

with a clear understanding of the battle with far more depth than most would expect. The reader comes away with a good sense of the events and the incredible challenges of operating in this environment. Operating off of Norway at the end of December puts ships and men really at the edge of capability and often beyond it. Even today that kind of climate is a killer of men and ships. Adding a war with U-boats, aerial and surface threats and the result is one of the most hostile situations anyone could face. Discussion of the light conditions and the storms facing both sides leaves the reader with a sense of shock that the operation could even go forward let alone lead to a successful conclusion.

At the same time, the complexity of operations does appear here as well. From the British side, the need to provide escorts for convoys and larger forces in the critical areas to protect a stronger surface force in case of German capital ships presented the admirals with unique challenges. Augmented by ULTRA based on the enigma cypher machine, the British were able to have a more complete intelligence picture of the German threat and were able to plan accordingly. Aware that the Germans wanted to put a major surface unit against the convoys, British planning provided for heavier capital ships in this case HMS *Duke of York* supported by one heavy and three light cruisers and multiple destroyers and smaller vessels. This force was also a multinational force including three Canadian destroyers. In the end the Royal Navy clearly had superior forces at their disposal. In comparison the German navy could field only *Scharnhorst* and five destroyers due to damage to the KM *Tirpitz* which rendered her inoperable. Yet despite the numerical advantages, the ability to read German codes and the expectation of action, the Royal Navy

almost missed the opportunity to sink *Scharnhorst*. Bad weather and equally bad luck can conspire to steal victory from anyone, and it was far closer than most think.

Overall, *North Cape* provides an interesting and fascinating read into the last battle of the *Scharnhorst*. It provides enough information to not only wet the appetite of the reader but a good consensus of the operations without overwhelming the reader. The greatest limitation is that this subject really needs a more in-depth discussion and assessment. This was a dramatic moment that had a huge impact on many things not just the people who fought it. As such it really deserves a larger study. That should not detract anyone interested in this from picking up the book. I think this will be an interesting read for anyone interested in naval history during this period and the little discussed northern convoy operations especially in 1943.

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John G. Langley. *Canadian Confederate Cruiser: The Story of the Steamer Queen Victoria*. Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing, [www.nimbus.ca](http://www.nimbus.ca), 2018. 192 pp., illustrations, appendices, index. CDN \$17.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-77108-660-8. (E-book available.)

John G. Langley, author of a well-reviewed biography of Samuel Cunard, has written a very readable volume about an important and overlooked vessel in Canadian history. Introduced by the author as a compendium of stories, the book centres on the steamer *Queen Victoria* but he provides extensive details surrounding the ship and the events, making this more of a "life and times" volume.

In the 1850s the port of Quebec often depended on steam tugs to assist vessels negotiating the strong currents and dangerous channels between the port and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. At the same time, Trinity House of Quebec, charged with controlling and improving navigation of the river, needed assistance in building and supplying lighthouses along the route as well as providing salvage services. François Baby, a member of the Upper Canada elite, had developed a towing business and when the government called for lighthouse and buoy tenders which could also handle towing, passenger, and freight services he proposed two new vessels. These ships, built in the Napier yard on the Clyde, were the *Napoleon III* and the *Queen Victoria*, twin ships 173 feet long and 30 in breadth with displacement of 494 tons. Both vessels were successful and took advantage of government subsidies as well as funds advanced to Baby to cover the building costs. By 1859, however, accumulated debt against which the ships were mortgage collateral resulted in their transfer from Baby to the government.

Both ships performed a variety of tasks in their role as tug steamers, but as the largest vessels in the provincial fleet, they also carried dignitaries on official tours in the area. In 1866 the *Queen Victoria* sank in a storm off the Carolina coast while returning from an unsuccessful expedition to create direct trade between Canada and Cuba.

Langley covers the vessel's relatively short life in a workmanlike manner but, with the exception of participating in the royal visit of the Prince of Wales in 1860, and carrying delegates to the 1864 confederation conference in Charlottetown, the ship's story is not a particularly stirring one. While these two events inspired reportage, the normal working life of the vessel did not. The

problem is compounded by a dearth of information about the ship. No plans, drawings, photographs or particularly good descriptions of the *Queen Victoria* are known to exist. The handsome illustration gracing the cover of the book is a marine painting of the sister ship, the *Napoleon III*. An illustration labeled as a "Blueprints of the steamer Queen Victoria" turns out to be a conjectural drawing based on a 2015 technical report used to construct a model of the vessel.

