

A Twentieth-Century Naval Leader

MICHAEL SIMPSON

A LIFE OF ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET ANDREW CUNNINGHAM



Frontispiece: Cunningham by Karsh of Ottawa, 1944 (Imperial War Museum, London).

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Series Editor's Preface

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham was the Royal Navy's leading sailor of the Second World War. The Navy knew him by his initials - 'ABC' - and he is remembered and commemorated still. His principal theatre of operations was in the Mediterranean, where in the early days he held the line against a strategic situation that was much worse than pre-war planners could ever have imagined possible. This was best exemplified by the role of the Royal Navy in conducting a fighting withdrawal against terrible odds from Crete in March 1941. Cunningham was aware that not only the fate of the British expeditionary force, but also the reputation of the Navy itself was at stake, and was resolute in his support for the operation. He held out, too, against Winston Churchill's incessant demands for more offensive action than the strategic circumstances demanded or Cunningham's resources made possible. This was a different kind of battle - continual, semi-covert, and highly political - but if he had lost it the consequences might have been as terrible.

Thanks not merely to good fortune, but to his skill as a commander and to the professional efficiency and devotion of his people, ABC presided over the slow but steady triumph of the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean until it was finally able to assure the safe and timely arrival of supplies and reinforcements to allied forces in the theatre, to provide the conditions for a full-scale invasion, first, of North Africa and then of Sicily and the Italian mainland, until he was able to send that memorable signal back to London to the effect that the enemy's remaining ships were now safely moored at Malta, under the guns of the British fleet.

After this all-important maritime victory, Cunningham was recalled to London, where he was honoured at Paddington Station by being met by the entire Admiralty board. Despite their many differences Churchill was proud of this successful fighting British sailor

and sent him off to Washington to impress the Americans. With some reservations, Churchill then accepted the strong-minded Cunningham as First Sea Lord. This chair-bound task was not to Cunningham's taste – he was no Whitehall warrior, but he conceived it to be his duty to accept the post, if only to continue as a resolute defender of the Navy's interest and success against the continuing and sometimes unreasonable demands to be expected from Churchill.

Cunningham was not in the Nelson mode. He inspired respect bordering on awe, and sometimes fear rather than adulation. He was not a people person. But for all his faults (and, as we shall see, he had some) he was amongst the greatest of the Royal Navy's twentieth-century sailors. ABC's career spanned both the operational and the policy side of British naval history in this period. In this book, readers will find a rounded, and where necessary critical, biography that is fully worthy of its subject.

Geoffrey Till Series Editor

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Abbreviations

AA Anti-Aircraft

AB Able-bodied Seaman

ABC Andrew Browne Cunningham

ACM Air Chief Marshal

ACNS (A) Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Administration)

ACNS (F) Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Foreign) ACNS (H) Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Home)

ACNS (UT) Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (U-boat Warfare and

Trade)

ACNS (W) Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Weapons)

Adm Admiral

Ady Sec Admiralty Secretary
Air Cdre Air Commodore
AoF Admiral of the Fleet

ALUSNA All US Navy AM Air Marshal

ANCXF Allied Naval Commander Expeditionary Force

AOC-in-C Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief

AoF Admiral of the Fleet AS anti-submarine

ASV Air-to-Surface Vessel (radar) ASW Anti-Submarine Warfare BAD British Admiralty Delegation

BPF British Pacific Fleet

Brig Brigadier

Brig-Gen Brigadier-General

BRNC Britannia Royal Naval College

BS Battle Squadron

Capt Captain

Capt (D) Captain (Destroyer [flotilla])

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CAS Chief of the Air Staff
CCS Combined Chiefs of Staff

Cdr Commander Cdre Commodore

Cdre (D) Commodore (Destroyers)

CID Committee of Imperial Defence

C-in-C Commander-in-Chief

CIGS Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CNO Chief of Naval Operations [US]

