

BOOK REVIEWS

Spencer Apollonio. *Lands that Hold One Spellbound. A Story of East Greenland.* Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, www.uofcpress.com, 2008. xx + 233 pp., illustrations, maps, graphs, glossary, bibliography, index. CDN/US \$34.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-55238-240-0.

This is the story of the human migrants who explored and populated East Greenland as gleaned from Icelandic Saga's, Danish and international exploration records, Danish government records, Allied and Axis archives from the Second World War, and post-1945 archives from these countries. It is grippingly told, for the most part in the words of the individuals who first observed and recorded the physical, meteorological and anthropological make-up of East Greenland.

East Greenland, as here discussed, extends from, the southernmost point of Greenland, Cap Farvel 59 45 N 43 53 W, north up the east coast to Ammassalik 65 40 N 37 20 W, thence north to Scoresby Sund / Ittoqqortoormiit 70 20 N 23 00 W, and so to the north point of Greenland, Kap Morris Jesup 83 38 N 32 40 W. In all, some 99,456 sq. km. (38,400 sq. mi.) of mountainous arctic territory, scored by deep fjords and mighty glaciers that produce numerous icebergs.

Surface access is difficult. From the west, the overland route crosses the Greenland ice cap that covers the interior of Greenland with ice up to 3,350 m. (10,990 ft.) thick. The ice cap is contained by the mountain ranges that form or back the coast. Sea-borne access from the east requires the crossing of the East Greenland Current, an ocean area of innumerable icebergs, thick sea ice, savage storms and frequent fogs. It is the graveyard of many ships and their crews.

The earliest migrants to Greenland, Paleo-Eskimos, arrived in three groups from the arctic edge of North America beginning around 2,200 BC. The first, group migrated south, down the east coast of Greenland to Scorsby Sund. They died out about 1300 BC. The second group arrived in northern Greenland about 2000 BC and migrated south, down the west coast around Kap Farvel, and north, up the east coast to Ammassalik by about 1900 BC. Known as the Saqqaq people, they disappeared about 800 BC. The third group of Paleo-Eskimo people with origins in the Eastern Canadian Arctic, now known as early Dorset people, passed through northeast Greenland to amalgamate with the Saqqaq people prior to the latter's disappearance. A later group of the Dorset people, also Paleo-Eskimo, arrived in Greenland about 800 AD. They are thought to have survived long enough to encounter the Neo-Eskimos of the Alaska-originated Arctic Whale Hunting Culture, who arrived about 1200 AD. People of this Thule Culture are the ancestors of today's Greenlanders.

The earliest sighting of the east coast of Greenland by a European occurred between the years AD 900 and 930. During the 500-year Norse colonization of West Greenland there were vague reports of mariners wrecked on the east coast while en route to the West Greenland colonies. These Nordic colonies were last heard from in 1408. From 1579 onwards, there were various attempts to reach Greenland's east coast from Europe. Henry Hudson, seeking a route to the Orient, came upon the coast of East Greenland on 13 June 1607. He neither landed on nor ever returned to East Greenland. During the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century all European attempts to land in East Greenland met with

failure. It was not until 1752 that the first European was known with certainty to have landed on the east coast in modern times. Peder Olsen Walloe, a trader in Greenland, passed by Kap Farvel from west to east in an umiak – an indigenous boat – and managed to travel 60 km (32nm) up the east coast. There his progress was thwarted by ice and an inhospitable shore. The farthest point he reached was named “Kap Walloe” in his honour.

In the spring of 1822, William Scorsby Jr., a young whaling captain, sailed from Liverpool in command of the arctic whaler *Baffin*. The coast of East Greenland was sighted on 8 June in latitude 74 06 N, the first recorded sighting in 150 years. Drifting southerly, he was finally able to land on 24 July. The following day, in a “spacious” inlet, he met his father, the master of the whaler *Fame* that had entered the inlet the day before. Scorsby Jr. named the inlet “Scorsby Sound,” for his father.

Fridtjof Nansen and five companions who made the first crossing of the Greenland ice cap in 1888 commenced their epic journey from a sealing vessel using two rowing boats set on the ice just south of Ammassalik on 17 July 1888. They drifted for twelve days before reaching open water along the coast at about latitude 61 35 N. A further twelve days, under oars, were spent seeking a landing with a practical route onto the ice cap. This they found at Colberger Heide at latitude 64 04 N, on 10 August. The following day they began their ascent of the inland ice, reaching the west coast of Greenland in the latter part of September, the first to do so.

The latter two-thirds of this book are devoted to East Greenland from the time of Danish pre-eminence in 1883. Included are public and private expeditions, jurisdictional disputes with Norway, experiences of early aviation, military

operations by Allied and Axis forces to establish meteorological stations during the Second World War, post-war air defence installations, and the “compulsory civilization” that followed the introduction of civil aviation into East Greenland.

Each operation was full of the experiences demanding of body and mind that are particular to polar regions, and are here illuminated in the words of the men and women that lived the experience of “Lands that hold one Spellbound.”

Len Forrest
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Ayşe Devrim Atauz. *Eight Thousand Years of Maltese Maritime History. Trade, Piracy, and Naval Warfare in the Central Mediterranean.* Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, www.upf.com, 2008. xvi + 379 pp., illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. US \$69.95, cloth; ISBN 978-0-8130-3179-9.

With this book, Ayşe Devrim Atauz has filled a vacuum that has long been empty while giving Malta’s maritime history an international perspective. Her work represents the first attempt to present a globalized history of Maltese maritime activity that stretches from pre-historic times to 1800, when Malta *de facto* became part of the British Empire. Until now, Maltese maritime history had been treated disjointedly either through the production of highly researched monographs which focused on one particular maritime aspect or period or else via sporadic references in the numerous articles and books that are published about Malta both locally and abroad. Despite the evidence of a serious interest in Malta’s maritime past, there has never been an attempt to create a general historical monograph. For this reason, the

author should be congratulated for attempting a holistic account of Maltese maritime history.

To achieve her goal, Atauz tapped into two different streams of research; her archaeological studies which relied on empirical discoveries, and secondary historical sources comprising numerous historical monographs. Unfortunately, her underwater archaeological research yielded few encouraging results since it focussed on only some of Malta's harbours. She interpreted this to mean that Malta was not as important a maritime base as was hitherto believed. Moreover, Atauz largely avoided primary source material in favour of secondary sources, which admittedly is not normal for this type of general work. Given the author's Turkish nationality, one would have expected her to turn to Turkish-language publications relevant to Maltese maritime history. Malta has quite an extensive historical literature that is published in Turkey, all of which is beyond the reach of most English readers.

Atauz' research allowed her to build tables containing chronicles of maritime events which can help the reader better understand Malta's historical trail as well as the island's role in the maritime history of the central Mediterranean. This is a point of great relevance and innovation in this work but the author should also be praised for her interpretation of the facts that emerge from her research.

In recent years, Maltese maritime history has tended to focus more heavily on the Hospitaller period (1530-1798), often ignoring the rest. Atauz seeks to reconstruct a balanced account of Malta's role by taking the innovative approach of giving equal importance to the prehistoric and classical eras, as well as the Middle Ages. Her reading and interpretation of Maltese maritime history from the High Middle

Ages until the arrival of the British is completely different from the one the Maltese public is accustomed to encountering in their local history books. Atauz is quite conscious of this fact and attributes it to a certain bias by local historians toward their island's history. Again, I would have expected the author to have made more use of Ottoman sources, in particular for the period of the Knights of Saint John. Current studies of this period by both local scholars (such as Victor Mallia Milanes) and foreign scholars (such as Molly Greene) point to a different conclusion than Atauz reaches. It is true that the Knights of Malta had a small fleet but their raids in the Levant were still such an irritant to the Ottoman Empire that the Knights caused several international crises during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Atauz considers the High Middle Ages as Malta's golden age of maritime history. She bases this on modern demographic studies which indicate a population expansion in Europe from the thirteenth century onwards followed by a heavy drop in the fourteenth century. Unfortunately, due to the scarcity of documentation for this period, it is definitely premature to consider Malta as a major maritime power. This hypothesis needs to be further studied and tested against better demographic evidence. Furthermore, before accepting such a definition, one needs to explain why Malta failed to possess an important arsenal at this period. Maritime importance and the existence of a good arsenal go hand in hand. I cannot imagine a nation claiming to be a maritime power without an arsenal.

Malta's history under the Knights of Saint John has been treated in extensive detail. Although focussed on the struggle between the cross and the crescent, Malta

experienced other developments during the period which deserve more detailed attention. For example, a local boat-building industry developed for the construction of fishing boats as well as cross-channel transportation. The book also lacks comprehensive references to the many Maltese merchant ships which fell victim to Muslim corsairs. Atrocities were not only committed by the Maltese corsairs; they were a feature of the universal law present in the Mediterranean at the time.

Atauz dismisses Malta as an important maritime power during early modern times, basing her conclusion on her underwater archaeological research. She claims that Malta's wrecks are less important, both in terms of quantity and quality, than those found in the Aegean and off the Turkish coast and argues that if Malta had been an important maritime power, as many have claimed until recently, there would have been more maritime wrecks.

In my opinion, this conclusion has a number of drawbacks. First of all, the author's underwater archaeological research did not include the Grand Harbour, Malta's main harbour. Failing to study this area leads to a strongly biased argument. In fact, archaeologically, one cannot compare Malta with the eastern Mediterranean - these were two different maritime realities. Firstly, there has been continuous dredging in the Grand Harbour and the surrounding areas for centuries. Secondly, Maltese sailors tended to sail smaller vessels, so that the only wrecks one would expect to find in Malta are those of small boats, rather than large vessels. Malta would not have many wrecks around its coast. I am astonished that some are still being found.

Why then are there are so many wrecks along the Turkish coast, the Aegean, or the Italian coast? This is due to the

popularity of the system known in French as *cabotage* or coastal sailing. It was a way of protecting a ship, particularly if sailing next to a friendly territory since one would not expect to be attacked by pirates or corsairs. It also allowed sailors to pull into a coastal community to trade their goods along the route. Thirdly, it was safer, since travelling alongside a recognisable coast did not require the use of maritime instruments. Coastal sailing, however, had one big disadvantage: it increased the risk of shipwreck. A strong, adverse current or bad navigation could bring the ship onto rocks or cause it to overturn. The presence of so many wrecks in the Eastern Mediterranean and Italy can surely attest that the *cabotage* system was being practised. Perhaps, the extensive number of wrecks implied by Atauz to have been present along Turkish coast can be an indication of the weakness of Turkish navy personnel. It is a known fact that during the modern period, naval operations were being relinquished by the Ottoman Empire to French seafarers or else their Greek subjects. The Ottoman establishment was experiencing difficulties.

The same argument cannot be made for Malta. Although Malta was on the route of the *cabotage* trade, as has been explained by Daniel Panzac in his book *La Caravane Maritime*, ships sailing to the island had only one destination, the Grand Harbour. Big ships did not do any coastal trading around Malta as it was too small to permit such a system. Thus, any serious conclusions based on maritime archaeological evidence have to be focused on the Grand Harbour to carry any weight. The rest of the coast was only sailed by small fishing boats.

On the other hand, measures and systems introduced by the Knights of St. John to increase the maritime importance of

Malta seem to point in a different direction from Atauz. In fact, Malta's importance increased greatly after the Middle Ages. Although Atauz argues that Malta was an important base for piracy in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, I am strongly convinced that Malta was not a haven for corsairing or piracy at that time and no more than an occasional base.

It was only during the early modern period, in particular from the end of the sixteenth century, that the name Malta became synonymous with corsairing. The island became famous for this type of activity, and such fame confirms its maritime importance. In the published material of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Malta is mostly mentioned in reference to the Hospitaller fleet. Their activity was so prevalent that it succeeds, in terms of propaganda, to obfuscate a new order that was set up to undertake a similar mission dedicated to St. Stephen in the Duchy of Pisa.

Finally, the book would have been more complete if the British period, which Atauz has rightly considered to be very important for Malta's maritime history, had been treated more comprehensively than the superficial three-page coverage it received.

By basing the book primarily on published sources, Atauz ran the risk of reproducing and repeating errors to be found in the original publications. One such case is her reference to the presumed census undertaken during the Arab period. This census never existed and is the result of the forgeries of Abbe Vella. Unfortunately, these documents continue to trap local and foreign historians. This is not the sole historical mistake that results from the use of secondary sources. Certain historical facts reproduced from local amateur historians leave much to be desired. The author should have paid more attention

to verifying historical dates.

Nevertheless, one congratulates Atauz for challenging historical stereotypes and for producing a solid synthesis. It is the first maritime work which features a good database of maritime events for a small island nation at the centre of the Mediterranean which has eight thousand years of maritime history.

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Msida, Malta

Merrill L. Bartlett and Jack Sweetman.
Leathernecks. An Illustrated History of the United States Marine Corps. Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute Press, www.navalinstitute.org, 2008. xx + 479 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. US \$60.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-59114-020-7.

There are many published histories of the United States Marine Corps, including several illustrated histories. This new illustrated history of the United States Marine Corps brings the Corps's history up to date, ending with a final chapter that perceptively analyzes the Corps's spectrum of contributions to the war on terror, from peacekeeping operations in Africa to pitched battles in Iraq and Afghanistan. The battles and counter-insurgency operations are discussed candidly and accurately, no small feat in the middle of on-going operations. The authors' treatment of the two battles for Fallujah merit particular attention. This highly readable narrative is combined with many unpublished and perhaps unknown visuals of every description, including black/white photographs, numerous maps, and full color paintings. It contains a wealth of Marine Corps combat art, most of it rarely seen by the public. There is no doubt that this book will be popular with Marines and those who

love them, but what about those interested in naval/maritime history, who usually don't pay much attention to the Corps' history?

The United States Marine Corps' primary mission is amphibious assault and its most famous battles, such as Belleau Wood, Chosin, Khe Sanh, and An-Nasiriyah, have all been fought on land. Bartlett and Sweetman, however, both respected authorities on naval and Marine Corps history, remind their readers that the Corps' current specialization is a relatively recent development. The first half of the book, which covers the Corp's history prior to World War I, emphasizes the sea roots of the Marine Corps. During these early years, the Marines fought the majority of their battles at sea, as part of a ship's company. Until the mid-nineteenth century, every naval engagement was potentially a boarding action, and members of the Corps played vital roles in these engagements.

Beginning with the first landing (and victory) of the Continental Marines back in March 1776, when an eight-ship convoy sailed to seize Nassau, The Bahamas, the authors proceed in a lively narrative to tell the story of these soldiers of the seas. While acknowledging that the Continental Marines did fight some battles on land, their activities centered on the war at sea. In the early years marines served on United States Navy ships as guard detachments, maintaining order and preventing mutiny. While they fought in a number of land battles during these years, their primary role was still aboard Navy vessels. They played an important part in many of the most famous sea battles of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As one reads the descriptions of the Marine's roles in these battles, a new appreciation for the entire naval action is gained.

