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New Books and Reprints in Naval History

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New Books and Reprints in Naval History

Comments by John B. Hattendorf

Bach, John. *The Australia Station: A History of the Royal Navy in the South West Pacific, 1821-1913*. Kensington: New South Wales Univ. Press, 1986. 260pp. John Bach's well-researched narrative of events on the Australia station complements the work of Gerald Graham and Barry Gough in describing the activities of the Royal Navy in the Pacific during the 19th century. Starting with the first regular detachment of a first ship from the East Indies Squadron for duty off New South Wales in 1821, Bach describes the development of the naval base at Sydney and the activities of the Royal Navy in that region as both local policemen and representatives of the Imperial government in London. He takes his story up until the establishment of the Royal Australian Navy in 1913. Interestingly, Bach suggests that the Navy provided an indirect, but powerful social and political influence on the development of Australia.

Bromley, J.S. *Corsairs and Navies 1660-1760*. London and Ronceverte, W. Va.: Hambledon Press, 1988, 517pp. \$50

This volume is a compilation of articles written by the late Professor John S. Bromley. Long recognized as a great authority on the subject, his essays were published in conference proceedings, local history journals and *festchriften* that are often hard to locate. The direct reproduction of these articles, written in both French and English, makes for a motley collection of typography. Yet, within a single volume and with an index, the collected essays make a valuable and handy contribution to the social and financial aspects of French, English, Dutch and Channel Islands privateering by one of the most eminent historians of the subject.

Fanning, A.E. *Steady As She Goes: A History of the Admiralty Compass Department*. London: HMSO, 1986. Distributed by Bernan-Unipub, Lanham, Md., 458pp. \$27.50

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

This fascinating and well-written book tells the story of the Royal Navy's struggle with magnetic deviation. It is a tale which parallels the development of iron and steel ship construction from the establishment of the Compass Department in 1842 until it was merged with other organizations in 1971. Broadly written, with reference to both the technical development of warships and the relative success of British compass technology among those of other navies, Commander Fanning has carried the story through the development of the gyrocompass and the Ships Inertial Navigations Systems as well as their applications to submarines and aircraft. This history of so commonplace a tool as the compass is a case study which has much to tell us about technological innovation within the Navy.

Gordon, G.A.H. *British Seapower and Procurement Between the Wars: A Reappraisal of Rearmament*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988. 321pp. \$21.95

Gilbert Gordon makes a very important contribution to naval history with this volume. A revised and reorganized version of his University of London Ph.D. thesis, Gordon has carefully examined the Royal Navy's industrial procurement in the 20-year period between 1918 and 1938. One might be tempted to see his work as a study of logistics, but Gordon makes a careful distinction between the distribution of supplies to users and procurement from sources of production. Gordon deals only with this latter aspect of logistics.

The author examines the Admiralty's approach, organization and procedures for procurement as well as British industrial resources for warship construction and the production of naval munitions. Most importantly, he examines the interrelationships between the nation's productive capacity and its naval programs.

Gordon concludes that the Navy was limited by production constraints, not, as one usually reads, by financial considerations or the government's policy. It was industrial capacity which was the chief formulating influence on the nature and the scale of naval construction in the period of rearmament after 1936.

Guerres et Paix 1660-1815. Vincennes: Service Historique de la Marine, 1987. 328pp.

This collection of essays is the proceedings of the Anglo-French Naval History conference held in Rochefort, France in 1986 and sponsored by the French Navy and its historical office. The volume includes a variety of essays on French and British naval history written in the languages of both nations. Focusing on the years between 1660 and 1815, the topics range across a variety of topics from sea literature, strategy, operations, tactics, dockyards to medicine. Among them are papers by such well-known British and French

naval historians as Jean-Pierre Busson, Jonathan Coad, Patricia Crimmin, Phillippe Masson, Jean Meyer, Alan Pearsall and N.A.M. Rodger.

