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## The Naval Night Battles in the Solomons

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many sources by a Royal Navy officer, Lieutenant Commander Hubert Treseder, who had long service in *Sheffield*. So it bears at least the basic characteristics of a tribute to the ship and to all who sailed in her.

What is clear, is that those who commanded the Royal Navy understood that the stress of war on a senior service, largely manned by reserves and conscripts, demanded of its leaders the traditional Western military virtues, but also changes in the pre-war style of command. Thus, *Sheffield* served under a vice admiral who, author Bassett records, "never minced words but recognized effort and ability; his congratulations were delivered *personally even to junior ratings*;" and a new *Sheffield* commanding officer who, upon his first inspection savagely rebuked all hands and subsequently recanted thus; "A few weeks ago . . . I said several things . . . I have since regretted and for which I now apologize. *I was wrong*. I had no conception of the circumstances under which you had been serving—and are still serving—on Northern Patrol, and every criticism I made of this ships' condition I withdraw unreservedly." He had learned Squadron Commander Arleigh Burke's wartime dictum that if it doesn't contribute to winning the war, don't do it.

This splendid book is a truly worthy addition to the U.S. Naval Institute's bookshelf of offerings. Peacetime sailors should read it, whatever their station or responsi-

bility. It will add to their life of service today. All other students of war should read it for the experience of how it was at sea in wartime in a vast oceanic war.

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Kilpatrick, C. W. *The Naval Night Battles in the Solomons*. Pompano Beach, Florida: Exposition Press of Florida, Inc., 1987. 335pp. \$30

This book describes the fourteen nighttime naval battles of the Solomons campaign that occurred between August 1942 and November 1943. A full chapter is devoted to each of the fourteen battles which are presented in chronological order beginning with the Battle of Savo Island, 9 August 1942. Six nighttime battles in the vicinity of Guadalcanal are described, as well as two near Bougainville and six more in the New Georgia-Kolombangara-Vella Lavella area.

Each chapter follows this general format: preliminary comments; a short introduction to events leading to the battle; the main body; a series of short paragraphs that relate events in a ship's log format; and a summary and critique. The log format was intended as a minute-by-minute review of each battle and covers the preparations for battle, approach phase, discovery of the enemy, commence fire, highlights on the action and retirement to base. Official navy archival sources were

used as research materials. The types of documents used were action reports from the individual ships involved, verbatim voice radio reports from the office in Tactical Command, and other messages between ships involved.

The text is supplemented by several lists and tables. For example, the "Pacific Chronology" is four individual lists of United States and Japanese cruisers and destroyers lost or damaged, but omits battleships and aircraft carriers. These are longer than necessary because all cruisers and destroyers lost or damaged in the Pacific war are listed, not just ship casualties in the Solomons.

The "Solomons Glossary" explains U.S. Navy terminology used in the text. The index lists ships, battles, and individuals, but the references are to chapter number, not page number.

Each chapter has a crudely drawn "battle vicinity" diagram. These show only the general route of American and Japanese forces in the battle area and are not detailed battle diagrams. Two battle diagrams (Cape Esperance and Tassafaronga) were included, apparently to fill page gaps.

This book adds nothing to the history of the Pacific war that Samuel Eliot Morison has not already described in *The Struggle for Guadalcanal* and *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier*. There is no doubting the authenticity of research materials used in writing this book. The claim that the log format using messages in

combination with action reports "produces a highly accurate sequence of the events" is also beyond question. However, arranging events in order is only part of the writing process and the author has confused the means with the end. The result is a list of events inadequately described. The log format is unnatural and lacks narrative description; the reader is expected to put a list of events together into a comprehensible story. This deficiency is partially alleviated by explanatory "notes" inserted in appropriate places, but many of these notes confound rather than explain. The summary and critique section of each chapter helps some, but it parrots the dated information from secondary sources listed in the bibliography, which are mostly general histories, personal accounts or propagandistic works written during wartime that have little historical value. Unrelated events are lumped together and headings appear in the text that have nothing to do with what follows. Spelling and grammatical errors and stylistic gaffes add to the confusion. A lot of what passes for information in the text and tables is just plain wrong.

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Office of Air Force History. *The Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History 1959-1987*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988. 608pp.