

care spaces. Perhaps this speaks to the instrumental nature of the women's work and mere presence as key to the achievement of the goal of the health care system – healing sailors so that they could continue to serve in the navy. Unfortunately, there were instances of “cavorting” (181) and general disorder (chapter 7) which often saw the blame put onto the women, nurses, as well as the involved seamen.

This work is an excellent example of a well-researched work that brings archives to life while shining a light on previously understudied topics and people of this period. It will be perhaps most of interest to those interested in military health care and socio-economic conditions in early modern England. As a final observation, it should be noted that this very fine volume was recognized with an “Honourable Mention” for the Canadian Nautical Research Society's Keith Matthews Book Award in 2025.

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**Pearson, Judith E. and John A. Rodgaard, eds. *The Trafalgar Chronicle: Dedicated to Naval History in the Nelson Era: New Series 9***

**Seaforth Publishing, 2024**

223 pp., illustrations, notes

ISBN 9781399078085 (softcover) US\$39.95; 9781399078092 (e-book)

US\$19.99

This edition of *The Trafalgar Chronicle* is a superb collection of essays. The theme of this year's *Chronicle* is naval intelligence in the Georgian era, which C.S. Forester called “the age of fighting sail.” Seven of the 15 articles have at least some connection to intelligence. Steven E. Maffeo's overarching piece on “Secret Intelligence in the Age of Nelson” serves as a brilliant introduction to the theme. Evan Wilson's essay on junior British officers making the grand tour of Europe, a requirement for gentlemen to be seen as worldly and for officers to be gentlemen, demonstrates they took the opportunity not only to learn French and go to the opera but also to examine the ships, ports, and fortifications of a potential enemy. The lack of accurate, timely intelligence that caused Admiral Nelson to make several false movements in chasing Admiral Villeneuve's fleet across the Atlantic and back to European waters in the year-long lead-up to the battle of Trafalgar is the topic of Arthur Venn's informative contribution.

The eight non-intelligence essays are a smorgasbord, some focusing on individual people. Natachia Abriat writes about a scarcely known French naval

officer, Baron d'Imbert, a Royalist who went over to the British and established a network of spies in France to try to undermine the Napoleonic regime, only to end up impoverished and distrusted by the returned French monarchy. William S. Dudley's essay concerns a forgotten American seaman, Joshua Penny, who escaped British impressment in the 1790s and hid away in a cave under cliffs on Table Mountain, above Cape Town, South Africa, for 18 months, surviving on nuts and berries and animals that crossed his path. "Bearded and hirsute and dressed in animal skins," he ventured down to the beach, was taken aboard a Danish vessel, and after more adventures crisscrossing the Atlantic, arrived home on Long Island in 1803, after an absence of nine years. Yet his exploits in the War of 1812 led to his capture and imprisonment at Melville Prison, near Halifax, for nine months, until he was exchanged with the direct involvement of President Madison.

But *The Trafalgar Chronicle* is a better production than a mere listing of its component parts suggests. First, it is printed on heavy stock paper and is beautifully and copiously illustrated, including eight pages of color images. Second, the editors deserve credit for preserving the distinctive voices of the authors and for ensuring the essays are not repetitive. Third, it is a joy to read. The essays are short, thoughtful, and well written. Each stands on its own. Readers do not have to proceed in any particular order, which allows the reader to pick and choose what seems intriguing at the moment. Reading *The Trafalgar Chronicle* is like going to an excellent restaurant and being able to sample everything off the menu.

These essays may affect future scholarship. In "The Cost of Wartime Innovation," Samantha Cavell analyzes the Admiralty's decision in 1779 to sheathe the hulls of the entire British fleet in copper, at great cost, and without understanding the science behind electrolytic degradation – but knowing that without copper "bottoms," the overstretched Royal Navy was on its way to defeat. Ironically, corrosion under the copper led to horrific disasters at sea. Within a few years and after much experimentation, brass alloy fittings were adopted, with the result that when the French Revolutionary Wars began, the Royal Navy had a considerable technological advantage over the fleets of France and Spain. Another essay that may affect future historians is David Rothwell's essay on how British naval officers in the West Indies made decisions weighing the terrible risks of tropical disease; among other things, Rothwell provides a thoughtful gradient on the relative importance of sickness in the calculations of commanders.

*The Trafalgar Chronicle* is destined for historians, academics, and those with a broad interest in maritime history in the age of Nelson. But it is the

antithesis of a dry, “academic” book. Without exception, the essays are engaging and the stories they tell are captivating and often dramatic. All in all, *The Trafalgar Chronicle* is a beautiful production.

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**Pietrek, Matt and Alexandre Gabriel. *The Rum Never Sets: 300 Years of Royal Navy and London Dock Rum***

**Wonk Press, 2025**

xvii + 237 pp., illustrations, index

ISBN 9798218565718 (softcover) US\$40.00

The daily rum ration or the daily tot is probably one of the best-known traditions of the Royal Navy and was provided from the mid seventeenth century until 31 July 1970 when it was ultimately decided that a daily ration of rum no longer befitted a modern and high-tech navy.

Most historical studies dealing with the sailors of the Royal Navy will not fail to mention the daily tot, but somewhat surprisingly, the logistics behind it, the procurement of the vast quantities of rum, and the actual blend of the rum have not been the subject of much research up to now.

Matt Pietrek’s and Alexandre Gabriel’s 2025 book *The Rum Never Sets* aims to close this desideratum and to provide not only a history of the rum operations and logistics of the Royal Navy, but also how navy rum became a trade name used by other manufacturers. In addition, the book provides highly detailed background information on the art of blending, aging, and storing various rums as well as the effects of sea journeys on the spirit and a huge variety of other little-known facts on rum.

Divided into two parts, the book starts with the history of the daily tot and the procurement of the rum required by the navy. In addition to describing the actual origin of the rums, the blending process, and the development of the warehouses at Rum Quay in London, including the catastrophic fire of 1926, there is a most valuable discussion of what makes a rum blend a navy rum and how navy rum also became a blend for the civilian commercial markets. The second part of the book deals less with history but with the actual rum and can be understood as a well-educated introduction of everything rum, such as differences between individual rums based on their origin, effects of aging the rum, and browning the rum.

Combining a historical study on the history of navy rum and the daily tot with detailed information on rum itself might look like a pretty obvious way