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SMS KONIGSBERG: Sea Wolf in Lair



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Auteur	Bericht
<p>Tandorini</p>  <p>Geregistreerd op: 11-6-2007 Berichten: 6906 Woonplaats: Laarne</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Geplaatst: 26 Okt 2008 19:41 Onderwerp: SMS KONIGSBERG: Sea Wolf in Lair </p> <hr/> <p><i>A German commerce raider, harried by the Royal Navy, is tracked down to a muddy corner of an East African backwater. This action included one of the very first uses of aircraft in naval combat - both to bomb the Konigsberg and to act as spotters for British naval gunfire. No fewer than 11 aircraft of five different types and two airfields were used during 9 months stalking Königsberg.</i></p>



Zanzibar, 20 September 1914. The British 3rd-class cruiser Pegasus lays in harbor. Commander John Ingles would have much preferred his ship's overhaul to take place at the British stronghold of Mombasa, but the Royal Navy had already suffered some loss of face in East African waters early in World War I. It was sound policy that Zanzibar's inhabitants should realize the Navy's resolution to protect them. Ingles was uncomfortably aware that the 2,135-ton Pegasus—her fires drawn while the residue of long steaming on poor-quality coal was cleared from her boilers—was a sitting duck. He ordered his gunners to take it in turns to sleep at their posts and sent the armed tug Helmuth to patrol the harbor approaches.

A little before 0500, Helmuth sighted what looked like a large

merchantman making her way cautiously through the shoals of Zanzibar's south channel. The stranger's reply to Helmuth's challenge was sudden and shocking. Breaking out the German battle-flag, she gathered speed and brushed Helmuth aside with two warning shots. His Imperial German Majesty's light cruiser Königsberg drove in towards Pegasus. The first salvos from five of Königsberg's 10 4.1 in guns opened up from 9,000 yards and bracketed the motionless Pegasus, whose eight old 4in guns were outranged by about a half a mile. By 0525, when Pegasus had fired some 50 rounds to no more effect than a graze on Königsberg's 2 in armored deck, the British cruiser was ablaze amidships. One by one her guns fell silent as the German scored hit after hit.

Shrouded in smoke and with fires breaking out along her entire length, Pegasus ceased firing. For about five minutes, while Königsberg closed to under 7,000 yards, the German guns were also mute. A German account states that the British raised a white flag. But then showed signs of re-commencing action. A British source claims that although Pegasus's ensign was momentarily struck--shot away--it was bravely held aloft by Marines, one man taking another's place as they were shot down. For whatever reason, Königsberg opened fire again, inflicting casualties among damage and medical parties on the British ship's torn decks. After 10 minutes' more bombardment, during which she put a few shells into the town but completely ignored the big collier Banffshire moored nearby, Königsberg steamed out to sea. She had scored around 300 hits on Pegasus killing 31 men, wounding over 50. She sank at 1300.

Königsberg triumphed in an unequal contest that began some days before the War Telegram brought the ships of Rear-Admiral Herbert King-Hall's Cape Squadron to battle stations. Late in July 1914, Pegasus was sent to Dar-es-Salaam--capital of German East Africa--to keep an eye on Königsberg. It was 16 years since Pegasus had made 21.2 knots on her trials. On 31 July 1914, she could only watch as the 10-years-younger, 3,400-ton Königsberg--still capable of approaching the 24 knots for which she had been designed and completed at Kiel in 1907--raced from Dar-es-Salaam and disappeared over the horizon. Like Ingles of Pegasus, Fregattenkapitan A. D. (Max) Loeff had advance orders for the coming hostilities. Königsberg was to be a hit-and-run commerce raider along the sea lanes linking Britain with her far-flung empire. A few hours after losing Pegasus, Königsberg slipped past the second of King-Hall's old cruisers, his flagship, the 2nd-class cruiser Hyacinth, during the night. War was declared four days later. By then the German cruiser was at large somewhere in the vast expanse of water between Cape Town and Singapore.

King-Hall heard nothing of her again until 21 August, when news reached him of the fate of the 6,000-ton liner City of Winchester, out of Ceylon with the best of the season's tea. She was attacked by Königsberg some 280 miles east of Aden on 6 August. A week later, when her crew had been transferred to two German steamers and her bunkers emptied of coal to keep Königsberg running and fighting, Loeff sank the liner in Khorya Morya Bay, SE Arabia. News of the sinking affected British station commanders from the Mediterranean to the China Sea. Their prime duty was to guard the routes along which Imperial troops and supplies were being rushed to Europe, to the vital Suez garrison, and to East Africa, where an able German commander, Oberstleutnant Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, was building a powerful force of German and African askari soldiers. The sea lanes were not only threatened by lone wolves like Königsberg, the light cruiser Emden, armed merchant cruisers like the fast 9,000-ton liner Prinz Eitel Friedrich and as yet unknown numbers of smaller steamers, but also by Admiral Graf Maximilian von Spee's heavy-cruiser China squadron. Despite the Royal Navy's impressive

superiority in capital ships (most, however, kept in home waters) and the help of Japanese and Russian cruisers, Britain's eastern admirals were forced to work their ships and crews to the limit.

The loss of one out-of-date warship could be borne. But the threat to the prestige of the Royal Navy in the eyes of the Empire was more serious. The Admiralty despatched old battleships whose guns could guard the convoy routes while cruisers hunted down the raiders. With German bases closed, the Japanese navy guarding the China seas, and German colliers and supply-vessels sunk or interned wherever they appeared, the hit-and-run ability of ships like Königsberg must have become increasingly limited. But with the raiders' early successes, the governments of Australia and New Zealand, in particular, became reluctant to risk their troops at sea. In October 1914, New Zealand refused to sail more convoys until their security improved. Every available ship was now deployed in search of the raiders. Off East Africa, the three modern 25-knot cruisers Weymouth, Chatham and Dartmouth, each mounting 8 x 6-inch guns, looked for Königsberg.

Königsberg vanishes again

As far as Königsberg's hideout was concerned, preparations were made early in 1914, when the 650-ton survey vessel Möwe charted the tortuous waterways of the Rufiji Delta--a 30-mile wide, 200-square-mile wilderness of forest, bush and swamp through which the Rufiji river flows into the Indian Ocean in three main channels and several smaller branches. Möwe's charts, as well as fine seamanship, enabled Loeff to 'vanish' after the sinking of City of Winchester. He took the 378ft-long Königsberg deep into the delta. It was from this secret base--where close liaison was made with German land forces--that Königsberg ventured out to sink Pegasus.

