

acknowledgement.

The problem of no citations of factual or pictorial sources renders the book less useful to people seeking to learn about the Royal Navy of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period. But they are not really the intended audience. This book is for those wanting just an overview of the subject and era. It is the kind of volume found in museum shops and on public or school library shelves. Someone whose interest in maritime history is beginning to appear might benefit greatly from this book.

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John D. Grainger. *The British Navy in the Caribbean*. Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, www.boydellandbrewer.com, 2021. 279 pp., maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography. UK £75, US \$130.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-78327-589-2. (E-book available.)

John D. Grainger, an independent scholar and former teacher, is a prolific author with over two dozen books to his credit. He is especially at home in the realms of ancient and maritime history, with titles like *Hellenistic and Roman Naval Wars* (2011), *The Rise of the Seleucid Empire* (2014), and *The British Navy in the Mediterranean* (2017) to his credit. Lucid treatment of the broader strategic background as well as quotidian tactical details distinguish his work, and the prose flows easily.

Not surprisingly, Grainger's latest book, *The British Navy in the Caribbean*, is a solid presentation of a subject heretofore treated as a sideshow to the Royal Navy's better-known activities in the Mediterranean and Atlantic. According to Grainger, Britain's earliest Caribbean ventures were more along the line of informal piratical and pri-

vateering enterprises against Spanish interests than sanctioned government fleets. These included three forays by John Hawkins between 1562 and 1568. Hawkins ferried enslaved Africans into previously inviolate Spanish Caribbean colonies and found ready markets among the labour-starved Spanish planters. During his last voyage in 1568, he and Francis Drake got into a desperate harbour fight at Veracruz and were fortunate to escape with their lives. Despite Hawkins' near ruin, the pattern for future Caribbean scuffles had been set: "Spanish control of the mainland and of the larger islands, including Florida, a position which was to be defended," and English trading/raiding trips and the seizure and settlement of smaller islands ignored by the Spanish (22).

Grainger makes it clear that none of these trading/plundering voyages posed a serious risk to overall Spanish hegemony in the region. Europe remained the focus for both the English and the Spanish royal courts, and the two sides soon informally agreed that Caribbean scrapes should not lead to a broader war. This was an admirable piece of *realpolitik*, soon codified in the 1604 peace treaty that ended the Armada war. It became known as "no peace beyond the line" (45). The "line" in this case really meant lines, referring to the Tropic of Cancer to the south and the longitudinal line running west of the Azores. Anything south of the Tropic and west of the Azores line was fair game. Since the Tropic of Cancer skims the northern coast of Cuba, this area included the entire Caribbean Sea.

During the early seventeenth century, the English managed to take and settle a number of unoccupied or lightly settled islands, including Barbados, Antigua, Nevis, and Montserrat. Grainger declares that once these islands began producing goods for English markets, their protection and that of the merchant

vessels sailing to and from their harbours became “naval problems” (46). Oliver Cromwell employed an aggressive Caribbean strategy with his so-called “Western Design,” which contemplated the outright conquest of Spanish territory. Using “no peace beyond the line” as an excuse, he sent 38 ships and 3,000 men into the region. This was by no means a petty privateering adventure and Spain declared war in 1656. The subsequent experience featured the themes of many Caribbean conflicts to follow – command blundering, devastating disease, and mixed military results. Cromwell’s fleet failed to topple Santo Domingo, but it did capture Jamaica, which became a “centre of power” (63) for the British, not to mention a wealthy sugar producer.

Henry Morgan is, of course, the most famous Englishman to rampage the Caribbean, but his accomplishments were more those of a pirate than a navy man. Morgan enjoyed spectacular success, but his buccaneer armies were risky instruments of national policy. As Grainger writes, pirates “had their own aims and agendas, and could not be trusted” (71). Given the potential profits, it was hardly a surprise that Morgan’s freewheeling ways appealed to later Royal Navy officers. Throughout Britain’s Caribbean history these men resisted cooperative enterprises and were interested only in enriching themselves.

By 1729, the English Caribbean enterprise had finally evolved from scenes of buccaneering derring-do to a formal naval presence. The fleets were small compared to those back home – a force under Rear Admiral Charles Stewart consisted of only eight ships, “the largest a third rate” (134). At first, this was generally adequate for limited operations and chasing smugglers, but the eighteenth century brought a series of wars, including Jenkin’s Ear, the

Seven Years’ War, the American Revolution, and the Napoleonic Wars, in which naval manoeuvring and combat between rival powers were very nearly worldwide. This meant diverse and complicated strategic goals. Perhaps Britain’s most impressive success was the capture of Havana after a long siege in 1762. Spain regained the “Key to the Indies” after an 11-month British occupation. Less impressive was the Royal Navy’s inability to stamp out smuggling and privateering during the American war. After Britain’s loss of Pensacola in 1781, the French navy was free to concentrate against Yorktown, directly leading to the overall British defeat. Grainger treats the nineteenth and twentieth centuries briefly, especially after the First World War when the Caribbean became an American lake.

There is much to admire in Grainger’s narrative. His inclusion of the Gulf of Mexico and its northern littoral, something too few Caribbean scholars bother to do, is particularly pleasing, as is his explanation of technological improvements like coppering and carronades. At 252 pages of text, his book provides an admirable and fast-paced overview of a fascinating subject.

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John Grehan and Alexander Nicoll. *Saipan 1944: The Most Decisive Battle of the Pacific War*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Frontline Books, www.frontlinebooks.com, Images of War Series, 2021. 191 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography. UK £14.99, US \$22.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-52675-830-9.

Although a select few of major Second World War actions – Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa – enjoy wide recognition over seventy years after the end of the war, that is unfortunately not the