

**SCAPA FLOW
From Graveyard to
Resurrection**

Edited by Simon Mills
Wordsmith Publications,
Chiltern House, 120 Eskdale Ave
Chesham, Bucks, HP5 3BD
£14.95
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THE DESCRIPTION above does not really convey what this book is about, if I include the rest of the blurb from the front cover you may get more of an idea, 'The original account of the greatest scuttling in naval history by the commander of the Imperial German Fleet, Vice Admiral Ludwig von Reuter.'

The book is in three parts, in the first part Simon Mills sets the scene and gives us a potted history of van Reuter and how he came to be in command of the fleet. The second part is von Reuter's account written to justify his actions in sinking the

fleet, and lastly a short re-telling of the salvage of the German Fleet.

Von Reuter came from a military family his father was a colonel in the Prussian army and his two elder brothers became army officers. The young Ludwig joined the navy cadets and a year later became a midshipman. The German navy at that time was the poor relation to the army, however when Rear Admiral Alfred Tirpitz was appointed secretary of the navy he set in motion an expansion which for a young officer was a great opportunity for advancement.

So after a distinguished career during which von Reuter was awarded the Iron Cross he found himself in command of the High Seas Fleet. Unfortunately this came just after the signing of the armistice which required all German surface ships to be interned and dismantled.

For a man steeped in Prussian military tradition this must have been humiliating and painful. By November 27, 1918 the German fleet was at anchor in Scapa Flow and for the next seven months sat there with peace talks in Paris deadlocked and with a great deal of unrest and near mutiny among a lot of the crews. Von Reuter was truly isolated.

The second part of the book is the Admiral's own report of the internment and subsequently the scuttling of the fleet. This is the truly fascinating part of the book. I have to admit I approached it expecting it to be written in a dull Teutonic style. But it is surprisingly well translated and is in fact quite an easy read.

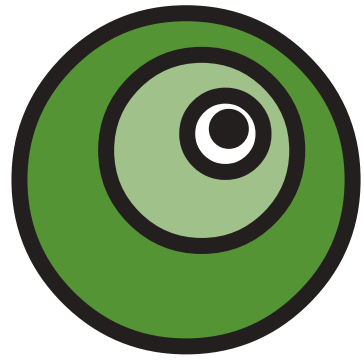
Von Reuter had many problems to deal with during the internment.

His crews had government-organised soldiers' councils and some of these refused to accept the authority of their officers. In addition there was much disorder and a general unwillingness to work. Mail from the homeland was scarce and he had little or no contact with Germany, indeed most of the information he received came from English newspapers which were days old by the time he got them.

By May the terms of surrender were changing and instead of dismantling the fleet he became afraid the British and their allies would retain the ships and absorb them into their own navies. Thus the idea of scuttling them before this could happen.

Gradually he convinced his officers and made plans for the scuttling on a predetermined order from him. This is a first hand account of one of the most momentous naval decisions ever taken. The fact that this man could order the sinking of 50 ships and be welcomed home a hero is testament to a time when a sense of honour and pride were paramount.

For anyone who is interested in the human and political story behind Scapa's wrecks, this book is a must. With lots of contemporary photographs, some taken as the ships were sinking; it helps us to understand the reasons behind such a momentous decision, and reminds us why we should treat these once great ships with respect and remembrance of this honourable man whose last duty to his country was to deny his enemy the use of his fleet.



ARMCHAIR DIVER



ARRAN SEA SCENES 2006

Produced by COAST
The Community of Arran
Seabed Trust £3.00

HERE'S ANOTHER must have Christmas present for the diver in your life - a calendar with a message. An important message - the sea around our coast needs protection.

Protection from scallop dredging, protection from prawn dredging, protection from the uncaring attitude of bureaucrats who will do nothing for an easy life.

COAST was set up a few years ago to draw attention to, and try to get some protection for, the fragile marine environment around Arran, like the mearle beds in Lamlash Bay.

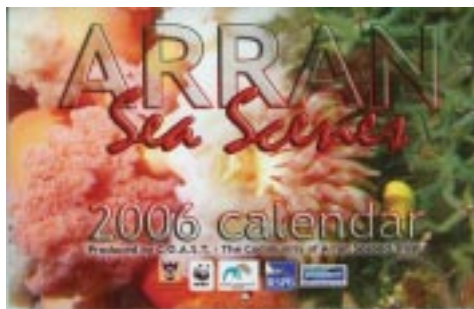
They have produced this calendar with photographs of some common species found around our coast. All the photographs have

been taken by members of COAST most of whom are members of Arran ScotSAC.

On the bottom left of each page is the monthly calendar with enough room on each day for a short reminder of important information. The right hand side you will find lots of useful information about who COAST are what they stand for. Space is also given to their sponsors and how they are helping to support conservation.

Most important are the sections explaining why we should adopt marine protection areas and no take zones.

COAST is to be congratulated for the innovative way they have chosen to get the conservation



message across. Anyone with this calendar on their wall will be reminded daily of the need for conservation.

At £3.00 it is a bargain and all my friends will be receiving one for Christmas - you have been warned. I would recommend all conservation minded divers to log on to their website at www.arrancoast.co.uk and order your copy now.