

The Falkland Islands' Misplaced H.M.S. *Glasgow*

By Father Augustine Monaghan

At the beginning of World War I, Great Britain's South Atlantic Fleet, based in the Falkland Islands under Rear Admiral Sir Christopher Craddock, was told to prepare itself to resist any threat from the German "China Fleet." News was received that the enemy had been sighted off the Chilean coast. Compared to the German fleet, the British was old and about to be changed, but the rear admiral set sail to his destiny.

Off Coronel the first big engagement of the war took place on November 1, 1914. H.M.S. *Monmouth* and H.M.S. *Good Hope* were sunk. Sir Christopher Craddock was lost at sea. H.M.S. *Glasgow* limped back to Stanley in the Falkland Islands, where H.M.S. *Canopus* had returned after boiler failure.

The way to the South Atlantic now lay open to the German fleet. The trade routes could be threatened. British ships and goods could be lost. More importantly, the British fleet's coaling station in the Falkland Islands was in danger. This situation was not lost on Winston Churchill, the first sea lord. He immediately ordered H.M.S. *Invincible*, H.M.S. *Inflexible* and H.M.S. *Kent* down to the islands.

Thinking all was in his favour, Vice Admiral Graf von Spee, commander of the German fleet, sailed around Cape Horn toward Stanley. The British sighted the enemy south of the islands. Orders were given for the anchors to be raised, decks cleared, and battle flags hoisted. The fleet sailed. The Germans were sur-

prised to see *Canopus* fire the first shots of the coming engagement. Realizing the odds now facing him, the German admiral turned south. The British fleet followed.

Vice Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee placed himself in a strategic position with the German fleet in silhouette. The *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisnau*, *Leipzig*, *Nuremberg* and auxiliary ships were sunk. Only 160 men were saved. The vice admiral and his son were not among them. This battle, fought on December 8, 1914, was to change the course of the war.

Twenty-five years later, a similar battle was to take place some miles further north on December 13, 1939, when a British fleet again stationed in the Falkland Islands defeated the German pocket battleship *Grafspree*. Ironically, the ship was named after the defeated World War I admiral.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the World War I battle, the Falkland Islands issued four stamps in sheets of 60 on December 8, 1964. The set depicts the three main ships of the British squadron that took part in the battle and the memorial to the battle on a small hill overlooking the town and harbor of Stanley. The

designs show H.M.S. *Glasgow* (2 1/2 pence), H.M.S. *Kent* (6d.), H.M.S. *Invincible* (1/- pound), and the battle memorial (2/-). As the result of a printing error, the *Glasgow* also appears within the 6d. border.



Fig. 1. 1964 set commemorating World War I battle of the Falkland Islands, including the black H.M.S. *Glasgow* within a red 2 1/2d. border.

It seems that the error occurred when the center vignette of the 2 1/2d. became mixed with those for the 6d. border. Since all the centers were black, it was easier to print these first. The second printing for the borders was red for the 2 1/2d. and the 1/-; and blue for the 6d. and 2/-. A sheet of the 2 1/2d. centers ended in the 6d. pile. Since only one sheet of the error has been found, the conclusion is that one sheet fell to the floor. Because H.M.S. *Glasgow* and H.M.S. *Kent* both face left, it was easy to replace the fallen sheet of vignettes on the wrong pile. As a result we have the blue border around the wrong ship—H.M.S. *Glasgow* instead of H.M.S. *Kent*.



Fig. 2. Printing error that placed the black H.M.S. Glasgow within the blue 6d. border intended for the H.M.S. Kent. This copy, one of 16 reported, is the subject of PF Certificate No. 244,064. It sold for \$13,200 plus 10% commission when Ivy, Shreve and Mader auctioned the "Samos" collection of British Commonwealth last June.

have found their way into stamp packets for beginners. Since only 16 have been found to date, where are the 44 others? Have you looked in your old album? ❖

The first recorded discovery of this error was in 1968. Fred Graham of Illinois bought the full set for his son for \$1.25. The error was sold at Harmers for \$3,000. Another was sold in 1989 for \$11,000. So far all copies seem to be in North America where they were sold by the Crown Agents in Washington, D.C. Most seem to