

of that class's armament and operational history. A final table shows the specifications for that class—displacement, dimensions, propulsion, range, and crew. A final section entitled “Analysis and Conclusion,” followed by a very useful bibliography and index, completes the work.

Stille writes well and his narrative keeps the reader focused. The many photographs add to the narrative and give the reader many visual connections to the subject. Several colour side view plates, two colour plates of RM destroyers in action, plus a good centerspread colour plate of the RM destroyer, *Da Verazzano*, help keep the reader's interest in the narrative.

This book, when taken with Stille's two earlier works on RM ships (mentioned above) bring life to a lesser-known aspect of the Second World War at sea. They can be a useful quick reference for the expert in the field, while the reader unfamiliar with the RM will find these a good introduction to this naval service. While this book on RM destroyers and Stille's other works cannot be considered revisionist history of the RM, they do help to refute the often-held belief that the Regia Marina was of little consequence in the Second World War. *Italian Destroyers of World War II* is a work recommended.

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**Jon Sutherland and Diane Canwell. *Churchill's Pirates: The Royal Naval Patrol Service in World War II*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2020. vi+244 pp., illustrations, appendices, bibliography, index. UK £15.99, US \$29.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-52679-651-6.**

Bottom line up front – this book has flashes of brilliance but could have been much better. Verbose and repetitive, as well as being padded out with barely relevant information, it is only the first-hand accounts that save it from being merely pulp history.

That said, the authors have produced a reasonable history of the Royal Naval Patrol Service and the thousands of men and the many hundreds of ships involved. These include assorted trawlers and other vessels taken up from trade during the war to operate as minesweepers, convoy escorts, anti-submarine vessels, stores carriers, and whatever other random tasks the Admiralty could come up with. The service replicated in many ways its First World War forebears who also get a lengthy (perhaps too lengthy) description.

When war came in 1939, the Royal Navy lacked sufficient vessels particularly for mine-sweeping and convoy escort duties. Formed in 1939 at HMS *Europa* near Lowestoft, England the Patrol Service Headquarters, known as the “Sparrows Nest” quickly recruited many fishermen and their

vessels to fill this void. The effect this had on reducing the fish catch for the British population is barely mentioned; and this would have been an interesting side story to explore, noting the reduction in available fishing vessels and the severe food rationing in Britain throughout the war.

Casualties amongst the patrol service crews were high with many ships lost to mines, aircraft attack, torpedoed while on convoy escort duties and bad weather also took its toll. As the war progressed more and more men with little sea experience were recruited as “Hostilities Only” officers and seaman to fill the gaps. Many seamen from occupied European countries also found their way in the patrol service as well. With this hodge-podge of ships and men, the service became known as Harry Tate’s Navy after a bumbling Scottish comedian, although the men themselves preferred to be known as Churchill’s Pirates.

These small ships served throughout the Atlantic campaign, in the Mediterranean, Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, on convoys to North Russia and in British home waters. They were present at the ill-fated Norwegian campaign where the crew of HMS *Arab* distinguished themselves in several harrowing days of intense air attack and which earned the ships commanding officer a Victoria Cross. The patrol service vessels also played their part in evacuating British and French troops from Dunkirk, and other French ports, in the dark days of June 1940, and then went back in June 1944 as part of Operation Overlord to support the landings at Normandy.

Many served as convoy escorts in the Atlantic and on the Artic run to Murmansk with several U-Boats sunk; but often at a high cost in patrol service ships and men. In British coastal waters the endless minesweeping took its toll on men and ships and one small patrol vessel swept nearly 200 German mines in its long career. Others had shorter service and perpetuated the old saying that “every ship can be a minesweeper – once.”

The book has some handy appendices concerning ships lost and awards for minesweeping, but I was frequently reaching for other books or trawling websites to confirm data due to a complete lack of end notes to justify many comments and assumptions. The authors can be quite verbose, using 20 or more words to describe a very basic activity and at times, the story becomes overly repetitive.

In other cases, the story line is scant and the reader will need to do more research to find out what really happened. The saving grace is the firsthand accounts, from several men, of the actions they fought, but again, there are no end notes to explain where this data came from and some portions of the book provide hear-say as fact.

It is not a bad book, but it is a basic history of the patrol service. For those who know nothing of this part of the Royal Navy, it is a good starting point to

gain a basic appreciation; but for those wanting a more in depth analysis, they will have to look elsewhere.

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**Greg H. Williams. *The US Navy at Normandy: Fleet Organization and Operations in the D-Day Invasion*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com), 2020. vi+437 pp., illustrations, appendix, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. US \$49.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-8077-4. (E-book available.)**

This work is Williams' latest detailed Second World War naval compendium in which he seeks to document the American Navy's organization and actions during Operation Neptune, June 6-24, 1944. Utilizing official reports, ship histories, and unofficial personal recollections, Williams provides readers with a detailed understanding of not only the Normandy Landings, but the preparation, planning, and post-attack supply efforts as well. As with his earlier work, the detached nature of ship names and statistics is humanized with the inclusion of personal information on surviving crewmen, casualties, and fatalities in addition to first-hand accounts. The work is arranged in fifteen chapters, each with its own subsection, followed by a brief epilogue noting overall participation figures, a summary of one D-Day Navy fatality, and the auction of a D-Day-flown flag.

The initial eleven chapters cover the lead-up to Operation Neptune, the composition of the various units involved, and the assorted types of ships composing the formidable D-Day armada. This latter point is focused on the less glamorous vessels of the fleet, such as LCIs, LSTs, Rhino Ferries, or minesweepers, rather than the larger cruisers and battleships of the fleets. These early chapters provide excellent background information on the various events that preceded Neptune, including an accounting of the disastrous German E-Boat attack on the unprepared LSTs of Exercise Tiger. Western Task Force Command units, groups, and naval squadrons are broken down extremely well in chapter nine, with each unit having some form of summary information paired with ship names and commanding officers when available. As usual, Williams documents the crew casualties aboard various vessels listing name, rank, and home address. The next two chapters see a similar treatment given to the main assault forces, follow-up convoys, and American units assisting the British and Canadians in the eastern sectors to round out the extensive background information.

The documentation of D-Day itself takes place over the 85 pages of chapter thirteen, followed by 113 pages on the post D-Day actions of Neptune, including