of Royal Navy convoy escorts,

> No sailor can read the account of these stubborn fights in the open Atlantic without having the greatest respect for all the participants on both sides. He might even have difficulty in determining who was the most deserving of his respect – the almost superhuman courage of the submariners, the sacrificial fortitude of the merchant mariners, or the aggressive intelligence and tenacity of those who manned the escort ships.[26]

In these examples, the authors provide a cultural description or label, but provide little explanation. For example, Milner does not define what 'Nelsonic' entails, nor Auphan explain 'aggressive intelligence'.

Another category of sources are the memoirs and other primary and secondary sources written by veterans. These sources often reveal something of institutional culture because the prose and approach chosen and the values represented will reflect that institutional culture. Two valuable examples are Vice Admiral Kenneth Dewar's *The Navy From Within*, and Peter Coy's *The Echo of a Fighting Flower*. These two sources provide complementary perspectives, with Dewar providing the view from a senior officer with experience of the First World War, while Coy was an enlisted crewman aboard *HMS Narcissus* in the Second World War.

There are some sources that feature more in-depth discussions of naval culture. An early

25 The Free French forces were those aligned with the Allies under the direction of General De Gaulle.
26 Paul Auphan & Jacques Mordal, *The French Navy in World War*, trans. ACJ Sabalot (Annapolis: USNI, 1959) 164-65.

example is Arthur Marder's 1972 article “The Influence of History on Sea Power: The Royal Navy and the Lessons of 1914-1918”. Marder argues that the Royal Navy failed to take complete advantage of the First World War due to several factors, including some that can be identified as cultural factors. The most important to this paper is the emphasis of anti-intellectualism. Marder describes the anti-intellectualism in three ways. The first aspect is the idea of absolute authority which dominates the Royal Navy and limited the opportunities for officers to voice new ideas and dissent lest they embarrass a more senior officer.[27] The second is a defensive reaction to Richmond and his allies' outspoken criticism of the institutional intellectual status quo, and absolute obedience. Finally, and most directly connected with this paper is the idea that history doesn't repeat itself and therefore study of naval tactics and history is of no use.[28] This is a significant article. While Marder does not once use the term 'culture,' what he describes is a group of cultural responses. This article also establishes anti-intellectualism as cultural precept that facilitates the cultural analysis in the first chapter. The article also confirms the character analysis of Richmond as well Kenneth Dewar, one of Richmond's closest allies.

Arthur Herman's biography of the Royal Navy *To Rule the Waves* examines schisms that fundamentally changed the Royal Navy culture to analyze institutional social and cultural developments. A prominent example is the chapter "Close Encounters" which describes the rise of the Royal Navy during the 18th century. Herman picks out the creation of the division system as a major improvement for the Royal Navy, “The divisional system dramatically improved life on Royal Navy ships. It forced officers to get to know their men as individuals, it taught the

27 Arthur Marder, “The influence of History on Sea Power: The Royal Navy and the lessons of 1914-1918” *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 41 No. 4 (Nov, 1972): 438.
28 Marder, “The Influence of History on Sea Power,”: 439.

midshipmen to handle their future crewmen with humanity and understanding, as well as firmness and discipline. It taught every navy officer what conscientious officers ... knew."[29] Herman describes cultural development and history though the perspective of social, technological and operational history. Herman's adaption of biography clearly illustrates a major problem with institutional cultural history – that of change over time. Herman divides the Royal Navy into distinct socio-political, operational and thus cultural eras in to order facilitate the biographical model that he employs. Some examples include the Elizabethan, Commonwealth and Restoration periods This approach allows Herman to examine four hundred years of the Royal Navy as a survey while addressing each period in depth.

Andrew Gordon's monograph *The Rules of the Game* presents a more focused examination of competing cultures within the Royal Navy through an examination of the Battle of Jutland in 1916. Gordon uses the battle to contrast two specific and well illustrated professional cultures within the battle of Jutland. Gordon's examination of the actions of the Battle Cruiser Force prior to the section of the battle known as the run to the north sets up comparison with the following examination of the Grand Fleet's command and control procedures in the following part of the battle. Gordon separates the two sections with a detailed narration of the development of command and control cultures within the Mediterranean Fleet in the final decade of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, and follows officers from their early service as junior officers in the Mediterranean and other duties to their roles as flag or command officers at Jutland. To introduce the terminology produced before, Gordon

29 Arthur Herman, *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004) 197.

compares the Grand Fleet and Battle Cruiser Force command and control micro-cultures.

Methodology

With this historiography in mind, this paper will partially use *The Rules of the Game* as an exemplar or justification for the intellectual processes, however with some fundamental differences. In this case, where *The Rules of The Game* examines the definite impact of two command and control micro-cultures upon a well documented and significant event, this paper will use the same cultural basis to examine a theoretical tactical macro-culture derived from Richmond's criticisms and claims that Callender's teaching had any impact on a selection of incidents.

The brief exploration of those claims allowed by this paper is accomplished in several steps. The paper will begin with an elaboration of "Blood and Thunder," followed by an examination of Richmond and the other "Young Turks" criticisms. That discussion will then produce the qualification of some aspects of the Royal Navy's institutional education and training culture, however, understanding – and not knowledge – is the goal of historical scholarship. The first chapter will therefore conclude with a discussion of the significance and qualification of a methodology or intellectual framework for testing those claims.

The second chapter will continue the process by utilizing that methodology and examining four disparate case studies from the Royal Navy's activities during the Second World War. The incidents will be examined separately and in chronological order, with an explanation of why each incident was chosen and how they present a diverse group of cases. The paper will then conclude with an overall analysis of the incidents and a response to Richmond's claims.

Chapter One

Sir Geoffrey Callender was responsible for teaching history to naval cadets as young as thirteen and his pedagogical methods were well suited for transmitting his passion for naval history to his young charges. He was more than just a lecturer and authored a number of the textbooks used by the naval cadets, particularly *Sea Kings of Britain* and *The Naval Side of British History*. Callender's prowess as a teacher was such that he inspired his students to write their own monographs on naval history.[30] Richmond's description of Callender's approach as "Blood and Thunder" is memorable, but also misleading. As much as it can be certain, Richmond used the phrase first during his conversations summer of 1942, and consequently reused by Graham in his diary as a handy label. The phrase brings to mind "hellfire and brimstone" and the passionate Methodist preachers of the Victorian era and while Callender was famously passionate his goal was enthusiasm, not fear. As his obituary states, "his was not dry-as-dust research, for he had an infectious enthusiasm for his subject and the faculty of making it entertaining to the audience of his lectures."[31]

We therefore must discount the phrase in terms of the pedagogical intent. Callender was a product of the Victorian era with a Victorian sense of pride in and passion for the Royal Navy. His enthusiasm transmitted into the textbook he wrote and pedagogical intent. This effort was strongly aided by Callender's quick wit and enthralling conversational skills. Graham disagreed with the pedagogical framework Callender had established at the Royal Naval Colleges, yet was unable to contain his admiration for the man.[32] "Tea with Sir Geoffrey Callender, who is less

30 David Matthew, *The Naval Heritage* (London: Collins, 1945) v. This book was dedicated to Sir Geoffrey Callender.
31 "Obituary: Sir Geoffrey Callender, Historian of the Royal Navy," *Times of London*, November 7 1946, 7.
32 Ibid.

blood and thunder than his books – a shrewd, reasonable and kindly man... despite his lack of really scholarly work, Callender has done much for naval history... He seems to have been a truly great teacher and is fair enough to admit Richmond's pre-eminence."[33]

The term can be more appropriately, if still loosely, applied to the historical content of the "Blood and Thunder" school. Callender created and taught a superficial form of naval history that was a product of the English Victorian milieu and used a highly romantic and nationalistic vernacular. Callender was a cheerleader for the "Age of Sail" Royal Navy as well as the Royal Navy as the defender of Great Britain and the British way of life. In many ways, he was in promoted an idealized perception of the Royal Navy rather than the reality of the 20th century Royal Navy. His lack of objectivity did not make him a bad teacher, but it did influence the teaching materials he created. Few of Callender's works are readily available, they provide the opportunity to examine the historical content. Callender's publications best demonstrate his wit and passion. Callender presented a highly glorified version of naval history intended to inspire the naval cadets to live up to the standard set by previous generations of gallant and patriotic officers by highlighting not only British victories, but aspects that best fit what the Victorian and Edwardian society and Royal Navy expected future officers to become.

Callender's first textbook *Sea Kings of Britain* was first published in 1907 and subsequently published in a number of editions for the Royal Navy colleges. The textbook is a hagiographic treatment of the lives and careers of several of Britain's most important naval officers. Significantly, this book was published shortly after Callender started employment at Royal Naval College Osborne to educate the youngest cadets, approximately thirteen years of

33 Gerald Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 1942.

age. The text is clearly aimed towards younger minds, and the colourful prose bears very little similarity to what would be considered modern academic history. Callender provides a respectful and exciting summary of the history of the Royal Navy that balances entertainment with the provision of knowledge, but omits any real analysis that could provide understanding of the principles of sea power or naval warfare. The selection of biographies highlights the best and the brightest of the age of sail, with little criticism. For example, Callender begins the section on Francis Drake, with a discussion of the tyranny of Phillip II of Spain and the valiant English sailors who defied Phillip.

