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John B. Hattendorf

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# Naval War Under Sail

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by  
John B. Hattendorf

Boudriot, Jean. *The Seventy-Four Gun Ship: A Practical Treatise on the Art of Naval Architecture*. Translated by David H. Roberts.

Volume I: *Hull Construction*. 1986. 166pp. \$58.95

Volume II: *Fitting Out the Hull*. 1987. 213pp. \$58.95

Volume III: *Masts, Sails and Rigging*. 1987. 280pp. \$69.95

Volume IV: *Manning-Shiphandling*. 1988. 394pp. \$105.95

Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press

**F**IRST PUBLISHED in France between 1973 and 1977 under the title *Le Vaisseau de 74 Canons*, these volumes became established as the authoritative reference work on the late eighteenth century ship-of-the-line.

Focusing in particular on the French Navy in the year 1780, Jean Boudriot examined in volume one the administration of the ports and dockyards, the work of surveyors and shipwrights, and the materials for shiphandling, dockyard installations, hull timbers, fastenings and caulking. In volume two he examined hull fittings, internal arrangements, ballast stowage, and stores. In volume three, he concentrated on masting, sails, rigging, and maintenance as well as on the general concepts of warship design and the costs involved for a 74-gun ship in this period.

All volumes provide important technical information to naval historians, but most of the readers of this journal will probably be more interested in volume four. It is in this last volume that Boudriot turns from the static to the dynamic. Here he discusses officers and men, command, ship organization, shiphandling, tactics, signalling, and navigation as well as uniforms, food, and life on board an 18th century naval vessel.

Each volume is assiduously researched and illustrated with color plates and line drawings, mostly in Boudriot's hand. Confining his own work to the ship and her equipment, Boudriot complemented his illustrations with Michael

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Dr. Hattendorf is the Ernest J. King Professor of Maritime History at the Naval War College.

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Petard's depiction of officers and men along with a most informative selection of sketches and drawings, by the 18th century artist Pierre Ozanne, of ships maneuvering under sail.

The French text of Boudriot's study has been widely known for more than a decade. However, this new English translation by David H. Roberts has not only increased the readership of Boudriot's work, but has added a new dimension. Roberts' careful work in seeking out English equivalents in the technical descriptions makes Boudriot's study of French ships a valuable guide for English-speaking students of the age of sail. In addition, Roberts has added marginal explanatory notes of his own and provided a valuable bibliography of French and English maritime dictionaries. All of the English terms used in the four volumes are combined into a 2,500 word vocabulary list and index at the end of volume four.

In short, these volumes are an exceptionally valuable contribution to naval studies, clearly illustrated by Boudriot's drawings and enhanced by Roberts' erudition in nautical terminology.

Crowhurst, Patrick. *The French War on Trade: Privateering 1793-1815*. (Studies in Naval History, Aldershot, England: Scolar Press) Brookfield, Vt.: Gower Publishing, 1989. 251pp. \$49.95

At one time, the history of privateering seemed to merge with that of the pirates and buccaneers, edging more toward romantic novels of a swashbuckling past. Much of that has changed through the serious, academic work of Professor John Bromley and his studies of French privateering in the 1689-1714 period. In this new volume, Crowhurst has applied Bromley's approach to a later and less understood period of privateering.

Crowhurst portrays privateering as a form of economic activity that can not be separated from the wider patterns of maritime commerce in which it took place. While others have stressed the role of privateering as either an aspect of naval strategy or alternatively as the work of men seeking an easy avenue to wealth. Crowhurst sees it as something quite different: a substitute for a normal seaborne trade that had collapsed. In the context of the Napoleonic wars, he shows that French merchants felt compelled to invest in these risky enterprises as the war destroyed the great colonial trade and shifted the economic focus of the country from the Atlantic coast on the West to the cheaper raw materials of the Northeast.

