

## Book Reviews

**Quintin Barry. *From Ushant To Gibraltar: The Channel Fleet 1778-1783*. Warwick, UK: Helion & Company, Ltd., [www.helion.co.uk](http://www.helion.co.uk), 2022. 364 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, paper; ISBN: 978-1-915070-39-5. (E-book available.)**

*From Ushant To Gibraltar* is a study of the men and actions of the Channel Fleet from 1778-1783. There are two reasons why readers of this journal would be interested in this book. The primary one is for its study of the Royal Navy during those six key years. A secondary reason is to better appreciate the American Revolution in its global context.

Chapter One is a brief biography of John Montagu, First Earl of Sandwich, a British politician who served in a number of cabinet positions, specifically as First Lord of the Admiralty on three occasions, most significantly in Lord North's Ministry. In that position, Montagu was a leader in the effort to rebuild a neglected naval force to both defend Britain and to project its power overseas. He will continue to appear throughout the book. The next chapter presents the civilians and officers who led the Navy and Chapter Three, the admirals who commanded. After that, is the tale of Charles Middleton, who, seasoned by sea service, assumed the position of Comptroller where he achieved the technological advance of coppering hulls. Chapter Five details the state of tactics and signaling in 1778. In Chapter Six, the focus changes to an examination of the French Navy, followed by a similar treatment of the Royal Navy from 1763-1778. Chapter Eight addresses Britain's war strategy of Britain, and the final chapter, that of France.

Having set the scene by describing the forces and introducing the principal characters, the text proceeds into sailings and actions in European, West Indian, and American waters. The first major engagement chronicled is the Battle of Ushant of July 1778, named for the island off Brest, France. Both fleets suffered extensive physical damage which set off a series of analyses,

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recriminations, and British courts martial.

A Franco-Spanish coalition devised plans for a Combined Fleet. The threat of a 1779 invasion of the British Isles put pressure on the Royal Navy as Britain's primary defense. Pressure eased as dissention and illness wracked the Combined Fleet, but battles still loomed. The Spanish Fleet was defeated in the Moonlight Battle off Cape St. Vincent on 16 December 1779.

With the threat of invasion averted, Captain of the Fleet, Rear Admiral Richard Kempenfelt, turned to much needed reforms of signaling, coppers of the fleet and organizational authority. Other challenges arose as Gibraltar needed relief and the Netherlands' declaration of war against Britain set off a war in the North Sea that proved disastrous to the Dutch economy. The narrative continues with the fall of Lord North's ministry in the wake of disappointing news from America in 1782 and concludes with an account of Admiral Viscount Howe's command of the Channel Fleet through the indecisive engagement off Cape Spartel after which Howe returned to political life on his way to becoming First Lord of the Admiralty.

Author Quintin Barry has drafted a intensely researched account, supplemented by portraits and sketches of prominent figures and tables documenting the British and French Fleets at the Battle of Ushant. The bibliography provides a guide to further reading. There is both a general index and an index of ships. Barry's experience as a retired solicitor is reflected in his account of the courts martial, as it was in *Disputed Victory*, which I also reviewed for *Northern Mariner*.

I recommend *From Ushant To Gibraltar* to readers with a deep interest in the late- eighteenth-century Royal Navy and its connection to the politics of the era. You will love the detail of cruises, actions, technological advances, officers, and enemies. With my American orientation, I have heard and read that the American Revolution was a relatively small part of a world-wide war, but this tome supports that general statement with eye-opening facts. I gained a deeper appreciation of the motives of America's French, Spanish and Dutch allies. Patient readers can derive similar benefit.

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**Malcolm Batten.** *Shipping on the Thames and the Port of London during the 1940s to 1980s, a Pictorial History.* Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword Transport, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2022. 232 pp. illustrations, maps, bibliography. UK £30.00, CDN \$46.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39901-840-1. (E-book available.)

This book is a photographic record and history of the vessels that worked in and visited the River Thames during the fifty-year period making up the great transition in ships and handling. It “aims to capture some of the variety of shipping on the Thames during this period when the old pattern of ships and ship-handling gave way to the systems more familiar today” (8). The photographs also depict and the text describes the evolving infrastructure of the port of London throughout the period.

Along with a brief history of shipping on the Thames, the introduction gives the story of Reg Batten, the passionate photographer who, over a half century, took the photographs making up this work. Malcolm Batten, his son, gives details of the vessels pictured and a concise and informative account of the history of the place: the river and the docks operated by the Port of London Authority.

The photographs are high definition, black-and-white views of the vessels, docks, buildings, and handling machinery that make up the maritime life of a great trading city.

The composition of Batten’s photographs is amazingly consistent over the years. Most are half-page and a few, full-page. They impart a huge amount of information about the vessels, their crews, the docks, and communities beyond. Information for vessels photographed includes owner (shipping line); builder; current name; gross registered tonnage; date built; previous names; and date of the photograph. Some are dramatic and at least one inspired, like the Thames barge moored sitting perfectly upright on the tidal mud in the River Colne outside a flour mill (56).

Following the introduction, there are large-scale historical maps and photographs of the docks, warehouses, materials-handling, and transportation infrastructure that comprised the Port of London: The Pool of London, West India Docks, East India Docks, the Royal Docks, Tilbury, and riverside docks and moorings, as at Woolwich and Deptford. There is detailed information on the evolution of cranes and hydraulic systems powering them from the state of the art in the nineteenth century to the beginnings of containerization.

The chapters are arranged according to the types of vessels and conform to their importance in the port’s history: cargo, service, and passenger shipping. Cargo was the first function of the maritime hub of the Empire. The section entitled “Cargo Shipping” opens with the development of the distinctive Thames barge, a ubiquitous form that followed the function of operating in the shallow water, tidal rivers, and mudflats of the Thames and East Anglia. The barge was the common denominator of vessels able to carry loads of flour, hay, or gravel from a farmer’s field into the heart of the city. Larger, motorized cargo vessels include large freighters with derricks and cranes, bulk carriers, roll on-roll off and small craft, like lighterage tugs, and specialized craft, like

coastal and up-river tankers. There is a section on lighters and their launch tugs; there having been 7000 and 350 respectively to distribute sixty percent of the cargo passing through the city. Along with the large, ocean-going vessels are the host of medium and small freighters and coasters needed to collect and distribute cargo to subsidiary ports across Europe and the Mediterranean. Transportation of energy resources is a major theme with the evolution from coal to oil in the vessels and the pumping systems for locks, bridges, and cranes that use the hydraulic systems in the port and from coal to natural gas in powering the city and the country. The section "Service Vessels" presents ship-handling and ocean-going tugs; dredgers; Trinity House vessels; recovery vessels; and floating cranes. "Passenger Shipping" includes passenger liners and later, cruise ships, as well as ferries and pleasure craft. Batten takes a long, wistful look at ferries, the only type of vessel featuring a description of their service at war. "Heritage Shipping" begins with the modern career of the Thames barge as an icon of maritime life on the south coast of the UK to which four full-page photographs are devoted. In the final chapter, "Postscript Rundown and Renaissance," the author ties the past into the redevelopment of the docks in the present day in text and photographs.

The text is concise and highly readable. What emerges goes far beyond the stated objective to be a detailed geography and history of the movement of goods and people in the marine transportation system: importing energy resources like coal and oil, bulk cargoes like sugar, wine and other foods; cement and building materials. Other vessels and parts of the system export waste: garbage and sewage sludge. One small quibble occurs on page 153 where a couple of vessels are supposed to be Flower-class corvettes. Although a lot of corvettes did go into civilian service, these do not look quite right. Batten's book portrays a gigantic marine transportation system evolving through time. The Thames estuary takes in most of the south-east, including Wivenhoe and Colchester. The map section could use a key map of the whole estuary with the detailed maps as insets and more detailed bibliographic information on the maps would have also been helpful.

The physical production is superior. Acid-free paper contributes to the crispness of the images to produce something like a coffee table book. At \$46 Canadian, this book is great value for money. Libraries dedicated to economics and marine subjects should acquire it. Students of materials-handling, transportation and large-scale energy systems will gain an historical perspective.

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**Erika Behrisch. *Discovery, Innovation, and the Victorian Admiralty: Paper Navigators*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, [www.palgrave.com](http://www.palgrave.com), 2022. xii+224 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US \$119.99, hardback; ISBN 978-3-031-06748-8. (E-book available.)**

Thanks to the prolific pens of disgruntled inventors, the Victorian-era British Admiralty has long suffered from a reputation of indifference, if not outright hostility, towards scientific exploration and technological innovation. In recent years, scholars such as Jane Camerini and Randolph Cock have pushed back against this image by citing examples of the Royal Navy's participation in scientific investigation during this period as proof of their engagement with the process of intellectual discovery. Yet Simon Naylor and others have cited other evidence pointing to a more ambivalent attitude than the redeemers of the Admiralty's degree of scientific investigation like to claim. So which interpretation is correct?

The answer that Erika Behrisch offers in this book is that both are valid. To resolve this seeming contradiction, she outlines the Admiralty Board's engagement with science during the middle of the nineteenth century by focusing on their interactions with three particular groups engaged in scientific discovery and technological development: Royal Navy employees undertaking scientific study as part of their duties, external scientific societies who worked with the Admiralty to collect data, and individuals in the private sector who proposed innovations and who sought remuneration for them. This she does by drawing upon Admiralty records, as well as other archival collections, to better discern the Board's perspective. What Behrisch finds amidst their assessments, debates, and judgments is a body that worked responsively to address innovation and to incorporate it into their operations. It was forced to do so, however, within the constraints of collaborative decision making and with typically conflicting mandates to serve as responsible dispensers of the public purse. What resulted may not have satisfied disappointed applicants, but as she demonstrates, it reflected the contrasting demands placed on the Royal Navy to explore and innovate within the confines of their other missions.

Nowhere does Behrisch make this conflict more apparent than in her examination of the famous Niger Expedition of 1841. What was proposed as a high-minded effort at humanitarian engagement, designed to establish treaties and promote Christianity among the peoples of West Africa, soon had directives for scientific exploration grafted onto it by various scientific societies. The requests to collect botanical samples, survey the river, and take magnetic measurements all came in addition to their existing duties on the expedition, yet without a commensurate increase in the size of the party or in their pay. While the crew were expected to undertake this extra work and the

risks involved out of their sense of duty, the expedition's commander, Harry Trotter, succeeded in negotiating pay raises at least for the officers involved in surveying, though his request for additional rations for the men was denied. As Behrisch demonstrates, the Admiralty was aware of the demands these duties posed and the conflicts that arose because of them but was constrained by the limited resources available to address them.

The scientific labours of the expedition were subsequently held up as the redeeming achievement in what proved to be otherwise, a disastrous mission. This reflected the growing popular appeal of scientific discovery, one that the Admiralty encouraged as the century wore on. Behrisch uses the 1849 publication of the *Manual of Scientific Enquiry* as an example of the importance the Royal Navy placed on scientific duties, though their achievements were narrowed by both the impulse to treat the data their crews collected as proprietary and the unwillingness to spend finite funds on purely scientific endeavors. Funding also proved a major limitation on their acknowledgement of the technological innovations with which the Admiralty were increasingly inundated. Here Behrisch argues that the Board took seriously all the inventions offered to them but were overwhelmed by the sheer number of proposals they received. A greater problem, however, was one of communication, as many engineers and other inventors took the dilatoriness of the investigations and the difficulty in obtaining adequate compensation as indifference or hostility towards innovation. This could not be further from the truth, although the Admiralty proved incapable of making this clear amid the onslaught of accusations leveled at them in the press and in Parliament.

Behrisch concludes her book by arguing that this "gross miscommunication" (195) is the story at the heart of it. This is perhaps too charitable a reading of the situation, given the ambitions, resentments, and jealousies that so often underlay the passions felt by many of those involved. Nevertheless, her conclusions are backed by a convincing amount of research and an incorporation of the latest scholarship on not just the Admiralty during this period, but of popular attitudes in Britain towards science more generally. This she employs effectively to make her case for the good intentions of the Admiralty Board and their underappreciated efforts to engage with science and technology in the mid-nineteenth century. From it emerges a tale of devoted officials doing their best to resolve the conflicting charges that they had been given. In its way, it is as inspiring an account as those of the more visible naval heroes of the era, as well as one of greater relevance to us today.

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**David K. Brown. *Atlantic Escorts: Ships, Weapons, and Tactics in World War II*. Barnsley, South Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, [www.seaforthpublishing.co.uk](http://www.seaforthpublishing.co.uk), 2022. 176 pp., illustrations, maps, glossary, appendices, notes, bibliography. UK £16.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-39902-004-6. (E-book available.)**

This work is a new paperback edition of Brown's 2007 study of the various escort vessels and their associated technologies fielded by the Allies during the Battle of the Atlantic. Primarily focused on the Royal Navy, with some relevant coverage of Canadian and American contributions, this analysis of frigates, corvettes, and destroyer escorts that thwarted the German submarine threat delves into an often-overshadowed facet of the Second World War's longest running engagement. Part chronology, part technical study, Brown examines the perpetual struggle of "quality versus quantity" as improvements in anti-submarine warfare faced off against the ever-present need for increased numbers of ships and crews to be placed in service (8). While some figures are rounded for simplicity's sake, Brown provides numerous comparative tables on a range of subjects to further supplement the text. Concluding chapters and appendices offer additional focused information on details such as weather conditions, ship construction methods, pressure hull strengths, and ASDIC set variants, with notes, a biography, and an index rounding out the work.

The majority of *Atlantic Escorts* is centered around a chronological retelling of the Battle of the Atlantic. The situation at the start of hostilities in September 1939 is laid out in a preliminary chapter on the interwar period, covering the extant models of warships and early adaptations of small ship ASDIC systems. The introduction of new ship designs and technologies is then woven into the narrative of the war itself, coupled with information from the German Kriegsmarine on relevant aspects of submarine design and their crews. The crucial decision of the Royal Navy to allow those suffering from burn-out to take shore positions and educating the next wave of crews versus the German philosophy of keeping a U-boat crew in action until they were lost is brought up early, highlighting one of the more human aspects of the battle (77). American contributions are largely addressed in terms of vessels supplied to the Royal Navy through early Lend-Lease actions and later purpose-built classes. These ships are presented in both their original configurations and as modified by the Royal Navy. More notable convoys which saw extensive defensive actions by escorts, such as ONS5, are covered in detail, and details like the Hedgehog forward-flung munition and camouflage measures are addressed throughout the text as well.

The final three chapters act as an overall conclusion, covering ship production, the technical aspects of fighting in the Atlantic, and Brown's overall evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-submarine vessels during the war. The

addressing of human factors within the technical aspects is appreciated, as it offers further insight into how the men assigned to often-cramped escort vessels viewed life aboard ships and the resulting improvements. This section also allows for a more direct comparison of the various ship classes on key points, such as production time, endurance, stability, and overall availability for operations. In his final remarks, Brown covers several studies that have argued over which of the various classes was the most efficient at their assigned escort roles, but holds to his own summary that the Flower-class was needed to achieve the high numbers required early in the war, with this giving the breathing room necessary to create more efficient and better armed escorts for the mid- to late-war conflict (158).

Among the few possible improvements, tighter editing would remove some of the unnecessary repetition, sometimes within just a few pages. Technological advancements addressed within the chronology also lead to some tangential diversions. This results in Brown covering the eventual culmination of some advancements before jumping back to the main narrative. This is more noticeable in the early war chapters when the technologies of ASDIC and shipborne radar were in their relative infancy. Finally, American naval escorts are given rather sparse coverage, often dealing with relevant shared technological upgrades or vessel classes designed and produced in American yards specifically for the Royal Navy. Given the fact that over 300 Evarts, Buckley, and Cannon destroyer escorts were completed with many seeing service in the Battle of the Atlantic, more in-depth study of the classes and a comparison of American versus Royal Navy crews would be useful. These points do not hamper the core data provided within the text, however, and given Brown's passing in 2008, any alterations would only make sense in the form of an edited compendium of several of his studies.

*Atlantic Escorts* provides a good overview of the often-overlooked small Allied escort vessels used in the Battle of the Atlantic. Brown offers a relatively concise examination of the various classes of ship, their evolving anti-submarine arsenal of detection technologies and offensive weapons, and a chorological summary of escorts from their initial interwar existence to the secession of hostilities in 1945. Such a focused study offers another insight into the protection of transatlantic convoys during the Second World War and serves as a useful resource for those studying escort ships, early sonar and radar technology, and the implementation of large-scale anti-submarine efforts under wartime conditions.

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**Jo Byrne. *Beyond Trawlertown: Memory, Life and Legacy in the Wake of the Cod Wars*. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, [www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk](http://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk), 2022. ix+248 pp., illustrations, maps, glossary, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. UK £90.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-80085-655-4.**

In preparing to read this engaging book, one might order a serving of fish and chips wrapped in newspaper, sprinkled with malt vinegar and perhaps, a pint of British ale, while wearing a black mourning armband. *Beyond Trawlertown* (the city of Hull, UK) principally centres on the years after 1976, the end of the last Cod War, but casts a much broader timeline. The early chapters offer a glimpse of the fishing industry in the 1950s and 60s that provides a baseline for understanding the subsequent changes. The emergence of the freezer fleet in the late 1960s technologically disrupted established patterns in the trawling industry portending the crisis to come. It became a fleet with dual personalities and two cultural rhythms nodding to the past as it reconfigured for the future contraction and decline of the industry and the town immediately after the Cod Wars era.

*Beyond Trawlertown* broadly focuses on an unforgiving, dangerous occupation, a seacoast town, technological advances in an industry, and the effect on men from several nations who competed for a rapidly dwindling resource. Of the twentieth century wars, the so-called Cod Wars may have had the lowest world profile, while portending the future without the shedding of blood. (There was only one confirmed fatality during the conflict: an Icelandic engineer accidentally killed while he was repairing damage to his Icelandic Coast Guard boat after a collision with a British naval frigate.)

Jo Byrne's work is a multifaceted textbook of the history and politics of the UK fishing industry, a philosophical essay, and a warning to other prominent fishing ports around the world.

Trawler fishing as first described was a labour-intensive occupation. In this enterprise, a cone shaped net is towed across the bottom of the seabed channeling fish into its point or cone. The trawl-net, usually full of catch, is then lifted onboard. The working vessels had relatively small crews that voyaged for a 21-day trip, usually to the northeastern Atlantic. This routine produced a local work-life-rhythm shaped by life at sea, but by also the surrounding district that supported the fishermen and their families. The homelife of the trawlermen was compressed into three days of both relative frenzy and celebration before the fishermen resumed what seemed like their perpetual hunt for cod. In time, the fish became depleted on the nearby grounds and it became necessary to go a great deal further afield to get an adequate catch. Larger boats and, consequently, larger crews were needed to get to where the

fish were and then to process them at sea rather than land a “wet iced catch.” This led to much larger vessels known as freezer trawlers with crews that could process and freeze the catch into solid blocks. It meant that the men, and now a growing number of women, were away from shore for three or more months. In fact, rather than returning to port, the freezer trawlers offloaded some of their frozen catch onto smaller boats that could quickly take them to shore, thus allowing the mothership to continue to scour the ocean’s bottom for increasingly scarce pelagic fish.

Overfishing was a result of heavy trawling, a fishing method that consequentially decimated potential breeding stock. Politicians, policymakers, scientists, and fishing communities struggled in a seemingly irresolvable dispute over the bounty of the sea. A heated discourse among diverse international social, economic, and environmental interests sought to both secure and preserve the industry and food source in the post-Second World War North Atlantic. Environmentalists became increasingly persistent, calling for changing territorial waters expressed in vital language that could no longer be ignored.

As the northeastern European fishermen competed to harvest the same bounty upon the same grounds, national territorial claims of coastal waters became hotly disputed. In 1952, the three-mile territorial limit became four miles. Iceland insisted upon a twelve-mile limit in 1956 as British trawlers increasingly encroached upon their waters. When “diplomatic, negotiations faltered, the British trawler fleet continued to fish in the disputed waters in ‘boxes’, protected from the Icelandic Coast Guard by the Royal Navy. Once under way, the first Cod War was [largely] a war of harassment, rammings and collisions between gun boats and trawlers” (61). The 1976 Oslo Agreement established a 200-mile limit that is the present law foreshadowing the demise of trawltown’s livelihood and ultimate character.

Byrne coined a portmanteau word “taskscape” that related supporting businesses to the demise of the fishing industry. These were the “bobbbers “or “lumpers” who unloaded the catch, the fish cutters and packers, the net menders, the shipyard workers, the fuelers, the local publicans, and even the pawnbrokers. The nature of an entire town and its support system changed at many levels.

Hull’s seaport had housed of a complex industry but the desire for remembrance was firmly rooted. The merger of place and memory of its society is fundamental to the recollection of events, and encounters are largely inseparable from the place in which they occurred. As humans, we possess quasi-memory banks that recall landscapes or townscapes, evocative terrain that connect with the past. The demise of the fishing town was one of disrupted belonging, feelings of disinheritance, community dissonance, and

action against perceived acts of forgetting. Ultimately, it started a voyage of reclaiming its identity and underwent a fundamental revision.

Much of the remainder of the book focuses on the disintegration and transformation of both the place and the industry that had inhabited the landscape: a narrative channeled through the experience of a single trawler port, compiled from individual and collective memory, framed by documentary research, and expressed through the understanding of an historian. Byrne's vision of its past and its evolution as part museum-part working seaport represents Hull's new beginning.

*Beyond Trawlertown* is a thought-provoking book in which Jo Byrne provides his readers with an abundance of 860 scholarly footnotes within a relatively slim volume. As a native of Gloucester, Massachusetts, this reviewer personally related to the story, but this theme has similarly played out in other fishing towns in North America such as St. John's, Lunenburg, New Bedford, and Monterey. This is a unique, well-written contribution to maritime literature and highly recommended to anyone interested in this important, still evolving topic.

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**Neil P. Chatelain. *Defending the Arteries of Rebellion. Confederate Naval Operations in the Mississippi River Valley, 1861-1865.* El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, [www.savasbeatie.com](http://www.savasbeatie.com), 2022. 336 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. US \$24.95, paper: ISBN 978-1-61121-603-5. (E-book available.)**

Both sides of the Civil War recognized early on that control of the Southern waterways was essential. Loss of these routes in the Mississippi River Valley would efficiently bisect the rebel states and severely restrict Confederate movement of men, equipment, and supplies. Accounts of Union strategy and its action to strangle and dominate these lifelines are abundant, while analyses of goals, means, and activities from the Southern perspective are relatively scarce. Chatelain tackles this underrepresented topic by examining several Confederate naval activities on the Mississippi River and some of its associated tributaries.

In response to the Union's blockading action, a major objective of the South was to build a countering naval force. The Confederacy's plan, broadly speaking, was to make use of a relatively smaller number of ironclads to counter the larger number of wooden ships that the Union had at its disposal. The South's need to create a scratch-built navy was immediately confronted by

a hard truth: facilities, raw material, and expertise necessary to design, build, and outfit blue or brown water vessels were sorely lacking in the Southern states. To this typical list of woes the author adds the impact of time, or more accurately put, the effects that a scarcity of time would have on already strained supply, communication, and manufacturing systems. Early Union victories along the Mississippi resulted in the loss of several of the existing wooden vessels initially scrounged by the Southerners for refit and ultimately doomed their hopes of constructing an ironclad fleet that could bolster the offensive capabilities of an otherwise mostly defensive strategy.