> At such a juncture from out of the deep there rose a mighty arm holding a sword wondrous as Excalibur itself. The sword was the sword of Her Majesty's most humble and devoted servant, Francis Drake...So long as the reader realizes as well as Philip and Elizabeth that the duel was a duel to the death, it is clearly impossible to stigmatize and as a buccaneer and pirate one who combined with the noble and lovable qualities that go to make the ideal commander, a faculty for intuitive discovery of the weak point in his adversary's only comparable to Nelson himself.[34]

Callender acknowledges that Drake was a pirate and rogue, however glosses over Drake's personal, tactical and strategic failings by dismissing them as acceptable given the behaviour of Elizabeth I and Philip II. Callender only mentions Drake's betrayal of Richard Hawkins in his statement "The Drake who at the crucial moment laid his sword at Elizabeth's feet was not the Drake of San Juan de Ulloa" without a description of those events.[35] He further describes Drake's voyages after his circumnavigation of the globe as "Elizabeth unchained her dragon!"[36] Callender excuses Drake's failure to expel the Portuguese from Spain in five months through a

34 Sir Geoffrey Callender, *Sea Kings of Britain* (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1920) 19.
35 Callender, *Sea Kings of Britain,* 20.
36 Callender, *Sea Kings of Britain*, 31.

comparison to Generals Moore and Wellesley's five-year peninsular campaign against Napoleon.[37] Drake's disastrous final voyage to the New World is similarly swept aside. Callender's efforts to recast Drake *the man* highlight the superficiality of this school of history, in particular the efforts to create perfect role models for officer cadets by removing the warts and presenting presenting not just the type of officer, but the type of man that that the cadets should revere and emulate. The description of the conflict between England and Spain as a "duel to the death" and a justification for Drake's choices also glosses over those very choices in order to cast a good light upon a founding father of the Royal Navy.[38]

Callender also commented upon the type of behaviour and tactical decisions that officers should imitate. An example contemporary to Drake is Captain Richard Grenville, also examined in *Sea Kings of Britain*. The treatment of Grenville's life only examines the loss of the *HMS Revenge* to a Spanish fleet in 1591, further emphasizing this tale as a particular example for emulation. Following the defeat of the Armada, the various English efforts to capitalize failed but those were mainly due to disease and poor planning. The *Revenge* was lost in a duel with a Spanish fleet which had due to poor luck surrounded the ship during the night. Grenville's decision to fight and die along beside many of his crew is precisely the type of decision that this paper will examine in the next chapter. Callender casts Grenville's behaviour as an act of nationalistic piety that reflects the idealized patriotism of Victorian England and underscores the happy self-sacrifice required of naval officers. "The last fight of the *Revenge*, and the immortal heroism of the redoubtable Sir Richard Grenville ... cannot fail to stir a thrill of admiration, so

37 Callender, *Sea Kings of Britain,* 31.
38

long as loyal hearts beat quicker at the name of those who found it happiness to die for England's honour."[39] Callender again focuses on the inherent gallantry as opposed to the real tactical issues of the history to set an example for his young students. "When he had finished these or other such like words, he gave up the ghost with great and stout courage, and no man could perceive any sign of heaviness in him."[40] Callender's prose delineates what is acceptable and patriotic and masculine without describing what would be unacceptable. Grenville's decision to fight and die is not only justified, but indeed glorified by his gallantry and the way that he accepted death for his country.

Another of Callender's published works gives further insight into his personality and his approach to history. As a son of the Victorian era, Callender fully shared the appreciation of nationalistic poetry which was popular during the 19th century. That Victorian appreciation of poetry was combined with his love for his nation and navy in his collection *Realms of Melody*, published in 1916. The collection was dedicated to young, exploring minds and celebrates English nationalism and the Royal Navy amongst other topics.[41] The collection illustrates the larger English social and culture milieu from which "Blood and Thunder" was born and demonstrates the romantic connections between patriotism, gallantry, the Navy and Battle within English, and therefore Royal Navy, culture. The collection includes poems that espouse the same platitudes regarding the glories of war and the masculinity of gallantry as Callender's textbooks. The collection includes sections devoted to "England," "Romance," "Battle," "Eloquence and Ships," and "Sailors and the Sea."[42] Callender includes Tennyson's poems "The Charge of the

39 Callender, *Sea Kings of Britain*, 100.
40 Callender, *Sea Kings of Britain,* 211.
41 Sir Geoffrey Callender ed., *Realms of Melody* (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1916) xiii.
42 Callender, *Realms of Melody* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1916) xiii.

Light Brigade" and "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade" that like Callender's treatment Grenville, treat death as the greatest form of patriotism.

Callender published his second textbook, *The Naval Side of British History*, in 1924, and there were ten print runs by 1941, mainly to supply the Royal Naval Colleges. In the introduction Callender addresses the different approaches to historical education, and acknowledges the importance of analysis designed to impart an understanding of sea power in its national and international contexts. There is room, he suggests, for both such analysis and a celebration of heroes. Apocrypha such as officers bowling before the Battle of Gravelines in 1588 or Nelson's death in *HMS Victory*'s cockpit

> deserve enshrinement, because they stimulate the imagination like the gentle undercurrent of haunting music which throbs the tenser passages of a great drama. But taken by themselves they cannot be said to put us into touch with the realities of naval war; the compulsion exercised by fleets on cabinets and cabinets, of fleets; the vulnerability of seaborne commerce, the dependence of an oceanic empire[43]

Nevertheless the book provides a glorified account that connects the twentieth century Royal Navy to a composite image of the most successful and prominent aspects of the Age of Sail Royal Navy. In the preface to the 1940 edition, Callender decries the manner in which government and public had taken the Royal Navy for granted, and cites as evidence the government's poor treatment of Drake, Raleigh, Rooke and Byng, leading figures of the sail-age Navy from the 16th to 18th centuries. "Such an attitude, deplorable on all grounds, is attended to deadly peril to ourselves – the peril that we may come to overlook the need for the shield of our earthly realm's salvation."[44]

43 Sir Geoffrey Callender, *The Naval Side of British History* (London: Christophers, 1941) vi.
44 Callender, *Naval Side of British History*, vi.

Like the previous textbook, *The Naval Side of British History* is a straightforward narrative history, but obviously aimed towards older cadets with a basic understanding of British history. In particular, Callender examines how the Navy was a direct actor in events vital to national interest such as the capture of Gibraltar during the War of Spanish Succession, the American and French Revolutions, and the Napoleonic Wars. Callender strives to illustrate to emphasize the importance of naval warfare but in many ways ignores the complexity of naval operations, as in his account of the battle of the Falkland Islands in 1914 where a British battlecruiser force under Vice-Admiral Doveton Sturdee destroyed a the German Admiral Graf von Spee's cruiser squadron.

> Fortune rewards those who are worth of her favours. On 8th December a few hours after the British fleet's arrival, with one of the magic threads which her fingers love to spin, she drew to the entrance of Stanley harbour the very force which Admiral Sturdee had come out to find. The process of coaling was incomplete, but plans were cut and dried, and every British captain had his orders and knew what to do.. Like Boscawen he signalled 'General Chase';..like Lord Howe before his most famous fight, piped all hands to dinner.[45]

Callender links Sturdee to famous British Admirals of the past, and then suggests that the British luck prior to the Battle of the Falkland Islands in 1914 was not luck, or the result of a decision made by Admiral Graf von Spee but rather predetermination or fate. Certainly this sort of allusion was well in tune with a certain thread of British nationalism, for the book includes a cartoon from *Punch* magazine in which Drake congratulates Rear Admiral Sir Roger Keyes after the Zeebruges and Ostend raid of 1918; “Bravo, Sir! Traditions holds my men singed a King's beard, and yours have singed a Kaiser's moustaches.” The association was not intellectually sound. While Keyes and the other Young Turks favoured, in some cases, aggression and gallantry

45 Callender, *Naval Side of British History*, 271-72.

over caution, they were in no way Drake's spiritual successors.

The loose and romantic associations with the navy of a bygone era, heavy bias towards narrative and an almost total lack of analysis relates to the fact that for Callender, the purpose of naval history for cadets was only to provide them colourful facts, anecdotes and stories. There was no greater pedagogical purpose beyond the provision of basic knowledge. Little was provided to create an understanding of naval warfare beyond a general celebration of courage and patriotism. “Blood and Thunder” history, in short, supported a tactical macro culture that eschewed analysis in favour of "muddling through" on the basis of the tradition of derring-do of heroes from the past.. This was a reflection of the rampant anti-intellectualism not only within the Royal Navy but within English society in general. Given that few senior officers within the Royal Navy saw detailed tactical evaluation of the First World War as practical or useful it is not surprising that Callender – who belonged to the same ideological branch of the Navy's family – would fail to provide students the opportunity to benefit from what evaluations existed.[46]

With this understanding of “Blood and Thunder”, it is now possible to discuss criticisms of Callender and the established intellectual culture from Richmond and his “Young Turk” allies. Richmond was set against early enlistment of officer cadets in favour of officer cadets joining following civilian high school, as he explained to Graham. Graham commented upon this following his visit to Dartmouth where he examined classes composed of “Drakes”, who had joined the Navy at approximately thirteen years of age, and “Frobishers”, who joined later.[47] “Frobisher Officers take the view, partially shared by Admiral Richmond... that (the) Frobisher

46 Marder, “The Influence of History on Sea Power,”: 439.
47 'Drakes' entered the service at the age of 13, while 'Frobishers' entered the service after completing high school.

system produces men less bound by routine and encased in tradition."[48]

While courage and gallantry is occasionally required of naval officers, it is more important to use judgement. Far from simply narrating the glorious history of the Royal Navy, Richmond argued history must be used to educate rather than instruct an officer. "The lessons of history are not confined to strategy; they extend equally to tactics."[49] For Richmond naval historical education must show naval cadets how the Navy had done its duty in the past. The role of the historical lecturer's role was to demonstrate the Navy's purpose and it's use as an instrument of policy. Hence Richmond was criticizing Callender's intent. Richmond further expressed to Professor Graham in 1942 that history must be taught for the purpose of instilling problem-solving skills by presenting examples of how past admirals and officers had sought to answer tactical and strategic questions rather than muddling their way through. After the interview, Graham records a similar view on the subject in his diary. "In any event I had little learned in Dartmouth regarding the teaching of history per se.. although Hughes agreed with Richmond forcefully that problems not heroes should be the essence of teaching for the more mature cadets."[50] This quote suggests Callender's textbooks for older students were still in use, and demonstrates that Callender's pedagogical methods still prevailed a decade after his retirement.

