



Before Jutland: The Naval War in Northern European Waters, August 1914–February 1915

By James Goldrick

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Before Jutland is a definitive study of the naval engagements in northern European waters in 1914–15 when the German High Sea Fleet faced the Grand Fleet in the North Sea and the Russian Fleet in the Baltic. Author James Goldrick reexamines one of the key periods of naval operations in the First World War, arguing that a focus on the campaign on the western front conceals the reality that the Great War was also a maritime conflict. Combining new historical information from primary sources with a comprehensive analysis of the operational issues, this book is an extensive revision of *The King's Ships Were at Sea*, Goldrick's earlier work on this naval campaign. In all, *Before Jutland* shows not only what happened, but how the various navies evolved to meet the challenges that they faced during the Great War and whether or not that evolution was successful.

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Editorial Review

Review

“This brief review has only been able to mention some of this work’s many qualities. For those who already possess a copy of its predecessor, *Before Jutland* offers many new insights derived from its author’s own experience of command at sea, while new readers can be confident that the new edition will again become the standard reference for the early months of the Great War at sea in northern waters.”? **Warship 2016**

“Goldrick integrates how things like prewar service culture, popular expectations, careless intelligence management, inadequate command arrangements, tradition, class, technological overload (e.g., radio, submarines, fire control, aircraft, etc.) and, of course, personalities, affected the actions of the British and German fleets, and, to a lesser extent those of the French and Russians as well, which are almost always absent from naval histories of the war. *Before Jutland* is a very good book, a necessary read for the serious naval historian and a rewarding one for the armchair admiral.”? **The Strategy Page**

“Goldrick succeeds in establishing a complex picture in which operational history is seen in conjunction with organization, personnel, technology and doctrine in an era of innovation. All in all, this is a superb study that is strongly recommended for anyone with an interest in the First World War and naval history.”? **International Journal of Maritime History**

“*Before Jutland* is a fine book, with a good balance of narrative and analysis. James Goldrick’s intelligent discussion of the challenges of operating large fleets of coal-fired ships provides texture and depth to the narrative. The volume is well illustrated and its maps are excellent throughout. The photographs, too, are helpful, if poorly reproduced.”? **Michigan War Studies Review**

“...these are the practical professional judgments of a senior naval officer gleaned over years of naval duty in various geographies, honed by a reflection on history. The value of the Summa is that the reader benefits from the insights that he has taken from history to inform his decision making and how his wealth of professional experience helps him understand the context of decisions made at the time. This is a veritable gold mine for professional naval officers...”? **Naval History Book Reviews**

“A great strength of the book is the attention which James Goldrick also gives to various broader themes: command and control, operational art, and social pressures arising from social change as well as from the personalities involved. The book is well presented, with photographs of the principal characters and ships, and provided with a comprehensive index, notes and bibliography. This book is informative, engaging and thought-provoking, and certainly achieves its aim to be a definitive study of the war at sea in northern European waters up to 1915.”? **Australian Defence Force Journal**

“This is a major study by an author well known to Society’s naval members. This splendid analysis in which the author looks at the Grand Fleet in the North Sea, the German High Sea Fleet and the Russian Fleet in the Baltic. He has made much use of new historical information from primary sources as he explores a wide range of key issues – war administration, ship design, use of coal, mining, use of signal intelligence, the weather and the relationships between senior characters such as Fisher, Jellicoe, Beatty...and Churchill; and on the opposing side Prince Heinrich, von Müller, von Tirpitz, von Pohl...and The Kaiser.”? **World Ship Society Warships 181**

“James Goldrick writes well and his detailed knowledge and access to RAN / RN records on all sides of the Pacific and Atlantic, makes for an entertaining and insightful read. With access to previously unavailable papers appearing in the *Naval Review* (itself formed in 1913, ‘before Jutland’), the book also presents a parallel narrative between over control and the clockwork fleets that fought and lost (both lost) at Jutland, and the Fleets that then emerge.”? ***The Navy***

“It is a masterly work that combines a lifetime of study with extensive experience of seamanship, command and control written by one of Australia’s preeminent naval officers. James Goldrick ends his remarkable book with the observation that the more one comprehends what happened at sea in 1914 and early 1915, the more that the events of Jutland, the Dardanelles and of 1917-18 become understandable, if not inevitable. Be in no doubt that this one is the essential key to a full understanding of the naval war and I wholeheartedly recommend it as the outstanding work on the subject.”? **Australian Naval Institute**

“Thanks to the author’s combination of a naval operational background and meticulous research, *Before Jutland* can truly be described as an authoritative battle history of the opening months of the war at sea in Northern Europe in 1914-15. This study reads easily and incorporates current scholarship about how new technologies were influencing naval warfare and about British plans to use seapower against the German economy.”? ***The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du Nord***

“*Before Jutland* is engagingly written and on the whole well-produced. Goldrick’s book is not the definitive history of the naval war before Jutland, but it certainly is an important step towards it, making an important point in stressing the importance of the naval war before the battle of Jutland for the development of operational thinking on both sides.”? ***The Mariner’s Mirror***

“The book’s key contribution is its discussion of the context for these early operations, which Goldrick calls the first examples of modern naval warfare. He makes clear that the mere existence of improved technology?whether dreadnought battleships or submarines or wireless radio communications?did not ensure its successful use, especially in wartime when everything had to be coordinated to meet an enemy force whose capabilities were not fully understood. A gulf yawned between technology, doctrine, and practice during wartime operations, and navies learned on the fly. Prewar economizing in all the fleets meant none had been allowed the fuel or ammunition to conduct realistic exercises. As a result, the effects of wartime use and conditions on the technology often came as an unpleasant surprise.”? ***The Journal of Military History***

About the Author

James Goldrick is a retired two-star rear admiral in the Royal Australian Navy who led Australia’s Border Protection Command and the Australian Defence College. He lives in Canberra, Australia.

Users Review

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