

## Book Reviews

**James H. Bruns. *Razzle Dazzle: United States Navy Ship Camouflage in World War I*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com), 2022. vii+266 pp., illustrations, endnotes, bibliography, index. US \$ 49.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-8763-6. E-book available.)**

Razzle dazzle was the American name given to patterns of wartime camouflage painted on ships, the British referring to the technique as simply dazzle. It was partly the brainchild of marine artists and graphic designers given some entry into official circles during the First World War, an act of desperation against mounting losses to German submarines, and a morale booster among sailors and the public on the Allied side. Contrary to conventional wisdom, ships were made more conspicuous, rather than trying to conceal or make them invisible to the naked eye, by using displays of abstract shapes, stripes, twirls, and colour that sought to visually confuse observers as to a ship's true bearing, speed, type, and size. The efficacy of the technique was never really proven, but it was hoped that such camouflage patterns would work long enough for ships to get away or turn the tables on an attacking enemy. Although German air forces used Lozenge camouflage incorporating spotting and gradient colours, the Imperial German Navy put little store in camouflage schemes at sea early in the war and only later adopted some patterns for its submarines and smaller warships in the face of threats from the air. Other allied countries like France and Italy, however, followed British and American examples by painting their warships and merchant ships in wild ways.

James Bruns, an experienced museum administrator responsible for the US Navy's system of museums, curated an exhibit at the National Museum of the United States Navy taking the title *Razzle Dazzle* to describe the American approach to ship camouflage and the participation of the country's navy, merchant marine, shipbuilders, and forces convoyed across the North Atlantic during the First World War. This book presents much of the background research and information behind the panels for the public display created

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by Bruns and his team. The book comprises an introduction and 19 distinct chapters of varying length with accompanying illustrations and photographs. Readers looking for a detailed accounting of ship camouflage after 1917 should look elsewhere, because only a portion of the available space is devoted to the specialized topic whether in text or photographs. Indeed, the book's title is somewhat misleading, since the content mostly deals generally with the US Navy and the American war effort. Just a few chapters describe camouflage efforts along with the official response.

The British Admiralty came to be persuaded by the likes of John Graham Kerr and Norman Wilkinson that dazzle camouflage was worthwhile and set up sections to study and apply its principles. That led to the adoption of standard schemes for painting warships and merchant ships in dazzle, subsequently taken up and refined by the Americans with their own ideas and influences from zoologist Abbott Thayer. These efforts accelerated when Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare forced the entry of the United States into the war. The fact that American government shipping authorities made camouflaging of ships compulsory with discounts offered on war risk insurance premiums probably accounted for its widespread uptake, far more than operational necessity. In other chapters, Bruns shows that American support for the system of convoy (in contrast to British resistance and slowness to adopt), organization of escorts, sector deployment of warships, air cover, and vastly increased shipbuilding capacity met the threat of German submarines and overcame losses, which steadily decreased in the last years and months of the war. The role of ship camouflage in this wider context is, therefore, put into perspective.

While some chapters are somewhat related to the war at sea and camouflage including merchant sailors, safety, and requisitioned liners, others are devoted to General John Pershing's Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF) in France, large railway guns, and mails which, while interesting, are really only tangential to the title. It is enough to know that the US Navy transported several million troops and supplies in convoy across the Atlantic in liners and ships sporting razzle dazzle camouflage. Similarly, considerable discussion is devoted to restoring the reputation of Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels and his relations with the wartime Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William Benson, and the commander of US naval forces in European waters, Admiral William Sims. Sims, who worked closely with Royal Navy counterparts during the campaign against German submarines, singled out the Navy Department in Washington and Daniels in particular for blame for deficiencies regarding naval strategy and preparedness. Subsequent post-war congressional inquiries absolved the secretary from the charges but the writings, influence, and supporters of Sims have dominated the historical narrative ever since.

*Razzle Dazzle* is suited to a gift shop where museum visitors might seek a memento or more information after seeing an exhibit, or general readers might be unfamiliar with the naval side of the First World War, particularly from the American perspective. Archival sources are used in parts of the text and referenced in footnotes for each chapter. The accompanying greyscale photographs come from official collections and are well-chosen. Some illustrations include side profiles of the camouflaged ships as well as propaganda posters. In the modern age of radar, infrared heat signatures, active sonar, surveillance aircraft, and satellites, the idea of painting ships in camouflage as part of naval warfare may seem quaint. But there are all sorts of other reasons for warships to have a distinctive livery, including homage to the past, morale and friendly competition amongst sailors and ships, and reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Will Coast Salish camouflage schemes ever be developed for the Royal Canadian Navy's Pacific coast ships in place of naval light grey, much the same way BC Ferries celebrates west coast themes with colourful paint and murals? Now, that would be a good use of camouflage to gain popular support and track allies like New Zealand which has embraced indigenous Māori culture.

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**Douglas Brunt. *The Mysterious Case of Rudolf Diesel: Genius, Power, and Deception on the Eve of World War I*. New York, NY: Atria Books, [www.simonandschusterpublishing.com](http://www.simonandschusterpublishing.com), 2023. 384 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. US \$28.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-9821-6990-9. (E-book available.)**

*The Mysterious Case of Rudolf Diesel* is history, biography and mystery with a strong maritime connection. Born in Paris in 1858, Diesel invented the engine which bears his name while working in Germany. The mystery involves his disappearance while crossing the English Channel in 1913.

Diesel was active during an era when inventors were searching for more efficient machines than the steam engines that powered transportation and industry at the time. Some pursued petroleum-fired internal combustion engines, while Diesel worked on an alternative model that could run on a variety of fossil and organic fuels. The book explains the process better than I could, so I refer you to it.

Having perfected a working engine, Diesel became a wealthy man by selling licenses for his invention to established industrialists in various countries. He became a recognized expert who traveled the world giving lectures and entering agreements with investors. Diesel's licensee for the United States and Canada

was Aldolphus Busch, a fellow native of Germany who made his fortune in beer production in St. Louis, Missouri. Though their 1897 agreement was not profitable, their 1908 agreement held new promise with the urging by the U.S. Navy for the construction of diesel submarine engines. In Russia, an 1898 licensing with the Nobel family enterprises (of Nobel Prize fame) provided engines for their oil pumping operation in Baku. In Denmark, the license was sold to the ship and steam engine builder Burmeister & Wain. French licensee, Frederic Dyeckhoff, employed horizontal design of the engine (as opposed to vertical design for stationary use) for marine propulsion on canal boats. Though a late entrant, the British licensee, Vickers, would become a key player in the race to build submarines.

Commercial application of diesel technology for marine use came into its own in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Nobels were the first to achieve success with the screw oil tanker *Vandal* in January 1903 and continued as the fleet was expanded. Diesel-powered ships did not require room for teams of stokers or space for coal. The engine typically required no maintenance at all over periods of years and delivered far greater speeds with fuel efficiency, so much so, that transoceanic trips required no refueling stops. Diesel propulsion was a game-changer for merchant marine fleets.

Though initially employed in commercial uses, the vision of British First Sea Lord, Jackie Fisher, and First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, ensured the Royal Navy was not far behind. Submarines and surface ships powered by diesel engines were as transformative as the advent of steam had been at the end of the age of sail. Diesel engines played major roles in two world wars and continue to propel transportation on water and land to the present day.

The mystery involves Diesel's disappearance. He was alleged to have boarded the SS *Dresden* in Antwerp for a business meeting in London. Reportedly seen at dinner, the next morning his cabin was empty, bed was unslept in, his watch nearby, and his hat and neatly folded overcoat were discovered beneath the afterdeck railing. Ten days later, a Dutch vessel found a badly decomposed body from which it recovered a pill case, wallet, I.D. card, pocketknife and eyeglass case identified as Diesel's by his son. What happened? Suicide? His bank statements reflected empty accounts. Murder? His engines threatened the prosperity of John D. Rockefeller's oil interests. The Kaiser may have been angered by Diesel's willingness to do business with the British in development of naval engines. Or, was it all a plot to enable Diesel to escape to Britain? By the way, Vickers shipyard in Montreal made dramatic advances in the development of diesel-powered submarines after Diesel's disappearance.

Photos of people and places involved supplement the text. The index assists

in finding what you remember, but are not sure where, while the bibliography provides a guide to future reading. Author Douglas Brunt skillfully weaves known facts and a detective's insight into an historic "Who dunnit?." We will never know and author Douglas Brunt presents the theories without answering the question. *Northern Mariner* readers will find *The Mysterious Case of Rudolf Diesel* a hit for history buffs and mystery lovers.

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**Przemysław Budzbon with Waldemar Góralski and Piotr Forkasiewicz (illustrators). *Soviet Motor Gunboats of World War II: The Red Army's 'river tanks' from Stalingrad to Berlin*. New Vanguard 324. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2023. 48 pp., illustrations, tables, diagrams, bibliography, index. UK £12.99, US \$20.00, CDN \$27.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4728-5721-7. (E-book available.)**

The Soviet Union designed, developed, and employed a variety of armoured motor gun boats (AMGB) before, during, and after the Second World War based on serial production and interoperability with the Red Army, whom they supported in operations. These handy boats were pressed into a range of roles and missions along river systems and in shallow sea waters providing both defensive and offensive capabilities. The main armament were guns emplaced in standard army tank turrets which gave the boats a distinctive silhouette and form, gaining them the informal categorization as river tanks. Soviet armoured motor gun boats combined speed, mobility, and firepower for active operations in support of the army, for any potential conflict with China, and against Nazi Germany during the invasion, and afterwards in the counter-offensives.

The Polish naval architect and technical writer Przemysław Budzbon contributes a definitely niche offering in Osprey's New Vanguard series focused on the history and operational deployment of Soviet armoured motor gun boats. Two experienced Polish illustrators with backgrounds in the digital arts and interests in military history, Góralski and Forkasiewicz, provide three-dimensional ship side views and original commissioned artwork, in full colour.

The book comprises forty-eight pages, similar to others in the New Vanguard series, with four unnumbered sections (the first being the introduction) highlighted with bolded subordinate sub-heading sections and a brief conclusion. A short list of further reading includes two previously published reference sources by Budzbon related to Soviet ships and fleets, for which he is considered an expert authority outside Russia. A number of tables provide technical specifications for individually numbered or named boat projects. Simple graphic side profiles of variants are drawn by Jerzy

Lewandowski, one in a time line. Shaded text boxes, some with additional photographs related to the content, explain specific actions shown in the original artwork, the activities and operations of the Danube and Dnieper flotillas, and the use of armoured motor gun boats by secret police (NKVD) border guards. The selected photographs from official repositories, private collections, and the author's own are fully captioned in side text to the main body. The coloured ship views and artwork are stunning as key features of the book.

Due to geography and the extensive river systems inside and along the borders of Russia, river gun boats gained utility during the periods of the czar and civil war. Patrols along the Amur River bordering Manchuria demanded mobile defence forces composed of armoured motor gun boats based on a British design of the Sultan class. The boats were built in St. Petersburg and transported by flatbed rail car across Siberia to locations where they were floated and based in flotilla. The Bolsheviks used armoured motor gun boats (perhaps a little less famously than Leon Trotsky's armoured trains) extensively with some success to stave off the Whites from multiple directions and secure the western frontier in a war with Poland. Under the Soviet Union, renewed tensions with China over boundaries in the Far East led to the design and development of two types of armoured motor gun boat designated Project 1124 and Project 1125. Iurij IBenua, a young naval constructor whose own native noble family was arrested and sent away for rehabilitation, was made responsible for their design and construction. The first boats were completed in 1936. Budzbon covers the technical specifications in terms of hull, propulsion, and armament in considerable detail through several programmes up to the Second World War.

In spite of the main title, only one of the four sections is specifically devoted to the wartime employment of the Soviet armoured motor gun boats. Hobbled by Joseph Stalin's purges of military ranks and uneven management in Soviet-directed industrial endeavours, the production of smaller armoured craft of direct use to the Red Army received marginal priority over the build-up of larger warships in the Red Navy. They were mass produced in small inland boat yards and transported by rail to operational theatres. All wartime-produced designs were still transportable by train. The armament adopted the T-34 tank turret, which greatly eased interoperability and logistics with the Red Army in terms of maintenance and ammunition, and when production of those ran short, Katyusha 132 mm rockets (nicknamed Stalin's screeching organs) on launching racks were substituted. Armoured motor gun boats were prominent during fighting at the desperate battle of Stalingrad, as depicted in the artwork of *Bronekater* No. 21 smashed and sunk on 9 October 1942. The deadliest enemy was German artillery. The Soviets obtained more

reliable marine engines through Lend-Lease from the Americans. As the war progressed, flotillas operated on the Danube and Dnieper rivers landing troops, providing fire support, and escorting the safe transport of supplies. Rear Admiral Sergey Gorshkov, a later commander-in-chief of the Red Navy, commanded the Danube River flotilla. Reinforcements to the Amur River flotilla participated in operations against Japanese forces in Manchukuo and Korea in the closing weeks of the war. A larger seagoing armoured motor gun boat, officially Project 161 and known informally as Skerry monitor, was designed and employed in the Baltic.

The last section looks at the post-war development of the armoured motor gun boat through the improved Project 191 and Project 1204, again given to Iurij Benua. The boats grew bigger in displacement and increasingly used naval standardized armaments, thereby negating the very advantages of the wartime AMGB which supported the Red Army. With decreasing relevance over time in a nuclear age, remaining armoured motor gun boats were handed over to the border guards and fitfully used during Soviet operations in Afghanistan. The threat of war with China inspired Project 1208, a river 'heavy' tank given the codename Slepén, and two more follow-on redesigns that served in military and constabulary roles until the fall of the Soviet Union and few are even to the present day.

*Soviet Motor Gunboats of World War II* is a specialized book in a specialized series focused on military wares from historical, design, and operational perspectives. The combination of engaging text and original artwork and graphics provide unique insights into Soviet armoured motor gun boats, their purpose, and deployment. The book will appeal to general readers interested in lesser-known Soviet efforts and weapons in the Second World War, naval historians studying coastal/riverine forces, and modelers looking for quick and unique projects in larger scales.

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**Richard R. Burgess.** *F2H Banshee Units*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2022. 96 pp., illustrations, bibliography, charts, index. US \$24.00, CDN \$32.00, UK £15.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-47284-621-1.

The F2H Banshee fighter-bomber was the third jet aircraft operated by the U.S. Navy (USN) and also served U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) aviation. The Banshee has a further distinction: it was the only jet fighter operated by the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), serving on the RCN's last aircraft carrier, HMCS *Bonaventure*. In *Osprey Combat Aircraft No. 141: F2H Banshee Units*,

Richard R. Burgess tells the story of this first-generation combat jet aircraft.

The Banshee's builder, McDonnell Aircraft Corporation of St. Louis, Missouri, was a relatively new player in the aircraft industry, having been created only in 1939. Curiously, McDonnell's newness proved an advantage when the Second World War began. The major American aircraft manufacturers such as Boeing, Grumman, Douglas, and North American, were devoted to military contracts, so McDonnell had room to experiment and take advantage of new technologies—such as the jet engine. McDonnell's first military contract was for the FH-1 Phantom, of which they produced sixty-two for the USN. While the FH-1 was used for training, it established the basic McDonnell design of engines being placed close to the fuselage or underneath the fuselage, and, as well, started the tradition of “monster” names for its aircraft: the F2H Banshee, the F3H Demon, the F-101 Voodoo (used by the RCAF/CAF,) and the F-4 Phantom II.

The Banshee was the aircraft that ensured McDonnell's future. From 1948 to 1953, McDonnell built 895 Banshees for the USN and USMC. The first fifty-six aircraft off the production line were the F2H-1 variant. These were rapidly followed by the F2H-2 Banshee, of which McDonnell built 436 in four (4) subtypes: the F2H-2 fighter-bomber, which had four 20-mm cannon in the nose and had eight underwing pylons for carrying ordnance; the F2H-2B, which had one underwing pylon designed for carrying a nuclear weapon; the F2H-2N, a night fighter version with a large radar nose; and the F2H-2P photoreconnaissance version. The F2H-2 series was followed by the F2H-3/4 versions—which had a much longer fuselage than the F2H-2 Banshees and a large radar nose. The F2H-3 and -4 Banshees were externally identical; they differed only in having a different radar.

The F2H is best remembered for its service with the USN and USMC in the Korean War. The Banshee, together with its contemporary, the Grumman F9F Panther, were straight-wing aircraft, not swept-wing aircraft. Therefore, the F2H-2 Banshees and Panthers did not have the performance to take on the Soviet MiG-15 consistently. (The F9F Panther is the subject of another Osprey book, *Osprey Combat Aircraft # 103, F9F Panther Units of the Korean War*; reviewed in *TNM/LMN* Vol. XXVI, no. 2.) The Banshees, along with the Panthers and other USN/USMC aircraft, provided much badly needed close support to ground troops. The F2H-2P photoreconnaissance units gave the United Nations forces in Korea excellent photographs and required information. (The Banshee was the “star” of a famous novel of the Korean War, James Mitchener's *The Bridges of Toko-Ri*. A full account of USN and USMC aviation in the Korean War is found in Thomas McKelvey Cleaver's *Holding the Line*, reviewed in *TNM/LMN* Vol XXIX, no. 3.) The F2H-3/4 series saw USN and USMC service in the 1950s but thankfully, never saw

combat.

The Banshee, a twin-engine aircraft, had good range, maneuverability, ruggedness, reliability and a high operational ceiling. It was relatively easy to fly and was a good aircraft to land on a carrier deck—certainly the most critical feature of a carrier aircraft. Its fighter-bomber versions carried a good payload and the Banshees built to carry a nuclear weapon gave the USN a nuclear capability—fortunately never used. The F2H-2P photoreconnaissance aircraft were the best of their day for aerial reconnaissance. For all that, the Banshee had a relatively short service life—from 1948 to 1958 in active-duty USN and USMC squadrons, and only four more years in USN and USMC reserve squadrons. The developments in aircraft technology—swept wings, engine designs, avionics, and other factors—overtook the Banshee and its peers.

Burgess's book is a good introduction to this important first-generation jet aircraft. Heavily illustrated with photographs, many in colour, accounts of the Banshee's operations in Korea and the Cold War, descriptions of the Banshee variants, and each USN and USMC units that used the Banshee are listed and described. He writes well and the narrative is spiced with enough accounts from Banshee pilots to hold the reader's interest. The centre colour section has thirty side-view plates of Banshees, illustrating the colour schemes worn by USN and USMC F2H's and includes a side-view plate of one RCN Banshee. Those are helpful to the modeler and aviation artist.

For Canadians, the F2H-3 Banshee is remembered as the only jet aircraft used by the RCN. The RCN wanted new Banshees, but delays in government procurement meant that McDonnell shut down the Banshee production line before a final decision was made. The RCN had to make do with thirty-nine used Banshees—all of which required reconditioning before being introduced into service. For six years, the Banshees served the RCN, and were assigned to Canada's last aircraft carrier, HMCS *Bonaventure*. At that time, the RCN Banshees were the only Canadian aircraft capable of carrying the Sidewinder air-to-air missile. Burgess includes a chapter on RCN Banshee usage. This is brief but justifiable, as the Banshee's RCN service was short. The airframes were already well-used when delivered to the RCN, and the *Bonaventure* was a small carrier, not really suited for jet operations. The RCN's Banshees were taken out of service in 1962, ending the career of this excellent aircraft. Three RCN Banshees exist today—at HMCS *Shearwater* at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; the Military Museums in Calgary, Alberta, and at the Canada Aviation and Space Museum at Ottawa/Rockcliffe Airport at Ottawa, Ontario. (Those wishing to read further about the RCN Banshees are referred to J. Allen Snowie's *The Bonnie*, the story of HMCS *Bonaventure* and Carl Mills' *Banshees in the Royal Canadian Navy*.)

The Banshee was a great aircraft which served the USN, the USMC, and

the RCN well. Burgess's book is useful for those with little knowledge of this aircraft and will be helpful to those with more expertise in naval aircraft. *F2H Banshee Units* is a worthy tribute to an aircraft remembered as, "The safe and reliable Banjo."