The criticism of the *intent* also extended to Callender's historical *content* as shown by excerpts of letters from Richmond to Kenneth Dewar from 26 July 1923 near the end of Richmond's time at Greenwich. The letter provides clear details of Richmond's view on

48 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 11 July 1942.
49 Sir Herbert Richmond, "The Place of History in Naval Education," in *National Policy and Naval Strength* (London: Longmans, Green Co., 1928) 266.
50 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 3 July 1942. Hughes is Edward Arthur Hughes, author and historian.

Callender as well as what he taught; “That ASS Callender... you never saw such drivel as he pumps into [the students]. Callender is again lecturing on the size of the *Henri Grace à Dieu* of 1519...I put to their Lordships that Naval History to the sea officer was what military history is to the soldier- the foundation of his knowledge of war.”[51] Richmond repeated these criticisms to Graham in 1942, during the discussion of “principles and problems” rather than “combats and heroes.”[52]

The second major issue that Richmond identified was an institutional smugness within the Royal Navy, and he blamed the Royal Navy's heavy combat losses to that smugness. “Richmond has emphasized a unique feature of this war – the speed with which our ships go down, never before have big ships gone under so rapidly, and German naval architecture seems to have improved beyond our down despite the pride or smugness of the Constructor Branch.”[53] Graham also interviewed Admiral Thursfield, who was editor of Brassey's naval review and bitterly criticized the *Times* of London for its repeated celebration of the way the armed forces were "muddling through" the war, thus demonstrating the British “national genius for improvisation.”[54] After Graham's interview with Callender, he criticized the historical teaching staff at the colleges in particular the “feeling that a man can be sent to Greenwich for 6 months training or less and then be in a position to teach history.”[55] His opinion of Michael Lewis, a senior lecturer at Greenwich was as follows, “(he) believes that general education is as important as straight naval history and is a little fearful over-specialization. On ships and officer and

51 Barry Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar: Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982) 128-129.
52 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 29 June 1942
53 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 30 June 1942
54 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 22 July 1942.
55 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 11 July 1942.

technical history he is extremely good, on general background he is hazier and too apt to try for attention rather than authority – a la Callender."[56] To summarize, Richmond and Graham criticized Callender's pedagogical intent and historical content, while arguing that changes could be made to facilitate the education of good young officers, especially if they had already completed a humanistic education at civilian high schools.

The thrust of Richmond's criticisms is most clearly expressed in the vitriolic attacks another "Young Turk", Vice Admiral Kenneth Dewar, made in the 1930s. His first complaint was was that the Royal Navy continued to train officers as if it was the age of sail. The major example was the use of sail training vessels for all midshipmen.[57] Dewar's second major complaint was that ingenuity and free thinking were stifled by bullying and a lack of social discipline, compared with the rigorous academic discipline as imposed by the culture of total obedience. The third complaint was that the Royal Navy instructors were poorly suited to their tasks, as midshipmen were initially taught by petty officers and able-bodied seamen, while academics instead of serving officers taught Sub-Lieutenants the mathematical fundamentals of navigation and other subjects without any practical application.[58]

Concurrent examination of Richmond and Dewar's criticisms allow scholars to qualify a number of aspects of the Royal Navy's educational culture prior to the Second World War. First and most important is anti-intellectualism as it is a cultural pre-condition that allows the other identified aspects to exist. Arthur Marder identified anti-intellectualism in his examination of the Royal Navy's study of the Battle of Jutland, but it can be more broadly applied as the foundation

56 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 27 July 1942.
57 Sir Kenneth Dewar, *The Navy From Within* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1939) 14.
58 Dewar, *The Navy From Within*, 40.

of the culture Dewar and Richmond criticized, and that partially existed as a defensive reaction to Dewar and Richmond among other people.[59]

That anti-intellectualism allowed three interdependent but distinct cultural aspects to develop and continue to exist. First, the Royal Navy as an institution and community of people was unwilling to examine its practices or institutional culture in any kind of depth, promoting only a superficial institutional self-awareness. Second, the Royal Navy had an emotional attachment to a constructed image of its own institutional past that ignored less glamorous or successful aspects of that history. Third, the Royal Navy had an institutional smugness or arrogance that was apparent in the interaction between the Royal Navy and outsiders, as well as between groups of Royal Navy personnel.

Because the aspects are similar to each other, Dewar and Richmond provide examples that reflect all the cultural aspects discussed. For example, Dewar criticized the practice of training crews to repel boarders with pike and cutlass, a defensive method held over from the age of sail and inappropriate for the Second World War.[60] Both Richmond and Dewar discuss the disadvantages of the enlistment of boys as young as thirteen as midshipmen, referring to the greater ability of the civilian high schools to provide a humanistic education and the negative aspects of the training ships that Dewar experienced aboard *HMS Brittania*.[61] [62] A further example from Dewar involved the inability to upgrade a warship's communications systems because the senior officer who designed the system would see the report and would be offended by the challenge to his reputation. This example demonstrates that collective arrogance was both

59 Marder, "The Influence of History on Sea Power,": 438.
60 Dewar, *The Navy From Within*, 35.
61 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, July 3 1942.
62 Dewar, *The Navy From Within*, 14-16.

permitted by and reinforced anti-intellectualism.[63]

Placing the Graham diary in the context of Dewar's criticisms allows a level of understanding regarding Royal Navy culture and education, however greater understanding can be achieved if Richmond's statements connecting "Blood and Thunder" to Royal Navy operational failures are tested.

Prior to beginning analysis it is necessary to discuss the methodology and intellectual framework for testing Richmond's statements. The connection between "Blood and Thunder" and Royal Navy tactical decision-making will be tested by examining specific tactical decisions, and how specific officers approached decision making. All decisions are the product of a decision making process which is influenced by numerous types of information. For this study, tactical decisions are considered to be influenced by two groups of factors. The first group of factors are tactical factors, such as ship's course, speed, damage, remaining weaponry, bearing of enemy, enemy damage, weather, and one's mission. This set of factors will change with every situation, if not for every decision. The second group of factors are non-tactical factors or cultural preconditions such as maintaining one's personal reputation, the reputation of the ship, the Royal Navy, or acting in accordance with societal expectations. While this second group of factors is difficult to prove, consider the frequency with which people are asked to reconsider decisions in order to protect their reputation, or behave in a certain manner because to do otherwise would result in humiliation.

Officers will have been trained to deal with both kinds of factors, although in different ways. For the actively considered tactical factors, officers would have been given specific

63 Dewar, *The Navy From Within*, 65.

training aboard ship. Such training would be specific to the type of ship or ships being commanded. For example, the commanding officer of a destroyer would react to a specific set of tactical circumstances in a different way than the commanding officer of a submarine would. These commonly held ideas and rules would form a tactical micro-culture, specific to that type. For example, while there would be a cruiser tactical micro-culture and a battleship micro-culture, there would also be more specific ASW escort destroyer and fleet destroyer tactical micro-cultures, due to the fundamental differences in the missions of those ships and their capabilities.

Tactical cultural pre-conditions, such as reputation, may or may not be actively considered by officers, however they are likely to influence an officer's tactical decision-making process, making certain options more acceptable than others. These rules and commonly held assumptions, or cultural pre-conditions, could theoretically form a tactical macro-culture that could influence a large number of officers on different types of ships. Accordingly, such an education would have to occur at an early enough stage to influence large numbers of officers. Logically it can be extrapolated that naval cadets historical education may be the source of a tactical macroculture, if one does exist. Naval history classes, by nature, would focus on the Royal Navy's history, emphasizing the heroes of the Royal Navy, and the battles they fought. Lessons on Drake, Blake and Nelson would have to include presentations of these gentlemen as role models for contemporary students, and their tactical behaviour in the battles studied would also provide a model for how naval officers should be.