French privateering in 1793-1815 was far less effective than it had been a century earlier, although it remained a major feature in the imagination of British merchants and naval leaders. In fact, it was a far less organized and much more diverse threat than the British imagined. It became, as Crowhurst characterizes it, "an elaborate cat and mouse game, in which both the French and English

tried to outwit the other. . . ." Yet in a broader view, the ability of the French to put successful privateers to sea was as dependent upon economic conditions within France as it was on the quality of Britain's attempts to protect her own trade.

While French merchants were motivated to promote privateering because of the collapse in normal trade, it was not a desperate response to that collapse. Merchants invested only modest proportions of their capital in this area and there were far fewer wartime privateers sailing to attack enemy trade than there had been in peacetime trade. Nevertheless, Crowhurst presents some clear evidence that merchants hoped to use privateering as a means to continue the earlier peacetime trade that had been disrupted by the war. Through this means, merchants were trying to provide a regular supply of goods which could be sold profitably.

Privateering was no haphazard activity for those engaged in it, but a carefully planned and well thought out venture. Everything depended on the skill of the managing owner in his choice of a suitable ship, captain, officers, and men, on the captain's selection of a suitable cruising ground for prey, and on good luck as well. At the same time, success in privateering was ultimately controlled by the ability to market profitably the goods captured at sea. Glutted markets and high taxes in France were stronger deterrents than the Royal Navy, although British naval patrols were effective. The British captured some 40,000 seamen in French privateers between 1793 and 1815. Their experiences in British prisons and in prison-hulks afloat mark a fundamental change in the treatment of war prisoners of this period in England. Crowhurst devotes the final chapter of his book to this aspect of privateering, examining the way in which the large numbers of prisoners and the collapse of the prisoner exchange system led not only to longer periods of imprisonment and deprivation than before, but forced the nation which held the prisoners to take the primary responsibility for them, leading to new attitudes in prison policy, design, and management.

Lacking French naval support which could have disputed the Royal Navy's protection of trade, the French privateer was controlled by market conditions. As these began to fail in the Atlantic ports, only the close proximity of English trade to Dunkirk and St. Malo continued to attract seaman, even in moderate numbers, over the full course of the war.

Byrn, John D., Jr. *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy: Discipline on the Leeward Islands Station 1784-1812*. (Studies in Naval History, Aldershot, England: Scolar Press) Brookfield, Vt.: Gower Publishing, 1989. 251pp. \$54.95

In this volume John Byrn has made a major contribution to the social history of the Royal Navy at the end of the eighteenth century. Adding great depth to  
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one aspect of a subject which Michael Lewis pioneered more than thirty years ago, Byrn examines naval discipline in one area of overseas operations. He shows that the system used to enforce discipline onboard ship was in fact an extension of criminal law. Arguing against the characterization of naval discipline as a form of inhuman brutality, Byrn shows that it was clearly a rule of law which differed little from the conception and practice of civil law at home.

Byrn shows that while punishment could be used to some extent to bolster and legitimize the authority of naval officers, it was not an unbridled and callous tool for promoting their interests. The brute force which was available to naval officers was sufficient to deter potential criminals, but it alone was not a secure foundation for governing a stable shipboard society. To do that, naval discipline and punishment had to be based on a rule of law closely tied to that generally received and practiced in Britain. In short, naval discipline was a clearly accepted part of the practice of Common Law.

Taken alongside N.A.M. Rodger's, *The Wooden World*, (1986), a study of the social aspects of the navy in the Seven Years' War, Byrn's study of the Napoleonic war period gives further support for the need to examine related issues for other periods in the light of detailed documentary evidence. The similarity of the approaches in these two works, as well as the contrast in their findings, suggests that we still have much to learn about the evolution of shipboard society in the eighteenth century Royal Navy.

Syrett, David. *The Royal Navy in American Waters, 1775-1783*. (Studies in Naval History, England: Scholar Press) Gower Pub. Co., 1989. 250pp. \$56.95.