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**Scot Christenson. *Dogs in the Navy*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2023. 178 pp., illustrations, notes. US \$15.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-68247928-5.**

For more than 15,000 years humans have lived with dogs. These beloved animals come in all sizes, large, medium and small, as well as a variety of markings—white, black, brown and several combinations in between. Early humans first encountered dogs when they came prowling about campsites looking for food scraps carelessly cast aside. Gradually, appreciating their usefulness, humans begin to feed them deliberately, drawing them into their community, training them to protect, hunt, and herd. They were, in a word, "domesticated." Evidence of this early relationship can be seen in prehistoric cave drawings as well as elegant, ancient Egyptian pictographs depicting dogs serving their masters.

Later, recognizing their value, Europeans, venturing on voyages of world exploration, took them along as hunters, companions and protectors. Even the irascible Captain William Bligh allowed a dog, Hatch, on HMS *Bounty*.

Beginning with an imaginative cover, that draws you in immediately (a ship, a dog, a seaman with seabag, and a traveling valise), Scot Christenson, captures the reader, and then delights with an impressive selection of photographs featuring 100 dogs and one robot. These images, drawn in great measure from the archives of the United States Naval Institute, accompanied by a lively text, describe the role of dogs, not only in their traditional role as protectors, but also as a critical presence at sea boosting morale and helping crews to bond.

Some dogs are presented in a fearsome pose. Two Coastguard men appear with Punch, a Great Dane, struggling to get off his leash while on beach patrol. Most of these well-chosen photos, however, are more comforting, showing sailors (alas, no women are included) enjoying the company of their canine shipmates. Many are light hearted. In one photograph, a mascot appears front and centre in a formal photograph of the officers of the USS *Orion*. Most of the photographs, however, are more casual and some, poignant. Among the latter, is a photograph of Caesar, a German shepherd, shot three times during the Bougainville campaign (1943), lying on a cot being attended to by his handler.

In another photo, eight air crewmen, all rescued when their plane went down in the Pacific, stand together in company with their mascot, Turbo. Some dogs earned a special reputation for unusual behaviour. Sinbad, a “liberty-rum-chow,” who served aboard the USCGC *Campbell*, is shown aboard the cutter, as well as shoreside bellying up to the bar and peeking out of the bell of a tuba. Admiral Wags, a black cocker spaniel, who survived the sinking of the aircraft carrier, USS *Lexington*, became the subject of a popular book by Fannie Jessop Sherman, wife of *Lexington*’s captain.

Of all the photographs, each special in their own way, two stand out to this reviewer, Checkers and Black Dog. Neither dog is stunning in appearance, nor did they perform heroic acts. Both are simply “mutts.” Checkers, of uncertain pedigree, is shown asleep on a deck of the USS *Bairoko*, between two rows of seamen standing at attention during the captain’s inspection. Unimpressed, by rank or ceremony, as the captain approached, Checkers remained motionless. The skipper, reportedly amused by Checkers’ antics, gave him a quick “pet.” Checkers offered no response.

Black Dog was equally unassuming and dismissive of hierarchy. A stray, he wandered into the naval airship base at Lakehurst and never left. Spending his time with the ground crew, Black Dog was always the first to take a line from an incoming airship and the last to let go when an airship was lifting off. Like Checkers, he was dismissive of rank, but, alas, accident prone. He spent a good deal of time with the vet. Hardly the handsomest dog in this collection, Black Dog’s scarred image presents a haunting portrait of strength and loyalty.

Founded in 1873, since 1898 the U.S Naval Institute has been publishing books on naval history, navigation, biographies, ship and aircraft guides and novels. The list is long and impressive. *Dogs in the Navy* may not be as well-known, or take up as much space on the shelf as many of those mighty tomes, nor is it likely to inform readers on matters of politics, wars, strategy or tactics. What it does offer, however, are lessons in kindness and comradeship. For sailors deployed for long periods of time, often in distant, perilous places, these canine companions provided moments of distraction and comfort. *Dogs in the Navy* is a fine addition to the Institute’s long list of distinguished books.

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**Aidan Dodson. *The Windfall Battleships: Agincourt, Canada, Erin, Eagle and the Balkan & Latin-American Arms Races*. Barnsley, Yorkshire: Seaforth Publishing, [www.seaforthpublishing.com](http://www.seaforthpublishing.com), 2023. 288 pp., illustrations, tables, maps, appendices, notes, index. UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-3990-6322-7. (E-book available.)**

At the start of the First World War, the Royal Navy took over a number of warships building for other foreign navies in British private shipyards to meet the immediate exigencies of wartime mobilization. In many instances, these ships had been custom ordered according to specific requirements and in-house designs for the end-users, in hull configuration, propulsion, and armaments. In various stages of construction and financing, the most useful ones were already launched or near being launched and awaiting completion and outfitting for delivery. Acquiring such ships through negotiated purchase with foreign governments or outright requisition by the Admiralty for settlement of claims later proved a convenient means to augment British fighting power at sea quickly, especially with battleships that took a long time and enormous resources to build. Author Dodson focuses on four dreadnought battleships, two on order for Turkey (Ottoman Empire) and another two for Chile taken over by the Royal Navy in this book. A well-known writer of naval technical history and warships, Dodson's career was in defence procurement in the United Kingdom. He describes the interesting background, context, and operations in British service, and the final disposition of these "windfall" warships, three as battleships and one converted into a dedicated aircraft carrier, among the first of its kind in the Royal Navy.

The book is organized into nine chapters, with a short introduction at the outset and the last chapter a retrospective acting as a conclusion. Similar to other Seaforth naval technical history titles, many captioned greyscale photographs, maps, side-view line drawings, silhouettes, and information in tables and lists accompany the narrative in the main text. Two very useful appendices give details in tabular form of warships and submarines on foreign order under construction in European countries and the United States. These are broken down by type in August 1914 and by builder and customer, not just the four battleships under discussion; thus making the book a reference source as much as a readable narrative focused on technical and construction details. The photographs and captions interspersed throughout can easily be read separately with the tables in the main text and appendices to get fuller technical details.

The rush to acquire newer dreadnought battleships for more prominent navies before 1914 was not confined to the main challengers in Europe. Great Britain and Imperial Germany engaged in their own naval building race, as well as the likes of France, Italy, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Mediterranean. Dodson points out that lesser-known naval arms races in South America and the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea compelled countries lacking the resources and capacity to build their own major warships to place orders abroad in Great Britain, Germany, France, and the United States with private companies well known in the export business. Turkey worried about the growing naval aspirations of Greece in the Adriatic and the aggressiveness

of the Russians in the Black Sea while Chile responded to naval developments in neighbouring Peru and Argentina with whom it had border disputes, as well as the former dominant naval power, Brazil, aspiring to regain its former glory. The *Sultan Osman I* and *Reşadiye* nearing completion at the Armstrong plant at the Tyne were recommissioned as HMS *Agincourt* and HMS *Erin* respectively once Imperial Ottoman authorities, left with few other alternatives, agreed to sell upon the promise of full compensation for monies already paid. Dodson downplays whether the semi-forced takeover of the Turkish battleships played no small part in the Ottoman Empire's decision to abandon neutrality and side with the Germans who transferred the battlecruiser SMS *Goeben* and light cruiser SMS *Breslau* cornered in the Mediterranean in substitute (complete with German crews and command). The Admiralty decided not to proceed with the building of a third Turkish battleship only recently laid down and scout cruisers assembled materials being diverted elsewhere, though it went ahead with four destroyers building at Hawthorn Leslie in Tyneside. A battleship for Brazil in early stages of construction was likewise discontinued, but because the two battleships for Chile, *Almirante Latorre* and *Almirante Cochrane* at the Armstrong and Vickers works were already advanced enough to warrant interest, negotiations opened to acquire them from a clearly neutral country with its own needs and financial challenges. The British government had to act fast, since other European countries were also eyeing the battleships for purchase and the private companies were eager to recoup their costs before any possible requisition. The *Almirante Latorre* was duly renamed HMS *Canada* in December 1914 and like the two ex-Turkish battleships, joined battle squadrons in the Grand Fleet. Differences in design, speed, and armament from standard British classes made the three "windfall" battleships stand out but hardly impaired operational deployment when every useful warship was needed to fill out strength. The British government, however, only approved purchase of the unfinished *Almirante Cochrane* from Chile in February 1918, when it was proposed to complete the hull with a flight deck and improved propulsion as a fit-for-purpose aircraft carrier. HMS *Eagle* was patched up for flight trials, then completely outfitted, and entered permanently into Royal Navy service because it was just too expensive to reconvert back to a battleship for return to Chile. In lieu, Chile accepted a generous package of cast-off airplanes, warships, and submarines for its troubles. Chile eventually regained the much-worn HMS *Canada* after the war and put the battleship into its own navy.

The fourth chapter covering service in the Grand Fleet is a substantial one, consisting of a chronological narrative by year. The three windfall battleships engaged in workups, training, exercises, and sorties as part of battle squadron complements and went into refit and maintenance periods to rectify deficiencies. Original configurations were changed, making improvements

to deck arrangements and replacing lesser calibre guns using non-standard ammunition. The battleships went to sea with the fleet to chase and engage German units in minor and major actions. During the Battle of Jutland/Skagerrak on 31 May 1916, HMS *Agincourt* had the distinction of firing the second highest number of shells on the British side striking opposing German forces, while HMS *Erin* did not fire its main armament in anger due its placement in the British line and the obstruction by another Royal Navy ship throughout the battle. HMS *Canada* likewise participated in a minor fashion during the naval battle. Each of the three battleships served throughout the remainder of the war and were present when the surrendered warships of the German High Seas Fleet were sailed to the Firth of Forth and interned at Scapa Flow in late 1918. In the immediate post-war period, HMS *Erin* was a drill, flag, and boys draft accommodation ship in turn at the Nore Reserve, HMS *Canada* transported personnel between the Mediterranean and the United Kingdom, and HMS *Agincourt* was designated for potential conversion into a mobile naval base depot ship. Limitations on battleships under the 1922 Treaty of Washington led to the outright scrapping of both *Agincourt* and *Erin*, while *Canada* was returned to Chile where it served in various roles that included mutiny and political upheaval up to the late 1950s. Conversion into an aircraft carrier saved HMS *Eagle* from the wreckers under the Treaty of Washington's provisions. This allowed the warship to serve in the inter-war Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and Far East and receive extended refits and updates, until sunk by torpedoes fired by a German submarine while resupplying hard-pressed Malta on 11 August 1941 with loss of 131 lives (929 rescued). The operational careers and fates of these windfall battleships diverged considerably after the First World War as each reached its time, with *Almirante Latorre* (*Canada*) being the longest in service. In the eighth chapter, Dodson gives a very interesting overview of battleships in the South American countries of Brazil and Argentina alongside Chile from the 1930s up to tightening budgets in the late 1950s and early 1960s and declining levels of American assistance.

The book, at first glance, may seem very specialized and narrow in focusing on only four battleships, but Dodson provides sufficient context and information to make an original contribution to the scholarship that offers new insights. It is recommended for readers interested in the technical history of warships, British shipbuilding, some individual units and their routines in the Grand Fleet during the First World War, and general historical naval developments in South America and the Eastern Mediterranean touching upon the last days of the Ottoman Empire.

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**W.A.B. Douglas. *A War Guest in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, [www.wlupress.wlu.ca](http://www.wlupress.wlu.ca), 2023. 272 p.p., illustrations. CDA \$24.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-77112-368-6. (E-book available.)**

During the Second World War, hundreds of British children were sent to Canada, often to stay with family friends or relatives as “War Guests”. One such war guest, W.A.B. (Alec) Douglas, stayed with his godmother in Toronto and wrote letters weekly to his mother back home in London. This book is a collection of those letters that were saved, along with modern commentary to provide the link between letters and provide the author’s supplemental recollections.

But before getting to the letters, Cynthia Comacchio provides a 12-page overview of the War Guest program to relocate children out of harm’s way either through the British government’s Children’s Oversea Reception Board (CORB) (for children whose families could not afford the relocation), or through privately funded means (i.e., often by the family). CORB received 211,488 applications (about one-half of all eligible children). The Canadian government balked at such numbers and request that only “suitable” children be selected. In the end, only 1,535 CORB sponsored children and 1,654 privately funded children were sent to Canada before the program was abruptly ended due to the hazards of the trans-Atlantic crossing. For example, SS *Athenia* was torpedoed on 3 September 1939 with the loss of one Canadian girl and several British children, and SS *City of Benares* was torpedoed on 17 September 1940 with the loss of 77 of the 90 children on board.

After the war, Alec Douglas immigrated to Canada in 1947 to live with his mother and Canadian step-father where he attended University of Toronto and enrolled as a regular officer in the RCN. In the 1960s, he reinvented himself as a historian and was posted to the Directorate of History, becoming head of DND’s Directorate of History (1973-1994). On retirement, he continued his work under contract and continued to publish historically-related accounts up to 2022 (i.e., into his 90s). A full, 36-page, account of his career, written by Roger Sarty, is provided as the second part of the book and thus, the reader gets a look into the federal civil service of times past. Alec and Roger are two of the co-authors of *No Higher Purpose* and *A Blue Water Navy*, the official operational history of the Royal Canadian Navy during the Second World War.

Douglas was born in 1929 in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where his father was a mining engineer. His mother took him to England where his father joined them for a few weeks in 1934 before he had to return to Southern Rhodesia. His father died when young Alec was six years old, forcing his mother to take up a job in sales and fashion in London. She did not have the financial means to send her son to a “public school” but did have a contact

who would sponsor him. But with the war looming in 1938-39, his mother arranged for him to go to Toronto to live with his god-mother in Forest Hill area of Toronto. The actual travel arrangements involved his travelling with another couple taking passage on SS *Britannic* to New York City, then by train to Toronto. The letters sent home almost weekly, describe the trip and then the three years that he lived in Toronto, weekended on a hobby farm NW of Toronto and spent some time at a cottage on Lake Muskoka or at a summer camp. With the threat of German invasion of England markedly decreased by 1943, he went home that summer via New York City sailing on HMS *Pursuer*, an escort aircraft carrier carrying P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft for delivery to the RAF (i.e., not intended for convoy protection).

These letters capture his life with intensity for two reasons; first, they were written contemporaneously, rather than in recollection, which is to say they have immediacy of details. Second, they were written to the child's mother who did not know Toronto or what was typical for children in urban Canada. The letters are transcribed, including the original text in parentheses, but with additions in square brackets added by Douglas or the editor. There is also copious use of footnotes, either by Douglas (in italics) or by the editor (in regular font) providing information greater than could be inserted within the square brackets. Although 17 years younger, I also grew up in Toronto, and Douglas' letters and footnotes brought back a lot of nostalgia for me.

Douglas is not only a prominent historian of Canada's Armed Forces during the Second World War, to say nothing about his writings of earlier eras, and many readers will enjoy reading the early life of such an important person. For people who wish to know about the life and times of a "War Guest" and of life in wartime urban Canada, this book will add to the sparse literature that presently exists. Thank you, Alec Douglas, for baring your personal life to scrutiny of your readers.

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**Karen Downing, Johnathan Thayer, and Joanne Begiato. *Negotiating Masculinities and Modernity in the Maritime World, 1815–1940: A Sailor's Progress?* Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature, [www.springernature.com](http://www.springernature.com), 2022. 313 pp., illustrations, notes, index. ISBN 978-3-030-77946-7. (E-book reviewed.)**

The topic of masculinity within maritime history is not necessarily a new one. It has, however, seen an uptick in discussion and agreed-upon relevance in the previous decade. In particular, maritime historians increasingly seek to explore how the negotiation of masculine identity and masculine action has

evolved over time and its impact on the broader maritime world. Emerging out of a 2016 St. Anne's College (Oxford) conference called "Maritime Masculinities, 1815-1940," the collected essays found in this book seek to help define and answer many of these questions, with an eye to tying them to the backdrop of ongoing modernization. The editors and authors find that in this 125-year period, modernization both reinforced male dominance and threatened masculinity by making men theoretically softer.

The book begins with an introduction examining the Regency Era, specifically veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, and the formation of "communication communities." Sailors in these spaces returned to England in 1815, having taken part in the successful beginnings of modernizing the Royal Navy. Not only had they shared experiences and knowledge across class lines, but they now held greater expectations of their role and place in British society. These expectations and the following agitations are said to have blurred, if not outright blended, the lines between classes in favour of a common masculine outlook. This leads directly into the book's first core section, which focuses on how marines negotiated various representations of masculinity and self in the changing world. For American sailors, this was highlighted by the use of gentility to manoeuvre themselves into preferable positions more readily. Using the ideals of gentlemanly politeness, early American mariners were able to bolster their moral standing and highlight the ill-bred actions of their rivals. They then had to contend with how this could be blended into the underlying racism of their times. In turn, fishermen in this era were held up as unique figures who had never lost their connection to true masculinity and came to be frequent subjects of art that sought to harken back to these supposedly lost attributes. Finally, the potential sale of the HMS *Foudroyant*, an outdated yet storied warship, became a flashpoint for debates about the fight between masculinity and modernity.

The book's second section focuses on the ideas of technological growth and how masculinities had to be altered (or not) to deal with these new realities. In the case of Finnish sailors, steam and steel came into the industry later than elsewhere. Consequently, while not a monolith on families or work, Finnish sailors generally questioned how younger sailors could learn the skills and endurance necessary for the field if aided by technology. Similarly, the U.S. Marines, finding themselves at risk of being rendered broadly useless to the Navy, worked tirelessly to reframe their deeds and actions. In this way, they were transformed from the armed infantry that fought onboard ships to the brave and dashing "real soldiers" whom sailors had the honour of rowing ashore for amphibious attacks. Likewise, as the German Navy expanded at the turn of the century, it became necessary to redefine their merchant marines. Previously often regarded as rogues and reprobates, these sailors needed to run

the new ships became paragons of true German manhood that anyone should aspire to become. Patriotism, citizenship, and respectability are the themes of this book's third section, blending into the fourth, which looks at recruitment efforts leading up to the First World War. Sailor's homes emerged as a physical representation of reformers' desire to clean up the waterfront by providing safe places for sailors to live and regimenting how they lived there. In turn, the efforts to save the HMS *Victory* mirrored the calls to heroic masculinity found in the HMS *Foudroyant* fight but now with an added undertone of racism. This racism continued into the efforts to recruit naval reserves before the First World War. British Naval Reserves were held up as protectors of Anglo-Saxon nationality and were expected to uphold ideas of men as warriors and women as nurses. Finally, the concept of heroic masculinity came full circle as the 1918 silent film *Nelson* directly ties service in the modern Royal Navy back to its storied past, while suggesting that all men must serve as they are able.

Each of the twelve essays in this book could be broadened to create a solid stand-alone text that adds to our understanding of masculinity in the maritime time world. Gathering them in shorter forms into a singular volume allows for a more fluid conversation. This book serves as an invaluable tool for those looking to begin or broaden their knowledge of the questions of masculinity within naval history. Further, due to its semi-fragmented nature, the contents can easily be used for various educational situations, only increasing the value of ownership. In short, it is an easy addition to almost any maritime history collection.

Michael Toth  
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**Michael Ellis, Gustaf von Hoftsen, and Derek Law (eds.), Stephanie Sewell (trans.). *The Baltic Cauldron: Two Navies and the Fight For Freedom*. Dunbeath, Scotland: Whittles Publishing [www.whittlespublishing.com](http://www.whittlespublishing.com), 2023. ix+290 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. UK £30.00, US \$44.95, hardcover; ISBN 978-1-84995-549-2.**

*The Baltic Cauldron* is an English translation of the Swedish book *I Fred och Örlog* published in 2022 to mark the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Swedish Navy. It takes relations between the navies of Great Britain and Sweden in the Baltic region during those centuries as a particular theme. Individual authors contributing chapters are serving or retired naval officers, academic historians, and at least one descendent of a British admiral. Although the listed editors are included, the real drivers behind the book and its translation were two captains from the respective navies, Peter Hore and Christer Hägg, each known for their prolific historical publications and commentary on naval affairs. Any

compilation must necessarily reflect the strengths and weaknesses in writing style and content across a wide range put together in one presentable form. The book delivers a unique celebration of naval achievement from both British and Swedish perspectives.

