

## Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Percy DOUGLAS,

KC.B., C.M.G.

HYDROGRAPHER OF THE BRITISH NAVY 1924-1932.

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By the death of Vice Admiral Sir Percy DOUGLAS which occurred at Dover last November the hydrographic surveyors of the world have lost one of their most distinguished colleagues.

Born at Southsea in November 1876 he was the second son of Admiral Sholto DOUGLAS, C.B. In 1890 he entered the Royal Navy as a Cadet on board H.M.S. *Britannia*. After qualifying at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, he specialised in hydrographic surveying and was appointed a Sub-Lieutenant in H.M.S. *Stork* surveying in the Mediterranean. In 1908 he obtained his first command of H.M. Surveying Ship *Waterwitch* on the China Station. After promotion to Commander he served from 1910 to 1915 as Superintendent of Charts in the Hydrographic Department, Admiralty. Soon after the outbreak of the Great War he was appointed surveying officer on the staff of the Vice Admiral, Mediterranean, and was promoted to the rank of Captain in December 1915. He was then selected to organise the Naval Meteorological Service which was established during the Great War and served as Director until January 1918. He then served as a surveying officer on the staff of the Admiral Commanding, Dover, during which time he carried out valuable work off the Belgian coast especially in connection with the naval attack on the port of Zeebrugge, for which he received the C.M.G. In 1919 he was appointed Assistant Hydrographer of the Navy and served in that capacity until 1921.

After a further spell afloat in command of H.M.S. *Mutine* surveying off the south coast of Jamaica, in 1924 he was appointed Hydrographer of the Navy and was promoted Rear Admiral in February 1927. The same year he was placed on the Retired List at his own request but continued in his appointment, being promoted to Vice Admiral in June 1931. The following year he relinquished the post of Hydrographer of the Navy and thus ended his career in the Surveying Service; this, however, did not see the end of his activities as shortly after leaving the Admiralty he was appointed Assessor to the House of Lords, Acting Conservator of the River Mersey and in 1934 Chairman of the Dover Harbour Board. He was also for many years a Younger Brother of Trinity House, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and of the Royal Astronomical Society and a Member of the Institute of Civil Engineers.

On relinquishing the post of Hydrographer of the Navy he received the well-earned honour of Knight Commander of the Bath; he was also the recipient of the Silver Medal for Military Valour (Italy) for services in the Dardanelles and the Order of Leopold (Belgium) for services in connection with the Zeebrugge operations.

On the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939 Admiral DOUGLAS at once offered his services to the Admiralty and was appointed Commodore Superintendent, Dover; it was shortly after taking up this appointment that his lamented death occurred.

The valuable hydrographic work Admiral DOUGLAS performed afloat was only secondary to that which he carried out while serving at the Admiralty. As already stated he inaugurated the Naval Meteorological Service during the Great War and the code for reporting the state of the sea, which bears his name has been universally adopted. He was largely instrumental in introducing the prismatic astrolabe into the British Hydrographic Service and he was a Member of the Committee of experts which met at Tavistock and resulted in the theodolite of that name. His active and fertile brain produced numerous instruments, diagrams, scales, etc., and it may rightly be said that his whole life was devoted to perfecting and improving the methods and instruments used in hydrography.

J.D.N.