Marine musketry contributed to the Navy's opening victory in the War of 1812. In the *Constitution's* battle with the British ship *Guerriere* (19 August 1812), the British captain and his first and second lieutenants were hit by marine's small arms fire. Marines played conspicuous roles in other United States Navy victories at sea. The authors also remind us that 34 "Leathernecks" served in Perry's ships at Lake Erie.

During the Mexican war, it was Marines who peacefully occupied the coastal cities of California after USN ships sailed in and demanded their surrender. Their role on land, in the conquest of Mexico City is well known. Marines played a limited role in the Civil War, but still served as guards in a hundred ships and provided security at nine navy yards. The Confederate States Marine Corps also supplied guards for Confederate ships. In 1866, when Congress was once again considering disbanding the Corps, the authors quote Admiral David Farragut, who testified that "a ship without Marines is like a garment without buttons." (p.119). The Marines did not always enjoy such great support from the Navy in their struggle to survive.

As sailing ships gave way to steam-power, the Marines took on a new role as colonial infantry following the Spanish-American War. The American Empire, gained from victory in the Spanish-American War (1898) was basically the Navy's concern, and the Corps was the Navy's force in readiness. As a result, marines were called upon to carry out politically- motivated interventions, some of which lasted for years. This new responsibility prompted naval progressives to suggest withdrawing marine guards from the Navy's ships, but that idea, the authors note, was anathema to the Corps.

The second half of this book covers the Marine Corps from World War I to the present. It is during this period that the Corps became well known for amphibious landings and land battles. In addition to highly readable descriptions of the Marines' major battles and operations in both World Wars, the Korean War, and Vietnam, the authors also cover other important actions that are not as well known. For example, the 1934 Nicaraguan campaign, which promoted the development of the Marine air-ground team and provided a generation of officers with valuable experience in jungle warfare and small-unit tactics.

Leathernecks provides a concise and easily readable history of the United States Marine Corps and is filled with numerous, helpful maps and beautiful colour illustrations. In addition, it reminds readers that the Corps is one of the United States' three sea services. Finally, it is a valuable resource for naval and maritime historians who might not be familiar with the role the Corps played in naval history, especially in the age of sail.

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Bert Bender. *Catching the Ebb. Drift-fishing for a Life on Cook Inlet*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University, www.oregonstate.edu, 2008. ix + 285 pp., illustrations, maps. US \$22.95, paper; ISBN 978-0-87071-296-8.

Bert Bender's *Catching the Ebb* is perhaps the best book about commercial fishing that I've ever read. It made me want to buy a fishing boat and leave behind my landlocked academic life forever. It made me want to feel the throb of aching muscles after a day spent chasing—and killing—fish. It made me want to read Melville.

Catching the Ebb is an elegant and heartfelt paean to a passing way of life, but is much more than that. It is simultaneously a celebration of the physical labor that connects humans to nature and a critique of “the commercial blare and emptiness of Hollywood and television land” (p.275). It is a discourse on the snobbery and emptiness of academia as well as the deep rewards of research, writing, and teaching. It is a meditation on friendship, family, community, and nature. It is an effort to come to terms with the most fundamental and troubling dilemma of what it means to be human—namely, our need to take life to sustain life. Mostly, it is testament to the human spirit and to our capacity for work, wonder, and communion with nature, even as we seem bent on destroying it.

Bender built a life teaching at Alaska State University, researching American sea fiction, and gill-netting for salmon on Cook Inlet in Alaska. He was a school teacher in 1963 when he began fishing with one of his colleagues from an Anchorage junior high-school—two greenhorns on a small wooden boat who didn't know enough to be scared and miraculously lived through their first season and never looked back. In the clannish world of commercial gillnetters, he was an outsider who did not immediately gain full acceptance among the old-timers. But he was his own type of gritty pioneer—one who realized his limitations, grew with the fishery, and became himself a respected old-time fisherman.

Bender's personal story parallels the larger narrative of the postwar fishery in Alaska—a chronicle of new technology, new regulatory regimes, faster and bigger boats, increasing competition and debt, environmental degradation, oil spills, global warming, the decline of the canneries, and—the menacing *coup de grace* for modern

small boat fishermen—the rise of the global fish-farming industry.

Bender resisted the changes but also embraced them, all the time realizing he was witnessing the long twilight of an era—an era when boats were made of wood not steel and men were made of grit not debt. He adapted technologies. He built bigger boats, all in the pursuit of more fish. And yet, Bender never lost his perspective. His life—a towering life when compared to our cubicled modern reality—embodied the ideal of “the fisherman who joins in and relishes the life hunt, knowing what it is to be alive in this elemental sense and, above all, who honors the life that is in him and that he takes” (p.284).

I know something of the wild salmon fishery in which Bender laboured and made a life. Somewhere in the middle of fifteen youthful summers working in canneries and fishing on boats in Alaska, I found myself on the back deck of the *Fiasco*, a sleek, low-lying fiberglass stern-picker that fished out of the very same cannery on the Kenai River where Bender had started his fishing odyssey in 1963. For two short summers, I witnessed the things that Bender describes here: the breathtaking wildness of Cook Inlet with its backdrop of snow-covered volcanoes and vicious tide-rips; the clear windy days of mid-summer when the salmon are carried up the inlet by heavy rollers that pound the small-boat fleet as they struggle to make their season before the short salmon run is over; the evening parade of fish-killers, belugas and gillnetters, as they make their way back into the Kenai River after a day spent hunting. I never met Bert Bender but I saw his graceful boat, *Ishmael*, and her sister ship, the *Cheryl Lynn*, and I came to know and admire the character of Cook Inlet drifters. They are tough and self-reliant but also aware of their vulnerability

and dependence upon things beyond their control—tides, subtle changes in ocean temperatures, distant markets, distant bureaucrats, oil tankers, and now, corporate fish farms, whose sterile, salmon-producing efficiency makes the effort expended by independent fishermen in gas, blood, gurry, and guts seem futile and absurd. I was a short-timer—a student from the suburbs of Seattle dabbling in a world of authentic work—but Bender was, and is, the real thing, and so is *Catching the Ebb*.

In my own book about the Alaska salmon fisheries, I say that, as a modern consumer, “I am glad to know that somewhere out there, setting out on the ebb tide, someone is doing work that dissolves the distance between humans and nature, between thought and action—work that eliminates the distance, irony, and spectator-like quality of modern life. I am glad to know that independent, small-boat fishermen are killing fish for me to consume.” I didn’t know it at the time, but I was writing about Bert Bender. And now Bender has given us a clear-minded, honest, and beautifully crafted view of the fishing life. If you want to learn about the lives of Alaska fishermen over the past forty years, you could do no better than to read *Catching the Ebb*.

David Arnold
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Capt. Robert A. Bartlett. *Sails over Ice. Northern Adventures Aboard the SS Morrissey*. St. John’s, NL: Flanker Press, www.flankerpress.com, 2008. xviii + 322pp., illustrations, index. CDN \$19.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-897317-36-5.

Sails Over Ice is a Flanker Press republication of *Sails Over Ice* by Captain “Bob” Bartlett, first published by Charles

Scribner's Sons, New York, 1934. It continues Bartlett's memoir, *The Log of Bob Bartlett*, [1875- 1926] republished by Flanker Press in 2006, and first published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1928.

When *Sails over Ice* was first published, Polar explorers and their exploits were events of not more than thirty or so years past. The names of Nansen, Sverdrup, Rasmussen, Peary, Amundsen, Stefansson, and others, were still the 'Toast of the Town.' Bartlett too was internationally well known, particularly for his participation in Peary's acclaimed successful expedition to the North Pole, 1908/09, and for his masterful leading of the survivors of the tragic and ill-fated cruise of the *Karluq*, in the Western Arctic, 1913/14. At that time, Newfoundlanders still fished, sealed and freighted in vessels similar to the *Morrissey* as did Maritimers and New Englanders. All of them, as well as a general coastal populace, immersed in the language of sail driven vessels, would have readily appreciated Bartlett and understood his story as introduced in a foreword by Lawrence Perry, at one time editor of the magazine *Yachting*, in which he said: "Since that time [becoming owner, 1925] he [Bartlett] has used her ...[in] the Arctic regions, ...he has run into adventures of many sorts. He has been lucky enough to come through, but it has often been touch and go...a fascinating tale... and the *Morrissey* is the heroine." Now, seventy-five years on, today's publisher, Flanker Press, has chosen to replace that original foreword by Lawrence Perry, with a foreword by the writer Paul O'Neill that concludes: "To read this book is to learn from his own thoughts and words why Captain 'Bob' Bartlett is indeed Newfoundland's most authentic hero."

In 1925, with financial support from the American philanthropist James B.

Ford, to whom the book is dedicated, Bartlett purchased the *Morrissey*, a "Banks" schooner, and went fishing off the coast of Labrador, for his own account. This was followed by several American-sponsored scientific expeditions in 1926 to NW Greenland; 1927 to Foxe Basin; 1928 to Bering Sea/North Pacific; 1929 to Labrador (movie making); 1930 to East Greenland; 1931 to the Greenland Sea; 1932 to Melville Bay, Cape York, Greenland, [75 55N, 66 25W], elevation 442m (1,452ft), building a monument 18 m. (59 ft.) high, in honour of the polar explorer, Robert E. Peary; and in 1933 to Fury and Hecla Strait.

Prior to undertaking these Arctic expeditions, Bartlett made changes to the *Morrissey*, changes to make her more suitable for expeditions in ice-covered waters. Engine power and associated fuel tanks and a short wave radio capable of sending and receiving messages were installed at New York, while structural improvements by way of greenheart sheathing of the hull and the fitting of additional cabins to accommodate scientific personnel, were carried out at Brigus, Newfoundland.

Bartlett was well versed in the hazards of navigation in high latitudes. Apart from the normal perils of the sea and the expected ice and its known hazards, he knew that disaster also awaited the navigator who failed to demonstrate the highest standard of vigilance when operating in high latitudes, where magnetic compasses were not dependable, and where charts often lacked much significant information, while what was given was circumspect, and where the weather to be expected depended upon the observations and subsequent interpretations made by the master.

A particular account demonstrates the then-difficulties of Arctic navigation and

of proving or disproving another navigator's findings [shades of the Peary controversy]. Describing events of the 1927 voyage into Foxe Basin, Bartlett writes: "In the course of our cruise we reached the location [?] given for the islands by Captain Spicer, and found nothing but a waste of water...I believe that he mistook the flats of the east side of Foxe Basin for an archipelago. If he actually discovered any islands they later sank ... for they aren't there now." (p.99) Bartlett does not quote Spicer's positions for the islands nor is there a track chart of the *Morrissey's* movements and the means used to determine her position. Regardless, in 1932 the CGS *Ocean Eagle* confirmed the existence of the Spicer Islands (*Sailing Directions Arctic Canada*, Volume 1, Fourth Edition, 1994).

To be able to agree or otherwise with Paul O'Neil's assessment of Captain "Bob" Bartlett's place in Newfoundland folklore, as given in his foreword to *Sails Over Ice*, readers need certain items of information. Line drawings of the vessel and copies of charts/maps as they existed in the period under discussion, together with a full disclosure of the vessel's tracks and with copies of the vessel's Log covering the incidents of both grounding and of being ice bound need to form part of the publication. A glossary of nautical terms for those "not of the sea," would assist such persons to a more informative, and thus more enjoyable, read of what is a lively collection of yarns from a great story-teller.

In the absence of corroborating evidence, Bartlett's actions in *Sails Over Ice* (narrated in the first person singular), at least warrant the acclaim, expressed in the 1934 foreword, by Lawrence Perry. They do not, however, come within sight of according to Bartlett's memory, the exalted

ranking of "Newfoundland's most authentic hero."

Len Forrest
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Stephen R. Bown. *Madness, Betrayal and the Lash. The Epic Voyage of Captain George Vancouver*. Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre, www.douglas-mcintyre.com, 2008. 256 pp., illustrations, maps, sources, bibliography, index. CDN \$34.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-55365-339-4.

George Vancouver had the sad misfortune to undertake a major voyage to the Pacific Ocean (1791-1795) that, while undoubtedly as great an achievement of navigation and endurance as any undertaken at the time, only really served to disprove a long-cherished and hoped for geographical theory (the existence of a Northwest Passage) rather than make any major discoveries; and to undertake a diplomatic assignment (implementing the Nootka Sound Convention of 1790) that ended in stalemate and then redundancy as England and Spain lined up together against republican France and Napoleon in the 1790s. Unfair as it might be, proving non-existence rather than making discoveries is never heroic; and diplomacy that goes nowhere is quickly forgotten. When to these things is added Vancouver's inability to avoid making powerful enemies, and to gain few if any friends as a result of his leadership, one can immediately understand how he returned home less than a hero, his great work essentially already a footnote to the concerns of the Admiralty and a government "suddenly overtaken by patriotic and military fervour" and to a political and social climate in which 'the details of his epic voyage were lost amid slander and innuendo propagated by his aristocratic enemies.'

The purpose of Stephen Bown's well-written, fast-paced and eminently readable biography is to explain the circumstances of Vancouver's cruel fate; to place his life and voyage into a broad historical setting; and to suggest that the achievements of his expedition make it one of the greatest of all time. The author is more successful with his first two goals than with the latter. The book is divided into four sections. 'Science and Discovery' introduces Vancouver's early life and his good fortune in starting his naval service on James Cook's last two Pacific voyages. Bown covers the ground well and moves on to discuss the fur trade, which focused so much attention on the Northwest Coast of America, as the unexpected result of Cook's last voyage, and; "The Gathering Storm" carries the story forward through Vancouver's service in the Caribbean, the clash with Spain at Nootka and his appointment to lead the expedition required to survey the Northwest Coast and to treat with the Spanish. "Agent of Empire" makes up the heart of the book bringing Vancouver back into the Pacific, surveying the North American coast, and acting in a diplomatic role with King Kamehameha in Hawaii and Bodega y Quadra at Nootka. Finally, in "In the Most Faithful Manner," Vancouver comes home, a very sick man, to be persecuted by his enemies, deserted by all but his family, and desperately trying to write up his journal for publication before he died. This is narrative history written for a general audience with the clear intent "to blend scholarship and storytelling." Except for the journals, particularly of Vancouver, Archibald Menzies and Thomas Manby, Bown's sources are all secondary. These are listed in a serviceable bibliography (an odd omission being Brenda Gillespie's passionate 1992 biography) and the author has included a short, useful section entitled

"Sources" in which he highlights specific works covering the major elements of the story, e.g. "Menzies, Banks and the Camelford Affair" and "Vancouver's Illness." There is also an extensive index. Bown is fortunate to have benefited from some fine, relatively recent scholarship, notably Kaye Lamb's magisterial four-volume edition of the Vancouver's journal (1984), the introductory volume of which remains the definitive biography, Robin Fisher's account of the coastal survey (1992) and some of the published papers (1993) that came from Simon Fraser University's bicentennial conference in 1992. The inevitable minor errors that continue on in a text based primarily on secondary sources will not bother those who seek a quick overview and basically sound interpretation of Vancouver's story, but they will irritate the specialist. The 18 illustrations are well chosen with one exception, the view of Friendly Cove in Nootka Sound in 1792: it is a poor modern sketch and it is surprising that the easily accessible drawing by Henry Humphrys, created to illustrate the crux of the disagreement with Bodega, was not used.