Had Loeff stayed at sea after destroying Pegasus; relying for fuel on coal taken from prizes and on contacts with supply-ships in remote anchorages, Königsberg might have had a career as spectacular as Emden. Instead, warned of the three 6-inch gun cruisers hunting him and of the arrival of the pre-dreadnought Goliath at Mombasa, Loeff decided to go into hiding again in the Rufiji. Here minor engine repairs could be safely carried out. By early October, Königsberg had 'vanished' once more.

Germany's carefully deployed supply-ships were, ironically, the means of Königsberg's betrayal. Early in October, Captain Sydney Drury-Lowe of Chatham, following yet another false trail in the Mozambique Channel, captured the 250-ton German tug Adjutant. The tug's papers linked her with the 3,385-ton liner President, whose movements had already aroused suspicion. Adjutant was bound for a rendezvous with President in Lindi Bay, south of the Rufiji. This date was kept by Chatham. Although not registered as a hospital ship or painted white as international law demanded, President flew the Red Cross flag. Turning a Nelsonian blind eye, Drury-Lowe sent a boarding-party. His action was proved legitimate by the liner's papers. These showed that she had off-loaded coal into lighters in September. These had taken it up the Rufiji. This, combined with a study of President's charts, gave Drury-Lowe the clue he needed.

Chatham arrived off the Rufiji on 30 October. Lookouts reported the German collier Somali about three miles up one main channel, three small steamers up another--and what looked like the upper-works of a bigger vessel much farther inside the delta. Local Africans confirmed that there was a large warship about 12 miles up-river and added that the main channels' banks were strongly held by German and askari troops

and that the waters were mined. Chatham- outweighing Königsberg by about 2,000 tons-could not enter the delta.

Rightly, Drury-Lowe was reluctant to risk a 'cutting-out' expedition in launches. He also doubted that Königsberg was really so far up-river and hoped that if her location was pinpointed she could be sunk by long-range fire. The old Goliath arrived to hurl salvos from her four 12in guns in Königsberg's direction. This was to no avail and Goliath was forced to withdraw with engine trouble. After sinking Somali with gunfire, Drury-Lowe could only settle down to blockade the Rufiji, supported by Weymouth and Dartmouth.

The Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) was officially established on 1 July 1914. It had no strength in East Africa. But Admiral King-Hall remembered the summer sensation of Durban-the exhibition flights of two 90hp Curtiss seaplanes. They were then known as 'hydro-aeroplanes'. The aircraft, their pilot, Mr H. D. Cutler, and a Union Castle liner were smartly requisitioned. On 6 November 1914, Flight Sub-Lieutenant Cutler RNAS sailed from Simonstown with one of the seaplanes aboard the armed merchant cruiser Kinfauns Castle. Bad weather on the way north damaged the aircraft. Parts from the second Curtiss were taken aboard off Durban. Helped by Midshipman A. N. Gallehawk, Cutler strove to put together one airworthy plane. By 20 November, Kinfauns Castle lay at Niororo Island-18 miles from the Rufiji. The monsoon season of clammy heat and torrential rain was imminent. Cutler and Gallehawk labored feverishly to plug the seaplane's leaky hull and adjust its engine to run efficiently in tropical conditions.

On 22 November-his aircraft stripped to its bare essentials -Cutler took off from Niororo and headed for the coast, into the raging monsoon. He had no compass and only enough fuel for about an hour's flight. When he failed to return, many aboard Kinfauns Castle gave him up for lost. He might easily have been, had not the crew of a native sailing boat reported sighting an aircraft flying south down the coast. Launches were sent to search and found Cutler unharmed. His plane was damaged by an emergency landing on an uninhabited islet. Two days later, the airman took off again in his patched-up plane, and this time returned successfully. What he had to say disappointed Drury-Lowe. Königsberg was indeed 12 miles up the Rufiji, heavily-defended and apparently ready for a sortie should the blockade relax. Another flight was ordered with Captain Crampton of Kinfauns Castle as observer. It was made early in December -after the remains of the second Curtiss were brought from Durban and cannibalized to make a single airworthy machine. Crampton confirmed what Cutler had reported Königsberg lay beyond the range of Drury-Lowe's guns.

The cruiser had, however, shifted position a little. On 6 December Cutler again took off to check on her. The Curtiss's hull was waterlogged and its engine on its last legs. One mile up-river the aircraft could take no more. Cutler landed in the river right under the guns of a German patrol. He was trying unsuccessfully to set his plane on fire as they waded out to capture him. Cutler remained a prisoner for three years, but he had one comfort-the enemy failed to capture his aircraft. From the tug Helmuth, Midshipman Gallehawk saw Cutler's landing. In an action resembling the plot of a boy's comic book, Gallehawk and a motorboat's crew roared into the Rufiji supported by 3pdr fire from Helmuth, drove off the askaris who were dragging the Curtiss ashore, got a line to the aircraft and, under heavy fire, towed it out. A gallant gesture; but of little material value. The Curtiss proved beyond repair and was eventually consigned to Durban Museum.

Chatham retired to Bombay for a refit and Rear-Admiral King-Hall himself arrived at the Rufiji aboard Hyacinth. Like Drury-Lowe, the Admiral called for aircraft-for bombing. He also proposed a surprise attack by improvised torpedo-boats, and an assault by monitors (shallow-draft vessels mounting heavy guns) which had acted successfully as fire-support ships off the Belgian coast in October. This was vetoed by the Admiralty. No monitors could yet be spared for East Africa, but aircraft were available. Two Sopwith float-planes--experimental variants of the 'Tabloid' land-plane-powered by the 100hp Monosoupape-Gnome Rotary engine developed for the 1914 Schneider Trophy event, were sent from Britain with a 20-man RNAS party commanded by Flight Lieutenant J. T. Cull.

When the Sopwiths arrived at Niororo on 21 February 1915, Ft.-Lt. Cull agreed to make an immediate bombing-run. But the Sopwiths' delicate air-cooled engines-even when stripped of their cowlings-failed to provide anything approaching full power in tropical conditions. Cull began with full fuel, maximum bomb-load (two 50lb, four 16lb) and an observer. After four days' wave-hopping he at last got aloft-but with no bombs, no observer, a ceiling of about 1,500ft and fuel for only an hour's flight. Within a few days both Sopwiths were unserviceable, their wooden frames and propellers warped by the heat (and many of the RNAS contingent down with heat-stroke or sunburn).