In twenty-one distinct chapters, the book covers an eclectic selection of topics in a roughly chronological order from 1522 to the present. Sweden is a Scandinavian country that once was a great military and naval power in the Baltic, and now known for its neutrality (at least until the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 when Sweden and Finland applied for membership in NATO). The Baltic Sea is a relatively shallow body of water that cuts across Northern Europe with an opening in the west through straits (Skagerrak and Kattegat) into the North Sea bounded by Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Control over access and trade, as well as the ability of navies to navigate and move through those waters, has underpinned campaigns, operations, and diplomatic relations between countries.

Sweden was a major supplier of timber and other raw materials used in the building of British ships, which brought the Royal Navy there. The Great Northern War (1700-1721) forced Sweden's Karl XII to solicit help and assistance from Great Britain and the Netherlands to ward off incursions from an alliance of Denmark, Saxony-Poland, and Russia. Admiral John Norris led several expeditions with mixed results. Swedish shipbuilding during the eighteenth century, according to Thomas Engevall, drew from British and indigenous influences, represented by Frederick Chapman's versatile and effective gunboats. Andrew Lambert joins Christer Hägg to provide a biographical overview of Captain Sydney Smith, a trusted advisor to King Gustav III during the 1788-90 Russo-Swedish War, and his influence during naval actions that culminated in a great victory for the bottled-up Swedish fleet against the blockading Russians. Entering into the Napoleonic period, the next chapters focus on Vice Admiral Lord Nelson's lopsided victory over the Danes at Copenhagen and aggressively keeping the Swedish fleet in the fortified Karlskrona anchorage and Swedes, impressed and volunteers, who fought at the celebrated Battle of Trafalgar where the Royal Navy won a resounding victory over the French. Another very substantial chapter written with Eric de Saumarez, a peer in the British House of Lords and direct descendent of Vice Admiral Lord James de Saumarez, details British strategy and operations in the Baltic that saw a phoney war between Great Britain and Sweden carefully managed by the admiral's diplomacy and tact. France eventually invaded Swedish Pomerania as Napoleon's armies marched on Moscow throwing the Russians onto the defensive. Saumarez led the Imperial Russian fleet out of the Baltic through the straits to find refuge in British ports.

Chapters in the book's second half start from the Crimean War through the

nineteenth century when Sweden developed a policy of neutrality in European political and military affairs. King Oscar I (1799-1859) was tempted to join the British and French, but declined the offer of receiving the Ålands islands (he wanted all of Finland) in return and stayed neutral in the war against Russia. Derek Law provides a quick overview of Swedish naval developments and British naval operations in the Baltic up to and including the First World War and afterwards against the Bolsheviks during the Russian civil war. The Royal Navy aggressively attacked the Russian fleet in its main base at Kronstadt with aircraft and motor torpedo boats. The next chapter details the British seizure of Swedish Italian-built destroyers at the Faroe Islands travelling to Sweden during hostilities in 1940 and their return after diplomatic protests, which Commander Torsten Hagman in charge of the Swedish squadron handled with grace and forbearance to save lives (but destroyed his reputation and future career prospects by doing so). Attempts to track and locate the German battleship *Bismarck* in Swedish waters during its foray into the Atlantic to prey on Allied shipping during 1941 is recounted including the role of Captain Henry Denham, the British naval attaché in Stockholm, in collecting and forwarding timely intelligence. Two chapters by Peter Hore examine British efforts to smuggle ball bearings and other critical manufactured goods from Sweden to Great Britain by sea, and thwarted planning for a Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm attack on Luleå to impede or stop iron ore exports to Nazi Germany, which meant for the air crews either ditching at sea or internment in Finland. Christer Hägg sleuths time spent in Sweden by Lieutenant Christopher Dreyer, an expert with extensive wartime experience in fast motor torpedo boats, who received a Swedish knighthood for assisting in the organization and direction of coastal forces, a particular strength of the Royal Swedish Navy. In the post-war period, according to Thomas Engewall, Sweden looked to Great Britain for technological advances in radar, ship design, marine propulsion (especially gas turbines), damage control, and anti-aircraft missile systems. Sweden procured a midget submarine through a personal relationship between the Swedish Navy's chief Vice Admiral Stig H:son Ericson and First Sea Lord Admiral of the Fleet Louis Mountbatten, the *Stickleback* (X-51) renamed *Spiggen*, Swedish for the same family of fishes. Christer Hägg provides biographical descriptions of some Swedish naval officers who took leaves of absence to serve in the Royal Navy gaining professional experience and sea time otherwise unavailable in the Royal Swedish Navy and its limitations on promotion and advancement. Carl-Johan Hagman narrates the background behind the Iranian seizure of the British-flagged *Stena Impero* belonging to a Swedish tanker company transiting the Strait of Hormuz, under the nose of a British frigate, and the repercussions until its final release through diplomatic channels. The last section by Admiral Lord Alan West, a former First Sea Lord

and Chief of the Naval Staff (2002-2006), reflects on the book's chapters and the import for relations between Great Britain and Sweden in the application of sea power.

The Scottish publisher has done an admirable job on the format and layout of the book. The pages are printed on glossy paper that provides clear and nicely presented text as well as the many colour illustrations and photographs. Christer Hägg's painting of the Swedish coastal defence ship *Sverige* graces the front cover, reproduced with the permission of Eric de Saumarez. A useful index covers names of ships and people. The book is recommended for readers interested in naval history and military affairs in the Baltic region touching upon Great Britain and Sweden in the naval sphere.

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**Felipe Fernandez-Armesto. *Straits: Beyond the Myth of Magellan*. Oakland: University of California Press, [www.ucpress.edu](http://www.ucpress.edu), 2022. 361 pp., illustrations. US \$29.95, cloth; ISBN 978-0-52038-336-4. (E-book available.)**

The incomparably brilliant historian of the exploration of the world's salt waters has provided yet another feast for the serious and inquisitive student of that strangely unique epoch when the world was about to become one in a geographical sense and yet strangely largely unknown, awaiting further discoveries that would indeed continue well into the twentieth century and beyond. The quest continues for such knowledge—and it may never be complete. “What possesses man to explore?” our author asks. What drove the Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan to quest for sponsorship in the rival Spanish court to propose reaching the Moluccas Islands (or more likely, the Philippines) by way of a western, then unknown, strait that would take his ships into a wider sea—the Pacific, he called it—that would then carry him, his ships and crews to isles of fortune already known? Magellan gave no intention of wanting to circumnavigate the world: that was laid upon him inadvertently by many another writer and mythmaker. Magellan died in battle on the island of Mactan. One of the officers he had been obliged to bring to heel, so to speak, Juan Sebastian Elcano, was the one who brought home the storm-damaged *Victoria*, a caravel or *nao*, smallest of the quartet of vessels that had set forth for the far side of the world.

Magellan is ripe fruit for a biographer's appetite. Armesto makes clear that he has been preceded by all sorts of charlatans, exhibitionists, circus promoters, and the like. He traces, in his conclusion, how Magellan has been strangely and inappropriately presented: early humanists adored him;

the Spanish took him as one of their own; the Portuguese despised him; tensions between Spanish and Portuguese interpreters resonate after all these years. Magellan is like the first man on the moon, a magnet for adulation and attention. But the real story, the true account, is disclosed by Armesto. He does not fabricate; he does not magnify; he keeps to the records. A biographer of Magellan is far better blessed than any biographer of Sir Francis Drake, who was the first to command a ship in a circumnavigation. Magellan had with him a reliable scribe, an excellent observer, Antonio de Pigafetta, who survived the voyage and came home to his hearth, to compile his account. Various editors, some recent, have given us authoritative editions of this account. Magellan left no record to speak of though, and for our edification, many persons followed his progress, decline and death, and the author is exquisite in treating all these appraisals with the judicial composure that is his mark of trade.

To Elcano went first glory of global circumnavigation but it is to Magellan, the protagonist and promoter, that we are always drawn, and justly so. Who are the prime movers of history? Magellan, certainly; Drake also. Cook was a creature of the Admiralty, Franklin an independent spirit willing to take risks in his three Canadian Arctic quests. Hearne, Pond and Mackenzie are “top of the tables” as to initiatives taken. And so it is that the myth of Magellan lives on, or are we being too critical here? As our learned historian and biographer tells us, the Magellan story has been overplayed, is full of inaccuracies, is full of struggles for primacy among officers and men. All of that is true, and more besides: how did the officers and crew survive scurvy? How did justice prevail aboard ship in the low latitudes of the South Atlantic when no rules applied, no articles such as developed in the seventeenth century in say the Royal Navy or other navies existed? Did the commander in chief have judicial powers? Could he hang murderers? Could he set them ashore as outcasts? What were the judicial rules well beyond the long reach of Spanish authority, where, indeed, the Portuguese possessions were about to intrude? On the far side of the world, the Treaty of Tordesillas divided a murky world of islands strangely competed for by two Iberian kingdoms. It is in all, entirely fascinating.

Professor Armesto’s grasp of these matters is buttressed by profound knowledge of the literatures, English, Spanish and Portuguese. He weaves this grand narrative through the scholarly literature (much of a very recent date), demonstrating complete mastery of the subject. In short, this book is a delight to read, not just as a way to show Magellan’s many faults and shortcomings, but by showing to us how the history of exploration in this very naïve and formative period, the earliest sixteenth century, needs to be reexamined. Many a biography of Magellan will succeed this book, but it is hard to imagine one that would exceed it in knowledge of sources, interpretation of evidence,

and examination of the speculative, delivering insightful commentary and demonstrable narration and analysis of the highest order.

Barry Gough  
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**Robert Gaudi. *The War of Jenkin's Ear. The Forgotten Struggle for North and South America, 1739-42*. Pegasus Books (Distrib. by Simon & Schuster), [www.pegasusbooks.com](http://www.pegasusbooks.com), 2022. xix+364 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. US \$18.95, CDN \$25.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-63936-296-7.**

There are some unusually named wars in the long list of human conflict—the Aztec Flower Wars, the War of the Golden Stool, the War of the Oaken Bucket, the Ragamuffin War, the Pastry War, and the War of Jenkins' Ear. It's a safe bet that most lay people have not heard of any of these, but the quirky names never fail to provoke interest. That makes these wars attractive subjects for popular historians seeking a catchy title and a New York publisher.

Among such is Robert Gaudi, a writer and journalist living in Washington, DC, whose bona fides include pieces for *The Washington Post* and *Harper's* as well as the 2017 book *African Kaiser*, which the *Literary Review* called "superb." Gaudi's foray into the War of Jenkins' Ear is the result of a trip to the Georgetown Flea Market, where he discovered a "tarnished" (xiii) medallion in a glass case hawked by "a large, shaggy man wearing a Hawaiian shirt." (xiii) The medal commemorated Spain's surrender of Cartagena (now part of Colombia) to Britain's Admiral Edward Vernon in 1741. Priced too high for Gaudi's pocket, the relic nonetheless stirred his interest, and he started researching the surprisingly robust market for Admiral Vernon medals. This led him into the broader topic of the war with the funny name, that Gaudi would learn, "wasn't funny at all." (xviii)

The War of Jenkins' Ear lasted from 1739 to 1742, but the incident that inspired its name took place eight years earlier off the coast of Cuba. A Spanish *guarda costa* vessel, captained by the cruel Juan de León Fandiño, overhauled a British merchant ship under the command "of a tough, choleric Welshman by the name of Robert Jenkins." (1) The Spaniards boarded the helpless merchantman and accused Jenkins of smuggling. He swore that he wasn't, but it made no difference. Fandiño's men ransacked the vessel and subjected Jenkins to painful tortures that included hoisting him into the rigging and dropping him through a hatch where he smashed into a water cask. Fandiño concluded the nightmare by cutting off Jenkins' left ear and threatening to do the same to King George II if the British didn't stick to legitimate commerce.

Gaudi is a skilled narrative historian, and he makes good use of his colourful topic, painting the broader background and introducing the reader to the issues, personalities, and battles that make up his canvas. Not surprisingly, eighteenth-century scribblers, versifiers, and cartoonists had a field day with this story, and Gaudi enlivens his text with their efforts. The mid-19th-century Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle gets credit for the war's name, though he called it the War *for* Jenkins' Ear. This gives Gaudi the perfect opening to get in a dig at modern historians, "who like to suck the juice out of everything," for labeling the conflict the Anglo-Spanish War of 1739.

The war's root causes included Britain's insistence on free travel through the West Indies (so drastically denied during the Jenkins episode) and more particularly, its right to sell slaves in the Spanish colonies; Spain's complaints about British loggers in Central America; and Britain's nascent Georgia colony, territory which by treaty belonged to Spain. Once war was declared, Vice Admiral Vernon, affectionally known as "Old Grog," (135) argued that Britain's best strategy involved hitting Spain's American colonies. The war's most famous clashes occurred there, though eventually the fighting spread along North America's Atlantic seaboard and into the Pacific Ocean and China Sea.

Vernon's determination delivered an early triumph at Porto Bello (Panama) where he overwhelmed Spanish defenses with only six ships. His next, larger expedition against Cartagena came to grief, owing to a shrewd defense coordinated by Don Blas de Lezo. Triumphant medals depicting Spanish defeat, like the one Gaudi found at the flea market, reflected English wishful thinking rather than the actual outcome. Practically unknown in the English-speaking world, Don Blas is a revered Spanish hero, called *El Medio Hombre* (half man) for his ghastly war wounds that had taken a leg, a hand, and an eye. At Cartagena, Don Blas remained on the defensive and let the tropical heat and diseases do his work for him. Predictably, the British died in droves, including a significant number of American volunteers. Gaudi is not the first historian to argue that Britain's disdain for and poor treatment of its American contingent at Cartagena, which it viewed as an undisciplined rabble, contributed in at least some fashion to the American Revolution over 35 years later. As it was, Don Blas' successful strategy "saved an entire continent for Spain." (280)

Gaudi excels in his descriptions of the fighting in Georgia and Florida, where "the redoubtable [James] Oglethorpe, philanthropist, soldier, parliamentarian, reformer, friend to the poor, father to the Indians and founder of Georgia," (168) capably defended Britain's buffer colony against Spain and its Indian allies. Unfortunately, he failed in two attempts to take St. Augustine because of bad leadership, divided command, and poor cooperation with the navy.

The War of Jenkins' Ear lacked a definitive finish, instead fading into

“the ongoing War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748)” (316). Gaudi, like most other historians, chooses to mark its end with Admiral Vernon’s return to England in 1742. He notes that Spain won even though Britain held onto Georgia. But the war’s human cost, Gaudi declares, “still astounds.” (317) Nine out of ten Britons who followed Vernon died, some 20,000 total. The majority succumbed to yellow fever or malaria, vomiting black bile and shivering beneath thin woolen blankets in stifling ship holds or in meager temporary hospitals landside. As Gaudi demonstrates so well in this fast-paced and readable book, there was nothing funny about that war at all.

John S. Sledge

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**Michael Gillen. *The Vietnam Run. American Merchant Mariners in the Indochina Wars, 1945–1975.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, [www.mcfarlandbooks.com](http://www.mcfarlandbooks.com), 2022. 376 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US \$49.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-8815-2. (E-book available.)**

In mid-November 1945, only a few months after the end of the Second World War, the United States-registered vessel *Stamford Victory* arrived at the port of Saigon. She was carrying over 2,000 French troops who had been embarked at Marseilles in late October. Thus began the United States Merchant Marine involvement in the Indo-Chinese/Vietnam conflict that continued on until the *Mayaguez* incident in May 1975. The use of the US Merchant Marine in the long-running conflict in Vietnam, is relatively unknown; but huge quantities of munitions and equipment were sent by the US Government, during 1945 – 1954 to prop up the failing French campaign against the Communist Viet Minh forces. Even during the height of the Korean War (1950-53), the US continued to support the ailing French with ammunition of all calibres, vehicles, weapons and other supplies. When the French abandoned the northern portion of the country, following their disastrous defeat at Dien Bien Phu in early 1954, it was the US Navy and US Merchant Marine who conducted the lion’s share of the evacuation of civilians and military personnel to the south.

Gillen then describes the build-up of US forces in the south to support the anti-communist Diem Government. As more US troops arrived in South Vietnam the logistics burden to support them increased exponentially with the bulk of the supplies and many of the troops coming in by sea. Many ex-Second World War vessels, then in reserve, were reactivated to support the flow of men and material, and this in turn, made these vessels more attractive to attack. There were sporadic sniper attacks as merchant ships transited the Saigon River, but the stakes were raised when the Viet Cong targeted the United States Navy Ship *Card* (a former Second World War escort, or “jeep,” carrier that was

now part of the military Sealift Command and manned by civilian mariners) at the port of Saigon on 2 May 1964. Two Viet Cong personnel moved through a sewage drain to the port and swam out the ship and attached explosives to the hull. The resulting explosion sank the ship (in 15 metres of water) and killed five of her civilian crew members. The ship was re-floated seventeen days later and repaired but the psychological and political damage had been done as North Vietnam claimed a US aircraft carrier had been sunk!

The attack on USNS *Card* had a flow-on effect, which was the increased use of Cam Ranh Bay and Vung Tau as ports and anchorages to avoid the narrow Saigon River. US engineers found Cam Ranh Bay as a “sleepy hollow” with a single stone pier built by the French in the 1950s, but soon turned it into a large, deep-water port with several piers and a nearby airfield. By 1969 there were 549,500 US personnel in Vietnam (not including those from the Allied nations of Australia, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand) and in that year alone, over 15,000,000 tonnes of equipment and supplies were shipped in to support the campaign; 95 percent of this came by sea. As casualties ashore mounted, the US Merchant Marine was not immune from attack. Disease and accident took its toll, but so did the enemy and sadly, some men were killed or murdered by the Viet Cong when on shore leave in port.

The story of the US forces in Vietnam is well known; but the Merchant Marine is hidden somewhat in the background, although without them, the armed forces would not have been able to prosecute the war. The words of General Douglas McArthur rang true in 1945 and then again in 1975—“I hold no branch in higher esteem, than the Merchant Marine. They have brought us our life-blood and they have paid for it with some their own.” This book is extremely well researched with a wide range of primary documents and first-hand accounts used. The author’s own service in the US Merchant Marine in Vietnamese waters adds weight to the narrative. My concerns with the book however are threefold. Firstly this is a hard book to actually read—the sentence structure is at times quite verbose and lengthy, forcing the reader to re-read the text to confirm what the writer is actually trying to say. Secondly much of the text becomes repetitive as the same information is “re-used” time and time again. Finally, the book is more about the US involvement in the Vietnam conflict from 1945-75 with the US Merchant Marine scattered throughout. That said, it is filled with excellent information concerning the US Merchant Marine in the Vietnam War for those interested in this little-known aspect of the war.

Greg Swinden  
Singapore

**James C. Goodall. *Nautilus to Columbia: 70 years of the US Navy's Nuclear Submarines*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2023. 352 pp., illustrations. US \$90.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-47285-650-0. (E-book available.)**

There is no way of getting around one simple truth. Submarines are both mysterious and cool. Designed to be stealthy and deadly, they offer an air of mystery to most people. Meant to operate underwater, as alien an environment as space is to many, these vessels are technological marvels that capture the imagination. Adding nuclear energy, either as a propulsion or weapon system, raises the “cool” quotient. This, however, may be due to the fact that, for many, knowledge of nuclear submarines comes via military fiction and authors like Tom Clancy. Submarines can pique our curiosity but, when nuclear weapons are involved, they can be terrifying.

The problem with writing a history of submarines post-1945 is the tight security restrictions. The start of the Cold War imposed heightened security on many military subjects as America turned its attention to countering the Soviet Union. The presence of nuclear secrets, both in terms the emergence of nuclear power and the presence of nuclear weapons, has buried much of the history of Cold War submarine development behind deep layers of national security. So, when books like *Nautilus to Columbia. 70 Years of the US Navy's Nuclear Submarines* appear, they hold the potential of revealing parts of the nuclear submarine story never seen before. In 352 pages, Goodall presents a history of American nuclear-powered submarines by class. With each class taking up a chapter, and further broken down by submarine, the reader is presented with a stunning array of black and white as well as colour photos supported by some technical details and history. For example, the *Skipjack* class starts on page 44 of the text and includes technical details of the boat itself and a short blurb detailing the significance of the design before going to specific submarines. There is a short technical description of each submarine and then a very brief history with pictures. This is supplemented by chapters on the development of an early reactor, the loss of both the *Thresher* and *Scorpion* and materials on research submarines, the Trident missile, etc. The book certainly looks impressive, but that is about as far as it goes.

