

crew, with Edwards providing a further listing of prisoners and casualties. The final chapter contains an account of the three-month long, independent voyage of the *Matavy*, written by Midshipman David Thomas Renouard. The men of the *Matavy* underwent their own series of challenges, crossing dangerous reefs, running low on supplies, encountering native populations, and becoming the first Europeans to unknowingly reach the islands of Fiji.

The three appendices serve as continuations of the work, with the first, a poem recounting of the voyage by an unidentified *Pandora* crewman. While offering an enlisted man's take on the voyage, it could not be inserted into the narrative chronology as easily as the other works. Edwards' more detailed statement on *Pandora*'s loss made in anticipation of his court martial is likewise difficult to fit in the narrative, but provides an excellent window into his final summation of the incident for his superiors. The final appendix essentially serves as the work's conclusion, detailing Edwards' court martial, the fates of Edwards, Hamilton, and Renouard, followed by the *Bounty* court martial and the later Royal Navy careers of Heywood and Morrison.

In terms of possible improvements, very few come to mind. The shift in font size between certain sources was unexpected, and the standardization of type would be appreciated. Additionally, some of the grey-scale-rendered images were originally colour paintings, with a resulting loss of detail due to the lack of pigmentation. The inclusion of colour renderings would greatly improve the impact of some of these images. Both of these suggestions are not crucial, however, and in no way diminish the work's effectiveness.

Chasing the Bounty is an excellent addition to the historiography of

the *Bounty* mutiny, its often-overshadowed aftermath, and the exploration of the South Pacific in the late-eighteenth century. Maxton skillfully integrates the unique surviving accounts from the voyage into a chronological timeline, offering a chance for scholars to compare official reports, *Pandora* crew recollections, and *Bounty* mutineer accounts of the same events side-by-side. This unique combination of perspective helps create a more detailed and objective accounting of the voyage of Captain Edwards and his men, making it a worthy read for those interested in the *Bounty* or the South Pacific in the early years of European exploration.-

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Hilary L. Rubinstein. *Catastrophe at Spithead. The Sinking of the Royal George*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforth.co.uk, 2020. 288 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, US \$38.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-52676-499-7. (E-book available.)

The *Catastrophe at Spithead* concerns the capsizing of the first rate British 100-gun *HMS Royal George*, flagship of Rear Admiral Richard Kempenfelt, that met with disaster while undergoing victualling, maintenance and minor repair off Portsmouth's naval base. In August 1782, the admiral and about 900 other souls lost their lives during the waning days of Britain's campaign against the American War of Independence. Rubinstein painstakingly recounts nearly every aspect of this and surrounding events.

The book is roughly divided into five parts: the rise and naval life of Kempenfelt; a detailed description of the what happened around and during

the capsizing episode; the subsequent court-martial, its verdict and the possible cause or causes of the disaster; the subsequent maritime legacies resulting from the calamity; and finally, the clearing of the wreckage hazardous to navigation and the fate of the survivors.

Of Swedish descent, Richard Kempenfelt was a polymath, a successful commander and a thoughtful student of war. Because he was not born into the British aristocracy, his rise in the Navy was slow. During the war of American independence, he served as chief of staff to three leading admirals and was finally given charge of the home fleet at a time when few officers of first-rate ability were willing to serve in an unpopular administration. He was nearly 60 years old before he received his admiral's flag. Unmarried and deeply religious, Kempenfelt was a student of naval strategy, gunnery, fleet dispositions, and tactical principles. He was instrumental in simplifying the British naval signal code system of pennants, an important improvement because it was difficult to discern a distant complex array of multi-coloured and patterned flags through comparatively primitive optics, especially on rolling, pitching ships and often through the smoke of battle.

In the summer of 1782, he flew his admiral's broad pennant on the *Royal George*. Launched at Woolrich in 1756, she had the tallest masts (114 feet, 3 inches) of any ship built in England. She participated in the battle of Quiberon Bay in 1759, but the warship based at Spithead was already 16 years old when ordered to take a fleet to join operations under Lord Richard Howe, headquartered in Gibraltar. Then calamity struck.