CO Combined Operations

Col Colonel

COMNAVEU Commander Navy Europe [US]
COPP Combined Operations Pilotage Party

COS Chiefs of Staff
CS Cruiser Squadron

Cttee Committee

CYS Chief Yeoman of Signals

DCNS Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff

DCOS Deputy Chief of Staff

Dept Department
Div Division

DNAD Director of Naval Air Division

DOps Director of Operations

DP Director of Plans

DSC Distinguished Service Cross

DSM Distinguished Service Medal [US]
DSO Distinguished Service Order

DUKW D = model year; U = amphibian; K = all-wheel

drive; W = dual rear axles

E-boat Enemy Motor Torpedo Boat

EF Eastern Fleet

ETF Eastern Task Force

FAA Fleet Air Arm
F-M Field-Marshal
FO Foreign Office
FSL First Sea Lord

GCB Grand Cross of the Bath

Gen General Govr Governor

HACS High Angle Control System

HF/DF High Frequency/Direction Finding

HMS His Majesty's Ship

IDC Imperial Defence College

INA Institute of Naval Architects
JCS Joint Chiefs of Staff [US]
JIC Joint Intelligence Committee
JIS Joint Intelligence Staff

JIS Joint Intelligence Sta JPS Joint Planning Staff JSM Joint Staff Mission

KBE Knight of the British Empire KCB Knight Grand Cross of the Bath

KT Knight of the Thistle

LC Landing Craft

LCI Landing Craft (Infantry)
LCT Landing Craft (Tank)

Lieut Lieutenant

LSI Landing Ship (Infantry)
LST Landing Ship (Tank)
Lt-Cdr Lieutenant-Commander
Lt-Gen Lieutenant-General

M of the RAF Marshal of the Royal Air Force

Maj-Gen Major-General
ME Middle East
Med Mediterranean
MF Mediterranean Fleet

MNBDO Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation

MT Motor Transport
MTB Motor Torpedo Boat

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NID Naval Intelligence Division

NLO Naval Liaison Officer

OA Operational Archives [US]

OM Order of Merit

ONO Office of Naval Operations [US]

OOD Officer of the Day
PM Prime Minister
POW Prisoner of War
R-Adm Rear-Admiral

RA (D) Rear-Admiral (Destroyers)

RAF Royal Air Force

RAN Royal Australian Navy
RCN Royal Canadian Navy
RIN Royal Indian Navy
RM Royal Marines

RN Royal Navy

RNR Royal Naval Reserve

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RNVR Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Royal New Zealand Navy RNZN RoP Report of Proceedings

Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia **SACSEA**

South East Asia Command SEAC

Signals Intelligence Sigint

Sea Lords SLSO Staff Officer

Staff Officer (Plans) SO(P)

Squadron Sqdn

Sub-Lieut Sub-Lieutenant

South West Pacific Area **SWPA**

TB Torpedo Boat

TSR Torpedo Spotter Reconnaissance (aircraft)

German submarine U-boat UN United Nations United States Army USA U-Sec Under-Secretary

United States Marine Corps USMC

USN United States Navy

USNR United States Naval Reserve

Vice-Admiral V-Adm VCVictoria Cross

VCNS Vice-Chief of Naval Staff Victory in Europe Day VE-Day VIP Very Important Person Victory over Japan Day VJ-Day

WO War Office

Women's Royal Naval Service WRNS

WTF Western Task Force

Journals

BJISBritish Journal of International Studies

Diplomacy & Statecraft $D \mathcal{G} S$ English Historical Review EHR

Historical Journal $H\mathcal{J}$

IHRInternational History Review Journal of Modern History $\mathcal{J}MH$ Journal of Strategic Studies $\mathcal{J}SS$

