

The Schleswig Holstein Question

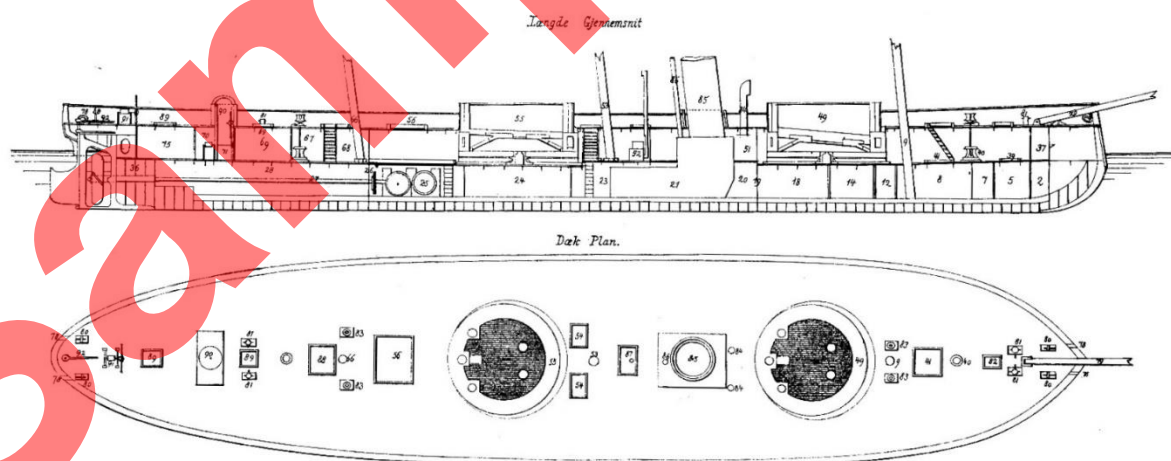
The Second Schleswig War, 1864 The Franco Prussian War, 1870

A supplement for Broadside and Ram

By David Manley

"Only three people have ever really understood the Schleswig-Holstein business—the Prince Consort, who is dead—a German professor, who has gone mad—and I, who have forgotten all about it."

