

given when it was written, Buchner uses relatively few secondary sources although he does include Churchill's *Their Finest Hour*.

This is an important account in the historiography of the campaign which provides the perspective of a knowledgeable German army veteran. It is entirely focused on the military problems faced and overcome with relatively little on the naval side of the equation. The German navy's role was critical in terms effecting the landing at Narvik and elsewhere in the Norwegian Campaign, but it has a small profile here.

Almost entirely absent is any analysis of Germany's campaign strategy and objectives. Narvik's strategic value was as the terminus of the railway from the Swedish iron ore mines, which were crucial for shipping that essential raw material to Germany during the winter. The Allied thinking was to deny Germany these resources. Almost none of this is touched on. Consequently, the book lacks a comprehensive examination of the campaign from multiple points of view. That noted, the real value of the book is the window it offers into the perspectives of the German participants and the nature of the "near run thing" that characterised their assault on Narvik. I would recommend it.

Readers interested in similar books on other battles and campaigns written in the ten to fifteen years after the war should explore the publisher's website. The University of Plymouth has also published a series of reprints of Naval Staff Histories which includes *Fight for the Fjords: The Battle for Norway 1940* (Battle Summary No. 17, Naval Operations of the Campaign in Norway (1942) as well as the official German account, *The German Campaign in Norway* (nd).

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Christopher M. Buckley. *Genesis of the Grand Fleet: The Admiralty, Germany, and the Home Fleet, 1896–1914*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2021. xii+360 pp., notes, bibliography, index. US \$44.95, hardback; ISBN 978-1-68247-581-2. (E-book available.)

Historian Christopher Buckley's focus on the British Royal Navy before the First World War explores how the Royal Navy prepared for naval conflict with Imperial Germany and, in particular, the origins and the ongoing development of Britain's Home Fleet.

Buckley sets the stage for the genesis of the Grand Fleet by describing the rough waters the Royal Navy had sailed into by the end of the nineteenth century. Before then, Britain's Royal Navy had been the indisputable ruler of the waves, operating since 1889 by "the two-power standard," meaning its

navy, was larger than the next two largest navies (France and Russia) combined. By 1896, however, maintaining that standard had become a challenge. Not only were Russia and France developing their navies, but Japan and the United States had strengthened their positions, and Great Britain recognized that any threat from Germany would be in home waters.

While other world powers had been boosting their naval forces, the Royal Navy had been reforming its naval squadrons and reducing its global reach from 1896–1906. No longer was it the hegemon in the face of growing navy rivals – with German naval power representing the main concern.

Though the Home Fleet had existed in one form or another since 1902 – sometimes called the Home Squadron and other times the Channel Fleet – in 1907 a new Home Fleet was established under the direction of First Sea Lord Sir John (Jackie) Fisher. A consolidation of Great Britain's other naval divisions, the Home Fleet was created despite opposition within and outside the Royal Navy – opposition that the author describes in detail.

To historian Buckey, the most compelling argument for consolidation was expressed by Fisher, who forcefully stated, “Our only probable enemy is Germany. Germany keeps her whole fleet within a few hours of England.” Despite the fear of a German naval confrontation and invasion, Great Britain's leaders were under considerable pressure to reduce Royal Navy expenditures, especially with the new, social-reform-inclined Liberal government in 1906, of which Winston Churchill was a part.

Though being what was then considered middle-aged, Churchill's characteristic decisiveness and penchant for action led to him being described as “a young man in a hurry.” Beginning in 1911 as First Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill's chief goals had been to cut spending and reform naval staff organization, which in his view was antiquated and inefficient. At the time, the solution to the problem had been clear to him: scrap the Royal Navy's outdated ships. But once Churchill recognized that Britain's vaunted superiority at sea was slipping, while Germany's naval strength was growing alarmingly, his focus flipped. As a result, he was no longer seen as the liberal, social-reform-minded politician, but instead seen as the new “Navy man” who reliably supported increased naval spending. Navalism was on the rise.

The book's detailed account of the birth and importance of the Home Fleet also includes a close look at the politicians, naval officers, and Liberal government policies that brought about this change. Along with Fisher, Winston Churchill was a prime supporter for naval reform, spurred on by his great personal fear of growing German naval strength. In Churchill's view, the reconstituted Home Fleet would be a central support to the British Grand Fleet. The strength of the Grand Fleet was crucial according to Churchill, who said that if the Grand Fleet were to be defeated, Great Britain could lose the war in

one afternoon. As Buckey notes about the Allies' triumph in the First World War, "Victory ashore had depended upon victory at sea."

