

the dioramas of Jan Vererstraeten and Jack Carrico, with the former being a highly detailed Riverine Patrol Boat and Command and Communications Boat diorama, and the latter being multiple detailed pieces created using kits from Masterpiece Models. Unsurprisingly, Branfill-Cook includes many of his own creations in this section, offering good examples of kit conversions to represent French and South Vietnamese craft as well as a variety of American vessels.

In terms of possible improvements, several come to mind. As this is a work primarily intended to help model builders, Branfill-Cook's note that profile drawings of conversion type vessels are "highly speculative" and readers should reach out if they have plans should be located in the introduction rather than as an image caption (10). Additionally, at least two of the photographs have incorrect information. One of the 11-metre FOM pictures states that the visible weapon is "not a .50 cal Browning, and is probably a 20 mm Oerlikon," when the weapon is quite clearly an M2 Browning with the early slotted barrel support of the pre-war Colt contracts (11). Another identifies the turret used for the LVT(A)-5 as coming from an M5 Light Tank, when it is actually from the M8 'Scott' Howitzer Motor Gun Carriage (13). Statements like these could lead to unintentional inaccuracies by modelers. The former Japanese junks used by the French are also not covered in the main text, though model suggestions are provided in the availability section, and there is just a single stern photograph of an LSSC when many more profile and detail images exist. The main text also seems heavily broken up by photographs and drawings. This may be the style of the work, but it does affect the flow of information. Finally, all period photographs are in

black and white, even though many colour images of American vessels exist. Said images would be helpful to readers by showing the period colour schemes and markings, rather than just relying on the models in the showcase section.

Riverine Craft of the Vietnam Wars is a decent primer on these vessels and a good reference guide for those seeking to model the Indochina and Vietnam Wars. While the text may be relatively minimal, there is a good selection of images and profiles, especially of the early French conversion efforts often overlooked in the historiography. For modelers, the products section offers a good rundown of available kits paired with commentary on their availability and accuracy, augmented by the stand-alone and diorama builds of the Showcase.

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Donald Collingwood. *The Captain Class Frigates in the Second World War*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Maritime, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2020. 224 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. US \$26.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-52678-223-6. Originally published 1999 and re-released April 2021. (E-book available.)

Overall, this is a very interesting book describing the history of the Captain-class frigates (destroyer escorts) in the Royal Navy during the latter part of the Second World War. The Battle of the Atlantic, and the U-boat peril, often has been described as the only event that really worried Winston Churchill during the war. Without the machinery of war, raw materials, food and troops from the United States and Canada, there was no way of defeating Nazi Germany and it all had to come via the Atlantic Ocean.

The Nazis equally knew that if they could stop this seaborne trade and troop movements, they could prevent a land war on two fronts. Without the Allies winning the battle at sea, there would have been no landings at Normandy and hence, no defeat of Nazi Germany.

Convoy escorts were, thus, a vital part of getting the convoys through and while Britain had the men to operate such ships, they did not have enough ships. Earlier in the war the United States had loaned 50 old destroyers to the Royal Navy to fill the gap, but by 1943, new and more capable ships were required—enter the USS Buckley and Evert class destroyer escorts (DEs) 78 of which eventually served in the Royal Navy. While classified as destroyer escorts by the US Navy they were ‘downgraded’ to frigates by the Royal Navy due to weapons fitted. The ships were classified as the Captain class by the British and took on the names of former Royal Navy captains from the Napoleonic Wars (but with a few from earlier campaigns).

Donald Collingwood’s book was first published in 1999 but recently republished in 2020. Collingwood served as an ordnance artificer in one of the DE’s (HMS *Cubitt*) during the war so had first-hand experience of these ships and easy access to many other ex-Captain-class men. This has its good and bad aspects throughout the book with rumours sometimes becoming fact.

The book is written in an easy-going, conversational style but at times assumes the reader has an in-depth knowledge of Royal Navy techniques, tactics, procedures, practices, equipment, ranks, history and customs. Collingwood’s writing, at times, is verbose and clumsy—using a dozen words or more to describe an event when five or six will do. The book lacks footnotes/endnotes which could have been used

rather than lengthy in-paragraph information. These flaws aside, Collingwood has produced a readable and informative narrative of life at sea in the Captain-class ships on the Atlantic and Arctic convoy routes and the English Channel patrols during the Normandy landings and opening up of the port of Antwerp.

