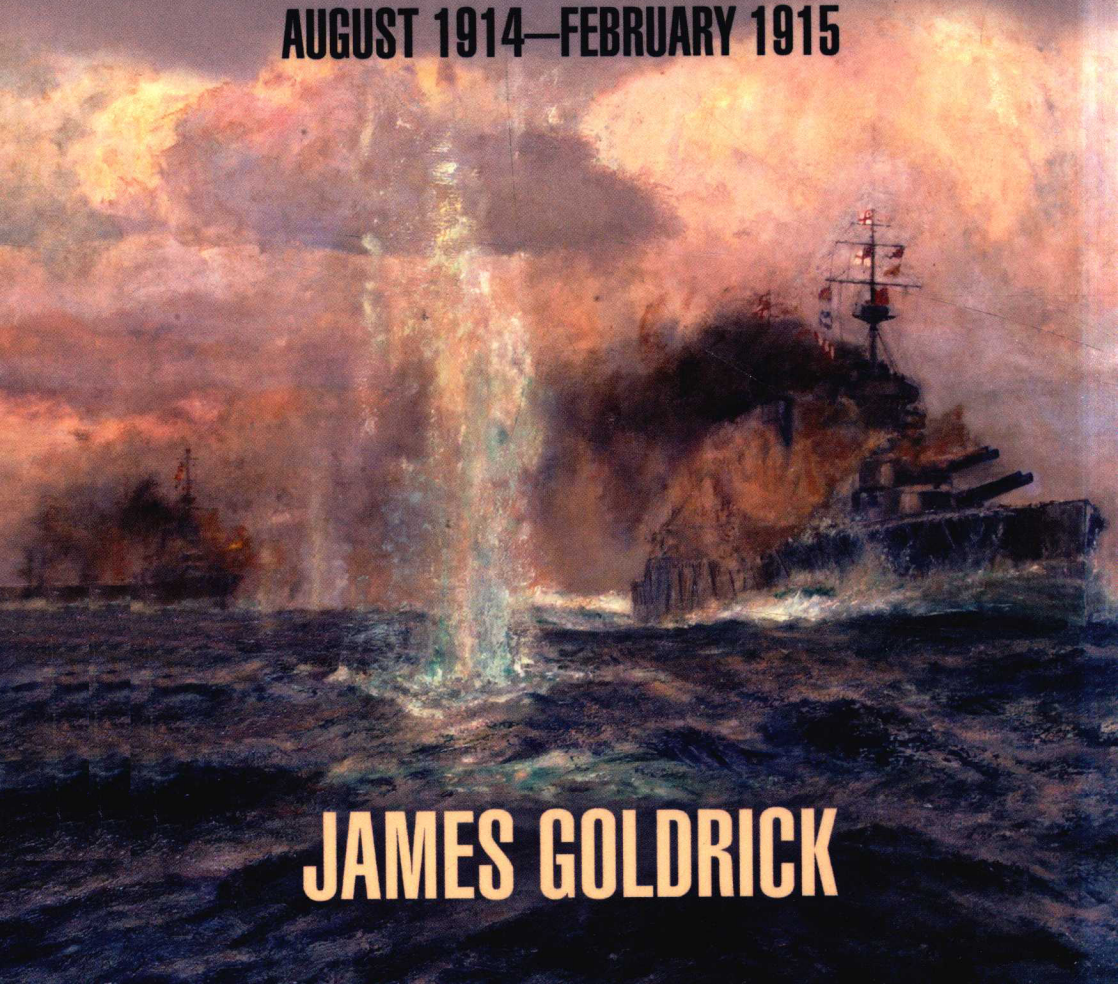


BEFORE JUTLAND

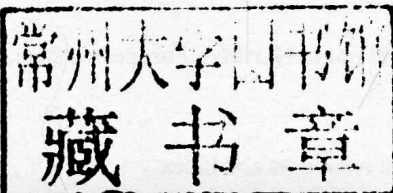
THE NAVAL WAR IN NORTHERN EUROPEAN WATERS,
AUGUST 1914—FEBRUARY 1915



JAMES GOLDRICK

BEFORE JUTLAND

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Naval Institute Press
Annapolis, Maryland

**This book has been brought to publication with
the generous assistance of Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest.**

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GUNS

<u>METRIC</u>	<u>BRITISH</u>
75-mm	3-inch
88-mm	3.4-inch
10.5-cm	4.1-inch
15-cm	5.9-inch
21-cm	8.2-inch
28-cm	11-inch
30.5-cm	12-inch
38-cm	15-inch

TORPEDOES

<u>METRIC</u>	<u>BRITISH</u>
45-cm	17.7-inch
45.7-cm	18-inch
50-cm	19.7-inch
53.3-cm	21-inch

DISTANCES

All distances in this book are given in nautical miles giving the old Admiralty mile as the reference for the nautical mile. This is one minute of arc subtended along a great circle. It is some 4 feet or 1.248 meters longer than the current nautical mile:

1 nautical mile = 1,853.2 meters = 6,080 feet

1 knot = 1 nautical mile per hour

COMPASS

360 degrees in a circle

32 points in a circle

1 point = 11 1/4 degrees

8 points = 90 degrees

16 points = 180 degrees (reversal of course)

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Notwithstanding my debt to so many, I emphasize that the judgments and interpretations in the text are mine alone, as is the responsibility for any errors.