Early in April there arrived three Short 'folder' seaplanes aboard the auxiliary cruiser Laconic out of Durban. They were old and cranky but at least airworthy. On 25 April, newly-promoted Flight Commander Cull took off with an observer, Air Mechanic Boggis, who carried a 7x5 Goerz camera. Laboring on at under 1,000ft, the Short came under heavy fire from ground troops and from Königsberg's position. She appeared to be still ready for a sortie. The camera did not show that more than a third of her 330-strong crew had left to serve with von Lettow-Vorbeck's army. And although a South African professional hunter, Pieter Pretorius, with a team of African trackers, claimed to have got within 300 yards of Königsberg early in 1915, there is no record that he reported the shrinking crew-although he confirmed the strength of the land-forces guarding her.

Where were the monitors?

The Shorts' climate-imposed ceiling made bombing a near-suicidal undertaking. Therefore Rear-Admiral King-Hall concentrated on tightening his blockade while awaiting the monitors. In mid-April intercepted wireless messages told of a supply-ship bound for the Rufiji. Hyacinth steamed to intercept. On 14 April, off Tanga, a 3,600-ton steamer (the captured British vessel Pubens, masquerading as the neutral Norwegian Kronberg) was set ablaze and run aground. Engine failure caused King-Hall's premature withdrawal, however, and the Germans were able to salvage part of Kronberg's cargo of arms and ammunition. There were more rumors of relief-ships, and King-Hall's command was strengthened by the 3rd-class Australian cruiser Pioneer, the armored cruiser Cornwall and the refitted Chatham. But by mid-May, when the two latter ships were ordered to the Dardanelles, the monitors had still not arrived. All three Shorts were unserviceable, and although an airfield had been prepared on Mafia Island, about eight miles off the Rufiji, no more aircraft had come.

In fact, the monitors were on their way. Severn and Mersey had been designed by Vickers as 1,260-ton river gunboats for Brazil. Like other export craft being built in Britain, they had been requisitioned by the Royal Navy in August 1914. Their design-267ft long, 49ft in beam, but drawing only 4ft 9in, with an extremely low freeboard reflected their

intended role, and made them totally unsuited to the voyage from Malta, through the Red Sea to Aden, and down the African coast. The Aden to Mafia stage alone took 19 days, during which time the monitor's tender Trent and their collier had often to assist the four tugs towing the unwieldy craft-capable of a mere 12 knots under their own power. Captain E. J. A. Fullerton of Severn and Commander R. A. Wilson of Mersey and their crews more than earned the special commendation given them by the Admiralty before they had even fired a shot over the Rufiji.

The monitors finally reached Mafia on 3 June 1915. But they were not ready for action. Mounting two 6in guns-one forward and one aft, with one 4.7in howitzer also aft for high-trajectory fire-they were built to give punishment rather than take it. Before they were risked in the heavily--defended delta, armor plate was added to their decks and sides. Sandbags were placed at such vulnerable spots as bridge, magazine and gun-mounts. On 18 June, while the work was still going on, the auxiliary cruiser Laurentic delivered new aircraft. These were land-planes-two Caudron GIII biplanes with 80hp Gnome engines and two Henri Farman HF27 'pushers' with 140hp Canton-Unné engines. The Farmans were from a small batch specially built for operation in the tropics, with frames of steel tubing, and had a four-hour endurance with a maximum bomb-load of 550lb. Squadron Commander R. Cordon took command of the Mafia airfield, which now boasted a large corrugated iron hangar as well as native-style grass huts for personnel.

Late in June the aircraft were assembled and work on the monitors completed. Training in combined air-surface operations then began. A simple 'clock-face' code was adopted for spotting. The new aircraft had wireesses, but an alternative hand-and-flag-signal code was devised in the case of failure. The Laurentic was sent to escort a small contingent of Indian troops in a feint landing at Dar-es-Salaam--intended to divert German forces that might otherwise be rushed to the Rufiji. King -Hall's fleet was strengthened by Pyramus (sister-ship to the ill-fated Pegasus), with the 2nd-class cruiser Challenger due to arrive early in July.

Laurentic's mock attack was mounted on 5 July. On 6 July, King-Hall launched his intended knock-out blow on Königsberg. Preceded by three 'mine sweeping' whalers, the monitors entered the Kikunja-northern branch of the Rufiji-at 0520. In the remaining Caudron-one Caudron and a Farman were wrecked in training--Flight Lieutenant Watkins bombed Königsberg from 6,000ft. He scored no hits but provided a diversion. As the monitors ploughed on, answering heavy fire from the banks with their 3pdrs and MGs, Flight Commander Cull arrived in the Farman, with Flight Sub-Lieutenant H. J. Arnold as observer. Weymouth, with King-Hall aboard, and Pyramus at the Kikuja mouth shelled enemy gun-emplacements and observation posts on high ground. At the same time, Hyacinth and Pioneer engaged similar targets while guarding the Simba Uranga channel.

The monitors anchored at 0630, supposedly more than 11,000 yards from Königsberg. Here their 6in guns should outrange her 4.1 in. Because of inaccurate charts, however, Severn and Mersey were much closer-in sight of observation posts with telephone links to the cruiser. Severn opened fire at 0648. Almost immediately she was straddled by the first of many accurate four- and five-gun salvos from Königsberg. Severn's first shots were signalled by the Farman as 200 yards short and off to the left.

First blood in the clash went to Königsberg. At 0740 a direct hit on Mersey's forward 6in disabled the gun, killed three men and wounded more. Minutes later, a motorboat alongside was sunk and another shell

holed the monitor near the waterline.

Commander Wilson wisely retreated about 1,000 yards. Severn was faring better. At 0751, Arnold signalled 'H T' (hit). Five more hits were signalled inside 20 minutes, but then Arnold made 'WO'-meaning the aircraft must leave. By 0810, when Flight Lieutenant Blackburn with Assistant Paymaster Badger as observer arrived in the Caudron, Mersey had again started firing while Severn retreated. Severn's move was lucky. It brought in view a German observation post in a tree about 400 yards away. Its destruction saw a marked decline in Königsberg's accuracy.

