

★ QUARTERDECK ★

MARITIME LITERATURE & ART REVIEW

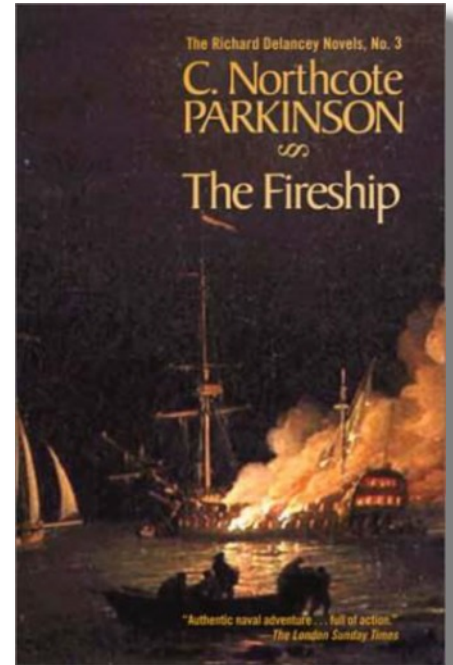
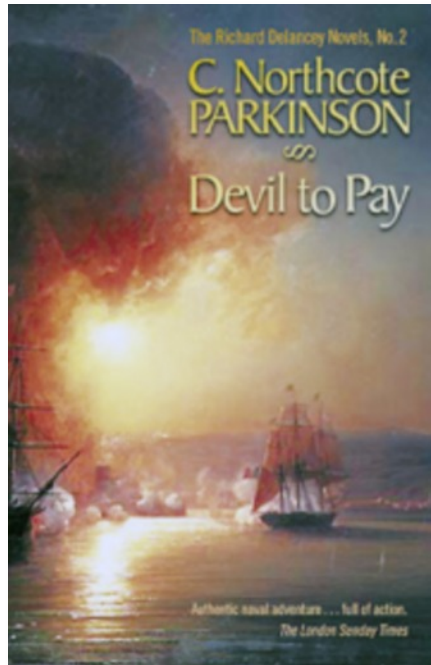
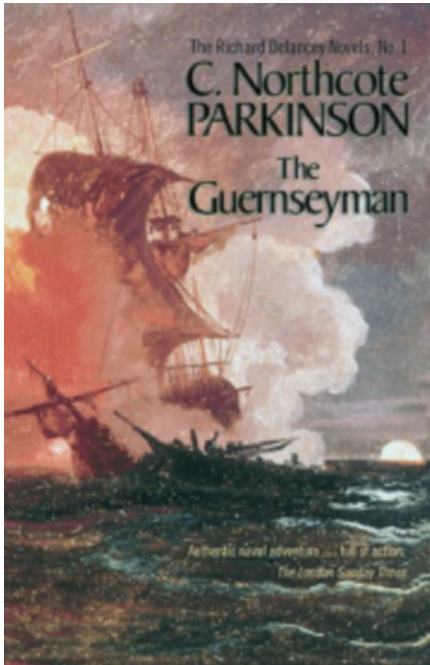


