

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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