

Book Reviews

Ted Barris. *Battle of the Atlantic: Gauntlet to Victory*. Toronto, ON: HarperCollins Canada, www.harpercollins.ca, 2022. 434 pages, illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$36.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-4344-6079-8.

We are so inured to events being reported in the news for only a few days; e.g., our diminishing interest in COVID, yet the Battle of the Atlantic lasted five years and eight months, from the sinking of *Athenia* on 3 September 1939 to the sinking of HMCS *Esquimalt* on 15 April 1945. There was no sudden climax or turning-point, just waves of successes and losses. Canada lost 24 warships, over 2438 RCN and 752 RCAF personnel in the Battle of the Atlantic (426). Moreover, Allied merchant navies lost 2233 merchant ships (58 being Canadian) and over 30,000 merchant seamen and officers. But there were 25,343 successful trans-Atlantic arrivals in Britain.

Over the years, many books have dealt with the Battle of the Atlantic, but most of them paint Canada as having little or no part in the fray. This book has strong Canadian content, not only in the ships involved, but also in the personnel. Barris, an author of many military history books, describes the war not in the impersonal way of ships doing this or that, but through the eyes of both Canadian and German participants. He has interviewed or found the writings of those participants to tell the reader that the battle was fought by people and not by ships and submarines.

The book loosely follows the chronological order of events of the battle – the U-boat attacks and the escorts' counter-attacks. It also touches on SS *Athenia* (torpedoed on the opening day of the war); HMS *Royal Oak* (torpedoed while at anchor at Scapa Flow); HMS *Jervis Bay* (took on *Admiral Sheer* to save its convoy); HMCS *Fraser* (sliced in half by HMS *Calcutta*); evacuation at Dunkirk; Britain's gold shipped to Canada; HMS *Repulse*, a 27,200 T battlecruiser, being "protected" by HMCS *Chambly*, a 915 T corvette,

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at Conception Bay, Newfoundland, after the former's chase of the *Bismarck*; Bletchley Park's decrypting Enigma signals; B-Dienst's decrypting Admiralty signals; SS *Caribou* (Sydney-Port-aux-Basques ferry torpedoed); the sinkings in the Gulf of St. Lawrence; the "happy time" along the American eastern seaboard; deployment of RCN ships in Operation Torch (Allied landings in NW Africa) and Operation Neptune (naval part of the D-Day landings); and finally, to VE Day and the celebrations in Halifax. The book closes as a sailor with tears in his eyes, views the disposal of "his" wartime corvette immediately after the war, the fate of so many other corvettes.

The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) sprang from almost a non-entity to a large navy (albeit with small ships), and from about 3500 personnel to over 100,000. Naturally, it suffered from growing pains in both aspects. Without naval architects, shipyards, skilled labourers, and corps of trainers, it called upon foreign-designed and foreign-built ships, foreign supplied equipment, and foreign training. Thus, it received what was left, given that the supplier (usually the Royal Navy) saw to its own needs first. Added to that, Canada wanted to promote and continue the use of Canadian-made things – such as SWIC radar sets, which were definitely inferior to the British 271 radar. Canada was assigned escort duty for the slow convoys in the aircraft coverage gap in the mid-Atlantic, where the Wolf Packs loved to carry out their deadly business. The "powers that be" blamed the RCN for poor performance, but the Brits and the Yanks didn't do much better when they took over and shuffled the Canucks to the Mediterranean to escort convoys for Operation Torch.

I have read about a half-dozen books devoted to the Battle of the Atlantic and many more books with reference to it. But this is the first time that I have learned the tricks of the trade; for example, the two theories of how a single ship ought to attack a submerged submarine and how hunter-killer groups perfected a two-ship attack with greater success. Barris acknowledges the success of bombers, particularly at night with good radar and the Leigh Light in forcing submarines to submerge (if only to slow them down and deny charging of batteries) and attacking with specially designed depth charges. No doubt there are other books on the VE celebrations in Halifax, but this book gives a good description. Unfortunately, that riot (as some would call it) ruined the career of Rear Admiral Leonard Murray, the only Canadian to command an Allied theatre during the Second World War.

Thanks to Barris, we now have a good book that describes how the perennially under-equipped but over-achieving Canadian escorts fought the longest campaign of the Second World War.

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Stuart Bligh, Elizabeth Edwards, and Sheila Sweetinburgh (eds). *Maritime Kent Through the Ages. Gateway to the Sea*. Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, www.boydellandbrewer.com, 2021. 567 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$90.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-78327-635-7. (Distributed by Casemate.)

This book covers topography and the entire swath of prehistory and history of what is now the county of Kent in southern England through the lens of its connection with the sea. The book is the published record of a conference entitled *Maritime Kent Through the Ages*, held at the Centre for Kent History and Heritage of Canterbury Christ Church University in 2018. Following the introduction, 20 individual chapters by specialist scholars are arranged into five parts corresponding to major themes: topography, defence, trade and industry, and coastal communities, followed by seven “case studies” and an afterword. Each chapter is written by a scholar specializing in the subject. The arrangement of the chapters follows a logical order conforming to Kent’s history and psyche.

Part I, “Topography” is a single, long chapter entitled “Kent’s Changing Coastal Landscape: a View across Space and Time” that uses text, coloured diagrams, and maps to show the landscape to be a dynamic arena for the people and events, beginning with the ice age up to modern times. Photographs show changes in the coastline through erosion and deposition up to the present time to show the fluidity and plasticity of the landscape and the rapid pace of change of the shoreline, which has affected some communities positively and others negatively up until modern times.

Part II, “Defence” consists of four chapters on the history of Kent covering aspects of defence and strategic concerns from Roman to Victorian times. Because Kent lies between Europe and London, it includes the major wars and especially invasions. Being based on archival records down to the level of the individual and community, it presents an extremely detailed history of the major currents of English naval and military history from Roman times through Anglo-Saxon, Danish, and Norman invasions. It shows the creation and development of what would become the Royal Navy through the histories of the coastal communities in mediaeval times through the civil wars of the early modern period, the Dutch, and Napoleonic wars. There is great detail on the burgeoning communities associated with the navy, like Chatham, Woolwich and Greenwich in the heyday of the British Empire. The study ends with the introduction of steam power in 1865.

The theme of “Trade and industry” is presented in four chapters that tie the land and its people to the sea through thousands of years of economic history. The chapter dealing with Roman Kent uses the techniques of archaeology to

study the remains of industries like pottery-making and salt production on the landscape. In another, the exchange of material culture in the Kingdom of Kent is studied to trace trading networks and relationships that produced the “wealthiest and most sophisticated in lowland Britain” (196). This is a statement echoed throughout the work in different ways. The same chapter details boatbuilding as evidence of the influence of cultures in continental Europe, using what little evidence remains, like nails and impressions in sand of wooden planks to conclude that the dominant boatbuilding tradition was “one of Scandinavian-type, clinker-built vessels.” Other chapters describe farming, woolen manufacture, and especially fishing. From the mediaeval period onward, records like customs accounts allowing the role of trade in individual communities to be understood, for instance, Sandwich, with its large harbour, was the important port for overseas trade with Genoese and Venetian galleys.

The “Community” theme has four chapters on the social history and especially the role of class relating the people to the monarchy and the Anglican and predecessor churches. Chapter 13, “Empire, Race, and Diversifying Kent’s History c. 1500-1840” records the role of Kentish individuals and families in the slave trade and the colonies for which they were bound. The ways in which Kent profited included commissioning voyages carrying manufactured goods to be exchanged for slaves, transporting the slaves to the colonies, and returning slaved-produced goods to England. As early as 1821 William Cobbett, the radical reformer, commented that “swarms of West Indians, Nabobs, Commissioners, and others of nearly the same description, that have selected it for the place of their residence” (314-315). The relative wealth of Kent is underlined.

Each of the four chapters grouped as “Case studies” is a detailed, sometimes whimsical, look at an individual community or aspect of society, such as, the place of Dover in literature; the beginnings of sea-bathing as a pastime; and the growth of “holiday-making” following the development of the railway. The pieces dealing with the nuances of the class system will be best appreciated by British people. Chapter 19, “Early Modern Thanet: an Open Society,” provides the key that makes possible the detailed study of the lives of people, families, and communities over a span of hundreds of years throughout the book: a wide array of complete, undisturbed archival records dealing with people and their property and trade. They include parish registers and other records of births, marriages, and deaths; ecclesiastical court records; wills and probate inventories; quarter session papers; deeds; and manorial surveys and court records. The church is pervasive in this book as it was throughout history. Chapter 22, “Rhododendrons and Raids: Dover Naval Women’s Daily Life and Emotions in 1918” covers the introduction of women into the Royal Navy

as members of the Women's Royal Naval Services (Wrens). The "Afterword" ties the book together and particularly traces areas that need further study.

The book succeeds in drawing out the place of the sea in every facet of the county's development. It is more than a common local history, enjoying the resources of a well-established archaeological society and the academic headquarters of the Anglican Church in its conception and publication to produce a fine academic work. This is an amazing physical production. The paper it is produced on is high quality kaolin stock that will last indefinitely and which allows production of high resolution maps and charts that are not only beautiful but convey very detailed information. Perhaps it betrays itself as a "local" history only in treatment of the bibliography. The first part entitled "Primary Sources (Excluding archival references)" oddly lists secondary, that is, published works, including monographs and websites as well as some primary sources. In the part entitled "Secondary Sources" there are listed journal articles, which are also secondary. This is a dense-packed academic book requiring time and effort. It is also physically heavy, with a high specific gravity. I wonder if it would float but did not find out.

A few of statements need checking: HMS *Achilles* was the first iron-hulled warship. (p. 156, para 1). HMS *Warrior* is commonly given. Average size of ships crossing the Atlantic in 1815 is given as 100 tonnes (p. 259, para 2), which seems low. "In terms of sheer number of ships deployed, the naval battles of the Dutch Wars are the largest Britain has been involved in" (p.5, para 4). Does this include the Second World War? Not likely.

This book is for libraries with big budgets but not limited to the county, because the political and military history of Kent is the history of Britain.

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Przemyslaw Budzbon, illustrated by Paul Wright. *The Polish Navy 1918-45. From the Polish-Soviet War to World War II.* Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2022, 48 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. US \$19.00, CDN \$25.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-47284-700-3. (E-book available.)

The history and development of navies in smaller countries typically receive less attention than the major maritime and continental powers. The Polish Navy (*Marynarka Wojenna*), founded in its modern iteration along with the Polish state after the First World War, is today a growing and increasingly capable naval force in Eastern Europe within the context of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU). Addition of warships

by foreign purchases and indigenous planned shipbuilding has gained urgency since Poland stands as a bulwark against increasing Russian bellicosity and regional threats, especially as viewed by the United States and its allies. The Poles have experienced fighting for national existence and defying the odds with the military and naval forces available to them up against far superior adversaries. Przemyslaw Budzbon, a naval architect resident in Poland with several naval-related publications in Polish and English over many years, has researched and written this latest offering in Osprey's well-regarded New Vanguard series (no. 307), accompanied by Paul Wright's customary first-rate colour ship profile drawings, cut-away views, and original artwork.

Following Osprey's standardized format, this small book incorporates an engaging, readable narrative alongside pertinent photographs, information tables for particular ships and ship classes, and art illustrations, which pack an amazing amount of detail for just 48 pages in total. The book is divided into three distinct sections covering campaigns and battles during Polish-Soviet hostilities in 1919-20, build-up of the navy during the interwar years up to 1939, and participation and organization of Polish naval units during the Second World War serving a government in exile dependent on material and training assistance from allies.

Poland was land-locked in 1918, and the first naval forces originated with flotillas of river craft and armed steamers used to support the Polish Army and counter similarly equipped Soviet river flotillas. Offensives and counter-offensives depended on the seasons and the initiative of local commanders. The Poles managed to prevent the Soviets from crossing certain key rivers long enough for progress on land and signing of the Treaty of Riga in March 1921, ending the war and preserving the country's territorial integrity. As part of the Treaty of Versailles, Poland also received access to the Baltic Sea via a corridor that split Germany from its eastern territories and commissioned a small number of hand-off torpedo boats, river monitors, and minesweepers. Shore facilities for the navy duly developed at Gdynia. Naval missions from Great Britain and then France arrived in Poland to offer assistance and advice for the nascent Polish Navy and its expansion.

Based on a three-pronged political, military, and economic alliance between France and Poland backed by loans and other financing with French bankers and industrialists, three submarines (from a planned nine) and two destroyers were constructed in French shipyards and delivered to the Polish Navy, headed after 1925 by Admiral Jerzy Świrski. Selected Polish naval officers attended courses and training in France to increase their professional competence. The Polish approach was to acquire or build warships superior in their respective classes, manned by well-trained crews, to guarantee a measured advantage over any other naval forces that the Polish Navy might come up against in

the confined and shallow Baltic. The Red Navy was the most likely opponent until Germany began to rearm under Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Poland was literally sandwiched between two antagonistic sides. As relations with France receded, Poland obtained two advanced destroyers from Britain's J. Samuel White shipyard on the Isle of Wight and two Dutch-sourced submarines of the latest design, *Orzel* and *Sep*. The German and Soviet invasions of Poland in September 1939 interrupted planned construction of more destroyers and submarines.

Badly outnumbered Polish naval units were sunk or destroyed in the opening operations of the war, went into exile in neutral ports, or fled to allied countries to carry on the fight. An Anglo-Polish Naval Agreement, negotiated by a Polish government-in-exile, placed Polish naval forces under the operational control of the British Admiralty while administration remained with Świrski and his staff. After the fall of France, significant numbers of personnel from the Polish armed forces regrouped in Great Britain, where newer and older warships were taken-over. Polish-manned warships and submarines participated in most main European theatres of operations as well as the Battle of the Atlantic against German U-boats and supporting the Allied landings at Normandy on the coast of France. The Polish destroyer *Piorun*, operating in a British destroyer flotilla, even played a small part in hunting down the battleship *Bismarck* trying to reach the safety of a German-occupied French port, described in a side text box. Having the Soviet Union become an ally was awkward for the Polish provisional government and its armed forces, given the troubled history and distrust between the two countries. At war's end, the British recognized a Soviet-installed Communist government in Poland 'liberated' by the Red Army and disbanded the remaining Polish armed forces in Great Britain, an act characterized as a great betrayal. Most former officers and sailors from the Polish republic's navy chose to settle in the West rather than return to Communist Poland. Thirteen who did so faced execution. Budzbon ends the story here without mentioning that Communist Poland established its own navy post-war, which became a substantial force with distinct capabilities in destroyers, submarines, and landing craft as part of larger Warsaw Pact arrangements with the Soviet Union.

This primer on developments and warships in the Polish Navy between 1918 and 1945 carries on Osprey's high production standards and convenient format at an affordable price. The photograph illustrations predominantly come from the Polish Naval Museum (*Muzeum Marynarki Wojenne*) located in Gdynia and various private collections as well as the Imperial War Museum for the Second World War years. Wright's artwork and ship profiles are excellent and nicely done. As usual, the text does not contain research references, though a short list of English source publications appears at the end for further

reading focused on the Polish Navy and general Polish military history. The book cites neither academic journal articles nor Polish source materials, which the author no doubt used in his research. *The Polish Navy 1918-45* provides a good general overview for English readers interested in the Polish Navy up to the end of the Second World War as well as ship enthusiasts and scale modelers. In the modelling community, Poland is known for some diverse ship kits, multi-lingual information publications, and detailed ship plans. Making a model of a Polish warship from the period relies on such sources or modifying French and British variation ship kits similar in design type and function.

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Ian Buxton and Ian Johnston. *Battleship Duke of York. An Anatomy from Building to Breaking*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2021. 264 pp., illustrations, appendices, sources, index. UK £45.00, cloth; ISBN: ISBN 978-1-5267-7729-4. (E-book available.)

Naval history over the centuries is replete with strategic and operational analyses. In recent decades the impressive output of David Brown and Norman Friedman (among others) has documented the parallel and symbiotic evolution of both naval architecture as a science, and the design development of various warship classes as driven by operational imperatives. Rarely, however, has the actual building and breaking of a particular warship been as completely and as uniquely illustrated as in this volume.

That this was possible stems from two happy circumstances: first, the remarkable foresight of John Brown Shipyard's management in very early establishing an in-house photographic department to record the progress of construction; and second, the preservation of this exceptional and unique consolidated record of Clydebank shipbuilding during the later decimation of the British shipbuilding industry. Ian Johnston's previous two books (*Clydebank Battlecruisers*, Seaforth, 2011; and *A Shipyard at War*, Naval Institute, 2014) provide additional details and examples of the photographic effort during and shortly after the First World War. This photographic record ultimately extended from 1887 until the collapse of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1972 and encompassed 23,000 glass plate negative and another 20,000 celluloid negatives. Of this treasure trove, over 600 photographs were of the present vessel. This record was augmented by pictures of the scrapping at Faslane, February 1958-March 1960, photographs taken by the first author while serving a naval architect apprenticeship at the Dumbarton shipyard of William Denny & Co., and by warship enthusiast Tom Ferrers-Walker,

who travelled regularly from Birmingham to record the progress. The result is a book which provides a remarkably visual (almost visceral) sense of the complexity of the shipbuilding and ship-breaking process of the era.

The book does not dwell on the operational history of the ship. *Duke of York* was the third vessel of the five-ship *King George V* class (the others being *King George V (KGV)*, *Prince of Wales*, *Howe*, and *Anson*) and had a lifespan of only 16 years, being caught in the post-war modernization funding crunch. Brief chapters on the shipyard's history, its labour/employment practices, costs, and procurement/contracts/ specifications set the scene for the meat of the book, the chapters on armament, armour, construction, plans, and breaking.

The chapters on labour/trades, costs, procurement, and specifications/contract provide fascinating insight into the business of ship procurement and production. That this ship was procured with official documents that numbered only "over 600 pages" is a testament to the latitude and expectations embodied in phrases like "to use only the best materials and workmanship of British manufacture" (31), as well as the caveat "no new contrivances unusual in Admiralty work to be introduced without Admiralty sanction" (30). This latter calls to mind Freeman Dyson's dictum that "a good scientist is a person with original ideas – a good engineer is a person who makes design that works with as few original ideas as possible..."

The chapter on armament is lavishly illustrated with excerpts from the coloured plan and section drawings in the armament handbooks. Each quadruple 14" MK III mounting (of which there were 2) cost £700,000 (almost 10% of the whole ship), weighed 1200 tons (excluding the guns) and employed a crew of 107. Each gun was 54 feet long and lobbed a 1,590 lb shell. The heaviest single component of the mounting was the 200-ton rotating turntable, requiring the ship to be repositioned in the fitting-out berth under the single crane capable of lifting such a weight. The complexity of the mounts was such that they took longer to build than the ship and so armament orders for the last three ships of the class were placed in January 1937, even though *Duke of York* was not laid down until 5 May 1937. She was launched and named on 28 February 1940. The mountings were not shipped until June 1941 (a one-year delay), and the ship was reported complete ready for trials 31 October 1941.

The main chapter of photographs covers the construction and is accompanied by excerpts from daily progress reports recorded by (variously) the Shipyard, Engine works, Shipyard Drawing Office (SDO), Committee (senior Clydebank management) and Board (John Brown Board of Directors in London). Together these paint a fascinating picture of incremental progress, but also of varying perspectives on issues, in-progress design changes, and impact of local and global wartime events. Thus, the loss of *Hood* gave rise to questions of acceleration of *Duke of York's* programme, including

exploration of the possibility of transferring workers from other yards (126); 19 December 1941 brought news of the loss of *Prince of Wales* (156) leading to further considerations of workforce shifting, this time from Clydebank to assist Fairfield with hastening *Howe*; 29 January 1941 noted design change proposals based on *KGV* sea trials; and 13/14 March 1941 noted the impacts of the Clydeside blitz, including the need to accommodate and feed (inside the yard) those workers who could not get home through the damage.

Of particular interest to this reviewer was to note the numerous design changes during the build progress: extra berthing for an additional 90 officers and men; switching of degaussing cable runs from external to internal; additional splinter protection around magazines (installed after launch); rudder modifications and support strengthening installed during a docking immediately after sea trials); and breakwater alterations based on weather damage to *KGV*.

There is also a chapter of plans, featuring double-page-spread general arrangements in full colour, a four-page fold-out inboard profile, as-fitted drawings, plate expansions of fore and aft sections, and a large scale body plan/docking drawing showing side blocking locations and placement of breast shores to prevent hull distortion due to the exceptional loads of gun mountings and armour.

The final chapter covers the scrapping or ship-breaking process at Faslane, illustrating how Shipbreaking Industries (SI) progressively dismantled the ship while afloat, gradually edging her into the shallows where the final cutting-up could be done at low tide. The record of weights of various materials accounts for some 37,048 tons of material, equipment, and fuel recovered, recycled or disposed of over a 27+ month process, using 353,000 manhours, or about 2% of the effort to construct the ship.

Overall, this book contains a wealth of visual and factual detail which will fascinate anyone interested in the technical details of large warship construction in the era of the Second World War. The more one dwells on the magnitude and complexity of the process, the more one is moved to retrospective admiration and wonder, not only at the engineering and fabrication feat, but also at the sheer managerial and logistical challenge of orchestrating such an endeavour in the pre-computer era. This volume will be a unique and most valuable addition to any library concerned with the history of warship construction.

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Alexander Clarke. *Tribals, Battles and Darings. The Genesis of the Modern Destroyer*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com, (distributed by Naval Institute Press), 2022. 208 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £30.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-52677-290-9. (E-book available.)

In *Tribals, Battles and Darings*, Alexander Clarke follows the transition of the destroyer, from a small ship suited to a single mission during the First and Second World Wars, into the modern incarnation of a larger ship, suited to multiple missions. He examines the Royal Navy's push to acquire larger, more versatile destroyers in the years leading up to the Second World War, and the continued need for them during the conflict. Not only does he focus on the political and financial considerations that affected naval procurement during the final years of the interwar period, he also describes how larger destroyers helped fill in the gaps within the Royal Navy during the interwar period due to political and financial considerations. He then looks at the personalities who commanded and fought these ships and their role in both peace and wartime. What emerges is not a history of any of the three classes discussed, rather it is an illustration of how destroyers evolved from smaller ships suited to single missions, and operating as part of a larger force, to warships that could perform multiple duties proficiently, and operate independently without the need for a larger fleet to provide support. The transition from specialist vessels to jacks of multiple, if not all, trades is clearly explained.

