

BOOK REVIEWS

James McDermott, *Martin Frobisher: Elizabethan Privateer*. New haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001. xv + 509 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. US\$35, cloth; ISBN 0-300-08380-7.

James McDermott was an independent researcher involved with the award-winning Meta Incognita project. His biography of Sir Martin Frobisher is of the same high standards; indeed it has been awarded the Canadian Nautical Research Society's Keith Matthews Award for the best book published in 2001 on a Canadian maritime subject, or by a Canadian on any maritime subject. Frobisher's "Canadian connection" is based on his three voyages to the Arctic in 1576, 1577, and 1578. His voyages began as a quest for a northwest passage. They became a large scale mining expedition seeking gold. The exploration contributions Frobisher made to the knowledge of Arctic geography were forgotten over the ensuing centuries, and the gold mining expedition, which found nothing but fool's gold and ended in bankruptcy and discredit for many was also forgotten until the arctic explorations of Charles Francis Hall in the early 1860s. As the four hundredth anniversaries of the voyages approached they began to receive some scholarly attention. Later again in 1990 the Canadian Museum of Civilization took the lead in organizing the Meta Incognita Project to examine not only the mining explorations, but all related aspects of it from the knowledge of the period of metallurgy and the ability to assay gold to medicine, and the contact with native peoples. The published results of the project, edited by Thomas Symons who was the chairman of the steering committee, won the Keith Matthews award for the best book of 1999. McDermott's contributions included biographical studies of the principal figures, an essay on the refining furnace for the anticipated gold built at Dartford, and with David Waters an examination of geographical knowledge and the practice of navigation.

In this first full-length modern biography of the Elizabethan privateer/pirate and explorer, McDermott has expanded on that work in a comprehensive study of Frobisher's life and of the period in which he lived. He has demonstrated an impressive and encyclopaedic knowledge and a mastery of the period. Given the paucity of materials relating directly to Frobisher this is important not only for providing the context of Frobisher's life and actions, but also because it allows him to suggest with authority more probable possibilities to fill in the mescapable gaps. McDermott's trenchant style makes it all most enjoyable reading.

Frobisher's life may be roughly divided into three unequal periods. The first was his turn to the sea and early privateering. Frobisher quickly established himself as "a man of rigorously ambiguous morals" (88). McDermott has observed that "the only pursuit to which he had devoted any sustained effort was privateering, for which he earned only a parlous reputation and a reserved seat in the dock of the Admiralty court" (107). Frobisher acquired a reputation which made he useful to the government leaders in dubious exploits where "demability" was required by the sponsors. So Frobisher was able to survive within the political and diplomatic climate of the time.

The second period was centred on the northern voyages. These demanded his association with important business men, such as Michael Lok, (who is also important in Canadian geographical history as the recorder of the account of Apostolos Valerianos, who in Spanish employ and with the name of Juan de Fuca claimed to have discovered the strait that still bears his name). The failure to discover gold and the resulting arguments over money did little to improve Frobisher's reputation or to recommend him for gainful employment. He therefore had little inducement to renounce entirely his former ways. Yet in his leadership of the northern voyages he "had exhibited fortitude, resolve, initiative and remarkably little natural

aptitude for the navigator's art" (248). The first qualities at least were useful.

In the third period of his life Frobisher did achieve royal service. He is frequently associated with Drake, whom he came to despise, and with the defeat of the Spanish Armada, in which he had an important role. McDermott offers a careful study of that campaign and examines closely the engagement off Portland Bill. He directly addresses the controversy surrounding that action and offers a convincing argument of the deliberate intentions and success of Frobisher. As the architect of the first real English victory in the Armada battle, Frobisher was given a knighthood. He came to be recognized as a thoroughly reliable second in command who was well imbued with a fighting spirit and who would be certain to follow instructions. Those qualities led to his being given the commission to command the fleet in the combined operation against the Crozon Peninsula in 1594. In the assault on El Lion fortress Frobisher, leading his men, was wounded. Gangrene set in and he died shortly after his return to England. He was quickly forgotten.

This excellent biography restores Frobisher to his place in his time and offers much to students of that period. Rare amongst books of serious scholarship, it is also a very enjoyable read which should be appreciated by many.

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Christopher McKee, *Sober Men and True: Sailor Lives in the Royal Navy, 1900-1945*. Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2002. 284pp., illustrations, notes, appendices, index. US\$ 29.95, cloth, ISBN 0-674-00736-0.

Christopher McKee, the Rosenthal Professor and Librarian of the College at Grinnell College, whose studies of the US Navy officer corps

before and during the War of 1812 are indispensable to students of both American and naval history, has turned his attention to the lower deck of the Royal Navy in the twentieth century. An unusual leap, but a fortunate and rewarding one.

Naval historians generally rely on documents produced by the naval elite: ships' logs and reports of proceedings written by officers in command or their staff officers; plans and analytical studies of operations; the personal papers and memoirs of sailors, mostly written by those who were decision makers of one sort or another during their naval careers. It is true that there are accounts written by men from the lower deck - Tristan Jones' *Heart of Oak* (London, 1984) is an interesting example - but there are fewer of them, and to verify them from other independent sources usually means turning to official records. Courts martial and boards of enquiry, such as Canada's *Mainigny Report* of 1949, and the report of the Invergordon mutiny, and the extensive records of evidence given at such occasions, do give insights into the life of the ordinary sailor, but even they bear the imprint of the officers of the court or the board. When you think about it, service records and personnel files have also been processed by officers. Many officers, some of them very distinguished, have of course come up through the hawse pipe, and they provide glimpses of what life was like when they were ratings (Rear Admiral Patrick Budge of the RCN is a prime example), but even they became distanced from their former messmates as they advanced through the ranks. Consequently, the picture historians have of the lower deck tends to be the view from the bridge or the wardroom.

Sober Men and True (a title that seems at first glance a trifle inappropriate, until one thinks of the story line in *HMS Pinafore* and wonders if the author is making an ironic statement) gives a very different view, relying strictly on evidence from the lower deck without reference to the naval establishment. It is a pioneering work - few historians have taken this route - and with the interviews and records of

some eighty witnesses does not claim to be a definitive study. It is however refreshingly authentic, and it captures the flavour of the navy and its people wonderfully well. Christopher McKee, as always, identifies with the men he writes about, and writes about them with flair.

The RN at the beginning of the period 1900-1945 was an idiosyncratic organisation, reflecting the class divisions in British society: Geoffrey Lewis' *Fabulous Admirals* (London, 1957), for instance, describes the total incomprehension of the life of the ordinary sailor that many officers rejoiced in at the turn of the century. Lewis lingered on exceptional cases, and there is ample evidence from this book and other sources that by no means all officers at the turn of the century were so detached. Jackie Fisher for instance, and David Beatty, and as some of McKee's witnesses tell us, officers who were "not necessarily those that gained ... the high regard of historians" (56) earned the greatest esteem of these men. But the social worlds of the lower deck and the wardroom were totally unrelated in that era, and throughout all these years there was a continuing resentment against officers - especially but by no means solely RNR officers, those who had come from the merchant navy - who seemed to be abusing their position. By 1945, after two world wars, although the navy McKee is writing about had become far more homogenized, it remained colourful and highly traditional, fiercely proud and possessive of its traditions, and it is clear from the words of the sailors themselves that, in spite of the democratic spirit fostered during the Second World War, the RN was still acutely class conscious.

McKee skilfully covers this near half century with a remarkable if selective cross-section of sailors, and opens up lines of enquiry that future researchers will want to explore. It is somewhat surprising that there is no reference to Invergordon and the discontent that led up to that mutiny - indeed the one reference to Invergordon is the diary of Yeoman of Signals John Atrill in the First World War: "Went ashore for a few glasses. It came on to snow very heavy during

the afternoon and the ground was soon covered. When we went off at 6 P. M. all the ships looked lovely, all white and the moon shining..." (173-4) - but one can understand McKee's reasons for not going into such a charged event as the mutiny. He leaves that to Anthony Carew's fine book, *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy, 1900-1939: The Invergordon Mutiny in Perspective* (Manchester, 1981). Clearly, McKee's study was intended to probe into the lives of individuals, not to analyse the navy's overall personnel policy, relying as he tells us on "the former ratings' own words as they wrote or spoke them." (250). There is consequently much of value on the reasons for joining, daily life and conditions of service, discipline and morale, and the changing social attitudes of sailors (the older ones, including those with plenty of experience at the defaulters table, "knew their place" and resented those of their messmates who accepted commissions, and even towards the end of the period it was mostly "hostilities only" men who felt strongly that men in the lower deck were being discriminated against). In short, we are being introduced to the culture of the messdeck.