David Syrett's carefully documented examination of British naval operations in American waters during the American Revolution is the preeminent study of this topic, clearly superseding the earlier work by Mahan and William James. Well known for his several earlier works on this period, Syrett focuses this book on why the Royal Navy was unable to crush the rebellion in America by cutting off the flow of arms and military supplies from Europe to the American rebels. The result is a study which transcends the narrow bounds of his historical focus and, while dealing directly with historical facts of this case, touches on some of the broadest issues involving the use of naval power.

In examining his subject, Syrett shows that the issue was more complicated than just a simple naval blockade. He has examined a whole range of questions involving naval strategy and policy including such issues as: the limitations of a naval force in combating a rebellion centered on questions of political rights; the problem of powerful neutrals aiding the rebels; the distribution of naval force when faced with a rebellion and also the threat posed by an international balance

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of power; the relationship of land power to sea power; and the very nature of naval power.

Syrett shows that Britain's defeat at Yorktown was the logical outcome of a strategy of scattering troops along the entire length of the American coast without adequate naval forces to protect them from an enemy who had gained local naval and military superiority. The skill of Britain's enemies in this war was matched by British errors. Wartime leaders in London failed to provide for the progressive inability of British commanders to work together in protecting their forces in America. Among the most flagrant failures was the refusal of Admiral Arbuthnot to join General Clinton in attacking the French in their quarters at Newport, Rhode Island. Moreover, British errors continued even after Yorktown. It took many more months for the government in London to understand that this battle was something more than a momentary setback. It was not until the following year that the opposition's attacks in Parliament brought home the point, forcing Lord North's resignation. Even under the new Rockingham-Shelburne Government, ministers failed to understand the need for shipping. For nearly a year after the terms of the peace treaty had been agreed to by the diplomats, British forces remained in New York for want of transports to bring them home.

Both in war and in its aftermath, Syrett shows the failure of the British Government to use its naval forces effectively. Making a valuable contribution to understanding the conduct of the American war, Syrett's detailed study is also an extremely valuable analysis and case study for anyone involved in trying to understand the broad nature of naval power.

Tracy, Nicholas. *Navies, Deterrence and American Independence: Britain and Seapower in the 1760's and 1770's*. Vancouver, Canada: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1988. 207pp. \$18.95

Historians have long seen the naval side of the American Revolution as an exceptional failure in a century of remarkable British naval success. In this book, Nicholas Tracy examines British naval policy in the fifteen-year period from the end of the Seven Years War in 1763 up to 1779 and French intervention in the American rebellion. France played the decisive role in winning the war for America. During the war itself, the British navy's command of the sea failed, but Tracy shows that in the period leading up to its loss Britain's minimalist policy of naval deterrence unwittingly gave France encouragement to intervene. Tracy's argument is a new one which provides a deeper understanding not only about naval policy but, more importantly, how American independence was

In the 18th century, the Royal Navy was the most powerful force at sea and it was Britain's key instrument of coercive diplomacy. For most of the peacetime period that Tracy examines, British statesmen used a system of deterrence in their foreign policy that was explicitly based on the threat of naval force. It was an aggressive policy focused on controlling French action and was carried out in the framework of a series of crises in far-flung areas, ranging around the globe from Honduras to India. Tracy gives a full chapter to a detailed discussion on the Falkland Islands crisis of 1768-1771, which not only provides insight into the basis for British involvement there and background to a 20th century war, but also demonstrates the effectiveness of Britain's deterrent policy based on the threat of naval force.