Following the front matter, which includes a list of abbreviations used in the book and a glossary of terms, *Defending the Arteries of Rebellion* opens with a short introduction presenting the Union's Anaconda Plan and its blockading actions as the catalyst for the Confederacy's defensive focus in the river valley, a review of previous writings on Civil War naval events in the Mississippi River Valley, and a synopsis of the current work's content. After stating that his book examines "Lincoln's strategic aim to control the Mississippi River and Confederate defensive measures to thwart the Federal goal" (2), Chatelain traces early Confederate plans and efforts to acquire or modify suitable vessels, followed by a series of chapters, presented in generally chronological order, that details specific naval battles and campaigns along the Mississippi and its tributaries. The book closes with a chapter discussing Confederate riverine strategy and the South's challenges and resulting innovations during wartime. Finally, the author offers a very brief assessment of Confederate successes and failures. He gives due credit to Confederate use of innovative technology such as armoured rams, rifled guns, and torpedoes, and accurately points out that Southern riverine actions should not be viewed as simply defensive in nature. An extensive bibliography provides primary and secondary sources, including government documents, books, contemporary manuscripts, newspaper accounts, and articles is also provided.

Chatelain has clearly done his research. He offers a wealth of detail on both Confederate and Union vessels, their construction or refit, equipment, armament, crew size, commanders, and ultimate fate of the ships, riverboats, and ironclads whether it be capture, scuttle, burning, or abandonment. He weaves together newspaper accounts, journals, and reports to accurately reconstruct vessel manoeuvres during battle and to provide insight as to the likely thoughts and motivations of the crew and commanding officers engaged in the various conflicts. Almost certainly by design, maps, images, and photographs are included within the text precisely where most beneficial for the reader to visualize the location of an event or characteristics of personnel, watercraft, or weapons. Taken individually, the descriptions of the wooden ships, ironclads, steamboats, and other vessels involved, and the battles they

fought, provide highly detailed points of reference to students or scholars who are interested in riverine actions in the Civil War's Trans-Mississippi theatre. In this instance, however, this extensive research comes at a price.

Two issues become apparent early on in *Defending the Arteries of Rebellion*. One gets the impression that the author, having collected and analyzed this quantity of excellent research felt like something had to be done with it all. First-hand accounts in the form of brief quotes are included on almost every page, in ways that sometimes add colour to the story or help in understanding the character or mindset of the principals involved, but more often do little to enhance the description or narrative. Elsewhere, marginally related or almost wholly unrelated details are inserted into otherwise well-written accounts. These inclusions sometimes affect the readability of the work. Additionally, there are times when Chatelain seems to have lost track of which pieces of source material he has already used: facts or details are sometimes introduced and then repeated, at times more than once, a few pages later or in a following chapter as if they were being presented for the first time. This fault may lie in the editing, rather than the writing, although the writing style is somewhat uneven. The description of the Battle of the Head of Passes provides a very good account of the flow of battle and description of the effect of the turtleback CSS *Manassas*' ramming the USS *Richmond* and its aftermath, but other battles are harder to follow. Occasionally awkward sentence structure would have also been resolved by more robust editing. Overall, and with some exceptions, the writing style is appropriate to the work but not particularly engaging. A complaint noted on an earlier publication of this book was that the index was off by several pages. This problem has been resolved.

This book provides the reader with quite a bit of information on what happened during different regional engagements, but does little to fit these activities within the greater context of the goals, strategy or overall military theatre from either the Confederate or the Union perspective. For the Confederacy's part, their need to protect and defend their sprawling riverine supply lines was approached the same way that they attempted to protect their coastline – with a string of forts placed at strategic locations supported by mobile watercraft. By necessity, and as intimated in the book's title, the focus along the Mississippi River Valley ultimately was, and indeed had to be, defensive in nature. It would have been useful to incorporate how these decisions and battles were in response to, or a result of, the Union's goal of simultaneously starving and slicing in two the rebel forces and the Confederate's strengths and weaknesses to counter these aggressions while attempting to maintain their riverine lifelines. Taken separately, the chapters come across as individual vignettes, interesting and rich in detail but almost peripheral to understanding cause and effect.

One final problem with *Defending the Arteries of Rebellion* is the inclusion of time as a deficient Confederate resource. The South's lack of time to develop their navy was a direct result of Union advances and military success at key Confederate points, such as New Orleans, Vicksburg, Memphis, and Forts Henry and Donelson, among others, all directly or indirectly targeted as part of the Anaconda Plan, a point that is brought up in the introduction but never properly explored. Unlike the more commonly cited deficiencies that challenged the Confederates (material and factories for iron manufacture, shipbuilding facilities and expertise, and the like) a lack of time was not endemic to the South's wartime condition, but the result of Union advances and success. If Chatelain had supported his assertion that time should be seen as a resource on par with material, infrastructure, and skill, he might have provided an interesting counterpoint to the standard argument, but his analysis offers no insight into what might have been done to gain time or what benefit more time would have provided to the fledgling republic.

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**Michael John Claringbould. *Pacific Profiles Volume Eight: IJN Floatplanes in the South Pacific 1942-1944*. Kent Town, S. Aus.: Avonmore Books, [www.avonmorebooks.com.au](http://www.avonmorebooks.com.au), 2022. 124 pp., illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. US \$42.95, paper; ISBN 978-0-6452269-4-0.**

This is the eighth volume of author Michael John Claringbould's study into the patterns and markings of the aircraft deployed by Japanese and Allied forces in the Pacific Theatre of the Second World War, specifically covering the floatplanes deployed as part of the Imperial Japanese Navy's operations in the South Seas from January 1942 through December 1944. This includes both the planes of the R-Area (denoting Rabaul) command as well as airframes attached to warships operating in the South Seas area. Following a term glossary, an introductory background on prewar floatplanes, and a summation of the overall Japanese command structure, Claringbould then examines the theatre's twelve main air units, miscellaneous units and surrendered airframes, and the aforementioned shipborne aircraft. The text then concludes with a listing of sources and an index of pilot names mentioned in the text.

The introduction and initial two chapters act as a general background for Japanese floatplane development and the Japanese command structure. Maps, R-Area force breakdowns, timelines, and a glossary of Japanese term enhance the text, in addition to period images and several profile renderings of pre-war floatplane types. The command directives regarding floatplane markings

are covered in this section as well, with the later chapters detailing how overlapping timetables and transfers of command could cause unit airframes to maintain earlier elements of markings or camouflage, or even characteristics of previous service under different commands such as to the Home Islands. The second chapter also serves as an overall chronology of the various units, detailing their locations within the context of the overall command and the progression of the war.

The core of the work are chapters three through seventeen, in which the 12 primary air units, miscellaneous units, surface fleet floatplanes, and submarine airframes are individually covered. Each chapter begins with a computer rendering of one of the unit's aircraft in action followed by a unit history, often containing aircrew lists and notable engagements. This is followed by a text section on the unit's marking patterns for their assigned airframes. Period images are supplied alongside the text, with the associated captions noting which aircraft pictured have received a profile rendering. These renderings are presented at full-page width, with their related captions listing model, tail number location, the pilot (if known), and timeframe. The length of description varies depending on available airframe information, with more unique aircraft such as LTJG Keizou's A6M2-N with its three confirmed kills or the floatplanes assigned to battleships and minelayers whose service histories are partially covered in the caption as well (83, 107). The section on submarine floatplanes is especially interesting and the tabulation of known submarine aircraft missions is greatly appreciated (199).

Though it admittedly does not fit with the established pattern of the author's Pacific Profiles series, it might be beneficial to include general top and bottom views for the different types of aircraft discussed, so as to show the wing markings, paint schemes, and visibility of float or fuselage markings from those angles. Given that some of the chapters have pilot rosters, either as final disposition lists or transfer contingents, this information could have been consolidated into an appendix of pilots, listing their unit, airframes, key service dates, and final fates. This would allow for quicker comparison of unit manpower levels and attritional rate comparisons. A close-up rendering of the aircraft identification stencils on the fuselages' port sides might also be helpful to show how information varied between airframe types. Finally, given the fact that many of the photographs of airframes show significant wear and damage, especially after being abandoned, it might be worth noting the building materials used, as cloth-covered control surfaces would fade, discolour, and decay at a different rate than metallic paneling. These are relatively minor suggestions, however, and would only serve as a means of enhancing future editions.

*IJN Floatplanes in the South Pacific* is an excellent resource guide for

those interested in this often-overlooked aspect of combat in the Second World War. Claringbould does an excellent job summarizing unit histories and documenting the human elements behind the rendered aircraft and their markings. For those interested in the logistics of Japanese seaplane deployments, aircraft markings, and the units involved in this theatre, this is definitely a solid and succinct reference. The recounting of several engagements between Japanese and Allied forces also makes this a good source for those studying the American and British advance into the South Pacific as well, allowing for better understanding of the opposing forces, their makeup, and losses from 1942 to 1944.

Charles Ross Patterson II  
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**Peter R. Dawes. *Expedition Relics from High Arctic Greenland—Eight decades of exploration history told through 102 objects*. Charlottenlund, DK: Museum Tusulanum Press, [www.mtp.dk](http://www.mtp.dk), 2022. 509 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, indices. DKK 475.00, US \$75.00, hardback; ISBN 987-87-635-4686-7.**

High Arctic Greenland has been the scene of numerous Arctic expeditions from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Whether it was explorers like Henry Grinnell tracing the fate of the lost Franklin expedition, or Robert Peary trying to reach new farthest Norths (and ultimately the Pole), the expeditions covered parts of Greenland previously unexplored and accumulated substantial knowledge about northwest Greenland. They also left behind intentional or unintentional material traces and relics.

With his new book, Peter Dawes not only provides a comprehensive overview of these expeditions to Greenland, but does so in a unique and novel way that successfully bridges traditional exploration history and high Arctic archaeology. Instead of just providing a historic account of the expeditions or simply delivering a catalogue of artifacts, Dawes uses 102 specific objects to tell the stories of the individual expeditions and the larger history of the exploration of High Arctic Greenland.

Divided into four main chapters, the book begins with a solid introductory chapter that discusses the aims of the book as well as providing some most useful comments and reflections on topics like the “collection instinct” or the distinction between simply labelling an artifact versus basing historical research on it. The next chapter deals with prehistoric and historic sites and discusses a wide variety of issues related to their artifacts. This presents the non-specialist on Arctic archaeology with basic background information on



relevant types of artifacts, such as cairns, memorial headboards, and rock engravings as well as relevant discussions related to these artifacts like the controversy on military installations and historic burial sites or specifics on conservation of different materials.

The third chapter is devoted to the selected artifact collection, using it to tell the stories of 18 expeditions carried out between 1853 and 1935. Since all of these expeditions are well known to any specialist on Arctic history, it is not the expedition history that makes the book a unique and a relevant contribution, but the way this history is told. Using at least one artifact to tell the story of each expedition helps the reader visualize the respective historic events. Furthermore, it reminds the historian that a tangible, three-dimensional object is an equally important research resource category for Arctic history in addition to archival material, printed reports, or other traditional sources of historical research. Given the fact that traditional documentary materials for these expeditions have mainly been generated by the expedition leaders, they tend to present a somewhat single-sided narrative. Illustrating the expeditions' histories via selected artifacts becomes an even more important concept, since objects, especially those not necessarily related to the expedition leaders, can often tell the story from another angle.

Altogether, the 102 artifacts provide an impressive story of the exploration of High Arctic Greenland that reaches far beyond any history that is based only on traditional archival sources. The fourth and final chapter is titled "A tribute to the Inuit and their dog sledges." While this chapter might initially seem outside the parameters of the book, further reading makes it extremely relevant. Discussion of how the expeditions depended on Greenlandic resources, especially the Greenlanders themselves and their dogs, this chapter marks an important attempt to decolonialize the history of High Arctic exploration. Calling it a counternarrative to the traditional Euro-American-centred history of the discovery of High Arctic Greenland may be too far-fetched, but it definitely incorporates Greenlanders themselves into the story and puts them firmly into the picture.

Anyone familiar with Arctic Greenland would already know that the exploration of this part of the globe was always dependent on the knowledge and skills of the Greenlanders. By devoting an entire chapter of his book to this topic, Dawes makes it known to the vast majority of historians who never had the opportunity to experience High Arctic Greenland themselves.

The eighteen expeditions detailed in the book were not only polar expeditions, but also expeditions requiring the use of watercraft, clearly making Dawes' book relevant to historians interested in maritime operations in the High Arctic. More important, however, is the way Dawes moves beyond the standard Euro-American-centric aspects of Arctic expedition history to

involve the inhabitants of the High Arctic themselves.

It is obvious that this book is more than the result of a lifelong academic career devoted to the High North. It is a work written by a colleague with a deep understanding of Arctic Greenland, its exploration, and its people. I can fully commend it to any (maritime or Arctic) historian with an interest in the polar regions of the globe, but I also recommend it to any reader without deeper knowledge who is interested in the history of the exploration of the high North. It will present a picture that places Greenlanders in the middle of their own history and illustrate that all kinds of artifacts are equally important as sources for historical research as archival materials.

Finally, the publisher, Museum Tusulanum Press, needs to be commended for having produced a book of outstanding quality. Print, paper, design, typography, and selection of illustrations make the book a feast for everybody with the slightest bibliophilic tendencies. A recommended retail price of US \$75.00 might appear high, but as the book is 500 pages in large format with 325 colour plates, it is certainly good value for the money. In the interest of full disclosure, this reviewer is not only a maritime historian specializing in the polar regions, but has also worked as a museum curator for many years. This might possibly bias me toward valuing any historical research that is based on artifacts in addition to archival materials. Given this background, I would like to state that Dawes' new book was one of the most pleasant surprises within the last few years.

Ingo Heidbrink  
Norfolk, Virginia

**Veronica della Dora. *Where Light in Darkness Lies. The Story of the Lighthouse*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, Reaktion Books, [www.uchicago.edu](http://www.uchicago.edu), 2022. 280 pp., illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography. US \$31.50, cloth; ISBN 978-1-78914-549-6. (E-book available.)**

From their beginnings in the coastal Christian chapels and temples of the Mediterranean to the modern electrified beacons of the United States, Veronica della Dora presents an interesting cultural history of lighthouses. Her interest in on how people historically have imagined and perceived lighthouses, rather than on technological improvements is a welcome diversion from traditional lighthouse histories. This approach, by the author's own admission, is "not a history of lighthouses" (34). Because the subtitle, *The Story of the Lighthouse*, implies a standard

history of lighthouses, some readers expecting a narrative history might be disappointed, but this book is well worth reading. There is much to be gained from the author's cultural focus on the human imagination and perception of lighthouses, including even a bit of history.

Della Dora divides her study by topic into light, darkness, power, sound, and memory. It is through these concepts that the author expertly explores the cultural significance of lighthouses, including their relationship with religion, their role in literature, their status as symbols of empire, their use in establishing radio communications, and their place in our historical memory. For instance, in the second chapter on darkness, della Dora relates the lighthouse to Herman Melville's description of the water's edge in *Moby Dick* (66-7) and places the lighthouse within the romanticism of William Wordsworth's poetry (82-3). These examples aptly support her argument that the lighthouse holds a special place in our imagination. Later in the chapter on power, della Dora discusses the recent lighthouse-building frenzy in the South China Sea as an example of Asian nations seeking to expand their empires. Under the United Nations Law of the Sea, a nation's coastal maritime zone is not extended by low-tide elevations, "unless lighthouses or similar installations which are permanently above sea level have been built on them" (127-8). The international Law of the Sea is important because it sets boundaries on where a nation can extract natural resources. Della Dora shows how lighthouses not only mark the boundaries of nations, but how they also become political participants in the expansion of empires and the competition for natural resources. Building lighthouses on low-tide elevations extends a nation's coastal maritime zone, allowing that nation to stake claim to the natural resources within those extended boundaries.

*Where Light in Darkness Lies* is well-sourced, drawing on cultural references that include Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Jean Guichard's famous photograph of the La Jument lighthouse during a storm, movie posters, postcards, oil paintings, and popular lighthouse narratives amongst others. These sources not only demonstrate the breadth of della Dora's research, but they also help the author reach the broadest possible audience. There is something in *Where Light in Darkness Lies* for anyone with even a minute interest in lighthouses.

Despite the well-deserved accolades, *Where Light in Darkness Lies* does fall short occasionally. One such place is the fourth chapter on sound. Della Dora does a good job discussing fog bells, canons, fog horns, and radio communications found at lighthouses, but the discussion focuses exclusively on those technologies without relating them back to the lighthouse, thus relegating the structure to a very secondary role. In order to support the argument of our imagination and perception of lighthouses, the chapter needed

to make a stronger intellectual connection to the lighthouse beyond the fact that these technologies are simply located at the same site as the lighthouse.

*Where Light in the Darkness Lies* is an exceptionally clear, well-written, and beautifully illustrated work that deserves to be read from cover to cover. It adds significantly to our intellectual understanding of the history of lighthouses and their cultural impact. Lighthouse enthusiasts and maritime scholars alike will delight in the wealth of information packed into della Dora's narrative.

James Risk  
Columbia, South Carolina

**Stefan Dрамиński. *The Aircraft Carrier Hiryū: Anatomy of the Ship*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2022. 336 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. US \$60.00, CDN \$80.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-47284-026-4.**

This work is the seventh entry in Osprey's *Anatomy of the Ship* series, examining the Imperial Japanese Navy Aircraft Carrier *Hiryū*. Best known for her participation in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and subsequent loss following the Battle of Midway, author, and graphics artist Stefan Dрамиński has used his digital skills and techniques to produce incredibly detailed three-dimensional renderings of the warship to allow for a visual examination of the *Hiryū* at a level not possible since her loss eighty years ago. As Dрамиński's fifth entry in the *Anatomy of the Ship* series, this study follows his established pattern of brief textual information followed by general arrangements, sectionalized views, component renderings, and, as the vessel was an aircraft carrier, aircraft renderings as well. A biography is present at the end for further research.

The work is divided into two sections, text, and renderings. The text section is relatively short, consisting of twenty-eight pages of analytical data and a twelve-page chronological timeline of the *Hiryū*'s service history. The information provided in this section examines the *Hiryū*'s inception, her hull structure, armour protection, propulsion, aircraft, and armament. This is accompanied with several period photographs of both the *Hiryū* and other Imperial Japanese carriers along with tables covering principal characteristics, relevant specifications, and a hull-frame spacing guide, the latter of which ties in nicely with the renderings section. The chronology is well done, with entries of different lengths depending on the situation addressed. The attack on Pearl Harbor and the Battle of Midway both receive multiple entries broken down by time in addition to date, allowing for a more 'blow-by-blow' recounting of the carrier's greatest attack and final loss. Both the kanji and Romanized

Japanese names for ships, departments, and equipment are provided in both the text and drawings sections, along with the literal English translation. This is especially appreciated for ship names, as it is too often the case that Imperial Japanese Navy vessel names are not given their full due. Dрамиński also provides insight into the standard naming conventions followed by the Imperial Japanese, with the *Hiryū*'s English name *Flying Dragon* following the theme of "flying creatures" for purpose-built carriers (10).

Dрамиński's computer renderings naturally form the core of the work. These are divided into thirty-eight pages of primary views and 256 pages of detailed shots within nine subsections. The primary views offer several angles of the *Hiryū* as she appeared following her commissioning, laden with her aircraft on 7 December 1941, and in her final configuration for the Battle of Midway on 4 June 1942. This included outboard profiles, top-down, bow, stern, detail, and angled shots, giving one a good, overall impression of the ship's scale, configuration, camouflage, and, in the case of the Pearl Harbor renderings, flight deck aircraft capacity. These lead nicely into the chapter on general arrangements, which are in effect computer line drawings of some of the primary views with annotated scales. The hull and hangar structure then receive a sizable treatment, with general views, deck plans, and transverse sections fully rendered, with supporting line drawings which are labeled to highlight the purpose of the compartments and machinery. The transverse sections are especially impressive, as Dрамиński's slightly angled rendering of each ship frame shows the vessel as a "slice" with aircraft fully loaded in the hangar bays, displaying the cramped, confined nature of the design in a way that is not possible with words alone. The superstructure receives similar treatment, supplemented by a first-person view of the *Hiryū*'s bridge (215). Then the flight deck follows, with line drawings identifying the major components and detailed renderings showcasing features such as aircraft locking eye plates, windshields, and cranes. The final five sections cover the minutia of ship armament, optics, fittings, aircraft, and boats, rounding out the work's coverage of the *Hiryū*'s anatomy.

I can think of few possible improvements. Including a scale in the primary views section would be appreciated. This would help with the visual understanding of the drawings and also bring the depictions in line with the other sections that have listed scales or "rulers." A section noting the combat damage received at Midway would be appreciated as well, highlighting on drawings where impacts occurred to better illustrate the affected compartments of the ship. Finally, since the *Hiryū*'s wreck was located in 2019, it would be interesting to see side-by-side comparisons of the renderings and underwater remains to highlight the state of preservation and battle damage. These are, of course, minor suggestions to improve possible future editions of Dрамиński's

already impressive work.

*The Aircraft Carrier Hiryū* is an incredibly insightful examination of the often murky world of Imperial Japanese carrier designs. Damiński has done an excellent job at translating the surviving blueprints and documentation into uniquely detailed views of the vessel that provide a great deal of insight into her construction, arrangement, conditions, and design limitations. As such, this is an excellent supplementary work for those studying the history of the Japanese carrier forces, the attack on Pearl Harbor, or the Battle of Midway, and is an excellent tome for model builders and those interested in marine architecture of the mid-twentieth century.

Charles Ross Patterson II  
Yorktown, Virginia

**John Fairley. *The Royal Navy in Action. Art from Dreadnought to Vengeance*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2022. 160 pp, illustrations, appendices. UK £30.00, US \$60.00, hardback; ISBN 978-13990-094-92.**

This attractive book uses paintings and drawings to illustrate Royal Navy operations from early actions in the opening weeks of the Great War to strikes in 2021 by the new carrier, HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, against ISIS bases in Syria. The paintings – there are ninety-six of them in colour and eight line drawings – are drawn from museums and private collections. They are grouped thematically and described by John Fairley, a television producer and author who served in the RNVR in the late 1950s. A former journalist, his text is a very readable but eclectic, running dialogue peppered with interesting details. How many of us on this side of the Atlantic, for example, are aware that Prince Andrew (long before his reputation was ruined) piloted the first helicopter to arrive to rescue survivors from the requisitioned container ship *Atlantic Conveyor* off the Falklands in 1982? Another example is how Fairley describes how war artist, Norman Wilkinson, returning from a weekend's trout fishing in Devon in 1917, was suddenly inspired about how dazzle paint could confuse an attacking U-boat (29).

Good war art can convey the essence of a situation in a dramatic manner. The text quotes a Second World War artist who believed that five hundred years in the future war art would mean far more than contemporary records (ix). This collection includes several examples of striking paintings that communicate the core of a story. Outstanding cases in point are Richard Eurich's image of survivors from a torpedoed ship (91), Philip Connard's depiction of the control room of a First World War submarine during an attack (19), and Charles Pears'

two paintings of convoys to North Russia (83, 90) and the battleship *Howe* (138). There are several striking works by William Wyllie (1851-1931) who gained a tremendous reputation during his lifetime. These include arresting images of survivors and dead bodies floating in the flotsam left by the *Lusitania*, and lovely studies of the Grand Fleet at sea and the Battle of Jutland. A terrific painting by Stephen Bone offers a three-dimensional perspective looking up the conning tower of a submarine (103). While most of the paintings depict well-known events, Fairley included two evocative water colours by G.L. Parnell, of a British fleet created in the Caspian Sea in 1919 (62). Most of the pictures are of ships, but Anthony Gross' view of a board game in progress in the claustrophobic mess deck of a troop ship during the artist's long voyage around Africa gives a vivid sense of cramped living conditions (94).