McKee writes frankly if discreetly about the private, and not always so private, lives of the sailors. A photograph of sailors with their female companions in a North African brothel, preserved in the Imperial War Museum and published in this book, is possibly unique, and his witnesses tell him of homosexual incidents they were aware of. He demolishes stereotypes of the "British tar" and in a concluding chapter, "Travelling with an Oar on my Shoulder" (taken from the saying of a retired sailor that he would walk with an oar on his shoulder until he found a place where no one knew what it was for, and there he would settle), he describes the resignation with which sailors served out their time. Leading Telegraphist Archibald Richards confides to his diary on 17 July 1942, when he would have been discharged had there not been a war on, "... here I am, bound hands and foot... until the end of the war.... It was at least tolerable in the pre-1932 days, although I am always eager to get out. But now, in

wartime, it's the most detestable situation I can think of. Everything connected with it is, to my mind, exactly opposed to what we are supposed to be fighting for...I fervently hope that 'ere another year passes I shall be back on civvy street, an attractive and peaceful one". (213) Yet these same men could never forget the navy, not did they abandon their loyalty to messmates and shipmates. "To miss this, writes McKee, "is to overlook the key [*comradeship*] that is essential to unlocking the lower-deck world." (223)

We owe Christopher McKee a debt of thanks for this remarkable and readable venture into that "lower-deck world." Historians and sailors alike should read *Sober Men and True* and keep it near, because however different navies may be, sailors will always be sailors, a breed apart.

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Andrew David, Felipe Fernandez Armesto, Carlos Novi, and Glyndwr Williams, eds. *The Malaspina Expedition, 1789-1794: Journal of the Voyage by Alejandro Malaspina, Volume 1, Cadiz to Panama*, Introduction by Donald C. Cutter. London: The Hakluyt Society, in association with the Museo Naval, Madrid, 2001. xcvi + 338 pp. Illustrations, charts, sketch maps, glossary, appendices. £45.00, cloth; ISBN 0-904180-727.

Of all the great eighteenth century maritime scientific expeditions, even with the bicentennial celebrations of the 1990s, the almost five-year voyage of Alejandro Malaspina is perhaps the least known. Owing to political intrigues that surrounded King Carlos IV and the rise to power of Manuel Godoy, within a year after he returned from his voyage, Malaspina's radical views and naïve political activities cast him into many more dangers than he had faced navigating the great oceans. Unable to obtain support from powerful friends, he languished in prison for years before

his release and exile back to Italy where he had not lived since he was a child. As a direct result of Malaspina's fall from grace, the Spanish government canceled ambitious plans for the publication of seven projected volumes on the expedition plus a volume of illustrations drawn by expedition artists and another of detailed marine charts. Thenceforth, Malaspina's name was stricken from all references to his highly successful expedition. Both he and José de Bustamante, who commanded the twin purpose-built corvette *Atrevida* that accompanied Malaspina's *Descubierta*, appeared in print unnamed as the "commanders of the expedition." After the investment of so much fiscal and intellectual capital, the much-trumpeted scientific and philosophical response of the Spanish Enlightenment and of a modern Spain to the voyages of James Cook, the Comte de la Pérouse, and other renowned explorers in the end came almost to nothing. With only limited exceptions, the scientific collections, research reports, charts, illustrations, and journals submitted by marine officers, scientists, and artists ended up forgotten in collections that did not receive attention for many decades or even for centuries.

In his introduction to what will be three Hakluyt Society volumes, Donald Cutter brings to bear decades of research on the Malaspina expedition and an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Spanish archives on the subject. From the outset, Cutter underscores the elements that differentiated Malaspina's expedition from others of the late eighteenth century. To a certain degree the voyage was one of exploration of unknown regions, but it was also a strategic inspection tour of the Spanish Empire. In some respects, the expedition followed a Spanish model expanding for example upon the earlier expedition of naval officers Jorge Juan and Antonio de Ullôa (1735-44) who had made exhaustive investigations of parts of South America. There was also the element of espionage as Malaspina stopped at Port Jackson in Australia to view and report on the progress of

the British penal settlement.

Unlike any other major voyages of exploration into unknown expanses of the Pacific Ocean, Malaspina conducted many of his investigations mostly on known coastlines and he recruited local officials to report on resources, political affairs, commerce, and public attitudes. Even on the coasts where he established correct latitudes and longitudes, in the 1790s he was able to tap a wealth of information from earlier Spanish and foreign explorers. Malaspina dispatched his botanists, surveyors, artists, and mineralogists inland to conduct research and to report on resources. He and his subordinate naval officers discussed political and defense matters with viceroys, governors, provincial intendants, port officers, and army commanders. Malaspina had shipyards at his disposal for repairs, the treasuries of the American possessions to draw upon for funds, and archives to provide detailed reports. The Spanish royal mail system shipped interim dispatches and scientific collections back to Madrid, and local men were available along the way to recruit or to press as replacement seamen and marines.

Although historians of the Northwest Coast often think of Malaspina's expedition as one dedicated to the original study of native cultures-at Yakutat and Nootka Sound-most of the expedition visits touched societies that were at least somewhat accustomed to European visits and trade. Even at Yuquot (Friendly Cove), Malaspina's scientists were able to interview members of the Spanish post garrison who provided detailed information on language and culture that would have been difficult to acquire in a visit lasting only sixteen days. Elsewhere, on the Pampas de La Plata, at Chiloé Island off Chile, in the Philippine Islands, and at Vava'u in the Tonga Islands, the natives had substantial previous contacts with Europeans. The warlike Patagonian natives for example, went aboard the corvettes to eat Spanish food, to smoke cigars, and to consume both wine and brandy.

It is most interesting to compare Spanish shipboard life and discipline in the

Malaspina expedition with the contemporary English and French expeditions. In terms of diet, hygiene, and attention to health, the Spanish seamen were very well fed, well clothed, and better treated by their officers. With frequent access to the shore and many stops at sheltered ports, Malaspina not only followed James Cook in gathering fresh food wherever possible, but local authorities went out of their way to offer provisions and to assist the expedition with fire wood, carbon, and coal. These factors with fishing, hunting, and harvesting scurvy grass and other herbs made scurvy a minor concern until later in the expedition. During the Atlantic crossing, contamination of essential biscuit supplies in the bread rooms of both corvettes by invasions of caterpillars could be remedied quickly by the bakers of Montevideo. In addition, the corvettes carried excellent provisions that included orange and lemon juice and dry soup tablets. Anxious to maintain happy and healthy crews, in most instances Malaspina and Bustamante were sparing in their application of corporal punishments. The naval officers, selected carefully for their education, dedication, and abilities generally got along very well and unlike some other lengthy maritime expeditions, they maintained very good relations with the scientists. Malaspina went out of his way to assist with the scientific experiments, expeditions ashore, and missions inland that sometimes required lengthy journeys.

All of this was not to say that Malaspina commanded a completely trouble-free expedition. When he referred to the "natural vivacity" of Spanish seamen, in large part he meant their tumultuous behavior in ports, chrome instances of venereal diseases, and above all their tendency to desert. At Puerto San Carlos on the Island of Chiloé, a number of seamen attempted to commit "the age-old transgression," that was to jump ship in order to commence new lives. It was one thing to blame the island women for combining " . . . a grasping nature with a passions for vice and loose-living common to all the provinces of Peru," but quite

another to reduce the attractiveness of young men who brought new blood from Europe (142). When five seamen disappeared and a marine ran off with some clothing and the tools of a forge set up ashore, Malaspina had him chased down and punished with three *carreras de baquetas* (running the gauntlet between files of his comrades who whipped him with the ramrods of their muskets or sticks). When this example failed to deter others, Malaspina posted a two-peso reward to anyone who recovered an escaped deserter. In the case of the marine, it turned out that a farmer offered him a position and the opportunity to marry his daughter. At Santiago in Chile, several seamen from *Atrevida* threatened marines with their knives as they fled. In each port visited, several seamen and marines managed to disappear.