ABBREVIATIONS

BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CAPTAIN (D)	captain commanding a destroyer flotilla
C-IN-C	commander-in-chief
COMMODORE (S)	commodore commanding submarines
COMMODORE (T)	commodore commanding torpedo craft
GHQ	General Headquarters (German army)
HMAS	His Majesty's Australian Ship
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
HVB	<i>Handelsverkehrsbuch</i>
NID	Naval Intelligence Division
SKM	<i>Signalbuch der Kaiserlichen Marine</i>
SMS	His Majesty's Ship (German)
VB	<i>Verkehrsbuch</i>

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INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK STARTED IN 1971 WHEN MY FATHER NOTICED A COLLECTION of elderly Admiralty books at HMAS *Encounter* in Port Adelaide. They proved to be the *Naval Staff Monographs (Historical)*, the Royal Navy's (RN's) internal history of the First World War. The last volume, covering British home waters from May to July 1917, was issued in August 1939. How they got into the office of the Naval Officer in Charge South Australia was not clear. Presumably they were landed early in the Second World War, but from which ship is unknown. The books were on no one's charge and in danger of unthinking disposal. Knowing my fascination for naval history, my father gave them to me. I soon realized that the *Monographs* were a comprehensive narrative of the war at sea. Although I was old enough to realize that much was left unsaid, with facts left to speak for themselves, I was also old enough to realize why this would be. They have never had a wide audience and, unlike some of the equivalent *Staff Histories* of the Second World War, have not been published.¹

In 1978 the last year of my undergraduate degree lay ahead and I had very little to do, having overloaded credits in my first two years. During a visit to Britain I met Stephen Roskill who suggested strongly that, since I would be at sea and fully occupied for many years afterward, I do something more than a few hours of lectures and tutorials each week. The idea of studying the opening of the Great War in the North Sea came from that conversation. Stephen believed that the operations of the First World War were not well understood and that it was time that they were reexamined.

The *Monographs* became a fundamental source. Stephen shared my opinion of them, although he confirmed that any criticism tended to be indirect, with the notable exception of the *Naval Staff Appreciation* of Jutland, a volume not in my collection, for reasons that explained why the *Monographs* were so restrained in their commentary. Written after the official history *Naval Operations*, they had the benefit of all the material collated for Julian Corbett and Henry Newbolt, plus other Admiralty files (some of which have since been weeded), as well as *Der Krieg zur See* and increasing numbers of first-hand accounts in both English and

German. Throughout 1978 I worked on early drafts. I went to sea in 1979. The end of that year offered an unexpected opportunity to qualify as a bridge watch-keeper on loan to the Royal Navy on fishery protection duties in the North Sea, based on Rosyth. Before joining my first British ship, I was able to take leave and conduct research in British archives. I also benefitted from the perspectives that Stephen Roskill could bring, as well as his criticism of parts of my draft. Operating in northern British waters soon began to open my eyes to the difficulty of what ships were trying to do in 1914: hard enough from the comfort of an enclosed bridge, with radar and (usually) radio navigation aids. As a result, I rewrote much of the original text. At the suggestion of Professor Jack Sweetman of the U.S. Naval Academy, I added more in the way of analysis and reflection.

After the 1984 publication of *The King's Ships Were at Sea: The War in the North Sea August 1914–February 1915*, three things happened. The first was that the products of an increasingly sophisticated approach to the history of the period before 1914 appeared—the work of trained historians, as well as experts in naval technology such as Norman Friedman. They tackled subjects critical to understanding the operational record. Their works were based on much more comprehensive and rigorous use of the archives than had before been possible. They were also marked by recognition of the complexity of the problems that navies faced in an era of extraordinary change.

