

necessary to see his projects to completion, ignoring traditional naval customs and bypassing organizational hierarchies. He created his own independent power structure with the help of sympathetic members of Congress and members of the media. He demanded the highest standards, pushing defense contractors and his staff (as well as himself) to the limit. At the same time, he clashed with the establishment—many Secretaries of Defense, Secretaries of the Navy, and Chiefs of Naval Operations. A master at intimidation, the admiral would exhibit fury with anyone whom he felt was indolent or incompetent. His interviews with young officers, applying to be accepted in his program were renowned. Wanting to make sure they could adapt to whatever situation they found themselves in, he typically had them sit in a chair whose front legs had been shortened so that they had to struggle to remain seated. If they gave unacceptable answers to intimidating questions, they were summarily dismissed or sent to sit in a broom closet for long periods of time to rethink their answers. Others were assigned curious or extremely challenging tasks to test their ingenuity.

Rickover perceived his greatest failure as the loss of the nuclear-powered submarine *Thresher* that disappeared while conducting deep-sea tests. He had been on the sub during its initial sea trials two years earlier. Rickover felt that it was only fair to share the risk inherent in the first voyage of any submarine for which he was responsible. He agonized over this loss for many years, long after it was found that its loss was likely due to faulty welding during Navy shipyard repairs, and not due to his engineering design.

Wortman's book largely avoids the technical details of Rickover's work but focuses on the admiral's fight to build and extend the nuclear fleet and the often-difficult relationships in the pursuit of that goal. He documents Rickover's efforts that had far-reaching effects on the post-war world. The excellent standards he demanded were qualities that had influence well beyond the Navy. The admiral cared deeply about the United States and threats to its security, especially during the Cold War. These concerns likely made him such a taskmaster. Yet he was a man who held the strong religious values of his family of Jewish and Christian faiths, and for charity and justice. His influence continues to be felt today.

This is a very well written, thought-provoking, inspiring, and moving biography about an important figure in naval and American history. I highly recommend *Admiral Hyman Rickover: Engineer of Power* to maritime historians and lay readers alike.

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**Matthew Wright.** *The Battlecruiser New Zealand. A Gift to Empire.*

**Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2021. 272 pp., illustrations, appendices, bibliography, notes, index. UK £25.00, hardback: ISBN 978-1-52678-403-2.**

*The Battlecruiser New Zealand. A Gift to Empire*, by Matthew Wright explores the history of HMS *New Zealand* from its proposal to its eventual scraping, covering in the process the economics and politics of the Dreadnought Age.

Wright opens by addressing the political motivations and complexities of how, during the Imperial Period, various British dominions proposed to pay for the construction of warships, for the defense of the Empire and of themselves. He examines what prompted New Zealand's desire to have a more powerful naval presence and their proposal to build a new battlecruiser for the territory of New Zealand. Lacking the industrial capacity to build the ship in their own yards, New Zealand offered to pay for the construction of a new battlecruiser to be used in home waters. Wright discusses the economic arrangements required to budget and pay for a project of this size and complexity and its financial impact on the nation without the need for an extensive background in economics or the New Zealand economy. Finally, he explores the service history of HMS *New Zealand*, its role in the First World War, and its fate.

In this way, Wright examines the Dreadnought Age and the First World War through the lens of a single vessel. Those who have studied the period might not find anything particularly novel here, but it is a good introduction for readers unfamiliar with the material, especially in the context of sea battles like Jutland and others in which *New Zealand* was involved. Wright does a wonderful job describing the relationship between the ship HMS *New Zealand*, and the people and the nation of New Zealand, making an interesting ship's history feel more personal.

The author's use of extensive primary and secondary sources provides a wealth of context related to the career of HMS *New Zealand*. Referring to personal papers, newspapers, and oral history, Wright explains why his interpretation of events may differ from other First World War historians and either supports or dispels some of the myths and legends surrounding the ship's construction and service. His in-depth exploration of the interaction between New Zealanders and their warship transforms the ship from a construction of steel and guns into the symbol of a nation with its own distinct culture within the British Empire. The popular support for building a warship and the national fascination with HMS *New Zealand*, both when it arrived to visit, as well as its exploits during the war, set this book apart from other First World War ship biographies.

The construction of *New Zealand* highlights the rapid technological innovation and development that characterized the years prior to the First

World War, but which rendered the ship obsolete at the end of the conflict. News that the ship would be scrapped was met with sadness and dismay, illustrating the deep devotion the populace had for their namesake ship, and the cultural impacts of the ship's service and disposal.

Wright's exploration of the history of the HMS *New Zealand* captures the politics, events, and technology of the Dreadnought Age. The construction of large warships at the time demanded political motivation as well as financial commitment and indicates the lengths nations would go to in the name of national prestige. Despite their naval role, warships like HMS *New Zealand* had a cultural impact on both the nation of New Zealand and on citizens of the British Empire around the globe.

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**Walter S. Zapotoczny Jr. *Crushing the Japanese Surface Fleet at the Battle of the Surigao Strait: The Last Crossing of the T.* Havertown, PA: Fonthill Media, [www.fonthill.media](http://www.fonthill.media), 2022. 238 pp., illustrations, abbreviations, appendices, bibliography. UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN: 978-1-78155-873-7.**

The naval history of the Second World War is full of dramatic moments. The *Bismarck's* only sortie, Midway, the Marianas Turkey Shoot, and of course, the Battle of Leyte Gulf all stand out not just because they catch the public's attention, but because of their significance to the war in general. Surprisingly, most people think of the Battle of Leyte Gulf only in terms of the sinking of the Imperial Japanese Navy's *Musahi*, or of the epic fight of the destroyer escorts against the main force of the IJN. As incredibly heroic as that battle was, and it was essential for the preservation of the invasion force, there was another side of the fighting for Leyte Gulf that many people forget. To the south of Leyte, in the Surigao Strait, the very last major surface engagement between battleships was fought on the night of 25 October 1944. Overshadowed by the fighting the next day, the battle of the Surigao Strait saw the last time naval vessels were able to cross the T on an opposing force and played an essential role in protecting the Allied landing forces in Leyte Gulf. By preventing a southern force from breaking into the anchorage, the US Navy managed to reduce the threat at Leyte and prevented an epic disaster. Yet, the battle of the Surigao Strait is almost never talked about.

Noted historian and author Walter Zapotoczny Jr. attempts to rectify this problem. Over the span of ten chapters and eight appendices, Zapotoczny sets up the Battle of Leyte Gulf and specifically, the fight for the Surigao Strait. In doing so, he brings a wide assortment of materials together to support our understanding of the events, starting with a discussion of the importance of