WINTER 2020

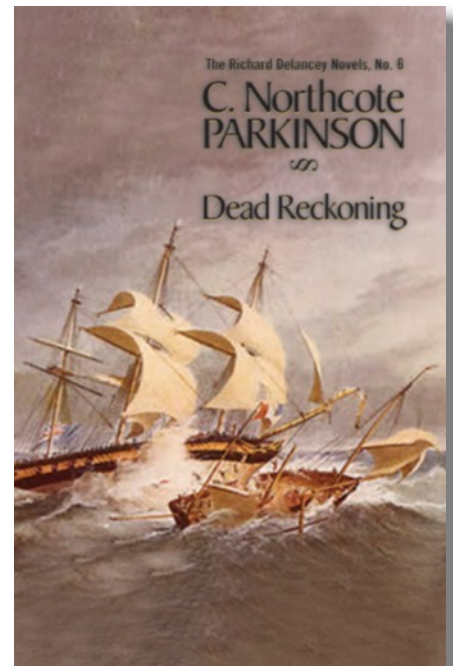
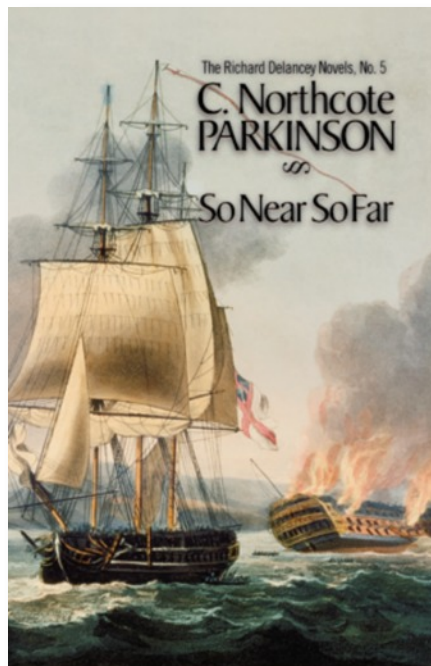
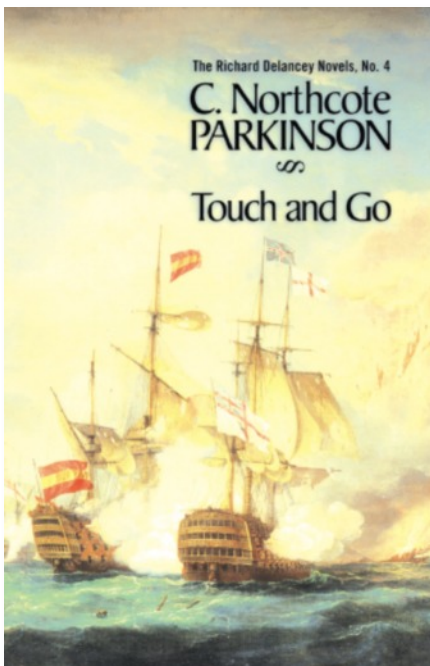
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THE DESTINATION FOR NAUTICAL FICTION



RICHARD DELANCEY NOVELS





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MARITIME LITERATURE & ART
REVIEW



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ON THE COVER:

Detail from "A Rare Peace," an oil-on-canvas
painting by American marine artist
Paul Garnett.
© Paul Garnett

© Tall Ships Communications



Image courtesy of the Royal Mail.

PAUL GARNETT

American marine artist Paul Garnett was recently honored when the Royal Mail in the United Kingdom featured his painting (above) of the British ship *Sovereign of the Seas* 1637 on one of eight Royal Mail Ships Special Stamps charting the illustrious seafaring heritage of the Royal Navy – from historic flagship vessels to today's powerful warships.

Ships depicted in addition to *Sovereign of the Seas* include *Mary Rose* 1511, *HMS Queen Elizabeth II* 2014, *HMS Victory* 1765, *HMS Dreadnought* 1906, *HMS Warrior* 1860, *HMS King George V* 1939, and *HMS Beagle* 1820. The stamps are offered in various packages, including on a first day cover (below). Visit www.royalmail.com for more information.



Paul Garnett

Photo courtesy of the artist.

NEW BOOK RELEASES

2020

US (United States)
UK (United Kingdom)
TPB (Trade Paperback)
PB (Paperback)
HB (Hardback)
EB (Ebook)
NF (Nonfiction)

JANUARY

Blood Will Out (UKHB)
by David Donachie

FEBRUARY

Midshipman Wormwood (UKPB)
by David Donachie

MARCH

Barbarians on an Ancient Sea
(USTPB)
by William Westbrook

MAY

An Eye of the Fleet (USTPB)
by Richard Woodman

The Darkening Sea (USTPB)
by Richard Woodman

Chasing the Bounty (USTPB)
by Donald A. Maxton

JUNE

Matthew's Prize (USTPB)
by Marcus Palliser

OCTOBER

Balkan Glory (UKHB)
by Julian Stockwin



Image courtesy of the Royal Mail.

GEOFFREY HUBAND

English marine artist Geoffrey Huband, RS-MA, was presented the Sir Robert Craven Trophy from the Britannia Naval Research Association (BNRA) on November 9, 2019. The trophy is presented to a person or institution who has demonstrated significant achievement in the preservation of naval artifacts or the promotion of naval history.

Geoffrey was honored for his work over 32 years as a book jacket artist and his meticulous research, resulting in the historically correct images he created.