While lavishly illustrated and fascinating to look through, the text does not reveal anything that is not already out there for public consumption. The author provides no details of operational patrols or related materials, and nothing here has been newly declassified. The result is an inescapable feeling that this is nothing more than a beautifully appointed coffee-table book, pretty but lacking the solid substance of an academic work. While the illustrations are incredible, the text is only likely to appeal to readers with limited background

in the area since the lack of serious supporting materials reduces its research value.

While I enjoyed the visual appearance of the book and its occasional references, I felt it needed more new material. Most of the naval history community will be more satisfied by other books addressing submarines and the Cold War. I cannot in good conscience recommend the book beyond its artwork.

Robert Dienesch  
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**Geirr Haarr and Tor Jørgen Melien. *The Sinking of the Blücher: The Battle of Drøbak Narrows April 1940*. Barnsley, S. Yorkshire, Greenhill Books, [www.greenhillbooks.com](http://www.greenhillbooks.com), 2023. xvi+419 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, appendices, bibliography, indices. UK £ 29.95, hard cover; ISBN 978-1-74838-875-1.**

In general, unlike many Second World War German actions, the invasion of Norway is still one of the less-studied aspects of that war. Haarr is one of the few historians to address it in detail, and he has gone on to establish a solid reputation as a scholar of the Second World War. In this volume, he has teamed up with Tor Jørgen Melien, who is relatively unknown to the English reading public. Nonetheless, Melien has been the editor of a Norwegian Military Journal for several years and is a veteran of the Norwegian armed forces, having served in several of their forts during the Cold War. The collaboration with Haarr is a logical one since this work focuses heavily on the defiant reaction of the Norwegian forts to the German invasion. The work is published by Greenhill Books, which is an imprint of the well-known Pen & Sword publishing house.

As opposed to Haarr's epic account of the German invasion of Norway, this one focusses on the initial days when Norwegian forces managed to delay the German attack on Oslo, allowing the king and government to escape Germany's clutches. In so doing, the key fortress of Oscarsborg, guarding the watery approaches to Oslo, inflicted a serious blow to the Kriegsmarine (Germany Navy) by sinking the heavy cruiser *Blücher*. As the latest and most recently commissioned heavy unit of the Kriegsmarine, her loss was very significant in more ways than one. While some pundits might be quick to dismiss this work as being nothing more than a publication of out-takes from Haarr's previous works, readers will quickly realize that it is indeed a worthy companion to them.

The first thing that one notices about this work is its attractive, almost matt-finish dust-jacket which features the famous dramatic image of the

*Blücher* heeling over just before sinking and two drawings of the *Blücher* on the back cover. Inside, the authors weave their tale in an introduction and 17 well-written chapters of different lengths, with the last one serving as its conclusion. The text itself is lavishly illustrated with over 200 carefully selected and credited photographs, drawings of the *Blücher*, several maps, appendices, notes, two indices and a detailed bibliography. The latter is proof of the depth of research undertaken by the authors. Additionally, it had a surprise for this reviewer, in that he is listed in it. A minor disappointment is the absence of a recently published biography of General-Admiral Hermann Boehm, the first naval commander of German Occupied Norway. Although Haarr is not known as a ship historian, he has clearly taken the time to familiarize readers with the more technical aspects of the *Blücher*, as well the other ships that steam across his pages. The drawings of the *Blücher* itself are the work of the well-known illustrators Antonio Bonomi and Abram Joslin. Unfortunately, the large drawing of the *Blücher* presented in the text spans over the spine of work which distorts some details of her mid-section. In addition, one may quibble with the authors' explanation for the main armament of the *Emden* being mounted in single 5.9 cm guns. This was a decision forced on it, as opposed to the non-availability of twin mounts.

Not surprisingly, once they have described the construction of the *Blücher* and the evolution of Kriegsmarine, the bulk of the first chapters focuses on the relations of the warring parties with then-neutral Norway. While the authors mention a number of naval incidents that led to the German decision to invade Norway, they strangely ignore the *City of Flint* incident. Even more puzzling is their radio silence about the thesis expounded by a retired German Admiral who had argued that Germany should have countered the British distant blockade by invading Norway in the First World War. This is not new, as these topics were also essentially by-passed in Haarr's previous works on the German invasion. From there, the stage is set for a description of the *Blücher*'s tragic and epic voyage through the Drøbak narrows. The remaining chapters provide a lot of details on the status of the Norwegian forts and the decision to resist the invading German fleet. It is not surprising that the authors dedicated this work to the commander of Oscarsborg whose actions ensured that the Norwegian government and Royal Family escaped Oslo to eventual exile in England.

The concluding chapter is well balanced and covers the controversy that erupted when the German Army (Wehrmacht) claimed that its soldiers had been inadequately instructed on ship board evacuation procedures, and worse had been left to their own devices by the *Blücher*'s crew. The author's comment that the *Blücher* should not have been there in the first place is poignant and telling, as are the many errors in planning and general lack of forethought which marred this invasion. Among others, these include the decision to

use her as a transport for not only Wehrmacht personal, but also for their essentially unprotected munitions. Furthermore, they significantly mention the misgivings that Admiral Hermann Boehm had about the difficulties Germany would encounter in getting the Norwegian populace to accept the occupation.

Overall, this is an excellent work that shows that good naval history is about more than the ships and the military commanders at the heart of its story. It more than illuminates a forgotten aspect of the Second World War and is highly recommended. It certainly helps to cement Haarr's place among historians of this conflict and is an auspicious beginning for Tor Jørgen Melien's career as a naval historian.

Peter K. H. Mispelkamp  
Pointe Claire, Quebec

**Brian Lane Herder. *Osprey Campaign No. 392: Early Carrier Raids 1942*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2023. 96 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. US \$25.00, CDN \$33.00, UK £16.99, paper. ISBN 978-1-47285-487-3.**

The Japanese attack on American and British possessions on 7 December 1941 broadened the Second-Sino-Japanese War into a Pacific War and also combined the separate European War and the now-Pacific War into the Second World War. In particular, the infamous Japanese surprise attack on the US Navy (USN) base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on 7 December 1941 caused major damage to the USN, sparked outrage in the USA and caused America's entry into the Second World War.

The USN's aircraft carriers were at sea on that date and were, fortunately, spared from the Pearl Harbor attack. The carriers' survival, coupled with the damage to the US Navy's battleship fleet, forced the USN to rely on its carriers. For two months after Pearl Harbor, the USN mounted few offensive actions. But beginning on 1 February 1942, slightly less than two months after Pearl Harbor, the USN mounted a series of carrier raids against Japanese installations in the South Pacific. These consisted of one or two aircraft carriers, surrounded by escorts, staging a brief attack on one or more Japanese-held islands. The series of raids lasted two-and-a-half months, and ultimately lead to the epic carrier battles of the Coral Sea in May, 1942 and Midway in June, 1942. These carrier raids have been little-chronicled by historians and are not well known, even to students of the Pacific War. With his addition to *Osprey Campaign No. 392*, Herder corrects this omission and fills in this little-known but important part of the early Pacific War.

It took the USN two months to regroup and develop strategies for offensive action in the Pacific. An early attempt to relieve the US base at Wake Island

was aborted. The first carrier raid occurred on 1 February 1942, when the USN aircraft carriers, *Enterprise* and *Yorktown*, accompanied by escorts, struck Japanese installations in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. Those raids were followed on 20 February 1942, when the carrier *Lexington* attempted a raid on the Japanese base at Rabaul. That raid was aborted when a Japanese bomber group unsuccessfully attacked the *Lexington*. On 24 February 1942, the *Enterprise* and its escorts struck Japanese-held Wake Island with a combined air and offshore bombardment attack.

March 1942 saw the last true USN carrier raids: the *Enterprise* attacked Marcus Island on 4 March, which was only less than 1,000 miles away from Tokyo. On 10 March *Lexington* and *Yorktown* attacked Japanese bases at Lae and Salamaua in New Guinea. That last raid was a success; the USN sank 13 of 18 Japanese ships berthed at Lae and Salamaua. The author only mentions the last carrier raid—the famous Doolittle Raid of April 1942, when normally land-based bombers took off from the USN carrier *Hornet* and attacked the Japanese mainland, including Tokyo. Many books, including a volume in the Osprey Campaign series, have been written about the Doolittle Raid. Adding that raid to others would have been repetitive.

All these USN raids inflicted little real damage on the Japanese war machine; true retribution for Pearl Harbor would come later. The raids did give the USN operational experience and confidence in its capabilities. And the USN was fortunate in another way; the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Force (IJNAF) units in the areas the USN attacked were not usually equipped with the A6M Zero fighter—the best carrier fighter in the world at that time—but rather, with the older, A5M fighter. Had the IJNAF units had Zeros, the results of the raids would have been disastrous for the USN at that point.

Herder's book is well-illustrated with many good charts and maps of the actions, photographs, a chronology, profiles of the opposing commanders, a good narrative of USN and IJN operations between 7 December 1941 and February 1942, detailed analysis and narratives of the raids, the aftermath of the raids and the battlefields as they are today. One point the author makes: USN carrier aviation at that time had three aircraft types: the Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter, the Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber, and the Douglas TBD Devastator torpedo bomber. While the Wildcat and Dauntless were excellent aircraft and proved their worth in many future actions, the Devastator was obsolete, generally ineffective, and equipped with substandard torpedoes.

The narrative ends with the 4 March 1942 raid mentioned above. Herder's chronology includes the Doolittle raid and the Battles of the Coral Sea in May 1942 and then Midway, in June. Those three actions brought an end to the initial USN campaign in the South Pacific. Thereafter, USN action shifted to the Solomon Islands campaigns. Herder makes it clear that far

from being passive for the period between Pearl Harbor and the Doolittle Raid, the USN reorganized, undertook several useful operations, and gained valuable operational experience. This book, therefore, fills in a little-known but important part of the early Pacific War and is highly recommended for students of the Pacific War and naval operations in general.

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**George Hodgkinson. *A History of Ship Launches and Their Ceremonies*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Transport, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2023. 344 pp., illustrations, notes, glossary, bibliography. UK £25.00, US \$49.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39904-945-0. (E-book available.)**

The birth of a ship at its launch can be compared by some to a child's nativity. "The dangers, the risks, the anxiety, and the impossibility of dress rehearsal, the excitement and the final drama at the launch or at birth are in common. That is where the similarities end." "She moves; and all the hearts of the spectators are moved with her. What solemnity; what concern; what solicitude is depicted on the confidences of the gazing thousands point, but she enters the watery element; enters slowly, but safely and majestically." (17) The launch is accompanied by a variety of rituals and traditions that reflect the era and place of the inaugurating event. Every ship launching is unique bringing its own challenges. Beforehand, one must evaluate all weather conditions, the weight of the ship, the declination and environment of its way, and the strength of the tide into which the hull enters the water for the first time. At this point, an impressive anonymous body made of wood, metal or more unusual materials ceases to be an inanimate object. In the maritime world, it almost wondrously becomes a "her."

When a hull slides into water for the first time, actions are sparked that are based on a vast collection of fears related to seafaring. A talisman of blood, wine or other liquids may be needed to symbolically protect ship and crew from the wind and wave. This requires a ceremonial experience, one to summon divine powers to protect her from unseen evil spirits, the subjects of countless and varied myths. Superimposed may be patriotic rituals such as cannon salutes or the performance of a nation's national anthem figuratively giving the hull the strength and character of the nation under which she will serve. All these ceremonial events are reassurances according to local and national traditions based upon sentiments that involve religion and/or superstition.

Hodgkinson leads his readers through a bewildering series of launching ceremonies through millennia starting with the ancient seafarers from Babylonian, Phoenician, Greek, Roman and Viking times. These events

included human and animal sacrificial letting of blood, through the more benign Indian Hindu *puja*, the breaking of a coconut, the ship builder's or owner's attempt to appease the gods. The various approaches for dealing with superstitions have generally evolved to the discharge of wine over the bow, deck, or stern, depending upon each nation's traditions. This could be performed by throwing an ornate silver cup containing wine overboard, smashing a glass bottle containing a precious liquid, or sprinkling salt and blessed bread or corn on the vessel, each being symbols of protection, perpetuation, and prosperity.

The author next addresses two questions, who and how. The first people who launched and named vessels were the local hierarchy and clergy. In time, perchance because of their lovely lines, ships were considered feminine. Logically therefore, this event evolved to include women who were appointed honorary "godmothers" for merchant ships and "sponsors" for naval vessels all the while each was in use. The ladies usually performed a key role in the launching ceremony and became a "generous friend" to all who served onboard the ship during its "life." In the case of a naval vessel, if the original sponsor died, the responsibility shifted to an exclusive nautical club, a "Society of Sponsors."

The how question had several solutions. The simplest employed the "Noah method," build the ship and then subject it to a flood. Still used today, a special dry dock that is later flooded is the way the *USS Constitution* has been repaired and kept afloat over its 227 years of naval service. The next is the use of careful declination of a way, a sloping path into the water over which the hull slides, for either a stern-first entry (especially if the vessel has huge propellers) or a sideways entry, but both can produce a mini-tidal wave endangering spectators ashore. There are several methods for releasing the ship from the stout blocks supporting its keel. Most simply use the so-called "dog shores," which are knocked out by way of sledgehammers or power tools, but a ship launched stern first will encounter a fulcrum point as it enters the water. Therefore, a temporary wooden "fore popper" is needed to support the bow when the stern becomes waterborne, thus supporting the shifting weight of the hull forward. Drag chains are needed to slow the hull's velocity, preventing her from running ashore on a far side bank, or too far into a harbour. Historically, in some countries, commemorative silver-plate ware, or special jewelry are made for the occasion, like rings, ornate hammers and chisels later stored in wooden launch caskets, or ornate axes made as keepsakes for the launching person or construction company

Hodgkinson relates all sorts of launch histories, including oddities like launching the hull in halves and joining the parts later. An untoward event at launch meant that if the vessel encountered later calamity, it was blamed on the launch and the ship was said to be destined to be an unlucky ship.

(On a contrary note, in 1797 the frigate *Constitution* required three tries to be launched and one was postponed because it the third was scheduled for a Friday, a superstitiously unlucky day. The USS *Constitution* went on to an illustrious career and is still afloat.) Also noted were launches that went wrong: a ship breaking in half because the “fore popper” failed; capsizing after entering the water; sweeping guests on the reviewing bleacher into a harbour by the launch back wash; etc. The many “horror stories” make a fascinating read. They include lifeboats in the Royal National Lifeboat Service, launches and international politics and a host of launch and naming ceremonies.

In summary, *A History of Ship Launches, and Their Ceremonies* is scholarly and perhaps unique in the maritime history genre. Hodgkinson drifts away into a few superfluous anecdotes, but the book is not only stimulating and well-researched, it arms the reader with all sorts of surprising “who knew?” information. This reviewer highly recommends this book for any maritime historian’s library.

Louis Arthur Norton  
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**John Jordan (ed.). *Warship 2023*. Oxford and New York: Osprey-Bloomsbury, [www.ospreypublishing.com](http://www.ospreypublishing.com), 2023. 224 pp., maps, tables, illustrations, notes, reviews. US \$60.00, UK £45.00, CDN \$80.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-47285-713-2. (E-book available.)**

*Warship 2023* represents the latest edition of a naval technical history annual dating back four and half decades since the original publication. It has become a recognized source for those seeking details about individual warships and classes across different time periods—design, rationale, building, armament, propulsion, operational deployment, and other characteristics. Actual content and subjects rely on submissions solicited from individual contributors and selected by the editors. Many of those contributors appear from annual to annual and are acknowledged experts in their fields. John Jordan, himself an author of several books on warships in the Marine nationale and in connection with the Treaty of Washington, and a noted illustrator of ship line drawings, has been editor of the beloved annual since 2004. The assistant editor is Stephen Dent, another long-timer less one year.

The annual follows a standard format with little yearly deviation. This edition has ten contributions devoted to historical topics and one contemporary naval piece, written by individual authors and graced with original photographs from their collections and other repositories. John Jordan also provides side line drawings for certain ships in some of the contributions, as he has done in the past. A short warship notes section provides further details on abbreviated

topics not normally warranting a full article, like that in the journal *The Mariner's Mirror*; and remains among the most popular features among regular readers. A section reviewing books published from the previous year by individual reviewers in the community appears toward the end. Heavily naval-focused, some of those books are the same reviewed in *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord*, and tend to be roughly the same length and comparable in approach. A photograph gallery, in this edition focused on the Imperial German Navy 1890-1918 drawn from a private collection, rounds out the content. In effect, *Warship* resembles a journal in an annual format, without the peer-review and much more focused on the narrow field of naval technical history, albeit with an international focus. The *Warship* annual series is always an eclectic collection of contributions and the 2023 edition is no exception. For the purposes of this review, it is useful to group the contributions nationally (though they neither appear in that order nor chronologically in the book). The first contribution by John Roberts details the slow loss of HMS *Audacious* to a German sea mine in October 1914. Despite determined battle damage control efforts, loss of power for pumps and flooding through entry points that undermined watertight bulkheads sealed the fate of the British battleship before it could be towed back to base for repair. Peter Marland describes electronic warfare systems in the Royal Navy from the late Second World War up to 2010, stretching the definition of “postwar.” Advances in computing power and miniaturization influenced onboard outfits dedicated to surveillance, interception, jamming, and direction-finding, the British adopting quite a bit of American-type equipment. Philippe Cresse profiles the French battleship *Masséna*, among the one-offs in the French navy’s 1890s construction programme, examining its armament, machinery, equipment, and operational usage. After bouncing between the Mediterranean and Atlantic, the flawed and increasingly obsolescent *Masséna* was put into reserve status, suffered an accident beyond profitable repair, and was sunk as a breakwater off the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915. Jean Moulin and John Jordan recount the first two purpose-built aircraft carriers introduced into the Marine nationale (the earlier *Béarn* was a conversion from a surplus battleship hull) during the 1950s that in service flew off and recovered rotary aircraft, jet fighters, and helicopters up to the late 1990s. *Clemenceau* and *Foch* incorporated several innovative features based on American and British experience in construction, design, and aviation arrangements. Air-delivered nuclear weapons were embarked on the French aircraft carriers from 1978. Hans Lengerer examines the transfer of the Yokosuka navy yard in Japan from French to Japanese management and adoption of British types of warships in the transition from iron to steel. The addition of graving docks and building slips accommodated the growth of Japanese sea power and the repair and conversion demands associated with the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese

War and the 1904-05 Japanese War, the narrative taken up to 1912 with the end of the Meiji Era. Kathrin Milanovich covers the technical details of three Takasago class protected cruisers ordered after the Sino-Japanese War to a design by Sir Philip Watts of Armstrong, Elswick. Common characteristics for each of the three warships are provided, and timelines for their operational service as well. Sergei Vinegradov shows the repurposing of guns taken from the *General Alekseev*, an Imperial Russian battleship on the side of the Whites in the civil war against the Bolsheviks that ended up at Bizerte in the French colony of Tunisia. Some guns gifted by the French were installed in Finnish coastal defences early in the Second World War, others captured by the Germans were installed in coastal defence batteries in Norway and the occupied Channel Island of Guernsey, and three naval guns were put onto railway carriage mountings and used by the Soviets and the Finns forming a type of mobile coastal defence. Stephen McLaughlin analyzes Soviet interest in obtaining Italian battleship designs from the private company Ansaldo, especially the Littorio class, as a basis for their own designs and construction during the Stalin years of the 1930s. Deficiencies in Soviet design talent and wild matching of requirements with feasible size and space limitations were apparent. Michele Cosentino surveys the various studies and rationales in the Regia Marina that led to development of a moderate displacement battleship, governed by naval treaty restrictions and a desire to maintain parity with France in numbers, comparable types, speed, and performance. The French fast battleships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg* eventually dictated the laying down of the *Littorio* and *Vittorio*, two modern Italian battleships with, it was hoped, a slight edge. Aidan Dodson and Dirk Nottelmann start the first of an intended two-part contribution dealing with conversions of older warships into flak and anti-aircraft batteries for harbour protection against attacking Allied aircraft. This part examines four hulls, two German and two Norwegian, in various iterations and camouflage schemes, and their operational deployment at North Sea and Norwegian naval bases. Conrad Walters ends the contributions with a look at the current US Navy's operating concept of Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) to meet the perceived challenge of a China with maritime ambitions and the ability to exert sea denial through employed naval forces and land-based weapons platforms over an ever-wide-ranging area in the Western Pacific. The United States no longer enjoys dominance and is trying to reconfigure an existing fleet structure into one that makes better use of advanced command control, autonomous weapons platforms, and a greater number of smaller units. The Chinese, however, maintain the uncanny ability to adapt and disrupt.