MAMilitary Affairs

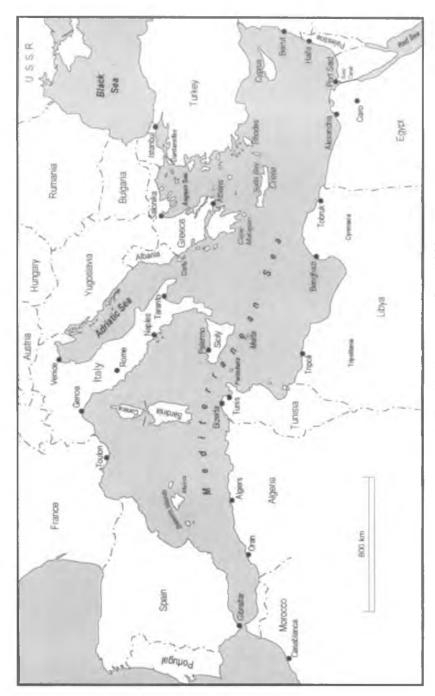
The Mariner's Mirror MM

Naval History NHThe Naval Review NR

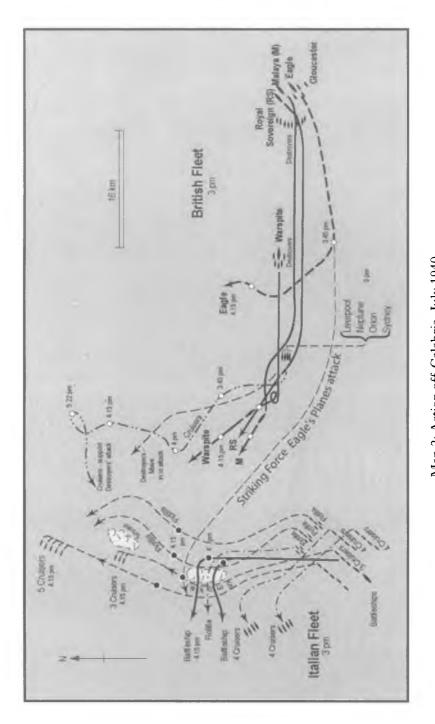
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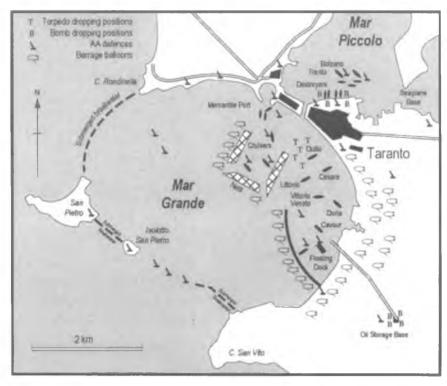
NWCR	Naval War College Review
PBA	Proceedings of the British Academy
$RUSI\mathcal{J}$	Royal United Service Institute Journal
USNIP	US Naval Institute Proceedings
$W \ \mathfrak{S} \ S$	War & Society



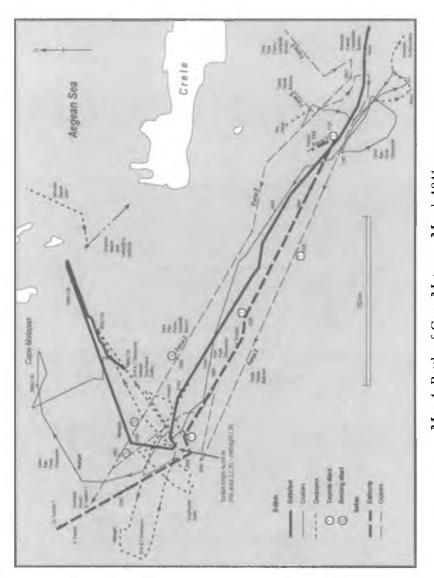
Map 1: The Mediterranean, June 1939.



Map 2: Action off Calabria, July 1940.