"It was gratifying to learn from some of the members of the BNRA that it was my work which ignited their flame of enthusiasm for naval history," said the artist. "I was pleased to know that so many people actually looked at my book jackets with so much interest.

"Sir Robert Craven was an heroic figure of the kind that Douglas Reeman would have written about, that only seemed to come to the fore in times of conflict. During World War II, Squadron Leader Robert Craven flew Sunderland Flying Boats and played a significant role in the defeat of the U-boat menace.

"There are tales of his daring exploits flying low over the ocean attempting to avoid the falling bombs from Stukas who were trying their hardest to bomb him out of existence.



Photo courtesy of the BNRA.

Geoffrey Huband receives the Sir Robert Craven Trophy from Dr. Vaughn Mitchell, chairman and co-founder of the RNRA.

Needless to say he survived and rose to become the leader of Coastal Command, which later became Strike Command and was knighted for his services to the United Kingdom. He died in 2003, and was a founder member of the BNRA."

JAMES L. NELSON



Photo courtesy of the author.

James L. Nelson

McBooks Press has acquired the rights to the Isaac Biddlecomb novels by award-winning novelist and maritime historian James L. Nelson.

Isaac Biddlecomb is a Colonial merchant sea captain caught up in the brewing American Revolution, while drawing the ire of a sadistic British naval officer.

The first two titles in the series – *By Force of Arms* and *The Maddest Idea* – will be launched in autumn 2020 in new trade paperback editions. The remaining three titles – *The Continental Risque*, *Lords of the Ocean* and *All the Brave Fellows* – will be released in spring 2021.

The Biddlecomb adventures carry into 1777, leaving open the possibility of new stories from Nelson, with the Revolutionary War far from over.



Photo by George D. Jepson.

English novelists Alaric Bond (left) and Philip Allan bask in autumn sunshine along the Serpentine in Hyde Park, London, after lunching in the nearby Swan public house with their wives and *Quarterdeck* editor, George Jepson, and his wife Amy. Bond announced that his new novel would be *Hellfire Corner* (see interview on page 12), a World War II thriller featuring British Coastal Forces. Allan revealed that his latest Alexander Clay novel would be entitled *In Northern Seas* (see page 26).

By George!



Wandering Maritime Devon

WITH JULIAN STOCKWIN

CATCHING THE GREAT WESTERN 8:03 from Paddington Station in London, we were bound for Plymouth, nearly a four-hour journey to England's West Country. As we left the British capital behind, a brilliant morning sun washed across the autumn landscape under a pale blue sky outside our carriage windows.

Sipping tea and munching a croissant, while Amy read, my thoughts turned to the rugged Channel coast and, in particular, Plymouth Sound and the opening lines in Julian Stockwin's latest Thomas Kydd novel, *To the Eastern Seas*, which I had recently reviewed in the autumn *Quarterdeck*:

"There was nothing to be seen but a dismal miasma of grey fret, a drifting curtain of mizzle over the listless water. It hid everything to seaward . . . Suddenly there was a cry: out of the grey murk firmed the unmistakable outline of a man-o'-war."

This scene was a vivid reminder of earlier visits to Plymouth, the only difference being gray present-day warships emerging from the haze, rather than wooden ships under sail, inbound for Her Majesty's Naval Base, Devonport, the largest naval facility in Western Europe, which started as a Royal Navy Dockyard in the late seventeenth century.

In *To the Eastern Seas*, Julian describes the view from Plymouth Hoe, the large green expanse above the limestone cliffs overlooking the Sound, where Sir Francis Drake is said to have played bowls in 1588, waiting for the tide to change before sailing out with the English fleet to engage the Spanish Armada.

This would be our fourth visit to Devon, a busman's holiday to rummage through locations new to us that have figured in the region's rich maritime history, guided by literary partners Julian and Kathy Stockwin.

Approaching Plymouth, the sun disappeared behind

dark clouds moving in off the sea. It appeared that Julian's words foreshadowed our arrival. By the time we disembarked at the rail station, where the Stockwins were waiting with a taxi, the rain seemed imminent.

After checking into our hotel, we struck off on foot for the Barbican waterfront district, along the cobblestones on north and west sides of Sutton Harbour, where we had booked a cruise in the surrounding waters. It's the preferred way, in my opinion, to visually explore Plymouth Sound and the Hamoaze, a stretch of the tidal River Tamar, which flows past the Royal Navy base.