*Warship 2023* continues the excellence of the established annual series published by Osprey. Layout and book design are consistently high, and the

photographs and illustrations nicely integrated. The text adopts a two-column format, like some journals. The book is recommended for readers interested in warships and naval technical history, scale modellers, and historical ship enthusiasts.

Chris Madsen

North Vancouver, British Columbia

**Nicholas J. Kaizer (ed.). *Sailors, Ships and Sea Fights: Proceedings of the 2022 'From Reason to Revolution 1721-1815' Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail Conference*. Warwick, UK: Helion & Company, [www.helion.co.uk](http://www.helion.co.uk). 2024. xvi+351 pp., illustrations, maps, tables, bibliography, indices. UK £29.92, paper; ISBN 978-1-804513-44-6.**

This is an edited collection of 14 papers (by 13 authors) presented at Helion & Company's 2022 "From Reason to Revolution 1721-1815 Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail Conference." The volume contains four sections: naval operations in European waters; naval operations in North American waters; naval administration; and social and cultural history of the navy. Nicholas Kaizer has done a superb job of marshalling diverse and fresh insights into the naval history of the long seventeenth century. Conference compilations preserve and disperse the work to a wider audience.

Three chapters provide a revised view of the Spanish and French navies of the era. Albert Parker's first contribution pushes against the long-standing belief that the Spanish navy was an inept and poorly-led force. Using the Wars of Jenkin's Ear and the Austrian Succession, Parker examines the Spanish navy's prowess in three areas: first, their successful convoying of treasure from their colonies to Spain; second, protection of trade between their West Indies colonies and Florida; and third, securing lines of communication in the Mediterranean. His second chapter deals with Spain's and France's support of the Jacobite Rising of 1745. Though the smaller Spanish effort inevitably failed, Parker finds the French action more successful than other historians give it credit, landing troops, supplies and specie. France's failure to invade England undermined the campaign, as did an increased British presence off Scotland in 1746. Parker makes it clear that revisiting these events, especially with Spanish sources, nuances our understanding of these much maligned fleets' effectiveness.

Olivier Aranda examines the French light squadron attacks on British merchant shipping, while protecting their own during the first two and a half years of the French Revolutionary War. Detailing the weak state (from typhus and reduced crew numbers) of four ships in the French fleet at the First of June, he also sees the Glorious First of June as a minor loss pulled from the jaws of

total defeat, more success than failure. A bold position that will be tested by others.

Paul Leyland's convincing chapter explores the importance of Antwerp as a port on the European coast that was vital to Britain's defence. The inability of French ports along the Atlantic to support a fleet large enough to carry an invasion force to Britain doomed the invasion plans of 1744, 1779, and 1803-05. Antwerp was large enough and after 1799 Bonaparte began rebuilding the neglected port, but it never was used to invade England.

Callum Easton fleshes out the difference between the perception and reality of Greenwich Pensioners, by examining the changing image painted for the public, and performing an analysis on a sample of residents. The imagery shift was reflective of public myths about seamen's behaviour, the growing romanticism of the 1830s and 40s and the political need to underline the continuity of the fit and heroic British warrior. Easton's work on the characteristics of the pensioners is a master stroke of data mining, bringing a greater reality to our conception of the pensioners.

Most of the chapters have no direct confrontation with any of the others with the exception of Young's and Krudler's. Andrew Young looks at Admiral George Anson's time at the Admiralty (1751-1762). Anson is portrayed as the change agent in all areas, including better naval signals, building better ships, developing effective sea officers, making the marines a permanent force, and improving food aboard ships. Young suggests that all great British sea officers from Hawke to Cunningham owe a thanks to Anson for developing a strong leadership ethos and powerful navy. He omits Anson's socially-challenged wife and father-in-law's work on the social and political sides of his efforts.

Using the larger social and cultural context, Joseph Krudler paints a different picture, though not focused on Anson. Krudler finds the British navy of the mid-1750s to be unprepared to meet the French. Serious manning issues were complicated by the vast numbers of deaths from disease in 1755, the result of Boscawen's failed mission to interrupt the French replenishment of Canada, and Hawkes' time off the French coast. Dockyards could not manage the flow of supplies, personnel, and captured vessels. Krudler connects this state of unreadiness to the reduction in land taxes and the choices made for spending. His view of the period clashes with Young's.

Jim Tildesley's account of British consul John Mitchell is unique, well researched and written. Mitchell promoted British trade in southern Norway. As consul, he assisted stranded British sailors to return home, encouraged sailors of other nationalities, especially Danes, to desert to the British Navy, and gathered intelligence on French ships along the neutral Norwegian coast. Tildesley assumes that men turned over from one ship to another went willingly (265), but as they had no choice in being shifted to another vessel, they were

something other than volunteers.

Andrew Lyter looks at four Black men who served as pilots on HMS *Poictiers* during the War of 1812. Two of the men escaped slavery in Delaware by rowing out to *Poictiers*. The chapter illustrates the opportunity for Black men to use their sea and coastline knowledge to negotiate a better position within the dominant community, in this case aboard the King's ships. It also is a dynamic part of the larger story of the enslaved who entered freedom by going to the British navy during the War of 1812.

Mauro Difrancesco lays out the evolution of the Venetian navy and naval doctrine, from galley to galleon, focusing on the Second Morean War (1714-1718). The problems of finance, failed leadership, missed opportunities and the vagaries of the weather are woven into a good description of the war's naval engagements.

R. Thomas examines the Halifax naval yard from 1767-1771, in a paper thick with detail. He states the navy was to enforce trade regulations, public order, and use Halifax to maintain its vessels. With smuggling rampant along a coastline favourable for such activity and many willing participants, trade regulation was the major issue. Thomas' use of South Carolina as a test case seems odd, as little smuggling occurred due to the export and coastal trades, rather than import trade. Another colony might have given better evidence.

Thomas Golding-Lee compares Rear-Admiral d'Estaing's failure at the Battle of St Lucia, 1778, with Nelson's victory at Aboukir Bay, 1798. The significant differences between d'Estaing and Nelson aside, the topographic differences in location, with St Lucia's mountainous shoreline versus Aboukir Bay's flat landscape and the resulting winds, influenced the outcomes. Golding-Lee claims that d'Estaing's refusal to fight a close engagement saved his ships for their victory over the British at Grenada, seven months later. Not knowing the future, this was really a serendipitous outcome of the defeat.

Kaizer's chapter on three engagements of the War of 1812 explores the unpreparedness of the brigs/sloops captured by well manned, trained and eager-to-fight American vessels of similar size. It is much like his book which this reviewer praised.

Andrew Johnson reviews the brief Courts Martial Returns between 1812-1818, finding a notably decrease in hangings and extreme floggings in the British navy. He suggests the courts martial were less punitive than earlier. Contrary to what Johnson states, flogging around the fleet (255) took place in response to court sentences, at least across the North American Station during this period. Johnson notes only six courts martial for the loss of a ship to the enemy, but there were eight just for ships lost in combat during the War of 1812.

A comparison of the names for ranks among the various navies appears on

pages xiii-xiv. Unfortunately, where Kaizer gives the French equivalent to rear admiral as contre-amiral (xiii), Golding-Lee and Krudler uses chef d'escadre (132 and 224, respectively). There was a difference between the mid-1700s and the 1790s that could have been noted.

Seventeen illustrations of people and events are peppered throughout the text, as are nine maps. Tables and figures revealing statistical analysis appear in most chapters, but the labelling is barely legible. Each chapter has its own bibliography, though their thoroughness differs widely, as does the use of archival versus secondary sources.

Helion's "From Reason to Revolution 1721-1815" series has published 127 works in the area (a list appears at the end of this book). Kaizer's edited volume is a positive addition to this list and will be of interest to maritime historians of the long seventeenth century.

Thomas Malcomson  
Toronto, Ontario

**Dianne Kelly. *Asleep in the Deep. Nursing Sister Anna Stammers and the First World War.* Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, [www.goselane.com](http://www.goselane.com), and the New Brunswick Military History Project, 2021. 222 pp., illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. CDN \$19.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-77310-1767.**

The history of war is not only the story of warriors and guns. It is also about those who care for the wounded. *Asleep in the Deep* is the story of Nursing Sister Anna Stammers of Saint John, New Brunswick, and the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC). A 1913 graduate of Saint John School of Nursing, Stammers worked two years as a private nurse before signing up with CAMC in June 1915. Anna was one of 50 CAMC nurses to sail from Montreal on the RMS *Metagama* on 4 June 1915, arriving at Plymouth on 13 June after an uneventful crossing. Aware of her family's concern, Anna cabled her aunt in Moncton advising of her safe arrival, news deemed worthy to be reported in the local *Daily Times*.

On 2 July 1915, Anna's first assignment was Moore Barracks near Folkestone, Kent, where she served for eight months. As Canadian troops became committed to battle in France, CAMC established two Canadian Casualty Clearing Stations (CCCS), Canadian Stationary Hospital (CSH) No. 1 and Canadian General Hospital (CGH) in France. Anna was one of nine Canadian nursing sisters arriving at CGH near Étapes, France on 19 February 1916. After treating battle casualties, Anna was granted leave, departing from Liverpool for Canada on the SS *Scandinavian*, 9 June 1917. Although the crossing was uneventful, it was likely worrisome, as the threat from

German U-Boats was much greater than it had been in 1915. Being treated as celebrities, returning nursing sisters were called on to give speeches on conditions in France and attend patriotic events.

Service played a role in the advancement of women's rights as the *Military Voters Act* gave the franchise to all Canadians serving overseas making Nursing Sisters and their families, Anna and her mother and sisters included, the first Canadian women with the opportunity to vote.

Returning to England, Anna was at No. 16 CGH in Orpington, England, by 12 October 1917. In the main, her patients had already received treatment in France and many would be sent back to Canada as invalids for further treatment. Transportation home required hospital ships. Perhaps as a natural sequence in her service, Anna was transferred to the Canadian hospital ship *Llandoverly Castle*, in March 1918. Despite special protection under the 1907 Hague Convention, to which Germany, Britain and all the naval powers were signatories, observance varied over time and among officers. Article 1 of the Convention stipulated that hospital ships were not to be used for any other purpose.

Claims that hospital ships were used for transportation of troops or war materials and for observation menaced vessels of both sides. After sinking a half-flotilla of German minelayers on 17 October 1914, the British captured the German hospital ship *Ophelia* on the claim, upheld by the Prize Court, that it was acting as a signaling ship and had never attempted to act as a hospital ship. The *Ophelia* precedence would be cited by Germany to justify actions against British hospital ships for the rest of the war. On 4 February 1915, waters around Britain and Ireland were declared a war zone. All ships in the zone were declared subject to German attack, although "hospital ships are to be spared; they may only be attacked when they were obviously used for the transport of troops from England to France. On 1 February 1915 a German torpedo narrowly missed the British hospital ship *Asturias*. In 1916 the Russian hospital ship *Portugal* was torpedoed by U-33 in the Black Sea and later *Portugal's* replacement, *Vpered*. British hospital ships torpedoed included HMHS *Gloucester Castle*, *Asturias*, HMHS *Lanfranc*, HMHS *Donegal*, and *Britannic*.

Given the precedent, Anna knew she was undertaking a hazardous duty whenever she boarded *Llandoverly Castle*. On 27 June, on the seventh night of a return trip to Liverpool, a torpedo from U-86 struck the ship at 9:30 p.m., sinking her in ten minutes. The explosion destroyed the wireless and prevented the crew from sending a distress call. Witnesses claimed that seven lifeboats made it safely into the sea. One was sucked into the whirlpool created by the sinking ship, two others capsized. The captain's lifeboat was rescued after 36 hours at sea by *Lysander*. A British sloop and four American destroyers

continued the search, yielding one lifeboat.

All massacres have survivors. Major Thomas Lyon, a Canadian surgeon gave his testimony. The U-Boat commander took Lyon and Captain Sylvester of *Llandoverly Castle* aboard for questioning. After their release, the U-Boat went on “a smashing up cruise among the survivors and by hurling it hither and thither he succeeded in ramming and sinking all the boats and rafts except one...which escaped. The survivors in this boat heard the sound of gunfire behind them for some time.”

The sinking of the *Llandoverly Castle* became part of the Allies’ propaganda war. After the loss, hospital ships proceeded as ordinary transports, with no distinguishing markings, armed and with naval escorts. A trial for war crimes was held in 1920 against Helmut Patzig, commander of U-86. His conviction was quashed in a general amnesty in 1931 and he served as a U-boat commander from 1943-1945.

Anna Stammers was killed in the sinking and is commemorated in her home province of New Brunswick.

The list of New Brunswick Nursing Sisters who served in the CAMC and the bibliography are helpful aids to those seeking to delve further. The index guides readers to facts they want to revisit. *Northern Mariner* readers will appreciate this 222-page book for its insights into the Canadian Army Medical Corps in the First World War and for the shocking details of the perils of hospital ships in that war. The attention to Anna Stammers is intermittent and often seems forced. Stammers left neither diary nor first person narratives from which author Kelly could draw. Sources were generally newspaper articles, military records or other secondary sources from which Stammers’ location and actions could be determined or inferred. I really believe she was featured primarily, or even solely, to provide a connection to qualify the book for The New Brunswick Military History Series of which it is a part. That being recognized, *Asleep in the Deep* has earned its niche in the naval history of the First World War.

Jim Gallen  
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**Richard J. King. *Ocean Bestiary: Meeting Marine Life from Abalone to Orca to Zooplankton*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, [www.uchicago.edu](http://www.uchicago.edu), 2023. xi+308 pp., illustrations, map, bibliography, index. US \$22.50, UK £18.00, cloth; ISBN 978-0-226-81803-0. (E-book available.)**

This gem of a book will introduce readers to a range of birds, beasts—terrestrial and aquatic—and the people who observed, studied, caught, cooked or otherwise interacted with them. A selection of featured animals are charmingly illustrated

by the author: pen and ink-wash drawings swim or fly through the text in each chapter. Mirroring the tradition of Medieval bestiaries, *Ocean Bestiary* presents a compendium of different animals found in nature, including their descriptions, their natural histories, and how they are used or have otherwise interacted with people. Like its Medieval models, which drew moral stories from the lives of real and mythical beasts, *Ocean Bestiary* presents moral lessons that reflect current culture. The author describes how our appreciation of ocean and coastal species has changed, particularly for endangered or over-exploited species, but also for previously misunderstood species.

King's book deftly interweaves episodes in the history of ocean science with historical anecdotes and tales of encounters with the featured animal species to illustrate how they were understood and used in earlier times and to highlight why our views of many ocean phyla have changed. For example, King tells us that thanks to the efforts of mid-twentieth century American biologist Gilbert Klingel, octopuses are no longer seen as "a creature that is horrible, dumb and evil" or even "the devil" (136), but rather, they are admired for their "keen witted" intelligence (141). Yet the capability for a moral interpretation of the beasts' life histories remains: recent authors still see the behaviours of various creatures (including octopuses) as models for human behaviour.

*Ocean Bestiary*, unlike the traditional Medieval bestiary, really focuses on the people who interact with the beasts. While King takes account of the activities of the animals themselves, he dwells, usually admiringly, on the sailors, swimmers, divers, artists, writers (such as Ernest Hemingway), biologists and others who either accomplished stunning physical feats or worked to depict, identify and understand oceanic creatures and their importance. Tellingly, the last chapter, on zooplankton, is really about Rachel Carson, her contributions to ocean science, and her popularizing work and books that helped to spread an understanding of the fragility of a nature faced with the onslaught of industrial humanity. King observes that her writing "was an ocean bestiary, too, in its way, so it is fitting that we nod to her masterpiece to conclude this humble one...." (265).

The content is, as often was the case in Medieval bestiaries, arranged alphabetically, beginning with abalone and ending with zooplankton. There are multiple entries for a few of the letters of the alphabet: for example "H", and "O" garner two entries apiece, while "S" and "T" both merit three. Under "Horse", King does not deal with actual living horses of any variety, such as the horses of Sable Island (which deserved an entry), or even seahorses. By eliding expectations, however, King follows the tradition of including mythical creatures in his *Ocean Bestiary*, and provides readers with unexpected and esoteric information. Rather than treating isolated island horse breeds, the author tells us the origins of "beating a dead horse": horse effigies beaten by

sailors and thrown overboard on nineteenth-century sailing ships to demarcate the annual date on which sailors stopped working for the ship, and began earning wages for themselves. Other entries include diverting and unexpected information about creatures that seemingly have no connection to the entry's subject. Under tuna, King includes a description of how the money cowry was farmed and its supply controlled in the Maldives from around 850 AD onwards through aquiculture. As a former shell-collector and current ocean historian, I was delighted by King's succinct and riveting presentation about these small glossy shells, which formed a cross-cultural currency used extensively across the Indian Ocean, and into Africa and even parts of Europe. The connection with tuna? In the Maldives, cowry production and use was tied to the extensive tuna trade.

It is impossible to summarize the content of this rich and fascinating book. It is somewhat America-centric, yet its subjects straddle the globe, covering both poles and all the oceans in between, and the stories it contains range from ancient to modern times. *Ocean Bestiary* is studded with brief poems, natural history, history of science, anecdotes and stories, most of them charming, that will entertain and educate the reader. While *Ocean Bestiary* is best read in installments, for pleasure, it is also a serious work of scholarship, well-indexed for finding specific information. This is a book for anyone who has an interest in the history of biology, marine biology, fisheries history, seafaring, and environmental history.

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**Angus Konstam. *British Frigates and Escort Destroyers 1939–45*. Osprey Publishing, [www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com), 2023. 48 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. US \$20.00, CDN \$27.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-47285-811-5.**

Angus Konstam has produced a series of like volumes for Osprey on Royal Navy (RN) warships of the Second World War era as well as many others on a wide variety of naval and military topics. His background includes service with the RN as well as a career as a curator of museums in both Great Britain and the United States. This particular book compliments a pair of Osprey titles he wrote on British destroyers during the war. He has not (yet) produced a similar book on corvettes.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, and most extensive, addresses design and development of the warship type; the second briefly explores their wartime employment; and the final section details technical specifications. There is a short bibliography thereafter on recommended additional readings

and an index.

Konstam's analysis of the genesis of the frigate design is well done. The RN was quite realistic as to the nature and likely conduct of any future war with Germany against British merchant vessels as the 1930s unfolded. Unlike Britain's policy stance during most of the Great War, it was determined that in the case of war against Germany, a convoy system would be immediately introduced. What warship design should be developed to defend those convoys was the objective assigned to the Director of Naval Construction in September 1938. By modern standards, a solution was sketched out quite quickly, with an approved design completed by the end of the year and the first batch of ten ships ordered in early 1939. Perhaps inevitably, errors were made, in this case with stability calculations, which was corrected late in the construction process involving some reduction in fighting capability. The first ships, newly labelled the Hunt-class escort destroyers, were commissioned in 1940.