Aware that many Spanish seamen recognized that they might acquire social status in the Americas unattainable to them in Europe, Malaspina strengthened discipline and raised the rewards offered for deserters turned in to thirty pesos. This was an enormous sum, but neither the rewards nor the fear of exemplary punishment deterred the crime. When the explorers arrived at the port of Callao and Lima, desertion had reduced both crews to about half of their original complements. Malaspina lamented the loss of skilled seamen who he recognized were also excellent men as well, but desertion made inshore surveys, anchor-work, and emergency operations increasingly dangerous. From this point forward, officers and marines were to open fire upon would-be escapees. To reward loyal seamen, the commanders increased wine rations and doubled pay from two to four reales per day—advancing money that was not due to be paid until the corvettes reached the Philippine Islands. Although replacement volunteers were found at Callao, many of these men deserted by the time the corvettes arrived at Guayaquil and Panama.

Malaspina recognized the importance of hydrographic surveys to advance national shipping and commerce. The naval officers and

scientists examined questions related to stimulating economic development, mining, agriculture, and good governance. As an example, Malaspina took special interest in the development of fisheries that would create new industries and indirectly protect the empire from foreign maritime intrusions. At Coquimbo north of Valparaiso, he sent his skilled carpenters to train local men how to construct large two-masted and oared Cantabrian launches that would make possible a conger eel fishery. He provided the city council with canvas, needles, sailmaker's palms, rope, tar, grease, and even a boat compass. Luis Née, Antonio Pineda, Tadeo Haenke, and other scientists assiduously collected plants, visited mines, and traveled inland some to examine important sites. At Guayaquil for example, there were scientific missions to examine Chimborazo volcano, to collect specimens, and to survey the economic potential of timber resources suitable for shipbuilding. At each stop, Cayetano Valdés visited archives to collect and copy important materials to assist Malaspina with his final study on the state of Spanish America. Volume one of the journal ends with explorations and surveys at the Isthmus of Panama.

Whatever his political defects that emerged when he returned to Spain, Malaspina was an outstanding hydrographer and navigator, an excellent seagoing commander, and an adopted Spaniard who truly cared about the economic development and defense of the empire. The corvettes *Descubierta* and *Atrevida*, were perhaps the best purpose-built state of the art ships available for marine exploration. Unlike the fortunes of many other mariners, good ships and good weather allowed Malaspina to declare that his sailing round Cape Horn was ". . . as pleasurable as if in the tropics" (118). He was also a scholar who carried with him aboard *Descubierta* a remarkably extensive library of the journals of explorers from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

The format of this particular volume illustrates the advantages foreseen by the Hakluyt Society when it

embarked upon Series III. The larger page permits the inclusion of useful sketch maps that indicate the course of the corvettes. The illustrations and color plates enhance the careful work of the editors. This is a major work to place alongside the published journals of the maritime explorers James Cook, George Vancouver, and La Pérouse.

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Frans Luidinga and Nico Guns. *Indrapoera. Een schip van naam*. Amsterdam: Van Soeren & Co., 2001. 615pp, photographs, fold-out plans, plates, bibliography, index, summary in English, Euro 58, CD N \$ 80; cloth; ISBN 90 68881 097 9

This large-format item tells in loving detail the story of *Indrapoera*, a handsome liner built in the twenties to operate between the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia. Her owners, Rotterdam Lloyd, were forward-looking and chose diesel rather than the traditional steam propulsion because it was more economical both in fuel and personnel costs and required less space. The first Dutch passenger liner with diesel engines, she was completed in 1925, the same year as the first North Atlantic diesel liner, the Swedish *Gripsholm*. With her straight stem, cruiser stern, tiers of wide promenade decks and tall funnel *Indrapoera* always retained the distinctive look of a ship designed to operate largely in the tropics. Named for a volcano on Sumatra, she had a remarkably long career of 37 years which had three phases. The first was service as a passenger liner, the second as a troopship during the war (mostly in the Middle East and Mediterranean), and the third postwar reconfiguration as a cargo liner to carry 100 rather than 437 passengers. In this role she was operated initially by what was now Royal Rotterdam Lloyd and finally did seven years with the Costa Line running between Italy and

Central and South America.

The authors are enthusiasts who have compiled similar nostalgic compendia about several other colonial liners. They interviewed dozens of ageing former crew members, located technical data, and gathered photographs and memorabilia including old posters and promotional brochures. The result is a bit like an extensive album supported by text based on the interviews and crammed with details. The problem with their approach is that it largely reflects the quality of the sources. The authors seem to have regurgitated every scrap of information which they gathered. Two examples are the invoices submitted by various purveyors for a dinner given by the shipbuilders and the swimming pool schedule, which shows how use was allocated among the class of accommodation. To be fair, the include-everything format does yield occasional nuggets like a comparison by the owners of operating *Indrapoera* and a steam-driven near-sister which shows that the diesel vessel used less than half as much fuel and required 30 fewer engineering personnel (16). However, the authors have not systematically examined themes like costs of operating the ship, any changes in types of cargoes carried, occupancy of passenger spaces, continuity in personnel and their backgrounds, etc. Accounts of individual voyages are strong on numbers of passengers embarked in particular ports, entertainments and occasional details of machinery problems and other minutiae. The result is doubtless fascinating for those with associations with *Indrapoera*.

Study of the book can also be rewarding for others. Several foldout plans are beautifully reproduced and show the internal arrangements typical of the time. The voyage from Europe "out East" took a full month and the design reflected considerable attention to passenger comfort, as shown in many evocative photos of art deco interiors. A high percentage of those carried, colonial civil servants entitled to periodic home leaves, had their passages subsidized. Another large group was planters

eager to display their success by booking good cabins when returning home for visits. One third of the 437 passenger berths were allocated to the first class and forty percent to the second class (as a matter of interest as a troopship *Indrapoera* was configured to carry 2000). Unfortunately, plans for the postwar conversion to a single-class cargo liner are not included.

The ship's first set of Schelde- Sulzer engines with 6,000 horsepower gave her a service speed of 15 knots. Within a few years the owners decided to increase *Indrapoera's* speed, partly because faster mail ships were being introduced on the run and shorter passage times would permit the same service to be provided by a smaller pool of ships. Model tests resulted in lengthening the ship by 2.3m and subsequently modifying the entry below the waterline forward. These modifications and two new two-stroke Schelde-Sulzer diesels with a total horsepower of 9,000 increased the service speed to 17 knots, reducing a one-way voyage to 29 days from 31. Interestingly, the owners were simultaneously upgrading their cargo fleet and the engines removed from *Indrapoera* were used to power two new 14 knot "fast" freighters. All this happened in 1931, two years into the Great Depression, which was severely crippling worldwide shipping. Rotterdam Lloyd was obviously confident that better times would return but the authors do not provide insights into the company's cash reserves or whether shipyard rates had also plummeted.

This extended "family album" reflects a strong sense of identification with the ship and by extension with the company. Among the items reproduced are two short speeches given when employees marked the firm's sixtieth anniversary in 1943 while imprisoned in a Japanese Detention Camp on Java. One was given by a stevedore; the sentiments are direct and include thoughts like "sunshine always follows rain" and "keep your heads high ." In an era when employer/employee relations are often depicted as edgy or even confrontational it is striking to glimpse such feelings of shared

loyalty.

The book concludes with an eight-page summary in English. There are two indices but they cover only the names of ships and individuals. The story of *Indrapoera* is of almost four decades of liner service. It is a workmanlike tale as there were no dramatic rescues, collisions or groundings. By the time she was scrapped in 1963 passenger ships were disappearing rapidly and worldwide shipping was about to become the first global industry. This book will appeal mainly to ageing seafarers and one-time passengers. But it is of wider interest as a beautifully-produced nostalgic album which brings to life an already long-ago era of seafaring in a time of leisurely and comfortable travel.

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Dwight R. Messimer, *Seek and Destroy: Antisubmarine Warfare in World War One*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2001. 299 pp, photographs, diagrams, notes, index. ISBN 1-55750-447-4.