Storm clouds propelled by a stiff sea breeze continued to threaten as we boarded the *Plymouth Sound*, which was moored at a quay a stone's throw from the steps where the Pilgrims embarked for the New World aboard the *Mayflower* in 1620. During our travels over the years, I always have viewed sites in England through a historical lens, imagining what they looked like in previous centuries.

As we cruised toward the Sound, the Royal Citadel towered over us on our starboard side. The massive ➤



Mayflower

limestone structure dates back to the 1660's, when it was constructed on the site of a fort originally built in the late 1590's during the time Sir Francis Drake was charged with improving Plymouth's defenses.

Drake's Island – an islet, really – lies prominently in the Sound, which in Captain Thomas Kydd's day would have bristled with a forest of masts rising from the decks of men-o'-war and merchant vessels. As we passed the island, Julian pointed to the spot where, in his imagination, Kydd's flying *Tyger* "rounded to, took in sail and anchored . . ." in his latest novel.

He is a self-described "visile," whose imagination is stimulated by observing things and places while conducting location research for the Kydd chronicles.

Plymouth Sound and the Hamoaze, with its historic naval presence, and the surrounding countryside provide a broad canvas against which he recreates the Georgian era in vivid detail.

After cruising past the naval base and heading back down the Hamoaze, Julian called our attention to Mount Edgumbe House, a large estate that lies on the western side of the Sound in Cornwall, which dates back to the mid 1500's. The stately home plays a role in *The Admiral's Daughter*.

The Sound's rich history includes a chapter written in 1815. On July 26, the 74-gun man-o'-war *Bellerophon* arrived, with Napoleon Bonaparte in British custody. The recently abdicated French emperor had surrendered to Captain Frederick Maitland aboard the ship at

Rochefort and was transported to Plymouth aboard the ship to await a decision on his future. Swiss artist John James Chalon captured the event in 1816 in a painting (above) depicting the *Bellerophon* at anchor, with onlookers in boats hoping to view the Frenchman when he was allowed on deck in the early evening.

By the time we returned to Sutton Harbour, light rain was falling. So we ducked into the nearby Strand Tearooms to warm up with a cuppa and lament yet

another gray day in Devon.

The following morning, the sun appeared for a time, during our visit to the Royal William Yard, which was once the principal victualling depot for the Royal Navy and an important adjunct to the Devonport Dockyard.

The massive buildings were constructed of limestone, with granite detailing, ►



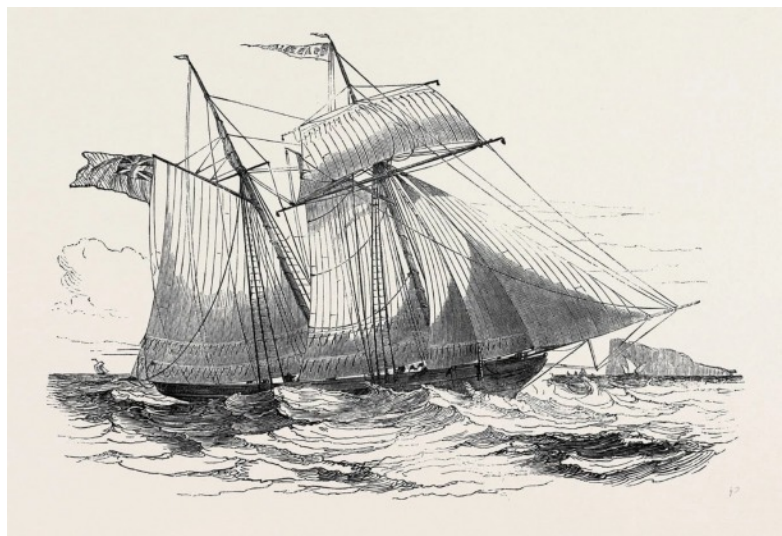
Photo by George D. Jepson.