Langley acknowledges the research of Rear Admiral H.F. Pullen, who located sources related to the building of the vessel including the specifications. Although lacking source notes, the volume does have a "Selected Bibliography" as well as a "Bibliography." The former is distinguished from the latter primarily by the inclusion of a list of newspaper references. Although the list is lengthy, the lack of Quebec sources, especially French-language publications, is noteworthy, and may have caused Langley to miss important details. For example, in portraying the captain as a hero, Langley appears to be unaware of one eyewitness account of the sinking of the vessel which mentions the captain as conspicuously absent, "during the time the storm lasted, the reflection even, of his benign countenance was not seen on deck." The sinking also involved a strange incident. While the captain of a rescue vessel, which itself was running out of provisions, pleaded with the crew of the *Queen Victoria* to bring supplies for the more than 40 men being transferred from the sinking vessel, the captain of the sinking ship elected to bring in the lifeboats a silver tea service and the 100-pound brass ship's bell. Passengers and crew were saved with only the clothes on their backs.

The story of this bell makes up the last third of the book. The artifact

passed through the family of the captain of the rescue ship to the village of Prospect Harbor, Maine. Attempts to repatriate the bell were made from the 1960s on. It was finally loaned for temporary display in Canada, in exchange for a replica bell being made, a model of the *Queen Victoria* produced and a rental fee of more than \$10,000 paid. While this might ordinarily serve as footnote to the history of the *Queen Victoria*, the negotiations dwarf the story of the vessel itself. There are other diversions as well, such as a full chapter dedicated to the story of the Confederate raider *Tallahassee* which was in Halifax in 1864. The volume is further padded out by an appendix with brief biographies of Canada's Fathers of Confederation.

Langley cannot resist the temptation to over-dramatize the narrative; the tug steamer *Queen Victoria* becomes a "Royal Yacht" (and later an "imperial" yacht) when the Prince of Wales or the Governor-General, step aboard, and the ship's bell is described as "Canada's Liberty Bell" and a symbol of nationhood. The vessel itself, owing to its role in transporting delegates for the confederation conference, is the "flagship of the emerging nation." The somewhat confusing title of the volume is credited to a Charlottetown press account of the ship, although no source is given. The phrase most likely appears in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek report from the *Saint John Morning Telegraph*.

The resulting volume is somewhat unsatisfying from a nautical research perspective. The problem may be that the subject and the available sources have enough content for an article, but perhaps not a book, and it has been lengthened by including a good deal of contextual information of marginal value. Nevertheless, it contributes to the literature by shining a light on the important role that support vessels, pre-

cursors to the Canadian Coast Guard, played in assisting commercial nautical operations and as mechanisms for advancing government maritime policy.

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Michael G. Laramie. *Gunboats, Muskets, and Torpedoes. Coastal North Carolina, 1861-1865*. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, www.westholmepublishing.com, 2021. xii+347 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. US \$30.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-59416-336-4.

Entering an oversaturated market, books about the Civil War need to fit into a particular niche. In *Gunboats, Muskets, and Torpedoes: Coastal North Carolina, 1861-1865*, author Michael Laramie traces naval and coastal battles that defined the Tar Heel State's role in the Civil War. His book follows the war from the seizure of Cape Hatteras to the official surrender of the Confederate soldiers under the command of Joseph E. Johnston to the Union Army and William T. Sherman. The author demonstrates North Carolina's importance in the Civil War, particularly by serving as a breeding ground for new tactics and technologies. Although not a historian by trade, Laramie has a degree in engineering and his experience in the United States armed forces provides him with a unique perspective on military history. He presents a persuasive argument for North Carolina's role in the Civil War that sheds new light on the conflict.

Despite being nearly 300 pages, the book moves at a good pace with chapters roughly 10- to 15-pages long. The author provides thorough and detailed maps and pictures of the places and actors that he describes in each chapter,