Starting with the Tribal class destroyer, Clarke explores why the Royal Navy needed such large, powerful escort ships with heavy guns and how they were used as fast destroyers suited to the conduct of war, as well as maintaining peace. He then explores the circumstances and technological advances such as radar, that required something suited to a different set of criteria; namely, losses due to aerial bombardment. This was the Battle-class of destroyers. Finally, he transitions into the post-war period and the D or Daring class of destroyers built for the RN and the Royal Australian Navy, the largest and most heavily armed of the three classes.

Through a series of anecdotes he explores the missions performed by various ships in the classes discussed, and the colourful personnel who advocated for, and commanded these ships. The result is a highly readable account of the role RN destroyers played during and after the war, that is accessible to both students of naval history and those new to the subject. This book is not a history of any one of the classes, although Clarke does provide sources for those who want to learn more about the topic. What this is, is an exploration of how one type of warship transitioned from plan to construction to implementation to something similar yet different.

Impeccably researched, this book provides a wealth of both primary and secondary references for readers at all levels, especially those who want to conduct further research. Written in a very informal style, it is accessible to both the layman and the serious academic. While light on the technical specifications for the ships discussed, Clarke's work is packed with blue prints and pictures, that describe how the ships were constructed, and the role that appearances play in both the design and perception of warships, both in times of war and peace. He does point out in several places the construction considerations that were taken into account for all of these ships, considerations that allowed them to conduct missions and survive damage that would have sunk lesser ships fulfilling similar roles. Without being overcome by minutia, Clarke explores a group of ships from conception to introduction, through application while offering enough depth to provide something useful to students looking for something new.

As good as it is, the book is not without shortcomings, the most obvious one being what Clarke does not discuss. While determining why these ships were constructed and what they did during the Second World War, there is less attention paid to the post-war period, particularly the Battle and Daring classes, which had long post-war careers, well into the Cold War. They were present in various conflicts, with various navies well into the latter half of the twentieth century. The lack of exploration of this territory, whether limited by considerations of length, or because it would detract from the author's central thesis, leaves plenty of room for further research.

Tribals, Battles and Darings opens a window into a period of transition for warships while offering an accessible starting place for looking at the people, events, and ships that influenced this unique period in history. It also provides a clear and straightforward examination of the final stages of the transition of the destroyer, from ships suited to a single mission, to ships that needed to perform a variety of functions in a changing world.

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David Craddock. *What Ship, Where Bound? A History of Visual Communication at Sea.* Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.co.uk, 2021. 96 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £12.99, US \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-52678-842-7.

While at sea, communication between ships and/or shore has been a challenging task. Historically, ships ingeniously utilized semaphore (from the Greek *sema* meaning light and *phero* carrier) to take advantage of the seaman's

visual senses by means of coloured flags, angularly arranged staves and/or balls plus modified lights. David Craddock's brief but informative book on visual communications using multiple historical sources takes the reader on occasional, unexpected detours.

Signaling by flags between ships in the days of sail presented multiple difficulties. Choppy seas, thick fog and residual cannon smoke from battles made viewing at a distance through relatively primitive telescopes problematic. The task was complicated by heaving, slick decks in rain and snow squalls, becalmed skies with no winds to fly a flag, or wild turbulent contrary winds tangling flags together. Communicating at great distances, at or beyond the curvature of the earth, produced a diminishing arc of legibility further limiting the sending of flag messages. Despite of these obstacles, flags were an early form of codification that linked ships during sea battles or fleet maneuvers and distinguished friend from foe.

The book features copious illustrations as well as multiple resources for the inquisitive vexillologist. The design of signal flags could either be rectangular or triangular in shape but their colours and design had to be easily seen and not confused in various lights and wind conditions. Primary colours plus black and white predominated and vertical stripes were generally more easily discerned. Each stood for a letter or number requiring ever-evolving code books. Flag groupings of twos, threes, and fours meant whole phrases or special orders. Adding to the intended meaning of the signals and to their interpretive complexity was the use of the specific masts to display the coded flags (fore, main or mizzen), at times what specific sails were set aloft and occasionally the number of shots fired from guns. Historic sea battles were won or lost by interpretations of these signals. Craddock chronicles their roughly 300-year evolution that became the International Code of Signals. He also includes a small segment showing how the British Union Jack evolved over time. Later, the use of signal flags became an instrument of mercantile marketing, a commerce adjunct to inform ships at sea where to make port and to notify them about which ships were inbound with their cargoes.

In addition to multicoloured patterned and geometric-shaped flags, an elaborate and complex array of semaphore signals could be displayed on a ship's masts at sea, on governmental coastal signal stations or commercially, at Lloyd's stations which were connected to the British Postal Service telegraph. The display of NATO code flags *Bravo Zulu* acclaimed "a task well done." Semaphore pennants used at sea and on land for some undiscussed reason differ in colour but are equal in size. Those used by the navy are red and yellow while those utilized by the army ashore are blue and white.

A communication "sea change" came with the invention of Samuel F. B. Morse's code and the telegraph, the basis of code for information transmission,

sometimes in detail via blinking lights and later by radio transmission. As an interesting, not well-known fact, a resourceful nineteenth century lady, Martha Coston, perfected coloured telegraphic night flares fired from pistols or grenade launchers. First employed during the Civil War, they are still used as distress and pilot signals today.

A History of Visual Communication at Sea is a concise book that is illustration rich with sometimes surprising anecdotes that make for enjoyable reading. As an example, one segment is titled “Semaphore in Popular Culture: Protests and public spaces.” The circular line drawing, known as the peace symbol, was originally emblematic for nuclear disarmament. It is in reality the superimposed semaphore for the two letters, ND (see below). The international campaign for nuclear disarmament adopted this protest symbol in 1958 and it has become an icon meaning peace.

Signaling at sea is not a common topic in the maritime history literature; yet it is a figurative footnote found on many pages and, therefore, of great significance. The most memorable example is Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson’s “England expects that everyman will do his duty.” With that in mind, although this short book may be critiqued as somewhat superficial, I would order a semaphore display aloft of *Bravo Zulu* for David Craddock’s *What Ship, Where Bound?*

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Sarah Craze. *Atlantic Piracy in the Early Nineteenth Century. The Shocking Story of the Pirates and the Survivors of the Morning Star.* New York, NY: Boydell Press, www.boydellandbrewer.com, 2022. 222 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £65.00, US \$99.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-78327-670-7. (E-book available.)

When media reports of a pirate attack on the MV *Maersk Alabama* circulated in April 2009, much of the Western world was shocked to learn that piracy was not a scourge of the past, rather it was, and had remained, a menace to regions of the maritime community since the so-called “Golden Age” of the early eighteenth century. This was not the first time that public consciousness had suddenly awakened to this plague of the seas long thought defeated. Within a couple of months of a series of pirate attacks on trading vessels, including the British brig *Morning Star* off Ascension Island in February 1828, the press brought alarming news of high seas robbery to the front pages, spurring widespread public fascination, and forcing both the British and Spanish governments to take action. Though contemporary justice was served

to the pirates and their captain, Benito de Soto, over time these events and the figure of de Soto became heavily distorted, sensationalized, and mythologized, to the point of creating an injustice to the survivors. Sarah Craze's superb examination into this attack returns these events to historical memory both accurately and vividly, while revealing the nature and scope of piracy within this often-overlooked period in the history of maritime violence.

Craze skillfully tells the story of the attack on the *Morning Star* within the broader context of the history of piracy and the specific conditions that existed in the nineteenth-century Atlantic that encouraged its temporary resurgence. The main focus, of course, is the piratical attack on the *Morning Star*, which is related to readers in balanced fashion. We learn of the crews of both the aggressor, men from the *Defensor de Pedro*, a Brazilian slaver, who mutinied in late 1827 and turned pirate, as well as that of the prey. The author gives equal attention to both the victims and the perpetrators, as well as revealing the plight of the passengers, particularly females, who courageously escaped their confinement and freed the male crewmembers from the hold. Their heroism saved the sinking ship and all aboard. These stories are usefully contextualized with attention to sexual violence at sea and a growing aversion by media outlets to discussing it publicly. Also well-explained is the rise of piracy within the region, originating out of the instability caused by Spain's struggle to maintain and regain its Latin American colonies. Craze describes how a generation of sea raiders emerged, most notably operating out of Puerto Rico and Cuba, and nicely chronicles the lives of several of them.

The trial and execution of the pirates who attacked the *Morning Star*, especially their captain, Benito de Soto, became a highly publicized affair, which had the effect of glamourizing these murderers and rapists. Craze relays how Benito de Soto's legacy gradually took shape, initially in Spain, but eventually in Western scholarship thanks to two of its earliest pirate history writers, Basil Lubbock and Philip Gosse. The pirate captain's death inspired romantic poems and stories that assumed a life of their own. The author usefully examines how the increasing popularity and profitability of such stories resulted in the media's increased influence in shaping public discourse surrounding piracy as well as the responses of governments to it.

The final chapter provides us with perhaps one of the book's most valuable contributions; that is, the descriptions of other contemporary pirates whose exploits have been largely forgotten. The lives of Cornelius Willhems, David Babe, and Albert Hicks, the last man to be executed for piracy in the United States, serve as microstudies of how the media landscape and its impact on both public opinion and government decision-making changed considerably over the nineteenth century. This practice was not new, for pirates of the previous two centuries had received similar treatment, and the trend continued through

the media's portrayals of pirates in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

There's little to criticize about this book. Its two maps; one depicting incidents of piracy reported to the British Press between November 1827 and May 1828, and the other representing the *Defensor de Pedro's* piracy voyage with ships attacked for the same period, could be more effectively presented by overlaying one with the other and including the dates of the attacks. Researchers and students of pirate history have much to gain from this study. Besides its close telling of several stories mostly absent from the secondary literature on piracy, the book draws on a wide range of primary evidence including trial papers and witness accounts. The select bibliography offers an excellent guide to the best available sources on both the 1828 attack and incidents of piracy elsewhere in the nineteenth-century Atlantic, including numerous British and American newspaper articles. As one of very few studies to question the conventional understanding of Atlantic world piracy as having been all but eradicated by the early decades of the eighteenth century, this book is important and worthy of our attention.

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Kev Darling. *Fleet Air Arm Carrier War*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword Aviation, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk (Originally published 2009), 2022. 352 pp., illustrations, appendices, bibliography, index. UK £19.99, US \$39.95 paper, ISBN 978-1-39907-500-8.

Kev Darling's history of the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) is a testament to the enduring popularity of works about British naval aviation. Originally published in 2009, its reprinting suggests that the interest in the subject has not been satisfied by the dozens of new books that have been written about it since, not to mention the many older works also still in print. Its reappearance thus raises a pair of questions: to whom is it designed to appeal, and how does it compare to the already substantial number of works available?

On a spectrum ranging from narrowly-focused academic studies to glossy, picture-laden surveys geared towards the popular market, Darling's book can be placed on the latter end of it. Though the title suggests that his book is only about the FAA, his first chapter offers a history of British naval aviation up to the start of the Second World War. Darling follows this with three chapters about the FAA during the war that divide his coverage by theatre, another three chapters offering more detailed coverage of the FAA's service during the Korean War, and two final chapters summarizing the FAA's history down to

the early twenty-first century. All of this is recounted with a generous number of pictures of airplanes, aircraft carriers, and aircraft operations, so many that the reader will find one on nearly every other page of the main text. Though these are all in black and white, any readers tiring of the dichromatic drabness of the text will find relief with a separate section offering 16 pages of gorgeous, full-colour photos of FAA planes and helicopters, either in flight or parked on the ground. In this respect, the book is truly a feast for the eyes.

All of these images are intended to supplement Darling's text. Yet not even the lavish use of illustrations can distract from the many flaws in this book. The first of these is its organization. Though the chapters are arranged in chronological order, the information within them is all over the place. As early as in the first chapter, which is subtitled 'From the Start to 1939', Darling summarizes the various classes of aircraft carrier built up through the 1950s, followed by a description of the aircraft of the era that ends with the Harrier jump jet. This creates an excessive amount of repetition, as numerous details are repeated throughout the text. Darling's detail on page 28 about the first HMS *Eagle*'s origin as a converted Chilean battleship, for example, is one that he regards of such significance that he offers it again on page 39, and then again in a photo caption on page 73. And while many details recur over several chapters, others, such as the sinking of the HMS *Hermes* in the Indian Ocean in April 1942 are left out altogether, as Darling picks up his coverage of naval aviation in that theatre with the arrival of the escort carrier HMS *Battler* on 26 October 1943 (and not 22 September, as Darling claims).

Most of this should have been caught by a sharp-eyed editor before publication. Unfortunately, not only was the initial publication poorly edited, but the reprint appears free of any editorial intervention as well. The text is pockmarked throughout with errors that neither the author nor the publisher corrected before they reissued the book. Some of these, such as the one on page 11 dating Eugene Ely's historic flight off of the USS *Birmingham* to 4 November 1910 rather than 14 November, are likely typographical in nature. Yet there are several, such as the identification of Luftwaffe field marshal Albert Kesselring as an 'admiral' on page 94, for which the blame must rest squarely with the author. And whether the numerous inaccuracies in the index are the result of sloppy indexing before the book's original publication or the failure to adjust to changes in the layout of the text for the reprinted edition, the result either way is to make it practically worthless as a tool for the reader.

Taken together, these flaws make Darling's book greatly inferior to the many alternatives available to readers today. Scholars would do far better to turn to David Hobbs's excellent series of works on the history of British naval aviation, which are similarly well endowed with illustrations, but which accompany texts that are far superior in every respect to what is offered here.

And while the more casual reader may enjoy the photographs and Darling's efforts to capture in his narrative something of the drama of aviation-assisted naval warfare in the twentieth century, with so many options from which to choose it is unnecessary to steer them towards his unreliable account. In the end, there is no good reason to recommend this book to anyone interested in this subject.

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Douglas C. Dildy and Ryan K. Noppen. *German and Italian Aircraft Carriers of World War II*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2022. 48 pp., illustrations, tables, bibliography, index. UK £11.99, US \$19.00, CDN \$25.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4728-4676-1.

Number 306 in Osprey's New Vanguard Series, and the first Osprey collaboration by authors Douglas C. Dildy and Ryan K. Noppen, *German and Italian Aircraft Carriers of World War II* offers an introductory examination of the German and Italian naval attempts at aircraft carrier programs. The book is divided into two distinct parts, with each containing a chronological analysis of the respective nations' efforts, accompanied by period photographs, profile renderings of the various proposed vessels, and data tables for relevant equipment and airframes. As is typical for Osprey works, a selected bibliography and index are provided at the end for further study and quick reference.

Lacking a comprehensive introduction, the text dives directly into the narrative of German carrier development. This constitutes over two-thirds of the work, totaling 29 pages compared to the 14-page Italian section. The development of German seaplane carriers and the beginnings of conversion carrier projects during the First World War provide a background to the efforts of the Kriegsmarine years later, with the majority of the section naturally focusing on the never-completed *Graf Zeppelin* and her associated aircraft designs. The political bickering and changes of leadership that hampered Germany's one wartime carrier are well documented, and the frustrations of Admiral Rader are well represented. The detailed focus on carrier aircraft designs is also appreciated, especially with the notations on the actual service of constructed airframes as the war progressed and the *Graf Zeppelin* was left to rust. The section finishes with an examination of the planned 1942 wartime conversion projects of ocean liners and unfinished cruisers into additional carriers, with information tables and profile drawings provided to better illustrate their unrealized potentials. No real section conclusion is given before

the work transitions to the Italian efforts.

As with the German section, the Italy discussion begins with a summary of their First World War forays into naval aviation, culminating in the “mobile seaplane base” ship *Europa* (34). Various interwar projects are briefly covered and rendered in a table, with the seaplane carrier *Giuseppe Miraglia* receiving an expanded section due to its status as the only major Italian naval aviation vessel at the beginning of the Second World War. The remainder of the text is devoted to the three primary attempts by the Regia Marina at carrier construction: the *Aquila*, *Sparviero*, and the proposed salvage and conversion of the cruiser *Bolzano*. Some coverage is given to the Re.2001 aircraft variants intended for use on these vessels as well, and a conclusion is provided noting the major points of contention that led to Italian efforts being “too little, too late,” while also noting that Italy did finally commission an aircraft carrier of their own in 1985 (46).

It is odd that a work discussing the design efforts of two different navies lacks an overarching introduction and conclusion. The Italian section, at least, offers a concluding paragraph on its covered material, but the absence of a clear conclusion for the German analysis or any form of transition between the two halves gives one the feeling that the work is somewhat disjointed. The disproportionately large size of the German section also gives the feeling that the Italian efforts are not receiving their fair share of coverage. And while it is understood that Osprey book page counts are often restricted by the series they are released under, either a more even split of focus or even a division of the two subjects into ‘full sized’ coverage would be appreciated. The placement of one of the Italian carrier design’s profile drawings in the German section instead of with the other Regia Marina renders later on is also done without explanation, though this was most likely due to an odd number of profiles for each nation.

German and Italian Aircraft Carriers is a decent introduction into an often-overlooked aspect of Second World War era naval ship design. While not without its shortcomings, the work highlights each nations’ naval aviation activities in the years leading up to the war, along with describing the partially-constructed hulls, proposed wartime designs, and associated aircraft that would have made up each vessels’ compliments had they been completed. For those interested in a basic history of German and Italian designs, this work is a good entry point, with a bibliography of more in-depth sources for those wishing to carry out further studies.

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Gerry Doyle and Blake Herzinger. *Carrier Killer: China's Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles and Theater of Operations in the early 21st Century*. Warwick, UK: Helion, www.helion.co.uk, 2022. 70 pp., illustrations, maps. UK £19.95, US \$29.95, CAN \$41.95 paper, ISBN 978-19150-7064-7.

In the early dawn of 26 January 1929, USS *Saratoga* launched nearly every aircraft on its deck toward the Panama Canal. By 0700, the naval air strike achieved complete surprise, the exercise umpires of Fleet Problem IX ruling that bombers attacking the canal's locks had rendered the canal inoperable and the mission a success. As the aircraft completed their mission, however, the battleships of the "Blue Force" discovered *Saratoga* almost 150 miles away, as they swept the Gulf of Panama. In the ensuing mock engagement, as the battleships opened fire and a Blue Force submarine fired a full spread of torpedoes, the umpires ruled *Saratoga* sunk before the airwing had returned from their mission over the canal. The mixed results of Fleet Problem IX, where the Black Force conducted a long-range air strike and successfully completed their mission of closing the Panama Canal while the Blue Force succeeded in sinking their enemy's aircraft carrier, opened a debate that has ebbed and flowed for nearly a century. How does the vulnerability of the aircraft carrier affect the way a navy thinks about its fleet? Gerry Doyle and Blake Herzinger's *Carrier Killer: China's Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles and Theater of Operations in the early 21st Century* brings that debate into the twenty-first century with clear analysis, excellent illustrations, and a succinct look at how the People's Republic of China (PRC) intends to place American carrier vulnerability at the center of its maritime planning.

Gerry Doyle is a writer and editor with Thomson Reuters, working in the Indo-Pacific region, who has covered politics and international affairs from the streets of Chicago to the Arab Spring. Blake Herzinger is a naval reserve officer who has spent most of his career in the Pacific and works as a consultant to the US Navy and Indo-Pacific Command out of Singapore. Together, they bring not only years of experience analyzing the Pacific world, but also a keen awareness of the complexity of both the military and political dynamics of the US Navy's growing concerns over the rise of the People's Republic of China. Over the course of six short chapters, *Carrier Killer* examines the history, technology, strategy, political symbolism and messaging, and tactics involved in the PRC's development of anti-ship ballistic missiles. Detailed and well researched open-access information on the DF-21 and DF-26 missile systems is at the core of the text, with the authors offering honest assessments of where the unclassified information may be flimsy or incomplete. They conclude the book with a thoughtful chapter entitled "Where do we go from here?" and a conclusion which brings together the key insights of the previous chapters and

demonstrates what is known as well as the significant number of unknowns involved in the Chinese missiles.

The first key takeaway from this book, that informs how today's naval professionals and students of the Pacific world should think about the PRC threat to American naval forces, is that the "kill chain" for these weapons is incredibly complicated, and by no means assured. "Kill chain" is a military term of art used to describe the sequences of events needed to achieve a successful engagement using today's networked, precision, long-range weapons. A potential target must be found via reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, the track of that target must be maintained, the information must successfully be passed from the intelligence gathering organization to a targeting staff, that staff must appropriately plan the attack, that plan must then be passed to the unit responsible for launching the weapon, then the weapon must be launched safely and successfully, and then all the technological elements of the weapons must operate or deploy successfully all the way until final impact. Each step in the chain must work nearly flawlessly for a successful engagement. And each step in the chain has the possibility of being interrupted by the enemy. As Doyle and Herzinger point out, this is a very complex undertaking and is quite difficult. And that does not even include questions about the technological elements of the DF-21 and DF-26 missiles and the fact that the PRC has not successfully tested them against moving targets at sea. These weapons are anything but a silver bullet.

The second key insight from the authors' analysis is that the ability of the newer, longer-range DF-26 to strike every American base between Guam and the Chinese mainland creates a much bigger threat than the possibility of a DF-26 attempting to strike an American aircraft carrier at sea. Targeting American and allied Pacific bases is a far less complex problem than managing the kill chain for an open-ocean engagement with a moving carrier. American and allied Pacific basing creates a logistical and capability infrastructure that would be vital in any future conflict with China. The DF-21 and DF-26 missiles, which are capable of carrying anti-ship warheads, might just as easily be fitted with conventional or nuclear warheads. The authors argue that this threat, to the allied basing network spread across the Indo-Pacific, is far greater than the high-profile and more often discussed threat to aircraft carriers which causes naval hand-wringing.

