

## Rear-Admiral Roger John Brownlow Keyes – Officer Commanding Dover Patrol

Keyes was one of those the First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill, had singled out for great things when WW1 began.

Keyes was first and foremost a man of action, the trait that no doubt endeared him to Churchill.

He had already served first as Commodore of Submarines at Harwich, then as a very frustrated ADC at the Dardanelles, then as Captain of the Battleship Centurion. Promotion to Rear-Admiral in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battle Squadron followed in 1917.

To his own displeasure he was then selected by his former commander at the Dardanelles, Admiral Robeck, for a desk job as Director of Plans at the Admiralty in October 1917. His then boss Admiral Jellicoe noted that he was ...”quite unfitted by temperament and brain power for the post”.

Keyes used this post to push for an assault to cripple the German submarine bases in Flanders and in particular Zeebrugge. He was selected to replace the out of favour Admiral Bacon in command of the Dover Patrol and put his own plans into action in January 1918.

It is ironic that Keyes is best remembered for Zeebrugge, which, although well organised, essentially achieved almost nothing concrete, when he actually did a good job at Dover improving the patrol arrangements (despite some setbacks), effectively barring the Straits to the passage of German submarines. This made the blocking of Zeebrugge largely irrelevant even if it had succeeded! We can maybe see what Jellicoe meant.

Keyes later became an Admiral of the Fleet and came out of retirement to act as Chief of Combined Operations in 1940.



## The Naval VCs – Commander Carpenter

There was so much bravery shown by the men of the assault ships under a continuous storm of fire that the VC for two members of the naval crew (one officer, one other rank) was awarded through a special ballot of all the officers and men.

Every member of the crews was thus deemed eligible to receive the VC.

Vindictive's commander, Acting Captain Alfred Carpenter, was the officer the crew chose. He also received special advancement to the rank of Captain.

Able Seamen Albert Edward McKenzie, a volunteer chosen from the crew of the Battleship, HMS Neptune, was the other rank the crew chose.



## The Naval VCs – Able Seaman McKenzie

Carpenter's Victoria Cross medal citation perhaps speaks best to his qualities:

... He set a magnificent example to all those under his command by his calm composure when navigating mined waters.... He showed most conspicuous bravery, and did much to encourage similar behaviour on the part of the crew, supervising the landing from the "Vindictive" on to the mole, and walking round the decks directing operations and encouraging the men in the most dangerous and exposed positions. By his encouragement to those under him, his power of command and personal bearing, he undoubtedly contributed greatly to the success of the operation.

McKenzie was a member of the storming party, landing with his Lewis Gun into the storm of fire, advancing down the Mole with his CO (Arthur Leyland Harrison) who with most of his party was killed. He was severely wounded and after his Lewis Gun was wrecked had to fight his way back to the ship in hand to hand combat, with only a pistol, a bayonet and his boxing skills. Whilst recovering from his wounds he died in the Spanish Flu epidemic.