The narrative does not describe every incident depicted; nor does it talk about every war artist. Two fine paintings of First World War convoys by Herbert John Everett (23, 30) convey a palpable sense of how ships out on the ocean move and look. The images are unexplained but, according to Wikipedia, the artist did spend time at sea as a merchant ship officer; perhaps this helps explain his extraordinary ability to put the viewer out on the water. Another unexplained artist is Yuunosuke Kojima, whose dramatic view of *Prince of Wales* under attack in 1941 appears on page 115. The text includes a discussion of the role of the Western Approaches Tactical Unit in Liverpool during the Second World War, and unexpectedly for a book about war art, an appendix reproduces a document about the Western Approaches Tactical Policy in April 1943. As for Canadian content, there is a painting by Simon Fisher of Lieutenant R.H. Gray's attack on a Japanese escort in 1945 (119), and one by Arthur Lismer showing the liner *Olympic* as a transport bringing troops home to Halifax after the Great War (27).

*The Royal Navy in Action* presents a compelling collection of marine art spanning the years 1914-2021. Some paintings by well-known British artists like Eurich, Wilkinson, and Wyllie have appeared in other books, but most are less well known and fresh. These dramatic and evocative depictions have been superbly chosen and attractively reproduced. They are supported by a running text describing actions by the Royal Navy over the last century.

Jan Drent

Victoria, British Columbia

**James Goulty. *Naval Eyewitnesses: The Experiences of War 1939-45*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Books Ltd., [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2022. xxii+208 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, US \$49.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39900-071-0. (E-book available.)**

Having already published books on the experiences of airmen and soldiers in the Second World War and Korean War, James Goulty continues to have a special interest in the training and combat experience of ordinary airmen, soldiers, and sailors. In his first chapter, sailors describe how life differed in battleships, cruisers, destroyers, minesweepers, coastal forces, all the way down to motor torpedo boats and even to landing craft. It really shows that sailors could find a style of life that fitted their personalities – from rigid top-down authority to being part of a team.

Next, the author chronicles the history of British naval aviation and aircraft carriers and the sailors' impressions of their aircraft. He explains why British aircraft were not as good as American planes. Training of pilots involved not only learning to fly, but also practicing take-offs from and landing onto a moving ship. Some operational experiences (e.g., torpedoing *Bismarck*, attacking the Italian navy at Taranto, and surviving Kamikaze attacks) are told by those involved. Life on board submarines, whether large or small, including the even smaller four-crew X-craft and chariots, and their exploits are described in chapter 3 along with anti-submarine warfare. The latter subject area continues into the next chapter which describes convoy experiences whether they were in North Atlantic, to Malta, or to Murmansk/Archangel. Particular mention is made of PQ-17.

All of chapter 5 is devoted to amphibious landings, from the learning experiences in 1940 at Dakar, to the small-scale raids by Combined Operations (including HMS *Campbelton*'s intentional destruction at St. Nazaire (March 1942), landings in North Africa (November 1942), Sicily (July 1943), Italy (September 1943), Normandy (June 1944) and even the raids along the coast of Burma (1945). How landing craft landed at beaches and then extracted themselves after unloading is well described.

To answer the question why choose the navy, a veteran of the First World War trenches advised his son about the various branches of the armed forces: "Air Force: what goes up must come down; Army: you're cannon fodder; Navy: three-square meals and a dry bed until the ship goes down" (163). In chapter 6, the author relates sailors' lives at sea, as well as the experiences of sailors and Wrens at shore establishments in terms of welfare, entertainment, rations, food, drink, love, romance, and sex. The author ends the chapter with a short section on the experiences of survivors of sinkings and of prisoners of war. The German name for prisoner of war camps for naval sailors was "Marlags" and for merchant mariner sailors was "Milags". Chapter 7 concludes the book with demobilisation and sailors' personal reflections on their wartime service.

What I liked about the book was the author's comprehensive appreciation of what it was to be a sailor in wartime. Lots of books describe naval actions, usually in terms of ships doing this or that, possibly featuring the captain or,



remotely, a heroic act. Goulty tells the story from the perspective of the ordinary sailor or officer who was there. Despite growing up with small boats and spending about a year's worth of sea-time on the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic Oceans, I still learned a lot about wartime life at sea. There is a comprehensive, six-page Timeline covering events from the 1921 Washington Naval Treaty to VJ Day which serves as a useful reference source for future reading.

The book is full of direct quotations from written material, but also from transcripts of oral recordings. The latter can be somewhat disjointed and could have been lightly edited. Thoughtfully, Goulty makes good use of explanations inside square brackets to define what is meant by words or phrases.

David H. Gray  
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**John D Grainger. *The British Navy in Eastern Waters. The Indian and Pacific Oceans*. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, [www.boydellandbrewer.com](http://www.boydellandbrewer.com), 2022. vii+319 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. UK £85.00, US \$99.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-78327-677-6. (E-book available).**

*The British Navy in Eastern Waters* summarizes the role that the Royal Navy played in both bodies of water from the age of sail through the end of the Second World War. Grainger opens his work with the birth of the East India Company and follows its evolution and influence in the Indian and Pacific Ocean region. In the process, he outlines the various conflicts that the Company and, later, the Royal Navy had with the various kingdoms that formed India, as well as foreign competitors, such as the Dutch and the French. Perhaps most enlightening is his exploration of the activities going on in these regions in the midst of larger conflicts. For example, the American Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars both had an effect on these far-flung regions, as well as affecting the conflicts on the European continent. Although Grainger touches on the American Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, he does not dwell on them. Rather, he focuses on the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the surrounding environments. He follows the emergence and rise of the East India Company, with an examination of its gradual evolution into the modern British Empire, away from a mercantile organization to one charged with maintaining and defending a global empire. Finally, he concludes with a brief examination of the role the Royal Navy played in this part of the world during the twentieth century.

The greatest strength of this particular work is the broad overview of the role the East India Company and Royal Navy played in shaping the region, and the impact those events had on the British Empire as a whole. In almost

300 pages, Grainger covers 350 years of interaction between the East India Company and the Royal Navy. While the story may be familiar to some, this work provides new students with a clear starting point and a summary of the events and forces that shaped this region. An ample bibliography and thorough references provide ample material for both newcomers and those more familiar with the subject, along with places to branch out from Grainger's text and explore individual aspects in greater detail. While useful, the general nature of this work also constitutes its weakness. Grainger covers so much ground that a reader never dwells for long in any one place or time period. His chapters average between fifteen and twenty pages and each one covers around twenty years, a compressed time frame that may disappoint those wanting more detail, because they will need to look elsewhere. Although Grainger addresses everything with broad strokes, he concentrates on the age of sail, thus, slightly shortchanging the impact events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had in shaping both the Indian and Pacific regions and the British Empire.

While it does not limit the content of the work, accessibility is another hurdle that may affect readers' ability to appreciate this work. The price of UK £85.00 and US \$99.00 hinders access by casual readers, especially students, perhaps encouraging cost-conscious readers to wait for a paperback or electronic edition. The lack of maps and photographs might also persuade readers to choose a digital version.

Grainger's latest book sheds light on British imperial influence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the role that these regions had in shaping the empire. It is particularly useful for new students who are looking for a place to start their exploration of this part of the world. While not covering any particular time period in great detail, the author does provide readers at all levels with a leaping-off point for their exploration of a fascinating subject.

Michael Razer,  
Ward, Arkansas

**Peter Hore. *Bletchley Park's Secret Source: Churchill's Wrens and the Y Service in World War II*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Greenhill Books, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2021. xiv+210 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, references, index. UK £13.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-78438-581-1. (E-book available.)**

Bletchley Park and its top-secret role in the decoding of the various German Enigma ciphers of the Second World War is probably familiar to many readers, if for no other reason than the greatly oversimplified movie of 2014 starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley, *The Imitation Game*. It is said

that at the peak of its activity, Bletchley received up to 3000 messages per day, and yet, as Peter Hore rightly points out, the source of all that message traffic has, for the most part, been ignored by historians. Redressing that neglect – all the more unjust, perhaps, in that the vast majority of those working in the role were members of the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRNS, the “Wrens”) – is the author’s explicitly stated goal in the writing of this book.

In fact, the Wrens working in Wireless Intercept (abbreviated WI, pronounced “wye”) were involved in many more activities than intercepting coded Morse messages intended for analysis at Bletchley Park. At the start of the war, many women who had studied, in one way or another, the German language, were hired to provide rapid written transcription of plain-language voice transmissions. Similarly, when Italy entered the conflict, those with knowledge of Italian were hurriedly recruited. As the war progressed, however, their duties as Wrens of the Y service grew to include, but were not limited to, oscillographic analysis of filmed Morse transmissions, radio direction-finding, and transcription of encoded Japanese Morse *kana*.

While the nineteen chapters of this work are arranged, for the most part, chronologically, the real narrative framework of the book relies on a small number of biographical studies examining Wrens in this line of work. The author’s reliance on this type of material proves to be both a strength and a weakness. Accounts based on the memories of the participants are veritable gold mines for such things as conditions of service, for example, and are justifiably the bread and butter of social historians. They can be quite dodgy, on the other hand, for such things as the concrete details of the workings of an institution as a whole. This, of course, is due to the limitations of the perspective of an individual participant, made all the more acute, in this case, by the rigorous stove-piping imposed on work of such secrecy. Hore employs a great many other sources as well, but these serve mainly to fit the recollections of the former Wrens into the broader chronology of the naval war as a whole, rather than to flesh out the details of the organization they worked for. This book cannot, then, be taken as an institutional history of the Royal Navy’s Y service – some men, too, served in it, and glimpses are provided of their contributions – but rather as an anecdotally based social history of the women it employed.

While good in concept, the author’s integration of the biographical accounts, each of which follows its own chronology, into the broader framework of the book leaves something to be desired. Material on a given Wren will typically begin with her academic and, if applicable, linguistic background, followed by how she became aware of the WRNS, how she was recruited, descriptions of training, uniforms, etc. Most individuals are introduced in the early chapters of the book, and so the stages on their respective journeys appear close together

both chronologically and in terms of their location in the text. Less happily, a number of Wrens are introduced further on in the book, but the author still goes right back to the beginning for that individual. So, for example, we will read yet another account of training at Greenwich whose location in the text is many chapters away from the others. Understandably, chronology starts to become difficult. Even hemispheres are displaced in this manner: on the second page of Chapter 18, “Last Acts in the East,” dealing with the Pacific theatre, we are introduced to a Wren who acquired her particular specialty analyzing U-boat transmissions. The reader is thus forced back to the Atlantic for a few paragraphs, for no compelling reason, before returning to the Pacific.

Rather than a lack of organization, I think the problem lies with the author’s reluctance to leave anything out of the anecdotal accounts recorded for posterity by the Wrens in question. While a praiseworthy sentiment, it has the unfortunate result here, of more than a little bit of repetition – work with oscilloscopes, for example, is described on at least three separate occasions. I think it is fair that the editorial staff share some of the blame.

Hore’s goal of integrating the recollections of women who worked in wartime signals intelligence with the broader picture is worthwhile, but I think others have done it better. For example, I would recommend Tessa Dunlop’s *The Bletchley Girls* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2015) and Michael Smith’s *The Debs of Bletchley Park* (London: Aurum Press, 2015). For those more interested in the role of women in the specifically naval side of wireless intelligence, there is really no alternative at present to *Bletchley Park’s Secret Source*, but the prospective reader must be prepared to accept writing and editing that are less than first-rate.

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**Christoph Irmscher and Richard J. King (eds.). *Audubon at Sea. The Coastal and Transatlantic Adventures of John James Audubon*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, [www.uchicago.edu](http://www.uchicago.edu), 2022. xix+334 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, indices. US \$30.00, UK £24.00, cloth; ISBN 978-0-226-75667-7.**

This is a book about seabirds seen through the lens of the writings of the great observer of the avian world, John James Audubon. Everyone has a notion about the word “Audubon” as icon of the modern-day environmental movement – this work introduces the person who was John James Audubon through his writings. It consists of selections about seabirds and the seafaring life from his journals and published books between 1826 and 1833. Audubon’s prose

is the basic focus, although the book is profusely illustrated with sketches, anatomical drawings and a few of the striking paintings of birds for which he is known for above all, as rendered for publication in the form of engravings by his collaborator, Robert Havell.

In the foreword, Subhankar Banerjee separates Audubon the person from Audubon the icon and puts him into the context of present-day events in the world of birds; the environmental movement; and the current understanding of the nature of racism and violence in its most brutal form: the slave trade. He draws parallels between the violence shown toward living things with recent environmental events. The introduction begins with an account of the extinction of what was believed to be the last great auk in 1844, which suffered a violent end at the hands of three, named Icelandic fishermen. It includes a biography that draws out the major themes of violence and racism in his background. They trace Audubon's French ancestry and the life of his family as small-time slaveholders in Haiti through a mysterious birth, a flight to France, and finally, his emigration to the United States – another slave-holding nation. Audubon's background as a child of a seafaring family from Nantes during the American War of Independence and into the Napoleonic wars gave him a grounding in violence; nor was he initially self-conscious about his use of violence, the gun being an essential tool for a self-professed ornithologist in his age. Throughout the book there are descriptions of horrific massacres of birds and all types of animals using guns and every weapon to hand which drives home the brutal nature of the people committing it.

The book also presents accounts of his life at sea on lengthy voyages made over extended periods, both to collect specimens and also to spend time in England, producing and promoting his two great works: the *Ornithological Biography* and *Birds of America*, where he made his name and fortune. On long voyages collecting individual specimens, an often-bored Audubon made detailed, intimate observations in sketches and prose, of life in a sailing vessel of 100 tons with a crew of twelve or so.

The editors also describe the evolution of Audubon's language in terms of structure, describing the process of deciphering the handwriting of early journals written in a vital, spare mixture of French and English, yet covering a wide sweep of topics from the minutiae of life on the vessel to fish and other creatures. This is contrasted with the later, polished language of his published work. The style of later journals is more direct and less digressive, being focused on the birds and other animals. His vision is shown to be darker and more reflective.

Irmscher and King contribute notes on the texts and, in the case of his journals, reconstruct them from handwriting made on board small sailing craft bouncing across the waves. In the last section of the journal, Audubon

records a voyage to Labrador and Newfoundland in 1833. He describes the slaughter of birds for their eggs for sale in a Halifax market, the slaughter of seals, and in the case of the birds, massacres where they attempt to defend their nests from the “egggers.” There is a detailed description of fishing and the processing of the fish in what was the nineteenth-century version of a factory ship producing salt fish. His final journal entries show a growing awareness of the basic violence underlining humankind’s treatment of living things, especially on the part of the fishers, “turtlers,” and “egggers” whom he had accompanied on his collecting expeditions, who were inured to violence. He describes the Fur Company as being a root cause being based on cupidity and details their fishing operation. He points out where industrial plunder leaves indigenous people in Labrador: “disappearing here from insufficiency of food and physical comforts and the loss of all hope, as he loses sight of all that was abundant before the white man came.... Nature is perishing” (290-291).

In the “Coda,” the editors bring Audubon into the context of today. This is an important book that everyone with a romantic notion of who Audubon was or is today needs to read. Despite being considered by Webster as “an American naturalist and painter,” the editors conclude that Audubon was a deeply ambiguous figure, who emerges as a violence-prone racist, a product of his time, as well as a human being, of his own nature. They invite us to consider our part of the legacies of violence and ultimately of slavery. A line is drawn from death of birds by primal violence to their modern-day death by pollution by plastic waste and oil-spills. Although none of the editors has a background in science or the academic credential of “ornithologist,” they have created an excellent work at a time when it is urgently needed. Given the current issues in the avian world such as “bird flu” and mass die-offs, it is time to consider the relationship between ourselves and our environment. This book is about Audubon and seabirds, but it is also about ourselves. It throws a bright light on racism and violence as characteristics of mankind. The question is asked, does he ever evolve into modern-day environmentalist?

Bibliography is alive and well. The physical book is a living tutorial on book production. For devotees of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, it is like coming home. What you see is what you get, but the sum is greater than the parts: the team at the press have produced a masterpiece of communication. As a physical work it is, as expected, being from the University of Chicago Press, a wonderful piece of work that both communicates and is a pleasure to read. Often “Acknowledgements” are rote, but these seem, though tucked away modestly at the back, to be heartfelt and evidence of the wide array of talents employed to create a fine work. Two indices, ornithological and general, make navigation simple.

The major published works described are also a bibliographic feast: a

“double elephant” folio presumably for the earlier *Ornithological Biography* and more the “egalitarian” Royal Octavo of *Birds of America*.

Ian Dew

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**Ryan Tucker Jones. *Red Leviathan The Secret History of Soviet Whaling*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, [www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu), 2022. 304 pp., illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. US \$30.00; cloth; ISBN 978-0-226-62885-1. (E-book available.)**

In the twentieth century, whaling was conducted on an industrial scale by factory ships from several nations, in pursuit of animal fats used in producing margarine and other products. Most of the activity was in remote waters. Fleets of catcher boats would locate and kill whales and bring them to their parent factory ship for processing. This system owed its effectiveness to innovations by Norwegian whalers earlier in the century: deck-mounted harpoon guns armed with an explosive grenade, and a factory ship with a stern slipway that enabled the whale carcass to be winched inboard for processing instead of the former method of flensing it alongside.

The Soviet Union was a latecomer to the industry, creating its first whaling flotilla in the 1930s. After the 1950s, it was a major player, and “the world’s most prolific whaler” (210). Between 1932 and 1987, Russian whalers killed 550,000 whales, roughly one in six of all those taken in the twentieth century. This stark story of the Russian decimation of whale populations was largely unknown in the west. It was publicized in the 1990s after the collapse of the USSR by Russian scientists and Yulia Ivaschenko, a Russian-American scientist. In *Red Leviathan*, Ryan Tucker Jones, an environmental historian at the University of Oregon, has now published a highly readable and thorough examination of all aspects of Soviet whaling. He covers why the industry was developed, how it was organized, and how it reflected the ideology of the USSR. He describes how it was supported by massive research, entered popular culture, created a group of privileged workers and finally, ended in the 1980s.

The book is based on years of study, interviews with former whalers and scientists in Russia and Ukraine, and Jones’ reflection. An earlier work, *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific’s Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741-1867* (2014) was about the dire environmental consequences of Russia’s imperial expansion into the North Pacific. It also covered how Russia subsequently introduced progressive conservationist policies. Jones’ even-handed perspective is a particular strength in *Red Leviathan*. While

he describes how the Russian whaling fleet of up to five flotillas operating simultaneously reduced certain whale species to near extinction while grossly under-reporting catches, he also puts the industry into its Soviet context. Marxist ideology stressed that man could harness nature. "Scientific socialism" meant that rigorous study of whale populations and their movements would facilitate maximum production of whale meat for food and bones for fertilizer. The whaling flotillas carried scientists whose studies, although not published in the west at the time, substantially advanced knowledge of whales while reflecting alarm about the pace of efficient slaughter. Scientists on board also educated the crews about their prey.

Early Soviet pelagic whaling began in the North Pacific in the 1930s, initiated under the first Five Year Plan of 1928. The USSR did not join international whaling in the Antarctic until 1947. That year the Soviets arrived with a flotilla centred on the modern factory ship *Slava*, a German war prize displacing 28,000 tons with a stern slipway. With a length of 155m, *Slava* was a "behemoth" compared with the 12,000-ton improvised Soviet factory ship of the 1930s (60). That year, *Slava* joined an international Antarctic whaling fleet of 16 floating factories (seven Norwegian, two British, two Japanese, and one Dutch) plus several shore factories on South Georgia Island. Jones notes: "Though every whaling nation recognized that a return to the disaster of the 1930s Antarctic whaling would sooner or later destroy the whales and the industry they supported, it was already too late to stop it" (66).

By the mid-1950s, central planners projected higher production targets even as Soviet scientists were aware that some species of Antarctic whales were "on the border of extinction" (91). The sixth 5-year plan of 1956 launched a major expansion of the whaling fleet. It resulted in five new whaling flotillas with factory ships displacing up to 45,000 tons crewed by up to 1000 men and women.

Jones devotes a chapter to the whaling industry workers, a predominately ethnically-Russian privileged caste in the USSR. Because of their unique skills, whalers were better paid than fishing-vessel crews. In 1950, when the average yearly wage in the USSR was 7668 rubles, cleaners in the factory ship *Slava* were being paid 10,000 rubles, boilers 36,000, and the captain 134,000 RUB (100). Whalers were employed by trusts that provided superior housing in their home ports of Odessa, Kaliningrad, and Vladivostok. They received a "polar bonus" for time spent below certain latitudes, plus a twenty-five percent bonus for meeting their monthly quotas for catches and products. If the quotas were exceeded by twenty percent, the bonus rose to sixty percent. This was a legendary "long rouble." "The motivation to kill as many whales as possible was as clear as the incentive to work hard in any capitalist enterprise" (100). Visits to foreign ports gave the whalers sought-after access to consumer



goods not available to most Soviet workers. They were able to invest their high salaries in western clothing, electronics, and other scarce items that were traded at high markups on the black market at home. But this chapter is about more than pay and perks because the author describes somewhat idealistically how a factory ship functioned as a Soviet *kollektiv*.

Soviet delegates made constructive contributions during the deliberations which resulted in creating the International Whaling Commission in 1946, which established catch limits for individual species. Within years, however, Soviet fleets were catching far more than their assigned limits. *Red Leviathan* includes figures for depredations of various species, but for example, by the early 1960s, in just four years the Soviets had killed nearly 30,000 humpback whales in the Antarctic while reporting less than 1000 (95). Russian overharvesting was happening as part of a devastating international effort. Jones writes that 1964 saw the greatest slaughter of 92,000 whales worldwide with the USSR accounting for forty percent of the total (95).

By the mid-1970s, pelagic whaling was becoming increasingly less economically sustainable. Soviet ships began better compliance with International Whaling Commission regulations after international observers started working on board in 1971. A nascent environmental movement was growing in the USSR. Because whale populations had been so decimated, catch sizes declined and in 1975, one huge factory ship began experimenting with catching fish instead of whales (188). Finally, Greenpeace actions caused unfavourable publicity that eventually jeopardized Soviet negotiations with the USA about access to fisheries. Jones was able to find telling documentation in Russian archives about the impact of environmental confrontations after the end of the USSR (201). All these factors combined to make 1986/87 the last Soviet factory-ship-season in the Antarctic.

The massive factory ships built in Nikolaev (Mikolaev) in Ukraine yards were among the largest vessels constructed in the USSR. To be fair, *Red Leviathan* does not describe the building and operation of Soviet whaling ships. The best such source would be *Whale Factory Ships and Modern Whaling 1881-2016* by Ian Hart (2016). *Red Leviathan*, on the other hand, is a multi-dimensional examination of pelagic whaling by the USSR. Based on deep study and sympathetic interviews of participants in Russia and Ukraine this notable book covers a variety of topics in an invitingly clear and well-organized narrative. This is backstopped by endnotes and an excellent index. A rewarding and authoritative read.