These escort destroyers were powerful and effective warships in the convoy protection role and were highly successful throughout the war. The first batch, eventually totalling some 23 ships, was completed throughout 1940 and into the early months of 1941 and immediately deployed in their intended role. The basic concept in the design was to create 'small destroyers' with smaller crews and rapid construction times so as to economically provide adequate protection for convoyed ships against submarine attack. Prior to the arrival of these first escort destroyers, the backbone of the convoy protection force was delivered by elderly Great War destroyers and the American four-stackers of similar vintage that were delivered as part of the bases-for-destroyers deal in 1940. Coincident with the arrival of the escort destroyers was the corvette design, an even smaller, but also effective, convoy protection warship. Both the Hunt-class, as well as corvettes, were intended to be cheaply and rapidly built as well as simple enough for non-specialised shipbuilding firms to successfully construct them. The first batch of Hunt-class escort destroyers was followed by a second comprising a further 30 warships. This batch benefited from the experience of design weaknesses of the first and were much improved in consequence. The batch two Hunt class were delivered during the second half of 1941, attesting to the speed of wartime construction. Two further batches were developed (Type 3 of 21 ships and a final Type 4 of 2) and constructed over the period of November 1940 to February 1943, when the last ship was commissioned.

The first warships termed 'frigates', now common in warship nomenclature but, in fact, a resurrection of a class of small fighting ships built in the days of sail, emerged from wartime exigencies for yet simpler escort vessels that could be even more quickly constructed. The Hunt class took somewhere between 12-18 months from laying down the keel to commissioning, which

was not seen as fast enough to provide the growing volume of convoy protection warships required. Corvettes were seen as a stop-gap, given their slow speed, poor heavy weather performance, and relatively light armament. Interestingly, the opinion of the shipbuilder who had developed the corvette (based on a whaler design) was sought by the Admiralty, and so was born the frigate concept. This warship involved two powerplants instead of the one in the corvette, was longer, had far better seaworthiness features, possessed significantly better range, was somewhat faster (20 knots vice 16), and able to carry more armament. Hence, the River-class frigate was developed in late 1940 with an initial batch ordered in May 1941 with ultimately 22 ships being commissioned between April 1942 and September 1943. These ships took a little less than a year to build and so saved a good six months of construction time. A second batch of 27 was ordered and completed by February 1944. Improved versions were built as the Loch class, involving 25 ships, and later the Bay class of a further 19, the last of which were completed after the war. A total of some 169 of these escort destroyers and frigates were produced overall for the RN and they contributed mightily to the successful outcome of the Battle of the Atlantic.

All of the classes discussed were heavily armed for their size, including two or three twin 4" gun mountings, pom-pom anti-aircraft guns, torpedoes, depth charges, hedgehogs and squid mortars—the latter two arrived in the last years of the war. Radars, air defence and fire control, were provided from the start, in contrast with the corvettes, and were regularly updated. The ASDIC sets were also improved as the war progressed.

Konstam notes that the Lend-Lease programme provided some 78 American destroyer escorts (note the flipping of the class description) that were slightly smaller than the British designs here noted. These were the Captain class, which were an important addition to RN escort strength during the war, but are not included in this account. Also not included were the ships built by Canada or built in Great Britain but transferred to other navies, such as the Polish and Free French. This is regrettable as it would have completed the picture.

In some ways, these ships were akin to 'hostilities only' naval personnel. They were tightly designed and economically built to one end: the provision of effective anti-submarine convoy escorts. This job they did effectively but they had no capacity of modification or improvements, and their post-war potential was limited. Some did serve in various roles into the 1960s, but most were scrapped within 15 years of the war's end.

Konstam's account is, in common with Osprey productions, brief but informative. He has provided a good overview of the genesis and evolution of the type and sketched out their wartime role and performance. The data

provided is useful for anyone wishing to quickly assess the weaponry installed, along with performance metrics. The brief bibliography provides a good summary of the chief resources for anyone wishing for more to explore. The quality of the illustrations (provided by Adam Tooby) is excellent, as are the photographs selected. I can recommend the book for all who wish a compact and helpful guide to this important class of vessels that were critical to the successful prosecution of the Atlantic War.

Ian Yeates,  
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**Brian Lavery. *Two Navies Divided. The British and United States Navies in the Second World War*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, [www.usni.org](http://www.usni.org), 2023. 613 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index, ship index. US \$60.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-68247-472-3.**

Brian Lavery's name is one undoubtedly familiar to readers of this journal. Over the course of his long career as a historian and curator, he has authored over 30 books on a range of topics connected with Britain's maritime past. His newest book represents a culmination of his many years studying various aspects of naval history. In it he provides a comparative examination of both the United States and British navies during the Second World War, one that addresses practically every conceivable aspect of his subject. From organization and rank to ship designs, weaponry, and culture, all are summarized in a series of chapters that offer side-by-side assessments that highlight their differences and assess their strengths and weaknesses.

Lavery draws from this exercise several valuable conclusions, but what emerges from them collectively is the shift in naval superiority that was underway during this period. Despite a mutual history of antagonism and conflict that left a residual mark on the attitudes of such key figures as Ernest King, the Chief of Naval Operations for the United States Navy, the two sides benefited from a shared past that was reflected in the many similarities in their respective cultures. This helped to bridge the gap in the social and cultural divides between the two countries, which was often reflected in their naval forces. While the cultural differences Lavery describes make for entertaining reading, far more significant were the programs to recruit and train officers and enlisted men for the two navies. Here the perpetuation of Britain's more class-focused society in their ranks contrasts with the broader social intake by the United States Navy, which Lavery suggests was a factor in the greater flexibility demonstrated by American officers in their roles, compared to their more specialized and narrowly-trained British counterparts.

More significant differences emerge from Lavery's comparison of the

materiel of the two forces. Here the Royal Navy proved a prisoner of its past, wedded by its longtime strategy to ship designs, equipment, and logistical support structures that were increasingly obsolete in modern naval warfare, yet difficult to change. This stands out most dramatically in Lavery's chapter on bases and logistics, in which he details the ability of the United States Navy to support fleets over vast distances and conjure up facilities on isolated islands in a matter of days. By contrast, the Royal Navy lost bases rather than added them, which hindered greatly their ability to deploy their forces globally and exposed the limits of Royal Navy vessels during this period. Designed for operations relatively close to fixed shore bases, the loss of key locations reduced their tactical effectiveness, and in the Pacific theatre left the Royal Navy dependent on their American allies to sustain operations.

The disparity in resources was central to the shift in naval superiority in other respects as well. In chapter after chapter, Lavery recounts how British innovations in naval warfare were more fully developed by the Americans, who incorporated them rapidly into their designs and operations. In only one area, anti-submarine warfare, did the British demonstrate a clear lead over the Americans throughout the war, and that was born of the necessity to maintain Britain's supply lines. In nearly every other area Lavery describes—electronics, naval aviation, submarines, minesweeping—the Americans integrated ideas and technologies more effectively into their ongoing tactics and operations. Only in the one area of amphibious warfare were Americans the teacher rather than the student, thanks to their pre-war development of doctrine and specialized vessels.

Such a broad-ranging comparison alone is worth the price of the book, but to it Lavery adds a further comparison of the two forces' enemies and allies. This includes separate examinations of the various Commonwealth forces, with the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) receiving the most attention. Lavery notes the greater desire of RCN officers to establish their force's independence from the Royal Navy, despite their reliance upon the British for ship designs and deployments. Their focus on escorting convoys contrasts with that of the Australians, who by necessity played a more wide-ranging role, with a greater variety of warships involved in a wider range of missions. This reflected the difference in the opponents the author details, as of the Axis powers, only Japan possessed the all-round capability of a modern navy, with all the accompanying challenges this posed for their opponents in the Pacific. Yet even the Japanese could not match the ability of the British and the Americans to wage a truly global naval war. And while the Royal Navy acquitted itself well over the course of the fighting, it was the United States that emerged as the dominant naval power at its end. By comparing the two navies Lavery's book offers excellent insight into the many aspects of this

transition, as well as what each one contributed to the largest naval war in human history. Though errors in detail are unavoidable in a work covering such an extensive range of topics, these are relatively few given its scope and do not detract from the balance of his achievement. With this book, Lavery has provided a unique work that both buffs and scholars of the naval history of the Second World War alike will want on their shelves.

Mark Klobas  
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**Tuuli Messer-Bookman. *Maritime Casualties: Causes and Consequences*. Atglen, PA: Cornell Maritime, [www.schifferbooks.com](http://www.schifferbooks.com), 2023. 216 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, appendices, bibliography, index. US \$34.99, cloth; ISBN 978-0-87033-641-6.**

Maritime accidents, ranging from small incidents to major catastrophes, like the loss of RMS *Titanic*, have always drawn the attention of maritime historians and historical studies on such accidents are simply too numerous to count. It is also a known fact that many such incidents have resulted in changes to maritime safety regulations: the introduction of Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) after the *Titanic* disaster is probably the best-known example.

With the timespan between the actual accident and the respective regulatory change often being several years or even more, the cause and effect relation has rarely been the subject of detailed historical analysis, usually remaining on the level of individual case studies. Therefore, Tuuli Messer-Bookman's book is a most welcome addition to the historiography of maritime accidents and safety regulations. She does not limit her study to any singular accident and related regulatory change, but provides a comprehensive overview on the nexus between maritime incidents and a developing regulatory framework incorporating all kinds of regulatory mechanisms in the field of maritime safety throughout the twentieth century.

The book is chronologically organized and presents in short chapters the most important maritime accidents of the twentieth century followed by a brief discussion of the causes of the accident, and more importantly, the regulatory changes introduced as a result of that event. Given the brevity of individual chapters, the analysis of the accidents does not always provide the full details a maritime historian would hope for, but such detailed analysis of individual accidents was by no means the goal of the book. Messer-Bookman is aiming for a better understanding of the development of the cause-and-effect relation over time, and a more detailed analysis of the individual cases might have even obscured the big picture the author aims to provide.

This 'big picture' tells the story of the development of maritime safety

regulations and how the process was influenced by maritime accidents. It also shows that this development was by no means a straightforward affair, often requiring substantial amounts of time prior to new regulations becoming effective. The reader soon realizes that the development of maritime safety regulations was mainly reactive, rather than part of a precautionary approach. Finally, it can easily be seen that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the issue of equipment and appropriate technology was at the heart of new developments in maritime safety regulations. By the second half of the century, issues of organizational safety and appropriate procedures took centre stage.

Maritime historians will find the index and the two appendices (conventions and codes, timeline) most useful tools. They make the book a reference work where one can quickly determine what changes to maritime safety regulations occurred at any given time, and in turn, making this information easily accessible vis-à-vis various maritime history topics of the twentieth century.

Messer-Bookman's book provides a highly welcome addition to the existing historiography on the development of maritime safety regulations by providing a grand overview of the inter-relatedness of maritime accidents and the development of maritime safety regulations, a cause-and-effect relation that has often been overlooked by maritime historians. Focusing on the bigger picture sometimes comes at the cost of some details, but the book never becomes oversimplified.

Written by a graduate of the US Merchant Marine Academy who also holds a law degree and has worked as a ship's officer, it is no surprise that the book is written in a straightforward technical style which allows easy access to the content even for the non-historian. A small number of illustrations accompanies the text, which, while appropriate, may not really support the text; nor, however, do they distract from the content. With a retail price of US \$34.99 for a hardcover, the book is reasonably priced to be added to institutional libraries, as well as the personal reference libraries of interested individuals.

In conclusion, *Maritime Casualties* can easily be recommended to every maritime historian with an interest in the twentieth century as well as those working in today's maritime industries. Although the book is exclusively focused on maritime accidents, it can and should also be recommended to anybody interested in the development of (international) safety standards in general. It convincingly explains that the development of safety standards was rarely a result of precautionary thinking, but rather the outcome of real-world accidents which had the power to foster the development and introduction of new regulations.

Ingo Heidbrink  
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**Gordon Miller. *Pacific Voyages: The Story of Sail in the Greatest Ocean*. Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, [www.douglas-mcintyre.com](http://www.douglas-mcintyre.com), 2023. xi+252 pp., illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. CDN \$59.95, US \$49.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-77162-347-6. (E-book available.)**

For an artist, or an author, to set out to cover 400 years of sailing history atop a third of the Earth's surface area is ambitious to say the least. Somehow Gordon Miller has achieved this with *Pacific Voyages* by researching, writing, and then illustrating with 10 clear maps and 94 stunningly detailed watercolour paintings a book which is both informative, expansive and highly enjoyable. One suspects from the variation of artwork, subjects from large and small craft, to sea otters that there is a lifetime of effort in this nearly square-foot of colour and content.

That Miller is a sailor is obvious; readers who have crossed this 60-million-square-mile, 11,000-by-10,000-mile ocean will find his description of "ferocious tropical cyclones, treacherous, reef-littered atolls, wearying doldrums and mind-numbing distances" apt. To earn a place in this anthology someone must have crossed or at least voyaged through it—William Dampier crossed it three times, and James Cook at least as many. Fiction writers, Jack London and Herman Melville among them, are not covered, though small-boat stalwarts like Slocum and lesser-known John Voss and Norman Luxton in their 36'9" *Tilikum* (1901-1904) are.

The main focus of this broad book is, as Miller modestly put it, to provide a "tribute to the humble little ships that first ventured across the great oceans... a...selective...story of the European discovery, charting, exploitation of the Pacific Ocean, mostly in small wooden ships." The story sweeps back 60,000 years, giving maps and designs for 36 Polynesian and other vessels from kayaks to massive Japanese junks. Miller then traces the 1291 AD voyages of Marco Polo's family's return voyage from China to Arabia and ultimately Europe. The narrative's main focus is the period from 1519, when Vasco Nunez Balboa built two small ships on the Pacific side of Panama for Hernan Cortez, to the passage of the four-masted barque *Pamir* around Cape Horn under sail in 1949.

As the reader will see, there is a tremendous tableau of material to cover; first are the indigenous canoeists followed by the need to circumvent the Mongols and other landsmen by getting to China by sea. Next we find a focus on Spain, especially Ferdinand Magellan's 1519 voyage to Manilla. We learn that a single "mountain of silver" in Potosi, Bolivia, produced for the Spanish some 60,000 tons of silver starting in 1545, tilting world trade in Spain's favour and forever whetting the appetites of seagoing plunderers in pursuit of the galleons. Then the British, Dutch, French and others jostle for hegemony over

the Spice Islands, and attempt to find Australia—Abel Tasman sailed right around it, finding Tasmania and New Zealand but not the southern continent. The Antarctic was likewise probed by Wilkes, Ross, and many others, we learn of sealing and of Darwin aboard the *Beagle*.

Vibrant details are planted throughout the text, as in that Jacob Le Maire may have killed himself at age 31 after having his discovery of a route around Cape Horn (the Straits of Le Maire) refuted. From there the reader voyages north to the harsh settings of Chukchi Peninsula and the Russian and Pomor expeditions from St. Petersburg to Kamchatka and the Sea of Okhotsk. Between the 1640s up to 1800, men under resilient leaders, like Danish-born Vitus Bering, reported back to Tsars and Tsarinas in the Baltic, and schemed ways across the Siberian Arctic. When Bering was told he was not daring enough the first time, he went back to define the American coast.

Captains pushing scientific boundaries and representing the Enlightenment then cross the vast Pacific seas, Captain Cook discovering Hawaii in 1778 while the American Revolution gained momentum, and Samuel Wallis being the first to find Tahiti, by disobeying his orders in 1767. There follows the *Bounty* mutiny, and the *Pandora* sent to capture the miscreants, stuffing them into a cage on deck (Pandora's box) from which they were only released once the ship wrecked. Captain Edwards sailed just 80 miles from where the mutineers were on Pitcairn Island without finding them; the circle of capture and punishment was closed when two mutineers caught at Tahiti were executed in London.

After conquest came commodities; by literally stripping the fur from sea otters (soft gold), seals, walruses and more, and blubber from whales, sea-hunters nearly exterminated their prey. There are chapters dedicated to clipper ships, tea races, grain races, and many enrapturing stories of close races, designers like Donald McKay in East Boston, and captains who didn't go below for months, as their massive crafts slammed through monstrous waves. The paintings of these bleak, gray, harsh seascapes with ships seeming to be small, are some of Miller's most evocative. We see them struggle to make it through waves shaped like mountain ridges in the Southern Ocean.

Miller's images of ships sharing the sea together, like the China clipper *Thermopylae* keeping up with a motor mail ship RMS *Empress of India* in 1892 in the mist is softer. So are paintings of the French *Doudeuse* finally catching the smaller *Swallow* in 1769, and his painting *We Sailed Together*, in which the British ships *Discovery* and *Chatham* are joined peacefully by two Spanish ships along the California coast in 1792 tells a tale of cooperation. Overall, we have an impression that the Pacific was beset by nations locked in commercial and territorial competition. The book's other focuses are boat building, small boats, the Buccaneer Brotherhood, probing through ice, trade,

and mavericks; those who set out to sail alone for adventure.

One cannot cover all topics equally well; single-handers Bernard Motissier and Francis Chichester are passed over, as is Felix von Luckner and his exploits on SMS *Seeadler* at Maupihaa (Mopelia) atoll and aboard *Kronprinzessin Cecilie* during the First World War. Miller does cover Commodore Anson's wrenching voyage of 1740-1744 well, and the book is not skewed to battles; in one case the Spanish galleon had stowed all its cannons in the bilge and was soon plundered and burnt.

Miller's ten hand-crafted charts are masterpieces, which go a long way to illustrating so huge a sea, and his 40 technical drawings at the appendices each have up to half-a-dozen line drawings. He admirably "draws heavily on the journals of the mariners...and on research by generations of scholars." These include three of Alan Villiers' books and as many by Herb Kawainui Kāne. Of course, some of the speed records, such as 465 miles in 24 hours set by McKay's *Champion of the Seas* in 1854, have been broken; by the women-led *Maiden II* in June of 2002, at 697 nautical miles.

The 94 colour art works are rewardingly original; whether copra schooners on an atoll, ships of war standing off, ships of science or slaughter, or Europeans meeting a Tongan canoe with generations aboard and firing a terrifying cannon, causing those on the smaller craft to toss chickens into the sea and follow them. Miller's masterfully enigmatic watercolour *Saved!* shares the lone sailor's desperation of the subject in Winslow Homer's 1899 oil *Gulf Stream*, also known as *Storm*. The book is replete with human detail, from the suffering of sailors with scurvy on terribly long voyages in which they eat the leather off their boots and blocks, to Magellan having been orphaned at age 11, and Le Maire being one of 22 children born to his prosperous Dutch parents.

This book is well-crafted, enjoyable and enthralling to read. It manages to be as solid as an anchor yet imbued with the colour of the ship *Desire* dressed with blue satin-like sails and uniforms under Thomas Cavendish's command in 1588. Miller tells us she was "displaying a new set of damask sails, her crew grandly dressed in silk and satin as part of the immense treasure captured" on her Pacific voyage. They triumphantly sailed up the Thames aboard *Desire* to the Queen's Palace where Queen Elizabeth went aboard to dine. In *Pacific Voyages*, Gordon Miller delivers what he promises to present: a book which has the elegant lines and speed of a clipper ship, while appearing to have been sailed alone.

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**Eric Mills. *Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War*. Atglen, PA: Cornell Maritime, [www.schifferbooks.com](http://www.schifferbooks.com), 2023. xi+315pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$29.99, paper; ISBN 978-0-7643-3592-1.**

*Chesapeake Bay in the Civil War* explores the American conflict as it played out on the bay and along the surrounding shore. Mills wrote the book to fill the void he found in Civil War historiography about the military actions that took place throughout the Chesapeake Bay region. Originally published by Tidewater Publishing in 1996, and then by Schiffer Publishing in 2010, this 2023 re-publication is the fifth edition of Mills' popular, original work, keeping it accessible to those currently studying the Civil War.

Chesapeake Bay has a coastline of almost 19,000 kilometres (over 11,600 miles), as it loops around points, dips into bays, floods marshes, and mixes with the mouths of five major rivers and countless creeks. It touches on Virginia, the seat of the Confederacy, and Maryland whose conflicted decision to fight with the Northern forces did not totally reassure the Union side. The Potomac River stretched from the bay to Washington DC, a potential invasion route into the Union capital, but also an obstacle to cross. The James River led to Richmond, the Confederate capital, and would be employed in the conquest of that city. The length of and nature of the shoreline encouraged the smuggling of supplies from the North to the South, raids into Union territory, and supplied ambush cover for attacking Union naval vessels as they passed or engaged in coastal raids. For the Union, these same rivers and creeks provided access into the Confederacy, pinning down Southern troops that could have been used elsewhere, and destroying Southern supplies.