The monitors closed in once more, but wireless communications with the Farman-piloted now by Squadron Commander Gordon with Arnold, who spent nine hours aloft that day as observer-failed. The Caudron, relieving it at 1145, had to leave almost immediately with engine trouble. At 1400, when the Farman returned with its wireless repaired, both monitors were firing briskly. But no more hits were signalled and many shots went unmarked. In fact, the monitors were firing better than they realized. Many shells landing very near Königsberg fell into deep mud and failed to explode. Of 635 rounds fired only six were signalled 'hits', but by the time the monitors withdrew-at about 1545-they had had many remarkable escapes from near-misses and the cruiser's ammunition reserves were depleted. It had also become apparent that in a subsequent attack the monitors should fire in turn rather than on their own time. This would allow the aerial observers to make their reports more specific.

On 11 July, just before 1200, Severn and Mersey steamed again into the delta. Cull and Arnold were overhead in the Farman. Fire from the banks was as fierce as before. Mersey had two men wounded before reaching her firing position. Her orders were to draw Königsberg's fire while Severn closed the range. But the Germans were not deceived. Mersey received only brief attention, while Severn was soon straddled by four-gun salvos that spattered her decks with mud from near-misses. At 1230, however, when Severn anchored well inside 10,000 yards (5.6 miles) and opened fire. Königsberg's accuracy suddenly crumbled. Severn's opening shots broke the telephone line linking the most important German observation post (said to be an officer in a barrel sunk in the mud only 50 yards from Severn) to the cruiser.

In spite of heavy small-arms and 12pdr fire, Cull and Arnold swooped over Königsberg below 3,000ft to spot for Severn, whose eighth salvo brought 'H T' from Arnold. Of the next 12 shots, eight hit. The cruiser was reduced to three-gun salvos. But she continued firing at the aircraft. At about 1250 a shell-burst sheared two cylinders from the Farman's engine. Cull began a shallow glide towards the river while Arnold asked Mersey to send a boat-still keeping up the report on Severn's fire. His final signal-'HT All forward'-was made just before the Farman hit the water some 150 yards from Mersey. It somersaulted and threw Arnold clear. But Cull, strapped firmly in his seat, narrowly escaped drowning before Mersey's boat arrived.

Arnold's last signal proved vital. Lowering sights a fraction, Severn hit Königsberg amidships-causing a massive explosion marked by a column of yellow-black smoke. Only two guns answered from the cruiser-then only one. For nearly an hour Severn fired a salvo every 90 seconds. By the time Mersey moved up to join her, seven big explosions had been counted. Aboard Königsberg, Loeff realized his ship was doomed and ordered scuttling-charges, rigged from torpedo-warheads, fired at about 1330. As her crew splashed ashore, the cruiser toppled to starboard and settled deep into the mud. At 1344-seeing Königsberg ablaze along her whole length and listing sharply, Lieutenant A. G. Bishop, observer in the

Caudron flown by Flight Lieutenant Watkins, signalled 'O K'. Severn and Mersey continued firing until King-Hall ordered their withdrawal. Soon after 1420, the Admiral stood at the salute on the bridge of Weymouth-her decks lined with cheering men-as the monitors steamed out of the delta.

As sunset approached, a party of Germans re-boarded Königsberg to lower her battle-flag, still just above water-level, and disable her guns by dumping the breech-blocks overboard. As a commerce raider, Königsberg had had little success, but she had kept a strong force of British cruisers-cruisers that might have hunted down Emden earlier, or reinforced Vice-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock's squadron and prevented its destruction by von Spee at Coronet on 1 November 1914-tied up for some eight months. Now her men went to join von Lettow-Vorbeck's force, while her name was passed on to a 5,440-ton cruiser launched in December 1915. She later surrendered to France and was renamed Metz. Königsberg's career was still not quite over. King-Hall was to regret that, because of the strong land forces in the delta, he did not order a final attack to completely wreck the cruiser. Early in August 1915, a Caudron from Mafia flew over the delta on a photo-reconnaissance mission. The airmen reported the cruiser a total wreck, but photographs showed a lighter alongside. Salvage of some kind was going on. (Her remains lay there until 1962, when the Tanzanian government sold them to a scrap-metal firm.)

The salvage work was directed by Commander Schönfeld, a naval reservist who had spent many years in East Africa as a planter. With the help of African and German divers, he recovered all 10 of the 4.1 in guns' breech-blocks from the Rufiji mud, as well as salvaging a number of 12 and 3pdrs and MGs. The 4.1 in (105mm)-as powerful as any artillery then in East Africa-were mounted on wheeled wooden platforms each pulled by up to 400 native laborers. In March 1916, when the British attacked German-held Kahe (more than 300 miles from the Rufiji), they were initially repulsed by guns from Königsberg, which played no small part in enabling von Lettow-Vorbeck to hold out until the Armistice. Perhaps the most ironic instance of the guns' use was at Kondoia Irangi in May-June 1916-where Königsberg's guns bombarding the British-held settlement were answered by guns salvaged from Pegasus!

The wreck of SMS Königsberg at the Rufiji River, August 1915

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"Horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae"
"Van hen(de Galliërs) allemaal zijn de Belgen de dappersten"
Julius Caesar(100 VC - 44 VC)
http://nl.escertico.wikia.com/wiki/Militaria_Wiki

Naar boven



Tandorini



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The Story of the Königsberg's Guns

The story of the Königsberg is a fascinating one, and that of her main armament even more so. Not only did these guns serve on the ship in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, but also on the dusty plains and the rain forests of East Africa. Today one of these remarkable guns rests at the western approach of the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

SMS Königsberg was the first of a new class of fast well armed Town Class Cruisers (Kleiner Kreuzen) displacing 3,500 tons, built for the German Navy (Kaiserliche Marine) at the turn of the 20th century. Launched in 1905 she was a sleek, three funnelled predator, carrying a main armament of ten 10,5 cm quick firing guns (German: 10,5 cm Seekanone or 10,5 cm SK). She initially served with the Baltic Fleet where she also acted as escort to the German Kaiser's Royal Yacht Hohenzollern before being laid up at Kiel in 1912. In late 1913 the German East Africa government requested a suitable replacement for their elderly sail and steam corvette, S.M.S. Geier then on station. Four months later on 25 April 1914 a re-commissioned Königsberg commanded by Fregatten Kapitan Max Looff left the Kiel naval base for East Africa to reaffirm German naval power in the Indian Ocean. After arriving at Dar es Salaam on 6 June, Königsberg, played host to innumerable German and African visitors in ports along the colony's coastline. Little did her crew realise that East Africa was to be, for most of them, home and headquarters for what remained of their short lives.

