

longer book that costs more.

The print edition hits a student-friendly price at the cost of some quality. Signs of this trade-off show up in the production values. More developmental editing could have adjusted the thesis to the argument and smoothed out the detours to the nineteenth century. The 10 photographs in the body of the text would have benefited from gaining permission to use proper publication-quality images. Seven photos are excerpts from archival documents that crop out the context of the rest of the page, meaning they are effectively block quotations that have not been transcribed, paraphrased, and quoted judiciously. Three of the five maps are either pixelated or reproduced too small to be legible. These signs and others – such as é missing from *soviétique* in the title and a title that makes the book sound like a primer when it is not – signal that the publisher prioritized accessibility and speedy printing over spit and polish.

Stephen P. Hay
Ottawa, Ontario

**Ferguson, Bill. *c/o Cunard House, 88 Leadenhall Street, London EC3*
*Whittles Publishing, 2025***

xiv + 193pp., illustrations

ISBN 9781849955829 (softcover) £18.99, US\$24.95

In recent years a good number of mariners' memoirs have been published, and Bill Ferguson's new book is another addition to this genre. From the perspective of the professional maritime historian these books are mainly source material for research within the field of social maritime history, and this book is not an exception. While it obviously does not contribute much to the field of analytical maritime history, it does provide an interesting take on how an individual mariner personally experienced work and life in the British maritime industries and therefore is a relevant source for a thematic field otherwise often exclusively depending on oral history work or reports from outsiders to the industry.

Like with all such reports, it needs to be understood that the book is mainly a reflection on the experiences of one single mariner, and fellow mariners might have put emphasis on completely different aspects. Consequently, it might be argued that for any professional maritime historian the value of this particular book might be limited, but that reading this book together with other comparable books will allow readers to extract a picture that can be understood as representative. In addition, it might be asked why books like this are written, published, sold, and read, and the answer to this question might be

simply that their authors have consciously or subconsciously understood that their personal experience has been different to the experiences of modern-day mariners and thus needs to be documented.

For any book reviewer such books are a challenge as you cannot argue with someone's personal experiences as they are neither right nor wrong, simply authentic. Therefore, this reviewer will not even try to comment on the importance of the book for scholarly academic research but think about potential benefits of the book for certain groups of readers. As already mentioned, for the professional maritime historian it is mainly a source for social maritime history research. For former fellow mariners who have served in the same period, it might bring back their own memories and help them to understand what was common and what was unique to their own experience. For somebody starting to be interested in maritime history without personal experience within the industry, it might be simply a starting point to understand the everyday lives and mindsets of professional mariners. For students of maritime history, it might be an opportunity to dive into the issues of research based on biographical source materials without doing actual oral history work. Finally, for others it might be simply an entertaining read allowing a sneak peek into the foreign world of the maritime industries during the recent past. In the end, the book can be recommended to nearly everybody with an interest in post-World War II British shipping – regardless of its status as an informational or a more casual read.

The text is accompanied by a variety of pictures interspersed into the text, mainly ship photographs, that are especially helpful for the novice to the field of maritime history. If questioned if this is a really important addition to the existing body of literature on maritime history, the answer is probably no. If asked if it is a welcome addition to the book shelf, the answer is probably yes.

Normally, it would be a criticism to note that there is neither an index nor a bibliography, but as the book is mainly an autobiographical account, these omissions might be acceptable. More problematic is the fact that the introduction to the British merchant marine in the mid-twentieth century at the beginning of the book is so brief and generic that it does not provide real background information for the reader not already familiar with the subject, and the reader with some previous knowledge about the industry and its history might question the need for this chapter at all. But as the book is mainly an autobiographical account, this critique remains minor in the end, especially if the book is understood as the author's recollection of personal experiences and not an analytical study. The book is reasonably priced and should be recommended to any library that is interested in preserving autobiographical

materials of former merchant mariners as source materials for social history research into the maritime industries.

Ingo Heidbrink
Norfolk, Virginia

Gimblett, Richard H. and Karl Gagnon. *Guardians of the North: Canadian Warships and Maritime Aircraft, 1910–2025*

Dundurn Press, 2025

xi + 400 pp., illustrations, endnotes, index, appendices

ISBN 9781459755550 (hardcover) CA\$60.00, US\$45.00, £35.00;

9781459755567 (e-book)

This is an excellent book. It offers serious scholarship and research presented in a light anecdotal manner. The casual reader with a passing interest in the navy will find a pleasant read and the student will find useful insights. It is also an important book by reason of its post-1945 discussion; the official history of that period, although completed, is unlikely ever to be published because of the difficulties of the post-2001 reclassification of some US documents. Given its approach of discussing the political and policy origins of classes of ships, this book breaks new ground going beyond collective individual ship histories with which we are all familiar. Likewise, the incorporation of maritime air assets as part of naval forces is also new and important. I vividly remember the intense opposition I encountered when in 1996 I insisted that a municipal Battle of Atlantic service should also honour the maritime air contribution and losses.

The book is divided in three parts of unequal length: ships, shipborne aircraft, and finally RCAF-operated maritime patrol aircraft. The numerous chapters are generally short which means it is easy to “dip” into the book, returning later. Richard Gimblett’s writing is easy and illuminates many colloquial terms once widely known such as the Esquimalt blue boats and “Dunc’s diner.” The “additional reading” provided at the end of each chapter, along with the bibliography, is a very useful feature.

Each chapter begins with Karl Gagnon’s very careful and precise scaled line drawings of the ships or aircraft discussed. They provide a consistent standard of illustration that cannot be found in photographs. It is unfortunate that the academic conventions of attribution in text, that form the basis of comments such as mine – “extensively researched” or “serious scholarship” – do not extend to illustration. The level of detail in Gagnon’s drawings, for example of the early armed yachts or the comparisons of ships pre- and post-