The first issue is qualifying how Callender's “Blood and Thunder” school would have translated to a tactical culture. “Blood and Thunder” tactical tendencies would lead officers to be

more cavalier or carelessly aggressive. This would have been apparent in a willingness to risk one's ship more than is necessary in a given tactical situation. Officers would also follow the examples of Drake and Grenville and choose action and violence over other options. Tactics would heavily rely on instinct rather than a decision-making system or prior tactical planning. This reluctance to plan is indicated by Admiral Thursfield's response to the concept of "muddling through", as well as Callender's use of fate in his historical analysis as shown in the discussion of the Battle of the Falkland Islands in *The Naval Side of British History*.[64] "Blood and Thunder" cultural preconditions would recognize the reputation of the Royal Navy as something that needed to be constantly upheld through their own behaviour and tactical decisions. This could be acted out by officers trying to emulate Nelson, either through tactics or signals sent or other means. The reputation to be defended would be established through the study of "heroes and combats" that Richmond criticized.[65]

To put these ideas in perspective, consider the earlier aspects of Royal Navy institutional educational culture. The decision-making processes and factors would be anti-intellectual or instinctual. Tactics would involve muddling through, and officers would attempt to uphold a constructed image of the ideal tactical officer. Finally, an institutional smugness or cultural sense of superiority would justify these behaviours.

In order to evaluate whether an officer's decisions during an incident reflect "Blood and Thunder" it is necessary to look at aspects beyond the tactical decisions made during the heat of battle. Tactical cultural pre-conditions are important, but very difficult to detect, since few if any

64 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 22 July 1942.
65 Graham, *Convoy Diary*, 29 June 1942.

officers would directly speak on such a topic. Therefore, it is necessary to examine other decisions, approaches to duty, or personal insights that will allow us to judge the applicability of "Blood and Thunder" in each individual case.

Properly developed methodology requires framework for selecting test cases in addition to development of the test itself. Incidents chosen need to represent a broad spectrum of operations as well as be able to be tested for "Blood and Thunder". Accordingly, the case studies have been chosen according to the following model:

1) Ships involved present officers with the maximum tactical flexibility.

2) Single ships or small groups to guarantee maximum flexibility independence.

3) That the senior officer made his choice from a number of options.

4) The incidents are discussed in the official histories.

Chapter Two

Having established how Callender's "Blood and Thunder" school of naval history could have been embodied in a tactical macro-culture, it is possible to test specific incidents. Comparing each incident to the theoretical cultural framework will put Richmond's criticisms of Callender and "Blood and Thunder" in perspective and create greater understanding of the interaction between officer education and operational results. Each case study will be divided into four sections:

1) A description of the incident, including the strategic situation.
2) A historiography beginning with the official or survey histories and ending with memoirs or primary sources.
3) An evaluation of the senior officer's intellectual or decision-making processes, followed by an evaluation of the tactical decisions made during the incident.
4) An final analysis comparing the evaluations to "Blood and Thunder".

Four incidents have been chosen that both satisfy the criteria laid out in the previous chapter for choosing incidents and present a diverse view of naval operations. The following incidents will be examined in this chapter and will be examined in chronological order:

1) The Battle of the River Plate from December 1939
2) The loss of *HMS Glowworm* from April 1940
3) Convoy SC 42 from September 1941 and
4) Convoy HX 228 and loss of *HMS Harvester*

Case Study #1: The Battle of the River Plate

The Battle of the River Plate was fought in December 1939 between the German panzerschiff *Admiral Graf Spee* and three Allied cruisers of Force G under the command of Commodore Henry Harwood, attached to the Royal Navy base at Freetown, Sierra Leone. The *Graf Spee* had been successful as a commerce raider since the beginning of the war, and the battle was a culmination of the Royal Navy and allied attempts to disable the unknown raider in the South Atlantic and Indian oceans. After several weeks of chasing rumours, mounting losses for Commonwealth shipping in the area and communication failures which prevented operational information from reaching Admiral Lyon at Freetown, the Royal Navy received a positional warning when the *MV Doric Star* signalled that she was under attack by an unknown German warship.[66] Given the Admiralty's response to the detection of a German raider in the South Atlantic – the formation of a number of heavy hunting groups dedicated to the eradication of the panzerschiffs- it is easy to grasp the significance the Admiralty and the French Navy placed upon sinking German commerce raiders and specifically the pocket battleships.

Harwood rendezvoused with his ships off of the River Plate on December 12 and contact was made with the enemy on December 13. Harwood placed his group in two divisions, grouping the flagship *HMS Ajax* with *HMNZS Achilles* in one division and the heavy cruiser *HMS Exeter* in the other. *Ajax and Achilles* were armed with 6-inch guns while the *Exeter* was armed with 8-inch guns. During the battle, the British ships were heavily damaged while the advanced armour scheme protected the *Graf Spee*. Captain Hans Langsdorff of the *Graf Spee* chose to secede the battle despite the greater damage inflicted upon the British ships and

66 Stephen Roskill, *The War at Sea: 1939-1945: The Defensive* (London: HM Stationery Office, 1954) , 117.

proceeded to Montevideo, where he ultimately scuttled his ship.[67]

Even collectively, the British ships were outmatched. The Treaty of Versailles limited Germany's right to defend itself and replace pre-First World War ear ships, but provided a general flexibility in the way that the *Reichsmarine* and later *Kriegmarine* could design and build replacement warships. The *Graf Spee* had been designed from the outset as an efficient commerce raider that was capable of defending itself against warships. Powered by efficient diesel engines, it had a tactical edge over the British ships that was compounded by its armament. The *Graf Spee* was armed with 11-inch guns which had greater range, penetration and explosive power than any British ship smaller than a battlecruiser. In comparison, the Royal Navy was limited by the international agreements of the Washington and London treaties of 1922 and 1930 respectively. Under those treaties, the Royal Navy's cruisers were individually limited to 10,000 tons, and a maximum armament of 8-inch guns. The Royal Navy had further decided in the 1930s to build cruisers with 6-inch guns in order to maximize the number of ships that could be built within the Royal Navy's allotted cruiser tonnage.[68]

Scholars have heavily studied the Battle of the River Plate as it is one of the Royal Navy's first and most important naval victories of the Second World War. Captain Roskill's official narrative states "What matters is that the far-flung dispositions ordered by the Admiralty and the hunting operations conducted by the responsible Flag Officers finally yielded the desired result to one of the groups so employed and thus eliminated a serious threat to our shipping."[69]

The English-language historiography is fairly straight forward, with historians echoing

67 Roskill, *The War at Sea*, 121.
68 Roskill*, Naval Policy Between the Wars*, 352-53.
69 Roskill, *The War at Sea,* 118.

the same conclusions about the importance of the battle and the surprising British victory. For example, It is clear that despite the Allied advantage in number of ships, the *Graf Spee* alone was a clearly superior fighting force. The official Royal New Zealand Navy history of the Second World War categorizes the battle as follows, "The result of the action was completely satisfactory in the final outcome, but, as was stressed in an Admiralty survey, 'only a tactical blunder of the first magnitude by the enemy and the superiority of our personnel prevented the destruction of one of our ships and our being forced to abandon the action.'"[70]

Historians also agree that Harwood was the man to take down a *panzerschiff.* Harwood joined the Royal Navy in 1903, and as a young midshipman would have been subjected to Callender's approach to Royal Navy history either directly by taking his classes or being being around those who did. Harwood was employed as an officer during the 1920s and 1930s in both line and staff duties. From 1931 to 1932 he attended the Imperial Defence College, and from 1934 to 1936 he was on staff at the Imperial War College *HMS President* where he taught anti-*panzerschiff* tactics.[71] Unsurprisingly given his study of the subject and his longterm deployment to the South American division of the West Indies & Africa Station Harwood anticipated that following the sinking of *Doric Star* that the *Graf Spee* would head to the River Plate as the Uruguayan and Argentinian estuary would provide a target-rich environment.[72]

The different histories take different approaches to putting the River Plate in context. While Roskill has no intention of diminishing Harwood's efforts it is necessary for him to put the

70 SD Waters, *Royal New Zealand Navy: New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-1945* (Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1956) 59.
71 Eric Grove, "Introduction" in *German Capital Ships and Raiders in World War II: Graf Spee to Bismarck* (London: Frank Cass, 2002) xi.
72 Roskill, *The War at Sea,* 117.

incident in context of the all the efforts the Royal Navy was making at the time and somewhat reduces the significance of the incident. Given that *HMNZS Achilles* was the Royal New Zealand Navy's biggest contribution to the early war effort, the RNZN's history focuses on the chase and the battle in much greater detail. Of course the battle itself was only a prelude to a greater scheme of deception and diplomatic skill put on by the British Foreign Office and Royal Navy that convinced Captain Langsdorff that he would be unable to return to Germany and to scuttle the *Graf Spee*. Some more modern works go beyond narrative to provide deeper analysis and understanding. For example Eric Grove's *The Price of Disobedience* examines Langsdorff's tactical errors, engaging the British cruisers in the first place, and splitting his fire between the three British ships, without detracting from Harwood's tactical acumen, strategic planning and good luck yet putting the behaviour in context of the Reichsmarine culture.[73]

For this case study it is necessary to examine Harwood's planning and decisions prior to the battle in addition to the battle itself. Harwood had initially been given command of Force 'G' comprised of *HMS Exeter* and *HMS Cumberland*, two heavy cruisers armed with 8" guns, as well as a pair of destroyers. However, by mid December 13 the destroyers had been redeployed to Europe, and *Cumberland* was forced to retreat to the Falkland Islands for refit. Accordingly, *Cumberland* was replaced by *HMS Ajax*, which Harwood took to be his flag, and *Achilles* which was part of the New Zealand division commanded by Captain William Edward Parry, RN, and mostly crewed by New Zealanders.[74]

