

useful resource for readers to obtain further information on particular vessels that were only briefly mentioned within the issue. Although the photographs, illustrations, and drawings are credited, a brief biography of the author of each issue would surely be welcome.

British Sloops and Frigates of the Second World War is an example of a brief, yet detailed, account of specific vessels written for a reader who knows little about the topic. Those not familiar with the ShipCraft series might purchase this book expecting a comprehensive history of the vessel types and be disappointed that it only offers a brief historical overview of the ships written for ship modelers rather than historians. Nevertheless, anyone with a particular interest in some of the RN's minor vessels will find ShipCraft 27 a handy publication for both historians, modelers, and anyone interested in British warships.

Patrick Boyle
Greenville, North Carolina

Anthony Bruce. *Anson: Royal Navy Commander and Statesman, 1697-1762*. Warwick, UK: Helion & Company, www.helion.co.uk. 2023. 245 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. UK £29.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-804511-92-3.

As Anthony Bruce reminds us, this is the first biography of George Anson in over sixty years, and only the fourth in the past 200. A retelling of his life with new material, and a synthesis of past perspectives is long overdue. It is a succinct, engaging biography of Anson, whose career afloat and at the Admiralty influenced not only contemporary events, but cast a long shadow into the navy's future. The paradox of his great leadership skills and seamanship pushing against his social awkwardness and tendency to become too firmly attached to his own opinion is laid bare in Bruce's examination of Anson's life. This is the 112th book in the Helion & Company series *From Reason to Revolution Warfare 1721-1815*.

George Anson entered the navy in 1712 as a midshipman. His early career saw him serve in various ships in the Mediterranean, the Baltic, the English Channel, and as a frigate captain convoying merchant ships to the Carolinas. His first major independent command came with the task of taking five ships into the Pacific Ocean and seizing Spanish treasure ships carrying gold, silver, and gems from their South American and Mexican colonies to Spain. Anson's expedition left England in 1741, later than intended, meaning the five ships rounded the tip of South America into the Pacific Ocean in January. Massive storms impeded progress, damaged the squadron, and forced two ships to

return to England. Separated during the storms, *Wager* rounded the Horn but wrecked off Chile, leaving only *Centurion* and *Gloucester* to carry out the mission. At this point, the ships' crews were wracked by disease and scurvy, which only grew worse.

During the next six months, Anson sacked Payta (Paita, northwestern Peru), captured six Spanish vessels, attempted to find Acapulco to seize the Spanish gold shipment, but arrived after the ship's departure. Deciding to head home, Anson destroyed the Spanish prizes and took his two ships across the Pacific, reaching China in November 1742. By then, only *Centurion* was judged fit to continue. Following a lengthy stay, he cruised off the Philippines where he captured the Spanish treasure ship *Covadonga* in July 1743, arriving back in England in June 1744. The circumnavigation and capture won Anson fame and fortune, but cost the lives of 1415 men and two ships. It had relatively little impact on the war with Spain.

Anson joined the Admiralty Board at the end of 1744, with the Duke of Newcastle as a new patron. He entered politics, being elected to Parliament with the assistance of his future father-in-law, the Earl of Hardwicke. He made no speeches in the House, nor would he when he sat in the House of Lords. During his time in the Admiralty, now and later as First Lord, Anson backed efforts to reform the navy, from improving ship construction, making the marines separate from the army, tightening discipline and creating standard uniforms for officers. It was the seed work that would serve the British navy very well by the end of the long eighteenth century.

One of the most important innovations Anson was involved in was the creation of the Western Squadron to defend England from invasion and position ships to capture enemy convoys and warships approaching Europe. Anson's recommendation to hold the main body of the squadron in port while elements were dispersed to watch the approaches to England and the French or Spanish ports, prevailed. He commanded the squadron in 1746 and 1747. The battle off Cape Finisterre in 1747 resulted in Anson's fleet capturing 18 French vessels, and stopping the re-supply of New France, preserving the English position in North America. It proved the importance of the Western Squadron and Anson's approach to its use.

Anson became the First Lord of the Admiralty in 1751, when Lord Sandwich was removed in a political house cleaning. Anson was in control when the French captured Minorca, in 1756, and Admiral John Byng failed to relieve the island or to actively engage the French squadron. This humiliating defeat for England bought the wrath of public and political criticism to Anson's door (and Henry Fox, leader of the government). The defeat was, in part, due to the limited number and poor condition of the ships Anson sent Byng out with, the lack of full crews, as well as Byng's own hesitation to fully engage

the enemy. Byng was recalled, court-martialed, found guilty and subsequently executed by firing squad. This deflected some of the blame, but Anson left the Admiralty when Fox resigned and a new government formed.

