

between units. Similarly, the importance of communications and relationships across Government and State Departments as well as that “of what authority US diplomats could exercise over marine legation guards” (99). Modern approaches to developing rules of engagement leave many questions as to what level of compliance with instruction may have been witnessed during this conflict.

Study of this conflict is valuable for a range of reasons. Abdow’s monograph is a good contribution to maritime studies; it would be an excellent contribution with the inclusion of perspectives from broader participants.

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Robert G. Allan and Peter A. Robson. *Workboats for the World—The Robert Allen Story*. Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, www.harbourpublishing.com, 2022. xvii+571 pp., illustrations, index. CDN \$99.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-55017-987-3.

An old saw in design is that form follows function. Conversely, it is equally true that form implies function. From this author’s admittedly biased point of view (having grown up on the British Columbia coast), this is particularly evident in the visual impression conveyed by a tug. The image of a tug is the very epitome of purposeful – whether smaller tugs berthing merchant ships, coastal tugs towing log booms and chip barges, or ocean-going salvage tugs steaming to the aid of disabled vessels, tugs exude an image of business-like, no-frills, and under-stated (but effective) strength. There are many varieties of tug, but they all share this aesthetic of purpose.

This is particularly evident in this marvelous new book presenting the history, evolution, and prodigious productivity of the Vancouver firm of Robert Allan Ltd (RAL), widely recognized as the world’s foremost designer of tugs. Over the last two decades, the name Robert Allan has become synonymous with tug design, but the path was not direct, nor even particularly pre-ordained. This book does an outstanding job of charting the evolution of RAL, and illustrating by turns, the role of talent, hard work, perseverance, opportunity, team-building (and even, occasionally, luck!) in forging an international success story.

There are many different and inter-twined stories in the almost 600 pages of this beautifully produced volume: the story of resolute and committed emigration from ‘The Old Country’; the story of dogged determination in establishing and sustaining an independent design house through trying times;

the story of design evolution and innovation; and the story of recruiting, developing, and retaining the talent to continue to be at the forefront of the industry providing workboats for the world.

The RAL story is, for its first 88 years (1928-2006), a dynastic story. Through three generations of Robert Allans (grandfather, father and son, carefully distinguished as Robert, Bob, and Rob) the firm has grown and expanded in ways that might never have been foreseen by its founder.

Robert Allan (The First) graduated as a naval architect from the University of Glasgow in 1907, working at Fairfields, Cammell Laird, and Yarrows on Tyne before immigrating to Canada in 1919, working first at Coughlin's Shipyard before joining Wallace Shipyards in North Vancouver (from 1921 known as Burrard Drydock Company Ltd) with a commission to design the Princess Louise for the Canadian Pacific Steamship Company. In 1927 he struck out on his own, establishing a design partnership named Allan & Stackhouse, then independently as Robert Allan in 1928. The initial years were very lean and for a number of years from 1933, he operated as a "One Man in the Basement" company. Times were tough and a letter of 1934 to a colleague who had relocated back to the UK notes "like many exiles in Vancouver I shall have to remain where I am for lack of the wherewithal to pay my fare...." This perspective of necessary commitment is reminiscent even of a later generation of UK immigrants, one of whom, on being questioned about the early commitment to a house purchase ("how do you know you'll like it here?") responded "we spent everything we have to get here: we can't afford not to like it."

Bob Allan (the son) studied naval architecture as an engineering student at UBC from 1934-36 but had to withdraw from the program due to serious illness. Fortunately, he had been well tutored by his father (including developing considerable ship-modelling skills in his teens) and obtained work in Burrard Drydock Company during the war, including serving as project manager for the conversion of the passenger/cargo ship HMCS *Prince Rupert* into an armed merchant cruiser. The end of the war saw a formal teaming of father and son in the home basement office, developing construction drawings for a series of colliers for France as part of war-recovery efforts.

Rob Allan (the grandson) duly followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps when, after a couple of years at UBC, he entered his grandfather's alma mater, the University of Glasgow, to study for a naval architecture degree. This was followed by a couple of years in England working for Burness, Corlett & Partners, the leading tug design consultants of the day. In the light of subsequent developments in Robert Allan Ltd, this was indeed fortuitous experience. He returned to Canada in 1973 to join the family business, succeeding to the leadership of the firm at the age of 34 following

the tragically early loss of both parents to cancer in 1980/81.