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**J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann. *Fortress Europe: From Stone to Steel Fortifications 1850-1945*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword History, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2022. 445 pp., glossary, illustrations, maps, tables, text boxes, appendices, bibliography, index. UK £40.00, US \$62.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-3900-272-1.**

Different European countries planned, funded, and built a wide variety of fortifications and military strongholds in the modern period from the Crimean War to the end of the Second World War. Some were more or less permanent installations prepared during peacetime over years and decades and manned by dedicated troops, while others were definitely ad hoc in response to wartime exigencies, time and available resources, geography, as well as particular threats and needs. Fortifications primarily fulfilled defensive purposes to bolster the fighting capabilities of positional armed forces, to slow down or ward off attacks, and to provide greater temporal space for formulation of policy, plans, and national mobilization. Technological changes in the art and design of fortifications were also notable in the so-called second industrial revolution, as the characteristics of weapons and materials advanced. Joseph and Hanna Kaufmann, a husband and wife team based in Texas, both retired from careers in public school and college education, are well-known for previous publications on fortresses and fortifications in the new and old world. The present work updates and synthesizes many themes and topics developed previously and gives particular attention to coastal defences and fortifications depending on the locale and strategic circumstances of particular countries near the sea.

The book is divided into 17 distinct chapters, each covering a specific country and area for either part of or the entire time period. The focus progresses from smaller neutral countries and the Baltic region to Central and Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and finishes with the big three – the British Isles, Third Republic France, and Germany from the Kaiser to Hitler. The Kaufmanns explain the changes wrought from introduction of rifled artillery, high explosive shells, and replacing centuries-old stonework with better protection from new materials. At first, Hermann Gruson's process for chilled cast iron possessed superior qualities for resisting penetrating fire compared to steel and was used extensively in armour facings and armoured turrets. The contest between protective armour and bigger and better guns played out with new offerings from private companies with state contacts like Armstrong, Krupp, and Schneider. The Belgian fort designer Henri Brialmont and his French counterpart Raymond Séré de Rivières, though less lasting, were recognized at the time for their expertise and innovation in the field. Quickly obsolete once completed, these types of fortifications proved their worth in the

general deterrence and readiness role, although some were pounded down to the ground by monster railway-mounted guns during operations in the First World War. Concrete, in special and reinforced forms, gradually became predominant in the construction of permanent fortifications. Soviet Ivan Belinsky's idea of the fortress garden situated in forests to provide concealment and limited protection from chlorine gas never reached beyond the conceptual phase, since it was pointed out that wood and brush furnished a fuel source for fire.

The Kaufmanns provide context and detailed treatment to lesser known and some decidedly infamous fortification projects, such as the tactically more efficient Hindenburg Line, the Stalin Line of fortified regions, France's much maligned Maginot Line, the Finnish Salpa Line, the Siegfried Line in western parts of Germany, and Hitler's unfinished Atlantic Wall. Generally, military fortresses and fortifications sited in challenging topography such as mountains, passes, and on water obstacles proved more successful and enduring, aimed at dominating or protecting certain lines of movement and supply. In other cases, fortifications had to be extensive enough and mutually supporting, to avoid being outflanked and bypassed by military forces. Too often, fortifications proved so expensive and demanding of resources and personnel that many remained unfinished or ill-adapted to a dynamic battlefield. The Germans used gliders and paratroops to subdue the Belgian fortress at Ében Émael in May 1940 against a numerically superior garrison.

According to American naval theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan, a ship is a fool to fight a fort. Coastal defences and protection of ports and naval bases are covered quite nicely in the book in both text and illustrations. By virtue of being coastal states, many of the selected countries devoted attention to protection from seaward attack. Defences around Den Helder in the Netherlands, and naval fortresses at selected points in Norway and Sweden are highlighted. The chapter on Finland details not only that country's coastal defences in the Baltic and Arctic regions, but also Russian and German fortifications in the Gulf of Riga and Gulf of Finland. Fortresses and artillery positions were built on natural and man-made islands at strategic points, including the naval base at Kronstadt/St Petersburg. The Austro-Hungarian Empire built out coastal fortifications on the Adriatic, and countries such as Italy and Spain invested fitfully in coastal defences. As a cost-saving measure, naval coastal batteries commonly consisted of guns taken off decommissioned warships and emplaced in fixed positions. They were joined with searchlights, controlled underwater mines, smaller calibre anti-aircraft artillery, batteries of shore-launched torpedoes, rangefinders, and later radar (and eventually missiles). During the German invasion of Norway in April 1940, the heavy cruiser *Blücher* was sunk after engagement by older Norwegian coastal guns and several hits by two or three Whitehead 450 mm torpedoes dating from the turn of the century.

Arrangements for coastal defence fell under either army or navy control, depending on the country and its traditions. German naval organization for coastal defences and personnel, for example, followed the same arrangements as those aboard larger warships, as evidenced on the fortress island of Heligoland and defences covering Wilhelmshaven and along the Elbe estuary to the Kiel Canal's western entrance and on the approaches to Hamburg. Where the army was in charge, focus gradually shifted away from permanent coastal fortifications and garrisons to greater employment of mobile field artillery and reserve forces. The French installed heavy 340 mm guns at the main Toulon naval base, but similar plans for Cherbourg and Brest on the Atlantic coast were shelved due to finances and higher priorities. Great Britain's strategically important positions at Gibraltar and Malta warranted some investment in fortifications and allowed the Royal Navy to dominate that part of the Mediterranean in peace and war, especially during the desperate struggle over supply lines to North Africa in 1941-42. Great Britain, as an island nation separated from the European continent by the English Channel, itself faced the threat of invasion, first from the French and then from Germany. Prime Minister Henry Palmerston inaugurated a costly and extensive programme of sea forts and batteries around Portsmouth and Plymouth to protect the major naval bases there. Hurried preparation of anti-invasion measures after the fall of France in summer 1940 augmented existing defences at British ports, while German losses of destroyers during the Scandinavian campaign and failure to achieve air superiority over the Royal Air Force during the Battle of Britain precluded Hitler and the German high command from proceeding with the planned Operation Sea Lion. German paratroopers, however, were given the opportunity to seize the Mediterranean island of Crete by airborne envelopment from British and allied forces; (another planned Luftwaffe airborne operation against Gibraltar was cancelled). The British constructed a number of sea forts during the two world wars in river estuaries out to sea to provide gun and anti-aircraft platforms, according to designs and plans made by Guy Maunsell. In terms of naval defence, coastal defences seldom acted alone and were integrated with flotilla craft such as torpedo boats, destroyers, and submarines, guard ships and floating batteries, underwater minefields and barrages, and maritime reconnaissance and strike aircraft.

The production quality of the book is very high. Most illustrations are in colour, printed on the glossy paper used throughout. Explanatory notes and references appear in sidebars on each page. Green shaded text boxes provide informative background related to the main text. The numerous tables are detailed and full of data on locations, types of armaments, and personnel. Four appendices at the end cover armour, artillery development, machine guns, and the revolution in artillery. The bibliography is extensive and specifically

identifies works in English with an asterisk. Among the pleasing features of the book is widespread reference and use of non-English source materials, whose authors are occasionally quoted directly in the text and text boxes. *Fortress Europe* by Joseph and Hanna Kaufmann is recommended for general readers interested in European military history and specialists on military fortifications and coastal defences.

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**Jack Kelly. *Valcour. The 1776 Campaign that Saved the Cause of Liberty*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, [www.stmartins.com](http://www.stmartins.com), 2021. xv+285 pp., illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. US \$28.99, CDN \$38.50, cloth; ISBN 987-1-250-24711-7.**

*Valcour* is a masterfully written history of a military campaign by opposing naval forces engaging in combat on a long narrow lake during the early stages of the American Revolution. Its unforeseen, consequential aftermath likely changed the outcome of the entire war. Kelly's narrative is a mosaic of interlocking and yet similar clashing tales of American and British politics, military ambitions, imaginative tactics, resourcefulness, and the vital role of logistics in war. In addition, there are thought-provoking insights into the character and leadership qualities of the officers on both sides of the conflict.

The British military plan was to cut the rebel colonies in two, especially the rowdy New Englanders, by capturing a swath of territory from the US-Canadian border, down Lake Champlain, across Lake George, through Saratoga and ultimately connect to the Hudson River and New York City. Lake Champlain contains many islands, shoals, steep rocky cliffs, and heavily forested shore. It gently flows south to north for roughly 120 miles with a width of twelve miles at one point and an average depth of about 60 feet. Situated between the Green Mountains to the east and the Adirondacks to the west, lake winds (critical for naval warfare) generally run northerly or southerly in this geologic corridor.

The leaders of the American forces for this "terraqueous war" were Generals Philip Schuyler, Horatio Gates, plus Benedict Arnold, Commodore of the Continental Navy's lake forces, and some soon to become prominent, such as John Sullivan. The British commanders were Generals Guy Carleton and John Burgoyne, and the later-renowned, Edward Pellew. All were King's Army veterans, but were now opponents. In addition, the British had made alliances with many of the native American tribes in the area.

The adversaries had the same requirements to wage the impending battle. These included reconnoitering the lake's nearby territory, taking soundings

of shoals, and building and arming vessels in the wilderness. Another critical challenge was providing timely logistical supplies like powder, canvas, and cordage for their forces. The British had a large number of disciplined soldiers and sailors as well as shipwrights, most of whom had recovered from smallpox and therefore not susceptible to reinfections. In addition, they had ample rigging equipment, naval stores, cannon, and powder. The Americans essentially had resourceful and clever although not well-trained men who were dedicated to the idea of gaining political and personal liberty. They were much fewer in number and their arms, effective if employed judiciously, were limited by comparison.

Then there was the matter of battle advantages, disadvantages, and tactics. The British had roughly thirty sophisticated armed bateaux vessels along with two schooners, a large radeau (raft) called *Thunderer*, and the big, square-sail frigate *Inflexible*, built on Lake Champlain's shores. The Americans knew the idiosyncrasies of the lake's bottom and their fleet of sixteen crudely-built schooners, sloops, gondolas, and row galleys. The crews were militia from several colonies, civilians engaged in learning the complex art of fighting battles upon water. US forces also controlled the relatively rundown, southern lake choke-point of Forts Ticonderoga and Mount Independence. The battle plan was to array the American fleet in a tight, south-facing anchorage arc below the northern shallows off Valcour Island's western shore. Once the British invaders discovered the hideaway of their quarry, the Yankees could concentrate their fire power on a relatively small but massed target. As the British struggled to bring their guns to bear, the Americans fired into them. Slowly, the more powerful force gained a favourable position. The result was devastating as British guns shattered the greenwood sides of the hastily built Yankee craft with heavy shot. The Americans suffered many losses during the exchange as the stronger British forces prevailed.

At dusk, the British anchored their fleet in a tight, defensive configuration to prevent the Americans from escaping. The intent was to force their surrender after the next day's dawn. That night in the fog, Arnold cleverly skirted the British trap, escaping to the south to engage them one last time. This led to the inevitable Yankee defeat, but also forced a strategic delay.

Although it was only shortly after 11 October 1776, the weather turned cold, producing some icy patches on the lake's few placid places. With complete victory within his grasp, General Carlton opted to encamp on the shores and transport his large army later on other craft, thus anticipating gaining control the entire lake in the spring. This allowed Arnold and most of his men to either shelter at Ticonderoga or escape to the south. Not long after, Gates and Arnold met Burgoyne at Saratoga and decisively defeated the British, a victory that convinced the French to enter the war as American allies. Therefore, the battle

off Valcour Island helped turn the overall tide of the Revolutionary War. One cannot read this book without thinking that Benedict Arnold's later acts of treason were a tragic ending for a man who, otherwise, would have been an American military hero.

Historian Kelly is a master storyteller, incorporating beguiling details and background information to bring to life the events and historic characters along with the bit-players who did all the fighting and bleeding. While retaining a scholarly thrust, the author occasionally uses textured prose to create remarkable and compelling word-images. For example: "The sun reached its zenith in the cobalt sky. While cumulus clouds, excited by the drama below went flying by. The guns gushed tumbling white clouds themselves, the sulfurous smoke billowing in the wind" (169).

Two more multifaceted gems are, "That night they got a taste of the adversity that always threaten sailors. The clouds first masked, then devoured the newly full moon. The air became restless. Drops of rain splattered on the canopies rigged over the gondolas' decks. The drumroll increased to a fierce tattoo. The wind veered around the north. It whipped the rain under the awnings, giving the men on the decks a cold drenching. The pitching and heaving of the boats under their anchor cables had many of them vomiting over the gunwales. The night went on and on" (98). "And if the days were hard, what are the nights? The moon, which had passed full a few days after they arrived at Valcour, had given relief from the profound darkness. But even bathed in that ghostly light, the nearby forests and hills suggested the darkness of the spirit. The men had to fight against gloom and discouragement. Now that the moon was coming toward new, the darkness deepened, feeding the men's worst imaginings" (128-129).

I highly recommend *Valcour* to historians and lay readers alike, a gem of maritime history chronicling a brief but pivotal event. In closing, Kelly perceptively summarizes his work's overall message as follows: "Generals and politicians have basked in renown. Ordinary fighting men and innocent civilians have carried the burden. The idea of war can inspire glory – its reality is anguish, hardship, and loss" (250).

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**Alston Kennerley. *Bullen's Voyages. The Life of Frank T Bullen: Sailor, Whaler, Author.* Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publications, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2022. 256 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39907-427-8.**

To refer to Frank T. Bullen as one of, if not the most, prolific writers on merchant sailors and the experiences of life at sea very easily could be said to be an understatement. Having written more than thirty books and innumerable articles, Bullen rose to prominence in the early-twentieth century as a lecturer and storyteller. Yet today, he has mainly become a footnote. Even more surprising is the seeming lack of interest in exploring the life of a man who, even if exaggerated, experienced more than dozens of other men of his era at a time when his writings were still fresh. Seeking to correct this long-standing oversight, Alston Kennerley draws together the story presented through Bullen's writings, backed with British maritime records, to create a single-volume biography. Starting with Bullen's rough, largely parentless childhood, we see how lack of opportunity and support on land pushed him to enlist on his first sailing voyage at the age of twelve, under the command of his ill-tempered uncle George. Here Bullen obtained a traditionally rough introduction to what it meant to be a sailor. Far from being eased into his new duties at sea, he was expected to learn on the job and quickly, with a threat of verbal or physical punishment at the hands of his openly abusive uncle, now captain, on open display. Nor was he afforded much in the way of ongoing support from the rest of the crew, particularly after an earlier mishap where a young Frank spoke too openly to a family while ashore, and the concerned father questioned his uncle as to the boy's treatment.

All the same, Bullen seems to have quickly taken to the sailing life, ready to advance his skills and career by moving from ship to ship as circumstances dictated for several years. He was also clearly aware of the issues of immorality that could arise on board ships, however, as his writings came to reflect a profoundly moralizing force, seemingly at odds with the frequent realities of life at sea. While this may have been a product of later life experiences once he was done sailing, Kennerley's narrative indicates that this view was at least partially present while he was still directly involved in the industry. In this assessment lies the most significant potential issue with this book: how much of Bullen appears in his writings. While the dates and types of his voyages can be confirmed through British maritime records, the true Bullen is not so readily found. Well aware of the desires of the reading public, and being a veteran sailor himself, it would not be surprising if Bullen embellished his stories to some degree, if only for the added drama. Thus, any biography seeking to consolidate the man's life story necessarily has to be careful to parse out the genuine from the enhanced reality of the story, but also to not reject the wilder truths. In navigating the need to take whatever Bullen has written with an appropriate grain of salt, Kennerley has well and truly stepped up. While we may never fully know the man whose adventures at sea were vast enough to produce the fodder for thirty books and numerous articles, the author manages



a well-aimed stab that generally hits the mark.

Those of a more academic leaning will undoubtedly appreciate the multiple detailed lists the author provides, including information on the various ships and voyages that Bullen served in throughout his career. Kennerley's detailed tracing of Bullen's movements back and forth across the world's oceans, makes it easy to see exactly why and how he came to be so genuinely sympathetic to the trials and tribulations of the common sailor. Moreover, in the absence of a biography of Bullen, Kennerley has opened up new avenues for research into the life and times of the man himself, particularly surrounding his youth that the author himself was unable to answer, nor which were the core concern of this biography. While only time will tell the true fruitfulness of such an inquiry, it would not at all be surprising for a future reader of this book to be inspired to seek to answer the lingering questions about the circumstances that forced a young Frank Bullen to sea, and what held him there until he found himself inextricably bound to it in one fashion or another for the rest of his life.

Michael Toth  
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**John G. Langley, Q.C. *Canadian Confederate Cruiser: The Story of the Steamer Queen Victoria*. Halifax, N.S.: Nimbus Publishing Limited, [www.nimbus.ca](http://www.nimbus.ca), 2018. 191 pp., illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$17.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-77108-660-8.**

The life, death, and lasting legacy of SS *Queen Victoria* is a tale well worth the telling, and John Langley, of Baddeck, Nova Scotia, tells it well. He shines a bright light on this hitherto little known, and sadly, unsung aspect of Canadian history.

The SS *Queen Victoria* and its twin sister ship, SS *Napoleon III*, were commissioned by Francois Baby, a Quebec City ship owner, and built by Robert Napier and Sons at Govan on the River Clyde. The two astutely named vessels joined the Baby fleet in 1856. Of advanced design and powered by both steam and sail, the two assumed such routine but essential duties as supplying lighthouses, delivering mail, tending navigational buoys, and providing tugging service. It was *Victoria*, however, that was plucked, Cinderella-like, from this mundane existence and given a task that placed her at the heart of the political processes resulting in Confederation.

The life of the SS *Queen Victoria* was not entirely humdrum, however, and Langley describes in considerable detail its occasional role in carrying such dignitaries as two successive governors general and their entourages and, in 1860, the young Prince of Wales, later to be King Edward VII, during his

visit to Canada. As the author notes, the ship had made a progress in four short years from utilitarian tug to royal yacht. This, albeit temporary, elevation in status, is not the reason why *Victoria* should be better known.

In 1864, the political leaders of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island decided to meet in Charlottetown late that summer to discuss with little enthusiasm the oft-recurring subject of a possible Maritime union. (Newfoundland had been invited, but cited lack of advance notice in declining.) They were joined by eleven senior representatives of the province of Canada East and Canada West, MacDonald, Cartier, Brown et al., who, although uninvited, were determined to raise the issue of possible Confederation with their Maritime counterparts. These Canadians set sail from Quebec City for Charlottetown on 29 August. The ship that was chosen to carry them there was the SS *Queen Victoria*.

John Langley does an excellent job of setting the stage for what eventually came to be called the Charlottetown Conference, referencing the social and political currents at play in the colonies there represented. With similar detail, he documents the discussions that unfolded, the many accompanying social events, and the role of *Victoria* therein.

The Canadian delegation arrived unheralded on 1 September as *Queen Victoria* anchored in Charlottetown harbour. After an underwhelming start – the Canadians were greeted by the P.E.I. provincial secretary who rowed out to greet them in a flat-bottomed boat reputedly laden with molasses and flour – a more fitting and formal welcome was accorded them. Introductory niceties once observed, the Canadians were invited to join the discussions and the agenda was expanded to include the weighty issue of possible Confederation, a development the Canadians were determined to promote with all their considerable powers of persuasion.

A much-anticipated circus was in town, and all hotels and inns were full with Island audiences. (Predictably, this coincidence gave rise to satirical comments, then, and later, about two circuses being in Charlottetown.) As a result, most of the Canadians kept their accommodations on board *Victoria*, now a floating hotel. Ashore, discussions proceeded apace, and after two days of promising talks the Canadians hosted a champagne luncheon aboard their ship late in the afternoon of 3 September. Langley admirably captures the substance and the mood of these discussions and quotes a letter from Canadian delegate George Brown to his wife conveying that sense of purpose and excitement: “the banns of matrimony between all the provinces of BNA having been formally proclaimed ... the union was thereupon formally completed and proclaimed.”

It was aboard SS *Queen Victoria* then, on 3 September 1864, that it was

determined and declared that the provinces there represented were “affianced,” a pivotal moment on the road to Confederation. Although not quoted by Langley, eminent historian Peter B. Waite wrote of this gathering that “(t)his luncheon on the *Queen Victoria* in Charlottetown was, in a significant sense, the beginning of Confederation.” Other historians have made similar assertions about the importance of this watershed event.

Langley documents in welcome detail the subsequent discussions leading to the Quebec Conference, the second of the major constitutional gatherings, and the role the *Victoria* played in transporting and housing those involved. Sadly, the ship of Confederation did not survive long enough to play a role in Confederation itself. Ownership of the Baby fleet, including *Queen Victoria*, had been transferred to the government of Canada for reasons related to the economics of the business. (The ship then became the CGS *Queen Victoria* and, along with the other vessels, formed the beginnings of the Canadian Coast Guard.) The government soon discovered that assuming the duties and responsibilities that had been carried out by the Baby fleet under contract was a costly undertaking, and in 1866 *Victoria* was chartered out to a commercial undertaking involving shipping Canadian goods to Cuba and returning with Cuban goods (notably cigars, rum and fruit) for the Canadian market. Unfortunately, that was not to be: on its run home, the ship was caught in a hurricane off the Carolina coast and, after two days of struggling to stay afloat, sank below the waves.

In nothing short of a miracle, however, an American brig, *Ponvert*, hove into view and rescued all but two of *Victoria*’s passengers and crew. Before the ship sank forever beneath the waves, its bell was presented in gratitude to the skipper of the rescuing vessel who eventually gave it to his home port of Prospect Harbor, Maine. Despite repeated attempts at repatriation over many years, it remains there to this day. Those attempts and subsequent developments resulting, among other things, in the commissioning of an exact replica of the ship’s bell by Prospect Harbor (now Gouldsboro) and its presentation to the city of Charlottetown make for fascinating reading and could, indeed, merit their own book.

SS *Queen Victoria* played an important role in the history of Canada, yet its very existence is virtually unknown. John Langley’s book should go a long way towards contributing to greater public and political awareness of the ship and her place in the story of our country. For that he is to be congratulated.

Brian P. Anthony  
Toronto, Ontario

**Daniel MacCannell. *Coastal Defences of the British Empire in the Revolutionary & Napoleonic Eras*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Military, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2021. 240 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, index. UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-52675-345-8.**

Considering Great Britain's naval supremacy over France throughout their wars in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, it can be easy to overlook the sense of vulnerability the British felt throughout the period. Even after the defeat of the Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar in 1805, invasion remained a constant worry, one underscored by the Nore mutiny in 1797 and the Irish rebellion the following year. Nor was the threat of invasion confined to the British Isles, as the vast imperial holdings often seemed little more than ripe fruits waiting to be plucked by ambitious enemy captains or avaricious privateers. Never before had such a powerful empire seemed so vulnerable.

Given all of this, the value of a study of the coastal defences developed by the British at home and abroad to deal with these threats is obvious. What Daniel MacCannell provides instead, is a far broader survey of amphibious warfare and naval sieges involving the British in the early modern era, as well as description of the preparations made to deal with them. His scope is impressive and arguably justifiable, considering how much of Britain's planning and construction undertaken to address the French menace in the 1790s and 1800s was shaped by the experiences of the previous decades. To do this in a way that aids in understanding the book's ostensible subject, though, requires a focus that MacCannell never seems able to sustain.

