

and can be launched from the decks of submarines, or put into airplanes and/or dropped from helicopters. Mini-submarines have also been tried with various degrees of success, though admittedly, they are expensive when manufactured in such small numbers and limited in capability. Several countries, including China, Russia, and the United States, have tracked vehicles that can crawl along the seabed and recovery vehicles for deep sea rescues from submarines. Chapter 16 looks at the use of mammals, such as dolphins, sea lions, and whales, known for their diving abilities, ability to locate objects underwater, and trainability to work alongside human divers in military endeavours. These sea creatures still outperform humans and their equipment by virtue of living in the sea and being adapted to great depths (dolphins and whales do not get bends).

The last three chapters move from the present to the future, examining remote autonomous underwater vehicles, advances in new equipment and breathing apparatus, and the use of diver special forces in sabotage and disruption operations far below the surface; for example, the rupture of a Russian pipeline in the Baltic Sea during the current war (special operation) between Russian and Ukraine. Combat diver units definitely have a future as a specialized capability sought by many armed forces and special forces.

While the text is a little uneven in parts and must fill gaps left by the non-availability of information, the real treasures of the book are the photographs, mostly in colour, depicting the day-to-day activities of combat divers, usually in action or training. These are printed on glossy paper and give full effect. The text does not provide references, but a list of further reading and bibliography appears at the end. In parts of the discussion, Welham draws upon his own experiences in the Royal Marine Commandos and subsequently in the private sector working oil rigs. *Combat divers* is recommended for readers interested in special operations forces in the maritime context, the diving community, and those interested in military elites within contemporary armed forces.

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Rif Winfield, John Tredrea, Enrique Garcia-Torrallba Perez, and Manuel Blasco Felip. *Spanish Warships in the Age of Sail, 1700-1860: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2023. 464 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. US \$100.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-52679-078-1.

Previous volumes in this impressive series have covered the British, French, Dutch and Russian navies during the age of sail. This book documents the

Spanish contribution to the period's historic maritime superpowers.

Design, construction, and use of Spanish vessels of war during the age of sail reflected political, geographic, and to some degree, cultural distinctions and concerns. This was in many ways reflected in the years following the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) by the Atlantic-based interests of Castile's maritime traditions, with its need for deep draft ships to support colonization and expansion, and Aragon's Mediterranean focus, which relied upon galleys and squadron support craft to provision and defend the lands surrounding that sea and its islands within. Influences on ship design and construction varied throughout the decades of this period, reflecting a change from Spanish to French and British shipwright techniques, philosophies, and materials. Spanish vessels were as good as, and at times in some ways superior to contemporary British and French ships of war, but Spain's maritime primacy would ultimately be hampered by a combination of political attitude and deficits in funding, as well as relatively lacklustre maintenance and training regimes.

The first 100 pages of *Spanish Warships* provide readers with an overview of the book's organization, useful notes on the nuances of units of measure and conversions, a historical overview during (and briefly prior to) the Hapsburgs and the Bourbon Eras, backgrounds on maritime leaders, and details on fleet organization, ship construction, innovations, materials, and personnel organization and command structure. This introduction is engagingly written and comprehensive and closes with a section on Sources and Archives, a bibliography and a helpful glossary, with translations and abbreviations. A series of chapters follows, each devoted to inventorying groupings of vessels according to the system employed by the Spanish at the time, a system driven primarily by the number and size of cannon as defined by Artillery Ordinances, roughly but not precisely comparable to the contemporary British Rate and French Rang systems. Decked ships, starting with three-deckers and moving down to single-decked frigates, are examined in Chapters 1 through 6, with the remaining chapters devoted to discussion, accounts, and listings of various smaller vessels (*buques menores*). A brief addendum offers information on paddlewheel and screw-propelled steam-assisted vessels. Appendices include information on naval expenses, ordnance regulations, personnel complements by number of guns, and other materiel, mostly during the Habsburg period. An alphabetical index of vessel names is also provided and is invaluable, considering the number of ships and smaller craft found in this work. The book contains a wealth of maps, plans, drawings, paintings, and other images throughout.

A typical chapter treating decked ships begins with a few paragraphs that provide technical details and major modifications or trends in construction or armament over time. Following this, ships are listed chronologically, beginning

with those in service or ordered as of 1 November 1700, and moving through an accounting of ships that were acquired as of certain dates. Within these divisions, members are organized by class followed by specific named vessels within that class. Each entry lists number of guns, dimensions and tons, type of armament, and details concerning location of build, refit, cruises and stations, and fate, in varying detail depending on information available or uncovered by the authors. In many instances, a vessel's departures and destinations, battles fought, and order, duties, or stations can be traced month to month. These sections are often lengthy and brimming with information, but readers should be aware that these details are provided as pieces of data, in a list format that is useful to researchers or as an efficient reference. Reminiscent of log entries, these are not cast as written narratives, nor are they intended to be read as a collection of ship's biographies.

Small frigates (the authors chose 20 guns as the dividing line between these and larger frigates), corvettes, brigs and brig-schooners, bomb vessels, storeships, fireships, packets, polacres and *zumacas*, galleys, and several other *buques menores* are treated in dedicated chapters, organized similarly to those prepared for the ships, but with fewer entries per type and in less detail due to a paucity of records available to researchers; some entries provide only the number of guns or a launch date, and others a single sentence or a few words concerning its one known mention in the historic record. Each chapter, however, offers information on the development of the vessel type, evolution of use when appropriate, sailing qualities, and clarification on terminology as needed. A representation of each type is provided in the form of painting, plans, or photographs of models, which are often contemporaries of their full-sized counterparts.

This is a handsome book, and a comprehensive resource for anyone interested in the development and evolution of the Spanish Navy overall, an understanding of the technical aspects of classes and the ships within those classes, or tracing a particular vessel's career. To a slightly lesser degree, it provides some insight into the politics and motivations of the Spanish Navy and its government. It deservedly takes its place alongside its British, French, Dutch, and Russian predecessors.

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Tom Womack. *The Dutch Naval Air Force Against Japan: The Defense of the Netherlands East Indies, 1941-1942.* 2nd edition. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. Inc., www.mcfarlandbooks.com, 2023. xii+388 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, appendices, notes, index. US \$39.95, paper;