

ing “The Campaign in Scotland,” “The Armies” and “The Battle of Glenshiel.” The last two chapters comprise “The Invasions of Spain” and “Sicily and the End of the War.” The author’s attention to detail is also, unfortunately, one of the book’s drawbacks. There is no in-depth introduction or discussion of context that would be helpful to readers who are not already familiar with the topic at hand. In particular, this book would have been improved by a discussion of European wars since the Glorious Revolution, with emphasis on the semi-integrations—and the conflicts—between the Dutch and English authorities and governments during the last war of the Allies against Louis XIV’s France and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). It would also benefit from a discussion of what followed beyond “the next two decades were ones of peace”, referring to Britain. Oates misses an opportunity for clarification by not discussing the 1710s as the last gasp of the old Williamite system and networks, and the 1720s and beyond as a different Hanoverian milieu.

There are several other issues with this book. The first is one of implied scales. The title, *The Last Spanish Armada*, invokes a grand event, as do the chapter titles that reference reciprocal invasions. The reality is that the events described are somewhat limited, and the actual text immediately drives down into the details and the historical narrative to a point that makes the juxtaposition a bit jarring. The second issue is that although Oates make excellent use of archival sources and printed primary sources, his secondary sources are generally quite dated, with a few exceptions, references that he was familiar with and likely already had to hand. Had he been able to pull something from the recent work of Catherine Scheybeler or Sarah Kinkel, it would have provided context for the historical

narrative.

I found this book a conundrum. For readers unfamiliar with the War of the Quadruple Alliance, it is too detailed and moves too quickly into historical narrative and the ‘19 Stuart invasion of Scotland, but is too brief a treatment and too much a restatement of existing literature to be particularly useful for those who are knowledgeable of the subject.

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Stephen Taylor. *Sons of the Waves: The Common Seaman in the Heroic Age of Sail*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, [www.yalebooks.yale.edu](http://www.yalebooks.yale.edu), 2020. 416 pp., illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. US \$30.00, cloth; ISBN 978-0-30024-571-4. (E-book available.)

Stephen Taylor’s diverse bibliography includes two excellent works of naval history, a biography of Admiral Sir Edward Pellew and a history of the 1809 naval campaign in the Indian Ocean. *Sons of the Waves* is an altogether more ambitious title. Whereas his previous naval history books—indeed, most naval history titles—centre on matters of strategy, operations, and the officers who directed them, *Sons of the Waves* explores the history of the common seamen, the navy’s Jack Tars, during the height of the age of sail (1740-1840), a period running from the circumnavigation of Anson to the early Pax Britannia, when sail gave way to steam. This remains an under-studied aspect of British naval history, as few historians have attempted such a study. (Brian Lavery’s *Royal Tars* being a prominent exception). The reasons are easily imaginable; the ordinary sailor of the Royal

Navy, often illiterate and of low social class, left few texts behind, and until the emergence of Social History as a proper historical research field, narratives and studies typically paid the Jack Tars little notice.

And yet, much of Taylor's narrative relies on the words left behind by those lower deck men. Taylor uses the few such texts in existence to flesh out the history and the life of these seamen, while grounding each of their stories in carefully researched context. A handful of narratives—including those by William Spavens, Robert Hay, Samuel Leech, Jacob Nagle, John Nicol, and William Richardsen—form the backbone of Taylor's research and narrative. Their accounts are supplemented by over a dozen additional narratives, as well as official documents. Basing this work on the men's own words is important, as from the eighteenth century onwards, their story was primarily told from the perspective of the officer class and plagued by common misconceptions in popular culture. Typically, the difficulty perceived in writing a history that depends primarily on Jack Tar's own words was barrier enough for most historians. The few surviving accounts traditionally have been used more as a source of anecdotes; Taylor demonstrates it they provide more than enough material to examine this subject thoroughly.

