

industrial and war equipment—with even fewer than the usually scant escorts due to TORCH. The evidence that they served to occupy the U-Boats' attentions despite not being planned as 'decoys' was circumstantial. Edwards makes frequent use of direct quotations from those who survived to craft a very well told story. He focuses, convoy by convoy, on their all-too-slow progress, eastward and northward (out around the Azores) and the often-elderly and therefore, slow tramps. Frequent descriptions of torpedo hits, abandonments in major fall gales, poor discipline in convoy by over-use of 'snowflake' in ships next to those hit. The insoluble coverage protection problems of the young escort commanders (LCdr Piers was 30), most only fitted with early asdic and HF/DF, few of the escorts equipped with radar, and with still-to-be-learned experience.

Decoys offers an excellent picture of what convoying was really like, night-by-night, even hour-by-hour, as part of the crucial mid-war Atlantic battle, reminding me of Jimmy Lamb's *The Corvette Navy*. What is missing is perhaps a wider understanding of how such convoys were organized. Why were they compelled to sail them, after three years of the battle, with so few, slow and ill-equipped escorts? Could not three or four more a/s warships not have been found, somewhere? Or was the need just not appreciated, at that organizing level? Unfortunately, the action occurred at a time when the Allies at Bletchley Park had lost most of their ability to read the German's 'Enigma' codes, revealing where the waiting U-Boats were. Nevertheless, it is worth the addition to any Battle of the Atlantic bookshelf.

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Arthur Herman. *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, www.harpercollins.com, 2004. xix + 648 pp., maps, notes, index. US \$19.99, paper, ISBN 0-06-053425-7. (Available on-line.)

Only after reading this book did I realize that Ian Yeates had reviewed it for *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* in 2004. (See https://www.cnrs-scrn.org/northern_mariner/vol14/tnm_14_4_73-116.pdf). I recommend his review to readers, but would like to offer a second review because this book is still relevant 16 years after publication.

Adm. Jeffrey Brock reports in *The Dark Broad Seas (Vol. 1)* that John Diefenbaker said: "A service or country without traditions is like a man without a memory." Britain is certainly a country with traditions steeped in time, as is the Royal Navy. *To Rule the Waves* delves into both naval history and traditions.

Herman is the author of *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*—another very popular book which this reviewer, and Ian Yeates, have read and enjoyed. In this book, Herman addresses the history of Britain and its involvement with the rest of the world through the activities of its navy, roughly from the early 1500s to the Falklands War (1982). As Yeates points out, Herman has had to rely on secondary sources so there are simplifications, omissions and errors as he glosses over so many events. As with biographies where the writer tries to convince the reader that the whole world revolved around that person, so too here with the British (I prefer Royal) Navy. Herman tries to convince the reader that five centuries of world history are all the result of actions by the Royal Navy.

Personally, I hated history as a

school subject. Yet now in later life, I read naval and maritime history almost constantly. This book, with all its little faults, would have made high school history much more meaningful for me. It provides the supplementary information that gathers all those meaningless dates and personages, which students are required to memorize, into a coherent entity.

The book opens in 1568 with an incident at San Juan de Ulloa, in present-day Mexico, with Englishman John Hawkins attacking the Spanish fort and silver- and gold-laden ships. He and Francis Drake made off with 25,000 gold pesos at the cost of four of their six ships. The book describes how the British beat the Spanish and then the French and became the international police force during *Pax Britannica* (1815-1914). After the Napoleonic Wars (ca. 1815), the Royal Navy changed its emphasis to scientific endeavours (e.g., Darwin, Franklin, HMS *Challenger*, hydrography.) This occupied many of its ships as well as a vast work-force of otherwise-unemployed officers and over 100,000 seamen. The RN next revived to meet the twentieth century and naval competition from the United States, Germany and Japan. Sadly, post-Second World War budget cuts reduced the Royal Navy to a mere shadow of its former self. One example is the number of aircraft carriers on inventory: 52 in 1945, 12 in 1950 and 3 by 1970. The last chapter of the book describes a small meeting at the British Prime Minister's office where those attending were wondering what they could possibly do as Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands. The meeting was interrupted when the First Sea Lord, Sir Henry Leach (an uninvited attendee) burst into the room to say that the Royal Navy could get a task force off in 72 hours. The torpedoing of the Argentin-

ian cruiser *General Belgrano* effectively took the Argentinian navy out of the picture. (561). True Royal Navy spirit! But two days later, HMS *Sheffield* was hit by an Exocet missile, burned, and sank showing that this was truly a high-tech war.

In Herman's opinion, the Spanish Armada was never going to invade Britain because the Duke of Parma, the Spanish general waiting at Calais to be transported across the Strait of Dover, had already called off the invasion. So it really wasn't a British victory but a Spanish relinquishment. His descriptions of various battles in the days of sail are hard to follow (and I sail boats!) and would be enhanced by maps which include wind direction. Herman's notes, however, provide references for those readers wanting better descriptions of the battles should look elsewhere. The Navy's administration evolved from a very ad-hoc arrangement to the Navy Board to Whitehall. Training went from civilian seamen to press-gang crewing to proper training at HMS *Illustrious* (cadets) and *Excellent* (gunnery) to Royal Navy College (officer education).

I appreciated Herman's description of the progress towards Second World War starting with the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles (1919). It failed where the Congress of Vienna (a century earlier succeeded). The road to war started with Japan becoming a military dictatorship in 1930 and its subsequent aggression in Manchuria, Italy's aggrandisement in Africa, and Germany's rearmament and European expansion. The 1935 Anglo-German Naval Treaty violated the Treaty of Versailles by allowing Germany to have capital ships and submarines—an interpretation of historical events that I missed in high school. I felt really sorry for the down-sizing of the Royal Navy af-

ter 1945 and for the loss of naval bases at Singapore, Aden, Trincomalee (Sri Lanka), Simontown (Cape Town), and Malta, to name a few. How can one be a global power without naval bases sprinkled around the world?

The book is a good source of trivia that I never heard explained before (or had forgotten). For example, 'Starboard' comes from the side of the ship where the steering board was normally found, so 'Larboard' was the side where loading was done in port. Due to the similar sounding names, the latter became 'Port'. Naval seamen were fed 'three square meals a day' because they were served on square wooden plates. The book is full of the names of captains and admirals who were so much part of the Royal Navy and later, were commemorated in names of ships: Anson, Howe, Rodney, Nelson, Hood, and Collingwood.

Here is a book that will refresh your high school history by connecting the historical events with the political manoeuvrings during the past 500 years. I bought the book at a second-hand bookstore, but I plan to make it a "keeper".

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