

THE ROLE OF LOUGH SWILLY IN WW1



In the autumn of 1914 Lough Swilly provided shelter for the entire British Grand Fleet under the command of Admiral John Jellicoe. The British Grand Fleet consisted of 35-40 state-of-the-art battleships and battlecruisers as well as a wide array of destroyer cruisers, aircraft carriers and submarines. The Grand Fleet was considered the most potent weapon of war of any nation

The Grand Fleet had been based at Scapa Flow, off the Orkney Islands north of Scotland and during wartime the Fleet was used as a means of imposing a naval blockade on Germany and transporting the British Expeditionary Force to France.

Because of its strategic location, the good depth of water and the presence of six fortifications Lough Swilly became a fortified royal naval base during the war with the navy headquarters in Buncrana called HMS Hecla. One writer of the time referred to Lough Swilly as the "Scapa Flow of Ireland" Fort Dunree was also a military base of strategic importance during the war.

In the early days after the outbreak of World War 1 it became apparent that Scapa Flow was not secure enough against possible attacks from German submarines which were roaming the North Atlantic.

On the 22nd October 1914 the Grand Fleet under the command of Admiral Jellicoe anchored in Lough Swilly. Admiral Jellicoe is quoted as saying "For the first time since the declaration of war the Fleet occupied a secure base" In order to protect the warships from German u-boat attacks there was a large boom erected across the lough between Macamish point and Ned's point.

The Grand Fleet left Lough Swilly in November 1914 but throughout the duration of the war many ships of the Royal navy anchored in the Lough.



HMS Audacious, sunk by a German Mine off the coast of Donegal in October 1914