Langstorff and the *Graf Spee* had taken only a few allied prizes in each area before

73 Eric Grove, *The Price of Disobedience* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000) 67.
74 S.D. Waters, *Achilles at the River Plate* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, War History Branch, 1948) 5.

steaming to another operational area in an effort to confused the allies and force the Royal Navy and French navy to search both the Indian and south Atlantic Oceans. Accordingly the Allies divided the available ships into numerous hunting groups, some of which had to be altered as ships were redeployed to Europe or required refit. The New Zealand official historian S.D. Waters included Commodore Harwood's instructions to *Achilles* upon the rendezvous: "'My policy with three cruisers in company versus one pocket battleship - attack at once by day or night" and then signalled "without further orders so as to maintain decisive gun range." It is interesting that the volume emphasizes that the three cruisers on the evening of their rendezvous practised the tactics laid out by the Commodore – to divide into two divisions and attack on either side.[75]

From this perspective it is possible to start the analysis of the incident. Although strongly suggested by Harwood's lectures to the Staff College, his behaviour on the evening prior to the battle illustrates that his tactical behaviour was not strongly governed by the "Blood and Thunder" school of history. While Harwood's instruction to his captains to act without further orders is not reliance on tactical instinct but rather a Nelsonic recognition that the battle might hamper or prevent communication between the flagship and the other ships of the division as well as a recognition of the ability of commanding officers to exercise initiative. Harwood also demonstrated pre-planning and problem-solving by exercising his ships after they rendezvous and practising his anti-panzerschiff tactics. after they rendezvoused, This planning and decision-making violates the "muddling through" aspect of "Blood and Thunder".

Examination of the tactical aspects demonstrates that officers who may not belong to the

75 Waters, *Achilles at the River Plate,* 6-7.

"Blood and Thunder" tactical macroculture may make tactical decisions that are consistent. One of the difficulties with making this type of analysis is differentiating between the aggression indicated by Callender and the normal aggression naval warfare in general required. As noted by several of the historians who examine the Battle of the River Plate, in order to win a naval battle, it is necessary to accept that damage will occur, and that ships will likely be lost. The Royal Navy was in a precarious position during the Second World War, and it was incumbent for commanding officers to risk their ships in a responsible fashion.

In the case of the Commodore Harwood, he clearly acknowledged during if not before the battle that the *Graf Spee* was a superior ship by referring to the inability of the 6 inch shells of *Ajax* and *Achilles* to penetrate the armour and do serious damage. The famous quote is "we might as well be bombarding her with snowballs."[76] However, the Commodore's orders showed that the first priority was to close to optimum range and open fire. The diary from *Achilles* indicates the high rate of fire during the battle; the guns became so hot that the paint blistered and were unable to run out automatically after each volley after only approximately sixty to eighty rounds.[77] During the eighty-two minutes of combat, Achilles fired two hundred volleys, for more than twelve hundred rounds.[78] Given the theoretical inability for any one round to penetrate the armour, it was important for the lightly armed cruisers to put as many shells on target and accumulate as much damage as possible. The focus on good gunnery would be contrary to the teachings of "Blood and Thunder" which would focus on fast gunnery to counteract poor accuracy.

76 Waters, *Royal New Zealand Navy*, 51.
77 Waters, *Royal New Zealand Navy*, 28.
78 Waters, *Royal New Zealand Navy*, 28.

The major tactical decision of the battle was to split the group into two divisions. Given that the *Graf Spee* had only two main turrets, splitting the group would also divide Langsdorff's attention and create the possibility for him to make poor tactical decisions. While firing all of the main guns at either *Ajax* and *Achilles* or *Exeter* would have allowed Langsdorff to do more damage to those ships and dispatch them quickly, it would mean that the other British division would be able to engage the *Graf Spee* unopposed. Division of the group actually improved the chances of any individual ship surviving. This was not the most obvious option, as Harwood could have chosen to attack the *Graf Spee* with all his ships in one force.

Having examined Commodore Harwood's tactical decision-making processes prior to the Battle of the River Plate and his tactical decision during the battle itself, it is clear that Harwood's tactical behaviour is not consistent with the "Blood and Thunder" school of history but instead represents the antithesis – a tactical approach that involves both an intellectual aspect in planning ahead, an appreciation of the mission while simultaneously appreciating the greater strategic situation. Harwood's decision to split his group and then train the group to fight as seperate divisions indicates in particular that Harwood's more general tactical decision-making processes, perhaps as a result of time spent at the Defence and Staff Colleges and his personality, were more strongly influenced by factors other than reputation and history.

Case Study #2 – the Loss of *HMS Glowworm*

The spring and summer of 1940 was one of the most dire periods of the Second World War for the Allies, as the failure of the Norway campaign compounded the effects of the Fall of

France. Winston Churchill, Chairman of the British Cabinet's Military Coordination Committee, was among the foremost backers of an Allied incursion into Norway, which was decided upon in early April 1940. However, the deciding blows had been cast the week before. On 28 March the Supreme War Council voted to mine the Norwegian coast as a preemptive defensive measure. The Allies expected to hold France, and wanted to deny the Kriegsmarine neutral Norwegian coastal waters as a route to the North Atlantic and allied convoys. The mining of Norwegian waters – officially known as "Operation Wilfred" was originally schedule for April 5th, although on that date the Cabinet postponed the mission until April 8th.[79] The ships for the mission sailed on April 5th despite the official delay to the motion.

The Royal Navy was ill prepared for large-scale mine-laying operations. They had laid down the excellent *Abdiel* class mine-layers but they had not been launched nor let alone commissioned, and the Royal Navy was forced to adapt ships for mine-laying . Operation Wilfred was divided into three prongs at three different locations. "Force WB" consisted of two destroyers ordered to feint at laying mines, "Force WS" consisted of four destroyers and the auxiliary mine-layer *Teviot Bank*, while "Force WV" consisted of eight destroyers. The battlecruiser Renown and the destroyers *Greyhound*, *Glowworm*, *Hyperion* and *Hero* were deployed as a defensive screen for the disparate mine-laying forces from a potential German interception.[80]

The next day, *Glowworm* was detached to recover a man lost by the board.[81] She was then unable to rejoin the screening force due to gale force winds and a sea state of 8, and on April 8th

79 Corelli Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the Second World War* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1991) 106-107.
80 Roskill, *The War at Sea*, 157.
81 Roskill, *The War at Sea*, 158.

encountered the first of the German naval forces that were advancing on Norway as part of "Operation *Weserübung*", the German invasion of Norway.[82] The British naval staff had tried to delay "Wilfred" until the 9th but the Cabinet refused. However, there was disagreement within the Admiralty over whether the German forces at sea were striking at Norway, or the Atlantic Convoys. First Sea Lord Admiral Dick Pound believed the former, while other staff and tried to convince Churchill of the attack on Norway.[83]

At 0815 on 8 April, *Glowworm* discovered two German destroyers attached to the *Admiral Hipper* and the German attachment for Trondheim in extremely heavy weather and signalled that she had encountered the enemy. *Glowworm* engaged the destroyers, including the *Bernd von Arnim*, until the German cruiser *Admiral Hipper* entered the fight in mid morning. *Hipper*'s opening volley heavily damaged the *Glowworm* and destroyed her bridge. The fight ended when *Glowworm* rammed the *Hipper*. According to Barnett, *Hipper* attempted to ram first the smaller ship first, but was unable to manoeuvre.[84] After *Glowworm* sank, one officer and thirty-seven crew were recovered, but the commanding officer of *Glowworm* Lieutenant Commander Gerard Broadmead Roope, RN, was in the process of climbing aboard *Hipper* when he succumbed to exhaustion and fell back into the sea. Captain Heye of the *Hipper* recommended Roope for the Victoria Cross, which was duly awarded. The inscription reads as follows;

> On 8th April, 1940, H.M.S. Glowworm was proceeding alone towards West Fjord, Norway, when she met and engaged two enemy destroyers, hitting at least one of them. The enemy broke off the action and headed north. Lieutenant-

82 Sea state 8 on the Beaufort scale is 34-40 knots of wind, and swells of 5.5 – 7.5m
83 Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 108.
84 Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 108.

> Commander Roope, though appreciating the intention of the enemy to lead him on to his supporting forces, gave chase. The German heavy cruiser, Admiral Hipper was sighted closing the Glowworm at high speed, and an enemy report was sent, which was received by H.M.S. Renown. Because of the heavy sea it was not possible for the Glowworm to shadow the enemy, and the Commanding Officer decided to attack. Ten torpedoes were fired without success; then the Glowworm, badly hit and her speed reduced, closed and rammed the Admiral Hipper. As she withdrew the Glowworm opened fire again, and scored one hit at 400 yards range. Badly stove in forward and riddled with enemy fire, the Glowworm heeled over, and the Commanding Officer gave the order to abandon her. Shortly afterwards she capsized and sank; only 31 out of her complement of 149 were saved. The Victoria Cross is bestowed upon Lieutenant Commander Roope in recognition of his great valour.[85]

As a relatively minor incident in a larger campaign, it is not surprising that the loss of the *Glowworm* has seen relatively little scholarly work. Captain Roskill's official history limits the discussion of the battle to the following. “Two days later she met the *Hipper* and her escort and was overwhelmed but, in a truly heroic end, rammed and seriously damaged her largest adversary.”[86] Roskill does mention the *Glowworm* once more when discussing the loss of *HMS Courageous*, *Ardent* and *Acasta*, which had been sunk by the German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* as the British ships retreated from Norway. “The names of Warburton-Lee of the *Hardy*, Roope of the *Glowworm*, Glasfurd and Barker of the *Acasta* and *Ardent* – all lost in unhesitatingly attacking heavy, even hopeless odds – should be remembered for ever in the Navy's long story of unquestioning devotion to duty.”[87] Roskill's statement regarding unquestioning devotion to duty reflects a reluctance to admit the less patriotic side of the Royal Navy's history, and it implies a cultural identity of duty above all.