Being primarily a narrative rather than an argument, Taylor's book appears not to have a defined thesis. Rather, it is a collective portrait of the Jack Tar, describing and defining the perspectives, ideology, and mannerisms of the British naval sailor through his own words. Sailors' experience of life at sea, of battle, and hardships are examined through their eyes. It is a deeply researched and thoroughly readable survey of the lives and perspectives of

the men of the Lower Deck

Taylor proves the usefulness of these sailors' account in the more traditional field of naval history, thanks to the differing perspectives they bring to a field long dominated by official reports and officers' correspondence. One key example is that of HMS *Vengeance*, a 28-gun frigate, which in 1759 was ordered to undertake a press gang mission, stopping British ships at sea and impressing whatever sailors they could. Official accounts of the mission are sparse, telling historians only the list of ships stopped and searched, whereas the narrative of one of her crewmen, William Spavens, provides so much more. It includes details of stiff resistance put up by some ships in the face of British impressment, and the great discomfort the mission caused Spavens and his fellow sailors. Worst of all, Taylor points out, was the crushing guilt felt by Spavens upon seizing fellow seamen on a homeward-bound ship, within sight of home and safety.

Taylor opted, quite successfully, to examine this history as a narrative story. From the circumnavigation of George Anson (1740-44) to the age of steam in 1840, Taylor presents the events and voyages of this century through the eyes of those common sailors whose accounts survive. He describes ship-board life, both in the navy and in the merchant service, in great detail. Recurring is the theme of desertion and impressment. Jack Tars detested the impress service, of course, and yet, as Taylor found, they recognized it as an occupational hazard, necessary to the maintenance of the Wooden World. It would explain the willingness of many seamen who had been impressed themselves to participate in press gangs.

Taylor admits that men he describes bear "a surprisingly strong resemblance to the Jack Tar of folklore." There is

a touch of romanticism in Taylor's frequent references to punishment and floggings, although he rarely goes into any more detail than the particulars of punishments doled out, the number of lashes sentenced, and for which crime. This despite several of the sailors describing their feelings and impressions of flogging.

The final chapter itself appears more motivated by a sense of romanticism than a natural conclusion to the story. It focuses on the Preventative Squadron, which in the decades following the abolition of the slave trade (1807) and slavery itself within the British Empire (1833) worked to suppress the illegal trade in enslaved Africans. Unlike previous chapters, this one features none of the characters whose accounts formed the backbone of the book, and indeed, very little of it is based on primary research involving Jack Tars at all. Taylor correctly acknowledges that these men did not participate out of an anti-slavery ideology, and correctly describes the hardship and losses suffered by British sailors on anti-slavery missions—1,000 men died between 1825 and 1840. The Jack Tars' involvement in the evil of the slave trade, however, which flourished under the protection of the Royal Navy up until the end of the long eighteenth century, is not considered in great detail in the earlier chapters of the book. This disconnect makes the final chapter feel like a one-sided, romantic analysis unsupported by primary statements from the Jack Tars themselves, and thus, runs contrary to the stated aim of the book.

The curious last chapter aside, Taylor's work is illuminating and innovative. It tells the oft-neglected stories of common sailors in the British world during the long eighteenth century. It demonstrates the potential of serious historical research relying on the words of ordinary seamen instead of their officers, and it highlights the ways in which

these sailors' accounts can contribute to traditional naval history. This book is a must-have addition to any collection on the Age of Sail.

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Christopher Wright. *Of Penguins and Polar Bears. A History of Cold Water Cruising*. Glos, UK: The History Press, [www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk), 2020. 224 pp., illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, indices. UK £20.00, CDN \$46.95, paper: ISBN 978-0-7509-9057-8.

Prior to the (hopefully) temporary shutdown of cruises to the polar regions due to the COVID 19 pandemic, expedition cruises to the Arctic and Antarctica have been one of the fastest growing sectors in the global cruise industry. Little known is the fact that cruises to the icy fringes of the globe started a relatively short time after the exploration of these regions and shipboard tourists have been travelling to these regions for more than a century. Until recently, historians of Arctic and Antarctic exploration have more or less completely neglected the subject of polar tourism, making Christopher Wright's book a welcome addition to the existing literature. Although the book is not the ultimate scholarly analysis of cold water cruising that the academic reader might hope for, it is nonetheless a well written introduction to Arctic and Antarctic cruising and its history. It will appeal to the armchair traveler as well as future visitors to the polar regions. In addition, it is a useful compendium providing detailed descriptions of ships, operators and destinations.

The actual historical narrative of cold water cruising only constitutes about one quarter of the book and is largely descriptive, containing little