

An account of the Surrender of the German High Seas Fleet in the Forth,  
November 21<sup>st</sup> 1918

from St Leonards Gazettes in February 1919.

St Leonards is a school in St Andrews – it used to be a girls' school but it is now co-ed.

(This clipping and authorship research was provided by Jane Clayton.)

The author was probably **Baroness Clifton**, known as Elizabeth Clifton while a pupil at St Leonards between 1913 – 1916. (So E.C fits.) Her mother, initially married to 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Darnley then married **Admiral Sir Arthur Leveson**. The 1911 census states he then had three daughters – including Mary and Pamela with his wife Jemima plus a son.

After studying the wives of the various Admiral I eventually came across Elizabeth. It seems to fit with Sir Arthur's responsibilities and the Kite Balloon Depot. Her address at school was 16 Hyde Park Gardens but a little later Northcliff, North Queensferry.

Lady Jellicoe (Florence Gwendoline Cayzer) attended St Leonards in 1895 and her sister, Lady Madden (Constance Winifred Cayzer) was at the school from 1894- 1897.

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THE ARRIVAL OF THE SURRENDERED GERMAN FLEET IN BRITISH WATERS.

When the official announcement was made that the German Fleet would come to Rosyth much speculation ensued as to whether the civilian "followers of the drum" would be allowed to see the surrendered ships; consequently we were all delighted when on the day before the Germans arrived a message came from the Commander-in-Chief, Rosyth, to the effect that a tug for Admirals' and Captains' wives and belongings would go round the Fleet.

The Germans arrived on the morning of Thursday, November 21st; the Grand Fleet and Battle Cruiser Force left Rosyth at 4 a.m. and met them at dawn in the North Sea. A day filled with incident begun for us at 8.45 a.m., when a party consisting of mother, two captains' wives, M\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_, my sisters, Mary and Pamela, and myself left the house in a Kite Balloon Depot Ford en route for the Dockyard. Arrived at the Dockyard we made our way to the Pontoon, through the crowds of enthusiasts, like ourselves, going to see the Fleet. Dockyard officials with wives and children, rug and food-laden; Admirals' wives in one-horse cabs having started at 6.30 from remote fastnesses beyond Dunfermline; Warrant Officers from the Depot ships; Wren chauffeuses, every sort and kind of person was there - it was a most interesting sight.

The Tug in which the Admirals' wives put out to sea was aptly named the "Volcano." It was one of those large, ponderous paddle-steamers that take trippers to Southend. Benches were ranged round the deck for us to sit on, these had been draped by a

thoughtful dockyard hand with green and orange signal flags, quite enough to give those inclined to sea-sickness a severe spasm.

At 9 o'clock we left the Dockyard and steamed down the Forth; with all the other tugs, containing dockyard-men and R.A.F.'s and others, we made quite an imposing Fleet. The day, which had started grey and cold, was by this time wonderful- a clear sky, deep blue sea and bright sunlight on the water. We anchored at 12 off May Island, outside the Forth, to await the arrival of the Fleet. Everyone judged that the moment had arrived for lunch, and began to consume food of the usual picnic order- a somewhat grim spectacle. The combination of the sublime and grotesque throughout the day was curious, and the surrender of the German Fleet will always be inextricably connected in my mind with Admirals ' wives eating ham sandwiches.

After we had been anchored about an hour, everyone began to get out telescopes and field-glasses to look for the ships. At first nothing could be seen, as the horizon was enveloped in a thick mist. The tug was now rolling about in the most unpleasing manner, and half the people began to feel ill; many were ill; those who were not were hideously bright, and remarked gaily that the weather would be much worse later in the afternoon. A welcome diversion was provided by someone announcing that the ships were in sight. We could now distinguish them far away on our left. The Cardiff-a Light Cruiser commanded by Admiral Sinclair- led the Fleet in; after her came two of our Light Cruiser Squadrons escorting German Light Cruisers, then German Battleships, in between double lines of our Battle-Cruisers. Having tossed up and down in the Tug for one and a half hours we now moved on, to the great relief of those who disliked the motion of the waves. Our first near view of the ships was when we saw fifty German Destroyers, escorted by ours, apparently coming straight at us. As we approached them they wheeled into line, and anchored, whereupon we steamed down their lines. The Germans were anchored in two lines on either side of us, with British Destroyers beyond them on each side again. We were only separated from the Germans by a small space of water, about fifty yards. Their ships were extremely dirty, a brownish green colour, they looked as if they had not seen a paint brush for a considerable time. In shape they are much higher out of the water than our ships, most of them have two large and one small funnel. Although the lines of their ships are not graceful, they are efficient looking. When we had gone down the lines of destroyers, we came to the German Light Cruisers, Battle Ships, and Battle Cruisers; these had all been wheeled into position at the other end of the destroyer line. The Light Cruisers first, bulkier than ours, most of them with three large funnels. I understand from a gunnery expert that their guns are extremely good. After the Light Cruisers came the Battle Cruisers the Moltke, Hindenburg, and Seydlitz - all very fine ships. They looked cleaner than the destroyers; they are painted a lighter grey than our ships. We came next to the Battle Ships- the König class - König Albrecht, Königin Luise, Kaiser and others. The German Flag Ship was the Friedrich der

Grosse, a fine looking ship; she had a Rear-Admiral's flag at her masthead, like ours in design, but black and white instead of red. All the ships of the König class have a large golden W, with a crown over it-, near their name-plate on the stern.

As we went down the lines in our Tug, the German seamen and officers stood and watched us from their destroyer foc'sles and the decks of the big ships. Many of the men appeared very young, they looked well and cheerful; the officers, however, of whom we saw a few, seemed dejected, as well they might. English officers were sent on board the German ships. We saw a Commander boarding a destroyer, and as the Tug passed the German Flagship, Admiral Madden, C.V.O., was on board her, interviewing the German Admiral.

By the time we had gone down the whole fleet it was 4.30. All the German ships had hauled down their ensigns at sundown, Sir David Beatty having issued a signal to the effect that the German ensign was to be lowered at that time, and not hoisted again without permission. We now altered our course for home. The last sight we had of the German Fleet was against a grey evening sky, with a faint yellow after-glow behind the distant, destroyer mast.

The people who were ill began to feel better and thought about tea. Everyone chattered with maddening energy. There had been so much to see and think about in this most interesting day that by this time I was in a more or less dazed condition; a curious medley of sounds assailed my ears, in which the agitated voices of Captains' wives wondering whether their husbands had remembered to send a picket-boat to fetch them from the Dockyards blended pleasantly with the screeching of sea-gulls round the harbour-bound trawlers, and the noise of water washing against the side of the Tug.