ABOVE In July 1815, HMS *Bellerophon* anchored in Plymouth Sound, with Napoleon Bonaparte aboard. The former French emperor had recently surrendered to Captain Frederick Lewis Maitland of the *Bellerophon* and was transported to England aboard the ship. Crowds of people came out in small boats to see Bonaparte when he appeared on deck in the early evening to take the air. The frigates *Eurotas* and *Liffey* also appear in the painting, which was completed in 1816 by Swiss artist John James Chalon.

ABOVE LEFT The Stockwins enjoy an English cream tea in the Strand



Photo by George D. Jepson.



LEFT Malcolm shares a yarn with Julian Stockwin during our visit to Salcombe. ABOVE A fruit schooner similar to Annie is a sketch by an unknown artist.

between 1826 and 1835, and cover approximately sixteen acres. The yard housed a cooperage, a granary and flour mill, a slaughterhouse and a brewhouse, as well as storage for food, clothing and equipment for the fleet.

By the afternoon, our luck ran out. Thick clouds and misty rain sent us scurrying by taxi to Corinthia, the Stockwin's late eighteenth-century home, where we met the new additions to the household, Siamese kittens Ming and Mae.

As rain lashed at the window panes, Julian and I sequestered ourselves in his study. Over cups of tea, we spent two hours chewing over a particularly sticky plot for a forthcoming book.

Kathy has often remarked that Julian frequently lives in the early nineteenth century, which is evident when his eyes glaze over and he retreats into suspended animation.

Suddenly, Julian stopped talking, his mouth agape, as the light in his head went on. "I've got it," he gushed and proceeded to describe in some detail the storyline, which will play out in a novel yet to be named.

Later, when the rain had abated, we strolled along the path next to the River

Erme, where the Stockwins frequently pace while hashing over ideas for the Kydd novels.

The following morning, we headed for Salcombe on the Channel coast to see master model maker Malcolm Darch, whom we had visited a year earlier and featured in the summer 2019 *Quarterdeck*. Our hope for a clear day was dashed before we started, with low-hanging clouds and showers.

Our driver Tony kept up a steady banter as we drove through rolling hills along narrow, rain-slicked roads in a van – a "people carrier" in the UK. At one point, we looked up to see a very large truck bearing down from the opposite direction, eliciting a gasp from some of us. "Don't worry," grinned Tony. "Just close your eyes . . . I do!"

Salcombe lies close to the mouth of the Kingsbridge Estuary and is primarily built on the steep west side of the waterway. Malcolm's studio overlooks the harbor, where boats of all sizes were tugging at their lines in a brisk breeze.

The model shipwright greeted us with his signature smile. The previous year, during our visit, he was working on the yacht *Iverna*, which he finished this past summer. Now he's recreating a piece of

local history, building the fruit schooner *Annie*. The vessel was constructed in what was then the village of Salcombe. She met her demise on a stormy night in 1879 on a nearby notorious sand bar.

While Amy and Kathy headed for local shops, our host handed us mugs of tea, and we settled in to yarn a bit. Over a decades-long career, including work as a trained shipwright, Malcolm has boundless tales to tell.

After a pub lunch, we stopped in the Salcombe Lifeboat Museum, where several models of local lifeboats built by Malcolm are on display.

By the time we headed for our rendezvous point with Tony, our umbrellas were whipped inside out by wind gusts blowing heavy rain sideways. It was a fitting end to another outing by the sea: ". . . a dismal miasma of grey fret, a drifting curtain of mizzle . . ."

On our final day in Devon, brilliant sunshine scattered a dazzling display of diamonds across the River Dart in Dartmouth, home of the Britannia Royal Naval College.

As our train to London rolled along the English Channel the following morning, a tantalizingly brilliant blue sea stretched as far as the eye could see. ■

Attack and capture of Belle Isle in 1761 by the British fleet during the Seven Years' War, employing flatboats.



The First Landing Craft

Purpose-built for British amphibious operations

BY CHRIS DURBIN

*Former Royal Navy officer Chris Durbin is the author of the *Carlisle & Holbrooke Naval Adventures*, which are set during the Seven Years' War, known as the French and Indian War in North America. In this article, he relates the development of the first landing craft used in military amphibious operations.*

THE BRITISH RAID on Rochefort in 1757 during the Seven Years' War exposed the weaknesses in Prime Minister William Pitt's strategy for descents upon the French coast.

The raids were designed to relieve pressure on the Prussian army and the Army of Observation, under the command of Prince



Chris Durbin

Photo courtesy of Chris Durbin.