This is an important book on a hitherto before neglected subject; tracing the development of antisubmarine technology and tactics during the first U-boat campaigns in history. All aspects of the subject are examined in great detail, from the use of radio decryption and signals analysis to the role of aircraft, both fixed wing and dirigibles to track and destroy submarines. Most of the wacky, wonderful and often harebrained schemes and hardware developed to thwart submarines are discussed in this powerful narrative. These include the development of antisubmarine mines, nets, exploding sweeps, howitzers, and the daring but futile raids on Zeebrugge and Ostend. Well known antisubmarine warfare (ASW) schemes such as the deployment of Q-ships, armed decoys disguised to look like an innocent merchantman, are placed into their proper historical context. Tactics

explored include: arming merchantmen, methods of deploying patrol craft, using submarines as asw vessels, and the introduction of convoys. The sheer geographic breadth of this work is impressive. While the more familiar submarine campaign around the waters off the British Isles is central to the narrative, Messimer includes well researched chapters on ASW operations in the Baltic and Mediterranean theatres of operations. In addition, Messimer also discusses German, Austrian and Turkish ASW operations.

Perhaps most praiseworthy is the great efforts the author has made to incorporate accounts of actual ASW operations into his story. Examples of many, and in some case all of the successful hunts using the various weapons and tactics are provided in detail. Unsuccessful attacks are also discussed. As well, Messimer compares Allied accounts with surviving German records, often relying on seldom used memoirs of submarine officers, to provide the reader with graphic accounts of what it was like to be hunted in the primitive submarines used during the First World War. As a result, Messimer provides one of the best historical accounts of what it was like to fight on both sides of the First Battle of the Atlantic.

There are some serious shortcomings, perhaps most glaringly is the lack of any prewar context. No information is provided on the state of either submarine or ASW technology prior to 1914. One aspect of submarine operations that becomes apparent when reading this account is that these early submersibles worst enemy's was their own technological limitations. Submarines frequently became susceptible to the primitive countermeasures available only after they suffered a technical failure themselves.

Also absent is a concluding chapter that might have linked First World War ASW to similar operations in the Second World War. Although Messimer traces out the origins of the many of the key technologies that would dominate the Second Battle of the Atlantic, such as depth charges, he does not indicate how these technologies would supplant other equipment

that was extensively used between 1914 and 1918.

The weakest aspect of the book is the superficial account of underwater listening apparatus. Since the story of the extensive research program in underwater listening is well outlined in Willem Hackman's *Seek and Strike*, it is surprising that only one brief chapter is devoted to it. This may reflect the operational realities of First World War ASW, where hydrophones, passive sonar, generally proved ineffective locating and tracking a submerged U-boat, and asdic, active sonar, was developed too late to have any significant impact on operations. Still, a huge research effort was undertaken in Great Britain, France and the United States to find means to locate submarines underwater. No mention is made of Professor Paul Langevin's groundbreaking research into underwater supersonics which resulted in the invention of active sonar. Messimer dismisses out of hand French ASW efforts, although their scientists developed not only the first asdic equipment, but also the Walser apparatus, the most effective passive listening device used in the conflict.

Finally, a production problem greatly reduces the usefulness of the extensive diagrams and maps. These are lumped together towards the end of the book. No reference is made to them in the text, even though they would have greatly aided the reader in understanding the tactics or technologies discussed in the narrative.

Despite these criticism's, Messimer's book is a valuable, if not groundbreaking, study of First World War ASW operations. This is a must read for anyone interested in the history of First World War or antisubmarine warfare.

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Peter T. Haydon and Ann L. Griffith (eds.).
Canada's Pacific Naval Presence: Purposeful or Peripheral. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Centre for

Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, nd [1999]. viii + 181, acronyms and abbreviations, notes. ISBN 1 -896400-24-X

This book is a collection of the papers presented at the 1997 Canadian Naval History conference held in Victoria, BC, by a number of distinguished historians, some with naval backgrounds, and seven serving Naval Officers. The papers progressively trace Canada's Pacific naval history over a period from 1862 when Esquimalt, BC. Was made the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief Pacific of the Royal Navy to the date of the conference in 1977.

Dr. Barry Gough's elegant stage-setting address begins with the era in 1862 known as *pax Britannica* when Britain ruled the waves and the Royal Navy commanded the power behind the dominance of the island empire. He traces the influence of naval power in the Pacific from that time to 1977 and Canada's part in it from the passing of the Naval Services Act in 1910; the birth of the Royal Canadian Navy, and the taking over of the Esquimalt Naval Base by Canada in 1912, through the faltering steps of the Royal Canadian Navy in the early twentieth century, brought on by a lack of government naval policy. The result was that Canada's Pacific Naval security up to the end of World War II was one of modest sea patrols of coastal waters and shore-based security including some land-based aerial surveillance.

When the Korean War came in 1950, the Royal Canadian Navy regained a lot of its loss of its Atlantic WWII prestige and efficiency through its naval support of the United Nations Special Force operations there on the western shores of the Pacific Ocean.

Boutilier goes on to ponder what, from that point, the future holds for naval power in the Pacific and what part the Canadian Navy might play in it. At the end, he states "Canada is not a bystander in Pacific affairs. The ocean may be large but those who live... (on the Pacific shores) will have requirements, needs and expectations that will oblige us to make responses, some

humanitarian and some more war-like, as the circumstances require, to fulfill what Canada holds dear".

The second paper, by Dr. Katy Bindon, takes a critical look at the role of historians in the past and future of the Canadian Forces. She states that "our concern in this must deal with the question of whether we have any critical or real impression of our military history, or understanding of how things came to be, and the very real threats that we have, as a country, survived and met or not met". She goes on to recall some of the commissions or the inquiries that did "little further than to consolidate a litany of historical ills while failing to target, or even propose, the new approaches or changes to public policy that should be the essential objects of their study". At the end of a well-reasoned and provocative paper she concludes: "My hope is that we will choose to become fully engaged in the process of the re-education of the country in the matter of the relationship of military history to the future of the Canadian Forces, and of naval history to the future of the Canadian Navy."

In the third paper Captain (N) Dan McNeil explores the evolution of Canada's Maritime defence policy against the backdrop of the struggle for an autonomous foreign policy. He traces the often acrimonious discussions that occurred at all Colonial and Imperial conferences from 1867 until the 1920's on Canada's contribution to the Empire naval forces. Even after the Royal Canadian Navy was born in 1910, these heated discussions continued in London and it became evident that Canada could not have "a national navy in the true sense of the word until it possessed an independent foreign policy". This was finally achieved by the statue of Westminster in 1931. "Canadian warships would now operate fully under national control."

S.E. Soward described the Pacific deepwater operations of the Royal Canadian Navy in World War II. When war began in 1939 against Germany, German armed merchant cruisers began operating against allied merchant

shipping. To help counter this threat, Canada commandeered and converted three CNR cruise ships on the West Coast the *Princes David*, *Robert*, and *Henry* to armed merchant cruisers. Initially they operated against German merchant ships in the Pacific Ocean HMCS *Prince Robert* captured the German ship *Weser*, HMCS *Prince Henry* intercepted two other ships but the crews scuttled them both. The ships were then employed on coastal patrol duties. When Japan captured the island of Kiska in the Aleutians the ships and two corvettes joined the US Navy forces assigned to recapture the island. By the time this force reached Kiska, the Japanese had left. In 1943, these ships, the largest and most powerful the Pacific Command had, were removed from the command, refitted and assigned to other wartime duties.

Meanwhile, in Ottawa grandiose plans were being made to organize a fleet of sixty ships and 17,000 personnel to be used in the war against Japan. However, these plans did not materialize and the only ship to join the British Pacific Fleet was HMCS *Uganda*, a cruiser already serving in the Atlantic. She joined the BPF on April 1, 1945. The paper describes the operations of the *Uganda* with the British Fleet and her infamous withdrawal on July 27, 1945, because of the conscription debacle under which all personnel for service in the war against Japan, although they had volunteered to serve for the duration of the war, were required to re-volunteer.

Michael Whitby's paper is a description of Canada's Pacific naval forces doing the best they could with few warships to patrol the Pacific coastal waters against Japanese naval expeditionary forces which never came. However, the Japanese did use scare tactics by sending two submarines for a short period to attack shipping and, while departing, bombarded coastal targets in Canada and the US and by a Japanese force, which for a short while, invaded one of the outer Aleutian Islands. The paper concludes that the whole naval war operations on the west coast was a typical example of the

RCN's "Can Do" attitude under great pressure.

