

er, to replicate the depth of knowledge and effort that has gone into this book by two seasoned and respected academic scholars. The one minor criticism is some repetition that exists from chapter to chapter that might have been addressed by more careful editing.

The large format paperback book, which is distributed through North Carolina University Press, has a reasonable retail price and will appeal to historians and researchers interested in shipbuilding, particularly in the American South and North Carolina, up to the early twentieth century.

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Eric Thompson (MBE, CMDRE RN). *On Her Majesty's Nuclear Service*. Oxford, UK & Havertown, PA, USA: Casemate Publishers, www.casemate-publishers.co.uk, 2020. xv+265 pp., illustrations, glossary of terms. UK £14.99, US \$22.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-61200-894-3.

This autobiography of a Royal Navy (RN) submarine engineer and electrical officer is of interest from several perspectives. Firstly, it is well and entertainingly written and thus, easy to keep on with, as well as informative of a submariner's career. Secondly, Thompson's service, from joining Dartmouth as a Cadet in 1961 until his retirement in 1998 as Base Commander at Faslane, Scotland, covers in its earlier pages a similar progress to many RCN submariners, in RN A and O class submarines in preparation for their acquisition in 1968 and on. Stories of life as a cadet, a mid, and sub-lieutenant will be familiar to any who followed that route.

Of value in an autobiography is the author's brief inclusion of naval, and in-

deed political winds of change and international events that shaped the progress of not only his Royal Navy submarine career development into their current nuclear-only field, but also the progress of world peace among the major powers at any rate. Short-sightedness prevented Thompson (in those early days) from being a seaman officer as planned. But as an engineer officer, he gives us a valuable look into the world "at the other end of the voicepipe." His stories of dangerous machinery break-downs, irascible commanders and companions, frightening and utterly silent patrols off Russian operating areas, in both diesel and nuclear boats, are told with a wry sense of humour.

His career in submarines was interrupted, as usual, by spells ashore in staff appointments. One of his more interesting and illustrative roles was as a torpedo development and trials officer, where he was assigned responsibility for correcting the poor performance of Tigerfish torpedoes, the primary weapon of Britain's growing nuclear squadrons. The boats were nearly perfect in both design and operation, but their only offensive weapon failed too frequently. Although Thompson's experiments solved the cause, his solution would have required an expensive, and unacceptable, change in the submarines' tube fittings design. Several times in Thompson's advancing career, improvements in operating technology were thwarted by costs or political change at home, from Labour to Conservative governments and back. These difficulties will be familiar to all in similar defence roles.

The RN's move into the ballistic missile nuclear role, influenced by their partners in the USN, and the malevolent American admiral, Hyman Rickover, makes for a fascinating look into outside bargaining and compromise that affected the world's navies and attempts

to maintain the delicate balance of power. Thompson was involved in all those negotiations, with increasing responsibilities, with his experiences already “at the sharp end.” This is a lighter, although very cognizant view of that esoteric world. (For a very detailed view of that world and progress of the RN into the acquisition of SSBN boats, see *The Silent Deep*, by Peter Hennessy & James Jinks; Penguin, 2019; reviewed TNM XXVI, no. 2, April 2016.) For those with only a general interest in those developments, Thompson provides an excellent overview, from a user’s perspective. The author, with his rather unusual background training perspective, gives the reader both a clear understanding as to why the RN has only a few nuclear boats while providing an interesting and wryly amusing tale to follow.

My only criticisms of the book, especially from a reviewer’s perspective, are its lack of any index and the somewhat casual and uninformative chapter headings – “Corporate Constipation,” “Walter Mitty,” “War and Peace,” which are not helpful. But it makes for enjoyable reading, which includes a bit of poetry and some looks at familiar naval life of appointments afloat and ashore. Much recommended.

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Kazushige Todaka and the Kure Maritime Museum (ed.), Robert D. Eldridge (translation). *Battleships and Battle Cruisers: Selected Photos from the Archives of the Kure Maritime Museum*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, www.usni.org, 2020. 222 pp., illustrations, tables. US \$75.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-68247-498-3.

Recently translated into English for the

first time, this work is a photographic compendium of the Imperial Japanese Navy’s (IJN) battleships and battle cruisers from the Meiji era through to the end of the Second World War. Translated by Robert D. Eldridge and Graham B. Leonard, this is a continuation of the Kure Naval Museum’s English rendition and expansion of Shizuo Fukui’s two-volume photographic compendium, *Japanese Naval Vessels, 1869-1945*. Sharing an identical preface and image note with the other volumes, *Battleships and Battle Cruisers* offers rare, large-scale views of vessels purchased, built, and captured by the Japanese during the aforementioned time period, and images of uncompleted ships and the *Kaga* prior to her conversion to an aircraft carrier. As part of the work’s expansion, all images are given a full page for increased clarity, with text kept largely to a minimum. Photograph labels follow the same format as previous volumes, listing the image’s identification number, ship’s name, and class (if applicable), and a one- or two-line caption containing the date and a short description. A standardized listing of ship specifications and a brief summary of the Kure Maritime Museum round out the work.

The photographs and vessels are divided into three distinct sections related to both the evolution of warship design and the geopolitical position of Japan. The first, “Until the Russo-Japanese Sea Battles,” documents the 14 capital ships of the Imperial Japanese fleet in service from 1878 to 1905 over the course of 42 pages. Despite the section’s title, this includes six ships of the Imperial Russian Navy captured during the Russo-Japanese War. These particular vessels actually provide some of the most interesting early images, with photographs of the battle-damaged ships as they were captured positioned immediately across