Many pictures, drawings and diagrams supplement the text. The brief glossary of lighthouse-related terms is an immense help both in understanding the book and as an independent resource. The bibliography is a guide to further reading and the index helps you find that elusive fact you remember but cannot locate again.

As a recent visitor to St. Simons Lighthouse, I enjoyed reading its story. The history of the development of lighthouses and particularly the struggles between Confederate and Union forces to control, disable and put back into service I find fascinating. Lighthouses of the Georgia Coast is a treasure for Northern Mariner readers planning to visit the area or those interested in the history and charm of lighthouses in Georgia, America or the world.

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Anthony Rogers. *Battle of Malta: June 1940-November 1942*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2022. 80 pp., illustrations, index. US $24.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-47284-890-1. (E-book available.)

The island nation of Malta occupies an important strategic location in the Mediterranean Sea. Situated between the island of Sicily and the North African coast, the possessor of Malta has the ability to choke off trade and naval missions. During the Second World War, Malta's location made it a prime target for enemy bombing, and perhaps an invasion by German and Italian forces. In Osprey Campaign 381: Battle of Malta. June 1940-November 1942, Anthony Rogers relates the nearly two-and-a-half-year struggle, primarily waged in the air, to prevent the Axis forces from taking over Malta.

Malta consists of two major islands, Malta and Gozo, plus a few smaller islands, some then uninhabited. In 1814, Malta became part of the British Empire and was a prime base for the British Royal Navy (RN), the British Army, and later the British Royal Air Force (RAF). For many years, Malta was a plum assignment for members of the British military. All that changed on 10 June 1940, when Mussolini's Fascist Italy joined Hitler's Nazi Germany in declaring war against Great Britain and France. The very next day, units of Italy's Regia Aeronautica (Italy's Royal Air Force) bombed Malta. That launched a combined aerial and sea campaign that would last over two years, at times bringing Malta to the brink of starvation. During that period, Malta earned the dubious distinction of being the most heavily bombed place on Earth.

Even prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, on 1 September 1939, the British government knew that Malta could, and most likely would, be a

prime target for Hitler and Mussolini. Unfortunately, at that time, the British military was still woefully under-equipped due to post-First World War military reductions and the prime focus of British military efforts was across the English Channel in northern Europe. For example, by the time Italy declared war, only four Gloster Sea Gladiator fighter biplanes were available to the RAF on Malta for air defence (three of them were famously nicknamed, "Faith," "Hope," and "Charity"). The British Admiralty wanted Malta's defences strengthened; the RAF, knowing Malta's proximity to Italian fighters and bombers, was less enthusiastic about defending Malta.

Over the next several months, Italian aircraft regularly attacked Malta. The British resupplied Malta by sea and managed to keep Malta in the war. In early 1941, Hitler supplied air units to the siege of Malta. Complicating efforts at resupply was the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia in spring, 1941, and the subsequent German/Italian invasion of Greece and the German invasion of Crete in the following month. The British effort to defend Greece and Crete diverted resources to those conflicts that could have been used to resupply and defend Malta. Ultimately, Hawker Hurricane fighter aircraft, and much later Supermarine Spitfire fighters (as well as an assortment of other aircraft types), bore the air defence of Malta. While there were some German minelaying operations off the coast of Malta, the action was in the air or by anti-aircraft units on Malta. Many pilots earned "ace" status or added to their scores in the aerial combats over Malta.

In spring 1942, Hitler and Mussolini apparently authorized plans for an airborne and amphibious invasion of Malta. The attack was cancelled two months later, but why remains a mystery; the Italian Army's paratroop units were some of the best trained and equipped of Mussolini's army. Together with German paratroop units and German/Italian infantry units, the invading force would have been successful. It appears that Hitler thought that the success of the German/Italian Afrika Korps in North Africa would moot the need to invade Malta. A successful invasion of Malta would have effectively prevented the British from using the Suez Canal. Supply ships intermittently resupplied Malta; the siege of that island nation basically ended in November, 1942.

Rogers' book is a useful overview of this long, critical struggle. The book comprises: an introduction; a chronology; descriptions of the opposing forces, commanders, and plans; a long section on the battle itself; a summary of the battle; a description of Malta today; a list of acronyms and abbreviations; and a bibliography. The text flows naturally and is easily read. Photographs, maps of Malta, including locations of anti-aircraft units, and several good colour plates supplement the narrative and clarify concepts for the reader. One colour picture shows the unique camouflage applied to helmets and vehicles on Malta.

This is not a maritime book; the action was in the air. But Battle of Malta

serves as a very useful work on a critical period of the Second World War.

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Ken W. Sayers. *U.S. Navy Minecraft. A History and Directory from World War I to Today.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, www.mcfarlandbooks.com, 2023. 499 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, tables, bibliography, index. US $55.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-8202-0. (E-book available.)

While used in every major conflict in the twentieth century, naval mining operations and de-mining operations does not get a great deal of press. Sown as area denial weapons to restrict access to waters and to prevent hostile naval forces from being able to use critical stretches of oceans, the mine was a powerful tool utilized by many nations. It helped shape naval operations and as such played a critical role in understanding the development of the battle space. In the First World War naval mines were used to restrict access to the North Sea and to provide a major barrier to German U-boats and surface forces. During the Second World War naval mines were used by the Japanese in much the same fashion to protect key shipping lanes. Every amphibious assault, no matter where it happened, was always preceded by mine-clearing ships to sweep the approaches to the beaches so landing craft could come in with one less risk. The first shots fired on D-Day were related to those operations as minesweepers were the first ships to close the beach.

To say that mine laying and sweeping are clearly a serious issue in naval planning is an understatement. A significant investment in resources by all sides was put into the use of or removal of mines. Yet the very limited material on the subject is a serious gap in the literature.

Ken W. Sayers, a former American naval officer who served both in the Pacific Fleet destroyers and at the Pentagon, brings a lifetime naval knowledge and experience to bear on the subject. His book on *U.S. Navy Minecraft* represents a unique study of this little-discussed subject, and a promise to help our understanding. Nearly 500 pages of text are broken up into 28 chapters supported by a preface, introduction, and detailed glossary of terms and abbreviations. The introduction offers a brief summary of the evolution of mines and their use, providing the only contextual understanding in this book in this book of the history of minelaying. Explaining its evolution and how ships were initially adapted to the job, Sayers provides an interesting thumbnail description of the use of mines.

Each chapter is organized in the same way and describes a specific class of ship. A detailed directory examines every class of ship either adapted or