Lord Palmerston



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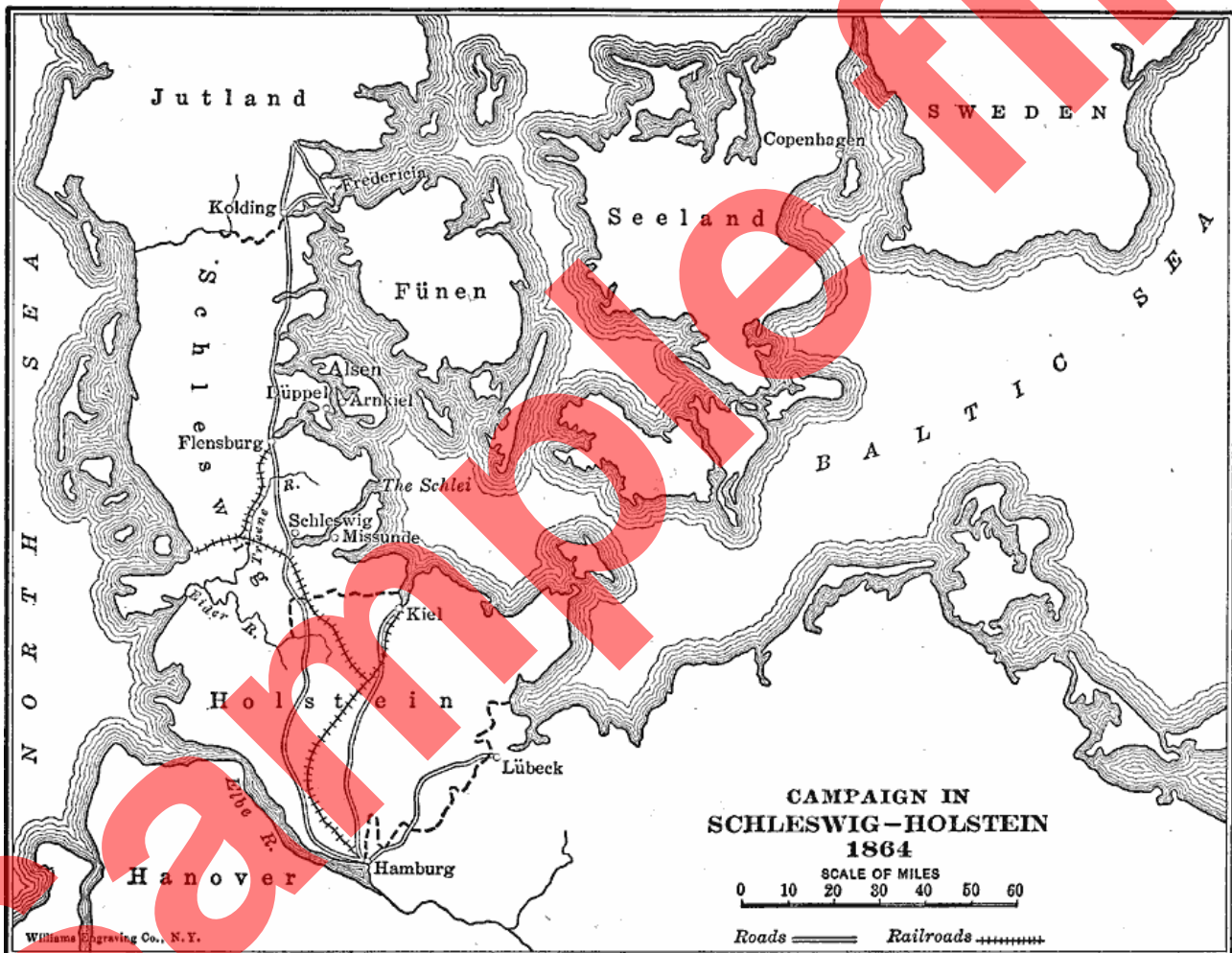


1. Introduction

This supplement allows players of “Broadside and Ram” to extend their games to the Second Schleswig War, fought between Denmark and the allied Prussia and Austria in 1864, and also the Franco Prussian war of 1870 (although here the naval warfare element is essentially conjectural). Summaries of the naval aspects of both conflicts is followed by ship data for all the major and minor Danish, French, Prussian and Austrian warships involved. Additional data is provided for British, Dutch, Swedish and Norwegian ships of the era that could have been “on scene” and may form the basis for a hypothetical game. Finally, a short set of additional rules covering sailing ships is included.

2. The Second Schleswig War of 1864

The Second Schleswig War, also known as the Prusso-Danish War, was a stepping stone towards Bismarck's vision of a unified Germany. It was one of his greatest gambles since operations against the coastal state of Denmark would surely be contested to a significant degree at sea. As well as direct action against Denmark, Prussia faced the spectre of having her ports and those of her allies subject to blockade. Although her army was the equal of any on the continent, the Prussian Navy of the era was no match against the Danish navy. When the order to mobilise came on December 8th 1863, some ships were in the Adriatic whilst other vessels were still under construction at Stralsund and Danzig. To make matters worse, a shortage of trained seamen meant paying off sailing vessels two man the steam ships. Nonetheless, by February 1864 the German flotilla under Captain Kuhn in the flagship *Lorelei* was considered ready for sea duty. The steam ships ready for action were the corvettes *Arcona*, *Gazelle* and *Nymphe*, the frigate *Barbarossa*, yacht *Grille*, and 21 gunboats. In addition there were the sailing ships *Gefion*, *Thetis*, *Musquito* and *Rover*, three schooners and 40 armed sloops. The fleet massed at Swinemunde.



