

ideas between calculations if they do not lose heart.

One of the author's primary concerns is to postulate Austin's original design of the *Princess Carolina* which he expounds upon in his second chapter. Riess consults published seventeenth and eighteenth-century treatises on designing and building warships and compares these methods to the *Princess Carolina*'s approximate measurements. He concludes that Austin used a more basic geometric technique than his contemporaries that was "not published but kept secret, possibly kept only within [Austin's] shipbuilding family" (10). Identified as a three-masted oceanic merchantman with a large main cargo hold and additional storage between decks, the *Princess Carolina* was designed and built in 1717 in Charleston, South Carolina for the shuttle trade between Charleston and London.

For readers with the savvy for data analysis as much as wooden sailing ships, Riess's work is replete with impressive research concerning the *Princess Carolina* and harnesses the potential to convey how eighteenth-century shipwrights methodically designed merchantmen. Prior to calculating Austin's design method, Riess asserts that maritime historians were left to assume that builders employed the same methods of design to merchant ships as shipwrights outlined in treatises about British warships (94). Although the *Princess Carolina*'s remains are but one example of how shipwrights possibly mapped out merchantmen—and the actual construction of ships were limited to available resources—Riess nevertheless ascertains that the vessel that "held up Wall Street" fits into what nautical specialists surmised about the erection of common transatlantic colonial merchant ships during the early eighteenth century. Although Riess's work could prove challenging for those unfamiliar with nautical archaeology and the economic, ecological, and political implications of the period, the breadth of data meticulously organized, aptly presented, and expertly interpreted is an invaluable contribution to the field of maritime studies through its deft exposition of empirical evidence.

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**Rodger, N.A.M. *The Price of Victory: A Naval History of Britain, 1815–1945*  
W.W. Norton & Company, 2024**

xxxix + 934 pp., maps, illustrations, appendices, notes, glossaries,  
bibliography, index

ISBN 9780393292220 (hardcover) CA\$52.91

Where does one even begin when reviewing a work such as *The Price*

*of Victory?* The third of a triptych on the naval history of Britain in its broadest (and global) sense from the years 660 to 1945, it weighs in at a resounding 35 chapters plus an epilogue, six appendices, 64 illustrations, 10 maps, almost 100 pages of references and 70 pages of bibliography. Combined with its predecessors *The Safeguard of the Sea* (1997) and *The Command of the Ocean* (2004), the trilogy comprises over 2,600 pages of meticulous historical synthesis, archival research, and interpretation. It is reflective of a lifetime's work by one of the most important naval historians of the last 50 years, completed despite Rodger's recent lengthy illness. Rodger's main thesis is that from 1815 onwards, command of the sea and an extensive merchant fleet for trade were central to the continuing rise of Britain and its empire in the nineteenth century. This led to global commercial and financial "superpower" status, at least until the overwhelming economic costs of the "price of victory" in the two world wars made this unsustainable. While this is not necessarily groundbreaking in and of itself, it is in the multidisciplinary breadth of the work that new aspects are revealed.

The author is at pains to explain that this is not a "company history" of the Royal Navy, but a survey of the contribution which naval warfare, with all its associated activities, has made to national history," the latter including "political, social, economic, diplomatic, administrative, agricultural, medical, religious and other histories which will never be complete until the naval component of them is recognized and understood" (xxxvii). One could add maritime, imperial, colonial, Atlantic and Pacific worlds, as well as the related histories of the various nations and empires with which Britain engaged given the global scope of its naval activities. With the approach taken here, scholars in these fields will no longer be able to ignore the central role of the British navy in historical developments in all of these disciplines.

*The Price of Victory* is organised in sections chronologically and then thematically by time period, roughly corresponding to the years 1815 to 1860, 1860 to 1890, 1890 to 1914, 1914 to 1940, and ending with a more fine-grained, at times year-by-year treatment of the Second World War. The latter alone comprises the focus of the book with 13 chapters, the same number as that devoted to the years between 1815 and 1914. Some may question this lopsided allocation and argue that the earlier periods demand more attention, but decisions, authorial and editorial, presumably had to be made. Yet, the importance of both world wars to the modern development of the navy and to that of twentieth-century Britain and its empire is without question. This demands a more extensive treatment, particularly given the after-effects of empire which remain today in Britain and around the globe. In a perfect world a separate volume covering 1815 to 1890 would have been the rum-flavoured

icing on the multi-layer navy cake.