The rebellion in America did not immediately affect the broad aspects of British policy. However, following the colonists' victory at Bunker Hill in 1775, London officials began to concentrate their effort on a North American military campaign. But at the same time, Lord North's government failed to respond vigorously to indications of French maneuvering. Hoping to avoid a European war completely, instead of confronting France, Lord North sought cooperation and conciliation. He tried to isolate the American problem from European politics and to buy time, even while France went forward with naval rearmament. In the late summer of 1777, military realities finally forced the British government to recognize that it could no longer maintain a dual policy in Europe and North America. Yet the government still refused major naval rearmament, attempting only minimal deterrence and marginal preparation for a European war. Even when news of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga reached London, the government continued its conciliatory policy toward France. Ministers in London concentrated their thoughts on how to use military force to pressure the Americans to accept parliamentary concessions and to persuade them to stay under the British crown.

After the declaration of the Franco-American treaty of alliance, however, it was too late for Britain to use her naval force as a deterrent. France had set the pace toward war.

Britain's coercive diplomacy, effective for a dozen years, proved difficult to abandon. Her change to a policy of slow rearmament while avoiding confrontation had two key effects that increased the likelihood of war. On the one hand, her naval strength increased to the point where Britain could prevent the French from injuring her seriously. On the other hand, the change in policy to avoid confrontation led French officials into thinking that Britain no longer had either the will or the means to block French ambitions.

Tracy's well-researched study of mid-18th century British affairs is full of insight on the nature of naval deterrence in peacetime and, as a valuable and instructive case study, deserves to be read in that context by current policy makers.

Coad, Jonathan G. *The Royal Dockyards 1690-1850: Architecture and Engineering Works of the Sailing Navy*. (Studies in Naval History No. 1, Aldershot, England: Scolar Press in association with the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England) Brookfield, Vt.: Gower Press, 1989. 399pp. \$89.95.

At one time the industrial and administrative side of naval history was completely ignored while excessive attention was given to heroes, battles, and tactics. Recently a number of historians have attempted to redress this imbalance. For many years, naval historians have been aware that the Royal Navy was the largest industrial establishment in Britain during the age of sail. Yet few scholars have ever seen, or thoroughly appreciated its architectural heritage, still in use by the navy, but which even today often lies hidden from public view. Jonathan Coad offers the first fully documented book-length study on the architectural history of naval establishments ashore. Ranging from the well-known Admiralty building in London's Whitehall to the remote dockyards, ordnance and victualing yards, naval hospitals, and schools, Coad has examined a wide range of buildings constructed in the 160-year period between 1690 and 1850. Using original plans and contemporary illustrations as well as 19th century and modern photographs, he has compiled a richly illustrated book that opens an entire new dimension to naval history.

Storehouses, sheds, workshops, admiral's quarters, and chapels fall within his purview. He even takes a serious look at the design of humble boundary walls as he examines the more glamorous entry gates that punctuate them. In the course of his survey he outlines the changing character of the navy in this period, devoting considerable attention to such related subjects as the process of cordage manufacture, the introduction of steam power and its application within the dockyards, the manufacture of weapons, the preparation of food supplies, and the care of the sick and wounded. Throughout, Coad deftly explains the most complex technical achievements in a manner thoroughly comprehensible to the layman. In the process, one discovers many new names and new aspects of the development of the Royal Navy. With this book in hand, no one can fail to understand with increased depth and clarity the problems of ship construction and repair and also the full range of the navy's industrial establishment in the age of sail.

In this volume, Coad has emphasized the surviving buildings of this period as he links architectural history to the navy's industrial enterprise. Naturally, much of the text deals with the main bases in Britain, but he provides some fascinating material on the overseas bases at Gibraltar, Minorca, Malta, Antigua, St. Lucia, and Bermuda, linking colonial structures to architectural and industrial patterns at home. In doing this, he provides interesting and useful maps that show the location of main buildings at each dockyard. The maps are not easily found except by the most careful reader; they are identified in the Table of

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Contents only as “Figures” and are bound together in mid-volume. Nicely printed in blue, black and grey, they are a fine complement to the illustrations. Moreover, the first four pages make a fascinating visual statement that is most worthwhile for the strategic historian to consider. A series of maps on these pages illustrate the Atlantic, the western Mediterranean, the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean. On them are shown the location of the Royal Navy’s major battles fought between the years 1702 and 1827. Interestingly, nearly every battle was fought relatively close to land and no great distance from some kind of base.