The final important conclusion of the authors in *Carrier Killer* is that the balance between the offense and defense fluctuates constantly. With this observation, the authors channel their inner historian, despite being analysts of the contemporary world. As naval historians have known for centuries, changing technology and changing tactics result in operational and strategic rebalancing in how and why naval forces fight. This results in adjustments to

the relative dominance of the offense and defense. If modern analysts are to be believed, and technological change is faster now than it has ever been in the past, that rebalancing might create rapid changes in the military dynamics of the Indo-Pacific and affect defenses against the threat of the missiles.

Doyle and Herzinger's *Carrier Killer* offers a thoughtful, thorough, and clear-eyed analysis of the possibilities created by China's deployment of anti-ship ballistic missiles. Rather than "silver bullet" weapons that change the balance of power in the Pacific, the authors demonstrate that these weapons are complex and unproven. At the same time, they certainly represent a threat to the safety of American aircraft carriers and the power projection mindset of American naval thinking. The vulnerability of the carriers has been a subject of debate for almost a hundred years. The authors do an excellent job of placing these new weapons in their technological, military, diplomatic, and informational context, backed up with excellent illustrations, maps and historical background. As a quick primer on important developments in the Pacific world, *Carrier Killer* offers naval professionals, contemporary analysts, historians, and students a valuable resource to help them understand the complexity of today's Sino-American naval competition.

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Steve R. Dunn. *Battle in the Baltic: The Royal Navy and the Fight to Save Estonia & Latvia 1918-20*. Barnsley, S. Yorks.: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com (distributed by Naval Institute Press), 2021. 304 pp., maps, illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index US \$24.95, UK £12.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-3990-9655-3. (E-book available.)

In the years immediately following the First World War, the Royal Navy engaged in an undeclared war by undertaking defensive and offensive operations in the eastern end of the Baltic Sea against the Bolsheviks and German elements trying to prevent the emergence of new nationalist states seeking independence. Commitment to the enterprise within higher Allied councils and Britain's Lloyd George government was tepid at best, save the constant urgings of munitions, war, and air minister, Winston Churchill. Lack of clear political direction meant goals were left ill-defined, and naval officers commanding the squadrons, such as admirals Edwyn Alexander-Sinclair and Walter Cowan, creatively interpreted the instructions given. Royal Navy warships brought arms and ammunition for the hard-pressed nationalist forces, provided bombardment and fire-support when necessary, patrolled in the face of significant dangers from mines and adversarial naval forces, and launched

attacks against Soviet fleet units inside the formidable main naval base at Kronstadt. Meanwhile, sailors, and even some officers, questioned why they were still fighting and suffering under austere conditions when the rest of Great Britain had returned to peace. Most poignantly, ships were sunk and lives were lost during this fitful period. An accomplished author with several books focused on naval biography and the Royal Navy before and during the First World War, Dunn highlights the complexities involved and the role played, in particular, by the Royal Navy in creating the countries of Estonia and Latvia.

The book is divided into 22 chapters and eight appendices. On the whole, Dunn provides a conventional operational and battle history that incorporates the political machinations as well as the personal reflections from participants to capture sentiments in their own words. The first chapters chart the decline of the Imperial Russian Empire and rise to power of the Bolsheviks under Vladimir Lenin, assisted in no small part by the Germans, who were rewarded by the Treaty of Brest-Litvosk taking Russia out of the war. After the 1918 armistice, the Germans never really left the occupied eastern territories, and the beleaguered Bolsheviks confronted a succession of distinct ethnic peoples in lands on the edges eager to gain independence, foreign intervention by the Western powers, and White Russian military forces trying to restore the Tsarist monarchy and turn back the revolution in an emerging civil war. The Royal Navy sailed into this maelstrom with the intent of upholding British interests and assisting friendly aspiring countries where possible, most particularly Estonia, Latvia, and Finland. Poland was considered a preserve of France based on that country's own relationships. Resources were short, and the ships dispatched were often old and worn-out, crewed by a mix of war-emergency and regular navy members. Alexander-Sinclair had no doubt had enough once relieved by Cowan, who applied himself with particular rigour to the mission and taskings at hand.

The middle chapters describe the interactions with principal figures such as the resourceful General Johan Laidner, commanding the Estonian land forces, and German General Gustave Rüdiger von Goltz with direction over the troops, ex-POWs, and free-booters (*freikorps*) seeking land and influence at the expense of the nationalists and Bolsheviks, to create a pan-German eastern enclave. It was often hard to determine who was fighting whom on land, though at sea it was somewhat easier because the Royal Navy pressed its presence strongly into the Gulf of Riga and the Gulf of Finland right up to the harbours.

The main obstacles were mines laid in fields, the natural hazards of relatively shallow and ill-charted waters, and occasional sorties by units of the Soviet fleet – mostly light cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. Reinforced by additional naval forces, including an aircraft carrier, destroyers, and

minesweepers, Cowan established a forward operating base and airfield in the Björkö (Koivisto) islands group close enough to observe and meet any movements from Kronstadt harbour beyond the minefields. Augustus Agar, a naval officer sent out to ferry spies for espionage purposes, demonstrated the utility of fast torpedo-carrying motor boats (CMB) in sinking the protected cruiser *Oleg*, which coalesced into a larger operation codenamed "RK" to strike directly inside the main Soviet naval base supported by an aerial diversion. Like most such affairs involving small forces in a heavily protected anchorage at night, mishaps and missed timings involved comparatively dear losses for the attackers, though two battleships and a submarine tender were heavily damaged or sunk (disputed by the Bolsheviks). If the attack against Kronstadt represented perhaps the high-point and defining event for the Royal Navy's time in the Baltic, the remaining chapters detail the dreary ordeal of working in a cold climate far away from anything, the occasional losses to accident and naval action, and mounting discontent amongst the deployed personnel over food, leave, pay, and uncaring leadership – the classic causes of mutiny. When certain crew members refused work or openly protested, Cowan was decidedly unsympathetic and responded with harsh measures. The previous spring, French sailors aboard warships in the Black Sea mutinied for similar reasons and faced equally dire consequences, especially those identified as instigators or ringleaders. Eventually, the British government decided that keeping naval forces on station in the Baltic cost too much when times were toughening and other priorities took precedence, and withdrew them with little fanfare, not even a special medal for service.

The Royal Navy's contributions in the struggles for independence by Estonia and Latvia are remembered in a number of memorials, thanks to the determined efforts of the failed British politician and academic, George Howard, the 13th Earl of Carlisle. The appendices provide a useful basic timeline, article 12 of the armistice respecting withdrawal of German troops, Admiralty expenditures on the Baltic operations, manning of CMB used in the Kronstadt raid, a description of Bolshevik legate Maxim Litvinov's demi-official overtures in Copenhagen, as well as figures on personnel and ship losses and numbers of Royal Navy ships deployed broken down by type.

The production quality of the book is exceptionally high, with a pleasing layout and look. Each chapter has a bolded heading and further sub-headings separating sections. Photographs are placed in the book's middle section on glossy paper, representing ships, well-known and lesser-known personalities, and memorials. These come from the author's own collection, as well as official repositories. The cover of the book reproduces a striking colour painting by Cecil King showing HMS *Caledon* in the ice at Libau harbour, from the Imperial War Museum's holdings.

Battle in the Baltic is recommended as a very readable and up-to-date narrative that puts the Royal Navy's operations in the Baltic after the First World War into context and pays homage to the men who served and died there. The sources and perspective are mostly British and share many similarities to Geoffrey Bennett's *Freeing the Baltic* (TNM XXVIII/1 Winter 2017, pp. 39-41), which it builds upon. Greater appreciation of the Russian, Finnish, Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish, Danish, and French sides is achieved to a limited degree. Historians and general readers interested in that part of Europe and the time period will find the book worthwhile.

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Anthony Dymock, Lutz Feldt, Patrick Hebrard, Fernando del Pozo, and Ferdinando Sanfelice di Monteforto. *Europe and the Sea—A Continuing Story*. Hamburg: Mittler im Maximilian Verlag GmbH & Co KG, www.mittler-books.de, 2021. 184 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography. Euro 29,95 €, hardback; ISBN 978-3-8132-1110-8.

The relationship between Europe and the sea has been the subject of many books and exhibition projects over the last decades and thus, it needs to be asked if this book brings something new to the table or not?

First, it must be recognized that the authors are not maritime historians or scholars, but rather, five retired admirals who have served with five different European navies and, more importantly, have worked together for a substantial period on European maritime security issues. Consequently, instead of presenting a traditional, scholarly analysis, the book discusses the maritime past and present of Europe, mainly as a background for present and future decisions on the maritime dimension of European security policy.

Basically, *Europe and the Sea* is divided into three main sections (past, present, future) plus one shorter section that deals with European strategies related to regional seas. This structure, while obvious, is most appropriate. The historical section covers the whole period from antiquity to the present day in less than 75 pages, making a broad-brush approach unavoidable. Unfortunately, it remains unclear to the reader why certain innovations like the Viking sun-compass are described in detail, while major ship innovations like the medieval cog are not mentioned at all. Since the authors were not aiming for an historical study, however, but an analysis of contemporary and future challenges, such details may be irrelevant for an evaluation of this book. In the end, the whole historical section is simply an easy-to-read and understand history of how and why some European nations developed into

maritime powerhouses, and that combined European naval and maritime activities clearly outnumbered comparable activities from all other continents throughout history. Despite being somewhat oversimplified and more uneven than a professional maritime historian might have liked, the overall story is largely convincing. Interestingly enough, the section ends with a chapter asking the reasons for the “indisputable European maritime primacy.” The answer, simply described as superior maritime technology combined with “applied organized violence” presents a western-European, post-Second World War bias, not unsurprising given authors and the aim of the book.

The next chapter focuses on the present day but is less an actual description of contemporary maritime and naval Europe than a summary of current maritime and naval politics and policies. Given the many descriptions of the industry itself already available, this book offers a simple, comprehensive overview of a topic that is normally characterized by hundreds of highly specialized papers, white books, etc. without a lot of the detail such studies entail. The final chapter on the future of Europe and the sea once again highlights future policy needs and maritime naval strategy. Here the authors make a convincing claim that maritime and naval affairs need to be an integrated element of any future European and EU policy development and that European politics without integrating the sea is simply not possible.

Europe and the Sea—A Continuing Story is a book that can be recommended to every maritime and naval historian dealing with contemporary (European) maritime history, not for its historical analysis, but as a snapshot on how naval leaders see current and future challenges for European maritime security. This makes it more of a primary source than a historical analysis. The production values include high technical quality and a small, but convincing, selection of illustrations, making it somewhat of a coffee-table book as well, suitable for everybody who has an interest in the state of maritime affairs in Europe. Unfortunately, the brief bibliography is somewhat haphazard and offers no real help for readers not already familiar with the most important literature on the subject. As a book that clearly explains the importance of maritime and naval affairs for past, present and future European politics and policy, it should be recommended to colleagues dealing with other fields of European history who might benefit from learning that maritime and naval affairs form an integrated and central element of European history, not an obscure topic only of interest to some highly specialized historians. With a retail price of € 29,95 for a large-format high-quality hard-cover book of nearly 200 pages, it is moderately priced. While this reviewer would not assign it as mandatory reading for a class, he would happily recommend it to the library of any institution dealing

with European history or as an addition to a private study collection devoted to the same subject.

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Bernard Edwards. *Royal Navy Versus the Slave Traders: Enforcing Abolition at Sea 1808-1898*. Pen and Sword Maritime, www.penandswordbooks.com, 2021. x+197 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. £14.99, US \$29.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-39901-350-5.

Bernard Edwards provides an overview of the British efforts to suppress the slave trade after the British parliament outlawed it in 1807. He tells the story from the perspective of the British seamen, marines and officers engaged in the fight. To underline this vantage point, the eight chapters bearing directly on patrolling, chasing, and fighting the slavers begin with a quote from a memorial tablet to one or more of the men who lost their life stamping out the African slave trade. This is the paperback edition of a book originally published in 2007.

Edwards gives the reader a tour d'horizon of slave trading from the Greeks through British, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and French involvement. Light on details, it does illustrate the long practice of various groups of people enslaving others, after capture in battle, or in raids on settlements, to provide labourers for large-scale projects, or workers for mines or plantations. After a synopsis of the British movement to end the slave trade, Edwards describes the first attempts to stop the slave traders. The British effort stretched along the West African coast from Cape Bianco (in present-day Mauritania) to the region around the Calabar River, (the border region of present-day Niger and Cameroon) where most of the seaborne portion of the trade originated. The first African Squadron, sent out in 1808, consisted of two vessels, a frigate, and a sloop. Given the scale of the task, this was a mere token force, but Britain's Napoleonic War commitments would not allow any more resources. By 1819, that force had been increased to six ships under Sir George Collier, a step in the right direction, but still woefully short of what was required. In 1820, the United States sent one ship to assist the British, the former British frigate *Cyane*, captured in the War of 1812. This was an interesting choice to send, as Collier had failed to retake the *Cyane* when it was in the company of its captor, US frigate *Constitution*, in March 1815. Another frigate, a brig and two schooners were later sent across to assist. Within a year, the entire United

States force had been withdrawn, and none would return for more than twenty years. By 1851, the British government had increased its naval presence off the West Coast of Africa to 24 ships. This was a force that could command and eventually stop the slave trade from this area of the continent. The east side of the continent proved a bit more stubborn, lasting into the 1890s before the sea-going slave trade was ended.

Chapters 7 through 14 narrate the 91-year fight. Of all aspects of the story covered in the book, this is where most of the detail exists. Despite that, this lengthy and complex struggle is reduced to a synopsis of particular engagements across the time period. These chapters paint a picture of the gradual build-up of ships to patrol the lengthy coastline, to capture the slavers, and free their human cargo. Edwards uses the experience of the person(s) involved to lead the way into the narrative for each chapter. This allows him to give the reader the sense of boredom faced by the sailors as they cruised endlessly back and forth searching for a target, the quick turn to exhilaration as chase was given, to fear and the rush of adrenaline in the fight. Finally, he describes the problems of the prize courts dealing with the captured ships and slaves as ships were returned to owners and people remained in bondage. As time went on, more ships were condemned and more captives released from their enslavement. The author covers victories and defeats for the British men and officers on the African coast. Lives claimed by disease and climate are repeatedly noted; as usual, more men died of disease and accident than in battle.

The book leaves the reader with much to reflect on. The description of the enslavement of African men, women, and children, sometimes by their own rulers, to sell to the Europeans and the Arabs who traded in slaves is quite disturbing. The horrific conditions aboard the slave ships and the brutality visited on those enslaved is palpable and lingers after one puts the book down. Of note is the hypocrisy of the governments (Spanish and Portuguese, for example) who claimed to have ended their slave trade but simply allowed it to continue for years, and the British who fought the slave trade, but kept tens of thousands enslaved until 1833, and who took too long to provide the necessary resources to fight the trade. Edwards' writing style is straightforward, simple, and pulls no punches.

The maps of the African coast are extremely helpful in placing the action, though the print is very small and hard to read. The illustrations are of people and ships related to the story, and of slavery. There is a short bibliography and the archives used are listed, but with no details as to what was used from them. As is usual for *Pen and Sword*, there are no footnotes or endnotes, a disappointment for the more academically-inclined reader.

This book provides a good overview of the British efforts to stop the African slave trade, primarily on the west coast, but also with some detail

along the east coast. A fuller, detailed and contextualized account awaits to be written. Edwards tells the story of one of the many conflicts the British navy was involved in during the nineteenth century. As such, it will be of interest to those examining British foreign policy in early Colonial Africa, the Victorian British navy and the slave trade.

Thomas Malcomson
Toronto, Ontario

David Ellery. *RMS Queen Mary. 101 Questions and Answers About the Great Transatlantic Liner*. London, UK: Adlard Coles, www.bloomsburypublishing.com, 2021. 128 pp., illustrations, bibliography. US \$28.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4729-9311-3. (E-book available.)

Many *Northern Mariner* readers have some ideas about RMS *Queen Mary* but more questions. This, small, quick read has questions of its own, 101 in fact. It begins with a short history and a timeline running from the idea of two superliners in 1926, through construction interrupted by the Great Depression, *Queen Mary's* maiden voyage in 1936, service as a troop carrier during the Second World War, return to the North Atlantic route, retirement, repurposing as a hotel/community focal point in Long Beach, California, to its current, uncertain state.

The questions are categorized by ten topics: Facts, Building and Launch, Design and Technology, Crew and Passengers, Life Aboard, War Years, End of an Era, New Beginning, and Heavy Weather. The questions and answers are concise, averaging three to four per two-page face without pictures. Those photos, both black and white and colour, add visual images to the text. They cover the vessel from stem to stern, from construction at Clydebank to berth at Long Beach, depicting rigging and propellers, shops, dining and play rooms, kitchens and lounges, captains, kings (think Duke of Windsor) and stars (like Bob Hope). Even those vintage advertisements still seize the imagination. Finally, seven diagrams illustrate the deck layout. The bibliography offers a guide for those thirsting for more.

Author Ellery has packed a lot into 128, undersized pages. I knew the name and had some vague conceptions about *Queen Mary*, but I gained a much broader understanding from these pages. I now realize just how unique this massive ocean liner, not cruise ship, truly was with its art deco style and three, segregated classes, and the wide variety of roles it played. The Great Depression extended this ship's gestation by 27 months. At the ocean liner's debut, *Queen Mary* was the monarch of the seas. In its youth, a war-time makeover transformed the ship into a maritime Boudicca, as it transported

troops across the Atlantic. With peace, *Queen Mary* returned as a bejeweled matron who pampered its passengers even as they were wooed away by new, speedy, Pegasus-fleets that forced the ship into a sheltered semi-retirement.

RMS *Queen Mary* is an easy but great introduction to the golden age of Transatlantic liners.

Jim Gallen
St. Louis, Missouri

Paul G. Gill. (Paul G. Gill, Jr., ed.) *Armageddon in the Arctic Ocean. Up the Hawse Pipe from Galley Boy to Third Mate on a Legendary Liberty Ship in the Biggest Convoy Battle of World War II.* Ashland, OR: Hellgate Press, www.hellgatepress.com, 2022. ix+389 pp., illustrations, maps, tables. US \$21.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-954163-38-6.

This memoir of mariner Paul G. Gill centres on his life during the Great Depression, chronicling his experiences aboard cargo ships and passenger liners before becoming a US Merchant Marine officer during the Second World War, and concluding with a brief summation of his post-war life. Recurring themes in the episodic account are the adolescent's attempt to earn a living while pursuing his calling for a nautical career. Gill's engaging story culminates with the firsthand account of his experience as an officer aboard the *SS Nathanael Greene*, an American-built Liberty ship, operated for the War Shipping Administration, and part of Convoy PQ 18, a fleet of forty Allied merchant ships under military escort, delivering supplies to the allied port of Archangel in the Soviet Union.

Paul and his twin brother, Phil, were the fifth and sixth children born to Sarah Welsh Gill and Captain William Francis Gill of South Boston. The Gills had a long history as fishermen off the west coast of Ireland, emigrating to America in 1864. Much of the narrative involves Paul's adolescence and his difficult life leading up to the convoy battle.

Paul recalls gathering driftwood on the beach with brother Phil, in the winter of 1931 – fuel to be burned in their mother's kitchen stove. After the driftwood was gone, the ten-year-old boys scavenged coke from the local electric company's coal-fired generating plant. As a teenager, he left home, signing up to work for the CCC, Civilian Conservation Corps, one of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs established in 1933. After 15 months living and working in a camp in Vermont's Green Mountains, he returned to Boston and signed up for the Merchant Marines; he was not yet eighteen. Gill's first position was as galley-man (cook's assistant) aboard an oil tanker. In 1937, he signed on as Ordinary Seaman aboard the *SS Manhattan* – the biggest and

fastest luxury liner built in the United States at the time of her launching in 1931 – intending to accrue enough sea time to be eligible to take the examination for Able Seaman. Gill describes his transatlantic passages to European ports, particularly Hamburg, where he enjoyed the beer halls, learned to speak German, and met Heidi, his girlfriend. In 1937, he made seven North Atlantic crossings aboard *Manhattan*.

The economic drought of the Great Depression along with organized labour unrest greatly undermined employment opportunities during these years. A particularly engaging episode involves Paul and his older brother, Steve, riding the rails across the continent, in hopes of signing aboard West-Coast-based merchant ships. In Denver, the brothers parted ways, Steve returning to Boston and Paul pressing on. Their experiences in North America's interior, jumping boxcars, camping in "hobo jungles" and looking for temporary jobs as they worked their way westward is a vivid moving picture of social history.

Eventually, Gill acquired the sea time, passed the exam, and received his Able Seaman license in May 1939. He worked aboard the US Army transport *Republic* and the passenger ship SS *Uruguay* to Rio de Janeiro, where some romantic encounters follow.

Having spent more than four years as a merchant seaman, Paul had risen from galley boy to Able Seaman, aboard nine different vessels visiting seaports all over the world. When the US Maritime Service at Fort Trumbull, Connecticut, opened its Officer Candidate School to any American merchant mariner who had accrued more than fourteen months of sea duty, Gill applied and was accepted. On a weekend visit home to Boston, his twin brother introduced him to Maura Evans, the young woman he fell in love with and later married.

On 1 April 1942, 21-year-old Paul Gill signed on as Third Mate aboard the S.S. *Nathanael Greene*, preparing to depart on its maiden voyage to northern Russia to deliver munitions to the Soviet ally. The action for which the memoir is titled is described in terse entries from the author's perspective. This ship's crew received the Gallant Ship Citation for outstanding action to save life or property at sea. (The Gallant Ship Citation is an award given by the United States Merchant Marine to US and foreign flagged merchant vessels.)

