

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](http://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](http://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