The central motif of the book is that a good, honest man, a great marine surveyor, who was obsessed with the idea of duty, was betrayed by people and events insuring that an early death would be one of loneliness and humiliation. The villains are Joseph Banks and Thomas Pitt, later Lord Camelford. Banks and Vancouver never developed a positive relationship. Banks expected more deference to his social and scientific role as the embodiment of the "enlightened voyage" and as he wrote to Menzies, whom he maneuvered onto the expedition as naturalist, Vancouver's attitude was "not such as I am used to receive from persons in his situation." The upshot was a powerful enemy who persisted

in undermining Vancouver in every conceivable way. Vancouver, in fact, never envisaged his voyage as a one to enhance science; he tolerated Menzies' work only in so far that it didn't impinge on the real work of hydrography, he never took artists aboard and was fortunate to have talented young men on the quarterdeck to make an artistic contribution, and he was little interested in the native peoples he encountered except politically in Hawaii. The other villain was Pitt, related to the prime minister and possessing a level of self esteem that quickly irritated Vancouver, who doubted his commitment to the cause and sense of duty. As the result of a number of incidents, the relationship quickly descended into a bitter clash of personalities that was disastrous to both men; Vancouver used his authority to flog the young midshipman, and eventually sent him home early; Camelford vowed revenge and had the means and connections to achieve it once both men were back in England in 1796. The one thing that betrayed Vancouver above all, however, was something over which he had no control—a debilitating kidney disease that in 1794 totally incapacitated him, brought on an early death at 40, and caused him to display almost from the beginning of the voyage, irrational and fierce outbursts of temper. When this was added to a basic discomfort with command that made Vancouver, already obsessed with detail and concept of duty, quick to retreat behind the letter of the law, one can readily understand that *Discovery* was never a happy ship. It is a remarkable testimony to his companions that the expedition achieved what it did, and as far as the survey of the Northwest Coast is concerned, the real heroes were Joseph Whidbey and James Johnstone. Although he discusses Vancouver's health, Bown

perhaps doesn't make enough of what the illness really meant in terms of the increasingly problematic behaviour that set so many people so personally against him.

Perhaps the least successful part of the book is the conclusion in which the author claims that Vancouver's work on the Northwest Coast to have been 'the greatest marine survey of all time' and that 'Vancouver is far most important than simply as the maker of a chart of Pacific America. He was one of the key players in the epic European power struggle of the late eighteenth century.' No comparisons with other voyages are offered to bolster this first claim and students of Cook's second voyage would probably beg to differ. As a scientific explorer, Vancouver was far from being the most important. No-one can deny the remarkable achievement of the coastal survey, which remained in use for over 100 years, but despite its meticulous nature, it covered much of the ground which had already been discovered by the Spanish and Russians and by English and American fur traders. With respect to Bown, it is not clear that Vancouver's inconclusive negotiations with Bodega made him the "key player" the author wants him to be, and while the survey of the Northwest Coast was certainly one of the considerations that led to the decision to fix the Canada – United States boundary at the 49° parallel in 1846, it was by no means the only one. Of greater importance were Alexander Mackenzie's overland trek "from Canada" in 1793, lack of government support for the Hudson's Bay Company, whose presence was dominant as far north as Russian America, and the inheritance in 1819 by the United States of the Spanish claims to much of the central coast. In the final analysis, the Americans were primarily interested in the Columbia River and Puget

Sound, whose discovery by Vancouver in 1792 ultimately didn't benefit Great Britain at all.

Madness, Betrayal and the Lash is a good, solid introduction to the Vancouver story and as such can be recommended. If it serves to make that story better known, as one might hope, the author will have achieved his prime objective. For those who are inspired to delve deeper, it will be, as Robin Fisher has noted, Kaye Lamb who continues to provide the sailing directions required.

Robin Inglis
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William Reynolds Braistead. *Diplomats in Blue. U.S. Naval Officers in China, 1922-1933*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, www.upf.com, 2008. xxvii + 406 pp., illustrations, maps, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. US \$75.00, cloth; ISBN 978-0-8130-3288-7.

This book is the third by the author describing and analyzing the role of the U.S. Navy in China. The first covered the years 1897-1907. The second explored the developments from 1909-1922. This volume is an in-depth study of the role of the navy, and in particular, the role of the admirals commanding the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, and the Yangzi Patrol in Sino-American relations, in all their complexity, from 1922-1933. The author as a boy accompanied his father to China, where he twice served in this period; however, this account is not a personal narrative. The author's experience is the source of his well developed interest.

For those unacquainted with the intricacies of relations in China in this period, a brief, very general, overview includes the citizens and interests of several

nations of Europe and Japan, who with the U.S. are described as the "Treaty Port Powers." Most of these countries had a naval presence in China, and all were represented diplomatically. Thus diplomacy and the occasional need for action, immediate, or in the face of perceived threat, were involved, ongoing, and reflected the various nations' interests in China. With foreigners scattered along the coast and in the interior of the country, the various navies were the obvious means of protection, or extraction, in times of civil war or nationalistic protest or riots.

The Chinese in this period were involved in demonstrations, warlord conflicts, attempts at national unification, and an ever growing desire to change the relationship established under treaties with the west and Japan. The role of the foreign powers' military, detailed in these treaties, was challenged in many areas, not the least of which were anti foreign protests and threats to the lives, interests and rights of foreigners in the country. The key problem for American diplomats and admirals alike, was the desire of the U.S. government to cooperate in protecting the lives and property of their citizens, while still standing somewhat apart from the actions of some of the other powers there. The role of the "diplomats in blue" was hardly an easy one, although important to America's interests and status in Asia.

The particular focus of the book, as indicated by the title, is the role of American naval commanders in dealing with the volatile situation in China. The commanders were on the scene, or able to arrive there fairly quickly. They had a sense of other naval commanders and their missions, as either cooperative or obstructive. They could, therefore, deal directly with situations when action was indicated, and reconcile their actions with

policies later. The captains of the gunboats, especially on the upper reaches of the Yangzi, cooperated in their attempts to deal with the varied situations which occurred, such as the charges of shipping of illegal cargoes, or the strikes against various foreign owned shipping lines. The senior officers dealt with more visible problems such as conferences with their counterparts when threats materialized, or negotiations with the Chinese government for berthing rights for their flagship at Shanghai.

The book is illustrated with maps to better acquaint the reader with the physical dimensions of the areas described. Pictures of some of the ships mentioned in the text are also useful, particularly for those readers not familiar with the appearance of the ships and gunboats of the period.

Japanese interests and demands are developed as a focus of the later chapters of the book, detailing the rising anti-Japanese sentiment in China, and the often strained relations between Japan and the other powers. In particular the Shanghai Incident of 1932 is explored through several chapters in order to demonstrate the increasing difficulties in the situation in China, and in relations between the countries involved.

This book is very densely written in the sense of detail provided, but the finesse with which the author explains the situations and personalities involved makes it an enjoyable read for those with interests in the field and those who have just discovered such an interest. The various incidents and people are handled in an even manner; the account does not falter even in the most involved situations. The influence from Washington, frequently complicated by disagreements between the State, War and Navy Departments, and Congress, as well as the situation on the scene, requires a

deft touch in order to be integrated in the narrative; the author provides this without disruption.

Diplomats in Blue covers the period from the end of the Washington Conference of 1921-1922, and its treaties reiterating the Open Door policy of the U.S. and a naval arms reduction agreement, to the Shanghai Incident of 1932. This account ends in 1933, perhaps the beginning point for a further study. This period is one of exhaustive change in China, and in intricacy in international relations there. William R. Braistead handles these challenges with expertise.

Katherine K. Reist
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William A. Carter. *Why Me, Lord?: The Experiences of a U.S. Navy Officer in World War II's Convoy PQ17 on the Murmansk Run*. Millsboro, DE: Wm. A. Carter, Ph.D. (P.O.Box 248, Millsboro, DE, 19966). xvi + 288 pp., illustrations, maps, index. US \$25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-0-9802457-0-7.

The Arctic is a world of its own – white nights in summer, dark days in winter – the sea covered by impenetrable ice fields or tormented by fierce storms – the *aurora borealis* illuminating the inhospitable and unforgiving environment where only a few manage to survive.

During the Second World War, convoys to the United Kingdom kept that country from starvation, enabling it to keep the war going and from 1942, to build a force that would invade occupied France in 1944. From 1941, convoys sailed to Murmansk and Archangelsk. Until the Allied invasion of Italy on 3 September 1943, the Arctic convoys were the only Allied convoys to the European mainland.

These convoys benefited the war effort of the Soviet army and airforce. Long before D-Day, 6 June 1944, merchant vessels from the US, UK, the Soviet Union and other countries delivered over 7,000 aircraft and 5,000 tanks to the U.S.S.R. The German high command was determined to stop those vital shiploads reaching the Russian front. Josef Stalin in his demand for a second front insisted on the convoys. In this respect, the convoys also helped both the United States and the United Kingdom to improve their relations with the Soviets. The northern shipping lanes were guarded by German U-boats and airforce operating from Norway. In total, the Allied losses in personnel amounted to 3,000 souls. In those days, chances of survival in the cold Arctic waters were practically nil. On 27 June 1942, convoy PQ-17 departed from Iceland for the Soviet Union. The Admiralty was under the impression that the German battleship *Tirpitz* posed a threat to the convoy and ordered the convoy to scatter. Moreover, the ships were left to their own devices. The Royal Navy fled from the scene allowing the German airforce and U-boats to have their moment of glory. At the end of the slaughter, 24 ships, two-thirds of convoy PQ-17, were lost. In all, 153 Allied seamen died, making PQ-17 the worst stricken convoy of the entire war.

In 1940 the author entered naval reserve officer training at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis. After the program he was assigned to command an armed guard crew on North Atlantic convoy duty. As a young U.S. Naval officer, Carter commanded a contingent aboard the American freighter, S.S. *Ironclad*. "*Why Me, Lord?*" focuses on the author's wartime experiences in the Arctic. His account of the journey of convoy PQ-17 across the North Atlantic to Russia is colourful, sometimes baffling. The stories about his

adventures in the Russian waters are equally interesting. After the *Ironclad* grounded near a dock on 17 November 1942, she was handed to the Soviets as a part of the Lend-Lease Act. Carter returned aboard the U.S. Liberty ship, S.S. *Richard Bland*. Just off Iceland the freighter was torpedoed in March 1943 by U-255 under the command of Reinhart Reche. The survivors had to board the lifeboats but were rescued and landed in Iceland.

"*Why Me, Lord?*" was written over sixty years after the Second World War. The question arises how accurate the story is. To what extent is the story in the book entirely the author's? From the book there is no way of telling. There is no specific reference in the text to the author's sources of information. The book does not contain footnotes or end notes. The author's inclusion of stories about his private life gives the book an air of autobiography, albeit focused on his wartime experiences. Nevertheless, the book is well written and easy to read. It is a gripping story that takes the reader to seldom spoken-of places. "*Why Me, Lord?*" is a must-read.

Jacob Bart Hak
Leiden, The Netherlands

Barry Clifford, Kenneth J. Kinkor and Sharon Simpson. *Real Pirates: The Untold Story of the Whydah from Slave Ship to Pirate Ship*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic and Random House, www.randomhouse.com, 2007. 176 pp., illustrations, references. US \$19.95, CDN \$25.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4262-0262-9

In the last few years, numerous books on the history of early modern piracy have been published. This is the "official companion book" to a travelling exhibit that displays items hauled up from the wreck of

the *Whydah*, the first pirate vessel ever found. It is written by Kenneth Kinkor, historian of the *Whydah*-shipwreck project, and exhibition producer Sharon Simpson, augmented with an introduction by the underwater explorer Barry Clifford. The aim of this book is to explain the so-called Golden Age of Piracy in the early eighteenth century by presenting a collection of artifacts from the wreck and utilizing this material evidence to illustrate the sea robbers' lives.

In order to understand the premise of the book, one has to know that the *Whydah* was an English slave vessel captured by Samuel Bellamy's pirate gang near the Bahamas in February 1717. Then, after a short voyage, it sunk in a fierce storm off Cape Cod. Only a few pirates survived. Remnants of the wreck were discovered in 1984 by Clifford, who had been a high school teacher before he began to search for the vessel. Over the last 25 years, more than 200,000 artifacts have been retrieved from the ocean floor. Yet in an early stage the project ran into financial trouble. Efforts to establish a lucrative museum in downtown Boston, and later Tampa, were thwarted by African-American organizations, arguing that a museum of the slave trade had a higher priority. To counter such concerns, Kinkor published an article in *American Visions*, a magazine of African-American culture and history, in which he argued that 25 to 30 percent of the pirates active between 1715 and 1725 were of African descent. This essay is seriously flawed, however, and fails to meet basic scholarly standards. It would be easy to ignore Kinkor's argument, but it has been quite influential. This present book, along with the traveling exhibit, is the latest example of the public presentation of the *Whydah*-shipwreck project.

The book begins with an account of the transatlantic economy in the early eighteenth-century colonies with an emphasis on the slave trade. After a description of how Bellamy seized the homeward-bound *Whydah* and made her a pirate vessel, the reader learns about characteristics of pirate life and their ostensible brotherhood. Pirates are portrayed as men who liberated themselves from oppression and were egalitarian in their organization and the distribution of their booty. The reader also learns about early eighteenth-century vessels, including details such as how sailors used ship guns and how X-rays help to identify artifacts from shipwrecks. Many images supplement this very readable text.

From a scholar's perspective, it is unfortunate that the book includes no direct references to sources. There is only a brief bibliography comprising a few books, leaving the reader with the impression that several passages are based on conjecture rather than on written sources or material evidence. For instance, how do the authors know that Bellamy was unemployed before he left England? Furthermore, remarks such as "Blackbeard's fearsome appearance struck terror in the hearts of his victims"(p.85) only serve to reinforce a popular myth. Not one single eyewitness account supports this statement.

The authors repeatedly assert that the discovery of the *Whydah* led to new insights into pirate history. The contents of the book, however, do not back up such a claim. No example of startling revelations based on material evidence emerges. The artifacts recovered from the wreck provide some nice pictures, but little information about pirate life and culture. This project is more a modern treasure hunt, which yields profits through its media exploitation, than serious archaeology or history.

This brings us to the question of African-American pirates. The book presents pirate gangs as pioneers of multiethnic society. Yet the authors fail to mention that merchant vessels in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world often had multinational and multiracial crews. It is asserted that pirates freed many slaves and accepted them as equal shareholding members among their bands. Again, there appears to be no conclusive evidence to support such a claim, and repeating a questionable argument does not make it true. The notion that “Blackbeard’s crew was 60 percent black” (p. 80), for example, is clearly based on a false interpretation of primary sources. An eyewitness account that survives in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania describes the crew as entirely white. The book also remains silent about the fact that seafaring slaves in American coastal waters enjoyed a limited degree of independence and freedom, whereas various pirate gangs mistreated and killed captured slaves. These atrocities – as well as all kinds of conflicts among the pirates – are well documented, but it seems that the authors are not really interested in telling the true story of real criminals.