Rubinstein describes the capsizing in detail with many human dramas. The alarm sounded during a card

game below deck. All but one gambler scrambled. He pocketed the abandoned stakes on the deck, escaped with his loot and, after being rescued, went on to a life of crime leading to his exile in Botany Bay, Australia. A little boy, attempting to avoid drowning, clung to the necks of two sheep from the ship's livestock. The animals swam to a nearby island and all three were saved. Especially sad was the drowning of five or six shipmates found clasped in each other's arms futilely trying to save each other. The exact fate of Admiral Kempenfelt is unknown, but it was assumed that he drowned trapped in his cabin, unable to open its door against the sea's onslaught.

Following the tragedy, a court-martial ensued during which survivors and witnesses in nearby vessels gave very detailed accounts of what they saw. The verdict exonerated the *Royal George's* captain, Martin Waghorn, but then Rubinstein systematically scrutinizes a variety of possible reasons to explain why the ship was lost. First, the vessel was taking on a large supply of food for their impending re-deployment. The ship's carpenter had undertaken a minor repair below the ship's starboard waterline which required heeling the ship to accomplish the task. Were all the starboard gun ports closed and watertight, the scuppers blocked, the cannon on the port side secured, the weather truly serene, was the ship in such disrepair that some rotten hull planking gave way, etc.? When the ship's first lieutenant ordered the *Royal George's* drummer to beat the alarm, did the scrambling of some 600 crewmen upset a delicate balance of equilibrium and permit the laws of physics to take their toll? The answers to these many questions are unknown, but each likely contributed in varying degrees.

The last chapters focus on how sal-

vors removed the wreck of the *Royal George* over time, as it became a hazard to navigation. They employed a simple diving bell, a helmeted diver's suit, and cables in an attempt to lift the damaged hull and move it closer to shore. Finally, the gun powder used to decimate what remained produced several underwater explosions and a spectacular geyser. Another chapter addresses the ship's legacy in British maritime history and concludes with a summary of what became of many of the survivors. A William Cowper poem about the tragedy became incorporated in the Victorian and Edwardian school books and popular anthologies, thereby enshrining the story of *The Sinking of the Royal George* in British naval annals. Rubinstein's book brilliantly covers the multitude of events on many levels. Well-written in clear prose, it is an excellent resource for any maritime historian.

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Robert C. Stern. *Scratch One Flattop: The First Carrier Air Campaign and the Battle of the Coral Sea*. Indiana University Press, www.iupress.indiana.edu, 2019. xiv+314 pp., illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. US \$45.00, hardback; ISBN 978-0-253-03929-3. (E-book available.)

Anyone born after, say, 1960, totally at home with the advanced intelligence and communications technologies of our time and unfamiliar with the details of Second World War naval history will find Robert C. Stern's estimable account of the Battle of the Coral Sea perplexing, to say the least. Although occurring less than eighty years ago, *Coral Sea* belongs to a time seemingly as remote as the Napoleonic Age.

For several weeks in the spring of

1942, specifically between May 4 and May 8, Japanese and American naval task forces built around the still-relatively new weapon system called the aircraft carrier, hunted each other around the Coral Sea and related ocean spaces immediately north and somewhat west of Australia. The Japanese with two heavy and one light carrier were charged with ultimately impossible dual tasks, the first of which was to escort and protect an invasion force charged with taking the strategically important town of Port Moresby on the southwestern coast of what is now Papua, New Guinea. The second was to find and destroy any enemy carrier task forces in the area, whose presence in fact the Japanese were not absolutely certain of until enemy war planes struck the island of Tulagi which Japanese forces had just seized as a shield for their invasion activities far to the west.

Thereafter, both sides, bereft of any precise technical aid beyond the small, crude and relatively slow carrier aircraft of the time, blundered about looking for each other for over 72 hours, coming within fifty miles or so, and ultimately finding the enemy almost simultaneously. Burdened with fragmentary information at best, commanders on both sides made erroneous calculations and reached erroneous conclusions. Stern is generally understanding, if occasionally scathing, in his assessments of opportunities missed, of poor decisions and timidity, and of frustration too readily indulged.

Consider this: having earlier sunk the Japanese light carrier *Shoho*, American scout planes discovered the two-carrier Japanese task force literally within minutes of *Yorktown* and her companion carrier *Lexington* being sighted by a Japanese scout. The American sighting report read as follows. "2 V S 2 0820 BT Contact 2 Carriers 4