Hall, Christopher. *Britain, America and Arms Control, 1921-37*. New York: St. Martin's, 1987. 295pp. \$37.50

In this Oxford doctoral thesis, Christopher Hall provides timely and careful reexamination of naval arms control in the 1920s and 30s. He shows that there were a number of reasons why arms control neither prevented military rivalry nor political conflict.

The basic reason that the Washington Treaty did not achieve more was due to the fundamental distrust that existed among nations. Compounding that problem, there were other naval powers which remained outside the Washington Treaty system. This created additional threats which endangered the treaty system. In addition, naval power remained a factor in national prestige. These factors prevented naval disarmament from being extended to all classes of ships and to all nations. Even the limitations on battleships failed to abolish that type of ship as a weapons system, although they certainly hastened their eclipse. The subsequent experience of the Second World War showed that the battleships gave small return for the investment. The war clearly demonstrated the inefficiency of concentrating scarce naval resources in capital ships.

Hastings, Commander D.J. *The Royal Indian Navy 1612-1950*. Jefferson, N.C. and London: McFarland & Co., Inc. 1988, 371pp. \$39.95

The first 75 pages of this volume are a broad sketch of Indian naval history from 1612 to 1934. Written by Commander G.E. Walker, the sketch was originally published in 1944 and issued to all officers of the Royal Indian Navy. As such, it is a useful document from history as well as one about history.

The bulk of the book is devoted to the naval service which began in 1934, when King George V conferred the title of Royal on the Indian Navy. It was short-lived, lasting only until 1947 when it was divided with the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan and its British officers were compulsorily retired.

Many of the records of the Royal Indian Navy were lost during the Second World War or in the period of partition. In their place, Commander Hastings has gathered together a number of reminiscences and culled the best articles from past issues of the *Journal of the Royal Indian Navy Association*, linking them with his own research. Hasting's compilation is a valuable reference work which contains much useful data.

The International History Review. vol. x, no. 1, February 1988.

This particular *International History Review* is "On Sea Power." The half-dozen essays in this issue were originally prepared as public lectures and delivered

at Yale University in the "Sea Power, Past and Present" series organized by Professor Paul Kennedy in the fall semester of 1986. Together, they comprise a most useful summary of the most up-to-date interpretations on the role of sea power in history. The tone is set by Paul Kennedy's introduction on "The Influence and the Limitations of Sea Power." The other contributors carry through the themes that Kennedy identifies by detailed analyses of various national experiences: J.R. Jones on "The Dutch Navy and National Survival in the Seventeenth Century"; Daniel A. Baugh on "Great Britain's Blue-Water Policy, 1689-1815"; Jonathan R. Dull on "Mahan, Sea Power, and the War for American Independence"; Holger H. Herwig on "The Failure of German Sea Power, 1914-1945: Mahan, Tirpitz and Raeder Reconsidered"; and Brian R. Sullivan on "A Fleet in Being: The Rise and Fall of Italian Sea Power."

Jose, Arthur W. *The Royal Australian Navy: The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*. vol. ix, series ed. Robert O'Neill with an introduction by Ross Lamont. St. Lucia: Univ. of Queensland Press in association with the Australian War Memorial, 1987. 649pp.

Of the 20 volumes in *The Official History of Australia* in the First World War, this is the only one devoted to the Navy. Originally published in 1928 and long out of print, it is now reprinted from the 1943 edition which incorporated minor corrections. It is available in paperback.

Jose's volume begins with a chapter-length sketch of the development of the Australian Navy from its establishment in 1911 up to the beginning of the war in 1914. The bulk of the book is a useful description of Australian naval operations. In creating this, Jose faced a difficult task. In the first portion of the war, the Royal Australian Navy operated as a unit in the Pacific, dealing with the capture of the German Pacific colonies, tracking the operations of the German squadron, as well as the *Emden*, in the Pacific. The Royal Australian Navy's many other activities were widespread, ranging from operations in Malaya to the North Sea, and difficult to relate to one another, although they were important contributions to the broad, allied naval campaign.