Corelli Barnett provides more details of the battle than Roskill, but makes a similar

85 Unithistories.com, “Roope, Gerard Broadmead,” Unithistories.com, http://www.unithistories.com/units_index/default.asp?file=../units_index/units.asp
86 Roskill, *The War at Sea*, 158.
87 Roskill, *The War at Sea*, 196.

evaluation of Roope's conduct, “For his unhesitating engagement of more powerful warships in superior numbers even to the point of ramming, Roope was to be posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.”[88]

The *Glowworm* has also been the subject of other scholarly and non-scholarly publications, however the narrative provided is generally consistent. Every author emphasizes Roope's bravery in actively engaging the more powerful German ships, and mention the awarding of the Victoria Cross. The more academic books, such as David Brown's naval staff history published and Malcolm Murffett's *Naval Warfare 1919-1945: an operational history of the volatile war at sea* mention that Glowworm's contact signal resulted in the Royal Navy forces being redeployed, with consequences for Narvik.[89] However, these events are usually examined as part of an analysis of the Admiralty disastrously muddling with the tactical situation from a distance.[90]

As a relatively junior officer, relatively little is known about Roope as a man. It appears that Roope joined the Royal Navy at an older age, as he gained the rank of Lieutenant at the age of 22 in 1927. He served first aboard the battleship *HMS Marlborough*, then aboard the cruiser *HMS Caradoc*. For two years he then served as First Lieutenant in the destroyer *Boreas* before gaining command of the destroyer *HMS Vidette* in 1936. Roope was appointed to command of *Glowworm*, a much more modern fleet destroyer in the fall of 1938.[91]

Looking at a number of Roope's decisions it is possible to perform some analysis of hist

88 Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 110.
89 Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 110.
90 Malcolm Murfett, *Naval Warfare 1919-1945: an operational history of the volatile war at sea* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009) 70.
91 Unithistories.com, “Roope, Gerard Broadmead.”

decision-making processes.. In this case, *Glowworm*'s enemy contact signals to the British Admiralty show that at least to some degree that Roope understood that his mission had changed. Originally designed as a force to protect the British minelayers from Norwegian interference, Roope may not have been expecting to run into a significant German force. The inscription on the Victoria Cross states that Roope followed the German destroyers to the North despite knowing that they were leading him back to their heavier ships.

This directly contradicts with Barnett's report that Admiral Lutjens turned the *Hipper* back, for her to find the *Glowworm* in close combat with the *Bernd von Arnim*.[92] Regardless of the what actually happened, *Glowworm* repeatedly signalled to inform the Admiralty she was engaging a superior force, with the last signal being sent at 0855, nearly an hour before the *Hipper* opened fire.[93] Given the information about the signal, the discrepancy raises questions about Roope's decision-making process. If the Glowworm was in fact in close combat with the German destroyers when *Hipper* arrived, the Roope's decision to engage the *Hipper* would probably reflect a realization of *Glowworm*'s poor chances of survival against two destroyers and a heavy cruiser. In this case, it would make sense that *Glowworm* stopped transmitting when her communication gear was destroyed, it could be consistent with earlier actions to report the significant information that of the arrival of a heavy cruiser.

If the Victoria Cross is to be believed and the *Glowworm* steamed after the retreating German destroyers despite knowledge of what would be ahead, then the failure to signal intention is absolutely in line with the theoretical “Blood and Thunder” tactical macroculture as

92 Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 110.
93 David Brown, *Naval operations of the campaign in Norway, April-June 1940* (Abingdon: Frank Cass, 2000) 12.

it would indicate aggressive behaviour, a lack of planning, and a reliance on improvisation or muddling through. Roope's decision to singlehandedly continue to engage German destroyers and eventually additional heavy forces would be in almost direct parallel with Captain Richard Grenville's decision to fight with a Spanish fleet with the *HMS Revenge* three and a half centuries earlier. Given both options, it seems that is more probable that *Glowworm* was still engaged with the German destroyers when *Hipper* came to the battle. *Glowworm's* failure to signal after 0855 indicates that her communications gear had probably been destroyed. Without that gear, pursuing the German destroyers is illogical as a scouting mission true to *Glowworm*'s screening role. If *Glowworm* was unable to communicate, it would have been wise to take advantage of the high sea state and attempt to rejoin the *Renown* instead.

During the battle, *Glowworm* aggressively attacked the two German destroyers using her guns. Once battle was joined with the *Hipper, Glowworm* attacked with torpedos before ramming the larger German ship. Roope's decision to attack the German destroyers and signal that he was engaging a superior enemy shows that he was an aggressive ship handler. In this situation, it is important to remember that his mission was to screen the *Renown*. As the captain of a fleet destroyer (as opposed to an anti-submarine destroyer) Roope's actions are directly in line with mission to engage the enemy where found and report the location, analogous to the light cruiser squadrons at the Battle of Jutland. In addition, the rough weather that had prevented the *Glowworm* from rejoining *Renown* would have also likely prevented her from evading the German destroyers. These could have been factors in Roope's decision to fight, but the aggressive attack on two ships is very consistent with “Blood and Thunder”.

Roope's most important decision – that to continue fighting after the *Hipper* joined the fight if not to ram – is more clearly in line with "Blood and Thunder". *Glowworm* had been heavily damaged by destroyer gunfire, and the presence of the *Hipper* guaranteed that British destroyer would not be able to escape. At this point, Roope had two main options: fight or surrender. Roope's decision to fight to the end is absolutely in line with "Blood and Thunder" and the Royal Navy's created image of the gallant past, following in the line of naval officers who engaged the enemy at long odds, officers like Rear Admiral Arbuthnot of the 1st Cruiser Squadron, or Grenville of the *Revenge*. If Roope had chosen to surrender following *Hipper*'s bridge-destroying broadside then the German ships would have been occupied for a considerable amount of time securing prisoners and the *Glowworm* before deciding what to do with her. This delay would have preserved the lives of many of the *Glowworm* crew members, a not inconsiderable factor, and could have delayed the German ships without the damage to *Hipper*. Roope's decision to attack the *Hipper* instead suggests that Roope preferred aggressive tactical behaviour, and that he lost his ship in an aggressive move that resulted in some damage to the *Hipper* in exchange for the loss of many crew-members' lives. Therefore, Roope's decisions were very much consistent with the ideas taught by "Blood and Thunder".

Case Study #3: Convoy SC 42

As the convoy which saw the Royal Canadian Navy sink it's first U-Boat, SC 42 provides the focal point for examining the tactical decision making of an officer who served in both the Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy, Captain James Douglas Prentice. SC 42 departed

Sydney on 30 August 1941, and was escorted by the Canadian 24th Escort Group. *HMCS Skeena* led a group consisting of the corvettes *IHMCS Alberni*, *HMCS Kenogami*, and *HMCS Orillia*, while Prentice was exercising the corvettes *HMCS Moose Jaw* and *HMCS Chambly* on a training mission a distance down the convoy's path.[94] The convoy was unmolested until 9 September when it was sighted by *U85*, and attacked later that night by other U-Boats. Several ships were lost that night, and the convoy was attacked again the next night. While the escort group rescued the crews of sunk merchant ships, *Moose Jaw* and *Chambly* engaged and sank *U501*. The attack was started by *Chambly* with depth charges, before *Moose Jaw* rammed the submarine on the surface. *Moose Jaw* was boarded by the submarine's commanding officer, and sent its own boarding party to *U501*. Unfortunately, one of the Canadian boarding party was lost when the submarine sunk.[95] SC 42's escort was later significantly strengthened on 11 September by five Royal Navy destroyers, three corvettes and a anti-submarine trawler, followed by two further Canadian destroyers on the 12th and three American destroyers on the 13th.[96] Overall, the convoy lost fifteen ships from a initial total of sixty-five, for the confirmed sinking of one U-Boat and the probable sinking of a second.[97]

A leading actor in this convoy, and the creation of the Royal Canadian Navy as a anti-submarine force is Commander, later Captain J.D. “Chummy” Prentice. Born in British Columbia, Prentice joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman 1912 at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. Prentice served for twenty-two years in the Royal Navy, with his most prestigious

94 Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose,* 236-39.
95 Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose*, 240-47.
96 Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose,* 250.
97 Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose,* 255.

appointment being the 1st Lieutenant-Commander of HMS *Rodney*.[98] The reduction of the Royal Navy during the 1920s and 1930s failed to elicit any further promotions, and Prentice retired to a civilian life. Prentice was registered as an officer who could serve the Royal Canadian Navy during time of war, and upon the outbreak of war was offered a commission within the Royal Canadian Navy at his former rank in 1939 and initially posted to Sydney, Cape Breton. Prentice was transferred to St John's, Newfoundland in 1940 and was to be given command of *HMCS Levis* however was instead appointed to Commodore Andrew Murray's staff as the officer responsible for Canadian Corvettes, a role which would allow Prentice to imprint his tactical style on a number of Canadian officers.

