

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

to approach the subject, but actually it needs to be understood as a somewhat novel approach as too many studies on the history of food and drink are lacking such detailed information on the type of food or drink whose history is being studied.

Procuring several hundred thousand gallons of rum annually for a period of more than 200 years needs to be understood as a major logistical achievement and looking into the contractual details of this operation provides a unique insight into the development of international trade and its usances and customs. For this reason, the book is definitely a recommendation not only for lovers of rum or sailors thinking back to the days of the daily tot, but also for serious maritime and naval historians and historians of international trade.

The book is well illustrated and the reproductions of contracts or personal notes by the rum vatters aid in our understanding of the complexity of the whole operation. While the index at the end of the book is superb, unfortunately the bibliography is a one-pager mentioning just four books and several large internet libraries without providing any details of the actual materials that have been used. Fortunately, for the many quotes used throughout the book there are references at the end of each chapter.

Altogether this book is a most welcome historical study as well as a book that might be understood as an educated but also entertaining read. As such it can easily be recommended to anybody with an interest in maritime or naval history or simply anybody occasionally enjoying a glass of rum. In closing, "Cheers," enjoy the book either together with a glass of good navy rum or, if you prefer, a non-alcoholic alternative.

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Rayner, Jonathan. *Screening the Fleet: The Royal Navy on Television 1973–2023*

White Rose University Press, 2025

278 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index

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free; 9781912482429 (e-book) free

Screening the Fleet: The Royal Navy on Television 1973–2023 by Jonathan Rayner is an intriguing review of not only contemporary depictions of the Royal Navy but also of an evolving televisual land, or sea, scape. From the individuals on screen, sometimes portraying themselves and other times depicting fictionalized personages, to the directors, producers, and the