Shommette, Donald G. and Robert D. Haslach. *Raid on America: The Dutch Naval Campaign of 1672-1674*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1989. 386pp \$32.95.

In 1672-74, England and the Netherlands were at war. Unlike the wars of the 1688-1815 period, which we remember more clearly, the third Anglo-Dutch war saw England allied with France against the Dutch. When we do think about that war today, we usually focus on the naval battles in the North Sea, remembering particularly those involving De Ruyter at Sole Bay in 1672 and at The Texel and Schooneveld in 1673. The author of the typical account of the war may point out in passing that the Dutch recaptured New Amsterdam briefly but that in the peace treaty it was returned to the English and resumed the name of New York. Although it was a significant incident in American colonial history as well as an interesting episode in naval affairs, no one has heretofore written a detailed narrative in English of the Dutch campaign in America during 1672-74.

In 1672, Commander Cornelius Evertsen The Younger sailed from Zeeland with a small squadron of warships on a secret mission to capture the English East India Company’s fleet off St. Helena. After receiving intelligence that an English squadron had sailed to protect St. Helena and the East India fleet, Evertsen turned to the secondary objectives of his expedition, an attack on French and English colonies in America. It resulted in the Dutch invasion of Chesapeake Bay and Virginia, capture or destruction of two hundred English and French vessels, and temporary restoration of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware to Dutch control.

Shommette and Haslach have written a lively tale of these events based on their translation of the 1928 edition of Dutch documents published by C. de Waard in the Netherlands and transcriptions made from the Evertsen papers in the 1920s and deposited in the New York Public Library. Their work in bringing the results of this research work into the English-language literature is a major contribution. Although giving the authors full credit for this, scholars will still be disappointed to find that the story is not told within the broad context of the

best recent scholarship on English, French, and Dutch history in this period. The European background is based on older sources. The 19th century work of John Motley is used, for example, but there is no mention of the more recent English-language background studies by Pieter Geyl, Geoffrey Parker, Herbert Rowen, Stephen Baxter, and Charles Wilson, or of the recent monographs on the origin and conduct of the Third Dutch War. In order to change the usual account of the Third-Anglo-Dutch war, the valuable material which Shomette and Haslach have presented now needs to be interpreted in broad terms.

Starr, Chester G. *The Influence of Sea Power on Ancient History*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989. 105pp. \$16.95

The eminent historian of antiquity, Chester G. Starr of the University of Michigan, is well known to naval historians for his doctoral dissertation on *The Roman Imperial Navy 31 B.C.-A.D. 324* (1941). In his latest book, Starr returns again to naval history, but this time spanning the breadth of ancient history from the Bronze Age to the fall of the Roman Empire. As his title suggests, Starr examines Mahan's ideas on sea power and considers whether they are an appropriate explanation for the role of navies in ancient history.

Using an analytical rather than a narrative approach, Starr begins by noting that classical historians have generally followed Mahan and emphasized the importance of naval superiority. Despite the fact that the sea is the backdrop of events in the chronicles of ancient writers such as Herodotus and Thucydides, a careful consideration of ancient political, social, and economic organization suggests that this is misleading. "Ancient life always and everywhere was rooted in agriculture," Starr writes. Political power was tied to agricultural elements. At the same time, maritime commerce was largely devoted to the transport of luxury goods, not items of necessity for political and military policy. However, from time to time, large urban centers arose (such as Athens in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C. and in Rome from the 3rd century) which required sea-borne grain to survive. Finally, the exercise of sea power required a well organized political structure to support a navy. Throughout the period up to 500 B.C., governmental forms were generally too amorphous to do this. Thus, Starr argues that sea power was not an important element during the overall course of ancient history, but rather a spasmodic factor which on occasion became a critical force. Even in cases such as Carthage, which dominated the western Mediterranean for centuries, and Athens, which has been a paradigm of sea power's utility, sea powers were ultimately defeated by land powers. While it is true that the enemies of Athens and Carthage had to go to sea to defeat them, the victors' strength was ultimately from the land.