Within each of those periods, themes generally alternate between chapters on policy and operations, government and administration, ships and weapons, and social history. Given the importance of the development and adaptation of aviation to naval technology and strategy between 1920 to 1942, and the gradual shift from battleship-centric to aircraft carrier-centred fleets, a full chapter is devoted to this topic. Social history, as with the earlier volumes and the author's masterful re-examination of the topic for the Georgian navy in *The Wooden World* (1986) remains a substantial focus, with seven chapters dedicated to that subject throughout the chronological sections.

A major argument put forward throughout the work is that the technological development of the navy was not deterministic. It waxed and waned with the vagaries of institutional priorities and policies, differing viewpoints of both naval officers and the growing influence of engineers, as well as political debates over strategy, costs, and differing priorities. While individuals played their part, such as Jackie Fisher in the development of the dreadnought, they were also subject to these currents of influences and perhaps played less of a role in technological choice than other histories have assessed.

Given the immense scope of the work much of the analysis – including that on naval institutions, one of the strengths of the volume – relies on an impressive synthesis of a broad range of secondary sources in several languages. Similarly, given this approach, and that Rodger's expertise lies predominantly in earlier periods of naval history, his treatment of twentieth-century naval social history at times lacks the archival focus that characterised aspects of the earlier volumes.

Some may contend that certain historiographical debates – particularly those surrounding the naval arms races of the early twentieth century – receive less detailed examination than perhaps warranted. No doubt this is due to constraints of space requiring succinct summaries versus more detailed critical analyses. Rodger can also demonstrate a tendency towards institutional sympathy. Admiralty decision makers, even when flawed, are generally portrayed as rational actors navigating complex bureaucratic and geopolitical pressures. Those seeking sharper judgments of various naval and political personalities may find Rodger somewhat conservative in his assessments of leadership failures. For example, controversies such as David Beatty's performance at the Battle of Jutland, the Admiralty's interwar strategic miscalculations, and the initial unpreparedness for submarine warfare in both world wars are described but not critically dissected in depth. More engagement with revisionist perspectives or archival sources might have enriched their presentation.

These quibbles of reliance on synthesis and focus aside, *The Price of Victory* stands not only as the crowning achievement of Rodger's trilogy, but as a foundational work for naval historians, historians of Britain, and scholars of many other fields. It will remain so for decades to come. Its insightful interdisciplinary interpretations combined with the work's comprehensive citations and bibliography will be a starting point for any serious student or enthusiast of the subject. It represents perhaps the *pièce de résistance* of the author's long and impressive career.

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**Scher, Rod. *Ship of Lost Souls: The Tragic Wreck of the Steamship Valencia*  
Lyons Press, 2024**

256 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index  
ISBN 9781493081356 (hardcover) US\$32.95

“If only ...”

In January of 1906, the steamship *Valencia* was en route from San Francisco to Seattle. During the voyage the vessel sailed north, parallel to the coast in adverse weather conditions, it was very dark, foggy and stormy. On board *Valencia* the crew had no clue about their position. The speed was dismissed due to an “overrunning” log. The captain was unaware of the strength and direction of the Davidson current. He claimed to have observed a lighthouse; no one else saw it. *Valencia* should have turned to starboard to enter the Strait of Juan de Fuca between mainland US and Canada, instead it ploughed on, till it hit the rocks of Vancouver Island. The hull of the ship was ripped open. Rough seas and wind hampered the evacuation of the passengers. The captain had never held a full lifeboat drill. Only a few of the crew were familiar with their posts and duties.

Mayhem trod in the trail of disaster. Some of the passengers boarded the boats prematurely and lowered them on their own, too hastily and panicking. Almost all the boats were handled by inexperienced desperate people. The boats fell into the sea, their occupants ended up in the cold water where most of them succumbed to hypothermia or were beaten to death on the rocks by the waves. On board the *Valencia* the remaining passengers refused to leave ship. A few survivors found their way up the bluff and left the scene in search for help. By leaving the location they unknowingly forfeited the opportunity to assist those trying to leave the ship. On departure from San Francisco the *Valencia* had a ship's complement of 65 and 108 passengers. Most perished