The majority of the book offers a well-illustrated overview of the preparations made in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries against possible assaults along Britain's coastlines and her scattered empire. Woven into this are more detailed descriptions of the forts and other defences erected during the period, and the weapons and tactics they were designed to resist. MacCannell is a fluent and capable writer who demonstrates throughout his book an ability to explain sometimes obscure information (such as the amount of powder required to propel shots of various sizes) in a way that makes it not just comprehensible, but interesting as well. The problem is that these distinct details never fully cohere in a way that would allow the separate parts of the text to aid in understanding the overall subject.

Ultimately this flaw undermines MacCannell's entire book, as he never demonstrates an ability to marshal the facts that he offers to provide any sort of overarching analysis of his subject. Instead, the myriad details wash over the pages like flood water, spilling out uncontrollably in all directions. Digressions abound, most of which contribute little beyond a sense of the author's passion for his subject and his desire to demonstrate all that he has learned about it.

MacCannell describes deployments, summarizes battles, and recounts the lives of important military commanders without providing any encompassing understanding of how British planning for possible naval assaults or defensive constructions reveal general military practice during that era. This is all left for readers to sort out on their own, even if MacCannell does not provide sufficient information for them to do so.

There is no better example of this than in the author's coverage of the Martello towers that were the principal British coastal fortifications built during this period. His book is filled with references to them, as well as proposals for their construction, descriptions of their layouts and operations, the programs for building them, and full-colour photographs of surviving examples. Yet nowhere in his book does MacCannell explain, even briefly, the actual history of the Martello towers themselves or what it was that distinguished them from other types of coastal fortifications. Whether he regards such information as irrelevant or simply assumes his audience already knows about it is unclear, but the lack of such context leaves one wondering why that design in particular was chosen to serve a central role in British coastal defence preparations and why a beleaguered British state was willing to invest so much time and funding in their construction.

This issue also raises the question of who is the intended audience for this book. MacCannell makes no claims of having undertaken archival research for his work, which rests almost exclusively on previously published works by other authors. The sense that this is meant for a general audience is reinforced by MacCannell's frequent meanderings into loosely-related events in the Napoleonic Wars, which can be entertaining but serve little additional purpose. Yet any notion that his book is geared toward the lay reader is offset by his in-depth technical descriptions and his periodic assumption of his readers' familiarity with different aspects of his subject. The combination suggests a book that might serve well as a gift for someone's dad who has run out of Horatio Hornblower or Aubrey-Maturin novels to read and looks to delve further into the era they describe. For scholars of the period, however, this work has little to offer.

Mark Klobas  
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**John R. McKay.** *Surviving the Arctic Convoys. The Wartime Memoirs of Leading Seaman Charlie Erswell.* Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Maritime, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk). 2021. xvii+181 pp., illustrations, maps. UK £19.99, US \$39.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39901-303-1. (E-book available.)

In his book, *Surviving the Arctic Convoys. The Wartime Memoirs of Leading Seaman Charlie Erswell*, author John R. McKay explores one sailor's experience in the Second World War, and the challenges faced by those who sailed on the Arctic convoys during that conflict. The book is a straightforward presentation of Charlie's experiences during the war. After briefly touching on his childhood and upbringing, McKay quickly arrives at a discussion of his motivations for joining the Royal Navy, his service during the Second World War, and what came after. The author does not dwell on Charlie's childhood or family life, beyond how they influenced his joining the Royal Navy. Vivid descriptions of the conditions and challenges of serving on a ship in wartime allow the reader to get a sense of what it was like to experience those events. Charlie discusses his impressions of the ups and downs of the Second World War, and briefly comments on the feelings of those around him as the conflict evolved. One of the more interesting aspects of this work is, while it focuses on Charlie's service escorting convoys, he also touches on other activities aboard ship during the war, touching on events across the Atlantic, France, and North Africa. The memoir concludes with his postwar activities. Though Charlie is a gunner, he does not explore the technical aspects of how the guns work, or any of the equipment he used later in his career. Readers looking for detailed examinations of the mechanics of how the guns worked and the structure of how convoys were assembled should look elsewhere. What the author provides here is an account of everyday life aboard a Royal Navy warship during wartime. Several anecdotes not only break the tension of combat but also assist in illustrating that sailors had drives and motivations outside of their jobs. One important contribution is the exploration of what sailors did when they were not at sea. What happened while the sailors were on leave or between convoys or missions is not often discussed in technical accounts of battles and campaigns. This provides a layer of background that is important for a more complete understanding of both the sailors and the events in which they participated.

The book is an easy read and very accessible to readers who are not students of maritime history or the Second World War. An extensive knowledge of the circumstances and events surrounding the convoys to Russia is not required. On the other hand, because it is a memoir and not a biography, written by an author who is not the subject of the book, it leaves something to be desired as an academic source. The lack of citations or bibliography means there are no additional sources for context. This leads to the author potentially taking events out of context, or framing events in a way that could be misunderstood. The fact that the author was not a direct witness to the events depicted, leads to the possibility that they injected their own preconceptions and biases into the work.

While not the best option available for those looking for academically reliable sources, the work does have something to contribute to studies of the Second World War, and maritime history. It gives new readers a place to start, providing a solid account of events and circumstances that one can relate to without having to be on a ship or a member of the military. For students, this work provides a firsthand account once-removed of events that can be explored in greater depth elsewhere. While the events depicted should be cross-referenced using cited sources, the background and colour provided by personal recollections reminds readers that these events were witnessed and endured by real people with their own feelings and motivations concerning what was going on around them.

While not a conventional academic source, *Surviving the Artic Convoys the Wartime Memoir of Leading Seaman Charlie Erswell* provides a personal account of events during the Second World War that are often forgotten, or not explored in great depth. The writing offers clear and easy access, a useful background and a worthwhile read for anyone interested in these events.

Michael Razer  
Ward, Arkansas

**Chris McNab. *Dreadnoughts and Super-Dreadnoughts*. Havertown, PA.: Casemate Publishers, [www.casematepublishers.com](http://www.casematepublishers.com), 2021. 224 pp., illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. US \$49.95, hardback; ISBN 978-1-63624-086-2. (E-book available.)**

Even the names dreadnought and super-dreadnought speak of power and strength at sea, representing the embodiment of physical strength and the ability to project power. Their massive size moving at speed and, of course, the raw firepower of the main batteries imply dominance. They are inherently fascinating and definitely capture the imagination of young and old. Chris McNab provides an account of their development in his book *Dreadnoughts and Super-Dreadnoughts*. This history will certainly kindle an interest for many readers not already intrigued by this subject.

Six chapters break down the subject clearly for the reader. The first four explain the development of HMS *Dreadnought* and the key features of these ships. Starting with the naval revolution that *Dreadnought* produced, the author then proceeds to analyze the design and engineering, the guns, and the living conditions aboard the ships. The combination presents a well-rounded picture of the dreadnoughts their crews. The final two chapters deal with the development of dreadnoughts internationally, the rise of what are called “super-dreadnoughts,” and finally, the experience of this class of ship at war.

The entire text is supported by lavish illustrations and textual additions aimed at explaining key aspects of the ships, their design, and the experience of those who served in them.

As a concept, HMS *Dreadnought* represented a significant evolution in warship design. McNab offers a strong understanding of these developments and the political opposition to this new paradigm in ship design. Given that the technical development of dreadnoughts was a complex process, McNab gives the reader a good sense of the huge technical leaps involved in developing a successful design. This reviewer found the discussion of living conditions for the crew particularly interesting. We tend to be drawn to the fire power or the overall design of a warship but forget that the health and comfort of the crew bears direct on the performance of the ship. Better design and enhanced weapons systems can improve the situation of those on board, which contributes to the success of the ship. McNab has incorporated the lessons learned from *Dreadnought's* first cruise and trials into his text. Many of the faults discovered on its maiden voyage led to changes in the ship's design, clarifying the fact that *Dreadnought* was as much a product of evolution as design.

The text is also very lavishly illustrated with unique images ranging from ship construction to life on board. Since many of these images have never been published before, they offer a haunting record of the ships' development. With all the dreadnoughts now scrapped or sunk, their memory is only preserved in these images and drawings, which contribute significantly to the text. The international additions to the book are truly refreshing, taking the discussion of dreadnought development beyond basic British naval history. In fact, all great powers, and any nation striving to be considered a great power, produced or adapted dreadnought designs. For example, the inclusion of American or Japanese designs emphasizes the international aspect of warship development as well as providing the reader with excellent points of comparison.

The greatest limitation of the text is in size and scope. It would have been interesting to see more of a comparison between the various national approaches to dreadnought design, or the scale of production and the cost for the US or Japan as compared to Great Britain. The danger for many books that focus on something technical, like ship design, is ending up looking like a glorified *Popular Mechanics* article rather than a historical text. Fortunately, McNab has incorporated a great deal of historical detail to balance the technical content.

This book is extremely valuable, not just as a quick reference regarding dreadnought ship design or its evolution, but as a research tool. The text provides those interested in the ships that became important war assets with a great starting point for their understanding. For anyone with a love of the sea,



*Dreadnoughts and Super-dreadnoughts* will be useful and interesting, full of fascinating information. Readers more interested in depicting these ships as artists or model builders will enjoy the book's historical accuracy and detail. Far better than some examples of this genre, this book is recommended very highly for all readers.

Robert Dienesch  
Belle River, Ontario

**John F. Messer. *A Scottish Blockade Runner in the American Civil War: Joanness Wyllie of the Steamer Ad-Vance*. Dunbeath, Scotland: Whittles Publishing, [www.whittlespublishing.com](http://www.whittlespublishing.com), 2021. xxiv+258 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. UK £18.99, US \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-184995-482-2.**

War devastates belligerents on both sides, but also generates economic opportunities for those who are willing to smuggle goods needed to conduct the war and profit from commodities produced by one side that are in great demand elsewhere. The American Civil War was an example of how this two-way traffic was employed to support the Confederacy. John Messer's book about the life and times of a colourful, largely forgotten, Scottish blockade runner, Captain Joannes Wyllie (aka John Wylie), features several special vessels and important Atlantic Ocean seaports. Its many enthralling encounters and escapes were largely woven from personal journals, ship's logs, and other primary source accounts.

This engaging story is well-documented and, at times, gripping – a unique perspective of Civil War foreign blockade running that has had little historiographic exposure. Wyllie, the son of a Scottish farmer, studied at St. Andrews University and, for several years, was employed as a successful schoolteacher. Wyllie, however, had a love for the sea and left the sedate position of school master to work his way up the merchant mariner ladder, starting with the sailing ship *Hope*. He ascended all the way to sailing master and captain, having served onboard twelve vessels during his career. Among many adventures, Wyllie's most notable one was as a blockade runner during the American Civil War, onboard the physically impressive screw steamer *Ad-Vance*. This was one of a specialized fleet of ships that smuggled munitions and supplies through a constantly moving barrier of enemy picket ships. Formerly listed as *Lord Clyde*, the screw steamer *Ad-Vance* was purchased by the rebel State of North Carolina and rechristened to reflect the name of the state's governor, Zebulon Vance. Its mission was to run much-needed war material from the UK through Bermuda or Nassau and to Cape Fear. Then it was up

the Cape Fear River to the port of Wilmington, North Carolina where the ship endured multiple river quarantines during a rampant yellow fever epidemic. Outbound, *Ad-Vance* also conveyed much needed cotton to the European dry goods market.

After achieving great success for a little over a year, Wyllie and his ship were eventually captured. Inferior quality coal provided by the Confederacy for his steamer did not produce sufficient energy to allow his vessel to obtain the optimum speed needed to evade a picketing craft. The former Scottish vessel was rechristened for service within the US Navy as *Frolic*, the prey turned hunter. Wyllie was detained by the Union forces but managed a clever escape and returned to the UK. He later continued his blockade running, this time on a new vessel, *Deer*. Wyllie and his new ship ran aground off Sullivan's Island at the northern mouth of Charleston Harbour shortly before the end of the war. Wyllie, incarcerated once again but this time as an escapee, faced severe judicial punishment, even as a foreign national. What followed was an almost comical second getaway from the clutches of federal law enforcement agents, employing ingenious disguises, subterfuge, false scents, and unexpected escape routes to leave American waters and regain freedom back in Scotland.

Initially, Wyllie did not receive credit for the success of his blockade running because North Carolina resident Confederate naval officers were in charge or listed as super-cargoes representing the interest of the ship owner. For most of the voyages, the Scottish "foreigner" was listed as sailing master, but he was eventually acknowledged for his role in *Ad-Vance*'s success. Wyllie successfully completed fifteen forays through the blockade, a rate of about one completed trip for every two months of service. This was an impressive record, but compared with others, he was only the tenth most successful blockade runner. Wyllie and fellow blockade runners from other nations were critical elements in the logistical system that carried supplies to the Confederacy to properly equip its forces. The success rate of the various blockade runners was nearly eighty percent, and the profits for the sponsors were substantial. These illicit vessels accounted for the majority of the Confederacy's artillery, small arms, bullets, and powder. Thanks to the blockade running, Confederate forces were never without a means to fight, thus prolonging the war.

After returning to the United Kingdom, Wyllie briefly became involved as an arms transporter in the obscure and bloody Paraguayan War along the River Plate. Shortly thereafter, the veteran mariner retired from the sea to his native Scotland. There, he became a farmer and a local bewhiskered celebrity, who recounted his seaborne adventures to his friends and neighbours. "Looking at the cut of his jib, one could not at the first take him for a sailor. He does not roll as he walks, but is remarkably light in his feet. He is tall and powerfully made, and in the region of the chest, shoulders, and neck there is a wonderful

concentration of force.... [His face] brims with kindness, and twinkles with racy or pawky [cynical] humor. Altogether, the captain is a notable man, and no one can see him for the first time without pausing to inquire who he may be” (204-205).

For over a century, Wyllie’s role and its impact upon the Civil War largely remained undiscovered – until recently. *A Scottish Blockade Runner in the American Civil War* is a scholarly, highly detailed book, consistent with what one might expect from a Scottish museum curator. Perhaps overly detailed with minor characters and sides issues, the work still provides an excellent contribution to the maritime history literature providing primary source data concerning the role and difficulties of foreign blockade runners during the American Civil War.

Louis Arthur Norton  
West Simsbury, Connecticut

**Venner F. Milewski, Jr. *Fighting Ships of the U.S. Navy 1883-2019, Vol. One, Part Two – Aircraft Carriers, Escort Carriers*. Poland; Stratus s.j, [www.mmpbooks.biz](http://www.mmpbooks.biz), 2021. 272 pp., illustrations, tables, glossary, bibliography, index. US \$52.00, hardback; ISBN 978-3-66549-29-6.**

The second part of a new naval book series, this work is a compendium of all 145 escort carriers produced or planned by the United States during the Second World War for both American and Allied use. Similar to the documentation style of Stefan Terzibaschitsch’s 1981 *Escort Carriers and Aviation Support Ships of the U.S. Navy*, the work consists of brief text histories, tabulated information, and photographs. All ten classes of escort carriers are covered sequentially, followed by a table of camouflage patterns and black and white renderings of the camouflage design sheets. A brief bibliography and index are at the end to conclude the work.

The core of the work follows a standardized format. Vessels are presented in numbered order following the listing of their class. Each is given a table listing ship name, hull number, builder, keel laid date, launch date, and commission date. This is followed by a paragraph-sized notation of the ship’s history, detailing key points in terms of approval, original commanding officers, transfer to Britain (if applicable), decommissioning or destruction notes, and the like. Combat service, tours of duty, and assigned air wings, however, are not addressed. Photographs of the vessel follow, and a general table on the class as a whole concludes each section with basic data regarding hull dimensions, armament, crew complement, and engineering specifications. There are images for a few of the hulls showing their construction or conversion processes, with

some of the more interesting photographs covering the post-war deployment of several escort carriers with large detachments of helicopters, making them an ancestral link of the modern navy's Amphibious Assault Ships.

The final thirty pages shift focus to the camouflage patterns approved by the United States Navy for use on the various escort carrier classes during the Second World War. This primarily consists of black and white scans of the Bureau of Ships Camouflage Measure Design sheets, with a two-table lead-in describing the seven approved camouflage measures and a listing of to which carriers the depicted patterns were applied. Clarity varies, as the sheets were not edited to remove tonal discoloration or jpeg artifacts. They do provide a clearer view of camouflage patterning than evidenced in some of the photographs, albeit only in greyscale form. Camouflage schemes for those escort carriers in British service are not directly addressed, and must be gleaned from photographs associated with the carriers in the core of the work.

A few suggestions for improvement come to mind. There are no images for the carriers AVG-8, CVE-34, 39, 40, 50, 52, 68, 74, and 89, even though several exist within the collections of NARA, NHHC, and the Imperial War Museum. There is also a surprising lack of colour and close detail images, especially in regard to documenting the camouflage patterns applied to the hulls and the islands, respectively. The cover image of USS *Santee* is rendered in black and white within the work itself, and if the camouflage section were paired with colour profile drawings or some of the existing colour imagery, it would greatly improve the work's effectiveness, as would a colour section or detail section of images. Some of the camouflage measures sheets seem to be of lower resolution than others, so an increase in their clarity would be appreciated and add to their impact in the work as a whole. Finally, an expansion of the near-bulleted text associated with each ship to include duty assignments and awarded battle stars would greatly increase the work's effectiveness, as it would allow readers to trace the vessel's history and movements beyond what is in photographic captions or mentions of loss.

*Fighting Ships of the US Navy, Volume One Part Two* is a good introduction to the escort carriers planned or built during the Second World War. While detailed service histories for the vessels may be lacking, it offers the basic build data, chronology for construction, commissioning, and destruction/disposal, and select views for a majority of completed hulls. For those interested in American-built escort carriers and their camouflage patterns, this work is a good initial reference source, and with an expansion of the information listed for each vessel's history, it has the capacity to become a primary reference tool on the ship class.

Charles Ross Patterson II  
Yorktown, Virginia

**Andrew Norman. *Bound for the East Indies: Halsewell - Shipwreck that Grippped the Nation*. Stroud, UK: Fonthill Media, [www.fonthillmedia.com](http://www.fonthillmedia.com), 2020. 187 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. UK £16.00, US \$24.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-78155-753-2. (E-book available.)**

In 1602, Elizabeth I gave her assent to a charter to the Honourable East India Company (HEIC) that granted a monopoly of trade between London and the East Indies. Trade with the East was not without challenge. The Dutch and the French had also made their way to the subcontinent and the rich islands of Indonesia. Although the English Navy defeated the Dutch in the First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654), the Dutch stayed entrenched in the eastern trade. The HEIC broadened its horizons, obtained footholds in Asia and the fight between England and France was concluded with defeat of the latter at Arcot in 1751. Internal resistance in Bengal was squashed at Plassey in 1757. While the Royal Navy controlled the seas, the HEIC ruled a large part of the Subcontinent. It was for them the Honourable Company's Ship *Halsewell* sailed the seas and carried their trade. The ship was launched on 24 August 1778, with three masts and three decks, it displaced 776 tons, had a length of 139 feet, 7 inches, and was armed with 26 cannons. The HEIC traded in the best of the products of the East: mace, nutmeg, tea, sugar, silks, cloths, precious stones like rubies, diamonds, sapphires, pearls, red coral, indigo, cotton wool, linen, pepper, rice, ginger, opium, exotic birds, and beasts.

*Halsewell's* captain, Richard Peirce, was born 1736 in Calcutta, the capital of the Indian State of Bengal. In 1761, aged 25, Peirce was made third mate on HCS *Horsenden*, and sailed to China. A few years later, he was second mate on *Pacific*. In 1767, in London, Peirce married Mary Burston. They lived at Kingston-upon-Thames, in Surrey, raising two sons, and seven daughters. In 1768, Peirce became captain of East Indiaman *Earl of Ashburnham*, making several voyages to China. Appointed captain of *Halsewell* in 1778, Peirce's first voyage to India and China lasted three years and spanned 35,000 nautical miles. On board the vessel was a cargo of copper, plus an army detachment of ninety-three military personnel, plus five women, and two children. The ship called into Madeira, Goree (Senegal), Table Bay in South Africa, Madras, and China. During this voyage Peirce lost a part of his crew to a British naval officer named Horatio Nelson, whose vessel was short-handed. On Peirce's second voyage with *Halsewell* in 1782, he sailed to Cape Verde, East Africa, and the Bay of Bengal, with a cargo of copper, lead, iron, and brass ordnance. On board were 141 military personnel, two women, the painter Johan Zofany, who had painted a portrait of King George III, his Queen and family, and portraits for royals on the European mainland. On the return voyage, the cargo consisted of bales of cotton and sappan wood [an astringent].

On 1 January 1786, *Halsewell* sailed through The Downs roadstead off Deal on the coast of Kent. Aboard were 103 passengers, among them two daughters and two nieces of Captain Peirce. The cargo consisted of silver, ironmongery, sheet copper, metals, canvas, and marine stores. The first stop would be Madeira, for fresh water, fruit, vegetables, and local wine. A day later, with the ship south of the Isle of Wight, the weather started to get worse. At nine in the evening, falling snow and freezing conditions forced Peirce to anchor. Next morning, in a strong gale, *Halsewell* had to cut anchors and run to sea. By ten that night, a violent gale from the south forced water in through the hawseholes (through which the anchor cables pass), allowing a large amount of water to flow onto the gun deck. Meanwhile, the ship already had five feet of water in her bilges. Captain Peirce had his fair share of worries. For much of the storm, many of the crew had been inattentive and remiss in their duty, and with a clear disregard for discipline absolutely refused to obey the officers. By 4 January, the situation on board *Halsewell* was becoming desperate. At two a.m., it was decided to cut away the mizzen mast, by which time there was seven feet of water in the hold. Later, in the struggle to cut away the main mast, five crewmen fell overboard and drowned – but the ship continued sailing in westerly direction. Six hours later, the winds pushed *Halsewell* to the north. At ten o'clock, while approaching the coast, the course was altered again, an easterly course that did not agree with the winds, destroying the fore-top mast and the foresail. Luckily, jury-rigged replacements resolved the immediate problems. Nevertheless, the strong gale was still hammering away on the vessel and its anchors failed to hold the ship near the shore at Aldhelm's Head.

On 6 January, at 2 a.m., the ship met its demise on the worst of places: cliffs of vast heights, at the mouth of a cavern, difficult to access due to the sharp and uneven rocks. It must have been a deplorable scene, *Halsewell* on the rocks, giving way to the force of the sea. The stricken vessel was pummelled to pieces, creaking, groaning, splitting under the strain. The cliffs reached about one hundred feet above sea level. Soldiers and crew tried to climb ashore in the cave on narrow shelves out of reach of the surf. Some succeeded in climbing the sheer cliff, others failed along the way and perished. On the cliffs, a nearby house raised the alarm and local quarrymen came to the rescue. Long before daybreak the wreck was shattered to pieces, the whole ocean covered with fragments of the ship and contents, broken masts, trunks, dead bodies, debris. *Halsewell* had departed with over 240 people on board – only 74 survived the ordeal.