Marc Milner describes Prentice as possessing a "fertile and often over-active imagination", Prentice's appointment to command *HMCS Chambly* and work up what corvettes had managed to make it to Halifax is what gave his tactical ideas purchase.[99] Prentice argued for Corvette tactics that were in contravention to Royal Navy standard tactics. Prentice believed that the Corvette's manoeuvrability required more aggressive ship handling, for example attacking at half the 1200 yards that the Royal Navy advised. He recommended maintaining a steady speed during the attack, to avoid warning U-Boats unlike the abrupt increase in speed dictated by British tactics.[100] Prentice also published the book *Hints on Escort Work* when he was Captain (D) in Halifax, in 1943. It is also telling that Prentice, as part of the command team in Halifax, that changed Western Local Escort Force tactics to offensive escort in 1942, and the focus of the

98 Marc Milner, *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) 45.
99 Milner, *North Atlantic Run*, 44-45.
100 Milner, *North Atlantic Run*, 76.

escorts from preserving the convoy, to destroying submarines.[101]

As a highly influential and relatively senior member of the Royal Canadian Navy, Prentice has been examined in many major works on the RCN, especially those that deal with the North Atlantic. The sources agree that Prentice was forthright, aggressive, and determined to improve the lot of the Royal Canadian Navy, "He is persistent almost beyond endurance at times.. but his interests are towards the benefit of the ships he is responsible for and not towards himself."[102] A number of sources highlight that Prentice was not only intelligent, but an intellectual, as shown by the number of papers that he published as well *Hints on Convoy Work*.[103]

The wealth of information and scholarship on Prentice greatly simplify the task of analyzing his decision-making mechanism or more precisely, his general tactical approach. Foremost, Prentice's intellectual approach to the practical aspect of naval warfare indicate an approach other than "Blood and Thunder". While Prentice did begin his time in the Royal Navy during Callender's time of influence, he also attended the Staff College, which, like in the case of Commodore Harwood may have impacted his tactical decision-making process.[104] An example of this intellectual and practical approach was the drive to get all Corvettes equipped with gyroscopic compasses, or if that was not possible to redesign the Flower Class in order to make magnetic compasses as effective as possible.[105] A similar change was the fitting of the rate recorder to Chambly. It can be argued on a very superficial level that Prentice's efforts to make

101Milner, *North Atlantic Run*, 246.
102Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose*, 162.
103Milner, *North Atlantic Run*, 46.
104Milner, *North Atlantic Run*, 246.
105Douglas et al., *No Higher Purpose*, 160.

with what was available, such as the improvements to the Corvette design and the deployment of untrained corvettes to aid convoy SC42 , explicitly involve the muddling through aspect of "Blood and Thunder." However, this is a misrepresentation as Prentice actively worked to improve the lot of the Royal Canadian Navy, and did not accept the status quo.

Prentice is closer to "Blood and Thunder" in his aggressive approach to tactics. However, this approach should be viewed in the same manner as Prentice's suggested alterations to the Flower Class. More aggressive ship-handling would result in the Flower being more effective anti-submarine platforms, therefore the more aggressive approach was desirable. The later changes to the Western Local Escort Force official tactics from defensive to offensive escort indicates the same type of thinking – that is looking for the most effective form of escort. Prentice's aggressive notions are shown in his text *Hints on Escort Work* "Always think in terms of destruction of submarines" and urged escort skippers to consider the destruction of a submarine to be of higher priority than the safety of the convoy.[106]

However, Prentice was still inherently aggressive. As an example, consider Prentice's tactics in the attack on *U501*. While the quick attack forced the submarine to surface, it was argued that Prentice had risked his ship by altering course later than he should have.[107] This basic evaluation indicates that other officers felt that Prentice accepted a greater risk to his ship than he should have, in a decision consistent with "Blood and Thunder".

Commander JD Prentice is an interesting case, as his tactical decision-making process and actual tactical decisions provided opposite indications. Prentice's desire to make a relatively

106Milner, "Convoy Escorts: Tactics, Technology and Innovation in the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-1945": 24.
107Milner, "Convoy Escorts: Tactics, Technology and Innovation in the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-1945": 21.

ill-equipped escort force effective required that he develop efficient tactics for those ships indicates an approach diametrically opposite to "muddling through". However his aggressive tendencies and willingness to risk his ships, and since his role was to protect convoys this would also include the merchant ships under his protection, in an effort to destroy the enemy are absolutely in line with Callender. Prentice would not have belonged to a theoretical "Blood and Thunder" tactical macro-culture, and this example shows the need to examine how an officer makes decisions as well as actual tactical decisions. In this case, it has been demonstrated that an officer who would not have been part of "Blood and Thunder" could make the same tactical decisions as an officer who was.

Case Study #4: Convoy HX 228 and the loss of *HMS Harvester*

This incident is interesting from the point of view that it occurred almost a year following Graham's interviews with Richmond. This incident was chosen specifically because Gerald Graham returned to Canada aboard *HMS Harvester*, and provided many personal observations of and insight into Commander A.A. "Harry" Tait, Commanding officer of *Harvester* during Graham's convoy experience of 1942, as well as in March 1943 when she was lost. The Royal Navy seized *Harvester*, which was designed for the Brazilian Navy, upon the declaration of war while still under construction. Analogous to the Royal Navy's H class destroyers, she was first renamed *Handy* before finally being renamed *Harvester*. *Harvester* had a busy war, being assigned to escort duty in the North Atlantic throughout her service career, and participating in the sinking of a number of U-Boats.

In the grand scheme of the Battle of the Atlantic, it is clear that the loss of *Harvester* and the battle of convoy HX 228 was a relatively minor aspect of the larger conflict. HX 228 departed New York on February 28, 1943 and arrived in Liverpool on March 15. The first few months of 1943 were particularly disastrous for the Allied convoys and February, 1943 had seen 68% of convoyed ships lost during transit. HX 228 was escorted by Mid Ocean Escort Force B3, composed of *Harvester* as well as HM Ships *Garland*. *Escapade* and *Narcissus*, the Polish destroyer *ORP Burza*, and the Free French ships *FNFL Roselys*, *FNFL Renoncule* and *FNFL Aconit*. *Harvester* with Commander Tait aboard was the senior ship of the escort, and had led the escort group since Tait had taken command of *Harvester* in late August of 1942. HX 228 was shadowed and attacked by U-Boats from 7 to 14 March, but it was on the 11th that *Harvester* was lost.[108]

On the morning of the 11th, *Harvester* retrieved survivors from a sunken merchant ship, and sighted *U444*. *Harvester* fired on and then rammed *U444*, and was disabled in the process having locked steering gear with the U-Boat as it attempted to dive. The Free French corvette Aconit later rammed and sunk *U444*. *Harvester*'s engineering team was able to restore power, but she took a torpedo a few hours later from *U432*. *Aconit* avenged *Harvester* and sank *U432*, as well as picked up the remaining survivors from *Harvester*, *U444*, and the merchant ships.[109]

The historiography of convoy HX 228 and the loss of *Harvester* is rather sparse. Captain Roskill's official history doesn't mention the convoy at all, and the only mentions of *Harvester* are at Dunquerque and the sinking of the U-Boat she shared with *HMS Highlander* in 1940.[110]

108Uboat.net, "Convoy Battles: HX-228," Uboat.net, http://uboat.net/ops/convoys/battles.htm?convoy=HX-228.
109Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 597.
110Roskill, *The War at Sea*, 221, 353.

Likewise, Corelli Barnett's account of the Second World War provides only seven lines on the loss of *Harvester*, while a slightly longer examination of the convoy as a whole is placed in context of the losses of earlier convoys, and the devastating German successes later in 1943. While few articles have been published on the convoy, much information about the convoy and *Harvester* has been made available online through largely unregulated but highly detailed websites devoted to topics such as the convoys of World War II and tracking all the warships of the Second World War. However, there has been at least one notable non-scholarly work published that does provide an important perspective on the incident.

