

pert in Civil War history would be left unimpressed after reading it.

Charles Cox
Pensacola, Florida

Mark Lardas. *The Glorious First of June 1794*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.ospreypublishing.com, 2020. 96 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. UK £14.99, US \$24.00, CDN \$32.50, paper; ISBN 978-1-4728-3484-3.

Few eras in history have garnered quite the attention from naval historians than the great age of fighting sail. With the release of Mark Lardas' *The Glorious First of June 1794*, one of the most pivotal engagements of the eighteenth century is made accessible to a broad spectrum of maritime history enthusiasts.

The epic sea battle that culminated on 1 June 1794 was a direct result of the global upheaval occasioned by the French Revolution. By the spring of that year, the egalitarian promises of the Revolution had been lost in the Reign of Terror, and an increasingly isolated France was forced to wage war on multiple fronts.

An unexpected famine would only make matters worse. Portions of western France experienced drought beginning in 1793; hostile European powers were unwilling to make up the agricultural shortfalls through trade. In order to ameliorate the food shortages, French authorities launched an ambitious plan to purchase immense quantities of grain from the United States. But in order to successfully cross the Atlantic, the grain convoy would be forced to run the gauntlet of a British blockade.

The grain convoy which mustered in the Chesapeake Bay was estimated at over one hundred vessels. Rather than split the convoy into smaller contin-

gents, French authorities opted to consolidate the ships. Although the vast fleet would consequently create a single large footprint at sea, it was justifiably hoped that the convoy would nonetheless lessen the opportunity for British vessels to locate and pick off individual ships.

The convoy would face a grim opponent in the form of legendary Admiral Richard "Black Dick" Howe. Commander of Britain's imposing Channel Fleet, Howe hoped to intercept the convoy, although his primary focus was the destruction of France's Grand Fleet, which sailed out of Brest.

That fleet was commanded by Rear Admiral Thomas Villaret de Joyeuse. An aristocrat who had survived the Revolution with his head, Villaret-Joyeuse was also a competent career officer. When he was ordered to escort the grain convoy into French ports, Villaret-Joyeuse opted to largely ignore his orders, deciding instead to lure the English fleet away from the convoy, allowing the merchantmen to slip to safety while using his own Grand Fleet as the bait.

Howe, an aggressive combat commander who preferred climactic contests between ships of the line, was only too happy to accommodate. Locating the French, naturally, was his greatest obstacle. The two fleets miraculously passed each other within hailing distance on the evening of 17 May, but due to the presence of a dense fog bank, the two sides never made contact.

British lookouts finally spotted the French fleet on 28 May. The French held the weather gauge, but Howe characteristically ordered his ships to give chase. Although Villaret-Joyeuse hoped to avoid a general engagement, the French three-decker *Révolutionnaire* sought battle, and found it. During an afternoon of epic fighting, the French

ship grappled with five English 74's. Though dismayed, *Revolutionaire* succeeded in slipping away under cover of darkness.

On the following day, the two fleets sparred and jockeyed for position. Still struggling against the wind, Howe finally ordered a general engagement. But due to confused signals and the inevitable fog of war, only a handful of ships engaged. Howe personally led the attack, which degenerated into a disorganized melee. The fight largely resulted in a tactical draw, although Howe succeeded in securing the weather gauge for the next day's fighting.

By 1 June, Howe finally succeeded in bringing his fleet to bear in a classic line-of-battle naval action. After intense fighting, Howe, commanding from the quarterdeck of the *Queen Charlotte*, succeeded in crossing the French line. By end of day, Villaret-Joyeuse's fleet had been badly battered, forcing him to disengage.

Ultimately, both sides would claim victory: the French for having ensured the safe passage of the grain convoy, the British for having badly mauled the enemy fleet. But Britain was clearly in a superior position for the continuing war at sea. The Revolution's frenzied political assault on the French navy, which included the purges of both experienced officers and trained gunners, had badly crippled her maritime capabilities. As the Napoleonic Wars unfolded over the succeeding decade, France was left at a decided disadvantage.

In addition to an engaging account of the fleet actions that took place between 28 May and 1 June 1794, Lardas' *Glorious First of June* constitutes a worthy reference volume on the battle. The book includes an exhaustive order of battle for both fleets, as well as excellent two- and three-dimensional maps that help clarify the chaos that erupted

when the two sides clashed.

This book follows the traditional Osprey template, and includes chapters on opposing commanders, opposing navies, opposing plans, the campaign, and its aftermath. Although Osprey books can't be strictly classified as academic volumes, that caveat by no means detracts from the author's research.

Mark Lardas is a lifelong maritime history enthusiast, prolific author, and knowledgeable authority on life at sea during the eighteenth century. He offers a concise and gripping account of one of the most pivotal, if unheralded, naval engagements during the wars of Revolutionary France.

Joshua Shepherd
Union City, Indiana

Jim Lotz. *Canada's Forgotten Arctic Hero: George Rice and the Lady Franklin Bay Expedition, 1881-1884*. Sydney, NS: Cape Breton Books, www.capebretonbooks.com, 2009. 192 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography. CDN \$14.95, paper; ISBN 978- 1-895415-94-0.

After Henry Grinnell's first expedition to locate Sir John Franklin in 1850, the United States began to direct part of their expansionist interests toward the extreme northern part of the American continent. Most of the daring adventures that characterize the expeditions toward the North Pole during the latter part of the nineteenth century have featured American military officials. Relatively little attention within the mainstream narrative of Arctic exploration has been reserved for people from other countries. The story of George Rice, a Canadian photographer who joined the Lady Franklin Bay expedition in 1881, is a refreshing example.

Jim Lotz, a Fellow of the Arctic In-