In January 1786, the first divers went to work on the wreck. Customs officers were able to salvage 54 barrels of wine, along with other items. Soon, the site and the remains of *Halsewell* became something of a tourist attraction, as even King George III and his entourage visited the area to see for

themselves. The demise of *Halsewell* was recorded in more than one way in popular culture. Poems appeared on the subject and a composer wrote a music piece. In 1818, artist J.M.W. Turner painted “Loss of an East Indiaman.” In 1853 Charles Dickens authored a short story on the tragedy. Artists created aquatints, engravings, and oil paintings. Although it may not have been seen as a national disaster at the time, the attention drawn by the ordeal most certainly gives that impression. Two centuries later, the wreck still appeals to divers, treasure hunters, and Andrew Norman, who has written a gripping story.

Jacob Bart Hak  
Leiden, Netherlands

**Michal A. Piegzik.** *The Darkest Hour. Volume 1: The Japanese Offensive in the Indian Ocean.* Havertown, PA: Helion & Co, Asia @War Series, [www.casematepublishers.com](http://www.casematepublishers.com), 2022. 80 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography. US \$29.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-91507-061-6.

Overall, I was quite impressed with this eighty-four-page book detailing the opening moves of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) operations in the Indian Ocean during early 1942. Following the fall of Singapore, in February, the Imperial Japanese Navy continued to push southwards into the Netherlands East Indies and eastwards towards New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. To the west, they planned to secure a safe western flank to support their advance in Burma and towards the Indian border. Ultimately, the Japanese plan was to foment an anti-British uprising in India, which would prevent British forces from attempting to re-capture Burma, Malaya and Singapore. To secure the Burmese southern flank required the capture of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (at the northern entrance to the Malacca Strait) and then, neutralisation of the Royal Navy base at Trincomalee in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) was required. An adjunct to this plan was the seizure of Christmas Island (south of Java) for its valuable phosphate supplies to enhance Japanese agricultural output, but this later action was a minor one.

Admiral Yamamoto continued to seek a decisive battle where he could destroy the US Navy aircraft carriers, which was only going to happen in the western Pacific, so he considered the Indian Ocean sorties a side show. The USN conducted offensive operations in the Pacific during March-April 1942, including the famous Dolittle raid on Tokyo, which reminded Yamamoto that the American navy was still an effective force to be reckoned with. Meanwhile, Japanese submarines were based at the Island of Penang (west coast of the Malayan Peninsula) and commenced offensive operations in the Bay of

Bengal. Following their successes in the early months of 1942, the Japanese also expected to be able to operate with impunity in the Indian Ocean and stifle trade, particularly the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to Australia, which would restrict operations being conducted from Australia by Allied forces.

To counter the Japanese actions, the Royal Navy rushed forces to the eastern Indian Ocean. Vice Admiral Sommerville arrived in Ceylon on 24 March 1942 and set up his headquarters there. He also wisely established his main operational base at Addu Atoll (in the Maldives), thus creating a “fleet in being” but one that could protect the sea lines of communication in the Indian Ocean, particularly the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. The Royal Air Force also began to move available aircraft from the Middle East to India and Ceylon, while any available Dutch or Australian aircraft were also sent to Ceylon. Thus, the stage was set for the Japanese naval operations against Ceylon, and other locations, in the Indian Ocean in April 1942. The second portion of the campaign is described in Volume 2 of this series and I look forward to reading it in due course.

Michal Piegzik has produced a very good analysis of the Japanese thrust westwards into the Indian Ocean. This campaign is often over-shadowed by the campaign in the Pacific, but the essential flow of logistics support to India, to support the British campaign in Burma, helped prevent a potential Indian uprising. Additionally, maintenance of the sea lines of communication to Australia meant that Allied forces could use the continent as a safe springboard to commence offensive operations in the Pacific.

While the book is extremely well illustrated with photographs and graphics of Japanese aircraft, it is quite light on maps which would enhance the narrative. That said, it is still highly recommended.

Greg Swinden  
Canberra, Australia

**Douglas Porch. *Defeat and Division: France at War, 1939-1942*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org), 2022. xvii+725 pp., illustrations, maps, endnotes, bibliography, index. US \$32.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-107-04746-4. (E-book available.)**

This book by Monterey’s Naval Postgraduate School professor emeritus, Douglas Porch, is the first of two volumes on France in the Cambridge University Press *Armies of the Second World War* monograph series. It follows up on Elizabeth Greenhalgh’s contribution on the French army in the well-received *Armies of the Great War* series. Military historians chosen for their expertise and knowledge of original sources and the latest scholarship



and literature provide insightful narratives at the national level in allied and political contexts. Unlike Greenhalgh, who only gave passing mention to the Marine nationale (reflecting the limited French naval contribution during the First World War), Porch's study is a wider examination of France's society and military preparedness going into the Second World War and its performance and travails in the face of defeat, that gives the French navy a prominent place in relation to the army and its support to the Vichy regime. Porch takes the story farther than George Melton's *From Versailles to Mers el-Kébir* (Naval Institute Press, 2015) and appropriately ends with the scuttling of the French fleet at Toulon in November 1942 in the wake of the Allied invasion of North Africa during Operation TORCH and German occupation of what remained of France proper. The Free French, renamed Fighting French, under Charles de Gaulle also built up military and naval wings to further political objectives that looked toward liberation and restoration of French republican government and imperial power.

The book is divided into ten chronological and thematic chapters, each roughly sixty pages in length containing headings and sub-headings and a conclusion at the end. Porch explains that there was no one French army, but instead, many iterations: the mobilized army that fought the 1940 battles destined for captivity as prisoners of war, the armistice army created by Vichy to maintain internal order and increasingly associated with questionable policies such as roundup of French Jews and refugees, the volunteers recruited into a short-lived anti-Bolshevik legion (LVF) to fight for the Germans on the Eastern Front against the Soviets, military and civilian personnel who escaped occupied France and rallied around de Gaulle in Great Britain, and the sizeable military forces in Vichy-controlled colonies such as North Africa with large indigenous components. By contrast, the Marine nationale under the leadership of Admiral François Darlan largely backed the collaborationist Vichy government of the aged Marshal Philippe Pétain. Though late to rearmament, the French navy boasted a sizeable force of fast battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, with a capable naval air arm, mostly land-based. Deployment in the Mediterranean and in specific operations, such as the landings in Norway, followed pre-war plans and arrangements with the British until the signing of the armistice with Nazi Germany which allowed Vichy to retain its fleet in return for certain conditions and neutrality. Winston Churchill's controversial decision to have the Royal Navy attack French fleet units near Oran at the Mers el-Kébir anchorage (Operation Catapult) on 3 July 1940 cost the lives of 1300 French sailors, created a great deal of indignation, and reinforced anti-British sentiment. Only a limited number of warships, sailors, and senior officers had arrived in Great Britain to continue fighting and after the British forcibly seized some vessels, many French asked to be

repatriated back to Vichy France. Understandably, further calls for French warships to come over to the Allied cause went unheeded because the French navy and its leadership became increasingly influential and intertwined within Vichy. An attempted joint British-Free French seaborne assault on Dakar in French West Africa ended in disappointment, though the retaking of Vichy-French-held Madagascar and the small French territorial islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon off the south coast of Newfoundland proved more productive.

In January 1941, British MI5 arrested the head of the Free French Naval Forces (FNFL), Admiral Émile Muselier, on false charges of leaking operational information to alleged Vichy contacts. His reputation never really recovered afterwards. A subsequent falling-out with de Gaulle over leadership and policy led to Muselier's sidelining. Deprived of their own sources of supply and limited in manpower, the Free French were utterly reliant on the British, and in turn, the Americans for most equipment and the latest advances in armaments. At the insistence of American president Franklin Roosevelt, de Gaulle's Free French were left out of participation in the major invasion of North Africa, and after the landings, a backroom deal was reached with Darlan who delivered a ceasefire across Algeria and Morocco and tantalizingly promised to deliver the French fleet into Allied hands. Vice Admiral Jean de Laborde, trusting neither Darlan nor de Gaulle, decided otherwise and instead ordered the fleet in Toulon scuttled when the Germans launched Operation Anton to seize and disarm French warships. After the Paris liberation, Laborde received a death sentence from a French high court on charges of treason in relation to his wartime decisions, subsequently commuted to life imprisonment, which resulted in a few years in prison before amnesty. Meanwhile, a young monarchist resistance fighter assassinated the turncoat opportunist Darlan, thereby smoothing out strained relations between the Americans and de Gaulle, at least for the time being. As Porch points out, the French navy by late 1942 was essentially no longer a significant factor in Allied calculations and comparisons are made to the Italian fleet's switching sides a year later. Some French naval forces, however, such as the battleship *Richelieu*, refitted and finished in American navy yards, operated alongside the British and Americans during 1945 campaigns in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, in part to restore French prestige and relevance. The Marine nationale emerged from the wartime Vichy experience with enduring divisions in its officer corps, a tenuous material state, and once de Gaulle became head of state a renewed interest in naval power, according to Hugues Canuel (see *TNM/LMN* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2021): 360-362).

*Defeat and Division* is a large book with big chapters, and no doubt the second volume will deliver the same. The accompanying photographs and maps add breaks to the sometimes dense narrative. The endnotes provide

further information, particularly in regard to Muselier (a reputed opium addict) and Darlan, which adds to current knowledge and draws on original sources not otherwise familiar. In keeping with the publisher's series, the focus is mostly on the army(ies), though a surprising amount of discussion is devoted to the French navy and France's general conduct of the war in those early years to provide context. The book is recommended for readers and researchers interested in the Second World War and France's part in it.

Chris Madsen

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**Stephen P. Roberts. *French Warships in the Age of Steam 1859-1914: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates*. Barnsley, South Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, [www.seaforthpublishing.com](http://www.seaforthpublishing.com) (distributed by Naval Institute Press), 2021. 512 pp., illustrations, drawings, appendices, bibliography, index. US \$90.00, UK £50.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-5267-4533-0. (E-book available.)**

The French navy (La Royale, Marine française, Marine nationale) is comparatively understudied in English-language scholarship, more so in the modern era than the age of sail. British naval historians studying the Royal Navy seem to have an aversion or national bias toward acknowledging that France was a serious competitor, taking the lead at times with its republican and scientific accomplishments. The main impediments holding back the French navy were economic (lack of industrial capacity in a predominantly agrarian economy), financial, and the necessity of keeping a large army for defence purposes on land. Published writings by American historians Theodore Ropp, Ray Walser, and Ronald Chalmers Hood III still remain among the few available. Canadian naval officer Hugues Canuel has added his book *The Fall and Rise of French Sea Power* (Naval Institute Press, 2021) and an article in the *Naval War College Review* (vol. 71, no. 1, (2018)) covering the period up to 1914. John Jordan, editor of the popular *Warship* annual and author of several books on types of French warships published by Seaforth Publishing, has reached out to French historians similarly interested in technical details. These new sources make full use of available French published sources and archival holdings. Stephen Roberts, who completed a PhD dissertation on the introduction of steam technology in the French navy at the University of Chicago in 1976 and edited Ropp's book for publication in 1987, provides a comprehensive catalogue of virtually every warship added to the French navy in the 55 years before the First World War. The book is part of a trilogy, the first two books prepared in collaboration with Rif Winfield dealing with French

sailing warships from 1626 to 1861.

The book is divided into three chronologically distinct parts or phases comprising eighteen chapters in total: traditional fleet updated, 1859-1882; fleets of the Jeune École, 1882-1897; towards a modern battle fleet, 1897-1914. Each part follows a similar standard format, progressing from the largest warships to smaller boats, submarines, and auxiliaries. Opening sections provide a rationale for the book's arrangement, the methodology used for comparison of technical characteristics, a timeline, and a preamble on the transition from sail to steam prior to 1859, and the building of the first seagoing ironclad, *Gloire*, and its successors designed by master naval architect Henri Dupuy de Lôme.

The first phase straddled the naval ambitions of Napoleon III, the inactivity of the French fleet during the disastrous war against Prussia on land in 1870-71, and slow nibbling away in the decade afterwards to budgets and attention devoted to the navy employed on various colonial expeditions. The once technological leading-edge French ironclads and cruisers became progressively dated in the face of improvements in guns and armour. France acquired rights to the manufacture of the Whitehead torpedo in 1873 building upon earlier interest in the automobile (self-propelled) underwater weapon and sea mines and embarked on construction of small sleek-looking torpedo boats organized into mobile flotillas.

The second phase was characterized by the influence of Jeune École ideas on fleet composition and the relative priority given to certain classes of weapons and warships in the French inventory. Advocates argued that war against England was most probable, and France had to be prepared to defend its coasts and when opportune attack the enemy's commerce and squadron units using new, improving technology. Work on battleships and armoured coastal defence ships progressed in fits and starts, even stopping at times, depending on the whims of successive ministers of marine and legislators in Paris. Concerns about the navies of Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Mediterranean finally provided some rationale for the larger warships. The French navy innovated classes of protected and armoured cruisers, which one admiral argued in 1896 should provide a basis for all fleet construction. Differing professional opinion and limits on industrial capacity meant that greater attention was given to gunboats and torpedo boats that could be constructed reasonably quickly (within a budget cycle) at naval arsenals and private shipyards. The first experimental submersibles and submarine boats were also introduced and operationalized.

The third phase details the filling-out of a battle fleet envisioned under several naval building programs from 1900 to 1912, based upon a balanced mix of large and small warships and submarines, including France's response to the

revolutionary big-gun *Dreadnought* that underpinned an arms race between Great Britain and Imperial Germany. The French navy moved from being second to fourth ranked in Europe and the world, though the Imperial Russian navy showed its deficiencies against Japan in 1905 and had to rebuild. Due to politics and finances, France was late in devoting resources to naval building, and bigger warships in later planned naval programs were left unfinished when the First World War started. Many of the armoured cruisers were older and obsolete in armaments and protection, and the Marine nationale only possessed a small number of out-dated, early design dreadnought battleships in 1914, mostly deployed in the Mediterranean because they were too vulnerable to use against German main fleet units in the North Sea and the Channel. New classes of French counter-torpedo boats that evolved into destroyers were smaller and too limited in range to be truly effective workhorses of the fleet and submarine hunters, the large number of earlier-built torpedo boats suffering many of the same shortcomings. Based on years of experience and trial, the French navy poured money into submarine development that delivered a significant capability with a selection of combination diesel-engine and electric-battery submarines around 800 tons with an effective cruising range over 1200 nautical miles on the surface and 100 nautical miles underwater. The French naturally considered the submarine merely an underwater torpedo boat, with lower silhouette and greater stealth, in keeping with the Jeune École legacy. A French pioneer aviator also flew the first aircraft with floats from a water take-off, portending future military and naval usage. The *Fourde*, previously a torpedo boat transporter, was converted and retooled as a seaplane tender in 1912.

The appendices furnish particulars on French naval artillery and torpedoes, a list of ministers of marine for the period, description of naval shipbuilding bodies, names of naval constructors, details of planned naval building programmes, budgets, and expenditures, alphabetical standardized ship-type descriptors, and disposition of naval squadrons and divisions for certain years.

*French Warships in the Age of Steam* is a big, beautiful book with small type. Seaforth Publishing delivers another outstanding visually pleasing product. It is logically arranged in a standard format that gives lots of useful technical information and background on individual ships and armaments, for easy reference. The variety of selected photographs and illustrations are appropriate to the subject. Entries are encyclopedic in nature and draw upon the best available French primary sources. Coverage includes many better-known warships in the fleet of “samples” slave-ship-interdiction as well as less-known vessels employed close to the metropole and across France’s colonial possessions. Roberts is to be commended for his diligence in chasing down information and his depth of knowledge. Jane Winfield, the sister of

his previous collaborator, helped immeasurably, in that regard. The book is recommended as an essential one-stop warship reference for historians interested in the French navy and its rivals before the First World War, ship scale modellers and hobbyists, as well as naval wargamers.

Chris Madsen

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**A. E. Rooks. *The Black Joke: The True Story of One Ship's Battle against the Slave Trade*. New York, NY: Scribner, [www.simonandschuster.com](http://www.simonandschuster.com), 2022. 382 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US \$29.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-98212-826-5. (E-book available.)**

Prepare to encounter more than you may have bargained for: Rooks wields her quill like a scalpel, keeping us up to speed on all facets of the setting, including backstories both personal and political. The tableau of this masterful feast of information is admirably laid out and kept within a 52-month period from September 1827, when the swift, Baltimore-built slave ship *Henriquetta* was intercepted enroute from West Africa to Brazil, to when forces as high as they get – to the Sailor King, William IV himself – turn against the West African Squadron's (WAS) anti-slavery efforts. At that point, the dreaded *Black Joke*, former slaver turned tender then brig, was burned to the water line to cover the bottoms of Admiralty overseers in their base in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The geographic epicentre of the book is Freetown, British West Africa, where the WAS was conducting its slave-ship-interdiction from the island of Fernando Po, the Gulf of Benin, Biafra, Togo, Guinea, even south to Angola, yet not all the way to Cape Town, South Africa. At that time, Liberia was being checked by US Navy ships like *Java*. At a British outpost known as Bathurst, now Banjul (in the Gambia), are sad reminders of how Africa and much of the imperial world was regarded primarily for what could be stripped from it. Hence the Gold Coast, the Ivory Coast (still the name of a country), and the wrenching name, "Slave Coast."

Palm oil and other cargoes were pulled from many rivers in the region, and slave entrepôts proliferated, including Gallinas (Sierra Leone). The focus, however, was on how wretched this harsh environment could be, and the extreme depths of depravity and inhumanity that played out there from the late 1700s to the mid-1800s in the name of profits, empire, and markets. As the frontispiece warns: "Beware, beware, the Bight of Benin, there's one comes out where fifty went in."

Into this rich, disease-ridden sea of connivance sailed both commercial and naval ships carrying the flags of half-a-dozen countries in the event that

false colours were needed. Bearing in mind that *Black Joke* had been a slaver (and could easily be taken for one again by other slavers), Rooks introduces us to a cast of characters as colourful, strong-willed, and ambitious as one could imagine. Most are Admiralty officers in the British navy in the middle to high end of their careers – one had commanded a ship at Trafalgar under Nelson some 25 years before. Others were the heavyweight traders and leaders of slave-trading cities, owners of slave ship fleets in Brazil or Cuba, and political wranglers.

In one enchanting scene, a slave ship is becalmed at night, while the young British commander is so determined to catch it that his men are rowing the big ship from small boats. The Spanish slavers taunt the British while firing at them, screaming “Come aboard, ye English blackguards!” to which the captain calmly replied from the wheel of his small ship, *Black Joke*, “I’m coming, mon! ... as fast as I can!” (262).

Several portraits and many informative etchings of actual vessels and ports, as well as lists of slaves released, are highly helpful and illuminating. One shortfall, however, is the absence of maps – of the rivers, the coasts, and the proximity to places described. There is a great deal of naval action as we follow the *Black Joke* into battles, chases or interceptions with fourteen ships. These result in the capture and release of 3000 or so persons, meaning they might serve 18 years of indentured (unpaid) labour in the British empire. The ships include *Christina*, *Dos Amigos*, *El Almirante*, *Fraquita*, *Gertrudis*, *Henriquetta*, *Presidente*, *Primero*, *Providencia*, *Rapido*, *Regulus*, *Vengador*, and *Zepharina*. Among the Royal Navy vessels in the WAS from 1827 to 1832 were HMS *Athol*, *Dryad*, *Sybille*, *Fair Rosamond*, *Conflict*, *Plumper*, *Seaflower*, *Brisk*, *Charybdis*, and *Favourite*; one of them designed by the commodore himself. There were arguments whether to even absorb captured slavers like *Black Joke* into the navy.

This is a thoroughly researched, well-written and painstakingly-told book, laying bare some of the most horrific atrocities in humankind. The *Black Joke* headlines this book because it became such a symbol of the successful fight against slavery; so much so, in fact, that in 1832 the black citizens of Freetown attempted to buy and preserve it. As Rooks eulogizes, “The ship had ‘done more towards putting an end towards the vile traffic in slaves than all the ships of the station put together,’ and arguably more than any other single ship ever would” (293-294). For example, it freed more slaves as a naval tender than it had transported as a Brazilian slaver.

Many of the events recorded were handwritten in ink by candlelight by young naval officers at the stern of a torpid, humid warship surrounded by hostile forces ashore and afloat. Their needs were often unmet and all segments of the population seemed to be dying of pestilence and imprisonment at depressing

rates. The author has also toiled through musty Admiralty dispatches from two centuries ago in order to find and share kernels of colour and truth revealed in tattered shreds of paper. These naval officers and men stemmed the tides of rivers to stand like sieves against slavery. Their adversary was an extremely profitable, multinational industry which put sugar in Britain's omnipresent teacups: the pro-slavery lobby had allies at the highest levels. Rooks' dramatic storytelling is anchored by seventy-five pages of references, making this a rare and rich jewel of a book.

Eric Wiberg  
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**Gene Eric Salecker. *Destruction of the Steamboat Sultana: The Worst Maritime Disaster in American History*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, [www.usni.org](http://www.usni.org), 2022. xii+497 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$39.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-68247-743-4. (E-book available.)**

In his book, Gene Eric Salecker paints a picture of the events before, during, and after the destruction of the steamboat *Sultana*. His comprehensive work provides something useful to both students of maritime history, as well as readers interested in other aspects of history, and their interaction with the events discussed.

The author opens with a brief history of previous steamboats named *Sultana*, and the situation regarding the use of steamboats at the end of the American Civil War. He then proceeds to explore the conditions that prisoners of war, the bulk of the passengers on the ship, found themselves in as the conflict ended. Next follows a discussion of the financial motivations that influenced the contracts which were used to pay operators to repatriate prisoners after the war. Students of economic and financial history will find something of interest in Salecker's in-depth explanation of how the contracts were written, as well as how all parties involved were paid. He also explores the nature of corruption that often surrounded these contracts, as operators were driven by operating costs and profit motives, rather than a desire to get prisoners back to their homes.

Salecker vividly traces the entire length of the *Sultana*'s final trip down the river, from her loading to her fiery destruction, and the aftermath. He paints a harrowing picture of passengers confronted by a ship on fire and the days and nights that followed. Readers will find a thorough and comprehensive exploration of these events both before and after the sinking, including follow-up investigations, trials, scapegoating and blame sharing. One of the author's expressed reasons for writing the book was to fill in gaps in his previous work



on the subject, as well as to help explain and/or suppress some myths that have emerged in the more than 150 years since the disaster (ix). In re-examining primary source materials, he provides a new perspective on the sinking; for example, how newspapers approached the event, the investigations, and the hearings and influenced subsequent attitudes about it.

Despite his extensive research into *Sultana*'s fate, Salecker does not offer his own theory on what happened or indulge in speculation and mythmaking. Instead, he lays out the available evidence and allows readers to draw their own conclusions. The author's extensive use of first-hand accounts, secondary sources, newspaper reports, trial transcripts, and numerous other sources, means those interested in pursuing additional research for academic study will find much to offer. The emphasis on the human element of the *Sultana* tragedy reminds readers at all levels that this is a very human story. Any references to technical aspects of steamboat construction or operations, or the dynamic conditions that influenced travel on the Mississippi River appear within the context of their role in the disaster.

*Destruction of the Steamboat Sultana the Worst Maritime Disaster in American History*, provides an accessible and comprehensive account of the events surrounding the loss of the *Sultana*, and the events that followed. It is both a gripping introduction to the subject and a thorough, well-researched, account, accompanied by enough source material to inspire future investigations. While exploring the sinking and its aftermath, he touches on other historical influences at the time and debunks decades worth of speculation and mythmaking that have grown up around the *Sultana* disaster.