Today the name Robert Allan Ltd is almost synonymous with tugs, but as this history makes clear, that journey was neither direct nor self-evident. The path of growth of the company business was more a case of being in “the Right Place, at the Right Time,” prepared with the skills and spirit of innovation to respond to emerging market demands for specialized vessels. The various chapters chart the wide menu of designs produced, from fishing vessels, to coastal patrol vessels, mission boats, ferries, workboats of every variety, research vessels, fireboats and, of course, tugs. Early on, the company’s small craft credentials were established by yacht work and the reconstruction of the BC seiner fleet in the years 1942-44. Already imbued with the urge to innovate, RAL designed their first steel fishing vessel in 1958, and developed a line of “Beach Seiners,” fast, shallow-draft vessels designed to access the limited short-term fishery openings.

The growth of the tug business and expertise was driven by the demand for escort tugs following the Exxon Valdez disaster of 1989, but also enabled by RAL’s embrace of computer-aided design (CAD) in 1985 and azimuthing drives for tugs in the late 80s. It is impossible to do justice to the variety of tug designs that RAL have produced to serve a wide spectrum of missions, but in 200 pages of the 597 total that story is very well elaborated, supported by a wonderful collection of photographs and plentiful drawings (mostly inboard/outboard profiles and plan views). There is one sole body plan showing the hull lines of RAL’s signature RA star escort tug; it would have been of interest to see more lines plans included, but even with that minor quibble, the book is exceptionally well illustrated.

Throughout the book the clear story that emerges is of success built on a firm philosophical foundation of design serving the requirement. This has extended to significant effort in influencing the regulatory rules governing design requirements. One statement that particularly resonated with this reader was this: “In a world in which we must strive to design the most efficient vessels possible, any regulation that constrains dimensions can be deemed to be counter-productive, particularly when one of those dimensions is length ...”. Among all his other accomplishments and accolades, Rob Allan considers his effective efforts to harmonize regulations for the design and construction of tugboats to be one of his most significant career accomplishments.

Finally, there is a substantial people story here. I have long admired the Dofasco Steel motto (“Our Product is Steel. Our Strength is People”) and the same element of the collective RAL success is evident in Chapters twenty-three and twenty-five, with the generous acknowledgement of individual contributions, and acknowledgment from within of the inspiring and enabling work environment that made it possible. With Rob’s retirement signaling the

end of the naval architectural dynasty (as he notes, neither of his two sons were named Robert, nor were they directed towards the ship design profession), it is a particularly fitting segue that the company has transitioned to employee-ownership.

In sum, this is a beautifully produced and well-written book that will appeal very much to all who admire tugs and desire to learn more of the process that shapes them.

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Ermino Bagnasco and Augusto de Toro. *Italian Battleships. Conte di Cavour and Duilio Classes 1911-1956*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com, 2021. 280 pp., illustrations, appendices, bibliography, index. UK £45.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-5267-9987-6.

This work is a continuation of the analysis of Second World War-era Italian battleships begun by the authors with their 2011 study of the Littorio Class from 1937 to 1948. This book covers the five ships of the preceding Conte di Cavour and Duilio Classes along with relevant discussions of the Regia Marina's first battleship, *Dante Alighieri*. Originally published in Italian as a two-volume set, the research by Bagnasco and de Toro fills in a large gap in the historiography of the Italian surface fleet, made possible by the increase in period sources not available to scholars for some time. As with their previous work, they offer an analysis of relevant Italian naval policies, pre- and post-modernization technical descriptions, and an accounting of the vessels' service careers. The latter predominately focuses on the Second World War era, as this was the most active and detailed portion of their service lives. Appendices on 1940-1956 colour schemes, wartime gunnery performance, wartime movements, and sustained damage round out the work, followed by a bibliography and index.

The work is essentially divided into two parts, with the initial eight chapters of technical data, naval policies and pre-war careers making up the first half, and the wartime careers, post-war fates, and final conclusions comprising the second half. The subject matter is presented chronologically, albeit with the post-modernization interwar era seeing the Cavour and Duilio classes separated into their own internally chronological chapters. The background of Italian battleship construction is well covered, giving one a good understanding of the perceived external threats from France, internal pressures, and cost issues encountered by the Italian Navy in the early years of the twentieth century. The Technical Description chapter does a solid job of breaking down and