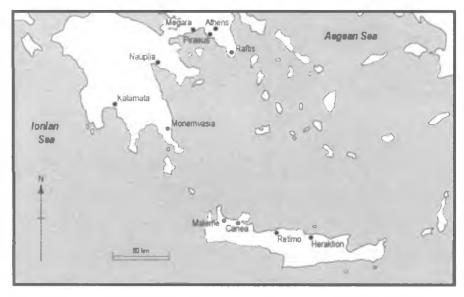
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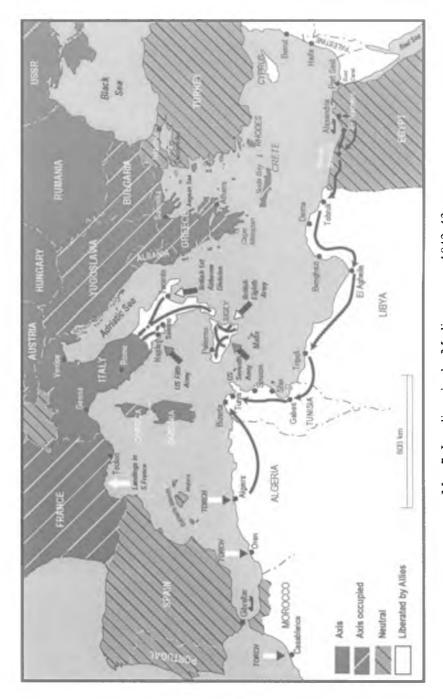
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Map 6: Greece and Crete, April-May 1941.



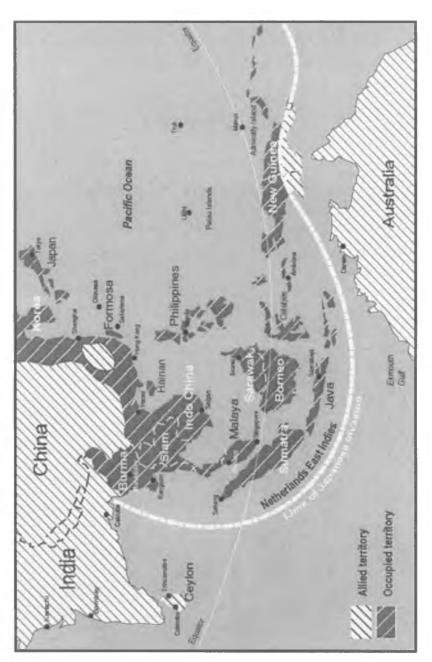
Map 7: Landings in the Mediterranean, 1942-43.



Map 8: The 'Husky' Landings, Sicily, July-August 1943.



Map 9: The Salerno Landings, Italy, September 1943.



Map 10: The Pacific, 1942-45.



Apprenticed to the Queen's Navy

1883-1908

On the warm but breezy afternoon of 27 June 1897 the royal yacht steamed through 30 miles of ships, celebrating Victoria's diamond jubilee. The Royal Navy symbolised the Pax Britannica; as *The Times* correspondent remarked:

Whether Englishmen, colonialists or Indians, all are citizens of the same Empire, with common interests bound together by the steel bounds signified in the long lines of battleships and cruisers in sight. No man or woman could gaze on that scene without having the national instinct awakened and the pride of citizenship aroused.¹

Among the junior cadets watching from the 'special service vessel' Wye was Andrew Browne Cunningham, aged 14 and about six months into his 15-month course at Dartmouth and he well recalled 'a sight they will remember all their lives'.2 The third of five children of Professor Daniel Cunningham and his wife Elizabeth, he was born at Dublin on 7 January 1883. His father, a distinguished professor of anatomy at Trinity College Dublin, was appointed to the chair at Edinburgh in 1903. The Cunninghams were Scots with a strong intellectual and clerical tradition. Andrew's mother also came from clerical stock and he was named after his maternal grandfather, the Rev. Andrew Browne. Both families had risen into the middle class by stern adherence to the Protestant ethic. Though Andrew, by his own admission, was slow to imbibe the doctrine of unremitting toil, the family tradition drove his career. He appears to have been an alert, energetic and mischievous youngster. Cunningham's mother oversaw most of his upbringing and he had a warm and close relationship

with her. Most of his earlier years were spent with governesses and domestic servants. After a short introduction to schooling in Dublin, he was sent briefly to Edinburgh Academy, lodging with his aunts Doodles and Connie May.³ Cunningham acknowledged that he 'found the Academy pretty tough going at first'.⁴ As he was bright, this may have arisen from a different accent, a slightly less than average size and joining a form of older boys. These circumstances may have stimulated belligerence and his love of a scrap.