The Danish fleet was not surprisingly the first into action. On February 1st 1864, the Danish steam corvette *Thor* and ironclad *Esbern Snare* engaged Prussian troops without great effect and received minor damage in the process. On February 18th the new ironclad *Rolf Krake* engaged a Prussian pontoon bridge, defended by a number of field batteries, at Hollnis. Once again, little damage was done to either the ship or the forces on shore.

On 5th March 1864 the Danes, led by Rear Admiral Van Dockum, had begun to enforce a blockade of the Pomeranian coast. The first clash between the rival fleets occurred on March 17th at Jasmund, off the island of Rugen. The Prussian squadron was commanded by *Kapitain zur See* Jackmann and comprised the screw corvettes *Arcona* and *Nymphe*, paddler *Lorelei* and five gunboats. The Danish force comprised the screw frigate *Sjaelland*, screw corvettes *Heimdal* and *Thor* and the wooden screw ship of the line *Skjold*, with the old

screw frigate *Tordenskjold* joining the Danes at 2 p.m. Errors on both sides led to the Prussians extricating themselves from a tricky situation. The *Arcona* and *Nympe* made for Swinemunde, hotly pursued by the Danes led by *Sjaelland* and *Skjold*, the latter only able to fire her light bow chasers for fear of losing ground. The Prussian gunboats and *Lorelei* made off towards safer shallow waters of the Rugensche Boden. The last shot fired by the Danes came at 5 p.m., ending the fighting although they had pursued the Prussians until they were only eleven miles from Swinemunde. Damage was surprisingly light; worst hit for the Prussians were the *Arcona* and *Nympe* with heavy damage and 13 dead and wounded; more substantial damage had been caused to the Danish *Sjaelland* with 22 dead and wounded. Whilst inconclusive, the battle of Jasmund showed that the Prussian fleet could defend its Baltic coasts.

In the North Sea the situation was very different. Captain Klatt's squadron returning from the Aegean, consisting of the paddler *Preussischer Adler* and gunboats *Blitz* and *Basilisk*, were forced to seek shelter in the Dutch port of Den Helder under threat of a superior Danish force led by Captain Suenson. Earlier Prussian demands for assistance led to the Austrians sending a squadron to the North Sea to lift the blockade of the Weser and Elbe rivers.

On March 2nd Commodore von Tegetthoff (to become famous as the victor at Lissa in 1866) left the Adriatic for the North Sea. His leading squadron comprised the screw frigates *Schwarzenberg*, *Radetsky* the gunboat *Seehund*; the corvette *Dandolo* was to have accompanied them but suffered a mechanical breakdown and was left behind. A second Austrian squadron under real Admiral Baron von Wullerstorft-Urbair was to have joined von Tegetthoff at Lisbon, but the success of the Danish blockade prompted von Tegetthoff to press on. After coaling off the South Downs of England (during which the *Seehund* ran aground and was left to catch up), the Austrians rendezvoused with Klatt's Prussian squadron and set course for Cuxhaven.

2.1. Battle off Helgoland

On May 9th, to the east of the British island of Helgoland, his ships ran into Suenson's Danish North Sea squadron, comprising the steam frigates *Niels Juel*, *Jylland*, and the steam corvette *Heimdal*. At approximately 1 p.m. the fleets clashed, the Danes in an arc formation, Tegetthoff in line ahead. *Schwarzenberg* opened the action. *Schwarzenberg* suffered an early gun hit whilst the Danish *Jylland* bore the brunt of the return fire. Tegetthoff tried to cut off the Danes from Helgoland and to close with their ships, whilst Suenson manoeuvred to bring both fleets on a broadside bearing at short range whilst steaming on parallel lines. The Danish concentration of fire on the *Schwarzenberg* set fire to a sail locker dangerously close to a powder magazine. By 4 p.m. her foresail was aflame, spreading fire to the mast. Crew losses had reduced her broadsides so she headed west northwest towards the neutral waters of Helgoland, covered by the *Radetsky*. The Danes pursued until the *Jylland*'s rudder was hit, Tegetthoff reaching neutral waters 4:30 p.m.



Battle of Heligoland