The author sets the stage for the naval contest over the bay, by describing the Union's attempts to secure key points along the Chesapeake, in particular at Norfolk, Hampton, and Annapolis. At Norfolk, the Union retreated, burning the ships in the harbour, but not the naval supplies. The Confederates took the supplies into Virginia and raised the surviving hull of the frigate *Merrimack*, turning it into the iron-clad CSS *Virginia*. When the Confederates abandoned Norfolk they burned all the naval supplies but left the vessels in the harbour. Hampton was preserved for the Union largely because of Fort Monroe, just off shore. Annapolis was saved for the Union by a last minute influx of troops and a failed Confederate plan for its capture.

The *Virginia*, as is well known, fought the also iron-clad USS *Monitor* on 9 March 1862, off Hampton. Hours of fighting produced no clear winner; the *Monitor* bore off to assess damage and the *Virginia* sailed back to Norfolk. But the largest, most deadly naval battle in the bay, the Battle of Hampton Roads, occurred the day before this famous encounter. The *Virginia* attacked the Union squadron off Hampton, sinking the USS *Cumberland* and USS

*Congress*. This Union defeat shocked the North and raised hopes in the South. Despite Confederate follow-up attempts to entice the Union to fight another battle off Hampton, the North refused the bait. CSS *Virginia* was finally scuttled off Craney Island on 11 May 1862, as the Union forces were about to retake Norfolk.

The majority of this book describes the many smaller fights, piratical activity, and the Union navy's coordinated operations with the army. An example of a single-boat capture was seizure of the steamboat *St Nicholas* by Confederate troops, who boarded the steamer disguised as regular passengers. One of their leaders, Colonel Richard Zarvona, came aboard dressed as a woman. After surprising the small crew, the captors went searching for a Union ship thought to be nearby. The ship had actually sailed up the Potomac, and so the *St Nicholas* was steered south capturing three Union merchant vessels. On reaching Fredericksburg, the *St Nicholas* became a Confederate gunboat.

What finally determined domination on the bay was the North's creation of the Potomac Flotilla and the larger Atlantic Blockading Squadron, to which the former belonged. Over the course of the war, both grew in size, gained experience, and were eventually able to close down most (though not all) Confederate activity on the bay. It is the stories of the small engagements, and these two squadrons that make this book worth reading.

Mills does a wonderful job explaining the personalities of the various naval officers on both sides of the conflict. Men who, before the war, were classmates in the naval academy, blood relatives, or friends in the same military, now fought to the death in service to opposing perspectives on slavery and governance.

While the book focuses mainly on naval issues and actions, Mills does describe the land campaigns within the area, which were usually, but not always, connected to the naval activity. Mills also deftly describes the political turmoil in the deeply fractured country on the eve of the Civil War. Baltimore, known as Mobtown, was the exemplar of this division, hosting an assassination plot of the newly-elected Abraham Lincoln as he passed through the city to his inauguration, and with its pro-Confederate populace, attacking Union troops headed to Washington. Baltimore harboured Confederate agents who purchased war materiel in the city throughout most of the war. A significant Union Army presence enforcing tight martial rule eventually calmed the rebellious element in the city.

Ninety-one images, many being photographs, depict people, places and events discussed in the text. The line drawings come from contemporary magazines, such as *Harper's Weekly*, which brought battles, generals and the machines of war to the public eye. The most troubling image is a group of Union soldiers whose time as Confederate prisoners left them appallingly

emaciated (235). An outline map of the Chesapeake Bay is found at the very front of the book while three other detailed maps appear where needed within the text.

Mills used official documents, contemporary accounts, memoirs and published records to tell the story of the contest for control of Chesapeake Bay, its rivers and shores. No new references appear after the original publication date. Of the 81 bibliographic citations, only five are from the 1990s. A revised, updated edition would be more useful, though this volume certainly might spur others to re-visit the topic, integrating it into current perspectives on the Civil War. This concern aside, the book will continue to interest those focusing on the Civil War, students of riverine warfare, and those studying significant naval engagements (specifically, the Battle of Hampton Roads and the contest between CSS *Virginia* and USS *Monitor*).

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**Michael Jay Mjelde. *From Whaler to Clipper Ship: Henry Gillespie, Down East Captain*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, [www.tamupress.com](http://www.tamupress.com), 2023. ix+406 pp., illustrations, maps, figures, glossary, notes, bibliography. index. US \$80.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-64843-112-8. (E-book available.)**

Michael Jay Mjelde is an expert on the history of the clipper ship *Glory of the Seas*. Since both his previous books are about the ship, it is no surprise that the clipper ship referred to in this book is the same vessel. The *Glory of the Seas* now, however, takes a secondary role behind the long and varied life of Henry Gillespie.

Born in Portland, Maine, Gillespie's parents owned various saloons, boarding houses, and hotels, a seemingly profitable career path that they would have most certainly expected their son to follow. Thus, in 1874, they must have been more than a little surprised when 17-year-old Henry opted to heed the call of the sea instead. Signing on to a whaling voyage, the young Gillespie would soon not only learn the skills of the trade but start himself down the path that would shape the rest of his career. This long and varied professional life is the focus of *From Whaler to Clipper Ship*.

As Mjelde shows, Gillespie's career was born upon a lie, or more accurately, twin lies. Not only did he tell the captain of the whaler *Wave* that he was older than he was, but he also claimed to have sailing experience, earning him the rating of able-bodied seaman when the ship set sail. Lying about his age was most likely a means to avoid questions about parental permission, while adding credibility to the idea that he had sailed before. Why, let alone how he thought

he would be able to pass himself off as an able-bodied seaman, having never worked on a sailing ship before, must be laid at the feet of youthful optimism. In any case, he was very quickly found to be a most unable hand, resulting in his being reduced in rating and being ridiculed and humiliated in front of, and probably by, his shipmates. Unwilling to continue in the company of this crew, Henry took the opportunity to vote with his feet and deserted the *Wave* at Barbados, though this ill-fated start did not deter him from seeking a career at sea. While he was careful never to list with another whaling ship, Gillespie would spend the ensuing years serving on several sailing vessels, gaining the experience and skills to earn the rank of a ship's officer.

Regrettably, for those who had the misfortune of serving under Gillespie in his early years as an officer and captain, it seemed that the one lesson he took with him from the *Wave* was brutality and degradation. While known as a bullying officer, his general competence resulted in employers generally overlooking his demeanour, and it was only when he was taken to court that Gillespie was forced to reckon with the downside of his cruelty. While he could have lost his career with the lawsuit, Henry's seemingly charmed career steamed onward, and he found himself redeemed via marriage. His wife would often sail with him and actively work to smooth down his most odious habits, resulting in him becoming what could be called an exemplary ship's officer, if not an exemplary person. During this time, Gillespie also moved his primary base of operations to San Francisco. Here, he gained command of the medium-sized *Glory of the Seas* in 1906, a position which Mjelde indicates was the pinnacle of Henry's career. Launched in 1869 as the last ship designed by Donald McKay, a famous marine architect in his own right, the *Glory of the Seas* by 1906 was due to be converted into a barge (the fate of many clippers past their prime). Thanks to the San Francisco earthquake, Gillespie was instead ordered to see the ship refurbished and used to haul lumber down the coast to rebuild the city, allowing the *Glory of the Seas* one last moment in the sun.

Gillespie's nearly fifty-year career as a merchant mariner is the ostensible focus of Mjelde's book. Scratching beyond the surface, however, Gillespie and his career quickly become less subject and more framework for discussing the multiplicity of changes occurring both on and off the water over this period. Most notably, for those interested in maritime history, this was when the use of wooden sailing craft to carry out the marine trades was well and truly replaced by the rise of steam and steel. Men like Gillespie, who had learned the ropes on the older sailing vessels, were forced to adapt to the changing ways or risk being left behind as relics of a seemingly un-mourned past. Gillespie, showing a consistent ability to be flexible as needed, would make this transition. When he ended his career in 1921, it was as the captain of the tanker SS *Swiftsure*, a

12,000-deadweight-ton behemoth that far outstripped ships like the *Glory of the Seas*. While possibly appearing to be of generally niche interest at first, this book will easily fit into most historical collections, enriching them by succinctly summarizing this crucial period.

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**Joseph T. Molyson, Jr. *Six Air Forces Over the Atlantic: How Allied Airmen Helped Win the Battle of the Atlantic, August 1939-June 1944.* Essex, CT: Stackpole Books, [www.roman.com](http://www.roman.com), 2024. xvii+343 p., illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliography, index. US \$34.95, CDN \$45.95, paper. ISBN 976-0-8117-7536-6.**

The Battle of the Atlantic raged from September 1939 until the end of the Second World War in Europe in May 1945. Sir Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister for much of the war, famously wrote in his memoirs, “The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril.” German surface raiders, both heavy naval units and improvised raiders, were contained for the most part by the Royal Navy, but the German submarine campaign initially threatened to starve Britain into submission. Later in the war it threatened to stop the buildup of Allied troops and materiel from the Americas needed for any invasion of Europe.

Joseph T. Molyson served 32 years as an intelligence officer in the United States Air Force, retiring as a colonel. Postings as a liaison officer to the British Royal Air Force, the German Luftwaffe and the Danish Air Force and Navy give him useful qualifications to undertake this book.

His is a popular history of the Battle of the Atlantic, based almost entirely on secondary sources, many of them dated. The six air forces he features are the Luftwaffe, the Royal Air Force (RAF), the British Fleet Air Arm, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), the American U.S. Army Air Corps/Army Air Forces (the name changed in 1941) and the U.S. Navy aviation. He compresses the story into 300 pages of text and explanatory tables, presented as 43 short chapters.

There is much to enjoy in this account, but also much which could have been improved. Molyson is at his strongest dealing with the technological aspects of the Battle of the Atlantic. His chapters “Finding a U-Boat” (Ch. 31) and “Killing a U-Boat” (Ch. 32) are clear expositions of the problems involved. His explanation of the POBRY manoeuvre (204-207) to pinpoint a suspected submarine with air-dropped sonobuoys, accompanied by a diagram, is excellent, but then he omits to explain the acronym—Purple, Orange, Blue, Red, Yellow—the order in which the sonobuoys were to be dropped.

He uses 34 sketch maps to great advantage to highlight and situate the narrative. Some are adaptations of maps from other secondary works, but the most successful are those he has composed himself. He also uses tables and diagrams freely, most of them to advantage to amplify the text. His repeated tables of convoy codes at different periods of the war, however, could have been condensed into one table as an appendix.

Rather than concentrate on some of the best-known convoy battles of the North Atlantic, Molyson provides some individual stories of lesser-known aspects of the anti-submarine war. One is the duel of the U.S. Navy blimp K-74 with German submarine U-134 in the Florida Straits in July 1943, which saw the blimp shot down and one crew member lost to sharks before a rescue vessel arrived.

He also recounts the story of a long-range, meteorological flight on 6 June 1944, by a converted Halifax bomber of No. 517 Squadron, RAF, piloted by Canadian Flying Officer Eddie Aveling, which ditched in the North Atlantic after two engines failed—a little-known D-Day casualty.

The biggest problem with this work is lack of balance. Although the work purports to discuss the roles of six air forces in the Battle of the Atlantic, the German Luftwaffe gets the most attention. At the same time, Molyson takes pains to point out how bad decisions made by Hitler and Hermann Göring, the head of the Luftwaffe, contributed to Germany's failure to develop naval aviation, which would have contributed to the U-boats' eventual success through reconnaissance and protection.

By contrast, the five other air forces lack the same detailed discussion, with the role of the RCAF treated in just two paragraphs. Although there are a few references to Canadian operations in the text, there is no discussion of the role of the RCAF in the North-West Atlantic.

The author rightly credits the RAF's No. 120 Squadron Very Long Range (VLR) Consolidated Liberators for their role in closing the mid-ocean air gap, but fails to mention RCAF efforts to acquire VLR Liberators and deploy them into the air gap during the critical summer of 1943.

The book has a number of technical problems, although this reviewer's copy is noted as being uncorrected page proofs. The problems start with the front cover. According to the list of illustrations, it should feature a Grumman Wildcat fighter launching from the escort carrier USS *Core* in April 1944. Instead it portrays a Curtiss SB2C Helldiver bomber with no carrier in sight, apparently in 1941. Hopefully, the final cover matches the author's list.

Most of the other illustrations are presented as a block of 12 pages following p. 167. They are muddy photographs, nearly all of German aircraft or German activities. The sole photo of an Allied aircraft shows an American B-24D Liberator, not the VLR variant, and fails to show any of the air to

surface vessel (ASV) radar aerials so instrumental in the anti-submarine war.

This book will appeal to the casual reader who wants a concise history of the Battle of the Atlantic, particularly one focussing on all the participants. The many maps and tables summarize the conflict usefully. Aviation and naval historians will be annoyed by the many small, needless errors, but may find some new material, particularly related to German maritime aviation.

Owen Cooke

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**John Morrow. *The Naval Government of Newfoundland in the French Wars, 1793-1815*. London: Bloomsbury, [www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com), 2023. xvi+242 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US \$115.00, hardback; ISBN 978-1-350-38317-3. (E-book available.)**

Readers previously unaware that the governors of Newfoundland were, from 1729, senior officers of the Royal Navy and, from 1776, of flag rank, may be just as surprised to learn that this fine new study by John Morrow, an emeritus professor of politics and international relations at the University of Auckland, is not the first full-length examination of what has been referred to as “the rule of the admirals.” The previous work, Jerry Bannister’s *The Rule of the Admirals: Law, Custom, and Naval Government in Newfoundland, 1699-1832* (University of Toronto Press, 2003), is essentially a legal history, and covers the entire period of naval government. Taking advantage of his previous work on Royal Navy admirals, *British Flag Officers in the French Wars, 1793-1815: Admirals’ Lives* (Bloomsbury, 2019), in the present work Morrow focuses on the eight admirals from that group appointed to the post of commander-in-chief at St. John’s, using their terms in office—“seasons” may be more appropriate, as the practice was for them to go home to England for the winter—as the narrative thread around which he structures an account of the government of a group of disparate settlements around the island that did not yet constitute a colony.

Exclusive of the introduction and conclusion, the eight chapters are thematic, with a chronological approach taken within each one. It quickly becomes apparent which governors were energetic and showed initiative, and which ones were not, because the same names, for the same reasons, appear in chapter after chapter. The range of topics examined is prodigious, including, but by no means limited to, such things as the machinations of half-pay admirals striving for a new appointment, disputes over jurisdiction between naval commanders-in-chief and commanders of the local garrison, impressment, mutinies, the involvement of St. John’s mercantile families in British electoral politics, the increasingly anomalous position of the established, i.e., Anglican, church in the face of growing Irish Catholic immigration, and even a proposed

cull of wandering dogs. An entire chapter, moreover, is devoted to the plight of the indigenous Beothuk as they approached their final days. From all this emerges a narrative that is far more a history of the settlement writ large than could ever be suspected by the book's title, and I can express nothing but admiration for the author's ability and effort in this regard.

With respect to that title, it is my view that, on balance, there is in this book much more "government of Newfoundland" than there is "naval," and less still of the "French Wars," which arguably did not in fact involve Newfoundland to a very great extent, at least not directly. The prospective reader hoping to gauge the book's contents on the basis of "what it says on the tin" needs to keep this in mind.

About the only quibble I can make at all about the text has to do with its periodization. The era of the French wars is certainly worthwhile examining, insofar as the governors of Newfoundland were Royal Navy admirals charged with defence of the island, but it is really only the first two chapters that address the specifically naval aspects of their appointments during this period. As for the civil aspects, there was a great deal going on in the years leading up to the wars and arguably even more in the years after, which saw the movement toward the attainment of formal colony status for Newfoundland in 1825. The continuities, both before and after, with the period examined here are far greater than what little change the wartime governors collectively were able to effect. The choice of the years 1793-1815 to focus on, then, appears to have little resonance on the civil side. In particular, the need to break off the discussion after what amounts to little more than a teaser concerning the political agitation that was to follow is a bit of a let-down, but of course a necessary one.

Even more of a let-down is the book as physical object. Although the paper is of good quality, and there is a nice colour illustration on the printed board cover, everything else appears to have been produced with maximum economy in mind. I will not belabour this aspect, but it cannot go unmentioned that the map on p. xv, for which the author expressly acknowledges the source in his preface, is reproduced so poorly as to be all but illegible. This is particularly disappointing in view of the book's hefty price tag.

It is, therefore, to be hoped that at some point in the future this otherwise superb text may be re-issued in a more accessible—that is to say, more affordable, particularly for students—edition, perhaps under the auspices of a different publisher, because it is unquestionably an important text in the field of Newfoundland studies which, given the depth of the archival research undertaken to create it, is unlikely to be bettered in the foreseeable future.

Brian Bertosa  
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**Gene Eric Salecker. *Typhoon Louise vs the United States Navy: Catastrophe at Okinawa, Oct. 9-10, 1945.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. Inc., [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com), 2023. ix+205 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. US \$44.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-9273-9. (E-book available.)**

In his book, *Typhoon Louise vs the United States Navy*, author Salecker explores the deadly impact of a Category one tropical cyclone on ships around Okinawa, Japan. Typhoon Louise struck on 9 October 1945, killing at least 100 personnel and damaging or destroying nearly 400 ships. Although the Second World War was officially over, the United States had continued using Okinawa as a naval base, in preparation for a proposed invasion of Japan. Salecker also examines efforts at early airborne storm warning and tracking.

The book opens with an exploration of the Allies' general situation in the late summer and early fall of 1945. In light of US preparations for the planned invasion, Salecker focuses on the massing of personnel and equipment on and around the island of Okinawa. Despite the book's title, Typhoon Louise was one of a series of typhoons and storms that affected the waters around Okinawa in the latter half of 1945. The author focuses on identifying and tracking them, and their effects on Allied forces around Okinawa. He then examines the plans and contingencies in place to deal with major weather events projected for the area. Next, he relates the experiences of crews on multiple ships, helping readers understand how the size and construction of naval vessels affected their ability to handle adverse weather conditions. Finally, the author explores the aftermath and potential consequences of the series of storms and Typhoon Louise specifically on Okinawa Island and environs. He also briefly discusses the potential impact that Typhoon Louise would have had on the planned invasion of Japan.

The author's use of published documents, studies, and first-hand accounts of the events enables readers to explore the disaster at all levels. The use of such diverse sources also allows readers additional options if they want to learn more about the effect of weather on war, whether they are aware of its implications or not. Newspaper accounts are essential to the author's work and provide personal colour and background to events. The book features a thorough appendix of ships damaged or destroyed during Typhoon Louise, allowing interested readers to investigate the accounts of individual ships more thoroughly.

This is a useful and informative read for students and readers of history on multiple levels. For students exploring the consequences weather can have on navies in the maritime environment, this book provides a good starting point. Those interested in the early history of weather forecasting, and the strengths

and weaknesses of the early methods used, will appreciate Salecker's insights into the shortcomings and evolution of early modern weather forecasting. Even the casual reader can find something useful here. At its core, this book is about people dealing with adverse natural circumstances and events. While it takes place at an important time in the period following the Second World War, it does not explore that conflict in any depth. It provides an unusual access road for readers perhaps less interested in ships and battles. In fact, in some places it reads more like a novel than a work of non-fiction. This is a book about the interaction of weather, sailors, and ships, rather than a technical examination of equipment and tactics. The narrative and action are moved forward by weather, rather than any human-driven outside force.

In an account that will appeal to both serious and casual students of the Second World War, Salecker makes a little-known aspect of the Pacific War accessible and fascinating by illustrating that for the ships and sailors of the United States Navy, bad weather could be just as threatening as actual combat.