Chris Weicht in his excellent paper traced the gradual buildup of the Royal Canadian Air Force's West Coast flying operations from 1920 to 1945. Like Whitby's paper he describes the RCAF's coastal air patrols with inadequate forces doing the best job they could under pressure.

In his paper LCdr R. H. Gimblett points out that in 1944 the Government had agreed to a postwar balanced fleet of aircraft carriers, cruisers, fleet destroyers and some 20,000 officers and men. When VE Day and finally VJ Day occurred things changed. The government reduced the interim manning of the services to 10,000 officers and men for the Navy and later reduced that figure to 7,500.

When the wars ended, the RCN had more than 100 ships and 100,000 officers, men women and civilians. The "de-mobbing" of most of the personnel, who were hostilities only reserves, reduced the RCN to a shadow of its former self. The period 1945-1950 was in many ways lost years for our Navy. The RCN was undermanned. Some officers and many men spent long times at sea, a reasonable sea/shore ratio of service for the men was in tatters, conditions onboard were not of the best and morale was at an all time low. One result was a series of mutinies onboard ships, three of them on West Coast ships.

In June 1950, the Korean War began. Peter Haydon in his paper sets the stage, when he stated that at the outset "the Navy had barely enough ships to maintain three destroyers continuously in Korean waters, the state of training was well below the preferred standards and morale was fragile". Summing up at the end of the war he states: "The way...the entire navy,...from secretaries to civilian dockyard workers, from the ships' companies to the staffs ashore, shared in the hard work. As a result commitment to Korea can be seen as a key part of the process by which the RCN rose out of the postwar doldrums to become an effective force".

The next two papers by Lt. (N) E. Kerr

and Cdr. R. Bush and Lt. (N) M. MacIntyre bring Canada's Pacific Fleet up-to-date from 1960 to 1977. In 1960 the Navy had 62 ships in commission and 20,000 officers and men, the largest peacetime fleet in Canada's history. By 1965 the fleet was reduced to 43 ships and today numbers 34. In 1965 the West Coast peacetime fleet hovered between one-quarter and one-third of the size of the Atlantic fleet. During the postwar years the naval threat, apart from Korea, was a cold war one i.e. an Atlantic one. This balance was about to change and more ships were sent to the Pacific to almost even up the fleets.

Trade and commerce in the Pacific, especially that with Asia, had increased by leaps and bounds and, by 1977 had surpassed that crossing the Atlantic. "In military and security terms it was prudent for Canada to increase its interest in the Asia-Pacific region and establish closer ties with the navies of the region through visits and exercises."

Although Canada's Pacific fleet made occasional visits to Pacific South American countries, especially Peru and Chile, beginning in 1955, the decision was taken to send ships to join the United States Navy's UNITAS exercises. In these, a USN task force circumnavigates South America and operates with the navies of countries on the way to improve the ability of the combined forces to work together in joint operations. This is known as interoperability.

It is Canada's policy to prepare its forces to be able to operate with NATO, United Nations, OAS and other RIMPAC forces in exercises such as UNITAS. In addition, as part of this plan, interoperability with USN forces, the most technologically advanced naval forces in the world, is a keystone for Canada's Navy. Maritime Command had made one of its goals to have ships able to operate with USN Battle Groups and this has been achieved.

In reviewing the papers presented at this conference, it is evident that Canada's Navy long ago learned, when presented with a

challenge, to get the best the "Can Do" with the ships and equipment at their disposal. This is a naval tradition.

This is a good book and well worth reading. The authors of the papers have researched their subjects with care and produced well-written and well-crafted essays. Some of them are better than others but all of them taken together give a remarkably good insight into the history of Canada's Navy in the Pacific from British imperial times to the present day.

To conclude, insofar as the Pacific naval forces of Canada are concerned, today, I am convinced that they are "purposeful" and not "peripheral"

H. A. Porter
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Robert Harms. *"The Diligent," A Voyage Through the Worlds of the Slave Trade*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. xxx + 466 pp., maps, illustrations, appendices, notes, index. US \$30.00, Cdn \$44.95, cloth; ISBN 0-465-02871-3.

On 31 May 1731, *Le Diligent*, a converted grain ship of 140 tons burden, set sail from the port of Vannes on the south coast of Brittany for West Africa. There the ship's officers bought 256 slaves, managed to transport 242 of them alive to Martinique, sold them, and returned to France fifteen months later with a cargo of 251 hogsheads of sugar, 23 bales of cotton and 13 quarter casks of rocou, a red dye stuff. Nothing could have been more ordinary. During the eighteenth century more than three thousand three hundred similar voyages carried more than one million Africans slaves to the French colonies. The only exceptional feature about the *Diligent's* voyage is that a detailed record has survived.

This is an unusual book and a brilliant one. Employing a rare maritime journal, which is convincingly authenticated, Robert Harms

reveals the complex workings of the transatlantic slave trade in a way never before attempted. From the details of a single voyage, the author successfully tells the larger story of the early eighteenth-century slave trade. Written by twenty-six year old Robert Durand, First Lieutenant of *Le Diligent*, Harms, a professor of history at Yale University and author of *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891* (1981), has made remarkable use of the journal. Lieutenant Durand tells the story of a great crime. His tale is of greed, madness, inhumanity and death which Harms transforms into a prism to break up the analytical language of ordinary historical discourse about the slave trade into streams of narrative. Harms gets close up and dirty to reveal the many shocking, fascinating worlds of the slave trade.

At first, the reader may wonder where he or she is being taken. But not to worry. The pace is leisurely. *Le Diligent* departs from Vannes only on page 85, ships officers purchase their first slaves on page 233 and the ship reaches Martinique on page 329. Nine captives and four crew members were lost. By the standards of the eighteenth century, the voyage was a success, yet, the ship earned no profit for the owners.

The book's success lies in Harms's creative use of the journal. While the ship is still in France the author explores attitudes towards race and slavery, the nature of marine commerce and the business of fitting out ships. During the voyage along the coast of Africa readers are introduced to ocean navigation and the complex, rapidly changing politics of a variety of African states, principalities and towns, all of which are important to understanding the slave trade. Whydah, Assou, Jakin, Principe and Sao Tomé were all ports of call where strange encounters occurred. Europeans poorly understood what was going on, and Harms deftly shows how Africans controlled the slave trade. On leaving the African coast, feeding the slaves and keeping them healthy combined with fear of revolts to wind up

the sailors to a fever pitch during of the Middle Passage. At Martinique, their destination, slave sales were only part of the complicated goings on. The author's claim that a voyage spanning three continents was largely shaped by local events and local rivalries originating in widely scattered parts of the Atlantic world appealed to this reviewer, but may be salted to one's own taste. Harms' use of other accounts, English as well as French, to explore many of the topics broadens

his study and increases its value.

This is a wonderfully imaginative, deeply knowledgeable examination of the transatlantic slave trade. The many illustrations are an added attraction. The author explores major issues, but his reliance upon narrative without consideration of larger economies and his insistence upon the importance of the immediate and local is sometimes frustrating. For instance, why were slave prices so low in Martinique in 1732 when historians tell us that French slave traders normally could not satisfy the demand for African labour? Some maritime historians may wish that the author gave more attention to the nautical dimensions of the voyage, but this should not deter anyone from reading what is probably the best account of a slave voyage ever written.

James Pritchard
Kingston, Ontario

John Griffith Armstrong. *The Halifax Explosion and the Royal Canadian Navy: Inquiry and Intrigue*. Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2002. Canadian War Museum Studies in Canadian Military History No 1. x + 248 pp.; maps, photographs, endnotes, bibliography, index. \$39.95, cloth; ISBN0-7748-0890-x (bound).

In a recent presentation to this Society's annual conference, the author of this important new book made perhaps the only two additional

points pertinent to the Halifax Explosion that one might want to know but that do not appear as such in the text. The first is that, of the approximately 2000 ocean-going ship movements in Halifax harbour over the course of 1917, only one of those ships carried an explosive mixture of munitions and combustible material. Second, that of all those movements, there was only one collision. As John Armstrong convincingly documents, before the 6th of December 1917, Canadian politicians and government officials of various departments (both in Halifax and in Ottawa) were aware of potential problems in harbour vessel management but were prepared to forswear the additional effort and expense as a suitable exchange of risk management. But the literal coincidence in space and time of the two points described above, in the SS *Mont Blanc* that December morning, catastrophically transformed the problem into one of crisis management - and a scramble to shift the blame.