The author undertook extensive ‘hard copy’ archival research in the 1980s and 90s to put this history together but also uses first-hand information from other Captain-class personnel who were present at the many actions in which these ships took part. The story begins in early 1943 with the commencement of ship construction in US east coast shipyards and the overwhelming support provided by the US Navy in getting the ships ready for sea. Certainly, the high quality American food and the onboard living conditions, such as the use of bunks rather than hammocks, were commented on by all who commissioned the frigates. There were often Royal Navy crew shortfalls and some of the frigates were steamed to England by Royal Canadian Navy ‘delivery voyage only’ crews. Many of the ships conducted work-ups off Bermuda before arriving in England where they were assigned to various escort groups.

While U-boats were rarely seen in the mid-Atlantic by late 1943, they continued to attack Allied convoys right up until the end of the war and the Captains saw their fair share of action. On the plus side, the frigates sank at least 38 U-boats (with some wartime ‘probable’ kills not being confirmed until well after the war when German records were analysed). Some were individual ship efforts while others were a team effort and often including aircraft to locate and harass the enemy submarines. During the post D-Day channel patrols several Captains were involved

in night-time running gun battles with German E-boats but only one frigate (HMS *Kingsmill*) was ever credited with shooting down a German aircraft.

The frigates did not have it all their own way. U-boats, mines or enemy aircraft sank or badly damaged 17 of the frigates and while some returned to port, they were ‘written off’ as a constructive total loss and scrapped. Many Captains suffered severe damage due to weather or enemy action but thanks to their very sturdy construction, stayed afloat and were taken back to port for repair. Others did their convoy escort duties with barely a shot fired. Fortunately, apart from actions with E-Boats, they managed to avoid action with German warships as the frigates’ three-inch guns, firing a 12-pound shell, were described by her gunners as next to useless with the shells often bouncing off the hull of surfaced U-boats.

At the end of the European war, some of the ships were prepared for service in the Pacific theatre but the Japanese surrender ended that plan. Most of the ships were returned to the United States in 1946-47 for scrapping under the Lend-Lease agreement. A few, however, were retained for use as floating power stations at various naval bases and one, HMS *Affleck*, was forgotten about and kept up this unsung duty at Tenerife until 1957 before finally being scrapped.

Of the many actions fought by the Captain-class during the war, there is one action that stands out for me and epitomizes the hard life at sea for the men serving in these ships. On 29 April 1945 HMS *Goodall* was part of the escort taking one of the last convoys to northern Russia when she was torpedoed by a U-boat in the Kola Inlet. The torpedo struck the frigate’s forward magazine and blew the entire bow off with the loss of 95 of her ship’s compa-

ny; effectively half her crew. The ship, however, did not sink and she had to be sunk by gunfire, by the Colony-class frigate HMS *Anguilla*, the following day. A testimony to the rugged design and quality construction of the Captain-class—but equally sad as many of *Goodall*’s men died in the final days of the European war and thus did not live to see the victory that they had fought so hard to achieve.

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Richard D. Cornell. *The Chippewa: Biography of a Wisconsin Waterway*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, www.wisconsinhistory.org, 2018. 200 pp., illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. US \$20.00, paper; ISBN 978-0-87020-780-8.

Mariners spend their lives on water—seas, lakes and rivers. Many see, but fewer actually observe the waters, their origins, their flow, their banks and the towns along them. *The Chippewa* chronicles author Richard D. Cornell’s exploration of the western Wisconsin waterway. Over several years he, along with his daughter, KC, and son Drew, canoed it from its headwaters to where it empties into the Mississippi. This is not a linear travelogue with a start, transit and finish. Cornell presents a series of floats that, when combined, encompass the whole river.

The headwaters were a riddle for Cornell to unravel. *Glidden Enterprise* reporter, Pat Bonney, led Cornell to the origin of West Fork, while the beginnings of East Fork are more obscure. What is clearer is that they merge in central Sawyer County. Like many waterways in this part of North America, the Chippewa was formed by the glaciers that crushed and scraped