Many historians who claim to destroy pirate myths are in fact creating new ones. Unfortunately, part of this book reinforces this pirate mythology. Years ago Kinkor complained that pirates were victims of bad scholarship and poor historiography. Now his contribution to the field embodies that very criticism. Still, this volume is of a higher quality than many other recent so-called piracy histories.

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Hans Frank. *German S-Boats – In Action in the Second World War*. Barnsley, So.

Yorkshire: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com, 2007. 192 pp., maps, illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. U.K. £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-84415-716-7.

While this well illustrated book is essentially a detailed chronology of the activities, successes and losses of all of the German fast motor-boat flotillas during the war (S-boats, for *schnellboot*, E-boats for the Allies, ostensibly for ‘Enemy boat,’ although probably just one of those terms that came to be adopted from usage), it has several intriguing aspects apart from just a log of events.

To take these in perhaps reverse order, it continues to surprise me why more of these vessels did not move into private hands post-war. With their high-speed diesel engines, they were considerably safer and cheaper to operate than the Royal Navy’s gasoline-powered MTBs and MGBs; they tended to be more sea kindly, with their finer hulls, than the hard-chined (flat-bottomed) MTB’s, and to my mind, were better looking boats for civilian use. Maybe it is yet another penalty for losing the war—Germany’s left-over ships were destroyed—while a few ex-MTBs are still about in private hands. It seems too bad.

A second comparison is the great similarity in the way the naval high commands of both the Royal Navy and the *Kriegsmarine* planned for the strategic and tactical uses of this weapon by their forces. In fact, neither side did much planning at all until about 1940 when the boats were actually being put to use by both sides. Peter Dickens complained in his *Night Action – MTB Flotilla at War* (Peter Davies, 1974) that when he was appointed to command the RN’s 21st Flotilla, there were no tactical or strategic instructions available on how he was supposed to employ his

flotilla. Moreover, the Admiralty itself barely knew how these mostly Reserve-manned boats could or should be used to advantage. Dickens' major opponents were largely in the exact same state. The S-boats, in fact, tended to be more mis-employed throughout the war, partly due to increasing pressures on the *Kriegsmarine* as it became more restricted due to both ship losses and the loss of reasonable sea control. From the earliest days, S-boats were often employed as fast mine-layers in the swept convoy routes along Britain's east and south coasts, in the Baltic to counter the Russians and Finns, and even in the Black Sea, where some flotillas were sent via overland and canal transfers. They were also employed to carry supplies in, and men out, of beleaguered garrisons cut off by land. All this is not to suggest Germany's boats were more adaptable than their opponents', but that necessity became the mother of invention in resolving local problems. Germany eventually became more of a centralist defensive enclave with internal manoeuvrability—with desperate problems that the S-boats helped alleviate. For obvious reasons, the boats were also increasingly subject to losses due to enemy (Allied) fighter-bomber attacks and bombing raids on their bases in Holland, Belgium and France.

The Royal Canadian Navy's Commander Tony Law was much frustrated in some of his encounters with S-boats in the Channel when their speeds proved 3 to 5 knots greater than the MTBs of his 29th Flotilla, enabling them to depart the scene when they pleased and leaving him unable usefully to pursue them. At home, however, the S-boat flotillas constantly competed with the personnel demands of the far more popular (in *Kriegsmarine* terms) U-boat arm, and to the end of the war suffered from crew shortages, from

flotilla and boat CO's down to sailors to man them, particularly in the training flotillas in the Baltic. The vessels saw highs and lows, but often external events drove their employment rather than strategic choices.

There is a good opening chapter describing the *Kaiserlichmarine's* development of fast motorboats late in the First World War, and inter-war developments, particularly in engine improvements. The appendices, describing equipment in detail—guns, radar, engines, are useful for evaluating this valuable tool whose employment was all too often poorly understood by those in command. The notes and bibliography are exhaustive, although the latter largely in German. The translation from the original 2006 edition is obviously carefully followed, with the occasional odd phraseology included. An interesting book for anyone wishing a close look “on the other side of the hill.”

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Marta García Garralón. *“Taller de Mareantes”: El Real Colegio Seminario de San Telmo de Sevilla (1681-1847)*. 2 vols. Seville, Spain: Cajasol Fundación Obra Social, 2007. €30, cloth; ISBN 978-84-8455-256-7. Vol. I, 391 pp. ISBN: 978-84-8455-257-4; Vol. II, 418 pp. ISBN: 978-84-8455-258-1.

In the age of sail, all European nations that needed to maintain a navy and foment seaborne trade faced the same problem: how to guarantee a steady supply of trained mariners to crew their ships. Some resorted to press gangs to recruit sailors; others, including Spain, relied primarily on incentives, but all recruitment involved government intervention to one degree or

another. In recent years, scholars have taken a renewed interest in the problem of recruitment and training for the sea in various European countries. The works under review exemplify some of the best research emerging from Spain.

Marta García Garralón's excellent two-volume study of the government-supported school for mariners in Seville, the Colegio de San Telmo, began as her doctoral thesis, under the direction of Carlos Martínez Shaw. The author earned a law degree before beginning doctoral studies, and the *Taller de Mareantes* (literally, "workshop of mariners") is the product of years of meticulous research into local and national archives. Because the royal government founded the Colegio de San Telmo, named for St. Elmo, beloved by mariners in much of Europe, the school's administration had to file regular and lengthy reports. These voluminous records provide a rich source of information about the college and the lives and careers of its students.

The first part of Volume I concerns the corporate body that oversaw the college. This was the Universidad de Mareantes of Seville, translatable as the "Universal Corporation of Seafarers." The corporation evolved from a combination of various guilds and religious brotherhoods representing individuals involved in the burgeoning seaborne trade of Seville, especially after Columbus's voyages. In other words, although the corporation did not officially come into being until 1569, its component parts and their spheres of activity had much longer histories. Every scholar who has dealt with the trade of Seville and the Americas has encountered the Universidad de Mareantes, but until García Garralón's research, few scholars studied its antecedents and multifarious activities in depth.

As the private counterpart to the government's Casa de la Contratación (House of Trade), the Universidad de Mareantes eventually acquired oversight for virtually every aspect of Spanish seafaring from Seville. This included the selection of ships for each fleet; their official gauging, careening, and provisioning; the production and certification of navigational instruments; the licensing of masters and pilots; and the assignment of pilots for naval and merchant fleets. The author includes a list of the officials of the corporation in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as a list of ordinary members in 1758. Together, they range from masters and pilots to captains, ship-owners, fleet admirals and other officers, and high-status members of the city council of Seville. Because of the importance of this little-known institution, the author has also published this section of her research as a separate volume: *La Universidad de Mareantes de Sevilla (1569-1793)* (Seville: Diputación de Sevilla, Área de Cultura e Identidad. Servicio de Archivo y Publicaciones, 2007).

Because the Universidad de Mareantes had responsibility to provide masters and pilots for the hundreds of ships in its purview, the corporation supervised the Colegio de San Telmo from its foundation in 1681. The second part of Volume I begins the history and analysis of the college and its students. Proceeding topically, the author discusses antecedents of the college in earlier schools for sailors, most notably during the late sixteenth century. She then discusses the regulatory history of the college during nearly two centuries of operation and provides a statistical analysis of the more than 4,000 students matriculated therein. Although 84 percent of the students came from the southern third of Spain, the vast majority of

them from the Seville area, virtually every region of the country had at least a few representatives. The last half of the first volume traces the history and contents of the curriculum, as well as the career trajectories of the students as a whole.

Volume II continues the thematic structure, dealing with the training of pilots, the admission of fee-paying noble youths in the college in the late eighteenth century, and the administrative structure and personnel of the college. The author also discusses in detail the lives of the students at San Telmo, known in the documents as *santelmistas*. During the late eighteenth century, the government ordered a series of detailed inspections of the college, aimed at improving and rationalizing its functions, as well as saving money. The government of Isabel II finally deemed the college unnecessary in the new age of railroads and abolished it in 1847. The handsome building that housed it went through numerous transformations of function thereafter, but it survives as an elegant monument to the government's commitment to education.

It is appropriate that this handsome, richly illustrated publication owes its existence to modern government involvement in disseminating scholarship, which is notable in Spain and notably absent in countries such as the United States. By law, banks and financial institutions in Spain must spend a percentage of their profits on cultural and educational enterprises. Many of the foundations set up for this purpose sponsor academic conferences, art exhibits, musical and theatrical performances, and the like. Many of them also run extensive publication programs for academic research, often focused on work related to the regions in which they earn money. Thus, the Fundación Cajasol published this

two-volume set, with production values far higher than a commercial publisher could have justified. Similarly, the regional government of Seville published García Garralón's separate book on the Universidad de Mareantes, cited above. These sponsorships have obvious benefits for scholarship, but the resulting publications often lack the marketing network that a commercial publisher could provide. The volumes under review represent an important addition to our knowledge of the infrastructure of seafaring in the early modern world. They deserve to be widely known, both in their original Spanish editions, and ideally in translation.

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Tido Holtkamp. *A Perfect Lady: A Pictorial History of the U.S. Coast Guard Barque Eagle*. Mystic, CT: Flat Hammock Press, www.flathammockpress.com, 2008. 160 pp., photos, maps, appendices. US \$19.95/CDN \$22.95, paper; ISBN 978-0-9795949-2-2.

There have been a number of books written about the Coast Guard barque *Eagle*, but this is the first pictorial history of the pride of the U.S. Coast Guard; the ship on which every Coast Guard cadet has trained since 1946 (and in recent years, officer candidates); "America's Tall Ship." Coast Guard cadets put navigation, engineering and other professional skills learned at the Academy into practice aboard *Eagle*, handling the 23 sails (22,245 square feet) and over six miles of running rigging. More than 200 lines must be coordinated during a major manoeuvre and cadets must learn the name and function of each.

This pictorial history is a celebration of the *Eagle*, the square-rigged

training ship of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, a lone and handsome reminder of the long line of ships and seafaring men that made the United States one of the great maritime nations of the world. The *Eagle* has also served as America's good-will ambassador all over the world, leading ship parades and playing host to heads of state and other dignitaries.

Built in 1936 at the Blohm and Voss Shipyard in Hamburg, Germany, the 295-foot ship was commissioned by Adolf Hitler as a German navy training vessel, the *Segelschulschiff* (sail school ship) *Horst Wessel*, named for a deceased young hero of the Nazi movement and the author of the Nazi national anthem. Claimed by the United States as a war prize at the end of the Second World War, the ship was commissioned in the U.S. Coast Guard and renamed *Eagle*. The book's title comes from a statement by the ship's first American commanding officer, Captain Gordon McGowan, USCG. In 1946, on the *Eagle's* voyage from Bremerhaven to her new home at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, which involved weathering a hurricane, Captain McGowan discovered that the ship handled extremely well and reacted "like a perfect lady."

Holtkamp served aboard *Horst Wessel* as a German naval cadet for six months in 1944. After the war, he immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Connecticut, later finding his old ship in New London, renamed *Eagle*. Holtkamp has sailed on board *Eagle* many times since then and has become friends with many captains and members of the crew. His love for the Coast Guard and his old ship are evident in his writing.

This is not a detailed history of the *Eagle*, but as its title states, a pictorial history. Using archival black and white

photographs from various collections, both official and personal, the author's captions tell the story of this ship and give the reader a feeling for the realities of life on board a square-rigger and a deeper understanding of why this ship has been loved by so many for so long. Anyone with a love for tall ships, for nautical history, and especially for *Eagle* will want to add this book to their personal library.

As someone who has sailed on *Eagle*, both as a cadet, and later as a Coast Guard officer, I found this book an informative and an enjoyable read. I found many of Mr. Holtkamp's photos and detailed facts of great interest. But more than "a trip down memory lane", this little book does an excellent job in telling the story of this "Perfect Lady" through countless photos.

C. Douglas Kroll
Palm Desert, California

Mac Johnston. *Corvettes Canada: Convoy Veterans Tell Their True Stories*. Mississauga, ON: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., www.wiley.com, 2008. 243 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. CDN \$39.95, cloth; ISBN 978-0-470-15429-8.

Mac Johnston, ex-editor of the *Legion* magazine, is uniquely equipped to undertake this task of preserving and presenting the story of the Canadian corvettes and the sailors who served in them during the Second World War. Using his amazing contacts, historical photographs, and the words of survivors, Johnston brings together for posterity the human story of Canada's coming of age at sea.

The work is an oral history built on interviews with more than 250 men, distilled and arranged around a theme or an event. Every action is seen from many

points of view and probed in freeze-frame detail. The book's progression follows chronologically within broad periods of the battle. Chapter headings are composed of a very short quote, for example: Chapter 1 – "They didn't even have uniforms for us" being the very beginnings; 2 – "There was nothing like an echo to wake you up", the opening moves; and 12 – "The winter, the sea – these were the enemy".

Sailors present their stories in a range of tones and from all points of view of the convoy war. A portrait emerges of the "wavy navy" sailors, the young Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) ratings and their officers, mostly from the naval reserve forces (RCNR). The stage is the ship itself, the corvette, a little ship of rugged design, ubiquitous and efficient.

Corvettes Canada addresses the routine of life at sea, which is contrasted with the protracted, furious action of convoy battles and the relaxation of leave. Most of the book is taken up with mundane subjects, such as hygiene, preparation and storage of food, and sickness, especially sea sickness. The author uses peculiarly blunt language when dealing with heretofore taboo subjects, like sexuality and the role and problems of alcohol at sea. There are many references to the ports of Derry, St. John's and Halifax, and a loving portrayal of one particular Newfoundland and Canadian institution, the Sea Going Officers' Club, which will forever be known in naval lore as the Crow's Nest in St. John's.

Perhaps the most powerful effect is the depiction of the particularly lethal nature of naval warfare and the high casualty rates in vessels struck by torpedoes, bombs or mines. One unaccustomed and pleasant surprise was reading about the prominent part played by

sailors from the Lakehead, an inland region of the country with a rich maritime heritage.

In one of his few comments on the strategy of the war, the author marks the rise in Canada's political fortunes with the transition to Western Escort Force from the Western Local Escort Force. There is also mention of the detrimental consequences of constantly breaking up crews and escort groups, which was the fate of the RCN during those periods of immense stress during which the force grew from a handful to 135,000 by 1945.

The photographs are, for the most part, as the author promises, in the nature of a family snapshot album. They bring the men and their diminutive ships home in a dramatic and emotional way that no formal portraits or shots posed in the builder's yard with new paint and uniforms could ever do. The photos have had an unfortunate treatment which renders them dark and opaque. There is the effective use of an artifact, a watch card, which fleshes out our understanding of the organization of a ship better than any flow chart. The maps are sketchy.