On 28 June 1914, the Archduke of Austria was assassinated in Sarajevo, and as the political situation in Europe slid towards open war, the Germans in East Africa began to weigh their options. Looff's immediate goal was to ensure his ship was at sea if war came. The British were aware of the new threat on the coast, and in case of war would blockade Dar es Salaam. As the latter part of July passed, Königsberg completed a series of gunnery training exercises and steamed back into harbour for an overhaul to wartime readiness. All wood furnishings were removed, lacquered panelling stripped away and coal and supplies poured into every empty space. By July 30, all was nearly ready and Looff spent time ashore coordinating his plans with the Colonial Army, commanded by the famous General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. German freighters in the area had been ordered to bring in their spare coal, and two were in harbour at

that stage. One of these, the 2,500 ton Somali, was pressed into service as Königsberg's seagoing supply depot. On July 31, the steamer Tabora arrived with news that the British Cape Squadron, based at Simonstown, South Africa, with their three cruisers under Vice Admiral King-Hall was due at Zanzibar the next day. There was now no more time for planning if Königsberg was to avoid being trapped in the harbour. By 4:30 that afternoon she cast off and made her way out into the Indian Ocean.

The Königsberg was ten miles out to sea and evening was falling when the officer in the foremast called down - three ships approaching! The Cape Squadron had arrived, only to see their objective steaming out to sea. All three British cruisers; H.M.S. Hyacinth, Pegasus and Astraea converged on the Königsberg and took up station around her - Astraea to port, Hyacinth astern and Pegasus ahead. If word of war came then Königsberg could hardly have been in a worse situation. Loeff considered his options and while the gunners would have been at the ready, he ordered his chief engineer to fire up all the boilers without making extra smoke. After 45 minutes the Königsberg had steam for her full speed of 24 knots and now only had to wait for whatever chance might come to use it to escape. Until such opportunity arrived, she cruised along at 10 knots, giving no sign of other plans. Not long after, a squall suddenly blew in from the southwest, and without warning Königsberg was blanketed by driving warm rain, all her "escorts" disappearing from view. Instantly orders went out and the cruiser made a 180 degree turn, churning a great knuckle of water behind her as she sped back on a reciprocal course. As she cleared the squall, Königsberg passed the Hyacinth, already making heavy smoke as she vainly tried to bring up steam for full speed. Loeff turned south for an hour and then headed out to sea at full speed for the rest of the night, consuming a large quantity of valuable coal in the process. King-Hall was left to his own fury at letting the German cruiser escape from under his nose, while Loeff was left to wait for war, in a cruiser already looking for coal to top up her bunkers.

Four days later, on August 4, the Königsberg was making her way through heavy seas off Cape Guardafui when she received a wireless code message declaring that Germany was now at war with England, France and Russia. This meant that in the vast open space of the Indian Ocean, she was now alone and hunted by a numerically superior foe. But she herself was designed to hunt, and Loeff was out for prey. After contacting as many German merchant ships as possible, to both notify them of war and ask for coal, Königsberg headed for the main shipping channel from the Red Sea to India which ran just north of the Horn of Africa. Within several hours of daylight she encountered three German steamers, the last of whom tried to evade the cruiser thinking her to be British. This short pursuit wasted more coal, and none of the steamers had any to spare. Finally, after passing a Japanese freighter, Königsberg drew her first blood when she came upon the British steamer City of Winchester. The steamer rang up all stop and prepared a welcoming party for the British cruiser she thought Königsberg to be. Only when the German officer arrived on deck did the Winchester's crew realize their dreadful mistake. This, the first British merchant ship to be taken by a German man-of-war, was also carrying most of the 1914 Ceylon tea crop, making it a double blow for the British.

After scuttling the City of Winchester at Hallaniya Island off the Oman coast, Königsberg's coal situation was even more of a concern and she turned back to the main shipping lane but found nothing. The British had reacted swiftly to the disappearance of the City of Winchester and diverted all ships away from the area. Also, the Japanese freighter had recognized the Königsberg for what she was and radioed British

authorities. While the upheaval caused by his cruiser might have given Loeff some comfort, his concerns were increasingly focused on finding more coal and fresh water. Fortunately for him, the second rendezvous with the Somali at Ras Hafun on the Somaliland coast went mostly as planned, and by August 24 the Königsberg was underway again with full bunkers.

Cut off from radio contact with Dar-es-Salaam (the radio station at the capital being destroyed during a British naval shelling of the city), Loeff headed for Madagascar where he hoped to intercept French shipping. Early on the morning of August 29 the German cruiser steamed into the bay at Majunga, only to find a Red Cross station and no ships. The entire area had been evacuated. Again, the locals believed the Königsberg to be British, and only when she was steaming back out of the bay without anchoring did the local radio send out alerts that the Germans were in their harbour.

By now Königsberg's coal supply was down to 250 tons and again she met the Somali, this time at Aldabra Island, but the coaling effort was called off due to rough seas. Coal was not Loeff's only worry as the ship also required some work on her engines. With the situation becoming critical, it was decided that both ships would head for the Rufiji River Delta. The delta had recently been charted by the crew of the survey ship Möwe who discovered the river, formerly considered unnavigable, actually had several deep channels. On the morning of 3 September Königsberg passed the bar at the mouth of the Rufiji River and steamed quietly up the Simba-Uranga channel to Salale.

Once the German authorities at the nearby customs station recovered from their shock at the cruiser's unexpected arrival they quickly advised Dar es Salaam of the cruiser's whereabouts and that she required coal and supplies. Loeff was also able to gather the latest news on world and local events, the most important of which came on September 19. A coast watcher reported he had seen a British cruiser steam into Zanzibar Harbour. The news was relayed to Loeff who having replenished his bunkers decided to head to Zanzibar, and destroy the lone British cruiser. Judging by the watcher's description of the British ship, it must be the Pegasus or the Astraea. In reality, it was Pegasus which had returned to Zanzibar for maintenance.

A Third Class cruiser of the Pelorus class, Pegasus had been launched in 1897 and displaced 2,135 tons, while her 4 inch guns were no match for the Krupp 4 inch guns on Königsberg. Because of a combination of boiler troubles common to the class, and the fact that she had been burning sulphurous Natal coal, she had to put in at Zanzibar for desperately needed repairs. It was considered a safe move by British authorities, convinced that Königsberg was no longer in East African waters. They were wrong.

