

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.

Martin Hubley
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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

within a couple hundred yards of land despite the dispatch of ships to rescue them. Only 37 people survived. The *Ship of Lost Souls* is the fascinating story of this tragedy, about what went wrong at sea, on land, in time, and in policies. The reader is left with the thought “If only...” There are a staggering number of issues in this maritime accident in slow motion, that, if approached in a different matter, might have resulted a completely different outcome. A definite must-read.

Jacob Bart Hak
Leiden, The Netherlands

Smith, William. *Churchill's Arctic Convoys: Strength Triumphs Over Adversity*

Pen & Sword, 2022

247 pp., illustrations, appendix, tables, notes, bibliography, index
ISBN 9781399072298 (hardcover) £25.00, US\$42.95

The story of the Arctic convoys which supplied vital war material to Stalin's forces during the Second World has long been popular with historians and naval history enthusiasts. It should be no surprise that their narrative attracted the interest of Pen & Sword, which is a very well-known publishing house of the United Kingdom, one with a well-deserved reputation for works on naval and military history. Its author, William Smith, is a retired civil servant with ties to the Royal Navy and NATO, and this is his first major published work. This Oxford graduate's choice of subject matter was in part inspired by his family's naval service throughout two world wars.

This work is divided into nine chapters of disparate lengths which cover the story of each convoy on the Murmansk run from its inception in 1942 to the return voyage of the last convoy in May 1945. Somewhat surprisingly, the editors chose to label both the Introduction and Conclusion as separate chapters. Six of the remaining seven chapters focus on separate phases of the Arctic convoys which sailed under the appellations of PQ, QP, JW and RA. Perhaps, appropriately, the remaining chapter deals with individual sailings which took place during the break in convoy sailings due to shipping shortages and the increased ferocity of German attacks on the last of the PQ-named convoys. This historical intermission of the story of these convoys also marks the transition point between the QP and JW convoys. This period was marked by a number of individual sailings intended to assuage Russia's concerns that the Allies intended to stop shipments of war material all together. Each chapter has an all too perfunctory account of the global and local war situation during