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Nelson's Blood: The Story of Naval Rum

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ple, that the Royal Navy's bombardment of the Turkish defenses though impressive was in fact inadequate and that once the troops were ashore the absence of effective communications rendered close gunfire support almost impossible. Moreover the lack of communications equipment made it difficult for unit commanders to direct effectively their subordinates. The terrain made it impossible for commanders to see much of what was happening; there were no accurate maps, and there were no observation aircraft. The Australians, therefore, usually had to rely on runners to relay critical messages. Runners often got lost or were shot by the Turks thus compounding command and control problems. Lack of proper beach control techniques delayed the flow of supplies and reinforcements ashore and hindered the efficient evacuation of the wounded.

During the interwar years the US Marines studied the Gallipoli campaign in order to learn from Allied problems and devise an effective amphibious assault doctrine. A reader interested in understanding the problems involved in mounting an attack from the sea will find Bean's study very rewarding.

Bean's work also shows why the Australians ultimately became the shock troops of the British Army on the Western front. The military historian Alfred Vagts drew a distinction between militarism and the military way. Militarism is a way of life based on caste, cult, authority, and belief in tradition for its own sake.

The military way emphasizes loyal-

ty, efficiency, and a focus on achieving objectives.

In the First World War the British Army was wedded to the first concept. For officers social connections were vital and criticism of superiors avoided at all costs. Textbook methods were gospel and as late as 1918 senior officers were still trying to launch cavalry attacks. The Australians by contrast were dedicated to the military way. Officers, for example, were chosen for their ability not because of their social status. The fact that the Jew, Sir John Monash, could become a general is indicative of this attitude. In the British Army he would never have received a commission as a junior officer. In the field the Australians quickly learned to do their jobs in the most efficient manner whether or not their methods were sanctioned by tradition. It was in the crucible of Gallipoli that the Australians learned their methods of waging war, and it is this process that Bean describes with painstaking care.

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Pack, James. *Nelson's Blood: The Story of Naval Rum*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983. 200pp. \$14.95

Despite the legend that gave rise to this book's title, Nelson's body was not returned from Trafalgar in a barrel of rum—and had he lived in 1970, Nelson would have applauded the termination of the daily ration of grog. However illustrious and venerable a service tradition must support a service need, Nelson would have been the first to recog-

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nize that the rum ration is out of place in the context of modern naval warfare.

Indeed, as Captain Pack shows in his astute and lavishly illustrated social history, its place in the Royal Navy was always ambiguous. Sailors drank rum in the West Indies for a century before Admiral Vernon, in 1740, sought to curb drunkenness by solemnizing the custom and putting it under official control, cutting the raw spirit with water and issuing this "grog" in limited amounts twice a day.

Grog time, and those occasions when the order to "splice the main-brace" set out an additional tot, became important moments aboard ship, a time of sociability providing the anodyne to relieve the discomforts of life afloat. The expectations and fond memories of the ceremony, the reluctance of the Board of Admiralty to terminate this special privilege of the Royal Navy, testify to the value it had as a morale booster and reward for the arduous hours at sea. Rum was called a seaman's "built-in stabilizer."

Yet Captain Pack's lively account shows that for all the nostalgia associated with the rum ration there was also, from the beginning, a dark side, the problem of drunkenness. While it was the province of the spirit to impart comfort and courage, its abuse led to disorder and incompetence. Captains over the centuries wrote to the Board warning that drunkenness was the curse of the service.

mately associated with drinking. To this problem the Admiralty responded with various palliative measures. Vernon's daily half-pint was gradually reduced. The mix of grog was changed to cut its potency. There was closer administration of the "pusser's rum."

The Admiralty moved very slowly. Abolition did not take place until well after the Second World War. Yet it was clear from the beginning of this century that the days of the tot were numbered. Changing social mores helped dissolve its mystique. Evidence came in on the effects of alcoholism. Alcohol related punishments were a burden on command. There was a reassertion of the popularity of beer, now possible to store in cans. In the mid-1950s only a third of the men took their rum ration. Above all, in the age of high technology, it was evident that the daily issue was not compatible with the necessary standards of safety and efficiency within the fleet.

Captain Pack concludes with a fine account of the intelligent way the Admiralty finally abolished the ration. Projecting its annual cost, they got the Treasury to give a lump sum worth nine years of rum to establish a Sailor's Fund for charitable purposes to naval personnel, and promulgated new rules for the purchase of beer aboard ship. In 1970, without opposition, and with no more than a sentimental look backwards, the long tradition of "Up Spirits" came to an end.

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