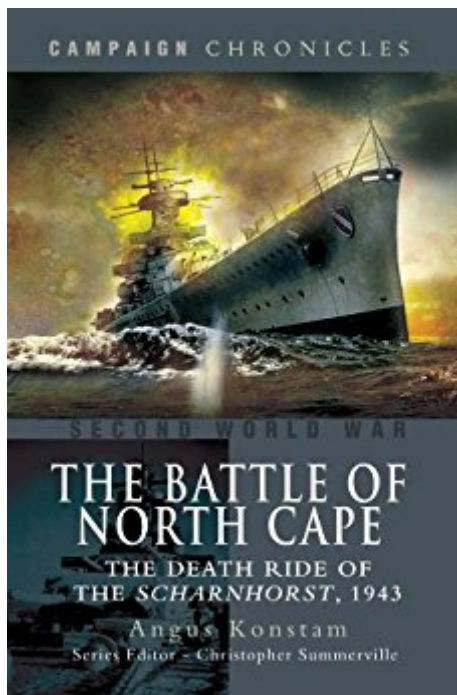


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Battle Of North Cape: The Death Ride Of The Scharnhorst, 1943 (Campaign Chronicles)



Synopsis

On 25 December 1943 the German battlecruiser Scharnhorst slipped out Altenfjord in Norway to attack Arctic convoy JW55B which was carrying vital war supplies to the Soviet Union. But British naval intelligence knew of the Scharnhorst's mission before she sailed and the vulnerable convoy was protected by a large Royal Naval force including the battleship Duke of York. In effect the Scharnhorst was sailing into a trap. One of the most compelling naval dramas of the Second World War had begun. Angus Konstam's gripping account tells the story of this crucial and under-studied naval battle, and explains why the hopes of the German Kriegsmarine went down with their last great ship.

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Customer Reviews

While much has been written about the pursuit and sinking of the Bismarck in 1941, the story of the Scharnhorst's last gallant sortie has received less attention. Mr. Konstam fills the gap with this accurate, compelling, and fast-reading account. The Scharnhorst's final mission has all the elements of maritime drama. Eager to redeem itself from the disastrous New Year's Eve battle at the end of 1942, the German navy pressured Admiral Bey and Scharnhorst into making a

dangerous mission to intercept one of the Murmansk convoys. Yet Bey was falling into a trap laid by the the British, under the astute Admiral Bruce Fraser. Bey managed to get Scharnhorst within 30 miles of Convoy JW55B, but from there on the mighty battleship's famous luck ran out. A dashing destroyer commander, Bey was out of his depth in charge of a capital ship task force. Author Konstam argues that the separation of Scharnhorst from her escorting destroyers was not a deliberate decision by Bey, but more likely an error caused by the complications and pressures of command. Alone in a dark and stormy sea, Scharnhorst fell victim to a surprise attack by British cruisers equipped with far superior radar sets. When Fraser attacked shortly after with the battleship Duke of York, Scharnhorst's superior speed and decent protection almost canceled out the British advantages, until a lucky hit slowed the German dreadnought and left her open to simultaneous attack by an overwhelming British force. While author Konstam gives careful attention to the strategy, tactics, weapon systems, and command personalities, he also provides telling glimpses into the lives of the British and German sailors caught up in this important and tragic story. Scharnhorst sailed on Christmas day, 1943, jettisoning holiday items as she went - Norwegian civilians found Christmas trees washing ashore afterward. When Admiral Fraser became convinced he had trapped Scharnhorst, he decided there was just enough time to give Duke of York's happy and excited crew tea time before the battle. Within a handful of hours, Scharnhorst was rolling over in brutally cold, storm-tossed waters, rent by as many as ten torpedoes and countless shell hits. Out of a crew of nearly 2,000, just 36 men survived. There are a handful of errors in this title, probably owing to publishing haste - the author once or twice mixes up east and west in describing ship movements, and a photo of Admiral Fraser and his captains is labeled backwards (as one can tell from the ranks visible on the officers' uniforms). Most of the information is solid, however, and upholds the best standards of historical analysis. This title is probably the most accurate, objective, and complete English-language account of the Battle of North Cape. It provides background into the convoy and task force movements leading up to the action I have not found elsewhere. The maps provided are helpful, and sixteen pages of illustrations give images of all the important commanders and vessels. Tables in front provide a summary of the capabilities of all the vessels, from battleships to destroyers, that participated. The book is informative, cogent, and concise, so that the reader reaches the end all too quickly.

When I was a kid I had seen the movie "Sink the Bismarck" many times. I also read a book about that famous sortie. I later read an excellent book about the German navy in WW2 where I learned of many other legendary sea battles and the ships that fought in them. Decades have gone by since

then, but my interest still remained alive. The Scharnhorst sortie is a most extraordinary tale. Campaign Chronicles found a wonderful author, Angus Konstam, to tell this unforgettable story. If you are interested in naval history and have wanted for a authoritative book about this particular vessel and it's fate, this is a perfect read for you. Like so many battles fought on the high seas, when a ship is sunk, the suffering and loss of life is staggering. The strategic aspects and timeline of the subject are well explained. There are many personal accounts represented by both sides of the battle. There are a few that are given in vivid detail, explained as if they had happened yesterday. Background and character studies are given about the commanders involved in the story. The human element of the battle is effectively brought out. A list of all ships involved is included. There are maps and photographs. "The Battle of the North Cape: The Death Ride of the Scharnhorst" vividly describes the blunders, missed opportunities and extreme weather that created what was to be one of the last great sea battles involving ships of this kind. Five stars and kudos to Mr. Konstam.

An excellent study on the planned killing of the Scharnhorst. Well researched and we'll presented that clearly explains the demise of the last of the active German Pocket Battleships.

I had viewed a few re-enactments and found versions of the Battle of North Cape over the 74 years since the action in which I was involved but I can now say that Angus Konstam's book amazed me; such detail of the six days. My night Action Station was on the starboard wing of The Air Defence Position (ADP) as a 3rd Class Electrical Artificer. Thank you .com for your prompt delivery of my order. Sincerely Alan Clements.

It was a quick read but very enjoyable. I don't think the details regarding the sinking of the scharnhorst gets much coverage in most general history's. I like the authors style of using the personal stories to assist and provide more details to the story, not making the personal stories the story itself. Of course due to the outcome the the German view isn't covered as well as the British. Strongly recommended if interest in naval combat. Probably one of the first and last combats between solo capital ships.

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