The resulting blast left thousands dead and many thousands more homeless: it "is a defining event in the Canadian consciousness" (inside dustjacket). Again as Armstrong illustrates, ironically there was perhaps no city in Canada that might have been better prepared to respond to such a crisis. The most important convoy assembly and naval port on Canada's east coast, heavily-fortified Halifax was a garrison town, with one soldier or sailor for every ten of the city's 50,000 inhabitants. Indeed, that the federal presence was so pervasive highlights the significance of this book's contribution to the literature on the Halifax Explosion: remarkably, for all that has been written in fact and fiction on the subject, having accepted to treat the event as a local disaster, none of those other works have made any meaningful use of the federal records in the National Archives of Canada of any of the Departments of Militia & Defence, of the Naval Service, of Marine & Fisheries, or indeed even of the papers of Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden.

Acknowledging the rich treasure trove

of material still waiting to be mined, especially in the Militia files, Armstrong focuses instead upon the response of the fledgling Royal Canadian Navy (RCN), and in that respect this study must be considered definitive. Not only does his narrative style throughout provide a most pleasurable read, but also his understanding and use of the material is most effective, whether it be of the reconstruction of the actual collision between the *Mont Blanc* and the Belgian relief ship SS *Imo*, or of the later inquiry into the causes of the disaster. A chapter that this former naval person found particularly compelling was that entitled "Towards the Unthinkable", in which Armstrong reconstructed a day in the life of the harbour on the eve of the disaster. From a thorough compilation of the essentially routine bureaucratic entries in surviving logs of the Canadian warships present, Armstrong has fashioned a most convincing portrait.

As for crisis management, he further demonstrates that not all of it concerned immediate relief of those affected. The citizens of Halifax were anxious to fix the blame, and the tin-pot Canadian fleet - in the eyes of Haligonians an unpopular usurper of the more prestigious Royal Navy - provided plenty of fodder. Again the irony abounds, as practically all of the major characters were former officers in the RN. Attention quickly focused upon the Chief Examining Officer, Acting Commander F.E. Wyatt, nominally responsible for the regulation of all ship movements within the harbour. With no direct contact with any vessel, Wyatt of course could bear no more responsibility for the collision than the harbour pilots assigned to *Mont Blanc* and *Imo*, yet the latter were patronage appointments and the Navy was held in many quarters to be a Liberal institution. Among the many insights of his detailed analysis of the inquiry, Armstrong details how the Conservative Senator who owned the Halifax Herald newspaper was instrumental in shifting blame from the Pilotage Commission onto the hapless Wyatt - and how

Borden's government was content to see this transpire. Anyone at all familiar with the machinations of the Somalia Commission of the last decade will immediately perceive the parallels; others exist in the RCN's own Mainguy Commission of 1949.

This book works on many levels. As suggested earlier, it will remain for some time the reference on the part played by the RCN in the Halifax Explosion. But anyone working on that event cannot ignore its implications in practically any other respect. Indeed, it stands as an allegory for the intrigues of any official inquiry. Finally, while setting a new benchmark of scholarship on the subject, Armstrong has succeeded also in maintaining the essential humanity of the tragedy: it is a horrible tale of a maritime disaster, wonderfully told through the eyes of the sailors affected.

Richard H. Gimblett
Blackburn Hamlet, Ontario

John C. Fredriksen, Ph.D., (ed.). *Surgeon of the Lakes: The Diary of Dr. Usher Parsons, 1812-1814*. Erie, PA: Erie County Historical Society, 2000, xvi +114 pp., map, photographs. U.S. \$10.95, paper; ISBN -1-883658-36-5.

Available in its entirety for the first time, this diary records the activities of a young naval surgeon's mate who served on and around Lake Erie during the War of 1812. In "A Diary kept during the Expedition to Lake Erie under Captain O. H. Perry, 1812-1814," Dr. Usher Parsons offers a fascinating personal account of his experiences treating the soldiers and sailors who came under his care, sprinkled with many keen-eyed observations of the society in which he lived. While Harold Langely's fine book, *A History of Medicine in the Early US Navy* (John Hopkins University Press, 1995) offers a fuller treatment of the topic, Dr. Parsons' diary is one of only a few such medical narratives published on the War of 1812.

Dr. Usher Parsons (1788-1868) rose from obscurity as a medical apprentice in 1807 to become "one of the most skilled and erudite physicians of his generation" (xiv). The author of numerous tracts and publications, Chair of Anatomy and Surgery at Brown University, President of the Rhode Island Medical Society, one of the founding fathers of the American Medical Association and a founder of the Rhode Island Hospital, Dr. Usher Parsons began his illustrious career in 1812 as a medical practitioner licenced by the Massachusetts Medical Society.

On July 6, 1812, the United States declared war on Great Britain and Parsons received his commission as a surgeon's mate with orders to join the *USS John Adams* in New York. In September, he and most of his mates were recruited by Commander Isaac Chauncey for a secret expedition to the Great Lakes. The diary begins September 24, 1812, as he sails down the Hudson River from New York to Albany. Like any young man setting off on an adventure, Parsons notes the attractive buildings of Albany and the uncomely females, observing that "there are 146 publick inns between Albany and Utica." He interrupts his travelogue to refer to the crew's fine health and to note without further comment, "We this day discovered among the crew a female clad in sailor's apparel" (5). Entries ranging from two or three words to half a page continue for the next two years until the last entry on December 10, 1814 when Parsons delightedly left Erie to join Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry on board his new frigate, the *USS Java*.

Appointed director of the Erie military hospital at Black Rock, near Buffalo, Parsons arrived in time for General Alexander Smyth's failed crossing of the Niagara River in late November, 1812. His diary carefully notes the names of American sailors wounded or killed and their injuries, offering genealogist and historians a very useful reference tool. (17) He also notes the arrival of his first copy of the *Boston Gazette*, the good sleighing, the spread of

pneumonia among the troops and his first trip to Niagara Falls. Although the Lake Erie campaign was his first combat experience, Parsons describes the injuries he was called to treat in a professional manner without over-dramatizing what must have been a horrific experience for him. For those with an interest in early 19th century medicine, there are numerous references to the surgical procedures and treatments he prescribes for his men. Thanks to the excellent footnotes supplied by the editor, Dr. Parsons' often laconic comments are amplified or explained in the context of 19th century medical knowledge.

Parsons, himself, was a very interesting character. In May 1813, he led a party of 20 civilians against Fort Erie after the British had withdrawn, and captured the last two inhabitants. As Fredriksen points out in his Introduction, this made Parsons the only surgeon of the War of 1812, and possibly of any other war, to lead an expedition and take the surrender of an enemy post. A few months later, in September 1813, Parsons was aboard Commodore Perry's flagship, the *USS Lawrence*, when they met the British squadron in the Battle of Lake Erie. Working amidst the cannon fire and carnage, Parsons not only managed to survive unharmed, he wound up the only surgeon well enough to look after nearly 100 casualties. Although eventually assisted by two captured British surgeons, Parsons spent the first 36 hours alone, feverishly working to save the lives of his fellow sailors. Miraculously, only three men died of their wounds and along with his Congressional medal and \$ 1,249 in prize money, Parsons earned Perry's undying gratitude.

For the next nine months Parsons chronicled his life in Erie until June, 1814 when he accompanied the disastrous Mackinac expedition under Lieutenant Colonel George Croghan. His account of the early part of the trip is full of interesting comments about the coldness and clarity of Lake Huron, an island near Fort St. Joseph covered with a variety of

trees and a "species of daisy of light blue colour" (85) and the sale of his flannel coat to Mr. Bullus for his share of the prize money(86). Parson's record of the expedition against Fort Michilmackinac on August 4 is one of the few eyewitness accounts of the event and concludes with the simple statement, "The retreat was well conducted"(90).