Königsberg sailed that afternoon and by late evening, was steaming for Zanzibar at her economical speed of 10 knots. Higher speeds caused sparks to shoot from her funnels, something they wished to avoid that night. By four o'clock in the morning, they were off the southern tip of Zanzibar and passing between the reefs. The tug Helmuth on guard duty was disabled by a shell. As they approached the village of Mbweni they could see Pegasus at anchor off the Eastern Telegraph Company offices at Shangani Point.. At a range of five miles, Königsberg ran up her battle flags and opened fire with her five port guns. Within eight minutes Pegasus was out gunned and on fire with heavy casualties. Her captain, Commander John Ingles struck the colours and surrendered. The white flag was seen by Loeff who ordered a cease fire and departed. The Pegasus had been hit numerous times and the ship was slowly sinking.

Despite efforts to beach the ship, Pegasus sank at two thirty that afternoon with a loss of 38 killed and 55 wounded. .

Leaving Zanzibar, Königsberg suffered a broken cross head on one engine and together with steam leaks caused by the bombardment, Looff had little alternative but to postpone his plan for a return trip round the Cape to Germany, while he effected repairs in the Rufiji. Only the railway machine shops at Dar es Salaam would be able to machine the parts needed and so, twenty-four hours after her departure, Königsberg was back in the delta, the only safe place on the coast for her to lay up. The delta was bisected by numerous channels, and the Germans were the only ones who knew that several of them were navigable. In case of emergencies, Königsberg would have an escape route. In the meantime, the engine parts were sent overland to Dar-es-Salaam by ox cart. To complete her disappearance Looff had the top masts dropped and camouflaged the remainder as trees, while some of the ship's light weapons were moved ashore to keep possible British landing parties at bay. Later they were joined by forces from the land army who garrisoned the local islands, creating a safe zone around the raider. For now, she would be safe.

Looff was unaware of several events developing elsewhere. Two days after his attack at Zanzibar, the German cruiser Emden shelled the port of Madras in India, causing huge panic and setting some fuel tanks ablaze. This double blow to British pride was not to be stood for, not to mention the strangling effect these German actions had on shipping. The six inch gun cruiser H.M.S. Chatham was ordered to East Africa from the Red Sea to seek and destroy Königsberg. The first break for the British occurred when Chatham searched the German liner Präsident and discovered an order for shipments of coal to be delivered to the Rufiji Delta and the cruiser H.M.S. Weymouth intercepted the German tug Adjutant with a chart showing Salale. Soon, reports began trickling from locals in the Rufiji area of a German ship moored there and on the afternoon of October 20, Chatham anchored near the Kiomboni branch of the delta to send a landing party ashore. Fortunately for them, it was at a place where there were as yet no German fortifications. Chatham closed the delta mouth and spotted the Somali masts rising above the green canopy of the river delta's forests, her cover was blown.

On the morning of November 30, Chatham zeroed in on what they now knew to be the Somali's masts and fired. Somali was hit several times and soon began to burn and Looff moved Königsberg further up the delta, out of range having suffered no damage during the day. Although the mechanical problems had been repaired, the situation was now grim, Königsberg's hiding place was blocked by three large, fast modern cruisers, and she lacked coal for a high speed run. Captain Drury-Lowe on board the Chatham had been given explicit orders to destroy the Königsberg at all costs. This was to be the start of an eight month long impasse, during which Königsberg was unable to escape from the delta, while the British were unable to get close enough to bombard her. More entrenchments were dug throughout the delta, creating a fortified zone which no British land force could hope to secure. On the British side, there were several attempts to bring aircraft in for reconnaissance and bombardment. The former worked occasionally, sometimes causing alarm when they reported Königsberg with steam up and ready to run for the open ocean. The latter never had a chance, as the aircraft were so unreliable that their main goal was to stay in the air, not dropping bombs! After a few encounters with these snooping aircraft, Looff arrayed a series of light cannon and machine gun positions as an anti-aircraft defence. These proved effective and brought down at least one of the British planes.

On New Years Day a message was sent to Loeff from H.M.S. Fox, "We wish you a Happy New Year and hope to see you soon." Loeff replied, "Thanks, same to you, if you wish to see me, I am always at home."

In April 1915, the Kronborg, a "Hilfschiff" (or blockade runner) bearing supplies for Königsberg and the land army, arrived in the Indian Ocean after a long voyage from Germany. Disguised as a Danish freighter, she was carrying 1,600 tons of high grade Ruhr coal for the cruiser, as well as hundreds of rounds of ammunition for the 10.5 cm guns, machine tools, cutting torches, clothing, fresh and canned provisions and a variety of other supplies. She also carried over a million rounds of small arms ammunition, rifles and machine guns for the land army. The British however, knew of her arrival, and thanks to diligent eavesdropping on German radio transmissions, they had discovered her purpose. The ship reached Manza Bay near Tanga, when the British cruiser Hyacinth appeared from the south. The captain of the Kronborg brought his ship into the bay at full speed, and ran it aground before setting fire to the deck cargo. The Hyacinth attempted to put the fire out but retreated and shelled the ship. The Germans promptly sent messages in the clear announcing the destruction of the ship, and that they had mined the bay. This last bit of news had the effect of keeping the British away long enough to allow the salvage of the cargo in her submerged holds. By the time the British returned a few weeks later, they discovered to their dismay the Germans had salvaged everything except the coal. The logistics of moving the coal to the Rufiji would have been impossible with the facilities available.

The loss of the coal meant that Loeff and the Königsberg would be confined to the delta. By this time the ship was now burning mangrove wood cut from the surrounding swamp by local labour to maintain power. Their fear was that a second Hilfschiff would get to the Königsberg, allowing her to head back into the Indian Ocean, but the second ship Marie did not arrive until the following year. What he did not know, was that the British had begun systematically charting the delta and the complex web of defences with the help of a South African hunter, Peter Pretorius. The British Admiralty also dispatched two ex Brazilian Navy monitors, the Mersey and Severn, to East Africa where they arrived in June 1915 after a long and difficult tow from the Mediterranean. By this time the crew of the Königsberg had been reduced by a third in order to supplement the land army after convincing the navy that the crew were more valuable fighting on land, instead of resting idly in the delta. The British were unaware of these developments, but they knew Königsberg was awaiting a second Hilfschiff.

