

of intersecting leisure and labour.

Complementing the photographs are ten short essays, which offer a spectrum of thoughts on the models by their makers, collectors, curators, mariners, poets, and historians. Among the many “whats” and “hows” there are profound observations of the “whys.” Even what constitutes a successful model is different from maker to maker and from observer to observer. For model maker Jim Turple, originally from Pictou Island, the measure was whether it looks decent and floats for kids to play with. William Knight, a scientist, curator, and historian, worked with models used as research instruments in wind tunnels and towing tanks and looks to the crafting and tinkering embedded in science allowing experimentation of design. Writer and curator Peggy Gale, originally from Newfoundland, writes of time never being empty in the seasonal fishery. Winter was a time of making and repairing nets, boats and wharves and even when those tasks were done it was often the making of model boats that was the chosen activity of scarce leisure. For Watson Knickle, a model builder from near Lunenburg, looking at a model enables him to imagine himself aboard the real boat out to sea and that gives him pleasure.

Boat is as good an example as exists of the ability of material culture to tell stories. The one hundred or so model boats in this collection have at least as many stories. Although not a conventional view of nautical history, *Boat* gives a revealing and thought-provoking perspective and is highly recommended.

Harry T. Holman
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

Konstam, Angus. *The Convoy: HG-76: Taking the Fight to Hitler's U-boats* Osprey Publishing, 2023

320 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, appendices, index
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British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said after World War II that there was only one thing that really frightened him during the conflict: the U-boat threat. If the Germans could stop the flow of food, munitions, equipment, and troops to Great Britain, then the war would ultimately be lost. Thus the Battle of the Atlantic was crucial to defeating Nazi Germany. This book by Angus Konstam describes a small but vital part of that six-year campaign.

At first look, the narrative would appear to be a little odd as its focus is on a single Allied convoy from Gibraltar to England in a campaign that saw

thousands of convoys traversing the world's oceans; however, this convoy was to prove that the U-boats could be beaten by new tactics and new weapons systems. Much of the new tactics came from Commander Frederic "Jonnie" Walker, a pre-war anti-submarine warfare officer who languished in the middle ranks for many years due to his criticism of Royal Navy anti-submarine training and equipment – but as the old saying goes, "cometh the moment, cometh the man." Walker commanded the escort ships for convoy HG-76 and he used new and innovative tactics to combat the Nazi wolf-pack system that had previously wreaked havoc on Allied convoys.

The convoy also had with it, for the first time, the "mini" aircraft carrier HMS *Audacity* that had started life as a German merchant vessel. Following its capture in 1939, the vessel was converted to an aircraft carrier to operate four Martlet fighter aircraft (originally bought from the US by the French Government but delivered to the British after the fall of France in mid-1940). The aircraft were ranged on the flight deck (as there was no hangar) and conducted patrols searching for U-boats on the surface and Luftwaffe Condor reconnaissance aircraft. The Condors were based in Southern France and could operate for up to 12 hours over very long distances and radioed convoy movements to the U-boats. The frequent air patrols by the Martlet fighters to locate the U-boats and patrolling Condors disrupted the attacks by stifling the flow of information to the U-boats and forcing the U-boats to submerge and thus lose contact with the convoy. *Audacity's* success also made her a prime target, and she was eventually sunk by a U-boat in one of the last attacks on convoy HG-76. Of note is that among the Fleet Air Arm pilots serving in *Audacity* was Sub-Lieutenant Eric "Winkle" Brown who later became one of one world's best-known test pilots.

The combination of air support from *Audacity*, outstanding leadership and tactical prowess by Walker, and sage control of the convoy by the convoy commodore (retired Vice Admiral Raymond Fitzmaurice) ensured the convoy reached England with only two merchant ships sunk out of 32 ships in the convoy. HMS *Audacity* and one of the escorts were lost but a total of five U-boats were sunk and another badly damaged and forced to return to port (one of the U-boats was sunk by the Royal Australian Navy destroyer HMAS *Nestor* that had been built in Britain and was on her first convoy escort duty). The logistics issues also rate a mention as several of the convoy escorts had insufficient fuel to screen the convoy for the full duration of the journey and had to return to port. Additionally, several of the escorts expended all their depth charges due the constant U-boat attacks and Walker's aggressive tactics.

The author also describes, in depth, the command and control of the U-boats exercised by Vice Admiral Karl Dönitz from his headquarters in the

Villa Kerillon on the outskirts of Lorient. Dönitz and his staff were stretched as they organised and controlled operations in the eastern Atlantic, west coast of Africa, the Mediterranean (after Hitler decided to send submarines to support his ailing Italian ally), and the western Atlantic after the US entered the war following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Equally of concern for Dönitz was the morale and welfare of his submariners, many of whom were tired and well overdue for relief with many U-boats lost due to inexperienced crews or over-worked veterans. The overtaxed Allied convoy escorts also had the fair share of issues as well and Commander, later Captain Walker, died before the war ended due to exhaustion and ill health.

Apart from some minor proof-reading issues this is an excellent book and highly recommended for those interested in the Battle of the Atlantic. For those who wish to further immerse themselves in this topic, I would also recommend watching the movies *The Cruel Sea* for the British point of view, and *Das Boot* for the German experience.

Greg Swinden
Canberra, Australia

**Lardas, Mark; illustrated by Edouard A. Groult. *US Navy Pacific Fleet 1941: America's mighty last battleship fleet*
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80 pp., illustrations, further reading, index

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Osprey Publishing has produced another highly readable and informative book by the prolific US historian Mark Lardas. For the general reader of naval history, the Osprey Series is a good first start, or primer, to understand the basics of what happened when, where, and why.

The US Pacific Fleet was created in early 1941 in response to Imperial Japan's increasingly belligerent posture in Asia and the Pacific region. Its first commander was Rear Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, who was elevated to four-star admiral for the period of his tenure. The fleet was based at Pearl Harbor but its "beat" was the entire Pacific Ocean ranging from the US west coast to the Philippines (but it was expected that in any war with Japan that the Philippines would be "under siege" from day one). The US Navy also operated five gunboats in Chinese waters, and these were ordered by the US Navy to quietly leave in late November 1941 and to steam to the Philippines as US-Japan relations continued to degrade. Wake Island was technically a forward