

BRITANNIA RULES THE WAVES

The nation that was the United Kingdom, being an island nation with territories and interests spread far and wide across the globe, what once was known as the Great British Navy has been at the forefront of the nations' military might, and for centuries had been feared. But after the events of September 1809, the British Empire was shown to be woefully inadequate in the battle against the Martian forces. With great heroism seen from the lowliest cabin boy, to the varied Captains and Commodores, the British navy briefly managed to stem the red tide, but after the Battle of London in July 1810, the great beast was decapitated.

For the following 5 years most Captains and fleets operated in one of two different roles, with no central organisation. In a stationary, primarily defensive manner, protecting major ports by stationing ships as effectively immobile firing platforms, occasionally being used for mid to long range bombardment of the Martian forces, as the Martians inexorably crawled forwards, before the populace would flee aboard, as the Naval forces would retreat,



taking as many people and resources as possible. The second type of Captain operated as a mixture of deep ocean escorts, trying their best to maintain the dangerously thin and unreliable supply lines, while in between living the life of the historical Privateer, little better than pirates, either raiding for supplies simply to continue afloat, or engaging in daring hit and run tactics against the Martian military.

The British Navy was notable for providing the transportation for most of the soldiers and materiel into Belgium for what was thought at the time to be the last stand of the Earth's forces in June 1815.

After the demise of the British Empire, to be replaced with the Commonwealth of Britannia, it was the naval heroes and leaders who formed the backbone of the new body of government, aptly called, the Admiralty. Even the common man knew that without the Navy standing their ground, protecting civilians, and also taking the fight to the Martian archenemy, the nation would be in an even sorer state than it found itself in once the ashes had settled. It also became clear that for the Commonwealth to regain contact, and control with its former colonies and territories, the newly reformed Commonwealth Navy would



be pivotal. All Naval men were given complete pardons for any previous misdemeanours or war crimes, the belief being in the freshly ingrained approach that the Commonwealth had to survive at all costs.

Despite the Admiralty doing all it could to rescue its Naval might from the flames of war, it was to no avail. The majority of the former British colonies and countries were either utterly destroyed, or had been subsumed by other Nations such as the Prussian Hegemony and the Imperial Eastern Union. Realising what the Nation had lost, the Admiralty decided on another tactic. Withdraw, regroup, and rearm.

The Martian arms race, where all Nations rushed to gain all that they could from the remains of the Martian military machine resulted in fierce and bloody fighting. The Commonwealth found itself ideally placed to react to the discovery of new Martian caches or dead war machines and tripods, where ever they were found in the world, and then rush the spoils of war back to the Commonwealth, again thanks to the Navy.

After the Treaty of 1820, halting the military portion of the Arms Race, the Admiralty took full stock of its military power, and decided that a full overhaul of its command structure



and organisation was required, if only to get a proper grasp on their military reach. To do so, an Admiral by the name of Archerwood totally changed the traditional approach to naval organisation, putting a focus on making the most of the resources available and independence that was so useful during the last few years of the Martian war. Instead of either having solo ships, namely alone or weak, or vast armadas, which would not make the most of what resources and ships were available, Archerwood proposed the Standardised Admiralty Squadron. In essence the entire Commonwealth Navy was broken down into many mobile Squadrons. 20 cruisers for scouting and harrying lines, 16 frigate gunships, 14 destroyers and 5 ships of the line-of-battle, better known as battleships. All of these craft now made from the new Martian materials, no longer wooden hulls but red steel and iron. Each of these newly nicknamed, ironclad squadrons was commanded by a Commodore, given total autonomy in how they performed their mission. The unusual make up of each squadron allowed for advanced tactics, from defensive lines, to the use of advanced triangulations and aiming techniques using different positioning of the constituent ships. A squadron alone was a formidable fighting force, flexible, able to react and punish any attack of any type from any



direction. Upon the adoption of the Standardised Admiralty Squadron the Commonwealth Navy was able to help push and expand the Commonwealth's flagging sphere of influence.

Only one issue stopped the Commonwealth from becoming all powerful on the high seas and regaining their lost territory. The ships were there, but there simply were not enough crew to go around. The autonomy of the Squadrons helped, centralising crew and skilled naval specialists. But it wasn't enough. Even when the Admiralty started to introduce conscription, both official, and unofficial, the number of active Squadrons slowly reduced. Luckily an unexpected advantage of having adopted the regulated Squadrons was that it became very difficult for the Commonwealths' enemies to stay abreast of what Squadrons were and were not active.