On July 6, 1915 the two monitors finally executed the operation carefully planned and rehearsed over several weeks. Severn and Mersey, supported by warships at the delta mouth, headed up the Kikunja branch of the delta. Loeff was soon aware of their arrival through his network of lookouts. At 06:23 the monitors opened fire using a spotter plane to locate the fall of shell. Königsberg's return fire was accurate, due to the network of lookouts linked by telephone who passed the monitors position to the cruiser. The British fire was inaccurate due in part to the signalling system used between the planes and monitors. At 07:40, a shell from Königsberg hit the Mersey's forward six inch gun, knocking it out and almost blowing up the ship. She was saved only by the heroic action of crewmen who threw a burning shell into the river. Near misses continued to shower the monitors with shrapnel, and after scoring only four hits on the Königsberg, the monitors retired on the falling tide. Immediately after Severn moved off, five shells from the cruiser's guns landed right where she had been moored. Had they hit her, this perfect group of shells would

have wrecked or sunk the small monitor. The British counted their luck, they had fired 635 six inch shells and scored four inconclusive hits on the Königsberg. The Mersey had lost one of her two main guns and Severn missed being blown out of the water by what her captain called blind luck.

For four days all was quiet, but early on Sunday, July 11, the aircraft began circling Königsberg, announcing the renewal of a second attack. By 10:40 the monitors were in the entrance to the river and by 11:30 the Königsberg had begun firing, hitting the Mersey with two shells, putting the rear main gun out of action. With the Mersey now completely incapable of returning fire, the Königsberg switched attention to Severn, who held her fire under the rain of shells until the second spotter plane arrived at 12:30. The carefully rehearsed signal system between ship and plane worked perfectly the second time and Königsberg was severely damaged with a number of casualties and damaged guns. The loss of the telegraph line to the ship from the lookout posts meant she was firing blind and unable to keep up the same rate of fire. Within a short time, a hit from Severn ignited ammunition in the Königsberg's after magazine, causing an explosion and a fire. Other hits killed a number of the crew and damaged the bridge, injuring Loeff and all but one man present. Finally, one of the two remaining guns fired its last round of shrapnel ammunition at the spotter plane, bringing it down in the river. As shells continued to rain down, First Officer Koch rigged a torpedo head as a scuttling charge and at two o'clock that afternoon Königsberg heaved slightly as the torpedo detonated. The blast tore open the cruiser's hull and she heeled to port, sinking into the mud with her upper works just above the waterline. She had occupied the Royal Navy for nearly a year tying up twenty ships and ten aircraft and consuming nearly forty thousand tons of coal. Loeff signalled Berlin: "Königsberg is destroyed but not conquered."

These were prophetic words as the Königsberg, although doomed as a fighting ship, still had plenty of fight left in her. From Dar-es-Salaam the order went out to salvage everything of use from the ship. Especially her main guns which were used by the German land forces to supplement their field artillery. The heavy guns were recovered and dragged on carts through the bush to the capital. There they were cleaned and carriages constructed from boiler plate at the railway workshops. Some guns were intended for fixed defences and received no carriages. Around 1,500 shells were salvaged from the Königsberg and the Kronberg and shared out between the ten guns.

From Dar-es-Salaam, the guns were despatched to various corners of the colony where they began their second career. They were skilfully operated by sailors from the Königsberg, now facing the African jungles instead of the open seas. One was mounted on the Goetzen, the largest steamer on Lake Tanganyika but later removed for use on land. The refurbished guns gave good service to the German ground forces, being much valued for heavy artillery support. Their shortcomings were that they were heavy and not very mobile, while their armour piercing shells were not intended for land use, and often buried themselves deep in the ground before exploding. South African troops fighting at Kondoa Irangi in July 1916, noted their satisfaction with this state of affairs. There was however some casualties to these guns and their persistent shelling were trying to the nerves.

As the war rolled on over East Africa, the Germans were forced to abandon or destroy these heavy guns. Their intrinsic lack of mobility became a liability as the Schutztruppen and their African Askari troops moved into a war of movement in the vast regions of Southern Tanzania.

The Königsberg guns were abandoned or captured as follows :

- 1 at Kahe, March 1916
- 1 at Mwanza, July 1916
- 1 at Kigoma, July 1916
- 1 at Bagamoyo, August 1916
- 1 at Kondo Irangi, August 1916
- 1 at Tabora, September 1916
- 1 at Kahima, September 1916
- 1 at Mahiwa, October 1917
- 1 at Massasi, October 1917.
- 1 at Kibata, October 1917

Most of the guns were abandoned or destroyed after they ran out of ammunition by their crews to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. After the end of hostilities the captured Königsberg guns were distributed as trophies and the following locations are known :

- 1 to Pretoria, South Africa
- 1 to Mombasa, Kenya
- 1 to Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania
- 1 to Kampala, Uganda
- 1 to Leopoldville in the then Belgian Congo
- 1 to Stanleyville in the then Belgian Congo

Of the Königsberg's original crew of 350 men, only 15, including Captain Looff, survived the war to return to Germany.

Today only the two guns in Pretoria and Mombasa are known to exist, both are mounted on similar heavy wheeled field mountings, possibly being those captured in a better condition (*since this article was written a third gun has been rediscovered, seen above in Jinja, Uganda). Other items including parts of a gun and a sighting mechanism are preserved at the South African National Museum of Military History in Saxonwold, Johannesburg. In the Imperial War Museum, London is the ships steam whistle and the Inclinator is displayed at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton. A few shell cases are also exist in many parts of the world.

Inspection of the gun located in the grounds of the Union Buildings in Pretoria, revealed that it is inscribed with the serial number 369 as well as "FRIED KRUPP, ESSEN", identifying it as a gun made by this famous German firm. A bronze plaque attached to the carriage states that it is the gun captured at Kahe, but this can not be as the Kahe gun was fitted on a wooden mounting, not a wheeled carriage and was found blown up by the Germans before they abandoned it. The gun's naval origins are easily discernable. The long barrel and heavy cradle type recoil system were designed for shipboard use. The gun is missing its breech block pointing to the conclusion that it was abandoned by the Germans once it had used all the ammunition available. A strong sheet metal carriage supports the gun, but a closer look reveals the carriage to be very utilitarian in nature. When mounted on a cruiser the gun had a range of 12,000 metres. The shell weighed 17.4 kg and the gun muzzle velocity was 600 - 650 m/s. On land the gun would have weighed around 4,000 kg. At one time the gun was painted a dark green colour but has been since repainted in maroon. The original colour scheme would probably have been the same as on the cruiser, i.e. a light sea grey, but it is possible that it was re-painted to camouflage it during its service on land. Clearly this was a powerful and unique gun, and one which ought to be preserved not only as a reminder of the Königsberg's adventures, but also of South Africa's contribution to the First World War.