Second, although I was deeply impressed by the quality of this new work, I began to develop an uncomfortable feeling that our operational knowledge of the war was being eroded over time. With the passing of the last veterans of that conflict we moved, in some ways, further away from understanding the operational record than we were when I first started writing. There have been areas of illumination, such as Andrew Gordon's remarkable study of the Royal Navy's command culture, *The Rules of the Game*, as well as Nicholas Lambert's work on communications, command, and control, and Jon Sumida's on naval gunnery. Yet we no longer comprehend the way in which ships were worked and fought in 1914–18. Indeed, the public interest in the Nelsonic era and the combination of extensive research, historically informed fiction, and the operation of replicas, as well as continuing square-rigged sail training have meant that our knowledge of what was happening on board *Victory* and her sisters in 1805 is greater than it is for *Iron Duke* and the Grand Fleet in 1914.² The deficiency becomes even more apparent comparing naval operational history with that of land forces, particularly on the Western Front. While debates continue, there is now a body of work that has profoundly changed our view of the land war, dispelled the legends of "lions led by donkeys," and above all conveyed both the complexity of the military environment and the learning curve that all concerned needed to follow. For the war at sea, understanding of the conflict remains incomplete—and what there is, is "too much Jutland."

The third thing that happened after publication of my book in 1984 was that I grew up. The insights that I had gained around British waters were deepened by service around the world and increasingly responsible appointments. This included more time with the Royal Navy—ironically again based in Rosyth—which included deployments to the Falklands and the Baltic, as well as further operations in the North Sea, the Norwegian Sea, and the Atlantic. Later I commanded a patrol boat on surveillance work around the Australian coast and on deployments to Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific, as well as twice commanding the guided missile frigate *Sydney*. In 2002 I led an Australian task group in the Persian Gulf, which included tactical command of the multinational force enforcing UN sanctions on Iraq. From 2006 to 2008 I was Australia's Border Protection Commander, in operational control of the units responsible for national maritime security surveillance and enforcement.

These were parallel, but not entirely separate, developments. The more I listened to the historians and the more that I reflected on their analysis, the more I found that they were influencing my own approach to contemporary problem solving. The greater my sea command experience, the more I realized that effective doctrine and equally effective command and control arrangements were central to effective naval operations. I also came to understand that success in exploiting an emerging situation, however ambiguous it may appear at first, has a direct relationship with the effort that has been expended on considering the operational context beforehand. If there were a clear parallel between my experience and the events of a century ago, it was in the way in which communications and thus command and control systems were evolving at breakneck pace, in ways difficult enough to manage in their immediate effects, but that had unexpected (and yet to be understood) second- and third-order consequences for the conduct of operations at sea.

One insight in particular caused me to look at 1914 with different eyes. I am old enough not only to have been taught to navigate out of sight of land without artificial aids such as radio beacons and satellites, but also have had to do so for real, and for extended periods. I am also old enough to have had to operate computerized combat systems and data links between ships and aircraft so equipped before the era of the Global Positioning System (GPS). The difference that GPS makes in maintaining oneself in a shared frame of reference with other units is so profound that, when people talk of the revolution in military affairs in maritime warfare, I think first and primarily of GPS. It was comprehending just how important is this new shared certainty of position that made me realize not only how difficult must have been the problems that the navigators and commanders of 1914 faced in knowing where they were—and where others were in relation to them—but also how vital their solution was in determining operational success or failure.

All this changed my own outlook on the First World War, particularly its beginning when so much was new and unknown. We are inclined to consider

what is known as the Fisher Era as a continuum from Admiral Fisher's accession as First Sea Lord in 1904. In reality, the pace of operational development not only accelerated, but also became truly multilane only after about 1909, just before the great reformer went into his first retirement. The pressures at all levels within navies were therefore intensifying in the years immediately before the outbreak of the war in ways that were not understood, nor necessarily recognized. In short, those involved were struggling to learn a new language of naval operations and warfare with an incomplete dictionary and very little grammar. As I came to understand what this really meant, what had seemed important to me no longer appeared so significant, but elements that I had barely recognized in my original analysis now looked fundamental to understanding what happened in 1914–15. I became less critical of some errors and more critical of others. I realized the truth of the comment in the *Narrative of the Battle of Jutland*, that the problem of determining just what did happen and why “is more of the nature of a complicated mosaic or puzzle picture whose composition requires a great deal of knowledge, skill and patience—how much can only be known by those who have tried it.”³

This new edition is my effort to cast light on what happened in 1914–15. My focus on the first six months of the war is because very important events occurred during that time. Despite the loose ends that inevitably remain, important things can thus be said. As with its predecessor, this is an operational history that tries to balance coverage of the major incidents with treatment of the continuum of activity. It also seeks to provide the context within which the protagonists were actually working, without the application of excessive hindsight, because in 1914 so much was new and experimental. My focus, as will be clear, is primarily on the British, but both the Germans and the Russians are integral to the study. Indeed, my inclusion of the Baltic in this edition comes from a recognition that neither the British nor the Germans' North Sea activities can be fairly assessed without giving due weight to this theater of operations. My intent within the scene-setting chapters is not to attempt a complete survey of the events of the previous decade, but rather to situate each navy within the environment of 1914. In all, I try to show not only what happened, but also how the services evolved to meet the challenges that they faced, and then whether or not that evolution was successful.

