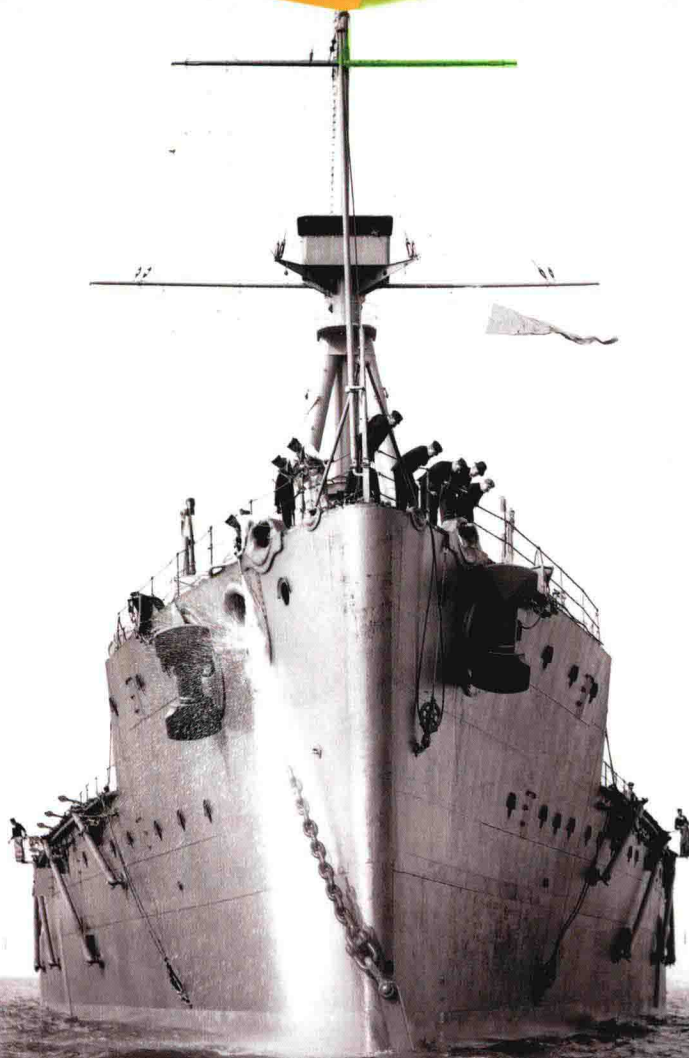


# THE ROYAL NAVY

A HISTORY SINCE 1900

Duncan Redford and Philip D. Grove



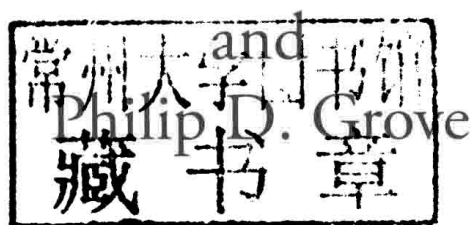
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ROYAL NAVY  
A History Since 1900

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# Colour Plates

1. British propaganda posters following the Scarborough raid (NMRN)
2. Sketch showing the damage inflicted on HMS *Warspite* during the battle of Jutland (NMRN)
3. The attack on Taranto, 11 November 1940. Painting by D. Cobb (NMRN)
4. A Fleet Air Arm Buccaneer launching from the flightdeck of a carrier (NMRN)
5. A Polaris missile being launched (NMRN)
6. Fleet Air Arm Lynx helicopter (NMRN)
7. HMS *Illustrious* with Fleet Air Arm Sea Harriers and RAF Harrier GR7s (NMRN)
8. Royal Navy 'Junglie' Sea Kings in Bosnia (NMRN)

## Series Foreword

The Royal Navy has for centuries played a vital if sometimes misunderstood or even at times unsung part in Britain's history. Often it has been the principal, sometimes the only, means of defending British interests around the world. In peacetime the Royal Navy carries out a multitude of tasks as part of government policy – showing the flag, or naval diplomacy as it is now often called. In wartime, as the senior service of Britain's armed forces, the Navy has taken the war to the enemy, by battle, by economic blockade or by attacking hostile territory from the sea. Adversaries have changed over the centuries. Old rivals have become today's alliance partners; the types of ship, the weapons within them and the technology – the 'how' of naval combat – have also changed. But fundamentally what the Navy does has not changed. It exists to serve Britain's government and its people, to protect them and their interests wherever they might be threatened in the world.