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**Jak P. Mallmann Showell. *Dönitz, U-Boats, Convoys: The British Version of His Memoirs from the Admiralty's Secret Anti-Submarine Reports*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Frontline Books, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2022. 224 pp., illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. UK £11.99, US \$29.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-39908-532-8.**

Eighty years after it ended, the Battle of the Atlantic still attracts more than its share of printers' ink. It was the pivotal naval campaign of the Second World War in the West, and one of the few battles that raged throughout this epic conflict. Author Jak P. Mallmann Showell is a well-known author who has published extensively on the naval history of the Second World War, and is considered one of the leading authorities on Hitler's U-boat war. This paperback reprint of his 2013 study, aims to provide readers with a mirror image of the different perspectives of the Royal Navy (RN) and the Kriegsmarine (KM, the German Navy from 1935 to 1945) on the highs and lows of this monumental struggle from each other's perspective.

To do so, he employs two primary sources, one from each combatant. For the RN, he has utilized the previously Top Secret "Admiralty Monthly Anti-Submarine Reports" against which he mirrors the published memoirs of Admiral Karl Dönitz, who commanded the KM's U-boat fleet until 1943 when he was named as the Commander-in-Chief (Grand Admiral) of the entire KM. Despite his enlarged sphere of responsibility, the U-boat war remained the central focus of the Kriegsmarine's war effort. Showell has

broken this narrative into 31 relatively brief sections of varying lengths. The text is buttressed with an introduction, 32 carefully selected images presented near the centre of this volume, a glossary and an index. While the photos do enhance the volume, their provenance is not indicated, although most should be familiar to readers who have studied this conflict. In lieu of a bibliography, the author has provided a selected list of “Further Reading” and an informative “Note on Sources” which should be consulted prior to reading the book. Given the nature of this volume, Showell has prudently indicated the sources for each section whether they originated from Dönitz, the Admiralty, or his own comments. While this mechanism impacts the flow of the narrative, it does ensure that the reader is always well-focused.

Readers should pay special attention to the introduction because its brevity (five pages) belies its importance to the entire narrative. Indeed, it provides a detailed but concise chronology of Dönitz’s career and position with the KM through to his appointment as its head and his subsequent conduct. Somewhat surprisingly, Showell does not fully discuss why Dönitz was even considered for this post, except for the government’s realization of the growing importance of the U-boat arm in the KM. This ignores the opinion of those historians who have argued that Dönitz was advanced as a candidate only for the sake of being able to discredit him by highlighting the deficiencies in his training and experience outside of the U-boat fleet. Indeed, and to his credit, it is obvious that the author was well aware of Dönitz’ relative inexperience. Showell claims that Dönitz was occasionally willing to question Hitler’s position and orders—sometimes to the point of disobedience—but it cannot be said that these disagreements in any way signified a personal distaste for Hitler’s regime. Moreover, although he was seen as a “sailor’s Admiral”, Dönitz seldom interfered with the more macabre aspects of the brutal regime’s policies. He even ignored the court-martial and execution of U-boat commanders who ran afoul of the regime and he never challenged its more egregious acts. Dönitz was well aware of his low seniority within the KM, and much to the delight of Hitler’s propaganda minister, quietly ensured that any old-guard potential rivals to his new position within the KM were quickly and quietly cashiered or retired. On another note, reader’s familiar with Showell’s other works will notice that his opinions on the success rates of U-boats did not change but remained an essential part of his view of the Battle of Atlantic.

For most of the book, Showell relies on the convergence between Dönitz’s auto-biography and the Admiralty’s Anti-Submarine reports and this is the highlight of the work. The ebb and flow between the facts and how they produced different conclusions and divergent deductions is by far the book’s strong suit. Unfortunately, the focus of the text shifts dramatically after September 1943, focusing the last three chapters more on the technology

used by both sides than their day-to-day operations. This highlights the main consequence of the sources Showell has chosen to juxtapose. It might have been better to choose a more contemporary German counterpart to the Admiralty Anti-Submarine Reports. Perhaps Dönitz's greatest failing was his unwillingness to accept the fact that the German Enigma coding machine and its cyphers had been compromised. Although he may have suspected it on more than one occasion, he failed to pursue an alternative coding solution despite concerns raised by even his most trusted U-boat commanders.

Overall, while its unique juxtapositioning of sources offers a unique perspective on the Battle of the Atlantic, this book comes across as an incomplete study. Simply put, while it is still a worthwhile read, it now seems lacking and fails to rank among Showell's best works.

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**Laura Trethewey. *The Deepest Map: the High-Stakes Race to Chart the World's Oceans*. Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, [www.gooselane.com](http://www.gooselane.com), 2023. 241 pp., illustrations, maps, acknowledgements, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-77310-279-5. (E-book available.)**

The 18 maps (typically 1:10 million) of the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the General Bathymetric Charts of the Oceans (GEBCO) published 1977-84 had faint grey lines showing the individual lines of soundings across the oceans from which the cartographers and geophysicists inferred what was between those lines. Those lines indicated that a lot of the oceans had never been surveyed. By 2017, there was the wishful endeavour to finish the mapping of all the oceans by 2030.

Victor Vescovo, a wealthy entrepreneur, was looking for his next challenge after climbing Mount Everest—why not go to the deepest part in the oceans, not just the Marianna Trench, but deepest part in all five oceans of the world? Thus, starts the story. He bought a former US government ship, renamed it DSSV *Pressure Deep*, purchased a brand new Kongsberg Maritime EM 124 multi-beam side-scan sonar, hired a recent graduate from University of New Hampshire's Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping, Cassie Bongiovanni, and started his quest.

The story begins with Bongiovanni's apprenticeship on a similar ship to map an area off the California coast which gave her the experience needed to run the equipment, clean the data, and assemble the data into a workable digital file for submission. The next chapter deals with the size of the idealized project of mapping all the oceans (seawater covers 71% of the Earth's surface)

and the challenges of getting the ship ready. Then the first dive was to the deepest part of the Puerto Rican Trench, which first had to be mapped to locate that appropriate place to dive.

The author diverts to recount how Maria Tharp and Bruce Heezen at Lamont Geological Observatory, on contract to Bell Laboratories, revolutionized the world's understanding of the oceans by illustrating on maps, later published by the National Geographic Society starting in 1967, the existence of tectonic plates. A lot of their work was based on scant bathymetric information and so, when Vescovo went looking for the deepest spot in the Southern Ocean (i.e., south of 60°S), Bongiovanni had to map the entire 600 mile-long South Sandwich Trench. They had some idea where to look because the thickness of the Earth's mantle and the depth of water are revealed in the Earth's gravity field as determined by the orbital behaviour of low-altitude satellites. But the mapped location of the deepest spot was found in a previously undetected branch trench. Bongiovanni figures that she has mapped 265,700 square [nautical?] miles (the size of British Columbia) of ocean, the data for which were sent to an international digital bathymetry depository.

With all this mapping, new features (e.g., trenches and seamounts) were discovered and they needed geographic names. So the next chapter deals with the process of proposing names and having them accepted by GEBCO's Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN). National and indigenous interests sometimes conflict with the proposer's wishes to honour someone or to memorialize an event during the discovery. Trethewey was allowed to observe a ZOOM committee meeting where some of Vescovo's proposals were debated.

But how does one survey 139.7 million square miles ( $362 \times 10^6$  km<sup>2</sup>) by 2030? One way that was proposed was to accept soundings taken by all ships wherever they travelled by "crowd-sourcing". The flaw is that most ships ply the same routes year in and year out. Another way is to loan out sounding equipment to local communities. National charting agencies will take a long time before those areas would reach the top of the "to-do" list. Trethewey reported on visiting the Nunavut village of Arviat to witness the locals carrying out a survey so that the annual supply ships can access the community using modern charts. Another method described is the use of robotic "drones" (72-foot [22 m] boats) sailing the oceans, collecting bathymetric data and transmitting those to processors on shore.

It is not only the deep oceans that need surveying, but also the continental shelf. During the ice age, sea-level was a lot lower allowing habitation in areas not covered by ice. Total bottom coverage by side-scan sonar allows archeologists to recognize possible sites. But these sites are sometimes destroyed by fishers raking the bottom for scallops and other shell fish, and by

looters of shipwrecks.

Once areas have been mapped, people soon realize that there are resources to be had. Manganese nodules also contain nickel, cobalt, copper and rare-earth elements, and range in size from peas to potatoes. The exploitation method is akin to vacuuming the bottom and then dumping the fine silt tailings back into the water where they will remain suspended destroying the living creatures. Some consideration is to release that waste below the level of living creatures—however deep that is!

So what starts out as a book about a man's benign adventure to obtain an entry in the Guinness Book of Records turns out to be a plea that everyone should heed this threat to our fragile marine environment. It is a plea that will have more impact than "climate change".

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**J. Michael Wegner, Robert J. Cressman, and John F. Di Virgilio. "A Pitiful, Unholy Mess:" *The Histories of Wheeler, Bellows, and Haleiwa Fields and the Japanese Attacks of 7 December 1941*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, [www.usni.org](http://www.usni.org), 2022. 336 pp., illustrations, tables, maps, notes. US \$44.95, hardback; ISBN 978-1-68247-602-4.**

This work is the fourth entry in the authors' Pearl Harbor Tactical Studies Series and examines the three primary Army airfields involved in the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. Wegner, Cressman, and Di Virgilio offer complete histories of the various sites, commands, and personnel involved over the course of each airfield's evolution, tracing the background of Wheeler, Bellows, and Haleiwa airfields to provide solid historical context before finally analyzing the attack. Period photographs, tabulated information, and map renderings are all utilized to enhance the text, with extensive notes, a bibliography section, and an index rounding out the work.

The book begins with a preface of naming and terminology notes, an abbreviations list, and a photo credits guide, which are all useful to readers unfamiliar with these aspects or seeking quick reference for the origin of an image without the need for extended information in the captions. From there the text can be divided into roughly three parts, the history of each airfield and the units stationed there, the average life and duty at the stations leading up to the December 7 attack, and an account of the attack itself. The histories of each airfield are addressed independently for clarity, from the establishment of runway spaces through to final disposition in the lead-up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, with period photographs used to illustrate details and changes along with a map showing how the airfields were arranged at the time of the attack.

The focus then shifts into a discussion of life on the bases themselves, covering the arrival of the various units, their evolution over time with the establishment of new directives, the arrival of new aircraft types ferried to the island by the Navy, and the duties of both pilots and aircraft maintenance staff. In addition to covering unit commanders, the authors add the human element of the rank and file as well, often citing the experiences of pilots, enlisted personnel, and even family members to better illustrate the realities of life and duties on the airfields. The authors cover maintenance difficulties and increased training efforts in the face of perceived laxness and inexperience in the months before the attack in detail.

The account of the attack essentially begins in the seventh chapter, which discusses the activities of various Wheeler airfield personnel on 6 December and the morning of 7 December. The viewpoint of the work then shifts to that of the Japanese first wave, offering accounts of the strafing and bombing of Wheeler Field from the attackers' perspective. American and Japanese accounts are then interlaced for a detailed multilevel view of the assault on Wheeler, followed by a chapter detailing the attack on Haleiwa and Bellows. Accounts of the pilots who managed to take to the skies are provided in detail, to include diagrams of the aerial engagements of American pilots Thacker, Rasmussen, Sterling, and Sanders and photographs of damage their aircraft sustained in combat (221, 228-229). The battle's aftermath is thoroughly documented as well, to include the capture of Imperial Japanese Navy Ensign Sakamaki Kazuo and the recovery of his midget submarine just off the coast of Bellows Field on 8 December. Aircraft replacement and refurbishment needs are then discussed, along with the repair of airfield facilities. The work rounds out with coverage of retrospective views provided by surviving veterans over the years, a discussion of letters written on the attack and to the families of those lost, and a reflection on both the memories of remaining veterans and the nature of America's "institutional memory" of the attack as years go by (262).

Only one possible improvement comes to mind, which is to include an appendix detailing surviving traces of the attacks on the airfields, such as the filled craters on Wheeler Field and the field's designation as a National Historic Landmark or the restored P-40B 41-13297 that was present at Wheeler on the seventh. As such, *A Pitiful, Unholy Mess* is an excellent study into the Army Air Corps' Hawaiian airfields before and during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The authors do an excellent job of offering a multi-layered account of the Army airfields that were attacked on 7 December on tactical, logistical, and personal levels, providing valuable research and information to researchers, while also providing many faces and personalities to the names that appear in documentation. Their research is to be commended, and this work is an excellent resource to those interested in the less commonly discussed aspects

of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the evolution of American aviation assets on the Hawaiian Islands, and the human element to the engagement.

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**Margaret Willson. *Woman, Captain, Rebel: The Extraordinary True Story of a Daring Icelandic Sea Captain*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, [www.sourcebooks.com](http://www.sourcebooks.com), 2023. 416 pp., illustrations, notes. US \$16.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-72824-005-3. (Audiobook available.)**

Historian Dan Snow once said that the job of a historian is to tell a cracking good story. Margaret Willson's *Woman, Captain, Rebel: The Extraordinary True Story of a Daring Icelandic Sea Captain* may not reside in the realm of what one might call 'academic history', but if her intention was to tell a cracking good story, then she has largely succeeded.

Willson relates the story of Thuridur Einarsdottir, a nineteenth-century fishing boat captain from south-west Iceland. Thuridur was not a great explorer or a remarkable warrior, nor was she a political leader or agitator (well, perhaps a little bit), but she was a remarkable person who had a quiet impact on the people around her and the communities in which she lived. She was a highly competent fishing boat captain, a gender non-conformist, an amateur 'legal beagle' (what we in Australia might call a 'bush lawyer'), and a reluctant sleuth.

Thuridur travels a common path in her village, going to sea at young age as a trainee deckhand and working her way through the ranks. But she shows an aptitude for seafaring that is uncommon. As her reputation grows, she gets the opportunity to captain a boat, and while it was not unusual for Icelandic women to go to sea in fishing boats during that era, it was unusual for a woman to be made captain. She makes the most of her opportunity, however, and her reputation only grows.

At the same time, Thuridur develops a strong sense of social responsibility and fairness. She goes out of her way to help those members of her community who have suffered some form of injustice. While these are admirable traits, they also lead to her developing enemies. Her enemies' ire increases when she reluctantly assists the local authorities in solving a major crime in the community, which, in turn, becomes something of a witch hunt. Thuridur, despite being guilty of nothing but being a competent, socially conscious woman, becomes an outcast and she is forced to start a new life in a different town.

Willson tells Thuridur's story from birth to death. Her research is based primarily on a series of newspaper articles about Thuridur, originally

published in Iceland between 1893 and 1897. This is supplemented by an extensive pool of other primary sources, which not only flesh out Thuridur's life, but gives us a rare insight into what life was like in regional Iceland in the nineteenth century. It brings a welcome depth to the story and characters, and helps to immerse the reader in Thuridur's world. You also get to read about some interesting, and bizarre, pieces of Icelandic folklore; the spirit Mori, for example, who haunts Thuridur's family for multiple generations and wears the blame for any misfortune that befalls the community, while the concept of 'Demon Pants' is chillingly absurd.

Willson's writing style is very readable. This is not an academic tome nor is it intended to be. Willson tells an interesting story and, for the most part, her style is reflective of that intent. There is, however, an occasional change of language, from a conversational, storytelling style to a more matter-of-fact historical style, and vice versa, which can sometimes be a little jolting. There is a hint of bias in Willson's story as well, often bordering on hagiography. Thuridur is almost faultless in Willson's telling and often the innocent victim of external, malicious forces. This is placed into perspective in Willson's afterword, however, as she notes a trend among historical writers in the latter part of the century towards promoting more rigid gender roles. She describes how Thuridur was effectively written out of history, an occurrence which is all too common with notable female historical figures. Whenever she was referenced, it was in a derisive or dismissive manner with the intent of undermining Thuridur and women like her, who were seen as being too masculine. Willson's book goes some way to redressing that balance.

*Woman, Captain, Rebel* is a thoroughly engaging and enjoyable read, not to mention an enlightening peek into Icelandic culture. Ultimately, Margaret Willson has told a cracking good story.

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**Stephen Zorn. *Tracking the Franklin Expedition of 1845: The Facts and Mysteries of the Failed Northwest Passage Voyage*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, [www.mcfarlandbooks.com](http://www.mcfarlandbooks.com), 2023. vii+201 pp., illustrations, notes, appendices, bibliography, index. US \$ 39.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-9219-7. (E-book available.)**

This work is an examination of the known evidence and prevalent theories regarding the ill-fated voyages of HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, launched under the helm of Sir John Franklin to find the Northwest Passage in 1845. Author Stephen Zorn, noting the increased awareness of the modern public regarding

the Franklin Expedition, due to the discovery of the long-lost shipwrecks and the fictional television miniseries *The Terror*, states that his work is a view into a complicated and incomplete history, consisting of “factual chapters” that rely on existing evidence and discussions of the possible pathways that may have occurred when information is lost, or possibly yet-to-be-recovered from the wrecks of the two vessels (2). Period images of the officers and vessels along with maps and relevant contemporary images are used within the work to aid readers in their visualization of the men and described scenarios, with appendices, a sizeable notes section, lengthy bibliography, and an index closing out the work.

Zorn’s initial chapters focus largely on public perceptions of the expedition and the known information regarding both crew and ships. He occasionally offers a nod to popular culture via references to the 1981 “Northwest Passage” song by Stan Rogers and the 2018 supernatural horror series *The Terror*, but the book is predominately a recitation of facts and recent archival discoveries. The biographies of ship officers vary in their extensiveness due to available sources, but Zorn nonetheless offers good insight into the types of men leading the expedition and their levels of experience. Likewise, he draws upon recently discovered reports and logs to examine some of the known rank and file crew, illustrating the gaps in arctic experience for many aboard. The design and service lives of the vessels are also discussed, to include modifications made in an effort to improve their effectiveness in the arctic environment. Also of note is the comparison between the large heavy sledges favored by the British explorers over more practical Inuit-style sleds, with the all the implied strains and tolls this physically taxing design would have had on the lost crews.

There are many speculative questions throughout the second half of the work thanks to the inherent nature of the topic at hand, as the only currently known written source is the Victory Point cairn’s May 1847 message and its April 1848 addendum. Other information can be gleaned from earlier crew burials, the locations and dispositions of the wrecks, various artifacts found in subsequent searches, and Inuit accounts recorded by said searchers. Zorn methodically goes through the various possibilities regarding routes, crew dispositions, the possibility of cannibalism, and final fates. A wide variety of causes of death are explored, and the discussion of cannibalism evidence on recovered bones combined with Inuit accounts is presented as one of the more definite aspects of the final days of the Franklin Expedition. Discussions of accounts of possible survivors are much shorter, given that it is a field based almost entirely on Inuit accounts from around 1859, roughly a decade after the likely passing of the crews. Zorn’s conclusions point out that there is much that will never be known with certainty, though the ongoing wreck investigations do yield the possibility of material surviving in some form that may shed new

light on the tale of Franklin and his men. The appendices, which follow the main text, help drive home the nature and human cost of this maritime mystery, offering a transcription of the Victory Point messages, a muster of the doomed crews, and the orders of Franklin that launched the voyage into history. A few possible improvements come to mind. The first two chapters, plus Chapters 14 and 17 are each prefaced by a quote later cited in an endnote. Having the attribution directly following it would help the work flow more smoothly. Strangely, there are no images of the shipwrecks in their present state, nor of the retrieved artifacts. Since contemporary images of other sites related to the expedition, such as the Beechey Island graves and campsites are included, it might be worthwhile to include some of the released images of the *Erebus* and *Terror* wrecks to allow readers the ability to observe the relatively intact nature in which they finally settled below the ice along with the artifacts that have been brought to the surface or identified in previous expeditions. There are also occasional random jokes and popular culture references that Zorn makes which readers may not be familiar with or which otherwise jar the narrative (e.g. 22, 113, 133). Elimination of these would aid in the work's flow and elevate its scholarly effectiveness.

*Tracking the Franklin Expedition* is a useful introduction into the existing historiography and viable theories as to the fate of the crews of *Erebus* and *Terror* during their doomed search for the Northwest Passage. Zorn examines the possibilities in a logical manner, presenting what is known early on and referencing those few solid facts to explain the rationale behind arguments. The work does have the possibility of expansion at a future date as excavations of the two shipwrecks continue and more scholarly work is carried out in British archives, which may help in illuminating the mystery. For those unfamiliar with the Franklin Expedition or interested in examining the current understanding of the lost voyage, this is a solid starting point.

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