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**Anna Sergi, Alexandria Reid, Luca Storti, and Marleen Easton. *Ports, Crime and Security: Governing and Policing Seaports in a Changing World*. Bristol, UK: Bristol University Press, [bristoluniversitypress.co.uk](http://bristoluniversitypress.co.uk), 2021. x+188, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, index. US \$75.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-5292-1771-1. (E-book available.)**

Commercial ports and industrial waterfronts have always attracted criminality that demanded a policing response. Whether the opportunism of sailors and longshore workers stealing from cargoes and smuggling prohibited goods and narcotics, or the organized variety practiced by criminal groups corrupting lower-level and higher-level port officials and infiltrating memberships of waterfront unions, ports are places offering considerable opportunities for criminal elements. Measuring the full extent of criminal activity proves difficult

from port to port, and even generally, because much crime goes undiscovered because authorities are more concerned about potential disruption to trade, bad publicity, and reputation branding. A port manager responsible for operations in the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority once even boldly declared that there was no crime whatsoever in Canada's largest west coast seaport regularly receiving shipping from Asia and other parts of the world. Reliable criminal intelligence collected by municipal police forces, the Canada Border Services Agency, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in a Joint Forces Operation and reported by an investigative journalist in the province's leading newspaper suggested otherwise, alleging involvement of the Hell's Angels motorcycle gang. Crime in ports typically occurs in the background, out of public view, as a function of the economic role of transporting and receiving goods, legal and illegal. Policing comes in the forms of dedicated port police, coverage from established police forces adjacent to ports, specialized task forces, and supporting security agencies. Anna Sergi, an expert on the Italian Mafia, teaching and researching at the University of Essex, and collaborators Alexandra Reid from the Royal United Services Institute's Organised Crime and Policing team, Ghent University's Marleen Easton, and Luca Storti at the University of Torino, summarize the findings of a workshop on port policing and security held in London during May 2020, as part of the Secur.Port project funded by the British Academy. This event, which brought together academics working in the field and professional practitioners, was actually the third workshop following upon earlier ones held at Ghent and Brisbane in previous years. The book therefore represents an attempt to consolidate existing knowledge and identify common themes.

*Ports, Crime and Security* consists of four chapters, each curated by one of the lead authors and facilitators for the workshops. The chapters are further divided by sub-headings and contain accompanying visual tables and illustrations. Key words and concepts are bolded within the text for emphasis and ease of understanding. Ports are described as multivalent spaces where a complex interplay takes place between local and global, and by implication, licit and illicit. Governance and cooperation within ports are equally complex in stemming criminal activity and balancing various interests. For the most part, the discussion remains fairly high level, if not theoretical, and offers few prescriptive solutions because each individual port and its situation is so different. The first chapter explores the political economy of ports in the global supply chain as generators of trade and employment set within national and local contexts. Though regulated according to international standards, ports present unique environments, in which various actors engaged on either side of the policing and security problem operate as forces for public good and criminal. The second chapter offers a series of case studies to highlight

the challenges of policing complex criminality in leading major seaports. The cases involve mostly Italian and American seaports, but Montreal is mentioned in connection with organized crime and the syndicated smuggling of drugs in large quantities. The trend is toward high policing, characterized by Canadian criminologist Jean-Paul Brodeur, as the confluence of intelligence gathering, state-directed political and economic interests, and exceptional law enforcement powers and jurisdiction that encompasses national security, as well as a mix of local policing and private security termed hybrid policing. The third chapter explains the emerging vocabulary and concepts behind security governance in ports such as flow, plural policing, networks, and nodal mapping. The sweeping statement that “historically conservative and realist study of sea power has meant that port security has often been studied for its influence on the distribution of hard naval power and military competition” (86) somewhat ignores the close connections that navies and commercial ports in maritime nations and coastal states have had with trade and economic activity related to the oceans – in Alfred Thayer Mahan’s words, the great global commons. The understanding of ports as interfaces and doors promotes plurality of a hybrid nature. The fourth chapter looks to the future of security in ports by assessing the efficacy of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code meant to address counter-terrorism vice major criminal activity and drug trafficking and by considering the disruptive impact of new technologies, digitization, automation, and cybersecurity. Selected seaports are becoming larger, with increasing volumes of containers and commodities and fewer actual people working in the system of moving goods from ship to shore and shore to ship. That makes them particularly vulnerable to penetration and subversion by criminals, who prey on weaknesses and human failings. Middle-level managers, technicians, and programmers are easy targets and associates in circumventing formal safeguards. Even more worrisome, port policing takes place without police, often times in name only.

While good at putting port policing and security into a wider context, the book leaves many questions unanswered, perhaps intentionally in pushing a larger research agenda, to be truly useful to responsible security and law enforcement professionals. The inner workings of marine security working groups and other collaborative spaces where they meet and cooperate are still very much a mystery, because minutes are often not kept or withheld from public scrutiny for operational reasons. Equally, criminals are naturally reticent about advertising their activities for fear of discovery and prosecution. Criminal intelligence reports produced by police quite often give a lopsided law enforcement perspective on criminality, influenced by advocacy for sufficient resources to enable police to fulfill their range of functions. Practitioners invited to the workshops and quoted in the book only reflect a certain point of

view that may or may not accord to reality in the ports. Whether the arguments that police and others make are convincing remains a matter for debate. The authors run together the separate words global and local into “glocal,” a social scientist nod at cleverness. Moreover, the focus on Brexit and on-going trade disputes between the United States and China in the chapters and conclusion distracts from broader understanding of port policing and security relevant to a far larger number of countries.

The book is available in both hardcover and electronic formats. The bibliography does not provide URL links to all open access entries, including my own article “Pacific Gateway” in the *Salus Journal* ([https://salusjournal.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03/Madsen\\_Salus\\_Journal\\_Volume\\_6\\_-\\_Number\\_1\\_2018\\_pp\\_26-4.pdf](https://salusjournal.com/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03/Madsen_Salus_Journal_Volume_6_-_Number_1_2018_pp_26-4.pdf)). The e-book in the Adobe PDF format allows limited links between the text, bibliography, index, and outside sources. The e-book, however, does not come with additional layers of data sets, information, and illustrations (pictures of the authors, for example) which are now possible. Publishers like Bristol University Press are simply content to make a digital copy of the traditional book with the same pagination, at a lower price point. The publisher may restrict the use and availability of content in the digital format at a later date. For this reason, the hardcover paper book sitting on a shelf still has a certain cachet. *Ports, Crime and Security* is recommended as a primer for anyone from the policy, law enforcement, national security, port management, shipping, and organized trade union communities interested in framing port policing and criminal activity inside major seaports.

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**Douglas V. Smith. *Carrier Battles: Command Decisions in Harm's Way*. Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2020 (originally published 2006). xxxiii+346 pp., illustrations, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. US \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-68247-502-7. (E-book available)**

This is a reprint of Smith's 2006 study on the decision making processes of commanding officers during the five carrier battles of the Second World War in the Pacific Theatre. Six central chapters focus on the engagements from a primarily American perspective, although Smith includes some of the Japanese rationale as well. Drawing from an impressive array of sources, he aims to illustrate the factors that led to the offensive mindset of American commanders and their ability to make quick and effective decisions in combat situations. Maps and diagrams used throughout the work chart the movements

of both surface vessels and aircraft. Additionally, an appendix of the Japanese plans regarding the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere appears at the end to aid in understanding some of the Japanese planning and mindset. An extensive collection of endnotes, a bibliography, and an index round out the work. Smith's extensive footnotes contain additional information rather than just source citations.

Prior to describing the carrier battles, Smith spends thirty-two pages discussing the prewar education of the American naval officers involved in wartime operations. Largely focusing on how men were taught "the wrong stuff" in the "right way" to encourage tactically-offensive decisions, this segment includes examinations of the perceived role of air power along with a rather interesting examination of the infamous court martial of Brigadier General William "Billy" Mitchell (9). The chapters that follow represent the five carrier battles, with relevant pre-engagement data discussed within each. The length of discussion varies, with twenty-eight pages devoted to the Battle of Santa Cruz, while the eponymous Battle of Midway boasts sixty-eight pages. The Battle of Coral Sea section includes an account of the attack on Pearl Harbor, extending the average discussion of the four of the five battles to around thirty pages each.

Smith's analysis of the engagements is quite complimentary to the American commanders, particularly Admiral Frank J. Fletcher. A man often maligned for abandoning the Marines on Guadalcanal, Fletcher's decisions are defended via historical analysis and direct primary source citation, lauding his decision to preserve the carriers and surface vessels for future engagements. The author's breakdown of engagements and decisions is fairly detailed, highlighting the American ability to deviate and improvise in ways alien to the highly orchestrated plans of Japanese naval warfare. He believes that the pre-war American textbook, *Sound Military Decisions*, served as the key educational cornerstone for the American naval officers involved in the carrier battles, and consistently drives home how the lessons and techniques the men were taught in their pre-war education gave them the foundation to succeed in actual combat scenarios. Smith further breaks down his analysis of battles in retrospective conclusions, where individual decisions are given a school-type "grade," an admittedly more subjective part of the work.

Nevertheless, several suggestions for improvement come to mind. The book makes very little use of photographs, generally placing a single small image at the start of each chapter. Including a few more of the many images available to illustrate personnel, ships, and engagements would help with the visualization of both the personalities involved and the situations faced during the battles. There is a wide range in quality of both maps and engagement diagrams from highly detailed examples to almost useless, unlabeled shapes

(64, 105, 115, 132, 140, 160). The replacement of the more crude diagrams from the Naval War College with more detailed scaled examples would be greatly appreciated. Furthermore, the Japanese perspective was relatively lacking. The expansion of the analysis to better examine Japanese pre-war training, commanders, and their decision-making would further enhance the work and help account for why one nation's officers triumphed over another's. Finally, the foreword seems almost disconnected from the rest of the work, focusing more on the submarine war than dealing with carrier battles. Addressing these issues in a future edition would definitely strengthen the work.

*Carrier Battles* is a good resource for those interested in the role of American commanders in the Pacific Theatre. It is by no means perfect, with several venues available for improvement and expansion. For students of American naval tactics, however, or those interested in the actions of Admirals Fletcher, Nimitz, Kincaid, and Spruance, and scholars seeking a compendium of key carrier actions during the Second World War, the work offers a solid compilation of data and analysis. Hopefully Smith will further refine his work to improve on his relatively solid foundation.

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**Jeremy Stoke. *More Lives Than a Ship's Cat. The Most Highly Decorated Midshipman in the Second World War.* Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword Maritime, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2022. 288 pp., illustrations, maps, appendixes, bibliography, index, US\$49.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39907-1367-9.**

Most naval memoirs spotlight the exploits of well-known commanders who participated in one or several historic battles. In a refreshing departure *More Lives Than a Ship's Cat* focuses upon a young sailor whose Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was not combat. He was a clerk, who earned the distinction of being *The Most Highly Decorated Midshipman in the Second World War*. Of obscure Ashkenazi roots, Gordon Alexander (Mick) Stoke was the last to be admitted into the Paymaster Branch Class at Dartmouth Royal Naval College, but finished with a first in his group. That was in January 1940. Paymasters spend much of their time ciphery and deciphering signals for the commander, and are concerned with accounting, distributing pay, secretarial work, victualling, clothing, stores, and performing secretarial work for senior officers. This MOS, although significant, was an unlikely path to become a highly distinguished naval officer. Yet Stoke excelled as a student, athlete, and valued junior officer, rising through the ranks from midshipman, the lowest

officer rank in the British Royal Navy, to lieutenant at an astonishing pace. His last “flimsy” (efficiency report) of 1945 typified what his commanders thought of him. “An outstanding Officer in every way, of marked ability, and assurance. Has a larger reserve of energy and has shown great initiatives in several jobs. He has an excellent knowledge of his many duties. . . a first-class Captain Secretary who should go far in the Service. Physically fit, keenly interested in games and has a good knowledge of French and Spanish. Thoroughly recommended for grant of seniority...” (235).

Mick, as he was known, was “Mentioned in Dispatches” several times early in his career, and later awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) and DSC (Distinguished Service Cross for Gallantry), the Atlantic Star, Africa Star, Italy Star, Arctic Star, Arctic Emblem, the Soviet Russian Convoy Medal, and a Star and Silver Pacific Medal. The stars indicated the war theatres in which he saw action during the Second World War. Remarkably he survived multiple devastating torpedo attacks while serving onboard HMS *Glasgow*, *Queen Elizabeth*, *Carlisle*, and *Hardy*. The last event occurred in the icy waters about fifty miles south of Bear Island inside the Arctic Circle. He also survived extraordinary heavy and sustained bombing raids while stationed onboard these ships and acting as an onshore-based naval coordinator participating in the desert siege of Tobruk in 1941, at the bleak Algerian port Bone during Operation Torch at the end of 1942 on into 1943, and later supplying logistical support for the Sicilian and Salerno invasions. Stokes was stationed onboard HMS *Kempfenfelt*, the British destroyer that laid claim to being the closest to the shore delivering supporting artillery fire to the D-Day invasion at Juno Beach. He later acted as a liaison officer to the US Navy from a British aircraft carrier in the Pacific toward the last days of the war during which he had served from age nineteen to twenty-four. After his military service he became a successful businessman receiving the 1981 Queen’s Award for Export (for British businesses who excel at international trade, innovation, and development). The former navy paymaster died at the age of seventy in 1991.

Jeremy Stoke, the author and Mick’s son, had access to a broad array of primary source documents, letters to his parents and wife, and a variety of naval logs, newspapers, official releases, and other papers. Stoke skillfully takes his readers from his father’s induction into the navy and through 15 detailed, largely action-packed chapters that end with his deployment to the Pacific and marriage to Second Officer WRNS Doreen Le Poidevin. There are vivid descriptions of life at sea, clear sailing in the heat and sandstorms in North Africa, ice-filled pitching seas in the Arctic, or cruising upon the extremely far reaches of the war in the South Pacific. All of this while enduring multiple attacks on his ships by planes strafing decks, bombs dropped on or

around them, avoiding mines, U-boats, suffering torpedo attacks, and a few unfortunate sinkings.

Lieutenant Stoke makes frequent prideful references in his letters to his family about winning rugby matches and other sporting competitions amid the serious terrors of war. All the while the young man was advancing his academic studies and earning praise from his superiors, thus advancing his naval career at a rapid pace. There are occasional breaks in the narrative where he describes his thoughts in personal letters while keeping within the confines of wartime security. In turn, Mick very humanly yearns for letters from his family and from Doreen, later his future wife. He has strong opinions about the German enemy, but also waxes mildly polemical about the French, Algerians, Egyptians, Italians, and the Americans. He expresses dismay at American racial prejudice he observed and particularly their attitude to the war. "They are mainly preoccupied with Japan and consider Germany is mostly a subsidiary war.... The newspapers concentrate so much on American news that British achievements only get attention if they are really startling and then it will be headlines for only a day" (222).

Cleverly titled, well written, fast moving, *More Lives Than a Ship's Cat* is a riveting look at British naval history from an unusual, intimate point of view. Mick Stoke's extraordinary life appears as an uncommon version of everyman. I highly recommend Stoke's work for maritime historians concerned with the Royal Navy during the Second World War.

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**Colin Thubron. *The Amur River: Between Russia and China*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com), 2022. 304 pp., map, index, US \$19.00, paper; ISBN 978-0-06309-969-2. (E-book available.)**

If one factors its source stream into the equation, as geographers routinely do, the Amur River is the tenth longest in the world, coursing 2763 miles from west to east. It originates in remote Mongolian bogs and carves a pair of broad, graceful arcs before finding its outlet in the Strait of Tartary, behind Sakhalin Island. For 1100 of its miles, the Amur forms the border between Russia and China, a region freighted with a difficult history (Genghis Khan, Stalin, purges) and a tense present (Putin, watch towers, live-fire exercises). Westerners rarely travel there and if they do, it is at their peril.

Colin Thubron knew this as well as anyone. An acclaimed travel writer with numerous books and awards to his credit, he owns extensive experience in both Russia and China, and at eighty-four has lost none of his grit. Indeed,



at a time when most men his age might be expected to enjoy a well-deserved retirement, Thubron embarked on a personal exploration of the Amur from source to outfall. This was no idle riverine meander, but rather, a difficult journey by horse, foot, train, car, ferry, and smugglers' boat, crisscrossing "a fault-line shrouded in old mistrust" (1).

Thubron writes beautifully, and he nicely conjures the river's many moods and personalities throughout this absorbing book. He began his odyssey in Mongolia on horseback with two guides. "Here is the infant Amur," he writes of its swampy headwaters. "It has a faint peaty tinge. Upstream it does not bubble whole from the ground, but emerges in a glinting coalescence of marshland waters, edged by fescue grass and willows" (12). Not surprisingly, the horses struggled through this morass, sunk to their withers with the "peat-laden water brimming over their backs" (16). At one point, Thubron's mount rolled over, trapping him underneath, "my ribcage screaming" (16). The horse regained its footing and lurched forward, dragging him a short distance before he wrenched his foot free of the stirrup. Thubron suffered two fractured ribs and a broken ankle, but rather than seek medical help or cancel his trip, he pressed forward, convinced that his injuries were not severe.

At Sretensk, Russia, a town "of mellow tranquility" where "nothing has overlaid the past" (73), Thubron encountered curiosity, suspicion, and virtually no commercial or recreational activity on the 400-yard-wide river. "Nobody fishes or sails on it," he observed, and "the only ship I see is a decommissioned patrol vessel set up on a memorial ramp" (74). He was briefly detained and interrogated, his explanation that he was writing a book about the Amur River only baffling the police, until higher-ups cleared him to continue. The ordinary Russians he interviewed in that remote Siberian fastness showed no energy, the young had little ambition, and everyone hated the Chinese. "There is a sour repetitiveness to everything I hear. That the Chinese can't be trusted. They are aggressive and sly. They work hard, but they have closed hearts" (122).

There is no denying that both optimism and prosperity are brighter on the Chinese side of the border. Russia's Amur population is about two million whereas China's is a burgeoning 110 million. Throughout his journey Thubron noted the glittering cities, extravagant lights, and towering buildings that overlooked what the Chinese call the Black Dragon River. In Heihe, a town of 1.2 million, he felt the contrast with Russia most keenly. "Parked beneath the grander flat-blocks, where spruce young women are walking in platform boots, I see lines of brand-new Subaru, Lexus and Toyota saloons, and Land Rovers with tinted windows" (147-8). The city's main business centre was a noisy "din of commerce" and the shops "bright-lit palaces, trumpeted in front by a raucous crossfire of loudspeakers" (148).

Along the last leg of his journey Thubron made a river run with a couple

of Russian poachers seeking caviar-rich salmon and the protected kaluga sturgeon (which can grow up to 18 feet long). They zipped along in a “tough, 25-foot sloop, whose four wonky seats have been torn from somewhere else” (241). Two policemen in a patrol boat overtook them, but they were easygoing compared to those elsewhere along the route. The officers knew the locals needed the fish to live, and they were happy to joke and sip a little vodka before departing. Away from the bonhomie on the water, however, Thubron found dire poverty, isolation, and a history of catastrophic floods. One of the poacher’s wives was blunt: “I scream every day. I forget human language. We have no television, no telephone, no radio.” She continued: “If your wife was out here, she’d be gone in two days. I’ve been here eleven years” (262).

The Amur’s mouth is largely to blame for its dearth of commerce. Thubron found it an underwhelming “labyrinth of shoals, shallows and dead ends” (267) that is iced over seven months of the year. Nonetheless, during the mid-nineteenth century, the Russians seized the area from China and established the port town of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur in hopes of developing it into a busy eastern entrepot to rival San Francisco. But the new lighthouse, log trading houses, shops selling fancy wares, and chuffing steamboats failed to overcome its natural disadvantages. A century and a half later, Thubron rambled a declining burg whose less than 30,000 people had “nobody to trade with and nothing to trade” (268).

Colin Thubron does what a good travel writer should do in this highly readable book – he introduces the reader to a little-known and less-frequented place, unfolds its eventful history as well as its stunning natural beauty, and introduces some remarkable people who inspire both fear and hope for the future. And all that with two fractured ribs and a broken ankle!

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**Steven Ujifusa. *Barons of the Sea, and Their Race to Build the World’s Fastest Clipper Ship*. New York: Simon & Schuster, [www.simonandschuster.ca](http://www.simonandschuster.ca), 2021 426 pp., appendix, notes, index, \$29.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-47674-598-5. (E-book available.)**

Before the space entrepreneurs of the twenty-first century, the railroad magnates of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, there were the barons of the nineteenth-century Industrial Age – some involved with ships as well as roads. A unique group of competitors spanning the years from the 1840s through 1860s in the United States sought to outdo each other in building the fastest, finest, and most profitable clipper ships to carry cargo from Canton, China

(modern day Guangzhou, China) to the United States. By the twentieth century, the maritime quest for speed often focused on the transatlantic luxury liners and the Blue Riband. Decades earlier, the focus of American industrialists was on clipper ships and China. It is the latter quest that Steven Ujifusa, author of *A Man and His Ship* (2012) presents in an engaging, fast-moving, and well-written book, *Barons of the Sea*.

Telling the story of personalities such as Warren Delano (grandfather of Franklin Delano Roosevelt), Abiel Abbot Low, Moses Grinnell, John Murray Forbes, and Donald McKay, the author tells not only the story of ships, but also of families that would dominate Boston and New York business for almost a hundred years. Not unlike the rulers of city-state of Venice in previous centuries with its families whose wealth derived from maritime trade, American families of the clipper ship trade created their own aristocracy of power built upon trade with China of porcelain, tea, silk, lacquer, jades, and other goods desired in the West. To be sure, there also was an underlying competitiveness with Great Britain that was both national and financial. Ironically, it was crates of Chinese hyson tea that had been dumped into Boston Harbor in 1773.

American clippers ships doubled the speed with which British ships could bring the same goods to market. Under American sailing masters and American clipper ships, return voyage times dropped from six months to just over three months duration from Canton to New York or Canton to London. America was being transformed from an agrarian society to an international maritime nation long before the sail-to-steam maritime revolution. The rise of the clipper barons was also set against the backdrop of Britain's two Opium Wars with China, from which the United States benefitted diplomatically and economically.

Ujifusa weaves an engaging narrative that begins in 1839 with a young Warren Delano at his estate, Algonac, north of New York City, thinking back twenty years to his time in China and his business relationship with Houqua (Wu Ping-Chien), a great Chinese merchant, who helped Delano prosper. A story within a story is the leisure and competitive sailing of Westerners in Canton during the hours not spent in the counting houses known as "Factories." Also interesting, though not unusual, is the way in which friendships made among the "Canton bachelors" in the mid-1840s would develop into the later intertwining of families through marriage.

Timed to the seasons, including the monsoon season and prevailing winds, ships of many nations vied for the best tea, especially the first picking of hyson, with hopes great fortunes to be made at auction. American merchants and ships were the last to arrive in then-200-year-old market. Once around Cape Horn, they diverged to major ports of their respective nations. For the United States, it was the docks of Boston and New York City. While many merchants and

mariners sought and made fortunes in whaling and whale oil, others turned to tea and some to both. It was tea that was to prove to be the more profitable of the two commodities.