After the battle, Gill received his Second Mate license and taught at Fort Trumbull Officer Training School. After a few months, he resigned and accepted a commission as an ensign in the United States Navy Reserve where his experience qualified him for duty as a Stevedore Officer in a Construction Battalion. He was assigned to the 37th Naval Construction Battalion in Pearl Harbor – his wife Maura joined him in Hawaii. After the war, the couple returned to Massachusetts to work and start a family. Using his benefits from America's GI Bill, Gill resumed his education, eventually earning an MBA

from Harvard Business School. One continuing thread of Gill's narrative is how he survived the economic hardships of the Great Depression to build a successful maritime career.

The book includes an introduction and an epilogue written by the author's son, Paul G. Gill, Jr., who also edited the manuscript. The epilogue follows up on what happened to his father and uncles, and the ships described in the memoir. There are no references or citations, but numerous images and personal photographs enhance the work. Editor Gill, Jr. is a medical doctor and writer, author of *The Onboard Medical Guide: First Aid and Emergency Medicine Afloat*.

An interesting personal memoir, Paul G. Gills' story is a notable addition to twentieth-century social and maritime history.

Linda Collison
Steamboat Springs, Colorado

Jamie L.H. Goodall. *Pirates & Privateers from Long Island Sound to Delaware Bay*. Charleston, SC: History Press, www.arcadiapublishing.com, 2022. 128 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$21.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-46714-827-6.

The Golden Age of Piracy, which lasted from the 1650s to the 1730s, has long lived in the imaginations of innumerable children and adults worldwide, spawning numerous books, plays, films, and television series. Famed for their rejection of mainstream society's social mores and hierarchies, as much as for their frequent violence and supposed riches, the prominence of pirates, is often up for debate. Looking at the Mid-Atlantic colonies, Goodall argues that these supposed scourges of all good people were, in reality, often welcomed by various governments in the region due to the economic and martial support they could offer. In particular, when it came to New York, she contends that a not insignificant portion of the region's economy was heavily dependent on piracy. Crews seeking to turn their captured ships and stolen goods to profit were welcomed in the newly English colony, with government officials happily condemning such illicit gains as the product of legitimate privateering. This willingness stemmed primarily from the precarious position of the colony itself. Having only recently been acquired from the Dutch, New York was well positioned but poorly provisioned for success, needing most of all ways to stimulate their economy. Stolen goods brought in by pirates allowed merchants to supply demand from both domestic and overseas markets and grow their shipping fleets at a fraction of the typical costs. The local economy was further stimulated by the ongoing pirate need to repair and outfit their ships for further

voyages as well as places to sleep, drink, cloth themselves, and otherwise carry out their daily lives. As Goodall points out, taverns, as places for food, drink, gambling, companionship, and informal trade, were often the largest beneficiaries of piracy and, in turn, produced some of the most ardent allies of the Mid-Atlantic pirates.

Importantly, Goodall notes that the economic benefits represented by these pirates extended across the Atlantic to Africa, where they proved to be crucial in undercutting the monopoly in selling enslaved persons held by the Royal African Company. Merchants in the mid-Atlantic colonies were fully aware of the value of this triangular trade and incessantly sought to force their way into the fray. One way to do this was to hire, or otherwise fund, pirates who would go to the African coast and acquire slaves through various means. These captives would then be carried to various ports in the Americas where they could be turned into a profit for the pirates' investors, while affording them deniability should their piratical employees be detained. Concurrently, the crews of these pirate vessels were an auxiliary military force that could be used by their governmental benefactors as needed, namely when the colonies themselves were threatened. Through their willingness to supplement the colonial government's authority, many pirates strengthened their bases of support, even as commercial interests increasingly began to complain to Parliament.

These growing protests eventually spelled the end of the Golden Age of Piracy. Parliament deployed new governors intensely hostile to piracy to multiple Mid-Atlantic colonies, particularly New York. Once in power, they began systematically hunting down and executing all pirates and pirate supporters they could find. Beyond fearing for their physical and financial well-being should they be caught, many pirate supporters were willing to turn on their former allies because they did not need them anymore. Increased economic viability in legal industries, such as ship-building, timbering, textile manufacturing, and agriculture, meant the once-desperate Mid-Atlantic colonies no longer needed to violate the law to remain profitable. Now that they were increasingly invested in successful shipping, it was in their interest that piracy, in general, be quashed, lest it be their goods that wound up being claimed as goods of war. As Goodall shows, however, piracy in the Mid-Atlantic remained alive, thanks to the continued financial boons of privateering. While not practised during times of peace, privateers could turn substantial profits during periods of war, particularly the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. In this way, the legacy of piracy would continue to help shape the future of the mid-Atlantic colonies as they became the mid-Atlantic states.

This book's short page length allows for a discussion of a relatively

complex topic in a manner that is generally guaranteed not to overwhelm readers of any level of prior knowledge while also not being overly simplistic. It admirably achieves its stated goal of showing how the Mid-Atlantic region was profoundly shaped by the influence of both pirates and privateers, while also pointing to future paths of scholarly inquiry which appear to have been previously overlooked or under-emphasized. Sure to be a well-thumbed tome for those interested in the history of piracy on the American continent, this book will neatly fit into almost any maritime book collection.

Michael Toth
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Max Hastings. *Operation Pedestal. The Fleet that Battled to Malta, 1942.* Toronto, ON: HarperCollins Publishing, www.harpercollins.com, 2021. 464 pp., illustrations, glossary, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$36.99, cloth; ISBN 978-0-0083-6494-6.

Operation Pedestal: The Fleet that Battled to Malta, 1942 explores the enormous effort to keep Malta supplied during the Second World War. Hastings' account provides a comprehensive examination of the people, equipment, and events that occurred in the course of accomplishing this goal, and Germany's opposing efforts to prevent the island from being resupplied. He also explains the role that Malta played in the Mediterranean campaign and why it was so important that Malta remain within Allied control.

The book opens with how and why the island of Malta was so vital to the Commonwealth war effort, briefly exploring Winston Churchill's personal commitment to the operation and his insistence that something be done. Hastings breaks down the composition of the supply convoys, examining the various merchant ships, what they carried, and why they were loaded the way they were. These details were governed by a series of strategic decisions driven by wartime necessity, and the critical need for ships to get through. Focusing on the convoy's escorts, Hastings addresses their role and that of the crews who manned them, placing the human component at the heart of the operation. Putting people front and centre makes the story more appealing to readers interested in people and events, as opposed to the technical aspects of convoy logistics, or how convoys were assembled and used. Nevertheless, the author explains how convoys and their escorts worked together to provide comprehensive protection against the many threats they faced creeping from England to Malta across the Mediterranean. Using a chronological format, Hastings closely follows the convoys, highlighting the almost incessant attacks they endured as they approached the Italian-controlled area of the

Mediterranean. The omnipresent threat of danger drives most of the narrative and the main body of the text.

This is an easily accessible volume for someone unfamiliar with Operation Pedestal, or the larger war in the Mediterranean, who is interested in an historical account without being overburdened by technical details. While discussing the tactics used to attack and defend the convoys, Hastings keeps things general enough that casual readers will not get bogged down in strategic issues, while providing enough detail to keep students interested in such things involved in the narrative. The text allows readers to follow the flow of the events without explaining how submarines, aircraft, and torpedoes actually work. While those familiar with the action surrounding Operation Pedestal might not find anything revolutionary here, Hastings' research will still enhance their understanding of the events and challenges faced by the Malta convoys.

For casual readers wanting an entry into the subject, the book has a lot to offer. Students looking for a more in-depth academic discussion, however, may find the work somewhat lacking. Fortunately, Hastings provides an extensive bibliography for further exploration – unfortunately, none of the endnotes are referenced within the main body of the text. This makes correlating a specific endnote to a reference in the book extremely difficult. If by design, it takes away from the usefulness of this work for academics; if in error, it should be corrected through careful editing of future editions.

While not shedding new light on Operation Pedestal itself, this book opens an accessible, well-researched porthole onto a dramatic and important series of events that students of naval and military history might not have previously considered exploring.

Michael Razer
Ward, Arkansas

David Hepper. *British Warship Losses in the Modern Era 1920–1982*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.pen-and-sword.uk.com, 2022. 424 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £30.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39909-766-6. (E-book available.)

A very interesting and extremely well researched reference book concerning the loss of Royal Navy and other Commonwealth naval ships, from 1920 through to the Falklands War. Each entry provides the ship's details, date of loss, commanding officer, and a narrative detailing how the vessel was lost.

Second World War losses make up the bulk of the book and describe the campaigns fought such as Norway, Dunkirk, and the Atlantic through to the final fighting in the Pacific in 1945. Some entries are quite lengthy, others less

so. While many losses were from enemy action, rock, tempest, and fire also took its toll as well as the foe. In some cases, blue on blue actions occurred, such as the first Royal Navy loss of the war, on 10 September 1939, when the submarine HMS *Oxley*, operating on the surface, was mistaken for a German U-Boat by the submarine HMS *Triton* and torpedoed with the loss of 52 of the ship's company.

The well-known losses such as HM Ships *Hood*, *Repulse*, *Prince of Wales*, and other capital ships are covered, but so are the small trawlers, motor torpedo boats, and mine-sweepers. The losses of the minor landing craft, known only by their number, during actions such as the Dieppe raid, Operation Torch in North Africa and D-Day, are also included, but with less detail about how they were lost and personnel killed or missing. The sheer number of landing craft lost on D-Day is quite sobering.

Equally noteworthy are some major incidents where poor planning and leadership led to serious losses. The one that stands out for me is the Ostend fire on 14 February 1945, where 12 Motor Torpedo Boats (MTB) were destroyed by fire and explosion. Some 64 crewmembers were killed and another 64 injured, with nine Belgian civilians also losing their lives. This accident was caused by an unsupervised and overworked Royal Canadian Navy motor mechanic attempting to fix an engine problem which saw high octane fuel pumped overboard. A spark, from an unknown source, ignited the fuel and within an hour the bulk of the MTB squadron had been destroyed, although some quick thinking and brave personnel managed to get other boats to safety. This and other vignettes are excellent and reveal the heavy losses incurred by the Commonwealth navies during the Second World War.

The pre-war period, 1920-1939 had, as would be expected, far fewer losses but of the 38 vessels lost, ten were submarines with a total of 402 personnel drowned. HMS *Thetis*, which was lost during diving trials on 1 June 1939, contributed 99 of those who perished. The submarine was later raised, renamed *Thunderbolt* and then lost with all hands on 14 March 1943 when sunk by Italian warships in the Mediterranean; becoming a vessel that was sunk twice.

Post-Second World War losses were also minimal, with less than 100 vessels lost due to various reasons. Again, submarine incidents took their toll, as did bad weather with the Australian patrol boat HMAS *Arrow*, sunk during the destruction of the northern Australian port city of Darwin on Christmas Day 1974 by tropical cyclone Tracy. Two of the ship's company died.

The destroyer HMS *Saumarez* fell victim to a stray German mine in May 1946 while operating off the coast of Albania and the frigate HMS *Berkeley Castle* met an unfortunate end in 1953 when undergoing a refit. The vessel was in dry dock when a tidal surge caused extensive flooding at the Sheerness dry dock and the ship was swept off its support blocks and capsized. The damage

was extreme and *Berkeley Castle* was “written off.” Training incidents saw several losses with the Motor Launch ML 2582 sunk, with only one survivor, when a Dutch F-84 aircraft failed to pull up during a mock attack and crashed into the vessel. The Australian destroyer HMAS *Voyager* was sunk during a collision with the aircraft carrier HMAS *Melbourne* during nighttime flying exercises in February 1964 with the loss of 82 of the ship’s company.

The book ends with the analysis of the Royal Navy losses in the 1982 Falklands War. The RN lost two destroyers, two frigates, a landing ship-logistics, and a landing craft medium in this short but sharp conflict. Several other RN ships were damaged in this “close run” short war. For those seeking more information on British ship losses in the Falklands, the recently published *Abandon Ship: The real story of the sinking’s in the Falklands War* by Paul Brown is an interesting and sobering read.

I noticed a few minor glitches in the book such as the omission of the RAN minesweeper HMAS *Warrnambool*, sunk in September 1947 while conducting post-war mine clearance. Additionally, for completeness, in the Falklands War section, inclusion of the loss of *Atlantic Conveyor* (taken up from trade and with a mixed RN/merchant navy crew) could have been considered.

That said, this is an excellent reference book for the naval historian and those with an interest in the war at sea during the Second World War. Highly Recommended.

Greg Swinden
Canberra, Australia

Kenneth V. Jack. *Eyes of the Fleet Over Vietnam. RF-8 Crusader Combat Photo-Reconnaissance Missions.* Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, www.casematepublishers.com, 2021. 230 pp., illustrations, appendices, terms and acronyms. US \$39.99, UK £35.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-63624-074-9.

Since the days of hot-air balloons, aerial reconnaissance has been a critical part of warfare. With the development of the airplane, camera-carrying observers spotted enemy formations. As aircraft changed from fragile biplanes to metal monoplanes, it was natural that cameras would be installed in them.

The Second World War saw the development of dedicated, or even specialized, photoreconnaissance aircraft—the most famous being the photo-reconnaissance versions of the famed Supermarine Spitfire. Unarmed, without cannons or machine guns for defence, the photo-reconnaissance aircraft depended upon speed and manoeuvrability to avoid enemy aircraft.

This format of unarmed photo-reconnaissance versions of fast fighter airplanes was repeated when jet fighters became available in the late 1940s and

1950s. The US Air Force replaced the guns in its F-80 and F-84 Fighters with cameras to make the RF-80 and RF-84 (the R prefix denoted reconnaissance.) US Naval Aviation and US Marine Corps Aviation did the same thing to its F9F Panther and F2H Banshee fighters—the guns were removed and cameras installed.

In the late 1950s, the Vought F-8 Crusader was the newest USN and Marine Corps fighter aircraft—one of the best performing aircraft of its day. It was inevitable that the Crusader would be modified into a photo-reconnaissance aircraft. In *Eyes of the Fleet Over Vietnam*, Kenneth Jack, a US Navy veteran who had been a photographic technician in RF-8 squadrons, tells the story of the RF-8 missions from 1964 to 1972 in the tragic Vietnam conflict.

The RF-8 Crusader made its public debut in 1957, when one set a North American transcontinental speed record from California to New York in 3 hours, 23 minutes. The pilot was US Marine Corps Major John Glenn – later an astronaut and US Senator. (The aircraft that set the speed record saw reconnaissance in Cuba in 1962 and in the Vietnam War. Unfortunately for aircraft historians, the record-setting RF-8 was lost in a crash on 17 December 1972, and now sits at the bottom of the South China Sea.) RF-8s proved their worth with valuable photo-reconnaissance during the autumn of 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis. (The author of this book chronicled RF-8 missions in an earlier book, *Blue Moon Over Cuba*.)

The combat career of this remarkable aircraft and its crews, both aircrew and ground crew, can be stated briefly. For eight years, two US Navy squadrons and one US Marine Corps squadron flew reconnaissance missions over North Vietnam, locating future bomb targets and then photographing areas that had been bombed to assess battle damage. The crews generally had to fly at low altitudes at top speed, but when the aircraft approached the area to be photographed, the flight path was a straight-on approach which gave the enemy ample chances to damage or shoot down an RF-8. The Crusader, in both its fighter and photo-reconnaissance versions, was rugged, fast, maneuverable, and possessed a good range. Its vices were that it was difficult to land on an aircraft carrier deck and was not capable of night reconnaissance.

Jack begins the narrative with an introduction to the Crusader, its development, and early service history. From there, the chapters are organized chronologically: 1964-66 on photo-reconnaissance and countermeasures; 1964: Over Laos & Prisoners of War; 1965: Support of *Operation Rolling Thunder* (bombing of North Vietnam); 1966: *Operation Rolling Thunder* intensifies; 1966-67: VFP-62 (a USN squadron) enters the Vietnam War; 1967-68: dangerous skies over Hanoi and Haiphong; 1969-72: the final years; a chapter on other Navy/Marine Corps photo-reconnaissance aircraft; and summary and conclusions. Two appendices follow, analyzing the effectiveness

of the bombing of North Vietnam (the appendices state that the bombing was not effective, either as a military or policy tool.

The narrative has many “I was there” anecdotes and is heavily illustrated. Those first-hand recollections keep the narrative flowing and prevent the book from being a monotone recitation of what were very dangerous missions. A few pilots were shot down and taken prisoner; their experiences as POWs are included and add to the disaster that was the Vietnam War. At the end of each chronological chapter is a stark reminder of the tragedy of war—a picture of each pilot killed during that period, together with a brief biography, remembrances of the deceased from family, friends, and crew, a listing of the deceased’s medals, and also the location of the deceased’s name on the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C.

Jack’s personal experience as a RF-8 Crusader photographer’s mate is a valuable asset to the book; he served with an RF-8 squadron in the Cuban Missile Crisis and again with an RF-8 squadron during Vietnam. He, therefore, knows the aircraft he writes about. He writes well and keeps the reader’s attention.

After Vietnam, the RF-8’s service days were numbered. It was gradually replaced in first-line USN service by the RF-4B Phantom. The last RF-8 in first-line service left for storage on 28 May 1982, though some RF-8s remained in reserve units until 1987. Many Crusader pilots, whether of the fighter or reconnaissance versions, remember the Crusader as their favourite airplane. *Eyes of the Fleet Over Vietnam. RF-8 Crusader Combat Photo-Reconnaissance Missions*, is a fitting tribute to an aircraft that served the USN and USMC well in dangerous airspace. It is recommended.

Robert L. Shoop
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Gareth Michael Jones. *The Development of Nuclear Propulsion in the Royal Navy, 1946-1975*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan (an imprint of Springer Nature), www.link.springer.com, 2022. xxv+287 pp., illustrations, dramatis personae, chronology, technical definitions, notes, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. US \$109.00, e-book; ISBN 978-3-031-05129-6. (Hardcover book available.)

Gareth Jones has done what (probably) very few former Royal Navy Chief Petty Officers have felt any desire to do, that is, to spend six years of their post-service life working towards a PhD – in his case, in History at the University of Plymouth. That time was no doubt spent well, for his 2019 thesis was published, with remarkably few changes, in Palgrave Macmillan’s

prestigious series “Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World” three years later. One reason for an uncomplicated progress from thesis to publication may be that the end result of Jones’ work, *The Development of Nuclear Propulsion in the Royal Navy, 1946-1975*, is the first scholarly monograph to deal exclusively with this subject.

To put that statement in context, it should be noted that academic histories of nuclear power, either civilian or military, are very thin on the ground. On the naval side, if one takes away American books – most of which, perhaps inevitably, deal with Admiral Hyman G. Rickover to a greater or lesser extent – the cupboard is essentially bare. Hence, the importance of this book to nuclear historiography is difficult to overstate.

Working within the time constraints imposed by his doctoral studies, what Jones has focussed on providing is more an administrative history of the British naval nuclear power program, and less a technical one. For the most part, the emphasis is on what was decided, by whom—including which of the many organizations involved in the program the individual worked for—when, and most satisfyingly, why. The “what” and the “why” inevitably intersect with the technology, of course, and a list of technical definitions is provided for the novice. This is important, because the discussion through most of the book is centred on the nuclear steam generating system and, even more so, the pressurized water reactor at its heart. Beyond the first two (of eight) chapters, which situate both the submersible and its various possible propulsion systems in their post-war context, the vessel itself is very much a secondary player. Therefore, while this volume will likely emerge as a milestone in the historiography of British nuclear power, its impact in the field of Royal Navy submarines, on which there is already a considerable literature, may turn out to be less extensive. Although it is impossible to disentangle the two entirely here, I think it is fair to say that this is much more a nuclear book than it is a naval book, and the prospective reader should keep this in mind.

As if to underscore the point, an entire chapter is devoted to the Royal Navy’s shore establishment at Dounreay, on the north coast of Scotland, where every British submarine reactor core design, except the most recent, has been subject to rigorous testing in a land-based prototype. While the facilities there have arguably made an enormous contribution to the success of the program, the reader whose interests tend more to the strictly seagoing side of things may find this chapter less engaging than others.

The date range in the book’s title may seem a little odd to some and is worthy of a brief explanation. 1946 saw the secondment of the first Admiralty scientist to the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, as well as the first reference in an official paper to “atomic ship propulsion” (58). 1975 ought really to be 1976, because the author’s most recent documentary source

is from that year. Any documents more recent than that will inevitably deal with submarines currently in commission and are therefore strictly off-limits.

Overall, Jones has done excellent work, having created a strikingly important book in its field. As a reviewer, though, I would be remiss if I did not point out just some of the numerous minor problems that plague the finished product. Indeed, it almost feels as if my electronic copy were in fact an earlier draft awaiting a final stage of editing. How else to explain the fact that the text refers to Figure 2.1 as HMS *Meteorite*, while the caption to that figure has HMS/m *Excalibur*? (It happens a second time at Figure 8.1, where *Resolution* becomes *Repulse*.) Following no apparent pattern, “HMS,” “HMS/M,” and “HMS/m” all make their appearance as prefixes for RN submarines, sometimes for the same boat. (*Valiant*, in fact, is graced with all three.) The author is also prone to run-on sentences, but the reader gets used to this.

For reasons that are not clear, science publishers—of whom Palgrave Macmillan’s parent, Springer Nature, is one—are willing to charge prices that, for a comparable product, a typical humanities publisher would not dare. While one should never underestimate the willingness to spend money on the part of the dedicated enthusiast, at a price of US \$149.99 for the hardcover version, the private individual really has to want it. Institutional libraries are probably a more realistic customer base, particularly those with holdings in the history of British nuclear power, for which this volume is a must. Equally suitable would be any collection with a strong Royal Navy component, the only limitation, possibly, being their desire for a book on a purely propulsion topic.

Brian Bertosa
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Richard M. Jones. *The 50 Greatest Shipwrecks*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword History, www.pen-and-sword.org, 2021. 168 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £19.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39900-800-6.

With an estimated three million shipwrecks globally spanning all continents, all types of water, and thousands of years of human history, selecting the 50 most significant is no easy task. Yet Richard M. Jones sets out to do exactly that in *The 50 Greatest Shipwrecks*, a list-cum-book dedicated to the greatest disasters in maritime history. The text fits comfortably into Jones’ growing corpus of publications meant to catalogue and memorialize maritime disasters. By focusing on what the author terms as the 50 most interesting shipwreck stories, this book brings novice maritime historians and history enthusiasts into the process of wreck identification and exploration.

