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Battleships of the Grand Fleet

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selections. As it is we must accept his choices—they *are* famous and if the English or Royal Navy figures large in most of them that fact reflects less the ethnocentric views of the author than the course of the naval history of the world, particularly since the mid-sixteenth century.

The book begins with the Battle of Actium in 31 BC. The opposing commanders were Antony and Cleopatra on one side and Gaius Octavius, soon to be Augustus Caesar, on the other. As with all the other battles, Howarth sets the scene so that there can be some understanding of the reason for the battle and why it was fought where it was fought. Geography is described sufficiently to permit understanding its importance (or lack of importance) to the battle. The personalities of the leading characters are outlined, frequently with anecdote, their plans and proposed tactics (when known) are traced, their ships and weapons described, and the story of the battle told in clear objective prose. In the preface to another of his books David Howarth, quoting Robert Louis Stevenson, has written, "there is only one way to be clever, and that is to be exact." Whatever the connection between them, Howarth is clever without being precious and exact without being staid.

The first chapter of *Famous Sea Battles* touches on a few other battles after Actium and ends with the 1571 Battle of Lepanto, the last great battle fought between fleets of galleys and the first in which the use of gunpowder was other than a haphazard isolated novelty.

The next famous battle is the Spanish Armada followed by The Four Days' Fight. Non-specialist Americans may not be familiar with this English-Dutch engagement of 1666 but perhaps they should be. One of the war's few positive

results was the Dutch conceding an English claim to Manhattan.

The Nile, Trafalgar, Navarino, Tsushima follow in their order and then Coronel and the Falklands (the 1914 edition), Jutland, River Plate, and the sinking of the *Bismarck*. The US Navy finally enters in the book's last two chapters, Midway and Leyte Gulf. (I was disappointed not to find the battle between USS *Monitor* and CSS *Virginia* famous enough for inclusion.)

In a half-page Epilogue, looking at today's navies, Howarth permits himself the one statement in the book liable to disagreement by many of today's naval professionals. He says, ". . . the only practical use of the carriers in the future will be in simply existing, not in fighting . . ." Well, maybe.

I recommend *Famous Sea Battles* to all naval professionals, whether active or vicarious. Only obliquely could it be said to teach any currently useful lesson of strategy, tactics, management, or leadership so its value lies elsewhere. There is a connection, however metaphysical, between those whose battleground was the sea and those whose battleground is or may be the sea and this book of classic sea stories well limns that connection. Whether we call it connection or tradition, sense of service or something else, it is an unquantifiable but essential and civilizing element in the naval professional's makeup.

W. R. PETTYJOHN
Ingram, Texas

Burt, R.A. and Trotter, W.P., MC.
Battleships of the Grand Fleet, A Pictorial Review of the Royal Navy's Capital Ships in World War One. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1982. 96pp. \$19.95

For the entire course of the first world war two enormous fleets, each centered

on a long column of battleships and battle cruisers, lay at anchor at opposite corners of the North Sea. Although there were a few small actions involving the heavy ships of either side, or both, there was only one day in all 1,500 days the war lasted that the opposing fleets actually saw each other and exchanged fire.

It surely is curious that in a war in which millions of Europe's young men perished on the eastern and western fronts, tens of thousands of such men in vast fleets of large, heavily armed ships should live so pacifically, so drearily, and, on the whole, so safely almost without break from the war's first day till its last. People still debate the degree of influence those men and their ships had, or might have had, on the outcome of the war.

What were the characteristics of ships which could so catch the imaginations of admirals, politicians, and taxpayers that some would demand and others would eagerly provide them by divisions and squadrons? What did they look like?

In this book one finds out what many of them looked like, for R.A. Burt and W.P. Trotter provide over 150 photographs, many of which are excellent, of the 50 British dreadnought battleships and battle cruisers which formed the core of the Grand Fleet from 1914 through 1918. Most of the views are single-ship portraits and all but a few show the ships in the very dark gray worn at that time by British warships in home waters. There was nothing attractive about most of the 50, though many of the later ones, the *Tiger*, and those of the *Iron Duke*, *Queen Elizabeth*, and *Renown* classes had the majestic good looks and presented a sense of power such as must have lifted the spirits of all, except their foes, who saw them at sea. Even though we can know them now only in the form of photographs, for long ago they

vanished from the face of the earth, we can be pleased by the appearance of such ships.

The authors provide the usual basic data on all these ships in tabular form, and caption their photographs knowledgeably and interestingly, while Mr. Burt provides the work with a short, roughly accurate essay on the dreadnoughts' origins, activities, and eventual passing.

One will not find in this book views of the great *Hood*, the last and largest of the World War One generation of British heavy ships, for she was not completed in time to serve with the Grand Fleet, or views of the dreadnoughts of any other nation, not even those American ships which served with that fleet in 1918. Neither will he find any pre-dreadnoughts, even though in the first part of the war a substantial number of those ships did serve in the Grand Fleet and all through the war they served in Britain's other fleets.

Still, for those who like big ships, and especially for those who like big ships with big guns, this is a book worth having.

FRANK UHLIG, JR.
Naval War College Review

Wettern, Desmond, *The Decline of British Seapower*. Boston, Mass.: Jane's, 1982. 400pp. \$29.95

Hill, J.R. *The Royal Navy, Today and Tomorrow*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982. 332pp. \$21.95

The Decline of British Seapower and The Royal Navy, Today and Tomorrow, are very different books, written for very different reasons. The first is a chronological account of the reduction in size and strength of the Navy which was second in size and power only to that of the United States in 1945. The second