

A New Understanding of *H.M.H.S* *Britannic's* National Ensign

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H.M.H.S. Britannic's national ensign has been portrayed as the standard blue ensign, at least in modern portrayals in paintings and models. Recent information has surfaced which has shown that the national ensign of not only *H.M.H.S Britannic* but all other British hospital ships during WWI was a flag known as the "Transport Ensign". This flag is shown below in Figure 1.



Figure 1

The discovery came about through a discussion in the Great War Forum which is an internet forum for WWI students and researchers. During one of the discussions about the flags flown by hospital ships, one of the researchers uncovered a document which answered the question about which national ensign the British hospital ships displayed. The document was [Correspondence with the German Government Regarding the Alleged Misuse of British Hospital Ships](#). The pertinent portion of this document as it applies to the issue of British hospital ship national ensigns is shown below in Figure 2.

Annex 10.
No British hospital ship was at La Rochelle during July 1915. All British hospital ships have their names painted distinctly on them in the usual place, and all fly the Red Cross flag and the British defaced Blue Ensign worn by transports.
The credibility of the witness may be

Figure 2

The discovery of this document was invaluable in correcting our understanding of the type of national ensign displayed aboard British hospital ships. The only thing to be resolved after the discovery of this document was to confirm the documentary evidence with photographic evidence. After researching photos, I was able to locate the confirmation in a Pathe' film found on YouTube. The video is [Hospital Ship \(1910-1929\)](#). A screen capture from the video is shown below in Figure 3. The ship in the photo is *H.M.H.S. Oxfordshire*.



Figure 3

A close-up which shows the anchor on the blue field of the flag is seen below in Figure 4.



Figure 4

With this photo confirmation I believe that it is safe to say that all British hospital ships during WWI, including *H.M.H.S. Britannic* flew the Transport Ensign as their national ensign.