The book breaks up into 50 short chapters, one for each wreck, plus an

introduction and epilogue. The narratives and lengths of each chapter vary with the legacy and history of each wreck, but broadly, each begins with the vessel's construction and details any noteworthy event in the sailing lives of the ships. The bulk of each chapter's narrative is, with few exceptions, an account of the vessels' sinking, in many instances detailing the disaster hour-by-hour. For wreck sites that have been identified, information about the exploration process, condition of the hull, and diveability of the site are also included. While the first four chapters focus on historical wrecks of wooden ships, Jones primarily engages with twentieth-century iron-hulled wrecks, providing the greatest detail of both service and exploration for those ships that served in a naval capacity between 1900 and 1950.

While serving as an invaluable entryway into the history of maritime disasters, the text would benefit from some broad definitions. As a British writer publishing with a British publisher, Jones selected heavily from wrecks that would be part of the British public consciousness as an historical reference or vessels whose sinking would have been newsworthy in the memory of modern Britons. Exactly how wrecks qualify as "great" is left opaque, though the author admits that the list is subjective and based on his particular interests. Heavy emphasis is placed on lives lost or other quantifiable metrics of damage, such as the number of seabirds killed by the *Braer* oil spill, but even these metrics are not applied consistently. The definition of "wreck" is also questionable, given the inclusion of HMS *Scylla*, which was intentionally sunk as an artificial reef. Even so, the density of maritime history literature can seem impenetrable, and a subjective sample still offers a starting point. Insofar as that is true, this book will be of interest to many novice historians and shipwreck enthusiasts. Subject vessels were also selected based on their intrinsic value to the author with no concern for whether historians, archaeologists, engineers, salvage firms, or treasure hunters identified the hull remains. While potentially off-putting for some academics, for many, this provides a different overview than would be seen in scholarly publications, potentially opening up discussions of context, ownership, and maritime law. These are subjects about which scholarly texts often assume a certain level of knowledge, leaving broader readership out of their reach. Jones' book is, both in its subjects and its narratives, highly accessible to all levels of expertise.

The book's short, list-like format leaves a number of the ships' stories sparse or incomplete, a necessity of the style but something for which Jones could have compensated by including citations or recommendations for further readings. Without such suggestions, curious readers are left wanting additional information. Jones also includes gratuitous details of violence and sexual assault that were not pertinent to the stories of the subject vessels, and repeatedly praises Nazi ingenuity and military skill. While the author, himself

a veteran, might hold a professional appreciation for certain wartime tactics and technologies regardless of who wielded them, praising *U-534*'s tactical competence and *Admiral Graf Spee*'s Nazi commander as a hero, even to his adversaries, glosses over too quickly the genocidal regime served by the commander and both aforementioned vessels.

With millions of shipwrecks globally, though, and an author-stated mission of remembering those lost at sea, the book falls short on a more fundamental level. Eurocentric and biased toward wrecks dating to between 1900 and the present, the supposed superlatives encompassed in the text are a smattering of stories more similar than they are distinct, all but ignoring the contributions of seafarers and seafaring technology from most of Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Latin America. When ships from these regions are detailed, comparatively more time is spent emphasizing the mechanical shortcomings of the vessels and the technical ineptitude of the crews than for their European and North American counterparts. Historically, seafaring in Asia, Africa, Oceania, and Latin America has been not only an important part of global maritime trade and exploration, but it was often a forebearer of technologies and skills such as astronomical navigation, mariner's compasses, stern-hung rudders, and the perennially-popular catamaran hull style. Temporally and geographically limiting what qualifies as exceptional and worthy of memory, whether tacit or explicit, reifies Enlightenment-informed notions of European exceptionalism stemming from the Age of Sail and the mythos of savage others. The obfuscation of global sailing histories in both the recent and deep past in a book dedicated to "those who have no known grave but the sea" inherently values those lives that are in the social memory of living Britons more than the countless many who came before them.

Chelsea M. Cohen
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Paul Kennedy. *Victory at Sea: Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II*. With paintings by Ian Marshall. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, www.yalebooks.yale.edu, 2022. 544 pages, illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. US \$37.50, hardback; ISBN 978-0-30031-917-3.

Paul Kennedy is among that select group of historians working today who broke from the confines of academia to become a leading public intellectual. His 1987 book, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, was a national bestseller when it was published, and it was just one of many works written over a prolific career stretching back nearly half a century. Now, at a time when most of his

contemporaries have eased their scholarly labours to bask in their accumulated honours, Kennedy has written a new book. Originating in a collaboration with the late marine artist Ian Marshall, it is a beautifully illustrated volume that examines the interrelationship between sea power and the global balance of power during the Second World War, and chronicles how a new international order emerged from the interaction between the two.

To demonstrate this, Kennedy begins by describing the major pre-war navies and how they addressed the strategic challenges they faced. Focusing on the six key naval powers – Great Britain, the United States, Japan, Germany, France and Italy – he examines their force structures, the missions they faced, and the choices they made to achieve them. The best part of this is his description of the interaction between economics and contemporary geopolitical thought among naval strategists, as it provides valuable context for the decisions made by these countries both before and during the war. Kennedy regards naval planners on all sides as acutely aware of the constraints they faced in addressing the challenges before them and shows how each country adapted as best it could – if not necessarily in the most economically rational manner – to achieve its goals. The composition of their respective navies reflected this, consisting of vessels designed to best meet their distinct goals.

The test came with the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. Initially a limited naval conflict, the balance changed in the spring of 1940 with Germany's conquest of Norway and the entry of northwest Europe and Italy into the war. During this period, the Royal Navy felt for the first time the impact of modern air power, for which they proved lamentably unprepared. Moreover, Germany's conquests removed the French Navy from the war while simultaneously gaining them access to Atlantic ports which magnified the threat to British trade. Yet not only did these victories cost Germany the bulk of their surface fleet, they pushed the United States Congress to pass the momentous Two-Ocean Navy Act, which authorized a massive expansion of the US Navy. It was through this exploitation of the nation's latent industrial capacity, Kennedy argues, that the United States laid the foundation for America's post-war naval dominance. Until the US entered the war, though, the Royal Navy had to carry on alone against the Germans and the Italians, which they did successfully only by concentrating its finite resources in the Mediterranean and Atlantic theatres. This created for Japan an opportunity to seize Europe's imperial territories in Southeast Asia, one which they judged could only be successful if it was preceded by an attack on the United States, the one unengaged naval power that could thwart Japanese ambitions.

With Japan's offensive in the Pacific, the maritime struggle was now truly a global one. Though Kennedy calls 1942 "the fighting-most year in all of naval history" (197) and summarizes the battles that justify such a label, he

regards the following year as the truly pivotal one in terms of deciding the war. This was due to the change in fortunes over the course of it. As Kennedy notes, at the end of 1942 the United States had just one fleet carrier active in the entire Pacific while Germany was preparing to launch the largest-ever U-boat offensive against Allied convoys in the Atlantic. By the end of 1943, however, the Axis navies were either on the defensive or, in Italy's case, out of the war altogether. Kennedy credits two joint factors in this shift: the mounting results of American industrial productivity and the successful deployment of the vessels it produced. For him, the interrelationship between the two is key. As he notes, Karl Donitz "would have been dumbfounded to read later statements by Western historians that the surge of US shipbuilding output . . . assured *inevitable* victory in the Atlantic campaign to the Allies," adding that "[i]f Donitz's U-boats had not been beaten squarely, in mid-Atlantic waters, during certain key May and June 1943 convoy battles, the story *would* have been different" (264-6).

Nevertheless, the sheer scale of America's economic output contributed to the shift in global power taking place. Not only did it result in a navy that surpassed Great Britain's in size for the first time in history, the vessels produced, most notably the aircraft carriers, redefined the nature of naval power. Air power plays a major role in Kennedy's analysis, as fast-attack carrier forces succeeded battleships as the supreme form of naval power. Nothing demonstrated this better than the sinking of the Japanese super-battleships *Musashi* and *Yamato* by dive-bombers and torpedo planes, in both cases well before they were able to engage the warships they were sent out to attack. In that respect, the true display of America's naval power at the end of the war came not with the signing of the surrender on the deck of the USS *Missouri*, but when the more than 400 carrier-based planes flew overhead during the ceremonies—the new symbol of maritime power in the age of Pax Americana.

Most of the details in Kennedy's book will be familiar to students of the period. He makes no claim to have plumbed the archives for new material, relying instead on published works ranging from the official histories of the naval war by Stephen Roskill and Samuel Eliot Morison to relevant Wikipedia entries for his information. Nevertheless, his book shines for the quality of the analysis within its pages. Its greatest strength is his explanation of the interplay between various factors—economic, geostrategic, and technological—in shaping the outcome of the war, which he integrates into a smoothly readable narrative of the conflict. It's a book that is destined to become a standard work on the naval history of the Second World War, one that can be read for enjoyment as well for the insights contained within its pages.

Mark Klobas
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Angus Konstam. *British Gunboats of Victoria's Empire*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.bloomsbury.com, 2022. 48 pp., illustrations, index. US \$19.00, CDN \$26.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-47285-158-1.

Angus Konstam, a prolific author on naval subjects, particularly regarding the steam era, has written a most interesting short introduction on the subject of gunboats in the second half of Victoria's reign. Gunboat is a noun that is redolent of empire and the imposition of British power where and when needed in the unruly age of unfettered capitalism and imperialism. The varied British trading and economic interests scattered about the globe were often in need of the services of Royal Navy gunboats to protect their investments and businesses. As well, there was also frequent need for imperial expeditions of varying scales to impose British political control over any given area with a show of force against, for the most part, ill-equipped foes. If you have ever been curious as to what these gunboats looked like and how they were designed, Konstam's book will fill that need admirably.

Like all Osprey publications, the format provides for brief, high level accounts of the subject at hand, accompanied by a wide array of photographs, contemporary newspaper illustrations and fine, attractive, diagrams of the ships under review. The book is certainly brief, only 48 pages, but it crams a great deal of material into that space. The bulk is comprised of an extended account of the design of various gunboat classes over the period in question (1850s to the early 1900s). This period was one of significant technological ferment and gunboat construction standards evolved considerably from the wooden-hulled vessels designed to assist in subduing Russian fortifications during the Crimean War, to steel-hulled warships constructed at the end of the period. The basic concept of these craft, however, remained consistent; namely, sufficient size to mount a handful of guns (2-6 for the most part) of varying calibres. The Crimean War ended before the first gunboats were completed, but they were speedily deployed to various trouble spots to patrol, show the flag, deal with pirates and/or slavers, or subdue locals who threatened ports or trading facilities up rivers or on the coasts of Asia and Africa (for the most part).

Konstam is judicious in his analysis of the designs for these craft over the fifty-year period of their deployment around the globe. Many featured sub-optimal structures and layouts that rendered them ineffective in terms of seaworthiness, or in performing their constabulary duties. These were speedily despatched to ports to act as floating depot ships or tenders. The more successful ones elegantly fulfilled their roles and found themselves in a wide range of environments from the heat of the Red Sea, the Australasia Station, the littoral of the Caribbean Sea, China, Malaya and Africa (both east and west), as well up various river systems. Interestingly, Konstam notes that the commanders

of these minor warships tended to be lieutenants or junior commanders, who often were dealing with circumstances well beyond what their training and experience had provided for. The isolation and the need to use one's initiative without reference to senior naval or political officials made for a lonely and often risky existence. Not all decisions taken in this environment were wise or prudent. On other occasions the gunboats were attached to fleets and participated with credit in, for example, the 1882 Bombardment of Alexandria and the 1896 Bombardment of the Sultan's Palace at Zanzibar.

The gunboats that form the subject of this book were the epitome, however, of the numerous vessels condemned by Admiral Sir John Fisher as '...too weak to fight and too slow to run away...' and so were scrapped after 1904. Their function was taken up by light cruisers, which were altogether more capable warships. Yet gunboats performed an important function of maintaining the *Pax Britannica* in Britain's favour for approximately five decades. These gunboats were omnipresent around the world's trouble spots where they kept the peace, provided security, and thereby delivered the necessary tranquility to permit orderly (and profitable) commerce. It is a fascinating, albeit short, introduction to the topic and it provides a useful primer on a key tool for the *Pax Britannica*.

Ian Yeates

Regina, Saskatchewan

Angus Konstam. *Big Guns in the Atlantic. Germany's Battleships and Cruisers Raid the Convoys, 1939-41*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.bloomsbury.com, 2021. 80 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. US \$22.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4728-4596-2. (E-book available.)

In 1939 the British Navy was forced to fight what amounted to two distinct naval wars. The first one was waged against German U-boats and is familiarly known as the Battle of the Atlantic. This was a continuous struggle for control of the sea fought across the vast stretches of the Atlantic. It is the story of the convoys, the air gap, and of course the U-boat wolf packs. The other war was a struggle against the German surface fleet, designed to confine the fleet as much as possible in German ports, and to find and sink ships when they sortied. This surface conflict was often a cat and mouse game involving hours of patrolling punctuated by dramatic battles, such as the hunt for *Bismarck* or the Battle of the River Plate. Such encounters tend to produce very specific histories discussing the select actions of participating ships, but nothing systematic and cohesive.

In an effort to overcome this, Angus Konstam provides a compact study of

German surface operations for the initial years of the war, from 1939-1941. As a museum curator and author of over 50 books, mainly in military and naval history, Konstam brings years of research in a variety of areas to bear on the Kriegsmarine in the Second World War. Sadly, what had the potential to be an incredible history, falls well short of this. Restricted by the Osprey formula of only 80 pages, despite lavish illustrations and pictures, the text really cannot do justice to such a large history. Broken up into six major areas focusing on initial strategy, the planning for the war, the Atlantic sorties, and the aftermath, analysis, and conclusion the text simply produces a precis of events with no depth to the study. Covering operations by *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, *Admiral Scheer*, and operations Nordseetour and Berlin, it provides the reader with many dramatic and exciting moments which seem designed to entice more than to explain.

Particularly frustrating is the absence of any citations. Photographs, illustrations, maps, and detailed information appear but not one reference indicates where anything came from. The result is an interesting read but one with little to no research value. The book seems aimed at young adults with an interest in the subject but is certainly of no use to anyone with the serious intent of doing further research. In essence, it is a starter book that I would not recommend for anyone with more of an interest than that.

Robert Dienesch
Belle River, Ontario

Mark Lardas. *Truk 1944–45. The destruction of Japan's Central Pacific bastion.* Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.bloomsbury.com, 2021. 96 pp., illustrations, map, chronology, bibliography, index. US \$24.00, CDN \$30.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-47284-585-6. (E-book available.)

This work is the 26th entry in Osprey's Air Campaign Series and author Mark Lardas' 34th overall contribution to the Osprey catalogue. In this latest publication, Lardas examines the reduction of Japan's military facilities at the Truk Atoll via the naval air campaign that began in February 1944. Presented in the standardized Campaign series format, the text begins with a brief introduction to Truk's pre-1944 significance followed by a chronology of key events related to the atoll from 1914 to 1986, with the latter naturally focusing on the war years. Lardas covers the equipment and capabilities of both the Allied and Japanese forces along with the air campaign objectives themselves before analyzing the campaign and its aftermath. Maps, sketches, period photographs, and computer renderings are used throughout the work for visual reference. A short note on surviving aircraft, further reading, and an

index round out the text.

The introduction and chronology are relatively short sections that nevertheless highlight the Allied fears of Truk being a fortified bastion versus the reality of its neglected pre-1939 status. Its importance within the Pacific campaign as a whole is discussed, followed by the need to capture or neutralize the atoll. These points are further expanded upon in the sections on attacker and defender capabilities, where Lardas accounts for the various available aircraft types, munitions, tactics, and infrastructure. The objectives of both sides are then covered, with the straightforward Allied goal being to neutralize and bypass Truk via an air campaign, whereas the Japanese sought to hold the atoll. Lardas points out that this was a “defective objective,” however, as Truk was more powerful in terms of exploitable potential rather than pure possession (36). Its physical distance from Japan made resupply difficult, and the Japanese defenses designed to counter an amphibious invasion would prove woefully inadequate in terms of dealing with the aerial assault that was to come.

The documenting of the February 1944 to June of 1945 campaign operations actually begins with another discussion of pre-war status before laying out the situation at Truk in the early war years and touching on the worrying attacks made by approaching American forces against other Japanese possessions. Particular focus is given to the mass carrier mission carried out against the Japanese forces at Kwajalein on 4 December 1943, which would prove to be a valuable learning tool for the operations carried out against Truk two months later. From this point, Lardas examines the US Navy’s Operation Hailstone and follow-up attacks by Task Force 58, the Seventh, Eleventh, Thirteenth, and Twentieth Army Air Forces’ raiding of Truk from March 1944 onwards, and the Royal Navy’s Operation Inmate in mid-June of 1945. Primary emphasis is given to the initial USN actions, as these opening salvos were what did the most damage and reduced Truk to a largely convenient training target. Several maps and diagrams show the approaches of various assaults along with standard tactics such as the repelling of aircraft attacks on surface forces via Combat Air Patrols. The escape of the Japanese Combined Fleet and the retreat of as many ships that could dodge American aircraft amidst the destruction of Japanese aerial forces within these early attacks well-illustrates Lardas’ view that Truk was in fact a self-made “trap” (59). This is further driven home by the documentation of later Army Air Force and Royal Navy practice raids largely ensuring that the possible threat from the remaining airfields was an unviable option for whatever aircraft managed to survive the near-constant assaults. Lardas’ Aftermath and Analysis section condenses much of the previous information into a more succinct eight pages, covering Truk’s surrender 2 September 1945 and post war existence, offering

some additional information and damage statistics to further highlight the effectiveness of the attacks. He rounds out the work with a few paragraphs on surviving airframes related to the Truk campaign.

Pre-Hailstone information on Truk from 1914 to 1939 is covered, if not repeated, in several places throughout the work. If this was reduced to just one location, it would help the work flow more smoothly and free up space within the restrictions of Osprey's format for additional information or photographs. Additionally, having a section at the end of an operation's coverage with statistical information or tables of losses would be an appreciated addition. This would allow for quick referencing of force disparity and loss illustration, further driving home the effectiveness of Allied operations and the dwindling Japanese capabilities as the campaign progressed. Finally, since the Aftermath section discusses the surviving aircraft of the engagements, it is surprising that the various sunken wrecks of Truk only warranted two sentences and no images (86). Given the ongoing efforts to locate airframes in the waters, the renown of some of the shipwrecks, and the looming threat posed by the fuel and munitions carried within, a more detailed discussion would help further illustrate the campaign's lingering presence in the modern day.

Truk 1944-45 is a good introductory work about the various air assaults carried out by American and Commonwealth aircrews across 18 months against a beleaguered Japanese force who expected an altogether different type of enemy attack. Lardas provides solid summary information and important details regarding the involved airframes, plans, and attacks that illustrate the innovative island-hopping technique of aerial reduction that helped Truk morph from a potentially dangerous enemy base into a convenient live-fire training tool. For those interested in the air operations of the late war Pacific and the Japanese defenses of important forward naval anchorages, this text offers one a decent initial exposure to the topic.

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Robert K. Liu. *Naval Ship Models of World War II in 1/1250 and 1/1200 scale: Enhancements, Conversions & Scratch Building*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com, 2021. 160 pp., colour illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-5267-9391-1. (E-book available.)

The making of miniature ship models is a popular hobby and pastime among a select group of enthusiasts, predominantly male, older in age, and with some means to support their interests and proclivities. Commercial companies, trade

shows, store-front and online retailers, publications, and associations cater to this community, which transcends national borders with a truly global reach, some regions better represented than others. Countries with substantial navies and the world wars in the twentieth century typically get the most attention from modelers. Having enough space to create, show, and store “collections” also remains a critical consideration, from beginners to the most skilled master builders with years of experience. Robert Liu, a retired biomedical scientist and ship model maker now in his 80s, draws on his decades of building scale warships in a variety of materials using traditional techniques, with a particular focus on those from the Second World War in the 1/1200 range. His skills as a trained jeweler and photographer add visually to the models that he has worked on and their representation in the full-colour photograph book.

The book is organized into 25 distinct chapters that first make general comments on the hobby, those who engage in it, and conventional production techniques. It then moves on to an eclectic selection of the models that Liu has built from scratch or kits, converted, and repaired, giving detailed descriptions of the process and close-up visuals with informative captions. Liu, the son of a Chinese Nationalist ambassador to fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, became interested in model warship building as a young boy, before and after his family emigrated to the United States. His brother, an engineer, was also an accomplished model maker for many years. Liu prefers to use metal and wood, as opposed to the more common styrene plastic models sold in kits by numerous manufacturers and widely available for relatively reasonable prices, although he includes newer 3D-printed models made of resin for comparative purposes to show finer detail. The chosen scales of 1/1250 and 1/1200 highlight a size small enough to facilitate larger collections of ship models, as well as presenting certain challenges and necessary skills for the intricate work in building. Such experience and skill are developed over many years and projects, to the point where a model maker becomes recognized and receives paid commissions. A single ship model may take many hours to complete, and Liu stresses the importance of documenting every stage through notes and photographs for future reference and payment invoicing. For the sake of accuracy and authenticity, he also advocates research in available books and internet sources for visual representations and data that improve the final product, which he calls a made cultural artifact of history and form of art. Some of the projects described in the book were rebuilds and conversions of earlier models, from his own collection and commissions from others, to make them more true to the original, or to correct a model as more accurate information became available. A model maker always makes judgment calls in building any warship in scale.