In his introduction to the University of Queensland Press edition, Ross Lamont points out that this work is a flawed example of official history. The difficulties lay not only in the disconnected nature of the subject, but also in several other aspects, including the fact that the author and the original series editor, C.E.W. Bean, held quite different conceptions of how to write history, and the Admiralty refused to cooperate in providing full information on RN-RAN operations. Nevertheless, until someone takes up his task again, Jose's volume remains the authoritative source.

Knight, R.J.B. comp. *Portsmouth Record Series: Portsmouth Dockyard Papers, 1774-1783: The American War*. Portsmouth: City of Portsmouth, 1987. 196pp.

This volume, edited by Dr. R.J.B. Knight of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, is a chronological list and summary of the letters and orders associated with the work of the naval Dockyard in Portsmouth, England during the War of American Independence. Reducing some 6,000 pages of manuscript to less than 200 printed pages for this 10-year period, Knight has produced an invaluable reference work. His insightful selection of documents and detailed summaries provide new understanding into the complexity of dockyard work and the myriad logistical problems involved in supporting the fleet in the age of sail. At the same time, this collection gives us a deeper understanding of the particular problems of the dockyards and naval logistics during the War of American Independence.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1805*.

Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press Bison Book, 1987. 256pp. \$40

Enriching the prose with well-chosen illustrations from the collections of the National Maritime Museum, Anthony Preston has abridged Mahan's first *Influence of Sea Power* book and added to it 45 pages of extracts from the two volumes of Mahan's second *Sea Power* book. Thus, he uses Mahan's words as a means to provide a classic overview of naval history from the Restoration to Trafalgar. It is a handsome adaptation of Mahan's work which may be useful in introducing readers to his ideas. This is a reprint of a volume which first appeared in 1980; it should be listed as an addendum to *A Bibliography of the Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan* (1986) as: A2 Abridg.d.

Meador, Bruce I. *ASNE: The First 100 years—The History of the American Society of Naval Engineers, 1888-1988*. Alexandria, Va.: American Society of Naval Engineers, 1988. 120pp. paper \$7

Commander Meade has produced a useful chronology of names and events that mark the history of the society which produces the distinguished *Naval Engineer's Journal*. This little booklet contains the past and present bylaws, the regulations for examining naval engineers in 1888, and an interesting selection of photographs and portraits.

Merrill, James M. *Du Pont: The Making of an Admiral—A Biography of Samuel Francis Du Pont*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1987. 316pp. \$21.95

With the verve of a novelist, James Merrill brings his readers to the early years of the U.S. Navy through the eyes of Samuel F. Du Pont, one of the most influential leaders of the Civil War period. Using the large archive of Du Pont papers, from which John D. Hayes published his distinguished edition of *S.F. Du Pont: Civil War Letters* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1969), Merrill has selected a large number of apt quotations that bring his subject to life.

Merrill's engaging narrative style carries the reader, quickly and easily, through fascinating episodes from half a century of our naval history between 1815 and 1865. Hayes' earlier work demonstrated Du Pont's great contribution in the Civil War. Merrill makes that clear, but shows that Du Pont's early cruises in the Mediterranean, the Mexican War and on a diplomatic mission to China in 1857-59 were equally interesting. A researcher who uses the volume will only regret that the author's careful research is only summarized and not directly footnoted.

Oppenheim, M. *A History of the Administration of the Royal Navy and of Merchant Shipping in Relation to the Navy from 1509 to 1660 with an Introduction Treating of the Preceding Period*. Introduction by K.R. Andrews. London: Temple Smith, 1988. 411pp.

Originally published in 1896, Michael Oppenheim's study of 16th and early 17th century English naval administration has always been the standard work on the subject. It is based on a very early, yet careful, examination of the manuscripts. It remains unsurpassed as a whole, although newer work has expanded the basis for research on the subject and has complemented his findings. Oppenheim's *Administration* is a classic that is on every short list of essential reading in British naval history. Temple Smith and Gower Publishing have done a good job in producing this affordable edition and Professor K.R. Andrews has enhanced it with a useful introduction for the modern reader.