At the age of 10, he was startled to receive a telegram from his father asking, 'Would you like to go into the Navy?' It may be that Daniel considered his boisterous second son unsuited to an intellectual training. The family had no maritime connections and Andrew had only a vague interest in the sea. Nevertheless, he replied, 'Yes. I should like to be an Admiral.' He was then sent to a school specialising in cramming boys for the Dartmouth entrance examinations. Andrew, who had done well at school, passed them comfortably, being particularly strong in mathematics though uninterested in the humanities.

Cunningham joined the training ship Britannia in January 1897, among 65 cadets, the sons of peers, gentlemen, business or professional men. Terms, under a Lieutenant, were housed aboard the hulk Hindustan, connected to Britannia. Cadets had a sea chest with a hammock slung above; each group of six shared a personal servant. Discipline was strict, though punishment was rare. While the education, recently reformed, was rigorous, it promoted mechanical learning, and 'a repressive mental process commenced in Her Majesty's Ship (HMS) Britannia and the gunrooms of HM ships during the most formative years of cadets' lives'.8 Instruction was in mathematics, trigonometry, navigation, steam engineering and seamanship, with physics, astronomy, geography, French, drawing, scripture and naval history. Cunningham lacked enthusiasm for field sports, though he became a keen golfer, and spent most of his spare time 'simply messing about in boats'. The sail-and-steam sloop Racer provided sea-going experience. He appears to have settled quickly to cadet life, though rarely extending himself in his studies. He rapidly acquired a reputation for pugilism - and the nickname 'Meat Phaz'. Towards the end of his course, he seems to have been anxious to seek adventure at sea; consequently, he committed numerous minor misdemeanours, but still obtained a 'very good' for conduct. He passed out tenth in April 1898, with first-class marks in mathematics and seamanship.⁹

The Royal Navy consisted of several hundred ships, two dozen bases and a strength of 90,000, while the naval estimates of over £,20 million constituted about a quarter of government expenditure.

Deployed worldwide, notably in powerful Channel and Mediterranean battle fleets, 'The fleet of England is her all-in-all' and upheld imperial interests.¹⁰ *The Times* trusted that foreigners had taken the review's 'lessons to heart' and observed that 'supremacy at sea belongs to Great Britain and ... she has no intention of abandoning it'. It concluded smugly, 'A powerful British Navy is the best guarantee of the peace of the world.'¹¹

Despite modern, advanced warships, long-serving, capable and well-trained crews, the confidence of almost total invincibility, and Nelsonian inspiration, the essence of Nelson's success had been forgotten. Where he had inculcated initiative and independence among his officers, a long period of peace had encouraged 'very senior officer veneration'. Moreover, exercises were perfunctory, staff work ill-organised and the study of war neglected. 'During the nineties', wrote Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, 'the struggle was always going on between the mind of the old seaman and the young technician'.12 Discipline remained ferociously harsh, food and accommodation spartan. Pay was poor and amenities few. Officers indulged in heavy drinking, hunting, shooting and fishing, regattas and balls. Their principal ambition was to keep their ships pristine. 'Competitive drill and smartness of the ships', noted Chatfield, 'was the test of efficiency, rather than technical effort in gunnery and kindred matters.'13 'The British Navy', wrote Marder, 'had run in a rut for nearly a century.'14 For the Royal Navy, the diamond jubilee review represented a last hurral of a vanishing age.