For the next 20 or so years, the Admiralty, and the Commonwealth itself moved on and evolved. Technologies from any and all sources possible were used and adapted to try to desperately keep pace with the constantly shifting peak. The manpower shortage was temporarily assuaged by the introduction of Hyrcanians and Reptids at a menial or manual labour level of the Navy. Hyrcanians were



found to be useful for boarding or defensive troops, and the Reptids were very adept at manoeuvring through the tight confines of the engine rooms. It was at this junction that the Admiralty decided to write an all-encompassing law in a bid to get ahead of the manpower issue. It wrote into common law that all its citizens, man or woman, adult or child, was a de facto member of the Navy, effectively making the Commonwealth a military nation, allowing the Admiralty unsurpassed control over all aspects of day to day life, from trade, to industry, to research. This also allowed the Admiralty to at least temporarily boost its numbers, but did nothing to resolve the deep seated population issues, so while this cemented the Admiralty's rule, it only had a temporary boost to the Nations defensive conundrum.

By the mid 1850's, the Commonwealth Navy was equipped by comprehensive and powerful Gauss weaponry. Trade with the Federated American Union even allowed the introduction of some Martian tech throughout the Navy. It was during the 1860's however, that the Commonwealth soared to the forefront of the naval race. The combined genius of Brunel and Babbage allowed for comparatively hyper advanced battleships, the so called Dreadnaught class. These were larger, better



armoured ships, with greater speed and manoeuvrability, thanks to Isembard Kingdom Brunels' engineering genius. Charlotte Babbage's continuation of her father's Difference engine, the Intuition Engine was the Coup-de-Grace of the Navy. Each Squadron ship is equipped with an Intuition Engine, three storeys high. The top of the Intuition Engine rests in the centre of the ship's bridge. The top is effectively a captains' chair with a link that attaches to, for want of a better word, non-resonant implant in the base of each captain or commodores spine. This allows each commander to utilise an aetheric link that binds all the ships together and, by the use of an aetheric view screen, an operator is able to 'tell' the Intuition Engine the tactical situation. Placing a marker showing an enemy battleship, or a Martian war machine, for example, will cause the Intuition Engine to calculate distance, most likely targeting priorities of the enemy, and most importantly the elevation, wind compensation, travel time, and a myriad of other factors required for accurate and consistent fire. This was done by loading thousands and thousands of situations, equations, and logic processes into the body of the Intuition Engine. While the device is unable to "think" in its own right, it intuits the best response given the data provided, hence its name. The true genius of the Intuition Engine



is through aetheric charge interactions, the Engine can interact with the mechanisms so well designed by Brunel to allow the ship to load, aim, and fire the weaponry on board, steer the ship, adjust the engine power and nearly any such action required in combat. Each ship in the Commonwealth Navy now requires barely one quarter the crew required in previous generations of battleship. This does not eradicate the need for crew to conduct the general running of the ship, for damage control, repairs, the logistics and care of stock aboard ship, nor of course, the Marines. For this reason press-ganging is simply an accepted risk for Commonwealth citizens doubly so with the fact that all citizens were effectively military staff. There simply was no argument with the Admiralty “recruitment officers” and Admiralty security services, otherwise nicknamed, “the Management”.

The Admiralty is not one to rest on its laurels however; whispers abound about the secret project known only as “Thunderchild”, currently being developed in the closed facility of Bristol. A new form of Super Dreadnaught class? A new super weapon? A new carrier? Or perhaps, could the Commonwealth be developing a completely autonomous battleship? The common access to resonant technology could provide the final linchpin of the Navy’s



power. Specialist Resonants with highly specialised communication implants could be trained to transfer the information and decisions made by the Squadron's Intuition Engine to the other ships of the Squadron, massively increasing their combat effectiveness. Could "Thunderchild" shift power forever on the high seas? Only time will tell. For a while though, the Commonwealth of Britannia and its citizens will continue sailing forwards, always willing to fight hard for Admiral and Country and proving that Britannia still rules the waves.