

nursed him back to health after contracting rheumatic fever with “a mixture of laudanum, camphorated spirits, ginger, and capsicum” (17). Far from harming the ship and crew with her presence, Barkley’s medicinal knowledge, French proficiency, natural sea-legs, constitution, and enterprising spirit were likely key in facilitating Captain Barkley’s fame and name, which is still inscribed on the maps of Vancouver Island’s west coast to this day (i.e. Barkley Sound).

Female voices are far and few in maritime historical scholarship. As such, Converse and Barkley’s joint stories put words to a world (and a subfield) that has largely barred women from the record. Be that as it may, as British colonists by nature, Converse acknowledges Frances’ account of her and Captain Barkley’s voyages as one “filtered through the lens of British merchant seamen” (115) who held colonial prejudices and benefited from colonial activities, although they were not directly involved in colonizing the land (5). Therefore, while Converse reports that Barkley did not voice her opinion in her original notes (5), her memoir’s inclusions and omissions implicitly demonstrate her innate motive, subjectivity, and bias from the perspective of an educated Briton, exposed to the luxuries and etiquette of the elite while abroad. This does not nullify the value of Barkley’s record, but this subjectivity serves to clarify Converse and Barkley’s stylization, grammar, descriptions, anecdotes, and other literary choices and allows the reader to think critically about their story’s depictions.

In sum, Converse’s work breathes new life into Barkley’s understudied two-hundred-year-old tale. As the first European woman to circumnavigate the world with her husband, Frances’ life is certainly remarkable, and her first-hand testimony aboard the *Imperial Eagle* and the *Halcyon* contributes critically to women’s experiences at sea during the early modern period. It also includes valuable information pertaining to the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific, such as their adornment, customs, trading practices, and relationships with Europeans. If readers are curious about histories of capitalism, women, shipping, Indigeneity, geopolitics, and imperialism’s pervasive effect on the early modern world, Converse’s reconstruction of Frances Barkley’s life encapsulates all these facets and much more.

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Terry Crowdy. *Formidable. Arthur Flint’s War Against Tirpitz and the Kamikazes*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword Maritime, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2023. xv+236 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, US \$49.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39908-766-7.

Arthur Flint was a steward on board HMS *Formidable* from 1944-1945. *Formidable* was an Illustrious-class aircraft carrier in service with the Royal Navy (RN) in the Second World War. Author Terry Crowdy, Flint's grandson, tells the story of an aircraft carrier that saw so much action in the Second World War with his grandfather's wartime career interspersed in the narrative.

Flint was born in 1924 and joined the RN in 1943. Unfortunately, he did not write a memoir of his wartime service and almost all of his wartime photos have vanished. But, during their time together in the year before Flint died, he told his grandson about his service in *Formidable*. Crowdy had hoped to conduct a more structured interview with his grandfather, which might have led to an "As told to" memoir," but Flint unfortunately passed away before such an interview could occur.

In 2003, Crowdy providentially browsed through the Imperial War Museum's photographic archive and came across photos of *Formidable* having been attacked by Japanese kamikazes. That sparked his motivation for writing this book. During the next few years, Crowdy found additional photographs of *Formidable*. Coupled with extensive research into primary and secondary sources regarding *Formidable* and the British Pacific Fleet, Crowdy was able to produce this work – and it is a valuable one.

To recount Flint's RN career briefly: at his enlistment physical, his eyesight was so bad that the medical examiner said, "Nice try, son," xi) thinking that Flint was deliberately failing the eye exam. Ultimately, Flint was posted to the RN's Accounting Branch, which included various RN trades, including officers' stewards. From there, he was assigned to a base where Fleet Air Arm (FAA – the RN's air force) squadrons would be trained in North America. When he arrived in New York City, he was amazed at the vibrancy and affluence of the USA. Flint was assigned to *Formidable* in June 1944, and served as a steward on that ship until the end of the war. Demobilized in 1946, he led a quiet but successful life until his death in 1999.

The real meat of this book is Crowdy's history of *Formidable*. Its keel was laid down in 1936 and commissioned into RN service just prior to the start of the Second World War, 19 August 1939. Not only did *Formidable* and crew participate in many actions, including air support for the invasion of Italy at Salerno in 1943, its squadrons attacked the German battleship *Tirpitz* in Norway in August 1944, along with various shore targets.

From there, *Formidable* was assigned to duty with the British Pacific Fleet (BFP) in the Far East. Flint recounts the voyage through the Mediterranean, through the Suez Canal, and across the Indian Ocean to join the rest of the RN forces challenging the Japanese. Crowdy completes the retelling of *Formidable*'s Pacific career. During the period April through August, 1945, *Formidable* was involved in major BFP actions and was attacked by Japanese

kamikazes several times. One thing that made *Formidable* formidable: like other RN aircraft carriers, *Formidable* had armoured flight decks, while US Navy (USN) carriers had flight deck made of teak wood. While the RN's armoured decks could be very hot in the tropics, or when a bomb with ensuing explosion struck the flight deck, any damage to the flight deck could be repaired in hours using quick-drying cement. By contrast, the wooden flight decks on USN carriers were cooler in the tropics but would suffer severe damage when struck by a bomb or kamikaze.

Crowdy does not limit his narrative to combat; one chapter, "Life Onboard," tells the life of sailors on *Formidable* – standing watches, how sailors slept, the Royal Marine detachment, how the ship's cooks prepared meals, cleaning the toilets ("heads,"), Captain's Rounds on Saturdays and church services on Sundays. Before leaving Great Britain for the Far East, a USN pilot, who had seen duty on the Pacific, came to *Formidable* and determined that the ship's complement of British-built Fairey Barracuda torpedo bombers needed replacement. The Barracudas were too slow to compete against Japanese aircraft. Accordingly, American-built Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers replaced the Barracudas and performed magnificently in the Pacific. The fighter squadrons were similarly equipped with American-built aircraft – the Chance Vought F4U Corsair – a high-performance fighter aircraft suited to naval operations.

Formidable is noteworthy for Canadians as it was the ship upon which Robert Hampton Gray, Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR) and an FAA pilot, attacked a Japanese ship. In doing so, he lost his life and was a posthumous recipient of the Victoria Cross – the only FAA pilot to receive the VC in the Second World War. *Formidable* returned to Britain in 1946. Too badly damaged to economically repair, it did one trip to Australia in 1946, and then sat rusting away in a dock until it was scrapped in 1953.

Crowdy's work is a comprehensive narrative of this ship's service and Flint's naval career. The book is heavily illustrated, with relevant photographs of the ship and its crew on nearly every page. The text is based on intensive research in the British National Archives, the Imperial War Museum's sound recordings, the BBC People's War Archive, British government printed sources, and many secondary sources dealing with *Formidable*, the BPF, and the FAA. It is a worthy tribute to a fighting ship and crew that played a critical part in the Second World War.

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