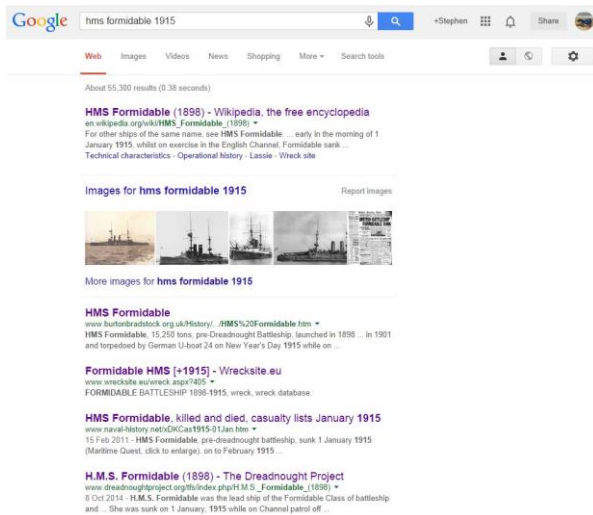
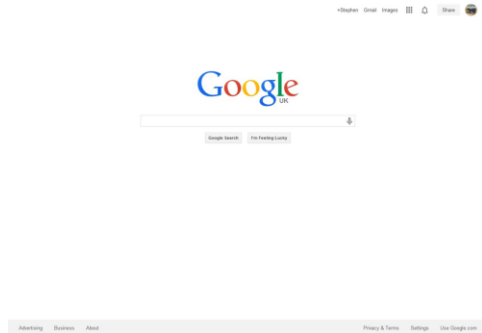


Researching Ships Online

The internet has become an indispensable guide for research, providing a fantastic opportunity to share information across a much wider platform than printed media. However, it must be treated with caution; anyone with an internet connection can post material online, and this information may not have undergone the same scrutiny and review that most published works have. When researching historic ships, there are a few simple techniques that you can use and a few things to consider from the outset.



Using Google

www.google.co.uk

Google and similar search engines are a familiar means of searching the internet. When searching for ships, you may need to be quite specific, depending on the popularity of the vessel's name. First, try searching for the ship name, then add more specifics to pinpoint an exact vessel. If for instance you are searching for HMS *Formidable*, sunk in the Channel on the 1st January 1915, you could search for: **Formidable**, or **HMS Formidable**, or **Formidable 1915**, or **Formidable 1898** (the year of launch), or **Formidable WWI**, or a combination of any of those.

There are many useful tips and techniques to using Google, just a few of which are included in this guide. If you're looking for more help or advice, you might like to try www.googleguide.com.

Narrowing your search with quotations

Google has options to specify an exact phrase by enclosing a term in quotation marks. This is particularly handy if you're searching for a ship name of several words in a particular order, or perhaps find websites that refer to a specific book title or quote. If you are searching for the book *The Dover Patrol 1914-1917*, by Admiral Bacon (published in 1918), you could google **The Dover Patrol 1914-1917**. However, you'll get many results relating to the general history of the Dover Patrol and several that relate to a 1998 publication (actually called *The Dover Patrol 1914-1918*). If you google **"The Dover Patrol 1914-1917"** it lists websites that specifically contain that exact phrase and in most cases direct you to the correct 1918-published book).

Google will also search related or similarly spelled words by default in a basic search. This can sometimes be very useful, but particularly with ship names, can often lead to results relating to similarly named vessels or even totally unrelated terms with a more popular spelling. For example, searching for **SS Londonier** will return results for the word Londoner. Searching for **SS "Londonier"** will prevent results related to natives of London from appearing, and reduces the number of search results from 360,000 to a mere 1,350.

Another way to use quotation marks is to use them around stop words (words that Google usually ignores in searches, such as **a**, **the**, **and** or **I**) to force Google to search for them too. This is handy if such words appear in a vessel's name. More on these techniques can be found in the link above.

Narrowing your search by removing specific terms

You can also remove certain terms from your search results by placing minus sign immediately before the word you want to avoid. This is particularly handy if you can see regular occurrences of a term that you know is skewing your results away from the specific item you're interested in. This can be of particular use when you want to avoid certain more popular search results or perhaps more famous vessels with the same name as the one you're researching. If you google **U-boat**, you get 90 million search results and most of those on the first page are related to the Second World War. If you google **U-boat -Second World War**, it drops to 2 million results and all but one of those on the first page relate to the First World War.

Searching within a website

It is possible to restrict your search to a particular website by specifying that site in the search bar. Many websites don't have an integrated search function, although many websites use this Google function on their own pages to operate a search bar – the search function on www.uboat.net for example, is a Google search that restricts the results to pages on uboat.net. It's a very handy function if you know that a certain website that has multiple pages may contain a specific vessel that you're interested in.

To search within a specific website, type **site:** and the web address into the search bar, followed by the search term. So if you type **site:bbc.co.uk/news Titanic** (note the space between the website and the search word) into the search bar at www.google.co.uk, the results returned are only those where Titanic appears on a BBC news page. The [Great War Forum](#) is another good example of such a site. To search only within the Great War Forum website, type **site:1914-1918.invisionzone.com XXXX** into Google (where XXXX is the vessel name you're investigating – note the space between com and the search word). Using this search term in Google restricts the search results it displays to those on the Great War Forum.

Searching within a page

Many of the websites you find yourself on will contain very long lists of vessels, perhaps shown in no discernible pattern. It can be quite time consuming looking through such pages, but most web browsers have a function that allows you to search a page for a certain word. Within the most popular web browsers (such as Chrome, Explorer, Safari and Firefox), pressing the CTRL and F keys together will open a search box somewhere on your screen. Here you can type the particular vessel name or other search term you're researching and be taken straight to its location on the page.

Duplicated ship names

Ship names get reused and duplicated quite a lot. The Royal Navy in particular has had many ship names in use for centuries, so always be careful to make sure you're researching the correct ship. In your search results, keep an eye out for the year of launch and/or the year of loss. If, for example, you come across entries related to an HMS *Formidable* launched in 1939, or one broken up in 1813, these are unlikely to be the First World War wreck.

U-boats can be another tricky one. As well as the fact that many First World War U-boat numbers were re-used in the Second World War, different classes also had slight variations on their name. Hence the First World War boats *U-90*, *UB-90* and *UC-90* were all different U-boats and there was another different *U-90* in the Second World War.

Wrongly identified vessels

The re-use/duplication of ship names is just one of the factors that contributes to the fact that vessel identities and histories can become confused and amalgamated in online sources and accounts. This can result in vessel images being attributed to the wrong ship and details of a vessel's career and fate being incorrectly reported. A critical eye and healthy degree of scepticism is advised!