The author's eighteen chapters present an aspect of nineteenth-century history that is only touched upon in most histories, if at all. Chapter 3 is especially informative as it deals with American merchants' the unspoken commodity in the 1800s – opium. Made possible, in part, by small and fast British and American schooners known as “opium clippers,” the illegal opium trade undergirded much of the legal Western trade.

Replacing the first-generation Baltimore clippers, the ships developed during and after the 1840s became the standard clipper ship of the China trade. A chapter is devoted to each of two designers without whom the clipper ship story would be incomplete – Nathaniel Brown Palmer, known as “Captain Nat” and Donald McKay. It was McKay's second clipper ship, the *Flying Cloud*, sold to shipping magnate Moses Grinnell by Enoch Train in 1851 for \$90,000 that is probably the most iconic of the clipper ships (along with McKay's *Sovereign of the Seas*).

The author recounts not only the history of American maritime fortunes, family dynasties, and economic rivalries, he tells also of the human cost in the quest for speed and profit. The loss of ships and crews was an ever-present threat that was realized by far too many sailors. Clipper ship sailors faced all the hardships written described by Herman Melville in his 1850 work *White-Jacket*.

Ujifusa helpfully reminds readers that clipper ship routes were not limited to the China trade. The discovery of gold in California in January 1848 brought enthusiasm, desire, and clamouring demand for rapid passage from America's eastern seaboard to the California goldfields. With the discovery of gold in California and American national expansion westward, the China to San Francisco voyage became lucrative. Carrying cheap Chinese labour for the building of railroad and other enterprises, the clipper ships enlarged their manifests of valuable cargo.

The author chronicles well the transition from “Indiaman” to “clipper ship” in an interesting narrative. He contextualizes details and gives readers a work that flows easily. Especially helpful is the appendix that provides line drawings and sail configurations of clipper ships, also showing their design development. Readers will not be disappointed.

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**Michael A. Verney. *A Great and Rising Nation: Naval Exploration and Global Empire in the Early US Republic*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, [www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu), 2022. vii+300 pp., illustrations, map, notes, index. US \$35.00, paper; ISBN 978-0-226-81992-1. (E-book available.)**

No understanding of American national development during the Early Republic and antebellum period is complete without the acknowledgement of the role played by naval exploration in developing early visions of American global empire. While the United States expanded its territory across the North American continent, it sought to achieve imperial ambitions abroad through US Navy-led exploring expeditions. The republican character of many American citizens did not allow explorationists to embark on the expeditions for the same government-initiated reasons that Europeans had. Rather, explorationists found interest groups within the United States to support their enterprise, transforming a lack of interest in expeditions at the end of the War of 1812 to the funding of voyages much larger than European counterparts by the 1850s.

In *A Great and Rising Nation: Naval Exploration and Global Empire in the Early Republic*, Michael Verney argues that the United States' attempts to fulfil its imperial ambitions during the antebellum period were "neither wholly exceptional nor unexceptional" (6). He also asserts that US imperialism was multidimensional, composed of "republicanism, capitalism, Protestantism, white supremacy, traditional gender roles, and imperial expansion" (7). Interests representing these several dimensions promoted exploring expeditions to different parts of the Pacific, the Middle East, South America, and even into the Arctic Circle. Verney masterfully uses case studies of several US expeditions to demonstrate their use for various imperial ends.

Early attempts to fund the first exploring expedition, which, though boasting both government and private supporters, ultimately lost favour in Congress due to republican fears of such an endeavour strengthening the central government. The explorationists found an unlikely ally in President Andrew Jackson. Though he at first championed fiscal restraint over naval adventures, Jackson adapted the idea of exploration to his own ends, namely expanding US naval influence in regions where Jacksonian capitalism had attempted to break into. The resulting voyage, known as the US Exploring Expedition (1838-42), both communicated American government interest in protecting Jacksonian capitalism (even resorting to racial violence in Fiji to achieve that end) and produced American charts of the Pacific that attempted to "equalize opportunity for working white men and the capitalist investors who supplied them" (72).

Beyond examining the stated goals of the expedition, Verney devotes

significant attention to the popular reaction to the expedition and the careful efforts of explorationists to use it to portray the United States as a rising empire – one capable of matching British and French scientific discoveries. Verney argues that the white American population, settled in a rapidly growing and changing young nation, welcomed the expedition's assurances of American empire with open arms. He shows how the expedition's official narrative played to the racial, class, and national interests of its intended audience through both the process of creating expedition literature, and sources of popular reaction to these narratives. This chapter demonstrates that exploring expeditions did not exist in a vacuum between the Navy Department and Congress, but gained the interest of the American populace, shaping their ideas of the world around them and their place in it.

Though the aforementioned expedition is the most well known in this time period, Verney demonstrates how lesser-known expeditions also reveal much about American attitudes, ambitions, and insecurities toward the world in different ways, accomplishing this brilliantly in his chapter on the US Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea. In addition to the Jacksonians seeking to protect their brand of capitalism, the American evangelical (a term that Verney defines as Conservative Protestant) establishment sought to protect its status from potential foreign and theologically liberal threats to their claims of religious truth. The Dead Sea Expedition, which had attempted to find the ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah, failed in its ultimate objective. Its aftermath highlights the mixed reactions at home that exploring expeditions brought. Namely, Congress seemed disinterested in the expedition's report while evangelicals framed the mission in a positive light.

Verney explores other themes of American empire regarding these expeditions, from the South American expeditions that attempted to secure a future for slavery for white southerners, to attempts at US-British rapprochement in the American search for missing British explorer Sir John Franklin. Using official expedition reports, popular sources reacting to expeditions, and a wealth of historiography, the author demonstrates that exploring expeditions became a vessel in which various antebellum interests competed for political legitimacy. His thorough seventy pages of notes and clear definition of terms makes *A Great and Rising Nation* easy for readers to follow. Verney poses new questions concerning the relationship of American empire, race, religion, gender, and the US Navy, all while including non-American voices in the study of these overseas expeditions. This book would be an excellent addition to the library of any North American, maritime, or global historian.

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**Michael Fredholm von Essen. *The Hunt for the Storozhevoy: The 1975 Soviet Navy Mutiny in the Baltic*. Havertown, PA: Helion and Company, Europe@War Series, Casemate Publishing, [www.casementpublishing.com](http://www.casementpublishing.com), 2022. 64 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. US \$29.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-91507-070-8. (E-book available.)**

A sclerotic Soviet regime was in its sixth decade in power when a committed Communist attempted to launch internal reform in November 1975. He was naval officer Valery Sablin whose improbable scheme was to seize control of his powerful ship, the destroyer *Storozhevoy* (“Sentry” or “Picket,” a traditional Russian navy destroyer name first used in the Tsarist fleet) and take it 300 nautical miles to Leningrad. There he would call on national television for an uprising to cleanse the regime. Valery Sablin had control of *Storozhevoy* for only thirteen hours before it was surrounded by pursuing ships and aircraft and crew members not loyal to his cause wounded and captured him. *Storozhevoy* returned to Riga from where it had sailed, the crew was interrogated and dispersed to other ships, and the ship joined the Pacific Fleet with a new crew. This dramatic story did not receive public notice in Russia until 1990. Once media restrictions were loosened, there was a torrent of Russian-language articles, videos, and books. Each significant five-year anniversary since has triggered articles and opinion pieces in Russia about the incident. Most see Sablin as a misguided idealist, whose aim was political reform, but some portray him as a traitor, a term which triggers stronger reaction in Russia than in the West. *The Hunt for the Storozhevoy* is the first extensive English-language account since *The Last Sentry* by Young and Braden (2005). The author is Michael Fredholm von Essen, a Swedish academic, historian, and geopolitical analyst who has published several books about Sweden when it was a leading European power. His output has included articles about contemporary Swedish intelligence. This nicely produced, slim volume is one of new series of similar shortish “Europe at War” booklets about Cold War topics being published in the UK by Helion & Company.

Von Essen’s account is straightforward and thorough. He begins by setting *Storozhevoy*, commissioned only two years before the incident, into the context of Soviet defence doctrine. This section includes a succinct summary of the evolution of Soviet defence concepts and of warship types. He very carefully describes the various types of warships and aircraft that pursued *Storozhevoy*, the combat organizations to which they belonged, and where they were based. These descriptions are accompanied by useful data tables and well-chosen photographs. The narrative traces basic details of how Valery Sablin, the specialist officer responsible for political education on board took control of his ship through subterfuge, how he started for Leningrad, and how he was intercepted at sea.

Once the Soviet chain of command became aware that *Storozhevoy* was underway, it scrambled what became a powerful combination of warships and aircraft. According to von Essen, this eventually involved 30 medium-range bombers, 20 fighter bombers, two maritime patrol aircraft and even the venerable cruiser *Sverdlov* and several powerful warships. While several participants contributed to written accounts and documentaries in later years, these were compiled fifteen or more years after the events. Most of the eyewitnesses had been young conscripts, aged 18 to 20 in 1975. There are inconsistencies and exaggerations in these accounts. Von Essen records that naval and frontal aviation records were ordered to be destroyed. Other official records, if they survived the end of the USSR, are not available. *The Hunt for the Storozhevoy* is the first published account in a language other than Swedish to draw directly on contemporary Swedish intelligence. Von Essen uses these reports and was able to discuss them and events with officials who were involved.

One of *The Hunt's* eight chapters is a welcome description of the evolution of Swedish intercept capabilities for Soviet signals and radar transmissions. We learn that going back to 1952, the United States shared intelligence with Sweden on the same basis as Denmark and West Germany under a secret arrangement (6). Valery Sablin's unsuccessful venture happened on a weekend, Saturday evening until Sunday forenoon. Swedish intercept stations recorded unusual levels of Russian radio and radar traffic on the other side of the Baltic, but the analysts who collated this data worked a five-day week. When the recordings were analysed starting on the Monday it was thought that they had registered a series of unusual exercises. The analysts deduced that a fleet of several warships including *Storozhevoy* had "exercised" with multiple aircraft from both naval and frontal squadrons. The early analysis stated that *Storozhevoy* had been "possibly attacked" by frontal aviation, but the notion that an actual attack had occurred seemed so implausible that it was dismissed. Moreover, no signs of other heightened Warsaw Pact military activity had been detected. The narrative suggests that the Swedish analysis was based on intercepted plain text traffic and radar surveillance of airspace. It was not until several days later that a Human Intelligence (HUMINT) source in Latvia, a dockyard worker, reported to his Swedish handler via a contact in a third country that a warship had sustained combat damage. By the end of November 1975, Swedish intelligence had begun to form a picture of what really happened, and a story appeared in a tabloid in January 1976. One of the Swedish intelligence analysts later observed that because the surveillance system failed to provide immediate warning Swedish decision makers and military units would have had no advance warning had *Storozhevoy* reached Swedish waters (46).



Valery Sablin was a Soviet insider. He and his brothers had grown up in a naval family living in naval towns and he would marry the daughter of a naval officer. After training at the most prestigious Russian naval academy, he had served in the fleet for several years. Long interested in Communism, he then volunteered for four years of study at the Military-Political Academy in Moscow. This specialist training qualified him as a political officer. His first ship in this position was the new Project 1135 (NATO type designation KRIVAK) *Storozhevoy*. Dissatisfied by the wide gap between Communist doctrine and Soviet reality, Sablin decided that he would engineer an internal revolution on his own.

He chose to act when his ship was part of a fleet moored off Riga to celebrate the anniversary of the 1917 Revolution, a time when several officers were conveniently absent on leave. After using subterfuge to lock up his commanding officer, Sablin mustered the ship's officers and youthful ship's company separately to explain his project to broadcast a national appeal in Leningrad where the Communist revolution had started. The few officers and a handful of sailors who chose not to support the plan were locked up. Participants later related a feeling of euphoria at being part of a daring venture. *Storozhevoy* had recently completed a long voyage to Cuba and the political officer would have been well known to his listeners because of his regular political indoctrination sessions and a penchant for one-on-one chats.

A dissenting officer managed to make his way to the "duty ship" in the river. His report about the planned exploit sounded so implausible that it took some time until it was reported up the chain of command. Meanwhile, Sablin did not get *Storozhevoy* underway until 0215, almost four hours after the dissenter had made his escape. Within the hour, air stations and naval bases in the area were receiving urgent orders to intercept. One air base was informed that a NATO warship had penetrated Soviet waters. As his ship headed in darkness through the Gulf of Riga toward the open Baltic, Sablin communicated by radio with the admiral commanding the Baltic Fleet and transmitted his demands to broadcast to the nation to Admiral Gorshkov, the C-in-C Soviet Navy.

The first units to intercept *Storozhevoy* were KGB Border Guard cutters inside the entrance to the Gulf of Riga at 0742. Sablin ignored their semaphore instructions to stop, told them that he and his crew remained loyal to the USSR, and headed out the wide Irben Strait at the entrance to the gulf. Shortly afterwards Admiral Gorshkov took command from Moscow of the naval interceptions – minutes later *Storozhevoy* was located by Ilyushin-18 maritime patrol aircraft. They passed his location to Tupolev-16 naval medium bombers that launched from what is now Belarus. Nine planes in flights of three arrived overhead at 0915 as Sablin, now clear of the entrance, was steering northwest on the first leg of a deep-water track around Estonia to Leningrad. For the next

hour, the medium bombers made increasingly low passes over the ship, firing their machine guns into the water next to the ship. Sablin manoeuvred his ship aggressively to avoid presenting a steady target. The medium bombers were armed with single anti-ship missiles. These had to be launched from a range of 110 km after the bomber had acquired the target on radar preparatory to guiding the missile on its flight. All ships in the vicinity of *Storozhevoy* were ordered to clear to a safe distance of 10 km, a standard procedure before an anti-ship missile attack from the air in case of a miss.

Meanwhile, other forces were closing on *Storozhevoy*. About twenty Air Force Frontal Aviation Yakovlev-28 fighter bombers armed with 250kg bombs had taken off from a field near Riga by 1000. The Minister of Defence, Marshal Grechko had ordered them to attack and, if necessary, sink the destroyer. Their aircrews had been trained to strike NATO airbases, not targets at sea. Hampered by patchy visibility and low cloud cover the YAK-28s at 1020 launched bombs ahead of a ship that turned out to be a Soviet freighter that promptly radioed that it was being attacked. Minutes later the YAKS dropped bombs ahead of a small destroyer that had been scrambled from a base further south. The attack stopped when the destroyer fired flares. Bomb fragments landing on board caused damage.

The buzzing by medium bombers and their machine gun volleys, accompanied by the violent evasive manoeuvring of their ship, rattled several crew members who released their commanding officer and seized weapons from the ship's small arms storage. They headed to the bridge where the commanding officer wounded Sablin with a pistol shot. Minutes later at 1032, *Storozhevoy* signalled to ships in the vicinity that the attempted uprising was over. The narrative shows that air and surface units were not communicating seamlessly, nor were the naval and frontal aviation units communicating with each other. At 1016 a Tu-16 medium bomber was ordered to launch an anti-ship missile. It manoeuvred into firing position even as *Storozhevoy's* commanding officer regained control below. Von Essen speculates that this aircraft might have carried a nuclear missile, but concedes authoritative records are not available (40-41). At 1045 the launch aircraft radioed that it had a radar malfunction and ordered the other two aircraft in its flight to attack, but a minute later all medium bombers were ordered to cease attacking. *Storozhevoy* headed back into the Gulf of Riga.

A special commission headed by Admiral Gorshkov interrogated the crew. Its report chastised Sablin as "somebody who has hidden his fervent anti-Sovietism and hostile views for a long time" (43). It also found fault with his hapless commanding officer and three officers in Riga who had been slow to report while evaluating what they had thought was an improbable seizure of control by Sablin. The commanding officer was reduced in rank

(but later promoted) and never served at sea again. He, Sablin, and the three other officers judged wanting in Riga were evicted from the party. Thirteen *Storozhevoy* officers and other crew members who had actively supported Sablin were given the equivalent of dishonourable discharges. Sablin and a 20-year-old conscript who had acted as his assistant were formally tried months later. The sailor spent eight years in Russian jails while Sablin, whose idealism impressed his KGB interrogator, was shot. His family were not informed of his fate for almost a year.

The Soviet regime suppressed information about the incident while denying that it could ever have happened. Eyewitness accounts tell of the repercussions within Soviet Frontal Aviation. Von Essen discusses changes to internal Swedish intelligence reporting procedures and how operating hours for analysts were increased.

*The Hunt for the Storozhevoy* is illustrated with clearly reproduced photographs and adequate maps. Colour plates of Soviet naval uniforms do not add to the story and are padding. This book is a careful account of an ill-fated attempt to initiate internal political reform in the USSR fifteen years before its collapse. Details about this episode remain obscure because official records are not available or were destroyed. Michael Fredholm von Essen's meticulous use of Swedish intelligence records in addition to Russian-language accounts that appeared years later make this as close to an authoritative record as possible.

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**Matthew Willis and Jim Laurier (illustrator). *Royal Navy Torpedo-Bombers vs Axis Warships 1939-45*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Books, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2022. 80 pp., illustrations, maps, chronology, bibliography, index. US \$22.00; CDN \$29.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-47285-248-9.**

During the Second World War, torpedo-carrying aircraft achieved remarkable results against shipping and warships as well as targeted strikes directly in naval anchorages. The increased air threat, in turn, evoked a counter response in more and heavier anti-aircraft armament provided onboard ships, to shoot down attacking planes before allowing them to get too close. Land-based maritime aircraft such as Coastal Command's Bristol Beaufort and Beaufighter, and flying boats like the Short Sunderland and Consolidated Catalina, were multi-role aircraft types pressed into offensive air operations over the sea. Only a handful of interwar navies possessed carriers capable of launching and retrieving aircraft on flight decks. Those practising the necessary tactics

included France, Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, although Germany and Italy aspired to gaining the capability with new building interrupted by the war. The main torpedo bombers seeing service in the wartime Royal Navy were the biplanes Fairey Swordfish and Albacore, and the monoplanes Barracuda and Grumman Avenger, obtained from the United States through Lend-Lease and assignment by the Combined Munitions Assignment Board. Matthew Willis, a frequent writer in aviation trade and historical journals, adds a contribution to the Osprey Duel series that pits dauntless Royal Navy aircrews and carrier torpedo aircraft against the surface units of the Kriegsmarine and Regia Marina, focusing primarily on the first three years of the war in European waters.

The highly illustrated book has an introduction, chronology, five main sections or chapters, a statistical analysis, and short concluding afterward followed by a list of further reading, websites, and Twitter feeds. Much of the commissioned colour artwork and drawings gracing the book, including the front cover, are by the American artist and illustrator Jim Laurier, an old hand from other Osprey Aviation series. Many original photographs come from Willis' own collection and are rare enough to be considered new. The discussion weaves the stories of the Royal Navy's air arm equipped with the obsolescent Swordfish and its replacements conducting active operations against large and smaller Axis warships with their anti-air defences in the waters off northern Europe and the Mediterranean. When France's Marine nationale built the fast battleships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg*, meant to hunt down and destroy cruisers with their forward-facing main guns, the German naval high command countered with construction of several commerce-raiding *panzerschiffe* (nicknamed pocket battleships), and two follow-on battlecruisers, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*. The Italians likewise rebuilt and modernized older battleships and laid down bigger, 40,000-ton hulls of the *Littorio*-class boasting specialized underwater protection against torpedoes and improved secondary armaments, particularly anti-aircraft guns.

A section dedicated to technical aspects furnishes details on the development of the British aircraft, the air-launched 18-inch Mk. XII torpedo directed by line of sight of the pilot or later, by analogue computer directors, protection provided by design features in the Axis warships such as the Pugliese System of shock-absorbing cylinders, and gun armaments in heavy, medium, and light varieties, with notable differences in rates of fire, loading, and reliability. The Germans and Italians each had standard 37 mm guns in powered mounts that compared with those available from foreign sources such as the Swedish Bofors 40 mm, and the smaller caliber Oerlikon 20 mm, capable of firing high explosive shells from a single manually sighted mount. The British and Americans eventually adopted those foreign armament

designs for manufacture in their own countries. The Royal Navy aggressively leveraged its available carriers and aircraft in the Mediterranean to maintain Great Britain's strategic position until forced to withdraw them in 1941; the *Formidable* barely escaping the attention of Luftwaffe dive bombers intent on sinking her. The next section is devoted to the place of torpedo-bomber air crews in the Fleet Air Arm, their composition, recruitment, and training, and the specialized training of German sailors in anti-aircraft gunnery along with their Italian counterparts. Shaded text boxes give additional information on Vice Admiral Arthur Lumley Lyster and Grand Admiral Erich Raeder as reflecting fleet developments touching upon carrier aviation in their respective navies. Germany's lone aircraft carrier, *Graf Zeppelin*, was never finished and made operational, while limited dockyard and industrial capacity in Italy delayed conversion of two aircraft carriers, *Sparviero* and *Aquila*. Both Axis countries, however, effectively employed dedicated land-based aircraft in maritime roles to exert sea denial in surrounding sea areas, particularly in the Mediterranean.

The combat section focuses on Swordfish and Albacore squadron operations during the ill-fated Norwegian campaign; in the Mediterranean, covering torpedo attacks on ships lying at the Vichy French anchorage at Mers el-Kébir and the defended main Italian naval base at Taranto in 1940; engagement with the Italian fleet at Cape Matapan; and running down and sinking the German battleship *Bismarck* in the North Atlantic as she was trying to reach Occupied France. When surprise was obtained and pre-planning and training sufficient, British attacks with the slow and low-flying torpedo bomber aircraft recorded marked success out of proportion to the forces committed. The nighttime Taranto operation (foreshadowing the surprise Japanese attack on the American naval anchorage at Pearl Harbor), in particular, hobbled the Italian navy and restricted its activities with a number of sunk and damaged warships. On other occasions, British aircraft and aircrews suffered terribly when confronting strong and determined air defences that caused high losses. Meeting high-performance land-based fighters in the air was almost suicidal, as demonstrated by the half-baked British reaction to the Channel Dash of German warships back to Germany. The aim, however, was to slow down or cripple a warship so that fleet surface units or submarines could intervene in a battle. The *Bismarck* chase proved this point. Swordfish flying at extreme range and displaying a great deal of courage managed to damage the battleship's rudder and aggravated earlier repaired battle damage. The resulting flooding caused a consequent decrease in speed sufficient for Home Fleet surface units to catch up for a conventional gun battle. Diagrams of typical attack profiles and descriptions by Willis highlight the torpedo attack tactics deployed against single warships, and where those were followed and deviated from.

This book provides a great deal of information in a small package on a

very specialized topic, both in terms of torpedo bombing methods and anti-aircraft capabilities aboard Second World War warships and the personnel who manned them. It should be consulted in conjunction with Jean-Denis Lepage's *Torpedo Bombers 1900-1950* (TNM/LMN 32 no. 1 (Winter 2022): 98-101) for technical details and wider context. The torpedo bomber, as a type, was already in decline well before the end of the war. Like Lepage's technical reference source, *Royal Navy Torpedo-Bombers vs Axis Warships* draws upon considerable research, but does not reference sources in notes or footnotes. This book in the growing Osprey Duel series list is recommended for readers interested in Second World War naval operations involving the British, German, and Italian navies, particularly in the Mediterranean. It will also appeal to researchers and scale modelers seeking background and technical details in easily understandable language.

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