Peter Coy's 2006 memoir *The Echo of a Fighting Flower* also covers the convoy in greater detail. Coy was crew aboard *HMS Narcissus*, and participated in convoy HX224. It is an interesting source because it provides another personal perspective that provides an enlisted view of Tait that provides a contrast to Graham's more academic evaluation. Most of the sources agree however that the HX 224 was a draw, as the Germans lost two U-Boats, while the Allies only lost four merchantmen in addition to *Harvester*. The sources do emphasize through mention that Commander Tait, as an experienced and respected escort group commander, was as serious a loss as his ship.[111]

Professor Graham's diary provides a valuable personal perspective on on Tait given the lack of alternative in-depth analysis. It is known that Tait joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman in 1922, and did his early service on battleships. Following promotion to Sub Lieutenant at the naval college at Greenwich, Tait was posted to *HMS Voyager*, the first of destroyer in a career largely spent aboard destroyers. Tait later served aboard *HMS Amazon* as an

111Barnett, *The War at* Sea, 597-98.

anti-submarine specialist. During the 1930s Tait was largely posted to cruisers, including a time spent aboard *HMAS Canberra* as exchange officer with the Royal Australian Navy. Following two years spent at the RN Barracks training new recruits, and time on *HMS Suffolk*, Tait began a series of destroyer commands in 1940. In order he commanded HM destroyers *Walker, Hesperus, Achates* and finally *Harvester*.[112]

Commander Tait is an interesting example because it is known for sure that he knew Sir Geoffrey Callender, and would have been exposed to Callender' teachings. Graham also provides us with the information that Tait was from Cambridge, and came from a family of academics.[113] As an officer, Tait was very straight forward, giving permission to his escorts to machine-gun the ships in the convoy if they did not obey instructions.[114] In another example of Tait's views, Graham describes the commander's reaction to the tabloid journalist Collie Knox's book *Atlantic Battle*. Taken literally from Graham's diary, "The captain read bits of *Atlantic Battle* by Collie Knox and said he nearly puked."[115] Described by Graham as a "nauseating book", "The wardroom howled in amusement and rage at the worst sentimentalities."[116] Given this reaction, is would reasonable to say that Tait did not hold with an overly sentimental version of naval warfare.

Tait was also an intellectual officer in the mold of Richmond. For example, Graham and Tait discussed Allied operations, "Had a long chat with Captain who feels deeply about question

112Unithistories.com, "Tait, Arthur *André* 'Harry'," Unithistories.com, http://www.unithistories.com/units_index/default.asp?file=../units_index/units.asp
113Graham, *Convoy Diary,* Sept 10, 1942.
114Graham, *Convoy Diary,* Sept 1, 1942.
115Graham, *Convoy Diary*, Sept 11, 1942.
116Graham, *Convoy Diary*, Sept 9, 1942.

of Canadian-Br co-operations."[117] Overall Tait is depicted as a solid and intelligent naval officer. Graham certainly does not display any qualms about his competence. However, Graham's profile only covers one convoy, one that didn't actually involve any attacks by submarines. Coy's text provides a view of Tait over a longer time period, such as his comments that Tait's common instruction for radical convoy course adjustments seemed to be derived from Tait's genius, without the knowledge of the Ultra code-breaking program. It also provides a somewhat whimsical view of Tait as he was last seen, swimming with his favourite pipe between his teeth.[118]

Given the lack of official history regarding Tait, we are obliged to once again rely on the Graham convoy diary to evaluate the tactical decision-making factor. However, there are a number of items throughout the diary that indicate that "Blood and Thunder" did not strongly influence him. First, Tait was an intellectual officer as shown by his discussions with Callender. He was also interested in scholarly naval history, as he gave Graham a history of the *Ark Royal* in return for a copy of Graham's doctoral thesis.[119] Tait and Graham also discussed the theory that German submarines would attack Canadian and American escorted convoys first, since British escorts had the edge in training and anti-submarine equipment.[120] This intellectual evaluation of naval warfare, and intellectual interest in naval history, and rejection of tabloid-esque sentimentality strongly indicate that Tait did not belong in the "Blood and Thunder" tactical macro-culture.

The actual tactical decision involved in this example is Tait's decision to ram *U444*. On

117Graham, *Convoy Diary* Sept 11, 1942.
118Peter Coy, *The Echo of a Fighting Flower* (Upton upon Severn: Square One Publications, 1997) 115.
119Graham, *Convoy Diary* 13 Sept. 1942.
120Graham, *Convoy Diary* 30 Aug. 1942.

the surface, the action is absolutely consistent with the “Blood and Thunder” model of aggression, willingness to risk one's ship and working on tactical instincts rather than a tactical plan. Although the Royal Navy believed that anti-submarine warfare could be both offensive and defensive in nature, escort work epitomizes both aspects. That *Harvester* was a permanent member and senior ship of an escort group as opposed to being a member of an ad-hoc support group like *HMCS Moose Jaw* and *HMCS Chambly* during convoy SC 42 affects the analysis. For detached anti-submarine forces, the first priority is clearly to destroy enemy submarines. While *Harvester* was an anti-submarine escort, its primary job was to secure the safety of the convoy.

Tait's actions such as rescuing the survivors of a sunk merchant ship indicate that the survival of the convoy was a greater priority thank sinking U-boats. The convoy had been ordered to change course to avoid the greatest number of U-Boats and given Graham's daily comments on Admiralty signals regarding U-Boat positions during convoy ON 126 the previous year, Tait must have known or guessed that *Harvester* had encountered only the very end of a U-Boat patrol line. Given these factors, Tait's decision to ram *U444* was not the product of a desire to uphold a Nelsonic tradition of aggressive ship-handling, but rather an attempt to further secure the safety of the convoy.

While the Western Approach Convoy Instructions indicated that ramming submarines was to be done only as a last resort, the reality is that it was an opportune weapon of almost certain effectiveness in the right circumstances. Although the hedgehog anti-submarine weapon had first been used successfully in November of 1942, *Harvester* had not yet been been armed with the weapon and was therefore reliant on depth-charges. Attacking *U444* would require

Harvester to move directly over the submarine's position. However, ramming the submarine would prevent it from diving and therefore protect the convoy. From the accounts it is clear that *Harvester* didn't damage her bow, as might be expected, but rather her stern and her propellers. As a sign that ramming was an accepted practice, and *Harvester* signalled *Aconit* after she rammed *U444*, "Well Played."[121]

Convoy HX224 and the loss of *HMS Harvester* provides an interesting instance where an officer who according to all evidence would not belong to or identify with the "Blood and Thunder" tactical macro-culture made the same tactical decision as would have been expected from an officer who did. This case also highlights the difficulties advantages of studying both intent and action, as well as the difficulties. Only the information provided by Graham's diary allows us to discern that Tait's tactical decisions were not inspired by Callender despite being in line with his teachings.

Conclusion

Given the scope and complexity of this project– the examination of an admittedly small number of case studies to discover whether historical education of the type developed by Sir Geoffrey Callender influenced Royal Navy tactical decision-making during the Second World War by inspiring a culture that celebrated aggression and self-sacrifice at the expense of analysis – it is necessary to keep in mind that a goal of history is to go beyond the simplicity of knowledge to the challenges of understanding and accept that a definitive answer is not possible.

While there may have been specific tactical decisions that Royal Navy commanding

121Coy, *The Echo of a Fighting Flower*, 110.

officers made that reflected the “Blood and Thunder” cultural values, the representative actions studied in this paper either show the contrary, or allow no definitive conclusion. In the cases of Commodore Harwood, Commander Prentice and Commander Tait it has been demonstrated that they went about their duties in an intellectual fashion that included pre-planning, quite the opposite of the gallant "muddling through" associated with “Blood and Thunder”. In the case of the loss of *HMS Glowworm* only a choice knowingly to to pursue German destroyers into the grasp of a heavier warship instead of rejoining the British fleet would have been consistent with “Blood and Thunder,” but it seems unlikely that *Glowworm* appreciated the hopelessness of the situation because of the likely breakdown of communications with the Admiralty.

It is clear from the other cultural analyses and scholarly sources that Royal Navy officers made tactical decisions that reflected “Blood and Thunder” cultural values prior to the Second World War. Two examples from the First World War are the decisions leading to the destruction of Rear-Admiral Christopher Cradock's squadron at the Battle of Coronel in 1914, and the Rear-Admiral Arbuthnot's suicidal but gallant charge that took the 1st Cruiser Squadron between the Grand Fleet and the German High Seas Fleet during the Battle of Jutland in 1916. Because both men were flag officers during the First World War, they would not have taken Callender's history classes as he only started teaching cadets ten years earlier.

The lack of evidence specifically supporting the existence of a “Blood and Thunder” culture does not prove that Callender did not affect the way that Royal Navy officers made tactical decisions. While a “Blood and Thunder” tactical macro-culture may not have existed, the cultural values that Callender taught, and the role-models set forth by his textbooks' focus on

heroes in battle may have facilitated individual officers adopting tactical cultural preconditions consistent with the framework laid out in the first chapter. In future it is necessary to expand the study in terms of depth and breadth in order to create a more complete understanding of the connection between "Blood and Thunder" and tactical decision-making.

This brings us to the most important question, "So what?" One of the issues with the whiggish approach to history is that research that provides negative results is regarded as less worthy or less important than research that provides positive results. Beyond just the new understanding of "Blood and Thunder" and the possible connections to tactical decision-making, this research and analysis has greater value because it provides a another perspective on Richmond and the "Young Turks" as an intellectual culture within the greater Royal Navy culture. More importantly given the emphasis on complexity as a foundation for historical scholarship, the use of a cultural framework to analyze tactical decisions and tactical decision-making processes provides another tool historians can use to understand decisions made in circumstances of extreme duress.

The value of this analysis also reaches beyond the realm of historical scholarship to modern military training. Cultural analysis poses questions about the training of modern naval officers in a military institution where the Royal Canadian Navy no longer exists as a seperate entity. This analysis can help modern military educators conceive more clearly the connections between historical education, and the creation of modern naval officers, and develop educational schemes designed not only to teach cadets about naval warfare, but also create a specific naval tactical or problem-solving culture.

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