William, Duke of Cumberland, by diverting French troops away from Germany, and to help British allies without deploying a British army to the continent.

However, at Rochefort, despite a huge fleet and eight thousand soldiers, the army commander General Sir John Mordaunt declined to land his force and the expedition was abandoned.

In parliament the attempt was described as “breaking windows with guineas,” and much of the blame was laid upon the ill-defined command relationship between Admiral Edward Hawke and General Mordaunt.

Clearly a new approach was needed ➤



The British Landing at Kip's Bay, New York Island, 15 September 1776, by Robert Cleveley, 1777.

before another attempt was made, and it wasn't just a matter of the navy and the army working together more effectively; there were also serious deficiencies in the equipment for a landing.

Until 1758, the only way that the British navy could land an army was by using the standard boats carried by men-of-war, or locally borrowed or built craft. Their deficiencies were obvious: they weren't large enough to carry a tactically significant number of soldiers for the initial attack, and they weren't suitable for landing on a beach in anything other than calm weather. In fact, their carrying capacity was so small that an army eight thousand strong and its equipment could take a week to land.



William Pitt the Elder by William Hoare, English portraitist, circa 1754.

In 1758, Pitt decided to try again with a less ambitious raid on the channel coast of Brittany or Normandy. This time, in advance of the landing, the Admiralty ordered the Navy Board to construct a fleet of purpose-designed and purpose-built flat-bottomed boats, each capable of taking half a company of soldiers at a time.

Two prototype flatboats were produced in only nineteen days and on the twenty-sixth of April the first was viewed by the Admiralty and Navy Board at Woolwich on the Thames. The Admiralty authorized the building of production models the very next day. However, time was not on the side of the King's yards and civilian ➤

yards that won the contracts. The next raid – on Saint Malo this time – was due to sail around the end of May.

The Admiralty wanted as many boats as could be built to be delivered to Portsmouth by 17 May, less than three weeks from the warrant being issued for their construction. It is worth noting, as a social commentary of the time, that one of the prototypes was built by Mrs Winter's yard at Deptford Wharf.

As far as I can tell, Mrs Winter was probably the daughter-in-law of the founder of the yard, but in any case, she evidently was running the yard as a going concern. Nevertheless, she appears to have lost money on the deal for the prototype, perhaps because of the unusually sharp bends of the clinker strakes (*lap-strakes* in America) near the bow. In recognition, the Admiralty allowed her another shilling per foot for the production models.

Captain Richard Howe was selected to command the raid on Saint Malo, raised to the temporary rank of commodore for the duration of the expedition. By the time he sailed he had some thirty flatboats available in two sizes. The thirty-six-foot flatboat was propelled by twenty navy oarsmen and could carry fifty soldiers. The smaller thirty-foot flatboat had sixteen oars and carried a smaller payload.

The flatboats were commanded by sea officers and they were provided with a two-masted lugsail rig for long passages. If it was considered necessary, a boat gun or half-pound swivel gun was fitted to the stem-post, manned by a navy gunner.

The boats had some interesting features:

★ The bows were wide and rounded rather than pointed so that two files of soldiers could disembark over the bows simultaneously.

★ The stem was cut away steeply towards a flat bottom so that they could run up on sand or shingle without tipping at an angle.

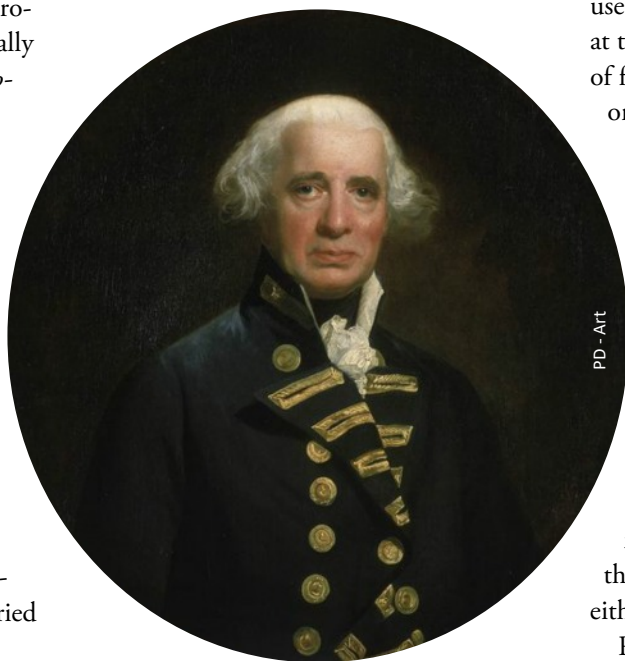
★ Their internal fittings – thwarts,

benches and so on – were removable so that one boat could be nested in another on top of booms on the deck of a transport or man-of-war.