Parsons notes the world around him with an eye trained to observe the minutia of life. His was the often-tedious life of a naval surgeon in an relatively remote post where the weather, the mosquitoes and occasional dinners at local establishments were periodically enhanced by the arrival of ladies on May 18, 1814 (72), a pleasant visit to Waterford, a neighbouring community on November 21, 1813 (58) or a few hours encountering French-speaking inhabitants along the Canadian shore, June 22, 1814 (76). His diary is both personal and professional. It includes medical observations such as the amazing recovery of a man who had been in a delirium for several days restored to "perfect collectedness of mind by drinking his usual allowance of whiskey" (14) as well as a formula for liquid blacking. (79) But he also records his gambling losses and the time(s) he "got beastly drunk with the others"! (98)

The subject of numerous articles and biographies, as well as an author and educator himself, Parsons' story has been told elsewhere and more completely. What the publication of his diary provide to scholars is a complete version of the text along with three appendices relating to the Battle of Lake Erie thoroughly annotated by John Fredriksen. A useful companion to similar War of 1812 accounts edited by Dr. Fredriksen, Dr. Parson's diary contributes a new dimension to the historical scholarship of the War of 1812 on the Great Lakes.

Faye Kert
Ottawa, Ontario

Gary Geddes, *Sailing Home: A Journey Through Time, Place and Memory*. Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2001. viii + 337 pp., map., \$32.00, cloth; ISBN0-00-200007-5.

In his book, *Sailing Home*, Gary Geddes takes us on several voyages by splicing coastal tales with ghosts of his past. In the first, a two month voyage through place, Geddes describes the people, sea conditions, and wildlife he meets and the experience of living in cramped quarters aboard the thirty-one foot sloop *Groais*. Sailing enthusiasts, understandably attracted by the book's title, must search carefully for any accounts of "coming about" or "tacking and jibing" before the wind. He rarely mentions a sail being hoisted. As Geddes himself points out, "I hadn't sailed as much as I'd expected, the wind either in my face or too strong..." (335).

Sixteen chapters describe Geddes' journey from Bellingham as far north as the mainland opposite the Queen Charlotte Islands and another five "sailing" back to Sidney. The single map conveniently shows the places Geddes' visits, however a caption to that effect and a line showing his cruising course would be a helpful guide for the reader. The book's cover shows an early map of the British Columbia coast, super-imposed on an ocean sunset that could stand alone as a framed work of art.

As promised in the subtitle, Geddes takes us on voyages through "Time, Place and Memory." The second voyage sails through memories where chance encounters prompt Geddes to reminisce about his own life (born in 1940) and that of his unquestionably eccentric family. He focuses on his childhood and early adult life on the coast. Geddes eloquently expresses his longings, his regrets and his gratitude to his family. He describes his stepmother's love for him with breath-taking honesty. He reminisces primarily through a child's eye and as such this portion of his work is devoid of detail about the communities as a whole. The third voyage bounces us through time and history. Geddes brings in the occasional

historical anecdote told by the people he meets. He recounts ships wrecked along his route or steamships and other vessels that plied the coast. He even compares memoirs from the voyages of Darwin's *Beagle* and Sir France's Drake's *Golden Hind* to his own experiences.

A fourth and unexpected voyage, assembles a rich and carefully selected array of literature. For example, a chance encounter with a killer whale leads Geddes to discuss humanity's evolutionary connection to the whale as described in Carl Zimmer's, "77ie *Water's Edge*." He also refers to the writings of such authors as: Malcolm Lowry, Herman Melville, Joseph Conrad, and Jonathan Swift. Given this approach, a bibliography, would have been a useful addition.

Meeting his cousin Ron in Vancouver, Geddes learns that his grandfather had lost his false teeth in the final days of his life, shortly before he drowned nearby. This inspires Geddes to recount his trip to his grandparents' birthplace in the Orkney Islands in the North Sea three weeks earlier. He meanders into a historical narrative about the Vikings, Picts and Irish priests who ruled the Orkney Islands. He drifts back in time in a breathtakingly smooth transition. Unfortunately, Geddes returns to the present in an equally imperceptible tack which potentially leaves the reader at a bit of a loss to know when the vantage point has shifted. Like a sailor who frequently checks his nautical chart while navigating a reef-strewn passage, the reader needs to periodically reread sentences to check their bearings.

Geddes' literary skill shines most brightly when recounting his own misadventures. When he makes a wrong step from his boat during the final leg of his journey we read; "So it was that the conquering hero, having braved the demons of the coast... found himself descending, inch by inch, into the salt chuck at the very apex of his glory" (326).

Sailing Home does indeed take us on some interesting journeys through time, place and memory. However, the journeys through

introspective memories and through a deeply pondered array of literature provide more enlightenment than the journeys through time and place.

Suzanne Spohn
West Vancouver, B.C.

John Sweetman. *Tirpitz: Hunting the Beast*. Annapolis, Maryland; Naval Institute Press, 2000. xii + 180 pp., maps, photographs, appendix, bibliography, index. \$US 28.95, cloth; ISBN 1-55750-822-4.

Tirpitz was Nazi Germany's last and most formidable modern battleship. Although relegated to a "fleet-in-being" role in Norwegian waters after the loss of her more famous sister ship *Bismarck* in May 1941, *Tirpitz* continued to preoccupy the thoughts of Allied political leaders and naval planners. Winston Churchill dubbed her "the beast," hence the sub-title of the book. The German battleship's presence and potential fighting power tied down British and American capital ships - at the time badly needed in the Pacific theatre against the Japanese - to counter forays against Murmansk-bound Arctic convoys and even a possible breakout into the North Atlantic; the threat posed by *Tirpitz* played an indirect part in the disastrous scattering of Convoy PQ 17. John Sweetman builds upon his previous work on strategic bombing to describe various British attempts to sink *Tirpitz* by air attack, both Fleet Air Arm and Bomber Command, from May 1940 until final success on 12 November 1944.

The book covers planning, operational, and technical aspects of British efforts against *Tirpitz* in a comprehensive and detailed fashion. Contrary to earlier demonstrations by American aviation

enthusiast William Mitchell, air power had not made the large, big gun battleship obsolete, even though most pre-war navies badly neglected short- and medium-range anti-aircraft ordnance. The British torpedo attack at Taranto and the loss of *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* off Singapore highlighted the vulnerability of big warships to air attack, but *Tirpitz*, ensconced safely behind protective nets in narrow fjords under an umbrella of strong defences, proved a far more difficult target. Shore-based, high performance *Luftwaffe* fighters completely outclassed available British aircraft, whether the Fleet Air Arm's antiquated Swordfish, Albacore, and Barracuda or Bomber Command's Hampden, Halifax, and Lancaster. Smokescreens and heavy anti-aircraft fire hindered accurate bombing runs, and bombs that did find their mark lacked sufficient explosive weight to penetrate *Tirpitz's* armoured deck and cause more than superficial damage. Surprisingly, Air Marshal Arthur Harris, the ruthless mastermind behind Bomber Command's strategic bombing campaign against German cities, took a personal interest in sinking the high-profile *Tirpitz* and continued to devote precious planes and resources to various operations. Meanwhile, Barnes Wallis, an aeronautical engineer with the armaments firm Vickers-Armstrong, developed the 12,000 lb. Tallboy, a gravity bomb originally designed to destroy hardened concrete structures and by far the largest in the Allied inventory.

Bomber Command, as Sweetman ably shows, finally possessed a large enough weapon in Tallboy to undermine *Tirpitz's* internal stability, although problems with load and range involved the British in complicated over-flights to Soviet airfields with lackluster results. The German decision to move *Tirpitz* to a new anchorage near

Tromso, believed to be safe with a shallow rock bottom that on closer inspection turned out to be mud and sand, provided Bomber Command with another chance. It was here that Lancasters from 617 Squadron and 9 Squadron, flying in Operation "Catechism" from airfields in Scotland, dropped a dozen Tallboys on or near the battleship with no interference from German fighter aircraft. The effect was catastrophic. *Tirpitz* capsized to the port side, trapping some 1,200 officers and sailors below decks in the hull. Sweetman makes good use of British and German after-action reports to provide a balanced view of the event from various perspectives.

Sweetman's book clearly demonstrates the undaunted determination of the British to sink *Tirpitz* and conversely the waning interest of the Germans, first from Hitler and then the German naval staff under Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, with the *Kriegsmarine's* largest warships. Although of only marginal operational utility in retrospect, *Tirpitz* remained a strategic asset, holding down sizeable Allied naval forces and bolstering the defence of German-occupied Norway. The joint effort by the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command to remove this menace was considerable and sustained. Likewise, lack of cooperation between the *Luftwaffe* and the *Kriegsmarine* undoubtedly played no small part in *Tirpitz's* fate. British bombers turned *Tirpitz* into a steel coffin for German sailors, but no more than the hundreds sent to their deaths in U-boats during 1944-45. *Tirpitz's* destruction was one more sign that the war was irretrievably lost for Nazi Germany, even though the *Kriegsmarine* under Donitz continued to fight on to the bitter end. Sweetman's book, based upon extensive research in a diverse range of original sources, will interest general readers

and specialists alike.