Chester Starr presents a rational and convincing argument for his case against the application of Mahan's ideas to ancient history. The publishers have written on the dust jacket that "this innovative study provides an important corrective to Mahan's thesis, both as applied to ancient history and to modern strategic thinking." One must certainly agree that it does correct interpretations of ancient history, although a nonspecialist in that area may have long wondered why Mahan's thesis has been applied so uncritically for so long. In this regard, the book is not so innovative as the publisher suggests. Historians working in a variety of other periods have in the past twenty years been increasingly critical in their views of Mahan and his work. As a corrective to modern strategic thinking, Starr's work joins that of a number of others who have begun to point out how modern historical research provides a basis for reevaluating naval theory. In particular, one can see here the inappropriateness of indiscriminately applying Mahan's ideas as a general explanation of the role of sea power.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *St. Ives: The Adventures of a French Prisoner in England*. (Chapters XXXI to XXXV by Jenni Calder. Research by R.J. Storey) Glasgow, Scotland: Richard Drew Pub., 1990. 299pp. \$4.99

When Robert Louis Stevenson died in 1894, he left the manuscript of *St. Ives* unfinished. Set in the time of the Napoleonic Wars, it is a plain, but exciting, adventure story. It centers around the Viscount Anne de Keroval de St. Ives, a Frenchman held as a prisoner of war in Edinburgh Castle—his escape into the Scottish countryside and his love for Flora. Stevenson left very few clues except for a few chapter titles as to how he planned to end the novel. We know, however, that he was very concerned with trying to get the historical setting right and the details of the period correct. Immediately after Stevenson's death, Arthur Quiller-Couch finished the novel and published his version in 1897. In recent years, Bob Storey became intrigued by one of the chapter titles, "The True-Blooded Yankee," and began to think about the possibility of an alternative ending based on a closer look at historical fact.

Storey's research showed that there was in fact an American privateer operating in Scottish waters in 1813-14 and that her name was the *True Blooded Yankee*. Owned by a Rhode Islander living in Paris, she sailed out of Brest and raided Islay, a place that the Stevenson family knew well. Speculating that Stevenson may have read about this incident in his research for the period, perhaps even reading George Coggeshall's account of the vessel in the latter's 1856 history of American privateering, Storey persuaded Jenni Calder, the author of *RLS: A Life Study*, to write a new ending to the novel. Calder has woven Storey's research (summarized in the introduction) into the adventures recounted in Chapter 34, taking account of additional evidence about the ending

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gleaned from Stevenson's correspondence and his other papers. Together, Storey and Calder have revived this adventure tale with a colorful and convincing ending that brings to the fore a hitherto obscure bit of American maritime history.

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**Request for Information**

Statesmen and Seapower of the Nato Alliance. Information is sought on the whereabouts of senior officers and statesmen of the Nato alliance who concerned themselves with the role seapower plays and has played in the successful working of the alliance and in its interconnected ways of securing the interests of member states against aggression. The investigator would welcome any and all suggestions about memoirs, diaries, tapes and photographs, books and articles. He would particularly appreciate information not usually in the public realm of university and institutional libraries. The investigator has been named to a Nato Research Fellowship to undertake aspects of this subject with a view to writing a survey history for 1949-1989. He seeks the opinions of informed individuals, particularly those who were active in the processes of ensuring Nato's sea security and of influencing aspects of maintaining, expanding, modifying, or diminishing the naval capability of the alliance. Opinions and suggestions from soldiers and airmen would also be welcome. Please address your initial replies to Professor Barry M. Gough, Professor of History, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3C5; telephone (519) 884-1970, ext. 2260 or 2081.