Anson returned to the Admiralty in 1757 with another political change. In the midst of the Seven Years War, he worked to increase the size of the navy to accomplish the government's goals in North America. He played a central role in planning the successful capture of the French fortress of Louisbourg, on Cape Breton. Anson sailed once more as Admiral of the Western Squadron to keep France from reinforcing its North American colony. Blockading and conducting a raid ashore Anson's fleet was decimated by scurvy, forcing him to return to port in September 1758. The planning of the successful attacks on Quebec, Cuba and Manila were his final achievements at the Admiralty. He died in 1762.

While he had worked alongside his men during the circumnavigation, and discussed his plans with his captains, Anson is described as a man of few words, and little writing. His actions seem to have spoken loudly, gaining the loyalty of his crew and officers, constructing his living legend status. His lack of writing or speeches in Parliament seem to have frustrated his contemporaries, and historians looking for his opinion.

The patronage that existed during this period was critical to a young officer's career advancement. The patron could place the protégé in a setting that yielded opportunity to excel, be noticed and advanced. Anson was certainly a beneficiary of this system, afloat and ashore, and used it himself to promote his followers. The significant difference with Anson was his promotion of talented protégés, for the most part. The exceptions might have been Captain Cheap, who wrecked *Wager* and lost control of his marooned crew during Anson's circumnavigation, and sending Byng to secure Minorca. Among his more successful protégés were Edward Boscawen, Edward Hawke, and Augustus Keppel.

Bruce highlights the key role Anson's wife, Lady Elizabeth, played in promoting her husband's career and advancing his ideas among the political elite. As a member of the aristocracy, she had access to powerful people and wielded that advantage with great skill. Her untimely death was a sharp blow to Anson.

The fourteen illustrations depict Anson and the people and scenes of his story. The general and ship indexes are short and functional. The bibliography covers archival material, published letters and document volumes and secondary sources, including theses and internet resources. It provides a good historiography of not only Anson, but also a foundation for many of the other leading naval players of the day.

Anthony Bruce has produced a valuable addition to the biographies of

great naval leaders. His analysis will engage the reader and lead to further work, whether to argue a point or to dive deeper into one aspect or another of Anson's life, Admiralty functioning in the mid-eighteenth century, or the Byng affair. This book will appeal to the academic, and the independent maritime scholar.

Thomas Malcomson
Toronto, Ontario

James H. Bruns. *Black Sailors in the Civil War. A History of Fugitives, Freeman, and Freedmen Aboard Union Vessels.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, www.mcfarlandbooks.com, 2023. 246 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US \$39.65, cloth: ISBN 978-1-4766-90544-4. (E-book available.)

James Brun's scholarly and moving work explores a topic that has rarely been written about, the crucial role of fugitive, free and freed Black men who served in the Union Navy during the American Civil War. Bruns presents documented accounts of former slaves (whom he refers to as contrabands) and free men, some of whom volunteered to join the union army. These men were not really integrated into combat units until late in the war. Others became Union Navy sailors on board naval vessels and fared much better as largely accepted, essential members of the crew. They saw a great deal of combat, serving in many capacities from coal stokers to gun crews, some achieving enlisted leadership positions. Many were decorated and several received the Congressional Medal of Honor for their extraordinary valour while in the naval service.

As slaves, death could come through accident, disease, suicide, or brutality, but working as a member of a military unit brought an opportunity for social dignity that was previously unattainable. The navy was by far the safest service to be in during that brutal war. "During the entire war, the United States Navy reportedly lost only 4,523 sailors killed in action, from accidents or disease. More seamen died of disease than combat (2,411 verses 2,112). The casualty rate within the Navy was roughly 2.7 percent. Comparatively, Union Army losses during the war due to combat, accident or disease have been estimated at 325,000 or roughly 27 percent, although this number is now thought to be underestimated" (176). The author states that sailors were far more likely to survive the war than the typical soldier. Also, some slaves living in the swampy south had natural or developed immunity to some insect-transmitted diseases that were debilitating to their white shipmates.

Bruns describes the brutality of life under slavery, and that escape,