Chris Madsen
Toronto, Ontario

Robert D. Turner. *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners: The Canadian Pacific's Princesses*. Victoria, BC; Sono Nis Press, 2000. 160 pp., photographs, illustrations. \$39.95, paper, ISBN 1-55039-109-7

With *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners*, Robert Turner has produced a lavishly illustrated book of memories for a service that has now all but vanished from British Columbia's coast. Rather than produce a historical overview of the Canadian Pacific Railway's British Columbia Coast Steamship Service, which would essentially duplicate his 1977 work *The Pacific Princesses*, the author's goal is to share his own personal memories and experiences of the people and the ships that maintained this service, along with those of others who either travelled or worked on the *Princesses* between 1901 and 1981.

The Canadian Pacific Railway's operations along British Columbia's coast played a significant role on the province's development, and much has already been written on this topic. Mr. Turner has gone to considerable effort to avoid repeating himself in his latest retelling of this story. He has chosen to begin this narrative in 1901, with Captain James Troup's arrival in Victoria, to begin a twenty-seven year tenure as manager of the British Columbia Coast Service. Using a number of sources, including many well-chosen quotations from Troup's own correspondence, the author ably illustrates the hands-on approach that the Canadian Pacific Railway's manager used to build his operation. Indeed, more than half of the book is dedicated to the years of Troup's tenure, and descriptions of the many ships that he helped to design.

With the exception of immediate

successor, Captain Cyril Neroutsos, Mr. Turner says very little of the roles played by those who followed in Troup's footsteps, though it could be argued that there is little to say. Close to twenty passenger vessels were built for the Canadian Pacific's coastal service between 1902 and 1928, while only six more would be built in the years that followed. Troup's successors had to deal with the depression, World War II, and competition from the airplane, an expanded highway network, and B. C. Ferries. As a result, all that they could really do was maintain or, in later years, slowly dismantle the system that Troup had built. The author has therefore chosen to concentrate on the company's reactions to the aforementioned challenges, as opposed to the actions of any one person, in the years following Troup's retirement. Nonetheless, there could have been some benefit from including the views and recollections of later managers, such as R. W. McMurray, O. J. Williams, and H. Tyson.

In keeping with the author's goal of producing an album of images and recollections, the format of this book is rather like a well thought out scrapbook. In places one finds a collage of Canadian Pacific memorabilia, while interspersed throughout the text are numerous excerpts from letters and interviews by those whose lives were affected by these ships. One of the hallmarks of any book from Robert Turner is the multitude of illustrations that are used. *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners* is no exception to this. Once again, Mr. Turner has gone to great lengths to limit the duplication of images between this work and *The Pacific Princesses*, with wonderful results. Highlights among the images reproduced in this book are the numerous interior photographs of the *Princess Victoria* and *Princess Kathleen*. An impressive array of colour photographs has also been included, among which are images of Captain Troup's early steamers *Princess Victoria* and *Princess Charlotte*, taken late in their careers.

The *Princess* steamers are all gone now, and with the sale of their remaining marine operations in 1998, the Canadian Pacific

Railway's involvement in British Columbia's coastal shipping industry has ended. In writing *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners*, Robert Turner has provided us with what may be described as a companion volume to his earlier work, *The Pacific Princesses*, written in 1977. This new book has also given Mr. Turner the opportunity to write the final chapter in the long history of Canadian Pacific's operations along the coast of British Columbia. While the illustrations alone make this book a valuable addition to the library of anyone with an interest in the history of shipping along British Columbia's coastline, Mr. Turner's affectionate recollections of the ships, and those who sailed on them, make it a necessity to those who can recall the role that they played in the development of this province.

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Christopher M. Bell. *The Royal Navy, Seapower and Strategy Between the Wars*. London: Macmillan in association with King's College, London, Studies in Military and Strategic History series, 2000. xx + 232 pp., maps, tables, list of abbreviations, notes, bibliography, index. £37.50, cloth, ISBN 0-333-71046-0.

When history popularizes military strategy, it is a safe bet that strategies implemented in wartime will monopolize the reader's attention. For the true student of strategy - be it air, naval, or land - there will always be a need to review what political, economic, and diplomatic considerations were active in the minds of decision-makers in times of relative peace.

Christopher Bell, a post-doctoral student at Simon Fraser University, carries this off in bold fashion. He explores the 'true' motivations behind the size and purpose of the Royal Navy (RN) in the period 1919-1939, and in doing so undermines the 'orthodox' view that the inter-war naval officer corps "fundamentally misunderstood the nature, meaning, and utility of

seapower"(xvi).

Bell traces the evolution of the 'power standard' as the means by which the Admiralty assessed its material needs. Taking a decidedly 'Mahanian' view of seapower - whereby national power was derived from colonial holdings, the sea-borne commerce emanating from them, and naval forces to protect both - the Admiralty reviewed the naval capabilities of potential rival powers and sought to maintain a fleet and basing infrastructure to deal with threats to its maritime trade. It was in constant conflict with the Treasury for resources; more so as the rise of Nazi Germany - considered to be a mainly a terrestrial power - heightened political attention on the need for a robust air defence of the home islands. Whether the Admiralty or the Cabinet subscribed to a one- or two-power standard (ie, the need to build a fleet to meet one or two challengers) from one year to the next is considered to be of minor importance. The interpretation of the standard favoured the RN some years, some not. There was a general consensus on the need for a robust Imperial (as opposed to local) defence based at sea. But the standard is judged by the author to have little long-term impact on the strength of the RN.

Chapters 2 to 5 provide a fascinating survey of plans to fight decisive or holding actions against other naval powers ranging from the least probable foe (the United States) to the most likely (Japan in the 1920s, Italy and Germany in the 1930s). The author points to the Admiralty's 'Far East Strategy' as an example of the unfair criticism that historians have levelled at the inter-war RN. While many historians assert that the possibility of ever sending a sizeable fleet to counter the Imperial Japanese Navy was unrealistic, this only became true with the rise of Germany and Italy as credible threats. Before this happened, the strategy was essentially sound because the RN possessed a quantitative and qualitative superiority in ships and manpower enabling it to simultaneously fight Japan and look after matters closer to home.

Did this mean that the Admiralty was guilty of focussing too much on Japan and not on European powers? Bell argues not since German ambitions were confined to Central and Eastern Europe (and Italy to the Horn of Africa) where naval power was not even relevant. By the mid-1930s German naval strength has risen but an Anglo-German accord had confined its size to 35 percent of that of the RN. This helped ensure that Hitler's commerce-raiding capability would be limited, adding a measure of security to Britain's overseas trade.

The book is constructively illustrated, well documented, and includes an index for easy reference. There are a few small warts: the author refers to, but provides no in-depth description or analysis of, the Washington Treaty - the naval arms limitation accord that established and represented the first serious effort to check the impulse to build navies of unreasonable size. Nor are Britain's vital interests clearly defined at the outset - a curious omission given that Imperial interests were THE justification for the maintenance of a large navy.

One might also look in vain for a comprehensive analysis of the TOOLS of Britain's naval strategy. What compelled the Admiralty to regard the big-gunned vessels as the primary means to project power rather than the aircraft carrier? Given the efficacy of Germany's submarine fleet during the First World War, should the RN have devoted more thought and resources to countering a more advanced version of this type of 'asymmetric' warfare? The reader may perceive only an oblique answer to this question as Bell recounts the on-going efforts of the Admiralty to match limited financial resources to seemingly unlimited goals.

The book is not a work of popular history, nor is it intended to be. But although appreciation of Bell's work may be confined to those who have some prior knowledge of international politics and strategy in the inter-war years, the book is without doubt an excellent attempt to revise judgement on the

quality of the RN's leadership over two crucial decades. Indeed, the references to the 'commitment-capability gap' facing Britain's senior service may be instructive to current practitioners of defence policy everywhere.

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