

overs which eventually resulted in the formation of Canada Steamship Lines. These final chapters draw heavily on the work of Stephen Salmon including his essay "This Remarkable Growth: Investment in Canadian Great Lakes Shipping, 1900-1959" published in *The Northern Mariner / Le Marin du Nord* in 2005. Although the period covered is short in contrast to the other sections of the book it does introduce some of the other firms active in the region such as the Quebec and Gulf Ports Steamship Company, the Ontario and Quebec Steamship Company, Inland Lines, and the Northern Navigation Company which are barely mentioned elsewhere in the text.

During the almost 70 years of history of the company, it operated some 55 vessels which followed technological changes from wood to steel and paddles to propellers in ships which ranged from under 100 tons to over 4,200 tons. Almost all of the steamers were painted white which gave rise to the name "The White Fleet." Camu provides details of the acquisition, service, and disposition of these ships. Remarkably, the first company vessel, the *Richelieu*, was still afloat more than a century after the company was founded, although under different names and different owners. Many of these steamers are shown in the volume and the images are properly treated as illustrations rather than decoration. Other illustrations show the routes of the vessels and newspaper advertisements of schedules and fares. The index is woefully inadequate and unfortunately, reduces the ease of access to what could be an extremely useful reference work as well as a narrative.

Any history of a business is reliant to great measure on the archival resources which have survived and Camu is fortunate that an extensive collection

of the Canada Steamship Lines records was transferred to the Queen's University Archives in 1973. The richness of these records, which includes an almost complete set of the minute books of the company, creates a dependence on the formal legalistic history of the company and underplays the social role the company played in the region. It is often the lack of corporate records which makes company histories seem uncritical with a tendency to focus on the larger-than-life personalities to inject interest in the story. It is refreshing to see how the skillful interweaving of corporate activity and the character of the company leaders can be enhanced by coverage of the geographical and economic context in which the action is carried out.

This history of the Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Company should be added to any listing of significant research into the history of North American shipping companies and underscores the need for more work on the history of similar concerns. *La Flotte Blanche* is well-researched, well-written, and well-presented and deserves to be better known as it sets a high standard for the history of shipping companies.

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Phil Carradice. *The Battle of Tsushima*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword, [www.pen-and-sword-co-uk](http://www.pen-and-sword-co-uk), 2020. xvii+184 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography. UK £19.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-52674-334-3. Distributed by Naval Institute Press.

Author Phil Carradice is a journalist and broadcaster who has penned some 60 books and is a regular at the BBC. This particular book is a popular history account of the seminal naval battle of the

Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) involving ironclads, or, perhaps the more familiar term is pre-dreadnoughts. There is an anachronism here, of course, in that the battle was fought prior to the construction of HMS *Dreadnought* and consequently the term would have puzzled all participants. For them it was a battleship engagement, the first involving modern designs and hence, its importance to history.

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 was a momentous conflict that is significantly underplayed in the historiography. The dismissal of the war as not particularly relevant is largely a result of the far more momentous conflict of the Great War, involving all the major European powers, their empires, and many others. The dust up in the Far East has been eclipsed.

This neglect is unwarranted and the War of 1904-05 presaged in important ways the Great War itself, with many lessons for all militaries that would soon enough be engulfed in that world-changing conflagration. It also announced the arrival of Japan on the world stage, demonstrating that Europeans could indeed be resoundingly defeated by other races. In naval terms, it confirmed that the ranges at which naval battles would be fought were far greater than some had considered likely and brought to the fore the new technologies of wireless and cable communication systems. It notably provided fresh impetus to the Royal Navy's great expectation of its own future 'second Trafalgar' as their hour hove into view.

The occasion for the war was competing national interests over northeastern China, while that empire was in the midst of its century of 'humiliations'. The First Sino-Japanese War of 1895 had seen Japan seize Korea and Taiwan (then Formosa) and, in the aftermath, Russia moving into Manchuria to seize the warm-water port of Port

Arthur at the tip of the Liaodong Peninsula. Thereafter, the abortive Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901 had been put down by a combination of European powers—accompanied by the United States, recently victorious over a declining Spanish empire and building its own. The Czar, Nicholas II, had ambitions to acquire Korea and Manchuria for Russia and pressure built accordingly. The Russians were quite confident that their significantly larger army and navy would have little trouble dealing with Japan.