Two sidelights on this story should also be mentioned. Firstly the Königsberg also carried two smaller 8,8 cm guns (German: 8,8 cm Seekanone L/30) in her hold, probably to equip and transform a merchant vessel into an armed merchant cruiser. These guns were also used on land and one, captured in September 1916, is currently on display at the South African National Museum of Military History.

Secondly, if we cast our minds back to the Königsberg's most famous victim, the British cruiser H.M.S. Pegasus, then there is another twist in the tale. Six of the eight guns on Pegasus were also salvaged by the British and mounted on land carriages. The two opponents thus met again, this time on land. Today one of the "Peggy Guns" stands next to the Königsberg gun (the "Bagamoyo" gun) at Fort Jesus in Mombasa, Kenya - two once wartime foes now rest peacefully together.

http://www.deutsche-schutzgebiete.de/sms_koenigsberg_1.htm

<http://www.wtj.com/>

<http://www.germancolonialuniforms.co.uk/>

<http://rapidhttp.com/milhist/vol032dh.html>

"Horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae"

"Van hen(de Galliërs) allemaal zijn de Belgen de dappersten"

Julius Caesar(100 VC - 44 VC)

http://nl.escertico.wikia.com/wiki/Militaria_Wiki

Naar boven

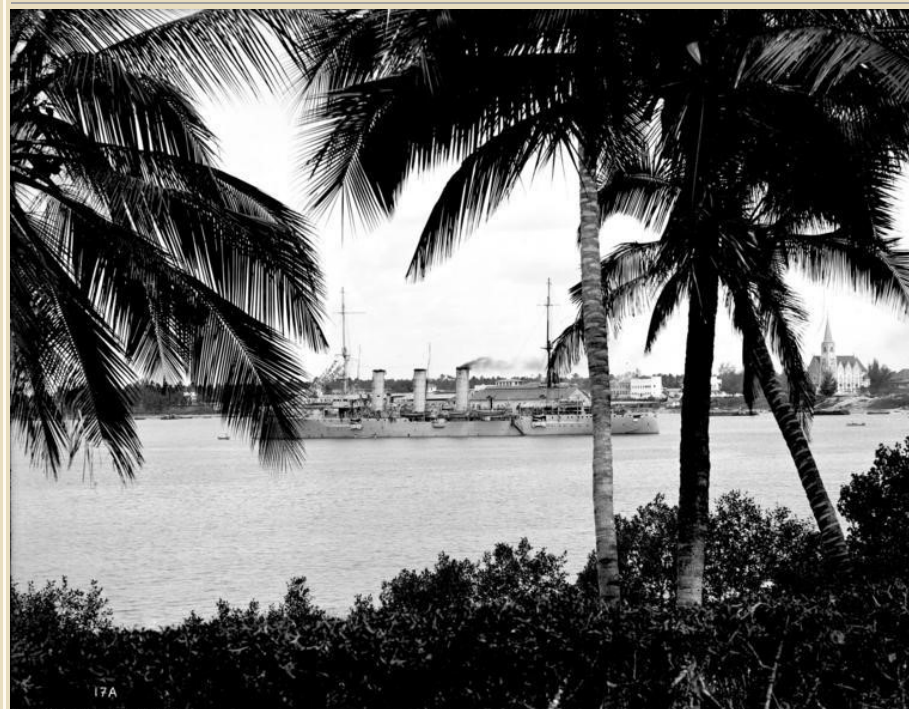


Regulus 1

Geplaatst: 22 Dec 2008 22:03 Onderwerp:



Geregistreerd op: 17-7-2005
Berichten: 12472
Woonplaats: Jabbeke, Flanders - Home of the Marine Jagdgeschwader in WW I



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-D040017
Foto: Dobbertin, Waltherr | 1914/1915

Te Daressalam





<http://www.forumeerstewereldoorlog.nl/wiki/>

Naar boven



Regulus 1

Geplaatst: 23 Dec 2008 22:19 Onderwerp:



Geregistreerd op: 17-7-2005
Berichten: 12472
Woonplaats: Jabbeke, Flanders - Home of the Marine
Jagdgeschwader in WW I



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-DOA3005
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-DOA3006
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-DOA3011
Foto: Dobbertin, Wäther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-D0A3012
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August

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Naar boven



Regulus 1

Geplaatst: 23 Dec 2008 22:19 Onderwerp:



Geregistreerd op: 17-7-2005
Berichten: 12472
Woonplaats: Jabbeke, Flanders - Home of the Marine Jagdgeschwader in WW I



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-D0A3013
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-DOA3014
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-DOA3015
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-D0A3017
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-D0A3018
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August

<http://www.forumeerstewereldoorlog.nl/wiki/>

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Regulus 1

Geplaatst: 23 Dec 2008 22:20 Onderwerp:



Geregistreerd op: 17-7-2005
Berichten: 12472
Woonplaats: Jabbeke,
Flanders - Home of
the Marine
Jagdgeschwader in
WW I



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-D0A3019
Foto: Dobbertin, Wäther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-D0A3020
Foto: Dobbertin, Wäther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-DOA3022
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August



Bundesarchiv, Bild 105-DOA3024
Foto: Dobbertin, Walther | 1915 Juli - August

<http://www.forumeerstewereldoorlog.nl/wiki/>

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Tandorini

Geplaatst: 17 Apr 2009 16:30 Onderwerp:





Geregistreerd op: 11-6-2007
Berichten: 6906
Woonplaats: Laarne

Wat er gebeurde met de kanons:

<http://www.sacktrick.com/igu/germancolonialuniforms/militaria/koenigsberggun.htm>

"Horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae"
"Van hen(de Galliërs) allemaal zijn de Belgen de dappersten"
Julius Caesar(100 VC - 44 VC)
http://nl.escertico.wikia.com/wiki/Militaria_Wiki

Naar boven



Tandorini



Geregistreerd op: 11-6-2007
Berichten: 6906
Woonplaats: Laarne

Geplaatst: 11 Jul 2014 21:58 Onderwerp:



World War 1 at Sea - Naval Battles in outline

HMS MERSEY and SEVERN V SMS KÖNIGSBERG - JULY 1915

<http://www.naval-history.net/WW1Battle1507KonigsbergAction.htm>

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Index -> Zeeoorlog

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Ja **mag niet** stemmen in polls