

beatings and some perishing. Due to the existence of seamen's protection certificates, we only know the identities of about a dozen of these sailors, all American citizens and all white. It is a useful reminder that the vast majority of captives were foreign, foreign-born, or Black, a reflection of the typical composition of early- nineteenth century American naval crews. Finally, Leiner demonstrates that it was the published tales of the captive sailors' lot that served to not only further galvanize American sentiment against North Africa, but also fuel calls among some to recognize the absolute hypocrisy at home regarding the institution of African slavery.

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John Quirk. *Quirky History: Maritime Moments Most History Books Don't Mention*. Leamington Spa, UK: Fernhurst Books, www.fernhurst@fernhurstbooks.com, 2022. 128 pp., illustrations. UK £17.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-91262-142-2. (E-book available.)

Funny, informative, and above all quirky, the artist, raconteur and certainly opinionated illustrator, engineer, and world traveler, John Quirk, invites us behind the stage and into the wheelhouse of 25 maritime events in his new book *Quirky History: Maritime Moments Most History Books Don't Mention*. He prods, entertains, and startles us with implausible stories which he manages convince us were not altogether impossible. His vignettes are particularly rich with geographic diversity and humour.

Quirky, as he calls himself, manages to give readers the sense that rather than simply being served venison, we have been invited to stalk, flush, hunt, shoot, dress, carry, prepare, marinate, spice, cook, and serve the deer. Herein you will find tales of Viking long ships, botany, plague ships, submarines, espionage, honeyed arrow-heads, French ships invading France, humble plans that become grandiose and the inverse, and staples such as stout rowboats, hardened pilots, and of course, adverse currents and fog.

The layout of the book is straight-forward and clearly designed to hold the attention of readers young and not-as-young. Each of the twenty-five chapters includes three to four pages of text, and each page has a colour illustration. These images are action-packed, highly imaginative, and often suggestive – even the medical section shows partially-clad patients being cured using milk from Blossom, the cow.

Quirk's childhood wonderment at the planet, followed by a down-to-earth career as an engineer lends the book credibility, even though he takes us behind the scenes to D-Day on a four-poster bed, by oxen and barge across the East African plains to Lake Turkana, and tells us how to hide the Suez Canal and Alexandria from German bombers. There are forays into medical science, the

arts, the Spanish Armada, the fledgling American navy having to sell most of its fleet, and lifeboat rescues off his native England. His coverage of engines includes steam, Merlins, Rolls-Royces, Packers and Diesels, motorbikes, Lawrence of Arabia, sports cars, and racing boats. Quirk even manages, however tenuously, to connect Emperor Napoleon with both Martinique and via Josephine, to Quirk's adoptive continent, Australia.

His artwork deftly toes the line, and he crosses his text with hale opinions—the last chapter depicts Russia versus the East in their 1904 defeat at the hands of the Japanese. Many readers will have read books or cartoons and seen videos of compilations of naval blunders. Yet this book is different. It walks us through the importance of the *Notraships* fleet of 1000 Norwegian merchant vessels in the Second World War, and how Herr Diesel met his unfortunate demise at sea with full pockets yet empty bank accounts. There is enough intrigue to fill a James Bond film, and indeed Bond's clever inventor, Agent "Q", is often cited. There is a lot in these few pages, including a German U-boat surrendering to men on camels, and classic battleship-versus-lighthouse-keeper confrontations, played out in the Bristol Channel and off California.

This compendium has so many factoids and datasets that it would be impossible for an author and editors to get every one right. One understandable *errata* is the assertion that Franklin Delano Roosevelt "had been Secretary of the Navy for 13 years" (47). This is a two-pronged exaggeration, since Roosevelt was an Assistant Secretary of the Navy (not the Secretary) from 1913 to 1920, half of the stated time. More engaging is the recognition of Hubert Scott-Paine for his extraordinary innovations with aircraft, seaplanes, and his unsung inventions, including the PT-boat.

Quirk, who writes under aliases, including J. Alan Williams, clearly has led fascinating lives, emphasized most in his years in East Africa making game lodges, during which he met extraordinary people and heard compelling tales of Germans and Britons. He describes stubborn colonials dragging vessels from the Cape of Good Hope to the lakes of Central Africa to combat the Germans in the First World War who had previously carted and created a fleet there.

Each chapter opens with a short, and often funny, introduction providing readers with an explanation and connection to the material Quirk is about to exhibit. For example, Chapter 25 "Russian Roulette," on page 123: "It was late April and I was editing this manuscript when the editor asked if I could add a story reflecting on the current Russia-Ukraine crisis. This is meant to be a humour book and it is hard to find levity in the psychopathic genocide....." This bluntly direct tone keeps the audience ready for the next hairpin turn. Like those taken by the horses and 100 men, women, and children accompanying the lifeboat from Lynmouth on 11 miles of mountainous turns, urgently trying to get over hill and dale to stand by to rescue the ship *Forrest Hall* in peril on

12 January 1899.

The illustration of a large thirty-four-foot, twenty-ton lifeboat parked before the Blue Ball Inn to repair a wheel, is captioned: “So that’s 114 pints, 300 packets of chips, 200 pies, a dry sherry for the vicar... and who is the Diet Coke?” In the following pages, we learn that shovelers cleared the way for the boat, shaving the corner off a house, knocking down walls, and widening roads. Although the boat made it to the ship, there were no rewards. Fortunately, the shipowner “shelled out twenty-seven pounds five shillings and sixpence to repair all the damage to walls and buildings. Sadly, four horses died during the event.” (35-36)

This book is highly entertaining and the information is easily accessible. There are no indices, only a half-dozen short footnotes. Geographically, the reach is vast – two nodes being the UK, with northern Europe, and the Antipodes and southeast Asia. South America and the polar regions receive less coverage. Thankfully, the reader is provided with five colourful maps, several original documents like the original plans for D-Day which were to have been destroyed, and even one photograph. There are three inset boxes with sub-stories. The autobiographical portions are light and generally sweet, often referring to a star-struck boy or boys staring at nautical ephemera.

Eliciting a chuckle from readers is not usually achieved by staying safely within the lines of convention, and few would accuse Quirky of being boring! Despite covering serious topics like disastrous ship and air wrecks, brutal battles, and seaborne hardships, the author retains the buoyancy of a kapok life vest, keeping us feeling safe and dry, though his humour is neither.

If this enjoyable book had a central theme, I feel it would be “laugh and learn.” A pleasant adjunct to Quirk’s frivolity is his modesty. He encourages readers: “Keep reading this book—you will always learn something useless” (50). And that is really the joy of this book – it is like a fortune-cookie that feels deliciously naughty, but has wisdom inside of it.

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J. W. Richardson. *In The Treacle Mine, the Life of a Marine Engineer*. Dunbeath, Scotland: Whittles Publishing, www.whittlespublishing.com, 2021. 256 pp., illustrations, appendices. UK £16.99, paper; ISBN 978-184995-488-4.

In the Treacle Mine: The Life of a Marine Engineer is the professional autobiography of J.W. Richardson in which he describes his career as a marine engineer from his early beginnings as a junior grade engineer to his time as Chief Engineer. Considering the number of such memoirs or autobiographies