The mostly metal model warships showcased in Liu’s book have come a

long way from the cruder models made for practical application in support of naval warfare. Warship models of this scale were used extensively in recognition and identification training, naval wargaming, and testing of camouflage patterns. Some museums and private collections still have samples of these ship models, often kept in easy-to-carry and store wooden boxes. Ship models presented by shipyards upon completion or found in shore establishments and on board individual warships were generally more detailed and came in larger 1/700, 1/350, and even 1/72 scales. From the start, the 1/1200 scale was utilitarian and economical in space, not expected to be too refined. Warship modelers like Liu, however, have added considerable detail and refinements to final products through their own techniques and innovations. Individual chapters cover the making of anti-aircraft ships, landing craft, destroyers and cruisers, and Japanese battleships. The French cruiser submarine *Surcouf* and French battleship *Jean Bart* receive special attention, owing to Liu's late friend and fellow-collector Alex White's interest in the *Marine nationale*. White's extensive collection of warship models was broken up and sold off after his death, though a few items found their way into Lui's possession, while he retained photographs of others. Some warships, such as the armed auxiliary cruiser *Jervis Bay* and the action between two Japanese auxiliary cruisers and the Royal Indian Navy minesweeper *Bengal* and tanker *Ondina*, get chapters due to their interesting stories and modifications in modelling. Aircraft, tiny at the 1/1200 scale, are added to ship models and covered in a dedicated chapter. Several lesser known conversions on the Allied and Axis sides to anti-aircraft auxiliaries, mine clearance vessels (*Sperrbrecher*), and convoy rescue ships are shown through various stages of building. A chapter is devoted to the HMCS *Prince Rupert* configured as a late-war anti-aircraft ship, that compares an Optatus kit to a scratch-build by Lui. The last two chapters showing an Italian armed schooner and Japanese guard picket boats take the small scale to a new level and amply demonstrate the ship modeler's skill and mastery of the medium. The book ends with a very useful glossary, comments on further resources, and an index.

Lui's book is aimed at serious, small warship modelers who aspire to gaining a certain modicum of higher skill in older techniques and mediums. Those are increasingly fading away as software-assisted line drawings and three dimensional computer modelling of warships gain in popularity. The same research and attention to accuracy and detail are needed for individual projects, and the level of granularity is far more refined than working in traditional materials at a small scale, even with the advent of photo-etched parts for static hand models. Toxic exposure to fine dust, paints, glues, and lead is almost completely eliminated. Lui's references to lead disease (corrosion) describes the interaction between wood and the commonly used metal that

can damage or destroy ship models over time, though the adverse effect on human health with prolonged proximity has been equally demonstrated. Lui is very much old school in a craft that struggles to attract new followers who might prefer just to buy finished models or incline instead toward newer forms without the downside. Computer modelled ships can be made to move, without a push by the hand, and may even be projected in three dimensions.

Chris Madsen
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R. Bruce Macdonald. *Never Say P*g. The Book of Sailors' Superstitions.* Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, www.harbourpublishing.com, 2022. vi+163 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography. CDN \$22.95, hardback; ISBN 978-1-55017-979-8. (E-book available.)

At its core, *Never Say P*g* is a collection of maritime superstitions, beliefs, and values of sailors from around the world and through the ages. Macdonald relies on his personal experience, notes, and interactions to build up an alphabetized list of sailors' superstitions. While the concept is simple and straightforward, the final result covers international boundaries, long-held beliefs, and modern creations. It touches on cultural norms, industry standards, and the methods through which identity is formed by sailors.

The book is highly personal in its writing style and authorship. Macdonald claims his initial interest in maritime superstitions came after being told not to stir his tea with a knife, as “stir with a knife and stir up strife” (136). He continues to draw on his own experience to show how it allowed him to collect anecdotes and listen to other maritime folk tell their stories or warn others away from bringing on bad luck. Relying on private experience, especially in a work of maritime history, can seem counterintuitive in a field where personal recollections rarely carry the same weight as historical documents, reports, or diaries. On the other hand, one might be hard pressed to find academically accurate recollections of folk beliefs and superstitions. When this knowledge is handed-down from individual memory, however, it can be a reliable historical and anthropological approach for creating a database of people's beliefs – or at least a good place to start. It should be noted that, where possible, Macdonald also provides more academic sources for his findings.

A list does not necessarily lend itself to grand historical, or cultural, conclusions. Nevertheless, certain themes do come forward as the reader proceeds down the alphabet of sailor's truths. Superstitions help a community form an identity and create a specific way of doing things. Traditions exist for a reason. While seemingly based in occupational mythology, they can carry a

grain of truth or be used to reinforce a certain group culture. For example, the beliefs surrounding respect of the dead dictate a rapid burial at sea to avoid upsetting the sailor's spirit or ghost (45). This serves a practical purpose as well: rapid burial means less risk of disease spreading from the deceased body. As an historical note, it is strange that this custom was ignored for Horatio Nelson, one of the most beloved sailors of his age, when his remains were stored in a cask of brandy following the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Traditions also create a visual language within a community. The most obvious of these is the practice of tattooing among seamen. Some symbols stood for good luck, like the pig and rooster, and helped a sailor keep good fortune on his side. The origins of the tattooed words HOLD and FAST, shed a particular light on sailing culture. It is thought to have a biblical origin in Deuteronomy 10:20: "Fear the Lord your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name" (141). While sailors considered it bad luck to run into a preacher, or have one on board, it is interesting that religion was still an inspiration for such a permanent reminder of a sailor's profession. Tattoos separated sailors from the general population: a sailor could literally carry his resumé with him with symbols like a dragon, turtle, and anchors all indicating service at a specific destination, or with a particular service—yet another method of maintaining a maritime identity.

Overall, this book is a comprehensive collection of sailors' beliefs and superstitions. Unfortunately, it does not go much beyond that. While it is informative, it lacks analysis or description about the origins or potential impact of such beliefs. A fuller study would lend the book an extra layer of credibility when explaining the origins of such strange facts of maritime life. *Never Say P*g* is a good introduction to sailors' mental attitudes but does not delve much beyond the initial offering of information.

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Alastair Mars. *Unbroken. The Story of a Submarine*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Maritime, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2021. (Originally published 1953.) 224 pp., illustrations, map. UK £12.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-84415-793-8.

Books on the U-Boat war in both World Wars are many; so, too, are books on the American submarine war in the Pacific during the Second World War. Less well-known are the efforts by the British submarine fleet in that second conflict. In *Unbroken. The Story of a Submarine*, this reprint of a 1953 memoir of Royal Navy (RN) operations details the first months of its career by its first

commander, Alastair Mars.

As a young man, Mars joined the RN in 1932 and had many postings, including service in Hong Kong. The outbreak of hostilities in 1939 found him in a position for wartime advancement. In 1941, at the age of twenty-six, he was picked to command HMS *Unbroken*, a submarine under construction. It must have been a heady moment for the young officer, recently married, now in command of a submarine.

Mars' narrative begins with the dreary wartime scene of November 1941. Though British forces had achieved some military success in North Africa, Syria, and East Africa, Britain was still under aerial bombardment and the recent German invasion of the Soviet Union had that nation's forces on the defensive. Added to that were the Imperial Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor in the American (then-) territory of Hawaii, the attacks on Hong Kong, the sinking of HMS *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* off the Malayan coast by Japanese aircraft, and the invasion of Malaya by the Japanese army.

With that background, Mars and his crew put *Unbroken* to sea to interdict Italian and German shipping in the eastern Mediterranean. He tells a great story – attacking shipping destined for German and Italian forces in North Africa, escorting ships in *Operation Pedestal*, the convoy that was sent to bring supplies to the beleaguered island of Malta, successfully avoiding attacks by enemy surface ships, and also landing commando units for raids on enemy-held areas of the North African coast.

The virtue of this book is that it is a first-hand account of submarine warfare written soon after the actions it describes. Mars wrote in a straightforward manner, without embellishment – he preferred to let the actions themselves speak to the reader. He shows the fear of a submarine crew under attack by enemy destroyers (and indirectly relaying the tenacity of the Italian destroyer fleet in seeking out *Unbroken*), the pain of wartime separation from his spouse, and his inability to be present at the birth of his child, the incredible austerity imposed upon the people of Malta and those stationed there during the bombardment.

Mars gave up command of *Unbroken* in spring, 1942, and returned to Great Britain. There he was reunited with his wife and met his 15-month-old daughter for the first time. After a period of leave, Mars was assigned a desk job at the Admiralty—which did not please his fighting spirit. *Unbroken* was never far from his thoughts, as he constantly watched for news of its exploits. Happily, Mars was allowed to greet *Unbroken* and its crew when it returned to Britain in summer 1943. Mars was assigned to command another submarine, HMS *Thule*, in December 1943, and took the boat and its crew to the Pacific theatre of operations in 1944. Returning home for good in autumn 1945, Mars held several posts prior to his departure from RN service in 1952.

As for *Unbroken*, it was sent to the Soviet Navy in 1944, as a part of lend-lease to the Soviets and returned in 1949. Sadly, a ship which had defied depth charges and all kinds of seas could not remain unbroken – it was scrapped in 1950. Mars's final words regarding his submarine are poignant ones – he was saddened that his boat was reduced to scrap, but at the same time, he was glad that *Unbroken* had not rusted away in some dockyard. He hoped, that, through the use of scrap metal, *Unbroken* would continue to serve the RN in some vastly different form. Perhaps *Unbroken* still sails today, more than 70 years later, in an even more vastly-changed form.

This book is worth reading, as it brings to the reader the immediacy of submarine warfare. The reader feels the crew's fear undergoing depth charge attack. Mars communicates life on board a submarine and ashore in a high-danger zone. The book fills in another gap in the history of the Second World War, but could have been improved by photographs of *Unbroken* and Mars. A brief biography of Mars could have been included, as the back cover merely states that Mars left the RN due to differences of opinions over postings and service. As a straight reprint, however, such inclusions might have increased the price of the book. Those suggestions aside, this book is recommended.

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Stephen McLaughlin. *Russian and Soviet Battleships*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2021. xviii+496 pp., illustrations, drawings, tables, notes, bibliography, appendix, index. US \$120.00, cloth: ISBN: 978-1-68247-726-7.

The Naval Institute Press has reprinted Stephen McLaughlin's classic study of Russian/Soviet battleship design. First published in 2003, *Russian and Soviet Battleships* immediately became the standard reference on Imperial Russian/Soviet capital ships. Quickly out of print, it was soon only obtainable at a steep premium with second-hand prices quoted as high as \$1,000 US. Although the author did not have the opportunity to revise the text, this volume is a welcome reprinting of a definitive design study.

Russian and Soviet Battleships follows the well sailed track for warship design studies with a chapter for each new (or proposed) vessel or class of ships. Indeed, some of the best chapters deal with the proposed Soviet battleships and the modifications to surviving Tsarist dreadnoughts. The author understands that the Imperial Russian/Soviet Navy generally played second fiddle to the Army in both financial terms and in prestige. The army was a necessity while naval development was cramped by geography and an underdeveloped

economy. Of the two problems facing the Russian/Soviet Navy, the attempted economic catch-up led to more significant difficulties. This was particularly true with regard to the dearth of draftsmen and other technicians to support Russia's naval architects.

Russian and Soviet Battleships does not deal with the numerous monitors nor the belted cruising vessels of the 1860s, starting instead with the first, true, Russian ironclad battleship, *Pëtr Velikii* (Peter the Great). The design and construction reflected two recurring tendencies that plagued armoured ship development. The first, was that it usually took a long time from the inspiration for a design to the finished product. Secondly, quality control was not always a strong suit for Russian shipyards. The trigger for the design came from an unlikely source, the voyage of the double turret monitor, USS *Miantonomoh* to Kronshtadt in 1866. The vessel impressed Vice-Admiral Popov (of circular ironclad fame), with its seakeeping qualities. Then backed by support from the Imperial court, Grand Duke Nikolaevich, General-Admiral of the Navy and the Tsar's younger brother, Popov designed a masted, double-turret monitor. The proposed vessel was sort of an HMS *Captain* on steroids for the Pacific Fleet. After *Captain's* untimely demise, the plans were reworked. Eventually *Pëtr Velikii* was completed in 1876, after suggested design changes by Sir Edward Reed, the former chief constructor to the Royal Navy. She bore a resemblance to HMS *Dreadnought* of 1874. Unfortunately, *Pëtr Velikii's* boilers did not meet expectations and it was not until after a refit by John Elder's of Glasgow in 1881-1882 that she could be considered a satisfactory fighting ship.

Some later Russian battleships also exhibited signs of faulty design or sloppy construction. The most notorious was *Gangut* of 1889, which was lost in 1897 after striking an uncharted rock. The ship was overweight on completion, with watertight doors that did not fit properly and its pumping system was inadequate. But as McLaughlin points out, the Imperial Russian Navy was not alone when it came to design problems and faulty construction of its warships. Nor were all Russian battleships floating coffins, even those that sank in battle demonstrated a certain toughness. The *Borodino* class, three of which were sunk at Tsushima, were a case in point. While not without their faults, these vessels, though grossly overloaded, survived a great deal of damage before succumbing to Japanese fire.

McLaughlin's discussion of the torturous Soviet design process is illuminating. The First World War and the Revolutions of 1917 put an end to what progress the Tsarist navy had made in its recovery from the Russo-Japanese War. Soviet five-year plans focussed on non-maritime heavy industry, electrification, and forced collectivisation of agriculture. While Stalin had a fetish for battleships, precious little steel went to Soviet shipyards. Naval architects, including holdovers from pre-revolutionary times, designed new

armoured vessels, seemingly at the whim of party hacks. In reality, Stalin was the final arbitrator of naval policy including technical matters. Thus, everyone beneath him in the chain of command had to follow (and anticipate) his lead, including naval architects. The Soviet Navy was hard hit by the purges, particularly the various design bureaus. At one point, the most experienced naval architect was only 32 years old. This lack of residual knowledge, coupled with ever-changing priorities and the consequent overwork, was one of the main reasons why no battleships were ever completed for the Soviet Navy. Ironically, the nation's inability to build a traditional navy before the Second World War resulted in a steel industry more geared to producing tanks than warships. In hindsight, this turned out to have been a more rational outcome than Stalin could have dreamed of.

Russian and Soviet Battleships, particularly the section dealing with Soviet battleships, should be required reading for naval bureaucrats and their political masters who are concerned with equipment procurement, whether the platforms being acquired are frigates or helicopters. Some Russian warships were badly designed and built, but the resulting vessels were not much worse than the equivalent ships built in Western Europe or the United States before 1914. Russian naval procurement only completely fell to pieces with the onset of Stalin's purges in the 1930s. McLaughlin's work is more than just a design study of bygone warships; it is a commentary on rational and irrational decision making. This reprinting of *Russian and Soviet Battleships* is highly recommended to those who did not purchase it the first time around.

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David Miller. *Langsdorff and the Battle of the River Plate*. Command Decisions Series. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword Maritime, www.pen-and-sword.com, 2021. Reprint from 2013. (Distributed by Casemate Publishing). 208 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US \$24.95, paper; ISBN: 978-1-52679-697-4. (E-book available.)

It is definitely odd which topics dominate the historical discussion of any given period. When the Second World War at sea is considered, most people think of the long-term struggle of attrition that we know as the U-boat war. Alternately, they may consider critical engagements like the Battle of Midway. What is often forgotten are the many smaller, but no less important, battles that seldom receive more than a vague reference or a footnote. One of these moments was the Battle of the River Plate. Fought on the morning of 13 December 1939, it was the first major surface naval battle between the German and British

navies in the Second World War. It saw a German commerce raider, the pocket battleship KM *Admiral Graf Spee*, square off against a British heavy cruiser, HMS *Exeter*, and the two light cruisers, HMS *Ajax* and HMS *Achilles* in the South Atlantic. Roughly an hour and a half later the battle was essentially over. Although heavily outgunned by *Graf Spee*, and despite heavy damage to *Exeter*, the British forces under Admiral Henry Harwood were able to inflict sufficient damage on *Kapitan zur See* Hans Langsdorff's *Graf Spee* to force him to withdraw. He sought sanctuary in Montevideo, Uruguay, to conduct repairs and bury the dead. Forced to leave the neutral port on 17 December and faced with the prospect of British reinforcements and a hopeless cause, *Graf Spee* was scuttled by her crew and her captain committed suicide. Usually mentioned only in passing, commerce raiding by *Graf Spee* was a serious enough issue to warrant the dispersal of forces to hunt the ship down and sink it. Yet, very little is actually written about *Graf Spee* or the Battle of the River Plate, despite the fact that this battle helped to shape the eventual confrontation in Norway. This 189-page book is a reprint of Miller's original 2013 text, providing a fascinating window into not just Langsdorff and the challenging command decisions he had to make, but *Graf Spee*'s operations up to that point and the battle itself. Miller, an accomplished writer on military history, brings a rich background of experience spanning histories of Richard the Lionheart, the U-boat war, and the Battle of Waterloo. *Langsdorff and the Battle of the River Plate* is the result of years of study of Captain Hans Langsdorff, one of Germany's most admired naval officers.

The book's 24 chapters are broken into four parts. The first part examines the historical background of German surface raiding in two chapters that address the experience and lessons of the First World War. The nine chapters of part two break down the design of the Deutschland-class *Panzerschiffe*. The war cruise of *Graf Spee* is the focus of part three where 12 chapters follow its cruise before the Battle of the River Plate as well as its last battle. It takes our understanding of Langsdorff right through to his death by his own hand after scuttling his ship. Finally, part four provides formal conclusions. Supported by three annexes, this represents one of the best breakdowns of the *Graf Spee* and its captain's only wartime cruise.

The breakdown of the Deutschland-class was particularly interesting. Besides the usual discussion of guns or engine specifics, something that is always fascinating as the small technical details add flavour to our understanding, the inclusion of chapter 10 dealing specifically with replenishment at sea was particularly revealing. Realizing that Germany would not have control of the seas in the future, and that any long-range raider had to be supplied in some way with munitions, fuel, and stores, the Kriegsmarine made a concerted effort to solve this problem. Their solution was the develop a fleet-support

ship capable of carrying fuel and supplies for an extended operational tour. The *Altmark* was one of five ships built to support the German raiders and was specifically tasked to support *Graf Spee*. Known as the Dithmarschen-class, these ships carried everything needed by a raider at sea, including methods of replenishment at sea. The challenges of transferring fuel, spare parts, food, and above all else, munitions between ships while in the open ocean should not be ignored. While a far step from modern fleet replenishment ships, these Dithmarschen-class ships represent the first design built for the purpose of supporting combat ships far from safe harbours.

Equally as important as the design of resupply ships, is the analytical component of each chapter. Taking the reader through the material and then providing detailed analysis is very useful and directly supports Miller's argument that the issues at play here were Langsdorff's command decisions and the forces shaping them. The combination of history and analysis gives the reader a good sense of events and their impact on the mind of the Captain. Miller goes out of his way to try to give the reader a sense of what Langsdorff's options really were, based on what he knew at the time. For example, regarding his decision to head for a neutral harbour, Miller reminds the reader of the intelligence estimates that Langsdorff had and what he knew for certain. It makes for an interesting read regarding his options.

The greatest limitation for this book rests with the serious lack of citation. The little that is provided is minimal and reduces the value of the text, although with so little written on the battle, perhaps it is not surprising. That, however, is exactly why it is needed. For scholars and those interested in naval history, additional sources would greatly improve the field. Likewise, the accounts of events are a bit brief in places, giving a bit of an abridged feel to the story. Readers may be getting the straight facts as they exist, but I was left hungry for more.

On the whole, this is an interesting account, well written and enjoyable to read. It represents some of the best work on the Battle of the River Plate and as such, should definitely be considered by more than just those interested in the period or the individuals involved. It is an account that many would find useful and definitely a satisfying read.

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Nicky Nielsen. *The Pirate Captain Ned Low: His Life and Mysterious Fate*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2022. xvii+205 pp., illustrations, map, list of crew, bibliography, notes, index. UK £20.00, US \$34.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39909-431-3. (E-book available.)

When speaking of the Golden Age of Piracy (roughly from the 1650s to the 1730s), certain names often come to the fore. Among them are William Kidd, Henry Morgan, Edward Teach, Calico Jack, Mary Read, Anne Bonny, and Stede Bonnet. Each of them carved out a dedicated niche of infamy for themselves in history. Less often remembered today, although well feared in his time, is the dread pirate captain known as Edward “Ned” Low. Famed for his utter brutality, Low may be most notable because he managed a career of five years in a field that frequently promised a quick death and little mourning. Equally noteworthy is that this career did not end at the end of a rope or a cutlass, but with the vicious captain fading away sometime in the mid-1720s, rumoured to be dead but never confirmed. For all of his notoriety and the many stories written about him at the time, few contemporary works have been released on Low. Author Nielsen does, however, speak highly of George N. Flemming’s historically adjacent 2014 book *At the Point of a Cutlass*. What she seeks to do in this book, then, is to provide a baseline story of the life and times of Edward Low while carefully navigating away from the literary excesses taken by pirate “biographers” such as Captain Charles Johnson.

Over the course of the narrative, Nielsen presents a man who was, at his core, the product of an impoverished upbringing who quickly learned that the only way to get what he desired would be through force and cunning. Growing up mainly on the streets, Low was ill-educated, with a penchant for cheating openly at cards and allowing his size to deter retribution. Added to this were a clear emotional, and possibly mental, instability that saw his moods swing erratically, a seeming enjoyment of violence, and a general disdain for authority that could not impose itself on him. In short, he was neatly suited to the violent life he would come to live. For all of his negative attributes, Nielsen is careful to also show Ned Low as a somewhat compassionate man, who seemingly loved his daughter deeply, and who did what he did, at least in part, in an attempt to provide for her. Further, although Nielsen cannot confirm it, she suggests that Low may have seen his older brother Dick hanged for theft, and if so, he certainly would have been scarred by the experience. Moving forward to his rise into piracy and greater infamy, Low is consistently shown to be a man seemingly balanced on a razor’s edge. On the one hand, he only led a mutiny of fellow log cutters because of perceived abuse at the hands of those in charge. On the other, he would then carry out a multi-year reign of piratical terror that saw innocent sailors and members of his crew actively afraid of crossing him lest he decided to employ one of his many favoured tortures on them.