Alas for Russia, this hubris was ill-founded, and it was humiliated by the surprise naval attack on the anchored Russian fleet at Port Arthur in January 1904. This setback was underlined by the subsequent defeat at the Battle of the Yellow Sea and the bottling up of the remaining Russian ships at either Port Arthur or Vladivostok. The land war was also not progressing well, with Port Arthur eventually besieged by the Japanese. To save the situation, relieve Port Arthur and restore Russian prestige, the Baltic Fleet, with four new battleships, sailed to their doom at the Battle of Tsushima in May of 1905. The voyage east, under the command of Admiral Rozhdestvensky, was epic, with the troubling episode of the attack on British fishing boats at Dogger Bank, mistaken for Japanese torpedo boats, being but one of many setbacks, difficulties, and uncertain basic competence in naval skills. Russian courage was never lacking.

This tale is told from the perspective of both sides and moves along at an easy and good clip. The author's asides as to the mental state of affairs of the principles serve to enliven the account. The brief summary as to the significance of the war and of the naval aspect related in the book is sound. The various attachés provided much material for their home governments to

digest, particularly the effect of modern weapons on the conduct of land campaigns, as well as the lessons involved with naval warfare. Britain's Admiral Sir John Fisher, the contemporaneous First Sea Lord, took note of Japan's naval success and out of that experience pushed on with the all big gun HMS *Dreadnought* and her fast battlecruiser near cousins HMS *Invincible* and her sisters. At the same time, the sheer incompetence of the Russian army and navy was well cemented in the minds of various European powers, notably Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, and exerted a malign influence on the decision for war in 1914. The influence of the triumph at Tsushima on Japanese thinking involved concluding that they had nothing to fear regarding faraway European powers, as well as the emphatic global statement that their country was a force to be reckoned, which lingered into the middle decades of the new century, ending only with their gamble for Pacific Ocean domination in the 1930s and 1940s.

A few caveats should be noted with this book. First, it is written in an informal style, with invented conversations and presumed internal dialogue that some will find off-putting. Such an approach is often a feature of popular historical writing and so not entirely surprising. Second, the book would have benefited from a final edit as a number of infelicities remain. Slips such as these are distracting, unnecessary and suggest untoward speed in production. Third, the somewhat sparse resources quoted largely involve printed accounts by participants, including Admiral Togo's battle report, and a small selection of secondary works, relatively few of which are up to date. Contemporary newspapers and some websites round out the research. Notwithstanding its objective as popular history, the book would have benefited from more recent explorations of the subject by, inter alia, Sydney Ty-

ler's *The Russo-Japanese War* (2018) or Larry Slawson's *The Russo-Japanese War: Political, Cultural and Military Consequences* (2019). And last, the book lacks diagrams to illustrate the battle. The collection of quite excellent illustrations does include a pair a maps, one contemporary, to illustrate the area in which the war was fought, as well as Admiral Rozhdestvensky's route from the Baltic to the Japanese Sea, as it was then termed (rather than today's Sea of Japan). Neither is particularly illuminating and there is no illustration of the various naval engagements, which is an unfortunate omission.

Any reader who wishes a high level, quick and engaging account of the Battle of Tsushima and the picaresque adventures of the Russian fleet leading up to that fateful day in May 1905, will be satisfied with Carridice's account. Those that might prefer a more scholarly analysis, with the more typical academic apparatus, will be well advised to search elsewhere.

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Julie Cook. *The Titanic and the City of Widows it left Behind*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword, [www.pen-and-sword.com](http://www.pen-and-sword.com), 2020. xxxvi+140 pp., illustrations, crew list, notes, bibliography, index. UK £19.99, cloth; ISBN 978-1-52675-716-6.

My first thoughts were 'surely not another book on *Titanic*—what more could there possibly be to write'?! Unlike many of the previous books on this subject, however, this one deals mostly with the ship's crew and more importantly, their families.

Journalist Julie Cook, whose great-grandfather was fireman (stoker) William Bessant and lost with *Titanic*,