In typically Canadian fashion, there are no heroes identified, although we know there were many. For example, Ted Simmons, skipper of HMCS *Port Arthur*, who sank one submarine and earlier served as the junior officer who led the boarding party from HMCS *Chambly* in its attempt to capture *U501*. Another endearing trait of the wavy navy is a generalized lack of awe toward the regular navy, expressed through small acts of defiance, such as the famous coat of arms of HMCS *Wetaskiwin*.

Can a work on a single class be successful? Unequivocally yes! The iconic nature of the vessel is explained in the observation that just about everybody served on them at one time or another,

which says it all. The flow, presentation and editing of the book traces the sweep of fortune throughout the longest battle in modern warfare.

This work belongs in every Canadian library and school in the country to teach young people the story of a defining chapter in our country's history and their maritime heritage. It would be a useful addition to the library of anyone interested in defence.

Kathy Crewdson and Ian Dew
Thunder Bay, Ontario

Angus Konstam. *Tudor Warships (1). Henry VIII's Navy*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2008. 48 pp., illustrations, tables, further reading, index. CDN \$21.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-84603-251-6.

Osprey Publishing has, for many years, produced handsomely illustrated monographs on military subjects for the general audience. The range in topics is comprehensive, involving the technology of war; the developments over particular periods of time on a given aspect of warfare; or a specific campaign or battle. There are dozens of titles.

On the whole, the objective of these publications is to provide the interested reader with a thumbnail sketch of the topic at hand, and provide illustrations of a high quality usually not found in more scholarly works. These include contemporary drawings or art, as well as specially commissioned pieces for the monograph. As well, there is always a "Further Reading" section to provide the curious with other sources of information, albeit without pretence that this is particularly detailed or remotely comprehensive.

The authors selected by Osprey are experts in the field. Angus Konstam, who is no exception, has written widely on naval matters, with perhaps his most significant books being his study on sixteenth-century warship design, *Sovereigns of the Seas: The Quest to Build the Perfect Renaissance Battleship* and *The Spanish Armada: The Great Enterprise Against England*. He has also written a fair number of Osprey titles on an eclectic range of topics and eras. Konstam knows the period well.

The volume at hand details the development of the Royal Navy during the reign of Henry VIII, with a focus on warship design and the ordinance carried. (The (1) in the title refers to the fact that Konstam has written a second volume on the Tudor warship which covers the reign of Elizabeth I.) Henry VIII is, debatedly, the father of the Royal Navy. Certainly it was he who laid the foundation for a permanent navy, with specially designed and commissioned ships, supported by a properly established dockyard infrastructure and the attendant bureaucracy necessary to give it life. Prior to Henry's initiatives along these lines, naval forces had been cobbled together essentially, but not exclusively, from handy merchant ships when needed, generally through the mechanism of the medieval Cinque Ports concessions and obligations. Once their duties were over, the 'fleet' dispersed to more congenial and profitable functions.

Konstam's book, therefore, starts with a review of late-medieval warship design, culminating in the *Mary Rose*, Henry's pride and joy. The discussion then moves to a review of naval operations throughout the reigns of both Henry VII and Henry VIII (1485 – 1547). The next section details the armament carried and the technology involved. The final part examines how the fleet conducted itself in

battle – a discussion helped by the fact that there were only two major actions during Henry's reign, one in 1512 and the second in 1545. The contrast is, therefore, illustrative of the strides taken over the thirty-year gap between the two engagements. The latter action involved the loss of the *Mary Rose*, when the open gun ports on the lower deck were flooded as the ship heeled over due to the wind.

Osprey books clearly have their place and certainly fill a niche in the market, or they would not be so popular, nor would such a wide range of topics be covered. Konstam has produced an excellent example of the genre and it serves as a quick introduction to early Tudor warship design, ordinance, and the engagements fought in the first half of the sixteenth century. It is well illustrated and it achieves its objective as an attractive introduction to the topic. It is not a scholarly production. There is neither the space to enter into the controversies, nor to cover the issues in any comprehensive way. But it does not pretend to do so. *Tudor Warships (1)* is an excellent representative of its genre and can be recommended without reservation on that basis.

Ian Yeates
Regina, Saskatchewan

Andrew Lambert. *Admirals. The Naval Commanders who made Britain Great*. London: Faber & Faber, www.faber.co.uk, 2008. xx + 492 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, index. UK £20.00, cloth: ISBN 978-0-571-23156-0.

Andrew Lambert is one of Britain's pre-eminent naval historians, who has, over a long and productive career, published many ground breaking books, predominantly on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

Royal Navy. The present book, *Admirals*, features ten individuals (actually, eleven as one section covers two men) who epitomized the role of supreme leadership at sea, excepting the obvious figure of Nelson. The latter was the subject of a previous book, *Nelson: Britannia's God of War*, published in 2004. In a sense, therefore, the present book addresses those lesser, demigods of war who contributed their bit to Britain's naval supremacy from the seventeenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.

Lambert has selected the front-ranked admirals of their day from the time of Elizabeth to the end of the Second World War. They include Lord Howard of Effingham, victor over the Spanish Armada in 1588; Robert Blake of the Civil War and Dutch Wars era; James, Duke of York, and later James II; George Anson, the circumnavigator and author of the victories in the Seven Years War; Samuel Hood and John Jervis, Nelson's mentors and architects of the Royal Navy that defeated Revolutionary and Napoleonic France; William Parker and Geoff Hornby, who dominated the Victorian era; John Fisher who revolutionised the navy that defeated Kaiser Wilhelm's High Seas Fleet; David Beatty, the battlecruiser admiral; and, finally, Andrew Cunningham, the Royal Navy's dominant sea-going admiral in the Second World War.

Many of these men, who exemplified naval leadership at the highest levels were, in other dimensions, rather flawed diamonds. Yet there is little debate of the importance of the selected admirals given their role in leading the Royal Navy over nearly four hundred years. Nevertheless, there will be those who question the inclusion of some on the above list. Many, for example, may find the publicity-seeking and self-promoting habits

of Beatty distasteful and demeaning. Some might find the omission of Jellicoe surprising. Others might think the role of Pound more significant than that of Cunningham, despite the latter's unquestioned talents. Finally, raised eyebrows may greet the inclusion of Parker and Hornby, the Victorian admirals, at all given the relative decline of the navy throughout that period, the lack of world-shaking conflict, the technological confusion, the basic lack of a serious opponent, and the bequeathing of a heritage that required sweeping out by the perhaps not-quite-sane Fisher in preparation for Britain's great struggle with Germany in the First World War.

Lambert is well aware of the many quibbles that can be raised with any or all of his selections. As a master of his subject, however, he methodically presents his reasons for their inclusion in his pantheon and, for the most part, convincingly. Lambert observed, in my view quite correctly, that the achievements he relates are most unlikely to be repeated in the future given the communication capabilities that now exist. He relates the sorry and well-known tale of Admiral Woodward during the Falklands War in 1982 who had to receive permission from London to deal with the Argentine cruiser, *General Belgrano*. The unique combination of judgement, moral and physical courage, aggression, political acumen, seamanship, and strategic and tactical skill, as well as mastery of the details of the profession is something that is possessed in abundance by all successful admirals (albeit in highly varying degrees among our present selection), but in the modern world the discretion and independence is gone. Lambert also noted that one element of professional education that needs new emphasis is to study the successful

exemplars from the past as much can be learned from them. Many of their attributes and skills are indeed timeless. Finally, Lambert also makes the point that the leadership he describes is not given to every officer in any navy. Indeed, the bulk of the officer corps needs to be masters of the technical elements of the profession, or managers of the 'system' that provides the fleet for the admiral to use. Happily, there appears to be a role for such plodders – the undoubted majority. Not all can realistically aspire to be Nelson, it would appear.

A few production notes follow. A surprising omission is the lack of a bibliography outside of the references provided in the footnotes section. In a volume of this nature, one that covers the sweep of naval history from the days of Elizabeth I to the latter days of George VI at the end of the Second World War, the range of material consulted would be potentially enormous. Nevertheless, a well organized and selective bibliography would have been useful.

Finally, the maps provided are inadequate. Indeed, their quality and placement in the text is uniformly so poor that they should not have been included at all. For example, the map illustrating the progress of the Spanish Armada is so small as to be unreadable, and the dates quoted on it do not match the dates in the text. One gets the impression that they were a last minute addition and were incorporated without much thought. Most of the other maps are similarly unhelpful and poorly placed.

Overall, *Admirals* is well written and the selection of nautical notables appropriate. One may quibble in some cases, as noted above, but the individuals selected certainly dominated the Royal Navy in their respective eras. As well, it is

a timely reminder of the effects of sea power on national prosperity. Sea power raised Great Britain from the fringes of Europe in Elizabeth I's time to become the pre-eminent world power by the turn of the nineteenth century; a position finally relinquished in the middle years of the last century. If you want to "punch above your weight," then the role of sea power in that equation is a lesson that might be contemplated with profit by the leaders of this country as well as those of Great Britain itself.

Ian Yeates,
Regina, Saskatchewan

Brian Lavery. *Shield of Empire: The Royal Navy and Scotland*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, www.birlinn.co.uk, 2007. 510 pp., illustrations, index. US \$60.00, cloth; ISBN 1-84158-513-0.

In *Shield of Empire: The Royal Navy and Scotland*, historian Brian Lavery examines the unique and significant contribution Scotland has made to the massive history of the British Royal Navy. As Lavery points out in the preface, the work is not intended to be a comprehensive naval history of Scotland, but is limited to exploring selected campaigns dating from the seventeenth century. This approach has nevertheless produced a work that spans 500 pages, as Lavery attempts to tell the tale of important Scottish contributions from the Jacobite suppression of the seventeenth century through to the tense environment of the Cold War. As the title implies, the history of Britain and the Scottish contribution to the identity of empire are not easily separated from each other. Overall, Lavery delivers an engaging read that touches upon little-discussed and perhaps forgotten moments of British naval

history, which were crucial to some of the most important national outcomes as historians understand them today.

The book's sixteen chapters are arranged topically and chronologically in a logical arrangement, supplemented by a helpful index of ships and interesting illustrations. Lavery provides a great service to the reader in the first chapter, which presents a helpful and concise overview of the relationship that Scotland has historically enjoyed with the sea. Using the colourful and engaging examples of ancient Rome and the Vikings, the author reminds the reader of the importance of sea power to the history of the British Isles. This first chapter establishes important foundational information about the turbulent but intertwined relationship between Scotland and England throughout some of the most politically charged periods in history. It is against this backdrop that Lavery introduces the significant contributions of the Scots to the overall British identity, forged by conflict and the English exertion of superiority which began with the Cromwellian invasion. Successive chapters focus on singular elements of the broader story, including highlights of naval engagements which occurred in Scottish waters. The easy-to-read narrative is compelling, taking the reader on a journey that visits Scotland not only by sea but also ashore. At the core of the narrative, however, is perhaps an even greater story – that of Scottish national identity. As Lavery attempts to frame the contributions of Scotland to the concept of sea power and empire, the point of reference is always the Act of Union of 1707.

For his accounts, the author made extensive use of the National Archive at Kew, where the majority of Scottish naval records are found, as well as selected state

papers and Privy Council records as earlier sources. The scope and ambition of the book targets it primarily at those who are knowledgeable about the complex historical interrelationship between England and Scotland and the forging of an imperial identity. It will also doubtlessly appeal to anyone with an interest in naval history. The academic detail, however, assumes a general understanding of naval terms, making the work challenging for a general readership. From Cromwell to the Cold War, the book spans four centuries of Scottish naval contributions to the larger global picture, concluding with an examination of Scotland in the nuclear age. The author touches briefly upon the controversy over the Faslane Naval Base in Scotland and British involvement in the war in Iraq, leaving the reader to contemplate the possible future impact of Scottish independence. *Shield of Empire* offers an engaging and important contribution to the larger academic study of the relationship between naval power and the history of the British Empire. More importantly, the book poses important questions about the preservation of Scottish identity and the future.

Cheryl H. White
Shreveport, Louisiana

Don MacGillivray. *Captain Alex MacLean. Jack London's Sea Wolf*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, www.ubcpress.ca, 2008. 359 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$29.95, paper; ISBN 978-0-7748-126472-0.

That Captain Alex MacLean was a consummate seaman is beyond dispute. But was he also the brutal shipmaster, pirate, alleged murderer and outright unscrupulous

adventurer that contemporary, and some more recent accounts held him to be; was he really a Wolf Larsen? On the West Coast, from San Francisco to Alaska, he was a legendary figure in his time. To some he was a folk hero, to others he was a criminal. In this comprehensive biography, Don MacGillivray (a professor of history at Cape Breton University and CNRS member) examines the life and times of this extraordinary mariner and takes a fresh look at what was the reality and what was myth in order to give a much more accurate account than has previously been documented. It is a fascinating story.

Alex MacLean was a Gael born on Cape Breton Island in 1858 into a farming family. Having gained experience in local fishing vessels as a young teenager, he moved on to deep sea sailing ships and eventually reached San Francisco in 1879. Together with his older brother Dan, he journeyed north to British Columbia in the spring of 1880 and for the following thirty-four years he would be a key part of the shipping scene in and around Vancouver and Victoria and as far south as San Francisco. He died in somewhat mysterious circumstances in Vancouver in 1914.

Victoria in the early 1880s was like a frontier town as it became a major hub for the emerging pelagic sealing industry in the northwest Pacific. Pelagic sealing is the taking of seals in open water during their migration to the breeding grounds as opposed to on land, or, in the case of the modern seal hunt on the east coast of Canada, on ice floes. Hunters in small boats attempt to kill the seals with rifle fire while the animals are swimming on the surface but many were simply wounded and escaped the hunters only to die later. It was a very cruel and wasteful practice, and both males and females were hunted indiscriminately. It was a very lucrative

business since seal fur was very fashionable and desirable, especially in Britain, and small fortunes could be made. The completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway reduced both the cost of transporting pelts and the time to the European market and made for a profitable trade. The MacLean brothers seized the opportunity and entered the sealing business, eventually owning their own vessels. They were to become the most successful sealers on the west coast.

The hunting of seals on land in their main northwest Pacific breeding ground of the Pribilof Islands on the American side of the Bering Sea was controlled by the United States. Exclusive rights to seal hunting on the islands had been granted to the Alaska Commercial Corporation (ACC) in 1870. Catch limits and the type of animals which could be taken were enforced. In effect, the US viewed the seals as the property of the ACC, regardless of whether they were on the high seas or not, and considered pelagic sealers as poachers and even pirates. As the pelagic seal hunt grew and fewer seals reached the breeding grounds, the US took action ? initially in 1886 with the seizure of three British Columbia-based sealing vessels on the high seas. Britain protested (Canada at this time was not in charge of its own external affairs) and a long-running dispute began. The MacLeans continued sealing throughout, with Alex, especially, earning the ire of the American authorities. The dispute was eventually settled, in favour of the British (and by extension the Canadian) position, in 1892.