★ The oarsmen sat on truncated thwarts while the soldiers sat on fore and-aft benches either side of the keel facing inboard with their muskets held upright between their knees.

★ Each flatboat had a kedge anchor at the stern that was dropped on approaching the beach, to aid in hauling off once the soldiers had been disembarked.

Two of the larger flatboats could land the entire fighting element of a grenadier company in combat formation for the



Captain Richard Howe

initial assault. They could then rapidly return to the transports for another load of grenadiers or musketeers. There is documentary evidence that a boat could be loaded with a half-company of well-drilled infantry in just two minutes. The only thing missing in the specification of the flatboats was a means of putting the soldiers ashore with dry feet. It was only after the first landings at Cancale Bay, a few miles from Saint Malo that this was seen to be a significant problem. Commodore Howe certainly took it seriously. On the thirteenth of June, after re-embarking the army, Howe

issued this general order from his flagship *Essex*:

"A stool is to be made according to the form which is to be seen on board the Essex for embarking the troops in the flat-bottomed boats and the Carpenters of ships charged with conveyance or manning any of those boats is to be sent to demand from the proper officer in the Forrester hoy the stores requisite for this purpose. Each stool will take three deals, four foot of elm board and one pound of tenpenny nails."

In this context a *stool* is a ramp; think of the ducking-stools that were still in use for minor crimes in English villages at that time. A "deal" was a standard size of fir plank as purchased from the Baltic or the American colonies and there were sixty-six three-inch nails in a pound of tenpenny nails.

Assuming they were using the common "Petersburg" standard deal, the amount of timber and nails that was specified would have made a boarding ramp twelve feet long and thirty-three inches wide. Two of these were built for each flatboat and stowed above the keel between the soldiers' knees when not in use. When required for landing they were to be extended over the bows either side of the stem post.

Richard Howe had been on the Rochefort raid and he'd witnessed the deadly confusion and delay of a divided command. In the aftermath, General Mordaunt was tried by court martial, exposing all the key players to criticism and, in Mordaunt's case, he was never given another command.

Howe would spare nobody in his determination that the next raid should, on the navy's part, be blameless. A division of four thirty-six-foot boats was decidedly not a command for a post-captain, yet Howe ruthlessly stripped his rated ships of their commanding officers, appointing one to command each division of flatboats. The captains of *Essex*, *Rochester*, *Deptford*, *Portland*, *Richmond*, *Pallas*, ➤

“The flatboats landed the soldiers a few miles west of the town, which quickly capitulated.”

Brilliant and *Tartar* all found themselves in command of flatboat divisions for the first landings at Saint Malo.

Throughout the long summer of 1758 Commodore Howe terrorized the Normandy and Brittany coasts making successful landings at Cancale Bay for Saint Malo, at Cherbourg and at Saint Lumiere again for Saint Malo.

The first attack on Saint Malo had mixed success. The army was landed without loss, vindicating the design of the flatboats and, perhaps of equal importance, the new command relationships and Howe's decision to put his senior captains in command of landing divisions.

Saint Malo did not fall, but all the shipping under its protection was burned: three ships of the line, twenty-four privateers and sixty merchant ships along with huge amounts of naval stores and ammunition. The Duke of Marlborough, who commanded the army, decided that he couldn't conclude a regular siege before an overwhelming French relief force arrived, and he marched back to Cancale Bay to be re-embarked without incident.

The second raid was on Cherbourg and the army had a new commander, Lieutenant-General Thomas Bligh. The flatboats landed the soldiers a few miles west of the town, which quickly capitulated. In the next few days all its wharves and dock facilities were destroyed before the army once again re-embarked.

