

demonstrates no direct connection between their service in Grey's campaign and their subsequent success in the Peninsular War. The book is also plagued by poor editing, with errors ranging from minor compositional matters to the unnecessary repetition of both Grey's and Thomas Dundas's biographies in separate chapters. Worst of all from the perspective of the readers of this journal, however, is the under-examination of the Royal Navy's role in the campaign. While Brown gives Jervis's forces due credit for their contribution to the conquest of the three islands, their blockade of the islands prior to the invasions and their failure to intercept French reinforcements do not receive similar attention. It's an omission that is all the more disappointing given that in most other respects Brown provides a satisfactory overview of the 1794 West Indies campaign, one that is likely to serve as the standard account for some time to come.

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**Dan Buchanan. *The Wreck of HMS Speedy: The Tragedy that Shook Upper Canada*. Milner & Associates, [www.milnerassociates.ca](http://www.milnerassociates.ca), 2020. 259 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, appendices, index. CDN \$23.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-988-34424-9. (E-book available.)**

In an October 1804 gale, His Majesty's Provincial Marine schooner *Speedy* disappeared off Presqu'Île Point in Lake Ontario. Lost with the vessel were some of the élite of the infant Upper Canadian society – among them Justice Thomas Cochran, Court of King's Bench for Upper Canada; Solicitor General Robert Gray, Member of the House of Assembly; Angus Macdonell, lawyer and also a member of the House of Assembly; John Fish, High Constable of the Home District; John Stegmann, Deputy Surveyor General for Upper Canada; and James Ruggles, Justice of the Peace for York County.

Also in the hold of the schooner was a prisoner, the source of all this official interest. Ogetonicut, a member of the Indigenous Mississauga band, stood accused of the murder of a trader at a post on Lake Scugog. The authorities at York, present day Toronto, wished to avoid tension by holding the trial elsewhere, in the capital of the Newcastle District, now Brighton, Ontario. Thus, the judge, prosecutor, defence, jailer, and expert witnesses all travelled together in HMS *Speedy*, an aging 55-foot (17 metres) two-masted schooner gunboat, into the autumn weather of the lake.

*Speedy* never arrived at its destination, but came to grief attempting the difficult entrance into Brighton harbour. Pieces of the presumed wreck were found on the southern shore of Lake Ontario soon after the vessel disappeared.

The tragic deaths of those on board left behind a scrambling York, devastated by the loss of so many influential people in one blow. The disappearance was a mystery until almost two centuries later, in 1989, when diver and explorer Ed Burt discovered a shipwreck on the floor of Lake Ontario that he believed to be the elusive *Speedy*.

According to his preface, Buchanan intended to write the story of the *Speedy* in more detail and with more credibility than any before him (xi). With an emphasis on original documents, Buchanan envisioned an accurate, comprehensive account of the *Speedy*'s final voyage (xi). *The Wreck of HMS Speedy* is divided into two sections. The first, seventeen short chapters, chronicles the history of the lost schooner. Beginning with the murder of John Sharp, Buchanan describes the arrest of Ogetoncut, the tensions leading up to the *Speedy*'s disappearance, and the aftermath of the shipwreck. The second section, only two chapters long but no less informative for its brevity, examines the discovery of the wreck. Buchanan includes a record of each dive, the limitations placed on Ed Burt as he tried to identify the wreck, and an analysis of different theories regarding the sinking of the *Speedy*. A more detailed account of the exploration of the site is included in Appendix A, one of seven appendices included in the final pages.

There would be no book without Buchanan's wealth of research. His account is built upon a scaffold of sources including letters, journals, newspaper articles, testimonies, diaries, and military and naval records, many inherited from Ed Burt. An index, bibliography, and thorough notes section follow his work. The first section has multiple images of maps and journals, including John Stegmann's map identifying the exact location of the murder to demonstrate that it was just inside the Newcastle District rather than the Home District. Images are more frequent in the second portion of the book, chiefly photographs of artifacts found underwater by divers exploring the shipwreck.

If there is a weakness in this account, it is Buchanan's attempt to tell the narrative both in his own voice and those of his characters. He might have done better to choose one or the other. As it is, the reader must rely on citations to tell the evidence-based portions apart from the notional ones. Buchanan's attempt may well have been more palatable had he written it with finesse. Unfortunately, the fictitious portions of the book do not hold up to the same standard as the rest of Buchanan's work.

Despite the mutability of style, *The Wreck of HMS Speedy* offers a good overview of the events of October 1804. Buchanan's pen illuminates the personal aspects of the story, devoting care and attention to the figures involved with the *Speedy*, notably Captain Thomas Paxton and Lieutenant-Governor Peter Hunter. Buchanan spent the time and the ink to study the families, careers, and characters of these men and others and was rewarded with a flush and

vibrant narrative. Rather than alienate the shipwreck from surrounding events, Buchanan positions his account where it belongs, in context. The impact of the tragedy on York is abundantly clear, illustrated with descriptions of political chaos and the grieving of the Paxton family.

Buchanan has extensively researched a book that not only informs but also engages his audience. His dedication to detail and accuracy is commendable; he has succeeded in writing a credible account of a fascinating tale.

The book is intended for a general audience, but it has value for the student of Upper Canadian history, of the maritime history of the Great Lakes, for prospective maritime divers and those seeking to understand the relationships of the Indigenous population with the white newcomers.

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**Steve Mullins. *Octopus Crowd: Maritime History and the Business of Australian Pearling in its Schooner Age*. Tuscaloosa, AB: University of Alabama Press, [uapress.ua.edu](http://uapress.ua.edu), 2019. 336 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$54.95, cloth; ISBN 978-0-8173-2024-9. (E-book available.)**

This is quite an interesting history of pearling in Australian waters in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Pearling was not as we know it today, where the prize is a pearl for use in jewelry, but instead it was the harvesting of pearl shell. The shell was then used to create pearl shell buttons in the days before plastic buttons became common-place (generally following the end of the Second World War). Any pearls that were found were an unexpected bonus rather than the main game—buttons were generally where the big money was.

In Australia, the key pearling locations were Torres Strait, centred around Thursday Island, and at Broome in Western Australia. Steve Mullins has done an excellent job describing this at-times highly politicized industry, especially its use of a non-white workforce in the Australian colonies and then, in post-Federation Australia after 1901. The new Australian Government's "White Australia" policy caused significant issues for an industry that used mainly foreign workers. This, coupled with higher taxes, forced the main company, the Clark Combination, offshore to operate in the Aru Islands of the then-Netherlands East Indies; where taxes were much lower. This company, formed by James Clark, is central to the book and Clark's rise from orphaned son of a fisherman to one of the richest men in Australia is also a key part of the story.

Northern Australian waters became known for their quality pearl shell which fetched high prices at the sale-yards at Bull Wharf in London. The work,