In considerable detail, the author neatly weaves the exploits and adventures of Alex MacLean into the events of his somewhat tumultuous times in the northwest Pacific. MacGillivray clearly demonstrates how MacLean was very much

a man of his times and, above all, how he was shaped by those times. As well as being an aggressive seal hunting captain, he was, first and foremost, a successful shipmaster. For example, his epic 362-day-long voyage into the south Pacific in 1897-98 in search of a treasure trove was a remarkable feat of seamanship and navigation. As the author makes clear, Alex MacLean learned his trade in sailing ships and a sailing ship, even in the latter part of the nineteenth century, was no place for weaklings. It took a hard man to rise to the top and effectively command a crew of often motley characters. It was a hard life which could also be, and often was, a brutal way of life, but the brutality was relative and not necessarily cruel or savage. Seal hunting, especially pelagic seal hunting, was no picnic either and it also required hard men. Given that Alex MacLean was one of the most successful seal hunters, it is no surprise that he was in all likelihood a hard taskmaster. Furthermore, as MacGillivray points out, given that sailors love to spin yarns or sea stories, sometimes known as "salty dips", and word of mouth was the most widely used means of communication at the time, it was inevitable that exploits would be greatly embellished at each retelling. Sailors can take perverse pride in serving under a hard taskmaster and, as if to demonstrate their own toughness for surviving such a regime, they stretch reality. Thus, when the novelist Jack London created the infamous Wolf Larsen, the Sea Wolf of the novel's title, he had heard such sailors' stories and stated that MacLean was the inspiration for Larsen. That he never actually met the Captain mattered little. Nevertheless, MacLean would become forever associated with Larsen to the general public, an association that MacLean did little to actively discourage.

This is indeed a fascinating glimpse of a complex man in a time of transition in the world. It is a significant contribution to maritime history as well as to the rich tapestry of Gaelic lore in Cape Breton.

Michael Young
Ottawa, Ontario

Innes McCartney. *British Submarines of World War I*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2008. 48 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, index. US \$17.95, CDN \$21.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-84603-334-6.

Much of the focus on the naval aspects of the First World War has been on two key issues: the mutual threat posed by the British Grand Fleet and the High Seas Fleet of the Imperial German Navy; and, the impact of unrestricted warfare by German U-boats on Allied commercial shipping — Britain's lifeline. The first led to the indecisive battle at Jutland in 1916, a clash which, in the long run, had little overall effect on the outcome of the war. The second issue almost brought Britain to its knees — a lesson which would be relearned painfully during the Second World War when the U-boat campaign was conducted in a much more sophisticated fashion.

What has been often overlooked, except for a few heroic individual exploits, is the significant part played by British submarines played in the First World War and the real strategic impact their exploits had on key segments of the land battles. For example, a squadron of only five small British submarines operating in the Baltic managed to bring to a virtual standstill the trade in iron ore between Sweden and Germany—a trade that was essential to the German war effort. Similarly, in the Dardanelles a handful of British submarines

operating in hazardous waters sank most of the Turkish Navy and half of that country's merchant fleet, exploits which earned four of the five Victoria Crosses that were awarded to the Royal Navy's submarine service in the First World War.

Notwithstanding the reputed disdain for submarines held by the Admiralty, a remarkable number of submarines entered service in the Royal Navy after the first five "Holland" class were acquired in 1902. From 1903 until the end of the First World War in 1919, no fewer than 239 submarines of 20 classes were built—150 of them during the wartime period. Included in this number are the ten H-class submarines built in record time at Vickers yard in Montreal. Of course, not all were to see wartime service, and many of the operations and spectacular exploits fell to the numerous E and H classes. The latter became the backbone of the Royal Navy's submarine service between the wars and some served in the Second World War as well.

This delightful little book is one of the publisher's New Vanguard series which deals with specifically focussed naval topics — for example, a companion book in the series deals with the U-boats of the Kaiser's Navy. It manages to pack into a mere 48 pages an incredible amount of detail and information written in an easy style that does not descend to over-simplification. It is divided into two main parts which deal consecutively with the design and development of each of the main classes which were operational during the First World War and their theatres of operation. There is a concise compilation of technical data on each submarine type and a series of superb illustrations of each one. There are also detailed cutaway drawings on selected submarines which give a sense of just how cramped and tight they really were. In

addition, there are many excellent photographs.

The section on the theatres of operation is a high-level summary of the extent of all British submarine activities in the First World War. The author emphasizes the Baltic and the Dardanelles campaigns but this is natural given the incredible and daring exploits that took place in these theatres. The interesting approach in these descriptions is that the author does not simply describe the submarine operations, and the heroics involved in many of them, he also neatly links their influence and impact on the larger strategic picture. All in all, this is quite a remarkable book, both as a good historical summary of an often-overlooked aspect of the war and also as an important technical reference.

Michael Young
Ottawa, Ontario

Stauffer Miller. *Hoisting their Colors. Cape Cod's Civil War Navy Officers*. Charlottesville, VA: Xlibris Corporation, www.Xlibris.com, 2008. 508 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, appendix, glossary, index. US \$23.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-4363-0676-8.

Size alone constituted one of the biggest differences between the Confederate and Union navies. Union naval forces outnumbered the Confederate navy by a ratio of about ten to one, reflecting not only the differing population size of the combatant nations but also their naval strategies born of geography, economics, and social makeup. Partially because of the Confederate service's small size, there is a fascinating overlap among its members. Although there are no doubt still unpublished letters and diaries from this

unlikely band of brothers, what is available reveals an almost family-like air within the corps, certainly among the officers. If they weren't related before the war began, they quickly got to know each other as they scurried from one desperate effort to another to hold off a vastly superior foe.

No such homogeneity seems to arise in Union naval accounts. The Union Navy did not lack *esprit de corps* (though it often seemed so), but it was a much bigger, more impersonal undertaking that by its very nature was more bureaucratic and distancing than its adversary. Some of the participants must have known each other, perhaps coming from the same town or county, and may have found continuing bonds in naval service. That's what one would hope to find in such a book as this, which consists of brief naval biographies of no fewer than 178 Union Navy officers from the Cape Cod area. You'd expect neighbourly tales and crossovers all over the place from such a small and intensely maritime culture, but it seems strikingly absent here. Perhaps in Yankeeland, good fences really do make good neighbours, whereas down South everyone is hanging over the back fence.

That's merely an observation, not in the least a criticism of this remarkable book. It covers a huge amount of ground and contains fascinating vignettes from all theatres of the naval war, including some very non-naval activities, like ad hoc cowpunching and tales of as-yet-unsolved treachery and murder in the ranks. It's a fascinating and informing read, a labour of love for local history that was years in the making, and a treasure trove for Cape Codders. Yet, across the board, one senses dispassion on the part of the participants, as though they were engaged in a distraction that, however terrible, was more an interruption to commerce than a war of

cultures and convictions that would change the world for better or for worse. But perhaps that's just what it was after a fashion, in the heart of Yankee culture that was itself not directly threatened with death or extinction. In fact, the naval war itself had that kind of feel to it, simply because of the tactics and strategy involved. The giant Union Navy spent most of its time on endless, boring blockade duty, involving the occasional run-in with an unarmed blockade runner, whereas the Confederate Navy rarely left dock without running into a fierce and bloody fight, usually in its own home waters.

There is further reason for this dichotomy, in that the Cape Codders covered here were mostly merchant officers who were pulled into naval service through necessity (their commerce was utterly disrupted by the onset of the war) and who left it as soon as they could. Naval service was neither as prestigious nor profitable as private sector maritime endeavours in America's busiest maritime location. Those who gave their lives in the process were more likely to be felled by fever or accident than by shot and shell, so naval service had a wholly separate, and separating, ring to it. Cape Cod's navy seems to have formed a distinct class that didn't mingle much with career navy officers, though there is ample evidence that they were impressed by the reputations of men like Porter, Dahlgren, and others when they had opportunity to run into them. That may also be a cultural artifact, since the book does not specifically refer to it, although the men all lived virtually next door to each other, it. It seems to have been pretty much "every man for himself," without even as much local camaraderie as there is on the Cape today.

Of course, there could have been many more connections than surface here in these short naval biographies, each normally

two pages in length. Indeed, many of them make you wish you could find a lot more about the individual tales only touched on in their brief entries. It's certainly a wonderful starting point for a host of future explorations into Civil War naval history.

John Townley
Sea Cliff, New York

William D. Naftel. *Halifax at War: Searchlights, Squadrons and Submarines 1939-1945*. Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing Co. Ltd, www.formac.ca, 2008. 285 pp., maps, notes, bibliography. CDN \$ 24.95, paper; ISBN 978-0-88870-739-8.

In the decades since 1945, Halifax has become a vibrant and cosmopolitan regional centre. Thanks to the popularity of Celtic music and its large student population Halifax is "cool." Things were different seventy years ago when war came. With a population of 68,000 and a further 10,000 citizens in Dartmouth across the harbour, Halifax had long been Nova Scotia's largest city, but it did not occupy the dominant place of today's metropolitan centre. There had been little economic progress during the dreary Depression although the port facilities had been improved, notably by the construction of the long quay opposite George's Island where battleships and liners serving as troop transports would berth during the war. While there had been modest improvements in the dockyard between the wars, it remained substantially unchanged since the Royal Navy had left in 1904. (The wholesale changes which eradicated the old RN facilities would come in 1941-42). Halifax was a dour place with few restaurants and cafes, a handful of movie theatres, no taverns (bootleggers prospered mightily during the war), and, surprisingly, not a single intersection with

traffic lights. Although prohibition was no longer in force, the consumption of alcohol was a charged topic and there was lingering strong support for temperance. War brought an influx of servicemen (and later women), merchant seamen and civilian workers. Overcrowding was an immediate problem and, while some housing was built starting half way through the war, serious shortages persisted. In 1944, the population peaked at 107,000 for Halifax and 17,000 for Dartmouth, an overall increase of almost 60% over 1939. People in perpetual queues waited for entry to the few restaurants and movie theatres, taxis were scarce and their drivers notorious for overcharging. Haligonian William Naftel, a former historian and regional manager with Parks Canada, has produced a popular history which tries to cover all aspects of Halifax at war. The text is based on archival and published sources, contemporary newspaper stories, and the odd personal reminiscence.

The war was felt in Halifax right from the beginning. An American freighter arrived with survivors from the liner *Athenia* on September 17, 1939, two weeks after the outbreak of war. *Athenia* had famously been sunk by a U-boat in the eastern Atlantic on the very first day of hostilities, September 3. The first convoy, HX 1, cleared Halifax for Britain on September 16 with eighteen merchant ships escorted by two Canadian destroyers. These two events underline how Halifax became involved in the war at sea right from the start. Naftel covers a wide range of topics in an encyclopedic manner, everything from Nova Scotia Light and Power, including its operation of the Halifax trolley system, to how troop trains and trains carrying gold bullion from European governments were handled, the expansion of facilities for the RCN, the

RCAF and the army, through to how civilians coped with wartime shortages and overcrowding, and finally, post-war planning for the city. The text is descriptive and there is little analysis. It's not surprising that *Halifax at War*, with its wealth of local detail and glimpses of everyday life generations ago, has been a best seller in Nova Scotia. In fact, the author assumes that his readers have a basic familiarity with local geography. There are two grainy maps but they are only marginally helpful as the lettering is too small and indistinct.

Halifax's critical role in as the RCN's main base during the war is generally well documented. It is less widely known that within weeks of the outbreak of hostilities, the Royal Navy started operating battleships, battle cruisers and cruisers out of Halifax because of the threat of attack on convoys by powerful German warships. Indeed, the *City of Flint*, the American freighter which had landed the *Athenia* survivors in September, was captured by a German pocket battleship in early October on her next voyage across the Atlantic. A hunting group of cruisers was soon based in Halifax to be followed by a battle squadron. Major French warships also became frequent visitors during the first winter of the war. The British battle squadron was withdrawn in mid-1941 but by that time, Halifax-based armed merchant cruisers had started escorting convoys part way across the Atlantic. They, too, were later withdrawn as the U-boats became the dominant threat. Halifax originally became a convoy assembly port back in the Great War when convoys were introduced in 1917 to stem the desperate hemorrhage of Allied shipping, but New York had been the more important assembly point. What was immediately different in 1939 was that

Halifax was now the key marshalling port at the western end of the Atlantic convoy system. Naftel describes how the unanticipated presence of British and French sailors with little spending money in downtown Halifax underlined how limited were the amenities the bleak city offered them. Eventually, an energetic Canadian naval wife mobilized other volunteers to create the Ajax Club, which offered a wet bar, reading rooms and other facilities for British sailors on shore leave. Naftel goes on to outline the unhappy story of how obstinate locals had the club shut down by early 1942 — over the protests of the chief of police — by arranging that its liquor license would not be renewed. What the author does not explain is that by that time, the club was being operated for Canadian sailors and the major RN presence had ended. The Ajax Club itself was revived by the Norwegian government, who opened it as a hostel for their merchant sailors, and, in fact, sold spirits without protests from Haligonians. Nevertheless, the story of how this rare amenity had been stifled by the locals entered the shared history of Canadian sailors based in Halifax.

One of the most interesting features of the narrative is quotations from the diaries of Harold (“Jeff”) Jefferson, the regional Censor of Publications and a former newspaperman. Jefferson and his wife lived in the Nova Scotia Hotel during the war and from his office, high above Bedford Row downtown, he had a good view of the harbour. He was well informed and kept voluminous diaries. His entries about survivors from ships torpedoed in early 1942 when German submarines first appeared off the east coast and about damaged vessels struggling in for repairs have an arresting immediacy.

Naftel also tracks how Jefferson recorded a progressive deterioration in

public order downtown due to the throngs of servicemen, allied merchant seamen and civilians looking for something to do in the streets against a background of continual overcrowding, shortages and minimal improvements in providing amenities. In September 1942 and September 1943 his diaries record that the main downtown streets were jammed with pedestrians. Brawls and fights were frequent. A friend told Jefferson how a mob had amused themselves by watching a fight between two sailors in an upstairs club during which the windows were knocked out. Jefferson wrote more than once that the streets were becoming progressively more disorderly. It all sounds like recent street brawls in Vancouver and Montreal after hockey games, or homecoming celebrations at certain universities, but in Halifax these scenes were apparently the norm. It is pertinent that Jefferson used street disorder in Halifax in 1917-18 as a yardstick — in August 1942 he felt that rowdiness had not yet reached the 1917-18 levels, but by September 1943 he was writing (p.181) that “...the city, and particularly the downtown streets are becoming as rough and tough as they were in 1917-18, also more crowded.”