If there is a limitation to this book, it is that the figure of primary interest within it is in so many ways nebulous. Coming from the streets, Low left no significant records of his early childhood, and being generally uneducated, he

left no personal diaries or journals from which his thoughts could be gleaned. Finally, as he was never arrested and tried for his crimes, court records, one of the most common sources for piratical histories, are no help. Rather, Nielsen has had to work diligently to pull fact from fiction within newspaper articles and often sensationalized accounts of the time, the end product of which is a fine piece of historical work. While readers might desire deeper discussions on particular points, the tapestry of a narrative that Nielsen does weave is awe-inspiring.

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Michael North. *A World History of the Seas: From Harbour to Horizon*. (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, (first English translation), www.bloomsbury.com, 2022. 331 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$30.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-3501-4543-6. (E-book available.)

As I write the review of Michael North's book, out of the corner of my eye I see hummingbirds flickering at our birdfeeder for a brief sip of nourishment and then flying off. They are perhaps a metaphor for his English translation of *A World History of the Seas*. North, a maritime history polymath, covers this vast and complex topic in 240 text pages with occasional illustrations, and maps, and "punctuated" by approximately 40 pages of endnotes. The topics cover maritime events that occurred upon the various bodies of water of the world through to the present time, connecting a world permitting the transport of goods and people from far-flung regions. It appears as a literary millimetre of varnish-coating overlaying an enormous, multifaceted seascape.

The book is challenging because the names of places and people who populated them have changed throughout their history, sometimes many times over. North rarely defines them and they are occasionally in a foreign or antiquated tongue. Therefore, one is relegated to verifying where the author is taking his reader. Still, new perceptions can be gained from overviews that elude scholars habitually focused on details rather than the big picture. Every reader will certainly take away different and personal insights after reading this book, but I wish to mention a few that struck this reviewer.

The book is unequally divided into two segments dealing with many maritime ethnic, social, and religious networks highlighting cross-regional linkages on the world's oceans and seas. The first eight chapters centre on specific oceans and/or seas and their maritime histories and connections. These are followed by two chapters roughly focused on the seas as a resource, and finally, human relationship with the ocean environment. The extensive influence of the Vikings is well covered. The pervasive maritime history of

the Spanish and Portuguese are well known, but the legacy of the Dutch, perhaps the cleverest of all the traders, becomes evident in chapters covering the Mediterranean, the northern metropolises on the Baltic seas, and the Indian and Atlantic oceans. For example, Dutch East Indiamen were faster, cleaner, less expensive to build and maintain, and safer. In addition, the Dutch also invented marine insurance.

Many Levantine nations of the ancient world had a small Jewish population from time to time who were involved in trading. Slavery has been with us since tribes conquered each other, but this book documents that slaves were a trading commodity much like grains, livestock, finished goods, and precious metals. The slave trade was one of the world's most persistent and ugly maritime institutions. Hand in hand with this was the very profitable business of ransoming prisoners. Once the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition forced their Sephardic Jewish population to disperse, they became a footnote in Iberian history, but ironically, one to be found on almost every page. Jewish traders became essential for mercantile growth and communication between many disparate cultures and nations. The Spanish Catholic clergy, and to a lesser degree those of the Portuguese, were also interested in proselytizing among the Indigenous Peoples they encountered and forcing them to accept their doctrinaire religious beliefs. The pragmatic Dutch, however, combined their less dogmatic religion with Indigenous beliefs. This made them more acceptable to the Indigenous cultures and thus, they became trading partners.

Finally, one gains an appreciation of the importance of the evolution of watercraft. First, they were used to transport people over distances that were nearly impossible to reach overland, then to explore, make war, and arguably most important, increased cargo capacity for engaging in long-distance trading.

The seas are a transport medium linking societies and permitting the conveyance of valuable or vital goods to supply demands. Imaginative modern technology has changed this quasi-seascape. The waters have carried free human beings, enslaved people, indentured servants, coolies, and commonplace emigrants about to change their lot for better or worse. But ultimately, the seas function as providers of resources, spaces of transportation, means of communication, and metaphorical pages upon which human history is written.

Finally, North's 40-page bibliography is an excellent starting resource for scholars who might wish to pursue or expand upon the many maritime historical threads that his book exposes. Although *A World History of the Seas* is not an easy read nor a book for every historian's library, it can be engrossing at times and contains many unique perspectives worth considering.

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Rear Adm. Dave Oliver, USN (Ret.) *A Navy Admiral's Bronze Rules: Managing Risk and Leadership*. Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2021. xv+214 pp., illustrations. US \$34.95, cloth; ISBN 978-168247-721-2.

Leadership. A simple concept but one of the hardest things to teach. In our society, it is one of the most valuable commodities because it is often so scarce. We hold up people skilled in leadership as role models, and we even spend quite a bit of energy trying to teach leadership skills to our youth. Whether via university business programs or military educational routes, the idea is to impart the vital skills of leadership to the next generation so that when needed, we will have new leaders to rise to the challenges of the future.

US Rear Admiral Oliver's new book, *A Navy Admiral's Bronze Rules*, attempts to distill some of the key concepts of both leadership and risk management based on his military career and experiences. The text is divided into four major themes, each broken up into smaller chapters. The first section is aimed at exploring the personal traits that a leader should try to strengthen. The second section attempts to identify the problems a leader will encounter that affect or challenge leadership skills. Part three focuses on the techniques a leader will find useful, while part four examines some of the special issues related to being a senior leader.

Each sub-series of chapters uses personal reminiscences from his military career in the American submarine fleet, chosen to illustrate specific lessons with a relevant example. For example, in chapter 8, Oliver uses his experience with naval war games as a tool to pry participants out of their conceptual ruts that can often stifle creativity. War games are an excellent method of training, allowing the participants to test accepted wisdom and to challenge themselves in two ways. Firstly, by understanding the concepts/theories they have been trained to put into practice. Secondly, by seeing how they react and adapt to situations that are dynamic and constantly changing. Games are an outstanding learning tool and can produce some incredible learning experiences. In this case, the example led to a re-thinking of war plans and was a major advance for American preparations for war.

Oliver manages to combine a lifetime of experience within a theoretical construct of what it means to lead. As the same time, by discussing things that would not normally be talked about, he offers some fascinating insights into life in the fleet. While war games, for example, might be mentioned in other literature, they are usually described as a means to explain lessons learned or how they shaped planning, usually from an academic perspective. Instead of this top-down approach, Oliver reveals the lessons from a rare, personal point of view. Similarly, the history he presents via his own naval career is not

something usually seen; namely, problems of command, of officers who did not master leadership and the impact they had on those below them, of issues related to personnel and the impact of ineffective leadership versus successful leaders. These stories provide a behind-the-scenes view of the navy familiar only to participants.

My greatest problem with the book is that, despite promising to show the reader the key elements of what we call leadership, I felt Oliver failed to deliver. As a memoir it is fascinating, but I found the lessons on leadership often unclear, if not lost on me entirely. The background Oliver offers is valuable but his concluding chapter summing up the rules is more of a list of chapters than a lesson in leadership.

While the text is recommended to anyone interested in the Cold War American submarine fleet and life as a naval officer, I feel its value as a teaching tool for future leaders outside of the military is rather limited.

Robert Dienesch
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Judith E. Pearson, Sean Heuvel & John Rodgaard (eds.). *The Trafalgar Chronicle*. New Series VI. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com, 2021. 232 pp., illustrations, tables, maps, notes. UK £20.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-5267-5966-5.

New Series 6 of *The Trafalgar Chronicle* provides readers who are interested in the period surrounding Nelson's and the Georgian Navy's battle of 1805 a wide-ranging set of thematic articles, biographical portraits, and items of general interest from a truly international collection of scholars, researchers, and historians. The *Chronicle's* mission is to provide information and research associated with the Trafalgar campaign and the surrounding years of 1750 to 1820. The series meets this goal by structuring its content around diversity, both thematically and in breadth of subject matter.

This issue offers four articles centered on the 2021 theme of *Royal Navy Encounters with Indigenous Populations and Enslaved Peoples*. These include a piece by Tom D. Fremantle recounting relations between Philip Gidley King (first Lieutenant Governor of Norfolk Island, third Governor of New South Wales, and an ancestor of Fremantle) and the Maoris; Christopher Pieczynski's discussion of British attempts to influence freedom-seeking American slaves in Princess Anne County, Virginia during the War of 1812; research by Lily Style concerning the rescue of an abandoned high-born infant Burmese by her ancestor, Captain Edward Blanckley RN, during the opening years of the first Anglo-Burmese war; and Gerald Holland's account of the interactions

between Nathaniel Portlock and Hawaiians and First Nation peoples of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Biographical portraits focus on Vice Admiral Sir Charles Saunder's efforts at Quebec in 1759 (by Barry Gough), the careers of Sir Harry Neale, Baronet GCB, and of Commander Walter Strickland (both by Barry Jolly), the political adventures of Sir Philip Durham, Nelson's "luckiest captain" (by Hilary L. Rubinstein), Father of the US Navy Commodore John Barry (by Liam Gual), and Captain Johan Puke's efforts during the 1790 conflict between the Swedish and Russian fleets at Viborg (by Christer Hägg). Four articles of general interest are included: Gerald Stulc presents the status of British naval surgeons during the French Revolution, Harold Stark offers a sketch of Nelson derived from a contemporary correspondence, Andrew Venn writes on the subset of Nelson's "band of brothers" who were absent at Trafalgar, and Anthony Bruce traces the development of the bomb vessel.

New Series 6 opens with Governor King's developing relations with the Maori of the Bay of Islands (New Zealand), and in particular with two Maori representatives, Woodoo and Tookee (referred to as Huru and Tuki in alternate sources, according to the author's notes) and chief Te Pahi. Fremantle's writing indicates that these encounters were marked by mutual respect and what seems to have developed into a true friendship.

British attempts to maintain tactical advantage during the War of 1812 included efforts to encourage enslaved people of coastal Virginia to take advantage of opportunities to gain freedom, by way of, among other means, offers to settle in British-held areas of North America and the West Indies. One initial British challenge was to aggressively promote this prospect while avoiding perceptions of inciting slave uprisings. The second thematic piece in this volume traces the many ways that the British and enslaved population worked together to seek this new life while affecting American economic and military aims.

Style's *The Tailor Prince* reads like a detective story as she compares and contrasts two accounts of how a purported Burmese noble's child, "Rangoon", found in the rubble following a siege (or rescued from a shipwreck) came to England. He grew up, married, raised a family, and passed away as an old man, aware of, but never reclaiming, his princely status.

A brief account of the interactions of Captain Nathaniel Portlock (who sailed under both Cook and Bligh during his naval career) with the peoples of Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest and Alaska closes the thematic section. This entry, for the most part, focuses on Captain Portlock's actions and perspectives rather than those of the indigenous peoples he encountered. Perhaps better placed among the biographic sketches, it does serve as a good transition piece to this volume's subsequent section.

In brief, the Biographical Portraits section follows each subject from cradle,

or at least early boyhood, to grave, with the exception of Duram's political focus and Puke's actions at Viborg, which provide a more detailed examination of a specific event or period in these men's lives. The portraits offer interesting and well-organized accounts of these individuals' professional development or important or defining events at a point in time. If there is a common theme to be had, it is that each of these sketches highlights either a capable mariner who was for one reason or another overshadowed, and therefore less celebrated, than his fellows or commanders, or well-researched players who were entering into new or pivotal episodes in their career.

The General Interest section opens with a survey of the status of British naval surgeons at the turn of the nineteenth century, and traces the gradual improvement in training, work conditions, equipment, and influence into the early years of that century. Their importance was often overlooked by the Admiralty, who regarded the practitioners as on par with craftsmen; the article concludes with an apt observation that the measurable improvements in health care, and by extension lives saved, benefited the Navy and their success during the French Revolution.

Clues about Nelson's leadership style are gleaned from an analysis of one of his letters to Captain Frank Sotheron. In it, Nelson is found respectfully but firmly disciplining a trusted subordinate for a misstep. Although the letter itself is brief, the article walks through in detail the opening remarks, the body, and its conclusion, insightfully linking Nelson's command style with the document's contents, phrasing, and intended message.

Due variously to assignment on resupply or diplomatic duty, illness, or personal or professional business in Britain, several officers linked closely to Nelson were absent from Trafalgar. The reasons, and to some extent the aftermath of each man's omission is presented. Discussed in this entry are British officers Vice Admiral Sir Robert Calder, Rear Admiral Thomas Louis, and Captains Benjamin Hallowell, Sir Francis Austen, George Murray, Samuel Sutton, Thomas Foley, Richard Keats, and William Hoste. French Admiral François Étienne de Rosily-Mesros, charged by Napoleon with instructions to relieve Villeneuve, missed both his assignment and the battle due to a series of mishaps, leading one to ponder what might have been.

The bomb vessel, a French Navy invention, was quickly adopted and improved by the British Navy prior its eventual obsolescence owing to the development of the naval long gun. These modified or purpose-built vessels were typically ketches early on, and later built as heavily reinforced ship-rigged firing platforms. This brief account is full of details on the changes made, successes and weaknesses of the design and application, preparation and firing, construction, and to a lesser extent, the tactics employed in their use. Bomb vessels served as the predecessor of the monitors developed and

placed in service during the American Civil War and both World Wars.

The entries found throughout the journal are enhanced by appropriate and informative maps, portraits, drawings, and photographs. A series of eight colour plates includes contemporary or near-contemporary paintings and illustrations, as well as a vibrant depiction of the fourth-rate *Dristigheten* and companion fleet vessels shortly after breaking through Russia's blockade, painted by Hägg. A handful of the black and white images in the volume seem to have suffered somewhat during reproduction or printing: a series of vertical or horizontal lines are evident in roughly a half-dozen of these, throughout some of the submissions. It is difficult to tell if these are attributable to the source material, an issue at press, or some other fault, but these are minor detractions from an otherwise excellent set of illustrations. One curious omission is found in *The Tailor Prince*, where the author, working from a sketch in a primary source held in her personal collection, describes clearly and in detail the garb, stance, and facial expression of Rangoon. Her discussion does great credit to the sketch, and certainly gives the reader hints at the man's possible character. Since it depicts the central player in the story its inclusion would have been a welcome addition.

In their forwards, the President and the Editors point out that this edition is a special case and applaud the contributors for their efforts in producing an outstanding collection of submissions without benefit of the typical archives, libraries, and research tools afforded during non-pandemic times. This is appropriate praise, and well-deserved.

Jim Hughey
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T. Joseph Scanlon. (Roger Sarty, ed.) *Catastrophe: Stories and Lessons from the Halifax Explosion*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, www.wlupress.wlu.ca, 2020. 400 p., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$39.99, paper: ISBN 978-1-77112-371-6. (E-book available.)

The explosion of the munitions ship SS *Mont-Blanc* after a collision in Halifax Harbour on 6 December 1917 was a disaster that killed nearly 2,000 people and devastated an important Canadian wartime port.

This book by the late Joseph Scanlon aims to presents a detailed and comprehensive view of the explosion using the lens of disaster theory. This is a field where Scanlon, a journalist and Carleton University professor, worked for many years. The Halifax Explosion interested him because it was Canada's deadliest manmade disaster, but also because it inspired the first modern academic study of the effects of disaster, *Catastrophe and Social Change*

written in 1920 by Samuel Henry Prince. Scanlon amply demonstrates that Prince's work was important, but deeply flawed, and felt the event deserved a better study. After Scanlon's unexpected death in 2015, his son James David Scanlon took the manuscript and engaged Canadian naval historian Roger Sarty to edit and complete the book.

The result is very different from most books about the Halifax Explosion. These have tended to be lavishly illustrated summaries focusing on survivor accounts, or specialized studies of specific families and institutions. This book focuses on documentation and analysis. (A single map and some images of key players are the only illustrations.) Scanlon explores how the city and its inhabitants were affected using tools of disaster theory about ideas such as panic and communication chains. An important idea in the book is an effect known in the disaster field as "convergence," when outside help brings extra resources, but also confusion and disruption.

In his verdict, the little-known deputy mayor of Halifax, Henry Colwell played a critical role. With other leaders killed, injured or out-of-town, Colwell led the response, holding a meeting behind the shattered windows of City Hall 90 minutes after the blast to create the Halifax Relief Committee. It set up a very effective relationship with the military for rescue, transport and treatment of the injured, identification of the dead and secured money and supplies. The committee's work was, in Scanlon's view, ad hoc and decentralized, but effective. The city used military vehicles and seized private cars to distribute incoming doctors, nurses and supplies to the hellishly overcrowded Halifax hospitals as regional help poured in from cities and towns in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Complexity arose on the third day as more help converged from further away, especially the relief teams from American states, notably Massachusetts. In a chapter Scanlon calls "The American Invasion," he shows how American officials convinced Canada's Prime Minister Robert Borden that a new and larger committee should be in charge, excluding municipal officials and staffed mainly by American "professionals". The exhausted Haligonians, appreciative of fresh help, went along. The Americans soon took all the credit for saving Halifax, dismissing the critical work started before their arrival. They also made some things worse, insisting on setting up their own hospitals, draining resources from the Halifax hospitals with the most serious cases. They brought an over-staffed and heavy-handed approach to dispersing relief that was obsessed with winnowing out "cheaters" using intrusive interviews and questionnaires that demanded detailed personal financial records. (Complaints grew and the American dominated committee was itself replaced by the federal Halifax Relief Commission in February 1918.)

Shipping, both naval and merchant, is addressed throughout the book, although naval scholars will still find that John Armstrong's 2022 book *The*

Halifax Explosion and the Royal Canadian Navy remains the key tool to understand the explosion's effect on the beleaguered Royal Canadian Navy. Most previous accounts have focused overwhelmingly on the two ships in the collision, the French SS *Mont-Blanc* and the Norwegian SS *Imo*, and which was to blame for the collision. Scanlon does not dwell on this controversy, although he does point mostly to confusion aboard *Mont-Blanc*, at odds with most writing in recent years has tended to focus the blame on outbound *Imo*, the ship speeding on the wrong side of the Narrows. This debate will no doubt continue. More significantly, however, Scanlon effectively addresses the broader, and often ignored question, unresolved by the official inquiry, about the dangerous pairing of flammables and explosives aboard *Mont-Blanc* and the admission of munitions ships deep into the harbour. He concludes that the British quietly made some changes to improve safety after the explosion, but continued to put the efficient delivery of munitions ahead of civic safety.

Scanlon's marshalling of sources is remarkable. No other book about the explosion has drawn from such a comprehensive documentary base. This includes not only the staples of firsthand written accounts and newspaper coverage, but also survivor interviews he conducted and a comprehensive array of archival sources that are not only footnoted but explored in a detailed sources chapter.

There are a few flaws. A section exploring the conflicting death toll of the explosion omits the comprehensive work by the Nova Scotia Archives' Halifax Explosion database created in 2002, which has systematically documented and refined the names of those killed. Scanlon also misinterprets some details on the physical effects of the explosion, the subject of considerable scientific work following the important 1994 conference proceedings, *Ground Zero*. These are minor points in wide-reaching and detailed research that sheds light on a myriad of important effects not previously explored; everything from the loss and restoration of critical telephone and telegram lines, to the effect on wages, to the struggle to ensure coal supplies after the explosion. Most Canadians know that railway dispatcher Vincent Coleman sent a heroic telegraph warning, but Scanlon explains exactly how he did it and carefully assesses its effect. This large and systematic study will become the new standard for understanding the Halifax Explosion.

Dan Conlin
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Timothy D. Walker (ed.). *Sailing to Freedom: Maritime Dimensions of the Underground Railway*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, www.umasspress.com, 2021. xvi+231 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, index. US \$27.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-62534-592-9.

Sailing to Freedom: Maritime Dimensions of the Underground Railroad is a collection of ten essays, edited by Timothy D. Walker, which examine how seaborne escape attempts by African American slaves in the antebellum South were managed and carried out. The maritime aspects of the Underground Railroad have garnered less attention in the historiography of the Underground Railroad than terrestrial aspects; even the name, the Underground Railroad, is metaphorically terrestrial. In fact, the use of sea routes to escape slavery were, according to Walker, far more prevalent than one may think. He states in his introduction that “of 103 extant pre-emancipation slave narratives, more than seventy percent recount the use of oceangoing vessels as a means of fleeing slavery” (1). That’s an extraordinary ratio that I certainly would not have expected.

One volume will surely not redress the imbalance and the book does not claim to do so, but Walker expresses his hope that it will inspire new scholarship into what he calls “the Saltwater Underground Railroad.” He hopes to raise awareness and improve scholarly accuracy and, ultimately, do justice to the memory of those Underground Railroad operatives who risked severe punishment and even death in aiding enslaved African Americans gain their liberty.

This collection brings to light the volume of escape attempts that occurred by sea and makes it clear that a holistic understanding of the Underground Railroad cannot be achieved without understanding its maritime aspects. Indeed, a waterborne escape offered greater chances of success to fleeing slaves in the deep south, at least to those in coastal regions, than an overland route. Slaves were extensively employed on the waterfronts in the antebellum south and the nature of their work meant that they endured less direct oversight than those employed inland. The prevalence of transient sailors from the northern states and from overseas, including free Black sailors, meant that enslaved people found it comparatively easy to obtain news and information from and about the outside world. Not to mention the opportunity to stowaway aboard one of the thousands of mercantile vessels departing southern ports annually.

Each of the contributors to the book covers a different region along the US eastern seaboard and considers things such the personal profiles of escapees, strategies employed to affect an escape and how Southern authorities attempted to thwart escape attempts. Many escape attempts were made largely in isolation, the escapee perhaps risking contact with one or two people, usually free Black crew members aboard a ship, to make the attempt. But others were made with the assistance of a pre-existing, albeit loose, network of people; dockside workers, sailors and even ship captains, who regularly assisted slaves escape to the north. The backgrounds of those involved in the network was unpredictable. It included Quakers, white abolitionists, freed slaves, and in

some instances, even family members of slaveholders. Some did so out of a sense of altruism, others demanded compensation. Some of the names and their stories will be familiar to readers, such as escapees Harriet Tubman (who became an Underground Railroad ‘stationmaster’) and Frederick Douglass, or railroad stationmaster William Still, or Robert Smalls who commandeered a Confederate gunboat to obtain freedom; but others will undoubtedly be relatively unknown. Eye-catching is the sheer audacity of people like Captain Albert Fountain or the mysterious schooner captain who Still only referred to as B, both of whom took great risks in repeatedly secreting people aboard their vessels and away to freedom.