The author's perspective of events supports those of the great naval historian Arthur Marder, who believed in the vital importance of the capital ships and dreadnoughts. It is Marder who correctly labeled the 1904–1919 period as the "Fisher Era."

Contrary to some recent revisionist historians, Fisher was not building a torpedo fleet to replace the armoured capital ships. Buckey reminds readers of Marder's contention that Fisher's reconstitution of the Home Fleet in 1907 "was a logical development of the policy of concentration at home which had been initiated in 1904."

The senior naval officers who did not welcome all of Fisher's reforms included Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, who commanded the Channel Fleet, and whose power would be diminished under Fisher's plan. Fisher and Beresford had 'huge personalities,' the author notes, and their enmity would divide the Royal Navy's senior ranks. Ultimately, the Channel Fleet was merged with the expanding Home Fleet, an evolution that the book describes in great detail. Beresford returned to his parliamentary career. From 1910 onward, the Home Fleet was the most consequential command in the Royal Navy, and its commanders were superior in importance and strategic planning to all but the British Admiralty. The Home Fleet managed to meet the goals set for it, becoming a vital part of the victorious Grand Fleet of 1918.

The author includes thorough discussions of the massive technological innovations in this period of dreadnoughts, heavy battle cruisers, submarines, and torpedo boat destroyers. Not only does the book contain lengthy descriptions of the various British senior commanders, it also includes excellent photographs of them and their ships. Though the book is a highly technical academic study, Buckey writes in a style that makes it accessible to the layperson and academician alike. *Genesis of the Grand Fleet* is one of the thirteen books that comprise the Studies in Naval History and Sea series, from the well-regarded Naval Institute Press. The series, according to the Press, publishes significant new scholarship that "advances our understanding of sea power and its role in global security."

An accomplished historian with a research interest in the Royal Navy before the World Wars, Christopher Buckey provides an authoritative account of the Home Fleet – a topic that had not received much scholarly attention prior to *Genesis of the Grand Fleet*. In addition, Buckey's book provides readers with many insights into the pre-1914 Royal Navy and its important role in the ultimate defeat of German naval ambitions in 1918. This well-researched volume includes an extensive bibliography, a full notes section, an excellent index, and numerous photographs of naval officers and ships.

The monograph extends the scholarship on British naval history, and in particular the period before the First World War. In addition, it provides a compelling account of the important evolution of the British Royal Navy's Home Fleet.

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Mike Carlton. *The Scrap Iron Flotilla. Five Valiant Destroyers and the Australian War in the Mediterranean*. Sydney, AUS: Penguin Random House Australia, www.penguin.com.au, 2023. 448 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. AU \$24.99, CDN \$22.91, paper; ISBN 978-1-76104-201-0. (E-book available.)

Mike Carlton is an Australian journalist with a keen interest in Australian naval history and this is his fourth book concerning ships of the Royal Australian Navy during wartime. His others are *First Victory 1914: HMAS Sydney's Hunt for the German Raider Emden*, *Cruiser: The Life and Loss of HMAS Perth and Her Crew*, and *Flagship: The Cruiser HMAS Australia II and the Pacific War on Japan*. All his books display a journalistic flair, weaving an interesting story about the ship and its men that engages the reader from the opening chapter and *The Scrap Iron Flotilla* is cast from the same mould. Australian naval history only gains a passing interest from the average Australian reader, with land warfare gaining the lion's share of publications. Mike's journalistic talents have increased the navy's "market share" and enabled the history of the Royal Australian Navy to reach a much wider and larger audience. That said his work will often gloss over "bad news," enhance the "good news" and there is a liberal dose of "British Bashing" of senior officers and politicians.

The Scrap Iron Flotilla tells the story of five aged Australian destroyers during their service in the Mediterranean during 1939-1941. The ships were all built in the closing stages of the First World War and obtained by the Royal Australia Navy in the early 1930s. Already twenty years old when war broke out in 1939, they were offered to the Royal Navy for service in the Mediterranean and upon arrival, were described by the German propaganda machine as another load of "scrap metal" from Australia. The destroyer crews accepted the German slur with typical Aussie humour and quickly identified themselves as the Scrap Iron Flotilla. Similarly, when the Australian 9th Division was besieged in Tobruk, the German radio announcer William Joyce (Lord Haw Haw) described them as rats living in tunnels. The Australians soon happily identified themselves as the "Rats of Tobruk," which subsequently became a house-hold name throughout Australia. Also little known today is