The disorder and pent-up frustrations culminated in the VE Day riots or disturbances, the result of a massive lack of leadership and foresight by both the naval and civilian authorities. All movie theatres, shops, cafes and restaurants had been closed. The civilian authorities did, in fact, organize street dances and fireworks for the first of the two evenings of the riots. The Navy had made no preparations for special celebratory events in their several establishments and simply declared an “open gangway,” meaning that anyone not on duty was free to celebrate ashore as best they could. (By contrast, in HMCS *Cornwallis*, the training establishment in the

Annapolis Valley, celebrations were organized on the base for its 8,000 sailors. Admittedly it was not practical for 8,000 sailors to be released into the small centres in the vicinity, but there had obviously been some imaginative planning by those in charge.) Around 9,500 sailors and wrens, out of roughly 18,000 sailors and wrens based in Halifax —about one fifth of the RCN's strength — were actually released into Halifax and Dartmouth on VE Day, plus soldiers and RCAF members. The involvement of Haligonians in breaking into liquor outlets, smashing windows and looting stores is also covered. (While not mentioned in *Halifax at War*, the deputy police chief testified after the disturbances that 60 percent of the looters were civilians, 30 percent Navy and 10 percent airmen.) Naftel does not, however, mention that the Halifax riots of 1945— while by far the most serious, with three deaths and damage to over five hundred businesses — were not unique. Halifax had experienced serious disturbances by servicemen twice in 1918 due to pent-up feelings of hostility. Moreover, there were serious VE Day disturbances involving civilians and servicemen in Sydney and New Waterford on Cape Breton Island. Shared knowledge that there had been disturbances at the end of the Great War and the riots on Cape Breton Islands show that the Halifax disturbances did not happen in isolation. Later, in July 1945, Canadian soldiers in England, frustrated by their long waits before being sent home, rioted and damaged property. Early in 1946, RCAF personnel at two bases in England staged sit-down strikes to protest delays in repatriating them home. All these events were mass protests by wartime personnel — “civilians in uniform” against authority — or in the case of Halifax and Cape Breton, against their environment.

The front cover of the book shows a dance floor crowded by young sailors dancing with young women, the sort of happy nostalgic image that finds its way into so many war movies and TV documentaries. Naftel does underline that many local organizations created canteens and clubs while individuals offered hospitality to the constantly changing sea of visiting merchant seamen (up to 30,000 a month) and Canadian and Allied service members. It's interesting to learn that Hugh Mills, owner of the clothing store that still thrives on Spring Garden Road, organized a “Concert Party,” a sort of variety show to entertain servicemen and merchant sailors. This went from strength to strength, put on over 2,500 shows by 1944, and eventually toured Britain and the continent just after the war to perform for Canadian soldiers awaiting repatriation. Mills also organized the supply of musical instruments, records, gramophones, etc. for visiting ships. Overall, however, the willing efforts by many were swamped by the scale of the problem created when large numbers of young men and women (the average number of naval liberty men alone in the summer of 1944 ran to about 11,500 per evening) began looking for something to do in their free hours.

There are lots of colourful stories of local happenings in *Halifax at War*, for example, the salvage and sale of aviation fuel from a grounded tanker by the inhabitants of Herring Cove on the peninsula southwest of Halifax, the salvage of barrels of rum from a former rum runner that had grounded years earlier in the harbour approaches, and discreet discussion of how prostitution flourished. Then there is mention of how the battleship *HMS Revenge* ran down one of the small vessels tending the anti-submarine nets at the harbour mouth in May 1940. But the book

also provides insights into everyday life on the Home Front across Canada: how rationing worked, how citizens were encouraged to help finance the war effort through savings bonds and stamps, and the grinding impact of shortages.

Recommended for those interested in a popular account of everyday life in wartime Halifax.

Jan Drent

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Rob Napier. *Reconditioning an Eighteenth-Century Ship Model Valkenisse, Retourschip of 1717*. Florence, OR: SeaWatch Books, LLC. www.seawatchbooks.com, 2008. viii + 239 pp., illustrations, appendices, glossary, sources, index, plans. US \$68.00, cloth; ISBN 978-0-9820579-0-2.

Valkenisse, a “retourschip,” meaning a return ship, was a Dutch East Indiaman belonging to the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) or United East India Company. Built in Middelburg in 1717, the vessel sailed between Holland and Batavia (now Djakarta) taking supplies out and expensive merchandise back, making seven round trips before being wrecked in 1740. While *Valkenisse* was lost, a model of her still exists, almost 300 years after an unknown builder created it to decorate VOC headquarters in Middelburg. This model is now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Boston.

Valkenisse, one of twenty retourschip models in existence, was damaged and devoid of its masts and rigging when MFA asked Napier if he would like to rig the model, this despite the fact that two others had worked on the model in the previous hundred years and there was little information as to what either

had done.

The book, beautifully written and produced, documents Napier's ten-year reconditioning process, a term he feels is more appropriate, with much of the time spent on vast amounts of research, study and old-fashioned detective work to decide what had been, how, and by which builders hand - the original builder, an unknown English one, or a later American owner. Knowing Rob Napier and his abilities as I do, I can think of no one better equipped to handle such a task.

The book contains a foreword by Albert Hoving, ship model restorer at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam; the preface is by Gerald W.R. Ward, senior curator of decorative arts at MFA, Boston. Hoving, Ward and others provided support during the reconditioning and book-writing process. The introduction and acknowledgments are by Rob Napier. Chapters are as follows; Opportunity, Provenance, Research Sources including studies and photos of most of the existing retourschips, The Riddle of the Scales, Preparing the Berth, The Hull Below the Main Rail, The Hull, Main Rail and Above, Going Aboard (a tour of the model) Sparring, Rigging Preparations, Standing Rigging, Running Rigging and the Final Steps, followed by five appendices, a glossary, sources and an index. There are also four folding plans by Napier in a pocket on the inside back cover. The book is lavishly illustrated, primarily with Napier's photos and illustrations.

Valkenisse arrived in Napier's studio in need of serious cleaning and reconditioning along with a bundle of spars believed to belong to the model; some did, most did not. The task of simply re-rigging the model using the spars took on a totally different aspect.

Compounding the problem was the fact that Napier, well versed in English and

North American ship construction, knew little of Dutch or European practices. He wrote to Hoving, whom he knew, asking for advice on literature that would help in his work. Hoving's reply electrified Napier: the museum in Amsterdam was well aware of the *Valkenisse* model and moreover, "The Museum is very interested in the project of re-rigging *Valkenisse*." Napier was advised that while the job would be possible without visiting the Netherlands, they were concerned about the treatment of their "national heritage." "They wanted to assure that the overhaul was as authentic – as characteristically Dutch – as was possible, and that they would provide everything Napier needed," adding that they could offer assistance in far more depth if he travelled to the Netherlands.

Once in the Netherlands, Napier was taken on a tour of museums that had retourschip models that he was able to study, photograph and document, along with a wealth of additional information. Napier does not speak Dutch, so Hoving interpreted in the Netherlands, and an endless flow of e-mails looked after communication and interpretation once Napier returned home.

A major consideration in any restoration is how a ship was built. Hoving advised Napier that as his skills were significantly above those of the original builder, he would have to revise his expertise to match those of the original hand that had built the model. MFA also had to decide whether repairs or additions were to be obvious to viewers, or were to blend into the model; both approaches are legitimate restoration practices. The blended approach was chosen for excellent reasons.

Retourschips were built in three sizes, 130, 145, and 160 Dutch *foet*, which differed from the English foot. Initially,

work on the hull was a matter of replicating missing pieces from those still with the model. A tentative scale had been established but, before work on masting and rigging could proceed, the true scale had to be established to allow accurate reconstruction of the masts, spars, and rigging sizes. Tabulating this information required a huge amount work before construction could start. Honouring their commitment to the project, the Rijksmuseum donated linen line, from which Napier laid up and dyed his finished-sized line.

The book provides a superb record of the reconditioning of *Valkenisse*, revealing the huge amount of work involved, while documenting the thought processes that went into the project. It goes far beyond the purely technical aspects of reconditioning a very worthwhile model. Napier, by choosing to refer to his approach as reconditioning rather than restoring, distances himself from many model builders who believe they are capable of taking on the task of restoring a model, based entirely on their technical model-building skills. While I know a few model builders who have added academic restoration and conservation courses to their extremely well-developed modelling skills, they are decidedly in the minority. Napier wisely intends to add such courses to his already fine record of working with the ship model collections of a number of prestigious organizations such as MFA, where he has had the opportunity to work with very capable conservators and restorers. While so doing so he has had his eyes and ears open to what they were doing and, more importantly, what they were saying.

This book is highly recommended to anyone interested in the reconditioning, restoration or conservation of any ship

model and should be very high on the list of model builders in general and specifically anyone referring to themselves as a model ship restorer.

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Gerald Norris (ed.). *The Buccaneer Explorer. William Dampier's Voyages*. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, www.boydell.co.uk, 2008. (First published 1994). xiv + 224 pp., illustrations, maps, sources, bibliography, index. US \$ 29.95, paper; ISBN 9-781-84383-364-2.

William Dampier's writings about his travels and observations are invaluable for those interested in early modern exploration. This new edition demonstrates that Dampier is still very readable after two centuries.

Editor Gerald Norris clearly admires Dampier, asserting that he was "the most remarkable seaman that England produced in the century and a half between Drake and Captain Cook." (p. ix) Norris relies largely on Dampier to make his own case through excerpts from his writings. Without question, this is Dampier's greatest legacy. His *New Voyage Round the World* was a sensation in its own day and is credited as being the first major English travel book and also notable for being the first such work to be written in the first person. Its popularity is borne out by the fact that the numerous volumes (1697, 1699, 1703, 1709) and many editions were snapped up by readers. Norris asserts that Dampier's "pungent narrative" was "wholly fresh" to readers of his own time (p. ix): "He rang true, he proved true." (p. xi) The fact that this globetrotter was a sometime buccaneer may well have added to his appeal. Yet the attraction was – and is – his

descriptions so it's not surprising that Dampier came to the attention of the Royal Society: his second book, *Voyages and Descriptions*, further enhanced his reputation. Whether he was discussing the movement of the tides or foreign cultures, few would dispute that Dampier's observations are wide ranging, detailed and also astoundingly accurate. Norris uses superlatives to describe Dampier's writing which he says is "still unequalled in range of interest, acuteness of observation and clarity of expression." (p.xvii)

We must also acknowledge Dampier's great talent as a navigator as well as his tenacity: Dampier survived three circumnavigations in an era when only the bravest or most foolhardy would even make a single attempt. Beyond his obvious contributions to natural science, navigation, and travel literature, his legacy is far from clear. This is demonstrated by the changing caption on his image at the National Portrait Gallery from "pirate and hydrographer" to "circumnavigator and hydrographer." This mixed legacy is also reflected in Dampier's chequered career. Although he managed to turn a disastrous expedition into a well-received literary effort, *A Voyage to New Holland* (published in two parts, in 1703 and 1709), he had to turn his quill to his own defence in *Capt. Dampier's Vindication of his Voyage to the South Seas in the Ship St George* (1707). Although Dampier was a man of undisputed talents, his "people skills" left much to be desired.

Dampier's time commanding the HMS *Roebuck* is an apt example of his misadventures in shipboard human relations. There was a great deal of friction between Dampier and the *Roebuck's* lieutenant, George Fisher. Their ugly relationship led Dampier to have Fisher held in a Brazilian jail; although the ship reached Australian waters, ultimately the ship sank.

Fisher was court-martialled in 1702 and deemed “not a fit person to be employed as commander of any of Her Majesty’s ships.” (p. xiii) Nevertheless, Dampier managed to gain a letter of marque from Queen Anne’s government. It seems he learned little from his court martial: trouble erupted on his privateering expedition and Dampier turned the lieutenant off his ship as well as some other members of the crew. Throughout the voyage, Dampier’s crew dwindled due to his poor leadership skills and volatile shipboard relationships. His backers attempted to bring a charge of fraud against him for the disastrous expedition. The charges were later dropped through his connections, ostensibly so he would be free to navigate another long-distance voyage. It was this voyage and the capture of a prize that ensured Dampier’s financial future.

Sadly, from the excerpts in this volume, we cannot fully grasp why Dampier was such a disaster as a commander and Norris does not explore this very much in the introduction to the volume. Tantalizing tidbits about crew relations in *Dampier’s Voyages* and the historical record reveal he was reviled by many of his men, so much so that a former crewman who had been marooned for four years resisted being rescued by Dampier and had to be coaxed aboard his ship (p.xvi). We are left with a conundrum which Norris does not attempt to solve for us: how could this man who seems so likable on the written page and admirable as the “indestructible Dampier,” be so desperately unpopular in a leadership capacity? Ever so briefly, Norris tells us Dampier was accused of being a “vicious, violent captain, whose language sometimes exploded into obscenities beyond the comprehension of hardened seamen.” (p. xx) Such actions were hardly novel among early modern commanders. Neither was

alcohol consumption. Norris claims Dampier was the ablest navigator of his time but we are left to wonder how a man could be “stupefied with alcohol” while his writings demonstrate he was a meticulous observer and talented navigator.

Norris does include an interesting section on the impact of Dampier’s writing on Darwin, Dafoe, Swift and Coleridge. If this part had been expanded, Norris’s assertion about Dampier’s impact on the literary and scientific worlds would have been that much more convincing to readers not familiar with Dampier’s work.

It would have been helpful to know why Norris has chosen the excerpts contained in this book. Even without such an explanation, samples of Dampier’s writing demonstrate why he has enjoyed a literary and scientific reputation. This volume does not delve into the enigmatic nature of the man’s personality. We are left to puzzle why such a remarkable observer of the natural world was so poor a judge of human nature.

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Captain Barry Thompson. *All Hands and the Cook. The Customs and Language of the British Merchant Seaman 1875-1975*. Salisbury, Wilts.: The Bush Press, rushnan@shoreside.demon.co.uk, 2008. 381 pp., illustrations, indices. UK £18.50 + £5.50 p&p, cloth; ISBN 978-0-908608-72-0.

I enjoyed this book. There was an instant feeling of the real thing: a hearty dialogue, questions, answers and anecdotes flying in the air, serious reflection and chuckling. Such is the tone struck by London-born resident of New Zealand, Barry Thompson, yarning with retired Able Seaman/Bosun

Charlie over a pint of beer. Such is the tone carried further and sustained throughout his book about British merchant sea-faring.

"You weren't a sailor until you had served on a British ship." So I was told by my informant, retired master sailmaker, Thorvald Thomassen, from South Norway, whom I interviewed about forty years ago. He was referring to his first years at sea around 1900. What did he mean? I only began to wonder when it was too late to ask. To put Barry Thompson's book to the test, I went to the index, looking up "Norwegian." The index pilots one to "Armstrong's patent," "handraulic," and also "Norwegian steam," all three entries explained as "[a]n operation performed solely by manual effort." There might have been a reference to the "Norwegian house-flag," the wind-driven bilge pump that was compulsory in Norwegian sailing ships, an embarrassment on photographs but quietly omitted from paintings. I think my sailmaker informant was referring to the fact that the most advanced technology was to be found on British ships during his early days at sea.