This series, through the numerous individual books within it, throws new light on almost every aspect of Britain's Royal Navy: its ships, its people, the technology, the wars and peacetime operations too, from the birth of the modern navy following the restoration of Charles II to the throne in the late seventeenth century to the war on terror in the early twenty-first century.

The series consists of three chronologically themed books covering the sailing navy from the 1660s until 1815, the Navy in the nineteenth century from the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and the Navy since 1900. These are complemented by a number of slightly shorter books which examine the Navy's part in particular wars, such as

the Seven Years' War, the American Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, World War I, World War II and the Cold War, or particular aspects of the service: the Navy and empire, the Women's Royal Naval Service, the Royal Marines, naval aviation and the submarine service. The books are standalone works in their own right, but when taken as a series present the most comprehensive and readable history of the Royal Navy.

**Duncan Redford**  
**National Museum of the Royal Navy**

'The role in Britain's history of the Royal Navy is all too easily and too often overlooked; this series will go a long way to redressing the balance. Anyone with an interest in British history in general or the Royal Navy in particular will find this series an invaluable and enjoyable resource.'

**Tim Benbow**  
**Defence Studies Department,**  
**King's College London at the**  
**Defence Academy of the UK**



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**Duncan Redford**

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**Philip Grove**

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# Introduction

On 26 June 1897 thousands travelled to Portsmouth on specially provided trains to witness the spectacle of 165 Royal Navy ships, together with invited representative vessels from 14 other navies, drawn up in five long lines at Spithead to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The beaches and piers along the waterfront were crammed with day-trippers. The anchorage was a teeming mass of craft, each jammed with spectators sweating in the June sun, jostling around the black painted hulls, white superstructures and buff-painted funnels of the anchored British warships. Only the presence of the royal yacht, *Victoria and Albert*, restored some sort of order, but once the royal party had passed, the pleasure craft returned and bobbed in its wake. An unofficial display of speed was provided by the experimental steam-turbine-powered launch *Turbinia*, which Sir Charles Parsons, the developer of the marine steam turbine, hoped would persuade the Royal Navy to take up his invention. Such was the *Turbinia's* impact that 'from a technical point of view, there would have been no important step forward to chronicle if the *Turbinia* had not made her brilliant appearance'. After sunset, at 20:45, the entire fleet, British and foreign ships alike, were illuminated in outline, masts, tops and turrets all picked out by the most modern and novel of methods – electric light bulbs.<sup>1</sup>

It was, everyone agreed, an awe-inspiring sight. No clearer example of seapower could be conceived. Britons were justly proud of their fleet – the most powerful collection of warships ever seen – drawn up for a royal review by the Prince of Wales to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The press gushed appreciation,



believing that if the British taxpayer ‘does not feel more than a thrill of satisfaction at a sight so splendid and so inspiring, he is no patriot and no true citizen’. Some felt that ‘at night the illumination of the fleet was a spectacle which surpassed all anticipation’. *The Illustrated London News* called it ‘one more beautiful of its kind than human eye had previously looked upon’ and thought that the illumination was the most popular feature of the day. Even the normally sober and conservative *Naval Annual* enthused that ‘Nothing could have been more beautiful than the effect of the fleet illuminated on the night of June 26th’, while the *Saturday Review* called it ‘enchancing and enthralling’. Even after the illumination ceased on the stroke of midnight, those who remained watching from the shore could still see the anchor lights of the great fleet gleaming in the darkness.<sup>2</sup>

Much was made of the fact that no Royal Navy vessels had been recalled from either the Mediterranean or any overseas squadron and that the fleet was almost completely made up of modern vessels, a welcome note given the less than enthusiastic response to the Navy which had been placed on public display at the 1887 Golden Jubilee Review. Fortunately the Royal Navy had been comprehensively expanded and rebuilt between 1884 and 1897. Indeed the expansion of the Navy was, in 1897, still on-going.<sup>3</sup>

The twentieth century must have looked like it would be the Navy’s century, as indeed the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been beforehand. Britain was an island – protected by its navy it was invulnerable to invasion. Britain was also at the centre of a globalized maritime trading network of formal empire – the Dominions and colonies that made up the British Empire – as well as an informal empire of economic and political influence that stretched far beyond those territories that Britain had claimed for itself.

However, with the dawn of the twentieth century came a problem that has stayed with the Royal Navy ever since – affordability. As a result, one of the key issues facing the Navy has been to do more with less – fewer ships, fewer sailors, less money. In the period before World War I the emphasis was to save more by making the Navy more efficient – shaking it out of its Victorian lethargy – and