Now read on.

THE BEGINNING

THE WEATHER OF EARLY SUMMER 1914 WAS BRILLIANT, AS THOUGH IT mirrored the hope for peace in Europe. For the first time in many years the Balkans were quiet, while the armaments race that had gripped the world seemed to be slowing. In Germany it was Kiel Week, celebration of the young empire's maritime success. The annual festivities at Kiel had become ever more splendid as Germany's prosperity and its merchant and naval fleets grew apace. This year there was a special reason for rejoicing: the formal reopening of the Kiel Canal. It had been dredged and widened to be capable of taking the largest battleships directly between the Baltic and North Seas without the potentially dangerous passage around Denmark. At 1300 on 24 June the imperial yacht *Hohenzollern* cut the ribbon suspended across the entrance to the main locks. Laid out in review were the ships of the magnificent German High Sea Fleet. Alongside, present in a gesture of friendship, were four British battleships and three light cruisers.

King George V, *Ajax*, *Audacious*, and *Centurion* were among the most powerful dreadnoughts Britain possessed. The cruisers *Southampton*, *Birmingham*, and *Nottingham* were also the most modern of their type. They, like the German ships around them, were products of the sixteen-year-old naval race between Great Britain and Germany. Much had changed since the original canal opening in 1895, when a British squadron, also composed of the largest and most modern capital ships and cruisers, dominated a small German fleet, only just receiving its first ocean-going battleships. The concern then was not the Anglo-German relationship, but rather the latter's long rivalry with France, and the occasion a chance for the young Kaiser Wilhelm II to make gestures of peace to Germany's old enemy.¹ This 1914 rendezvous might help ease the dangerous rivalry with Britain.

The ships were *en fête*. Paintwork gleamed and brass shone. *Southampton's* carpenter's crew had even planed her teak decks to remove any spots. Many commented on the yacht-like appearance of the German warships' light grey hulls and upper works, compared to which the dark grey of the British looked somber indeed. Ironically, the lighter shade was much more suitable for North Sea conditions and the Royal Navy's ships would soon lose their peacetime livery. While

sporting activities and visits were organized for the sailors, life for their officers was a constant dash between duty, official functions, and private fun “until about 6 a.m., when one returned . . . in a dilapidated condition and prepared for the next official function,” as young Lieutenant Stephen King-Hall reported.² Despite this hectic round and fraternization, there were tensions. The officers attempted to see as much as they could of the other’s navy. The Germans were disappointed that the British had covered all their gunnery instruments, and for their part could not help noticing British interest in the widened Kiel Canal and new submarines.³

There was another cause for comment. There was a second British squadron in the Baltic at the end of June. Four battle cruisers and two light cruisers under Rear Admiral Sir David Beatty visited Russian Reval (modern Tallinn) before moving on to Kronstadt, and, for the smaller ships, Saint Petersburg itself. There they were entertained by the local community and received by the tsar. The festivities culminated in a ball on board the rafted-together battle cruisers *Lion* and *New Zealand*, the latter chosen because her quarterdeck was “better for dancing on,” while *Lion* functioned as the supper hall.⁴ The significance of British squadron’s visit was not missed in Germany. Newspapers remarked on its “ostentation” and the implicit message that the Royal Navy did not regard the Baltic as a “closed sea.”⁵

The event was also important for the Imperial Russian Navy, emerging from the disaster of the war with Japan a decade before. The four battleships and five of the six armored cruisers that were the core of the Russian Baltic Fleet anchored alongside the British squadron at Reval. Several were elderly, and all were obsolescent, but they provided the foundation of the new force emerging in the eastern Baltic. The shape of things to come was *Novik*, which made a high-speed pass of the British ships at sea, first of a new class of fast and powerful destroyers. By the end of 1914 the Russian fleet would be joined by four new dreadnoughts. For many years the Germans had not had to consider the Russians as a serious naval threat on their eastern flank; this was about to change.

On 28 June festivities at Kiel ended abruptly. While on a tour of Bosnia, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife were assassinated. The murders cast a pall of gloom over Kiel as the German court went into mourning. Few realized the political ramifications. It was another incident in the Balkans that might end in a minor local war, but could not possibly involve Britain or Germany. Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the moving spirit behind Germany’s naval expansion, suggested that the British cruisers return home through the Kiel Canal, an offer immediately accepted by their commodore, William Goodenough.⁶ The parting was amicable. When on 30 June the British ships left Kiel, Sir George Warrender, the vice admiral commanding, signaled to the Imperial German Navy, “Friends in the past, friends forever.”⁷

The assassinations were having their effect on the rigid European alliances. Austria-Hungary, with its own ethnic problems, felt threatened by the emergent