The ties across the North Sea between one small and one large maritime nation were strengthened during the Second World War. Both countries had experienced the transition period between sailing ships and steam and motor vessels around 1875, two world wars, and the decline during the 1970s when flags of convenience replaced proud national ensigns, like the affectionately named "Red Duster."

The title sets the casual and colloquial tone of this book, primarily a reference book of merchant vessels as they were. I began by looking up "All hands and the cook," listed under "A" in the alphabetical index and was given the explanation: "Commonly used in general conversation to refer to everyone on board. It is derived from sailing ship days where

the maximum number of people were required to take in sail when bad weather endangered the ship." This may not be the most puzzling of expressions, nor the funniest, but the explanation is representative of the matter-of-fact explanation of formal and habitual ways of talking as well as of downright slang.

A random sampling of the twenty-one chapters produced "engagement and employment," "medical," "parts of the ship," "cargo and cargo handling," "people and places around the world," and my own favourite, "hotel services, catering staff and food." For the sheer wealth of information, the amusing presentation of the officers' elegant life-style among passengers, and for the slang used in reference to personnel and diet items, the book offers us a micro-sociological narrative. Here an occasional female may turn up as a steam queen (a female worker in the ship's laundry), or a barberon (a female barber). Some "pet names" for dishes may quench the appetite of the hitherto uninitiated, like "Harriet Lane" for canned corned beef, allegedly after a young woman of that name who went missing near a packing plant in London, "in the early 1900s," and was never seen again. "Jessie's dream" for white sauce conjures up men's endless wishful thinking about women wanting them, which is related to the earthy simile, "as hungry as a nun's cunt." The ample entries on food signal the importance of victuals in the excitement, joy, and disappointments associated with meals.

The use of irony and derogatory terms is a common strategy towards the inevitable, whether superior or inferior, admired or disliked, on board or ashore. Such terms develop into slang and standard phrases. There is much ironic slang in this book, balanced by accounts of its factual background and meaning. In particular,

there is a sober and informative prologue, found somewhat puzzlingly *after* the preface and the introduction. But never mind, just accept that this is an entertaining book with some editorial deficiencies, more than balanced by its informative value.

Under "Miscellaneous words and expressions" — the last chapter and maybe hastily put together — one finds some lines on ship's women. This, so the explanation goes, "refers collectively to woman assistant pursers, stewardesses, telephonists and other female staff. It was said in a slightly derogatory sense by those who were les [sic] than favourable [sic] disposed towards having women in the crew of ships." The information is useful but there are many disturbing printing errors, so unexpected in a book that otherwise seems well proof-read. Do they indicate the author's late awareness of maritime women (accounted for under the headline "gender" in the author's notes at the beginning)? Seamen's attitudes to women as sweethearts, mothers, sisters and good women are shrouded in silence, as if in a pact, while the phrases included refer to women of the red-light district like "The Bombay biddy," or The Cages in Hamburg, where women are on spectacular display.

Somebody or something — a copy editor or a sudden gender awareness on the author's part — may be responsible for the inclusion of the few lines on women at both ends of the book. They seem forced and like last minute afterthoughts. Some readers might find those two inclusions contradictory. Some readers will hope that Captain Thompson writes another volume where he pays attention to women in proportion to their historical presence and economic and social status, as well as rank, on board, perhaps even to attitudes towards mom and the girl at home.

Captain Barry Thompson has

written a reference book of facts, phrases and fables. He has a tale to tell that is worth listening to, as are the phrases and allusions from maritime life that he helps to keep alive. It is amazing how many tales can be told in the format of a reference book, compiled and explained by an experienced mariner who knows the ropes.

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John Turner. *Service Most Silent. The Navy's Fight Against Enemy Mines*. Drexel Hill, PA: Casemate Publishing, www.casematepublishing.com, (originally published 1955, Pen and Sword Books), 2008. 200 pp., illustrations, appendix. UK £19.99, cloth; ISBN 978 84415 726 6.

In the Second World War the survival of the United Kingdom depended on open shipping lanes to the rest of the free world. The Battle of the Atlantic was mainly between German U-boats and convoys of Allied merchant vessels and their escorts. Closer to land, another kind of battle took place. Both sides used mines as part of their defensive as well as offensive strategy; defensively, to protect home waters from enemy shipping, and offensively, to sink or damage ships. The German air force dropped mines by parachute; surface ships and U-boats laid mines in estuaries, coastal shipping lanes and approaches to ports. These sudden threats sometimes resulted in a complete shutdown of shipping in the area. Mine warfare is a continuous battle of wits between mine designers and designers of countermeasures. In order to devise a countermeasure to a certain type of mine, it was necessary to gather information on that type of mine. In practice, it meant taking apart an explosive device in a safe manner, investigating the configuration of the mine,

and taking adequate countermeasures. In the south of England, the naval base HMS *Vernon* was home to a team of specialists who did just that.

The first mines HMS *Vernon*'s mine section encountered were contact mines. This type of mine is set off by physical contact with a target. Magnetic, acoustic, or pressure sensors can activate a contact mine, but most of the mines handled by HMS *Vernon*'s crew were non-contact. Lieutenant-Commander John Ouvry was the first to recover a German-laid magnetic mine and from then on, the British developed their magnetic mine sweeping. By early 1940, the Germans realized that the British had mastered the magnetic mine and later that year began using acoustic mines. The Royal Navy's hands-on approach resulted in a speedy catch up with information on new enemy mines and a rapid response to it. HMS *Vernon* had already initiated work on an acoustic countermeasure. British mine sweepers were fitted with vibrating hammers in watertight containers under the keel. The Germans responded to this by switching to acoustic-magnetic circuits. Mine design developed to a higher level with delays and booby traps, employing up to three electrical or mechanical switches. Mines were also dropped on land. To counter this development, a separate organization was set up although, for a while, Navy personnel travelled throughout the country to defuse the land mines.

The ultimate mine was the "oyster," a mine type developed by both sides which was triggered by the change in water pressure on the seabed as a ship moved overhead. The Luftwaffe combined it with an acoustic trigger while the German navy added a magnetic trigger. The mine was in use by 1943, and nothing could counteract it, not even German technology. It was, therefore, to be used in a national emergency

only, and only on Adolf Hitler's personal command.

In spring 1944, 2,000 oysters were sent to France but in early May they were ordered back to Germany. By D-Day, the unsweepable mines were tucked away in Germany while the Allied forces landed in France. After the 6 June, the oysters were sent to France again and two weeks later, the Royal Navy's mine experts found their first oyster in France. Later that year the experts were involved in operations in Belgium and Holland.

Occasionally, the author's emphasis on details is somewhat over the top: "It was six days two hours forty-five minutes elapsed without incident." His very technical description on the defusing of a mine may not attract a merry crowd. In fact, boredom is at the door. Apparently the author is not altogether that well informed. Occasionally he takes a short cut, like "lessons are learned. New ideas and new tools followed," but he does not dwell on this. The book has black and white photographs, some taken during operations in Asia and North Africa, but strangely enough, there is no further mention of these actions in the text. This reprint of the book published in 1955 does not contain an index or footnotes.

The author uses conversations and thoughts as a vehicle to carry his prosaic tale, but they never really took place and are an invention of the author's. The story may be in the spirit of the Second World War but it is hardly corroborated by the few identifiable sources mentioned in the text. Undoubtedly there is a niche in the library of a happy few for this work. Even more than half a century after the Second World War, John Turner's book still holds a remarkable story about remarkable men.

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H.J. Weaver. *Nightmare at Scapa Flow; The Truth about the Sinking of H.M.S. Royal Oak*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd., www.birlinn.co.uk. Reprinted 2008 (from 1980). 172 p., illustrations, map, appendices, glossary, sources; no index. £7.99, paper; ISBN 978 1 84341 042 3.

The sinking of the somewhat elderly RN battleship HMS *Royal Oak* inside the supposedly safe anchorage at Scapa Flow in the Shetlands by the German *U-47*, commanded by Kapitänleutnant Gunther Prien just after 1 a.m. on 14 October 1939 is probably one of the best known naval events of the Second World War, and one of the more controversial. It shook the Admiralty to the core, caused several inquiries and, until the war's end and an examination of captured German documents, gave rise to much speculation, second guessing and denials, both in official and newspaper circles. The untangling of events was little helped by a massive crowing German publicity campaign within months of the action, and a book, supposedly written by Prien himself in January 1941, based only in part on released facts. Those at Scapa were not sure for many days what had indeed sunk their large ship, and to this day there are still those who claim it was not Prien but various other causes that cost the lives of some 833 men.

Weaver, in his original 1980 book (this re-issue does not seem to have been changed at all), set about to dispel as many of the errors, guesses and mis-findings around the sinking as was possible. He interviewed Prien's widow and as many ex-*Royal Oaks*, Scapa Flow citizens, Admiralty staff and German archivists as could be located more than 40 years after events. He diligently searched files, ships' logbooks, inquiry minutes and papers of the

day, on the whole successfully. Within this slim volume, he develops a fairly straightforward story of a daring U-boat exploit that was reasonably successful, identifies why there was confusion at the time on the part of the actual participants at Scapa, the Admiralty and Prien himself; he explains with pretty positive proof why errors appeared in stories at the time and traces in particular the German/Prien versions that appeared. Prien was killed when his boat was later sunk in March 1941, and Weaver shows that even Prien's own book, *Mein Weg Nach Scapa Flow*, was largely ghost-written, his objections to errors there-in not considered, and that it was essentially a propaganda publication to hearten the homeland. Frau Prien says he was disgusted with it, but did not have the opportunity to argue.

While it was thought that the fleet anchorage, with its five entrances more-or-less blocked with booms and a few sunken block ships, was a safe haven, there were those, mostly junior officers and civilian mariners, who appreciated that a resourceful submariner could indeed sneak in around the ends or even under of some of these barriers at high tide slack water, but their views were not pressed, and in the budget-short late 1930s there were higher and more obvious priorities than sealing the entrances completely. The night's events were not helped by Prien hitting *Royal Oak* near the bow with one torpedo (of four he fired, the others failing, as RN and USN torpedoes were to do). There was initially a presumption of an internal explosion, as no-one had seen either a submarine or tracks, or possibly an aircraft bomb, as the Germans had carried out several reconnaissance flights in the week before. Besides, those aboard considered the anchorage secure. But 13 minutes later, after circling to the middle of the Flow

anchorage and finding nothing else, Prien returned to fire three more torpedoes into the *Royal Oak* amidships, which it sank in about 15 minutes with heavy loss of life.

In both his report and local stories there is continuing disagreement on even the weather and visibility (there was, in fact, no moon, although occasional northern lights, and later some rain), on what ships were present (Dr. Göbbels claimed both *Royal Oak* and *Resolution* were sunk, but HMS *Resolution* was in dock at Rosyth near Edinburgh at the time, although she had been at Scapa a few days before as reported), on whether any depth charges were dropped shortly after the sinking, and whether the driver of a car Prien had seen on the roadway nearby on his way in had in fact seen and reported him, as he feared. In the dark of night, he reported firing on two battleships, although one was in fact the seaplane tender HMS *Pegasus*, which was not hit. He also stated that there were no other ships in the anchorage, when there were indeed four cruisers and a considerable group of destroyers, lying about three miles beyond his furthest penetration.

There is one map of Scapa Flow, but given the detailed narration of events, more names of locations on it would clarify what was happening, particularly as Prien slid in on a growing ebb tide flow and searched about. Confusion is also raised by even those tides, which flow in on the ebb from the east entrances. Until Captain Benn arrived as a survivor aboard *Pegasus* about two hours after the explosions, no one knew for sure whether it was caused by a U-boat, by which time *U-47* was long gone by the way it had come, slipping around the end of one of the block ship barriers.

For those with an interest in this unique story, this volume makes for interesting reading, with a minimum of hyperbole and a maximum of carefully

proven detail. Weaver does not attempt to assess the effect of the loss of this battleship on RN strategy, or even its potential future contribution, which would have been minimal. It is a tale of discovery and detecting, and an entertaining rather than educational one, albeit there are lessons to be learned. Even two of the tails of the torpedoes were eventually recovered and rest in local museums. Not great history, but another mystery unravelled.

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Sam Willis. *Fighting at Sea in the Eighteenth Century. The Art of Sailing Warfare*. Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer Ltd., www.boydellandbrewer.com, 2008.xviii + 264 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, appendix, glossary, bibliography, index. US \$60.00, UK £ 30.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-84383-367-3.

In *Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain described the enormous, ever-changing challenges of a Mississippi riverboat captain, challenges which could be met only by long experience, cool judgment, and great physical and moral courage. Much as the same was true of an eighteenth-century warship commander, particularly the captain of a ship of the line. Sam Willis is the Mark Twain for these men. His book is likely to become a classic. Like such renowned histories as Richard Pares', *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Oxford, 1936) or N. A. M. Rodger's, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986) it combines great originality, deep research, and clear, accessible writing.

Although many histories describe in passing the duties of a warship captain, most readers are introduced to the topic

through novels. Willis provides us with a detailed historical study based on extensive research in unpublished primary sources (particularly court martial proceedings), published memoirs, and a wide range of secondary sources, mostly but not exclusively dealing with the British Navy. The most striking characteristic of the book is its refusal to accept conventional wisdom. There are few clichés he doesn't examine critically, from the use of the weather gage in battle to the advantages and shortcomings of the Fighting Instructions issued with supplements by various admirals. As one example, he not only dispels the myth that an attack could not be made from leeward but also explains the drawbacks of doing so. He rightfully emphasizes the growing professionalism and self-confidence of British captains during the latter part of the eighteenth century, but he does not hesitate to point out the navy's failings, such as its slowness in putting all the vital rules of conduct in writing. He also does not hesitate to criticize admirals who disregarded the unwritten but commonly accepted rules of conduct, such as the authoritarian and uncommunicative Admiral George Rodney, who failed in his responsibilities to the captains who served under him.

It becomes clear from reading this book that command at sea was an art as well as a science, particularly commanding a ship in the line of a battle. The characteristics of eighteenth-century warships made station keeping extremely difficult, particularly under fire. Success depended on a clear understanding of what the commanding admiral expected as well as the experience, skill, courage, and common sense of individual captains responding to a chaotic and ever changing environment.

Because Willis' book is so tightly

focused there are topics he does not cover. He does not point out, for example, that British success in the wars of 1793 to 1815 was only partly due to British improvement. It also owed much to the deterioration of the French Navy which was starved of experienced officers, skilled sailors, and the naval materiel needed to keep ships in good repair. Nelson's genius is undeniable, but except for La Touche-Treville, his opponents were vastly inferior to such *Ancien Régime* admirals as Suffen, Orvilliers, and La Motte-Picquet. Conversely, Weaver does not cover the broader responsibilities of early-nineteenth century British admirals like the great Collingwood and Saumarez, who had to be diplomats and statesmen as well as fleet commanders.

When it comes to discussing ship handling, however, Willis is peerless. Not a page is wasted and virtually everything he writes is fascinating and provocative. This indeed is a wonderful book. Anyone interested in warships should have it on his or her bookshelf for frequent consultation.

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