Midshipman Cunningham knew little of these shortcomings. He applied for an appointment on the Cape station and served in the light cruisers *Fox* and *Doris*, luckily meeting sub-lieutenants who were strict but fair. Sea time offered experience in navigation and commanding ships' boats and Cunningham enjoyed and excelled in these duties. Excitement came in the Boer War of 1899–1902, the enterprising Cunningham securing attachment to a naval artillery brigade. Though he saw little action, he found ample opportunity to ride a horse and develop his stamina and resourcefulness. He learned to command men appreciably older and to understand army life. He gleefully told his mother of scrapes from which he had emerged unharmed and the exhilaration of dodging enemy fire. However, after several wearying months, Cunningham's mind was focused on returning to a naval career and, offered the chance to return home in October 1900, he seized it.¹⁵

Denied an early promotion, almost certainly because of the favour shown to him by Field Marshal Roberts, an old friend of his father, he began the metamorphosis into a sub-lieutenant. He served in the Channel Squadron, honing his ship and boat-handling skills in often difficult conditions before taking courses at Greenwich, followed by others at Whale Island and HMS *Vernon*. Cunningham's relative lack of sea time, resentment at injustice, harsh treatment at 'Whaley', his incorrigible rebelliousness, and the natural desire of a 19-year-old to enjoy London ensured that he passed his examinations adequately but without the distinction to earn early promotion. He was commissioned a sub-lieutenant in March 1903 and appointed to the Mediteranean Fleet battleship *Implacable*, 'considered a crack ship'. His personality and ambitions ran counter to big ships and their somewhat rigid officers and he found too little to occupy him and enjoyed no real responsibility. However, learning that there was a vacancy in the destroyer *Locust* (300 tons, 30 knots, coal-fired, two torpedo tubes and a handful of small guns), he boldly applied for a transfer to her and 'So began my long years in destroyers.' 17

Cunningham joined Locust in September 1903; with a crew of 58, she was extremely cramped. Her captain was Lieutenant A. B. S. Dutton, renowned for his zeal for cleanliness, efficiency and hard driving, which had led to the abrupt departure of previous sublieutenants. Cunningham was responsible for smartness, efficiency and the discipline of the crew. He now had an unforgiving captain, abundant responsibility, scope for initiative, opportunity to refine his seamanship, and a chance to shape a weapons system still rapidly evolving. That Cunningham revelled in these opportunities is clear from his account of a night attack on the battleships anchored in a defended harbour on the Greek coast. The exercise had excitement, boldness, instant decisions, hazardous manoeuvres, teamwork and determined action. He engaged in regattas in both *Locust* and *Orwell*, of the same class, to which he was appointed in December 1903.18 Promoted Lieutenant in March 1904, he abhorred specialisms and preferred being a 'salthorse'. To advance, he had to display outstanding qualities of organisation, seamanship, command, energy, determination and resourcefulness - preferably in a command.

However, between June 1904 and May 1908, he served in cruiser appointments, in which he undertook the instruction of recruits as well as more normal watch-keeping and divisional duties. He clearly enjoyed the tutorial role, clarifying his own views on training, discipline, efficiency, and command. After a training voyage to the West Indies, he spent further time in the Mediterranean, in the cruiser *Suffolk*, commanded by a future First Sea Lord, the urbane and courteous Captain Rosslyn Wemyss. He gained a priceless knowledge of the harbours, channels, sea conditions, and weather of the Mediterranean and compiled an unmatched record of regatta victories.¹⁹