The opportunities for seaborne escape were well known to Southern authorities to the extent that escape attempts by slaves working on the docks were almost expected, but such was the value of the work that they performed, that the risk was accepted. It was virtually assumed that a missing slave in a coastal community had attempted to escape by boat. Measures were put in place to thwart escape attempts: boats were searched before departing, free Black sailors had their freedom of movement restricted, and punishment for absconders and those that assisted them were harsh, while rewards were given to those who revealed them. But, as the book makes quite clear, these measures were no deterrent.

The text is aimed primarily at an academic audience but is accessible enough for general readership. Indeed, I make no claim to be an expert on American slavery or the Underground Railroad, but I found the text to be both informative and, for the most part, engaging throughout. Some chapters are better than others, as may be expected when a book has multiple contributors, and while there is some minor repetition, all the contributors offer something unique about the respective areas they cover. All chapters are very well researched with extensive footnotes giving the text intellectual vigour. I do not know that this book will inspire new scholarship into the Saltwater Underground Railroad, but it certainly helps to raise awareness of its existence and of those who were involved. Highly recommended.

Petar Djokovic
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Conrad Waters (ed.). *Seaforth World Naval Review 2022*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.nip.org, 2021. 192 pp., illustrations, tables, notes. US \$60.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-68247-746-5.

Authoritative and trusted annual reviews of international navies and naval forces published by private independent editors using open sources and

industry contacts have a long tradition. Brassey was one of the first, and Janes built an entire business model from the original naval annual conceived and illustrated by its founder, Fred Jane. Access to Janes' products, which cater predominantly to professionals, is very expensive and now available mostly in digital formats. That has left room for a reasonably priced, traditional book format which, like Brassey's before it, draws upon regular and guest contributors, experts in their respective fields, and targets a broader audience. The *Seaforth World Naval Review*, now in its thirteenth yearly iteration, is still under founding editor Conrad Waters. Waters, a lawyer and a banker, is known for his knowledge and interest in contemporary naval affairs, and has also published on the design, construction, and technical history of British cruisers reviewed previously in this journal (2019, XXIX no. 3, pp. 418-420). Previous years of the *Seaforth* annual naval review were covered by the late Charles Douglas Maginley, a long-time CNRS member and one of TNM's stalwart book reviewers who died in September 2020.

As noted by Maginley's last review of the 2020 edition (2019, XXIX no. 3, pp. 420-422), the structure and format share a consistent style with the other annuals in the series. The book comprises four distinct sections. The first section, an introductory overview, and second section, world fleet reviews divided into regions, offer focused, in-depth reviews of the navies of Sri Lanka, Spain, and the United Kingdom. They are written by contributing authors and curated by Waters. These parts are really the substance of the book. A third section examines some representative warship classes of interest, and a fourth section features a regular review by David Hobbs on developments in naval aviation and other technological reviews on optronics by technical guru Norman Friedman and greater automation in mine countermeasures by regular contributor Richard Scott. The last three sections are each divided into chapters or articles that carry a subordinate numbered heading to the parent section. Numerous tables provide comparative figures as well as numbers and data for the navies under discussion. Therefore, the *Seaforth World Naval Review* combines some characteristics of a reference source that follows an organized structure with a readable narrative that presents a considerable level of detailed information. Notes are provided at the end of the individual chapters, but there is no index provided, the same as previous annuals. Accompanying ship line drawings are done by John Jordan, another author and illustrator of technical histories and editor of Osprey's *Warship* historical annual.

Trends in world naval developments and particular navies are clearly identified throughout the discussion. The United States remains the clear leader in terms of defence spending on navies, total numbers of warships, and capabilities incorporating the latest advanced technology. Though other countries such as China, India, and Russia with geopolitical ambitions are

catching up or crafting a fleet mix suited to their own regional and global needs. The US Navy has fallen below the psychological threshold of 300 warships, a far cry from the anchor for Admiral Mike Mullen's aspirational 1,000 ship global maritime partnership navy, and due to a couple notable project fails, continuing fiscal pressures, and unexpected losses such as the fire-devastated amphibious assault ship *Bonhomme Richard*, is relying on a gracefully maturing fleet with occasional additions and replacements. Richard Scott's focused chapter describes replacement of the USN's versatile landing craft air cushion with a newer improved model, worked out and designed in-house and delivered through a commercial arrangement in a contract with supplier Textron. Building the next generation of ballistic missile and attack nuclear submarines constitutes the next significant bound. Even Brazil is eyeing its own nuclear attack submarine, as a follow-on to construction of four diesel-electric boats of the French *Scorpène* design. China gets lumped in with other major regional powers in Asia and the Pacific, although it is hard to see how Australia can compare to China, or even the significant fleet additions and upgrades happening in Japan and South Korea. Each of those countries possess industrial bases and funding commitments to undertake substantial naval programmes, the Republic of Korea Navy entering the preliminary design stages for a 30,000 tonne CVX aircraft carrier and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force creating an expanded fleet of state-of-the-art submarines and surface warships. The obvious concern is China whose People's Liberation Army Navy continues to build out in quantity and quality in the surface, sub-surface, and amphibious domains. A Type 003 aircraft carrier, China's third and largest, is taking shape at a state shipyard near Shanghai at the mouth of the Yangtze River, expected to enter service sometime in 2024 at the earliest. The USN and its allies in the region see China's navy as a likely rival and competitor, especially in regard to disputes over Taiwan and the South China Sea.

The eclectic mix of naval forces in the Indian Ocean and Africa regions ranges from small constabulary patrol to warfighting in function, India's navy being at the top of the heap. Delays of significant warship projects building in India have created gaps in the fleet and continued reliance on older ships reaching or beyond the point of their serviceable lives. This is no more apparent than in the submarine force where the desire for nuclear-powered submarines has encountered setbacks and a little more success with the indigenously-produced *Scorpène* designs under French license. Mrityunjoy Muzumdar provides a credible account of the development and current rationale for force structure in the Sri Lankan Navy, presented as a small navy in transition from a brown-water littoral force to one equipped to operate in the surrounding ocean with patrol vessels and naval air assets. South Africa continues to slowly

modernize its frigate and submarine forces, while Egypt (through a number of thoughtful purchases from foreign suppliers) has built-up a capable fleet of surface combatants and four German-sourced Type 209 submarines. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates have also made foreign purchases to bolster naval forces in response to fears about the intentions of Iran and its harder-line posture in the Persian Gulf and surrounding region.

The context of escalating tensions and prospect of war underscores the regional review of Europe and Russia, made readily apparent by the invasion of Ukraine. In fact, the European Union and NATO have treated the conflict as almost a proxy war with Russia, by sending significant amounts of munitions and military support to the embattled and sympathetic Ukrainians trying to stem the Russian advance and save their homeland. Backed by a new National Security Strategy promulgated in July 2021, Russia is making targeted investments in new hypersonic missiles capable of exceeding Mach 8 speeds and said to be impervious to air defences, as well as its strategic submarine force capable of launching conventional and nuclear ballistic missiles, to replace current Soviet-era submarines. At the same time, procurement of surface combatants is increasingly focusing on Project 22350 blue-water frigates and Project 20380/85/86 corvettes carrying an impressive range of weapons and sensors. Nikolai Novichkov, a contributing author, furnishes more detail on the background, technical characteristics, and construction of the corvettes, which have commissioned since 2008 and entered service in the Baltic and Pacific fleets. In the first week of the war with Russia, the Ukraine navy scuttled its only frigate, the *Hetman Sahaidachney*, then under repairs at the threatened port of Mykolaiv.

Amid the Russian menace, major financial commitments and investments for navies were already underway in selected western European countries. France announced a new generation nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to replace the *Charles de Gaulle* midway through the next decade and four new strategic ballistic missile submarines to replace the existing *Le Triomphant* class starting in 2035. Though almost equal in numbers to the United Kingdom's Royal Navy post-Brexit, France's *Marine nationale* has become and will remain Europe's leading navy that meets its own requirements from domestic production as well as generating revenue from a healthy export trade in leading-edge warships and submarines. A chapter by Bruno Huriet describes a sleek class of affordable offshore patrol vessels built by France's Naval Group for Argentina. These contrast with a similar class of relatively expensive offshore patrol vessels built in the United Kingdom, covered in a chapter by Conrad Waters, destined for overseas service in British possessions, and born from the accidental need to maintain shipbuilding capacity and a skilled labour force in a time gap between finishing work on aircraft carrier blocks and starting

future planned frigates. Richard Beedall's focused chapter on rebuilding the Royal Navy strikes an optimistic note if the planned naval programme is realized by 2030, but acknowledges many problems and potential challenges in the meantime. The Italian navy, minus the nuclear components, compares favourably with relatively new FREMM frigate additions to the surface fleet and a capable submarine force, four of which are Type 212A. Alejandro Vilches, another contributing editor, showcases the force structure and warships of the *Armada Española*, Spain's navy, which faces replacing an aging fleet with new warships and submarines during a period of fiscal restraint and reassessment of the country's role in the defence of Europe. Germany and Turkey continue to add modern warships to their respective fleets through domestic shipbuilding and participate in the competition for foreign export orders. A host of smaller European countries are also covered in basic detail in the remainder of the section.

Seaforth World Naval Review 2022 continues the beloved annual series with a clear layout and beautiful, well-chosen pictures in colour and black and white. The book is recommended for both general and professional audiences interested in the latest developments in contemporary navies around the world. It ranks with Brassey and Janes as a credible authoritative reference source in the field.

Chris Madsen

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Joseph Wheelan. *Bitter Peleliu: The Forgotten Struggle on the Pacific War's Worst Battlefield*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2022. 336 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography. UK £25.00, US \$30.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-4728-4950-2. (E-book available.)

The Battle of Peleliu, waged during the autumn of 1944, constituted one of the bloodiest clashes of the Pacific Theatre. Overshadowed by larger engagements including Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the battle for Peleliu nonetheless established the tactical template for Japanese forces during the closing months of the war. Moreover, the decision to carry out the battle was controversial at the time; among historians, Peleliu remains one of the most heavily debated debacles of the Second World War.

The grueling fight that would unfold for Peleliu had ironically been born of American success. By the summer of 1944, the tide of the war in the Pacific had clearly turned against the Japanese Empire. On New Guinea, Japanese forces were on their heels in the wake of successful Allied campaigns. In February, the Americans had largely neutralized the vital Japanese naval base

at Truk in the Caroline Islands. During the summer, American forces had seized the Mariana Islands, affording the US Army an ideal base from which to launch B-29 attacks directly on the Japanese homeland.

But the precise route to final victory remained in dispute. General Douglas MacArthur, who had been forced to evacuate Corregidor in 1942, not surprisingly favoured an invasion of the Philippines, followed by the seizure of Okinawa. For his part, Admiral Chester Nimitz considered the Philippines a non-essential target, and advocated for an invasion of Formosa and Okinawa in preparation for a direct attack on Japan. Ultimately, the Roosevelt Administration opted to implement MacArthur's preferred approach.

The Palau Islands, however, posed a potential threat to MacArthur's advance on the Philippines; a Japanese airfield on Peleliu Island was of particular concern, and considered an unacceptable danger to American shipping. Although initial plans called for amphibious landings on the entire island chain, by the middle of September 1944, the strategic landscape had changed.

Sweeping carrier-based strikes had established American air superiority over the region, and Admiral William Halsey, arguing that the Japanese airfield on Peleliu no longer posed a substantive threat, called for the entire operation to be scrapped. Admiral Nimitz was forced to make one of the most difficult, and ultimately controversial, decisions of the war. Although Nimitz agreed to cancel the planned landings in the northern Palaus, the invasion of Peleliu would proceed as planned.

The landings took place on 15 September 1944 and the American 1st Marine Division established a secure toehold on the island by nightfall. But at Peleliu, the Imperial Japanese Army unveiled a radically new tactical approach. At the outset of the war in the Pacific, a Japanese focus on aggressive fighting spirit had ultimately contributed to a string of crushing defeats. Japanese field commanders and enlisted men had been encouraged to throw overwhelming force against American troops and attempt to repel enemy attacks on the beaches. Mass frontal assaults, the "banzai" charge of legend, were bloody, and ultimately futile, attempts to halt the American tide.

In order to negate the overwhelming advantage that the Americans enjoyed in manpower, materiel, and firepower, the Japanese developed an intricate and highly coordinated defense-in-depth. Rather than squander their own limited manpower reserves in pointless banzai attacks, the Japanese would fight a war of attrition and exact a grim toll of blood for every inch of ground.

Although abandoning the strategic initiative was a radical departure from long-standing Japanese military doctrine, the core of the new approach involved the concept of "fukkaku," which constituted a heavy focus on fighting from prepared defensive positions. At Peleliu, skilled Japanese engineers supervised

the construction of a dizzying maze of tunnels and caves which honeycombed key positions on the island. The underground defensive works offered Japanese troops a good measure of protection from American bombardment and were mutually supporting in case one position came under attack.

The new Japanese tactics came as a complete surprise to senior American officers at Peleliu, and as their men became mired down in rugged terrain on the island's central highlands, they had few fresh ideas. Major General William Rupertus, commander of the 1st Marine Division, insisted on aggressive direct attacks into the Japanese stronghold, with predictable results. Rupertus persisted under the notion that Japanese defenses would collapse under repeated attacks and had no idea how to adapt to changing enemy tactics.

Largely due to a lack of tactical flexibility in the senior command, Marine infantry suffered ghastly casualties. Not until October would American commanders fully understand that the Japanese were waging a grim battle of attrition and change their own approach accordingly. Increasingly, infantry attacks would rely heavily on overwhelming firepower including armour, artillery, and close air support. This measured, combined-arms approach finally reduced the island's Japanese garrison, and likewise reduced the numbers of American casualties.

Author Wheelan pens a riveting account of one of the Pacific Theatre's least understood battles. His research relies heavily on primary sources including official correspondence, after-action reports, and Japanese records; the text likewise includes numerous veterans' descriptions of the horrific fighting of the two-month-long battle. *Bitter Peleliu* consequently contains a judicious mix of scholarly analysis and riveting combat accounts.

As such, Wheelan's book will appeal to seasoned students of the Second World War as well as casual readers with an interest in military history. Although further research on the battle is undoubtedly in order, *Bitter Peleliu* constitutes a worthy contribution to the historiography of the epic war in the Pacific.

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Klaus Willmann. *Screams of the Drowning. From the Eastern Front to the Sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Greenhill Books, www-pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2021. xvi+192 pp., illustrations, notes. UK £19.99, US \$34.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-78438-598-9.

In *Screams of the Drowning*, Klaus Willmann tells the story of German soldier Hans Fackler during the Second World War. He also briefly sheds light on the sinking of the SS *Wilhelm Gustloff* during that conflict.

Willman opens with an exploration of Fackler's childhood and his take on

the events going on around him at a period toward the end of the Second World War. He then moves into an exploration of Fackler's training and indoctrination into the Hitler Youth, and his experiences on the Eastern Front. Following that, he explores trips to field hospitals and Fackler's eventual transfer and evacuation on the SS *Wilhelm Gustloff*.

This is not a technical examination of the strategy and tactics employed on the Eastern Front. Nor will readers find a deep analysis of battles and tactics. Hans Fackler's experiences do, however, provide a first-hand account of the average German soldier on the Eastern Front at war's end. For example, the discussion of disparities in equipment throughout the German Army, and the rapidly deteriorating situation at the front is both intimate and chilling. Although students of military history may not find anything particularly new or revealing in Fackler's story, those less familiar with the topic will find the book a readable introduction to the period while more advanced students will find it a solid piece of non-technical background to events on the Eastern Front.

Despite its vivid description of the Eastern Front, *Screams of the Drowning* suffers from a number of shortcomings. The events surrounding the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff* may not be well known outside the context of maritime or military history, but the author only addresses it briefly. Within the confines of 192 pages, Fackler does not board the ship until page 105, the ship sinks six pages later and he is rescued by page 117. Of course, the actual sinking occurred quite quickly and a passenger below decks, like Fackler, would not necessarily be aware of the technical situation regarding the state of the ship or the nature of the attacks. Lack of access to such information accounts for the limited explanation of the sinking, not the author's inability or unwillingness to explore the facts. As a memoir, the text does not refer to primary or secondary sources, which limits the work as an academic resource. While the author does not draw direct conclusions, readers should cross-reference political or strategic comments against other sources for a more complete picture. Finally, it should be noted that this is a translation of a transcription of a memoir. Students who read this in the original German, may find additional context or nuance not present in the English transmission. Since the translator does note that some sacrifices and changes from the original were necessary, readers should remember that some things are lost in translation.

Screams of the Drowning offers an engaging account of one man's experience during the Second World War. While of limited academic value, the memoir does shed light on a little-known aspect of the war that students at all levels should find useful. Perhaps the questions it provokes will encourage further exploration of the war on the Eastern Front.

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Mark Zuehlke. *The River Battles: Canada's Final Campaign in World War II Italy*. Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 2021. 470 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, indices. CDN \$37.95, cloth; ISBN: 978-1-77162-312-4.

The war in Italy has often gotten the rough side of history. Let's face it, this was a part of the war that was never the central focus of our efforts. Fought as an extension really of the operations in North Africa and overshadowed by the fighting in France and Northwest Europe that started in 1944, Italy has always felt like a side show. An honourable mention, but that is all. It does not help that those fighting for Italy found themselves often on the low priority list for men and material after Normandy. Add the nickname the D-Day Dodgers and the historical feeling given is that this was not just a less important theatre of operations but that those that served there avoided the "real" fighting. This is certainly far from the truth. A long running campaign the fighting for Sicily and Italy exhibited some of the most ferocious fighting of the Second World War as certainly the Canadians can attest to. One needs only to think of the close quarters fighting in Ortona to find the proof.

Yet the fighting that ended the Italian campaign, starting in late September 1944 and continuing for the next five to six months, was some of the hardest fighting the Canadians undertook. The Emilia-Romagna plain looked like a promising and straightforward operational area, but it proved to be far from that. Broken by a series of rivers and ditches, it proved to be some of the nastiest fighting conditions the Canadians faced with exceptionally good defensive ground for the Germans to exploit. Yet few Canadians have really heard of it and fewer still understand it. Mark Zuehlke has taken steps to rectify that. In *The River Battles* (2021), Mark has explored the challenges the Canadians faced while trying to push out the Germans from Northern Italy. In this his fifth book on the fighting in Italy, Mark exposes the reader to this long-forgotten chapter of Canadian military history. In 470 pages, broken up in to twenty-four chapters supported by appendices, he details the incredible hurdles that the Canadians overcame to end the fighting in Italy.

Operating at multiple levels, *The River Battles* explores the multi-faceted issues surrounding the fighting in Italy. Terrain and strategic realities faced by the Canadians ranging from the failure to truly grasp the problems of the ground being fought over and the weather through the manpower crisis that plagued the allies throughout the war, set the backdrop for the campaign itself. To this background Zuehlke examines the problems of leadership that hindered operations as well as the attempts to rectify these issues. This includes not just the fact that Canadians operated as part of the coalition of forces in Italy, but personality clashes among the upper Canadian command echelon. This

directly impacted performance. But on top of this is also a complex history of a wide number of Canadian units that carried the fighting. Canada, like the rest of the British Commonwealth, has a military that was shaped by the regimental system used by the British. As such the Canadian army in Italy was really a complex tapestry of rather unique regiments rather than a homogenous whole. This unique nature of the Canadian Army really reflects Canada in a great many ways. Zuehlke weaves a masterful understanding of the units experience and the people that composed them, merging them into the overall story of the fighting. From the British Columbia Dragoons and the Cape Breton Highlanders through the Hasty P's and PPCLI to the West Nova Scotia Highlanders, Zuehlke manages to bring the people at the very front back into the history by telling their story and relating their perceptions of the war in Italy back to the greater narrative of the final river battles. The result is a masterful merging of histories into a gripping tale.

The complexity of the fighting in Italy is magnified by the incredible ferocity of it. The river battles makes this perfectly clear to the reader. This is a campaign of driving the Germans from one position to another while trying to maintain pressure on them as they fell back. The result was a series of operations that at the front had the Canadians patrolling forward to find the Germans. The discovery of these new enemy positions often came about via an ambush of rearguard forces. The ensuing fighting was viscous and exhibits intensity levels on par with Normandy. The deteriorating weather and wet ground increased the problems faced by the infantry as it often limited the support that they could get. This made the fighting into a particularly difficult infantry campaign of sudden contact and ferocious fighting. The fighting to cross the Savio river is perhaps a perfect example of this. With Major General Chris Vokes pushing hard to get the 2nd Brigade across the river, it fell to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry to cross the river and establish a bridgehead for the Seaforth Highlanders to expand. This was essential to allow the engineers to build vital bridges to allow follow on units, and supplies to expand the bridgehead. The terrible weather conditions and the inability to get a bridge across fast meant that it was not possible to get tanks across the river. Without armoured support, this made the fighting into a very difficult infantry assault into the teeth of a German panzer grenadier regiment's defences. The assault was a disaster for the infantry struggling through mines, mud, and extremely heavy German fire.

The greatest strength of Zuehlke's work has always been his ability to merge the operational/command issues with a narrative of those individuals involved in the fighting. The result is the inclusion of the lowest levels of the Canadian forces and their experience in a historical narrative that provides detailed information and a deeper understanding of the combat experience

from the perspective of the man in the foxhole. It produces a moving and often terrifying glimpse of the private's war that few people ever see. It has made all his books incredibly readable and relatable to readers and *The River Battles* is no exception. As a history the text provides an incredible narrative that sets the stage for further analytical work relating to combat performance, manpower limitations, operational research, etc. that really needs to be done. Thus, *The River Battles* represents an important stepping stone to further research and an opportunity for future scholars to build on. This text is thus highly recommended to all levels of interest in the Canadian Armed Forces or World War II.

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