

as experimental platforms, showing the flag and conducting naval diplomacy around the world, and fighting America's limited and maritime conflicts, demonstrates their importance to not only the smaller navies of the world, but also to the United States. In an era when the US Navy is de-commissioning small combatants faster than it is designing new ones, never mind building them, reading between the lines of this brief history raises some important questions for the future.

Benjamin "BJ" Armstrong
Annapolis, Maryland

Ben Warlow and Steve Bush. *Pendant Numbers of the Royal Navy. A Record of the Allocation of Pendant Numbers to Royal Navy Warships and Auxiliaries*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.com, 2021. Distributed by Naval Institute Press. xviii + 423 pp., illustrations, appendices, UK £25.00, US \$44.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-5267-9378-2. (E-book available.)

This is a brand-new reference book that should be useful for model makers, anyone trying to identify a warship in a photograph, and those interested in general Royal Navy lore. Ben Warlow and Steve Bush both had careers in the Royal Navy before taking up second careers in publishing. Bush has been editor of two periodicals – *Warship World* and *World Pictorial Review* – as well as compiling several books about warships. Warlow has produced more than 20 books on Royal Navy history and is a consultant editor of *Warship World*. They have recently jointly produced the fifth edition of *Ships of the Royal Navy* (Seaforth, 2020) originally compiled by J.J. Colledge and first published in 1987.

A note facing the introduction explains that oblong flags were originally referred to as "pendants" because they tended to hang down. The spelling changed to "pennant" because this is how the noun describing the flag has long been pronounced. Both spellings are correct; the authors have opted for the traditional "pendant." Pendant numbers came into use in the Royal Navy early in the twentieth century, when many ships of the same class could be manoeuvring together. The first system tried was funnel bands of various colours (each squadron had a separate one) and thickness. This was soon replaced by an identification system combining alpha-numeric flags. A single alphabetic flag identified the warship type and was used with numerical pendants. The pendant number system was used originally as the warship's visual call sign.

The authors include Canadian warships in service up to 1948 because Commonwealth navies used pendant numbers assigned by the Admiralty until

after the Second World War. In that year, NATO navies switched to using blocks of hull numbers for a particular type of ship (destroyers, frigates, etc.) allocated by the alliance. The RCN also switched to the USN practice of hull numbers without a letter in 1948 (xi).

By the 1930s, “H” was one of the letters used for destroyers. When the destroyer HMS *Comet* commissioned in 1931, she was allocated the first pendant number in the “H” series, H00 (which had been used by four previous destroyers going back to 1911). When *Comet* was bought by Canada and commissioned as *Restigouche* in 1938, she retained her H00 designation.” “G” was another letter used for destroyers. HMCS *Haida* on commissioning in 1942 was designated G 63, which had been used by four earlier destroyers, most recently by HMS *Gurkha*, lost in the Mediterranean months earlier after being in service only 12 months. Corvettes were identified with the letter “K,” thus, *Sackville* was K 181.

Under the RN system, cruisers were assigned numbers but the ship type did not have a distinguishing flag. HMCS *Uganda*, on being transferred to the RCN in 1944, retained the pendant number 66 assigned to HMS *Uganda* in 1940. *Pendant Numbers* includes a listing of the visual call signs assigned by the US Navy to Allied ships operating in the Pacific starting in 1944. *Uganda* was now identified as “C 175” while part of the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) in 1945. The BPF list is interesting as a curiosity because it shows the ships identified by Canada as part of its intended contribution to ending the war with Japan. It optimistically includes HMCS *Micmac*, the first Halifax-built Tribal which commissioned in September 1945.

The book is up to date with listings with a note clarifying the various pendant numbers published for the new *Astute* class submarines and listings for the new aircraft carriers *Prince of Wales* and *Queen Elizabeth* and the Offshore Patrol Vessel *Spey* commissioned in 2021.

Attractively produced, *Pendant Numbers* contains a clear arrangement of tabular information and nicely-spaced entries that make the book logical and easy to use. The captions under the excellent photographs add a welcome extra dimension by underscoring various points about how pendant numbers and other distinguishing devices have evolved. This new reference book is an interesting new venture that should appeal to warship aficionados.

Jan Drent

Victoria, British Columbia