When Cunningham returned home in April 1908, he found a widespread naval revolution in progress. Discontent with the complacency, narrow-mindedness, rigidity and superficiality of naval education and strategic thought emerged in the 1870s but only became widespread following the publications of the American Captain A. T. Mahan in the 1890s. He created an audience for Professor Sir John Knox Laughton, principal founder of the Navy Records Society (1893), an institution dedicated to providing a sound historical basis for naval strategy. Sir Julian Corbett taught on the newly-established war course and promoted the eternal verities of maritime warfare, ²⁰ Herbert Richmond, a protégé, created *The Naval* Review (1913), 'an instrument for reform through education ... by the exchange of ideas'.21 The revolution is associated, however, mainly with Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fisher (First Sea Lord, 1904-10 and 1914-15), influenced by Corbett and mentor of Richmond. A man who 'thought in large brush strokes and primary colours', Fisher had the 'capacity to think the unthinkable'.22 He was primarily responsible for the introduction of destroyers in 1892 and influenced the development of the submarine. He instituted realistic training, fostered naval intelligence and gathered round him a group of junior officers keen to modernise the navy in fighting efficiency, equipment and techniques. Fisher effected reforms in officer recruitment, service conditions and the manning of ships. Slow to acknowledge Germany as the most likely enemy, he was nevertheless insistent on maintaining the navy at a high pitch and desired to maximise cost efficiency, rationalising deployments on the grounds, 'We cannot have everything or be strong everywhere.'23 Associated principally with dreadnoughts, 'What Jacky actually wanted ... was the creation of a more flexible system for protecting Britain's overseas territorial and trading interests.'24 More interested in battlecruisers and leaving the Mediterranean to flotilla defence, he was opinionated and controversial. Though the Edwardian era would have seen great changes, he gave them a major fillip and made Winston Churchill (First Lord, 1911-15) a disciple. Nevertheless, in 1914 the Royal Navy was still more technically minded than intellectually questioning; it was not until after the disappointments of the Great War that the reformers were heeded. Cunningham was listed as a member of the Naval Review after the war but he was far from being a 'Young Turk'; indeed, he termed the movement 'subversive' and challenged authority only on a practical, personal basis.²⁵ He was more directly influenced by Fisher's creation of destroyers, for destroyers made Cunningham.²⁶

Cunningham, Destroyers and the Mediterranean: A Symbiotic Relationship

1908-18

Lieutenant Cunningham, aged 25, was appointed to the command of Torpedo Boat (TB) No. 14, attached to the Reserve Fleet at Portsmouth, in May 1908. She was a relatively new vessel (270 tons, two 12-pounders, three 18-inch torpedo tubes, 26 knots) and was originally designated as a 'coastal destroyer'. Cunningham's 18 months in TB 14 were spent in almost ceaseless gun and torpedo exercises. He progressed to the 30-knot destroyer Vulture in January 1910 - scarcely larger than TB 14, coal-burning and obsolescent - not to Cunningham's taste. He complained to Captain (D), the able and formidable Reginald Tyrwhitt, who 'was rather annoyed' at the young man's presumption.² Fortunately, an exchange of destroyers between Devonport and Portsmouth enabled him to transfer, in August 1910, to Roebuck, a newer coal-burner and a much better ship. She was more habitable, had greater endurance, and was faster; Cunningham characteristically described her as 'handy' but boiler trouble caused her to be paid off. Cunningham was exceedingly lucky to be appointed to another destroyer, Scorpion, in which he was to make his name over the next seven years. Scorpion, three months into her first commission, was typical of the destroyers with which the fleet went to war (945 tons, one 4-inch gun, three 12-pounders, two 18-inch torpedo tubes, 27.5 knots). Somewhat slow, under-armed and inadequately equipped but relatively robust, her main defect was that she had coalfired turbines, 'an extraordinarily bad mixture'.3

Flotilla tactics quickly became more sophisticated, involving the

defence of the battle fleet and counter-attacks, including night engagements. At sea much more often than big ships and the navy's maids-of-all-work, they were grossly overworked in wartime. Destroyers offered the opportunity to exercise one's own judgement, take initiatives, operate independently, assume total responsibility for a vessel and its company, engage in David-and-Goliath encounters with big ships and close quarter scraps with light craft and shore defences. They made ship handling a work of art while daring appealed to young captains of zeal, determination, coolness, self-confidence and unflagging energy. Command meant training a ship's company to a high pitch, a gift for leadership, an instinctive grasp of the ways of the sea and ships and a fine eye for opportunities. Chatfield once observed, 'In all affairs of the sea rapid, nay instant, decision is vital.'4 No one exemplified these qualities more than Cunningham.