Palmer, Michael A. *Stoddert's War: Naval Operations during the Quasi-War with France, 1798-1801*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1987. 313pp. \$24.95

In this major contribution to U.S. naval history, Michael Palmer links a detailed account of the infant U.S. Navy's operations in its first challenge at sea within the context of wider international and national affairs. Palmer has superseded the 80-year-old work by Gardiner Allen, *Our Naval War with France*, and directly complemented Alexander De Conde's well-known study of the diplomatic aspects of the conflict. In addition, Palmer has made good use of Dudley Knox's edition of the naval documents of the war, and he has gone further, delving into new material at the Public Record Office and into personal papers. While Palmer makes a direct contribution to American naval history, his work is also a fascinating case study in the way a small navy dealt with a large navy's strategy of *guerre de course*.

Pocock, Tom. *Horatio Nelson*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988. 367pp. \$22.95

This well-written biography of Nelson is not merely the latest in the huge library of Nelson studies. It is the most balanced treatment of Nelson's

complex character. Although unencumbered with footnotes and scholarly apparatus, Pocock has based his work on a wide reading of the literature and the manuscripts, taking into account new evidence and interpretations as well as benefiting from the author's own research visits to such widely separated Nelsonian sites as Aboukir Bay, Nicaragua, Corsica and Burnham Thorpe.

Pritchard, James. *Louis XV's Navy 1748-1762: A Study of Organization and Administration*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens Univ. Press, 1987. 285pp. (Can) \$32.50

James Pritchard has done for the French Navy what Daniel Baugh did for the Royal Navy in his *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*. Explicitly using Baugh's books as his model, Pritchard tells the French side of naval administration from the aftermath of the war of the Austrian Succession through preparation and support for the fighting in the Seven Years War. Pritchard carefully demonstrates the essential connection between financial strength and naval power. In conclusion, he offers the radically new, but fairly simple, explanation that lack of money lay at the heart of French naval weakness and defeat in this period. This was paralleled by insufficient manning along with a defective organization for strategic direction. Choiseul's naval reforms failed to deal directly with the question of naval finance "and effectively denied France fulfillment of the dream that she might one day be mistress of the sea."

Tilley, John A. *The British Navy and the American Revolution*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1987. 332pp. \$24.95

John Tilley of East Carolina State University has written a lucid description of the activities of British naval officers in the American War that presents a delightful and engaging evocation of the era. Tilley has succeeded in adding style and drama to the story that William James told 60 years ago in his *British Navy in Adversity*. Although not everyone will agree with Tilley's judgments about the actors in his history or his judgments about the work of other scholars, his book is a readable and attractively produced introduction to British naval operations in the mid-18th century.

Turk, Richard W. *The Ambiguous Relationship: Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1987. 183pp. \$32.95

It has long been a commonplace that Mahan and his ideas greatly influenced Theodore Roosevelt. In this little book, Richard Turk provides the full written evidence of this relationship by publishing 62 pages of correspondence, including TR's letters to Mahan and some previously unpublished letters between Mahan and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Equally important, Turk analyzes the subject in a 100-page essay. He concludes that

the intellectual relationship between the two men was an ambiguous one which contained strong disagreement as well as convergence. Both were advocates of sea power and the battleship; both were Anglophiles; both shared ideas of the social Darwinists; both saw the rising power of Germany and Japan. Yet, they openly clashed over the all-big-gun battleship and the immunity of private property from seizure at sea. Each had a different temperament and approach that led them in diverse ways.



“But there will always be found at the beginning of a war, or upon a change of commanders, a restless impatience to do something, to make a showing of results, which misleads the judgment of those in authority, and commonly ends, if not in failure, at least in barren waste of powder and shot.”

Alfred Thayer Mahan
Types of Naval Officers
(Boston, 1901, pp. 115-116)