The arrival of a new weapons platform, the need to develop it rapidly, the growing threat of war and the persistence of an exacting, autocratic, uncompromising (though often petty and pointless) higher command meant that Cunningham was driven relentlessly and was equally demanding of his ships' companies. Service in light craft brought officers and men closer together. The constant sea-going and exercises 'cultivated a quick-thinking brain, initiative and anticipation'. Moreover, he was prepared to tackle superiors to engineer desirable appointments; flotilla commanders used their influence at the Admiralty to enable him to command destroyers for over 11 successive years.

None was stricter than Robert Arbuthnot, Commodore (D), Home Fleet. 7 Cunningham evidently met Arbuthnot's severe criteria, for he enjoyed the Commodore's protection in avoiding potentially embarrassing retrospective examinations. His own reputation for strict discipline and intolerance of inefficiency owed as much to Arbuthnot's example as to Cunningham's inherent Calvinistic sternness. Cunningham was noted for having had 11 First Lieutenants in seven years commanding Scorpion; however, two of these were temporary appointments and the remainder survived for between seven and 24 months - hardly an indication of Cunningham's displeasure with their conduct.8 Arbuthnot drilled his flotillas in all sea conditions, at night, and without lights. As a result, 'there was little that any of us did not know about the North Sea in all its moods' and precious little that Cunningham did not know about the capabilities of his craft.9 Exercises replicating war conditions, in the roughest of seas, were likely to carry with them serious risks and Scorpion ran down a sailing vessel in the Channel. Cunningham escaped condemnation, the officer of the watch being held responsible. He was similarly fortunate on other occasions when errors were committed or officialdom disdainfully treated. Moreover, he was fully alive to ruses by which his ship might benefit and his own freedom of action be enlarged. A principle evident as a fleet commander emerged early in his captaincy – the man on the spot is likely to know best.¹⁰

The flotilla sailed to the Mediterranean in the autumn of 1913. Cunningham looked forward to returning but the Mediterranean had become a backwater for the Royal Navy. Fisher, who had commanded the Mediterranean Fleet at its largest, and his disciple, Churchill, were determined to maintain a 60 per cent margin over Germany. No dreadnoughts could be spared for the Mediterranean, and in any case Fisher and Churchill believed that the advent of submarines and torpedo craft had rendered its narrow waters untenable for them. Churchill was forced by a rapidly deteriorating international situation to station three battlecruisers there, but was still compelled to let the French defend Britain's considerable Mediterranean interests. Russia coveted a warm-water access, which Britain, despite the entente of 1907, was determined to deny her. The Italians and the Austrians, supposedly allied, were building battle fleets against each other. The smaller Balkan powers had fallen first upon the decaying Turkish empire and then upon one another. Wilhelmine Germany was the source of much turbulence, provoking a second Moroccan crisis in 1911, promoting a Berlin-Baghdad railway, allying with Austria and Italy, and suborning Turkey from its historic allegiance to Britain, as well as stationing major naval units in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean had its delights, however, chiefly golf and sailing for Cunningham, but the accent was clearly on preparation for war. Cunningham renewed his acquaintance with the eastern basin, especially the Aegean, and the flotilla was worked up to a high level of efficiency by Captain (D) C. P. R. Coode.11

By the time Britain declared war (4 August 1914), the flotilla was ready for operations, *Scorpion*'s log stating laconically, 'Prepared for war. Cleared ship for action.' After several days patrolling off Malta and in the mouth of the Adriatic, ships of the 5th Flotilla were ordered to join Rear-Admiral Troubridge's armoured cruiser squadron in pursuit of the German battlecruiser *Goeben* and the light cruiser *Breslau*. The destroyers, running short of coal, joined Troubridge at dawn on 7 August but within a few hours most had dropped out, *Scorpion* and two others remaining ultimately coaled from the cruisers at Zante after Troubridge called off the pursuit. The German ships made their way to Turkey, arriving at the Dardanelles on 11 August. The First Sea Lord, Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg, minuted, 'The escape of the *Goeben* ever remains a shameful episode in the