In September, Saint Malo was again chosen for a raid. This time the army was landed at Saint Lunaire to the west of the town, the other side of the Rance, a broad estuary that lay between the army and the town. Once again, it was found impractical to capture the town and with the weather worsening, Howe designated the sheltered bay of Saint Cast, a dozen miles march to the west, for re-embarka-

tion.

This time the army was closely pursued by a strong French force that closed in and encircled the British army before it could embark. Over a thousand British soldiers were killed or wounded and the entire rearguard of the finest Grenadiers and Guards battalions was captured.

The navy suffered far less but because of Howe's insistence on his captains commanding the boats and the re-embarkation, three post-captains and a commander were captured on the beach. This was the last descent on the French



Charles Spencer,
3rd Duke of Marlborough

coast in 1758.

It is still argued whether Pitt's 1758 strategy of raids on Normandy and Brittany had any useful effects. Certainly, there was considerable destruction of shipping and port facilities, and the privateers of Saint Malo slept less easily, but whether it resulted in a significant reduction in French forces in Germany is not at all clear.

What is not in question is the huge advances in command arrangements for combined operations, the leap forward in naval signalling and the development of

the first mass-produced, purpose-built landing craft.

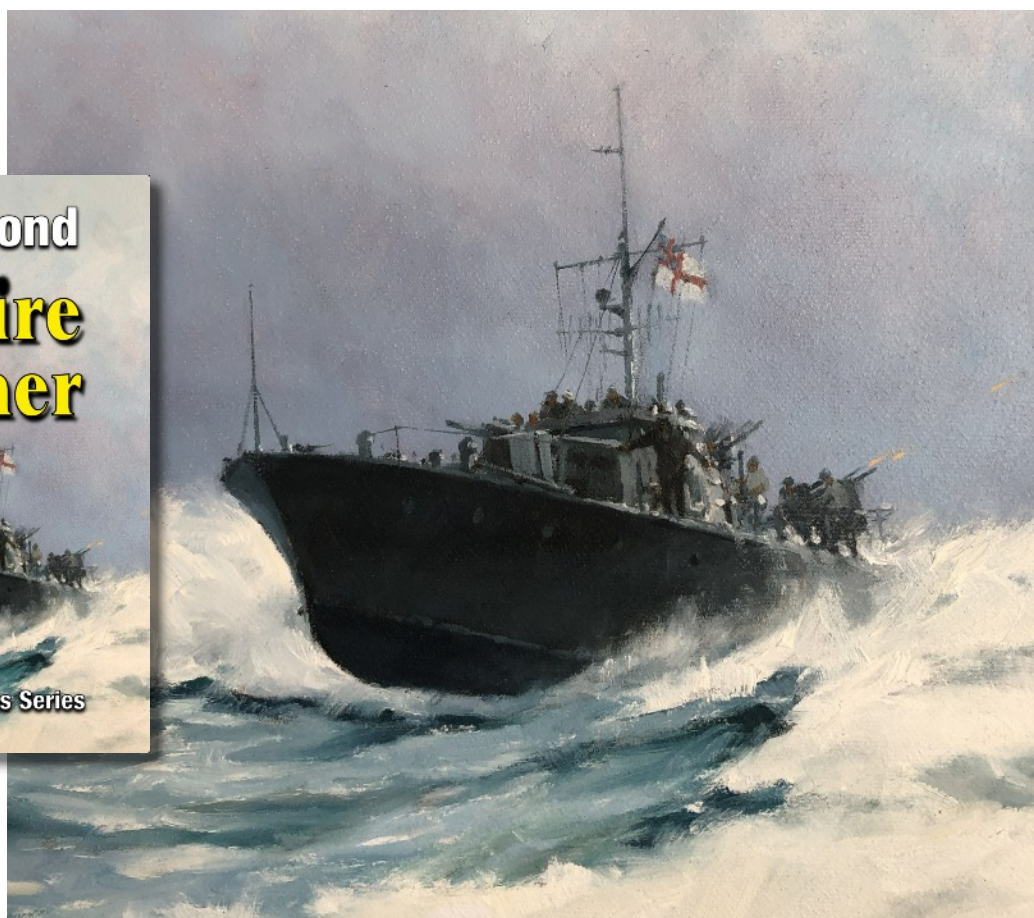
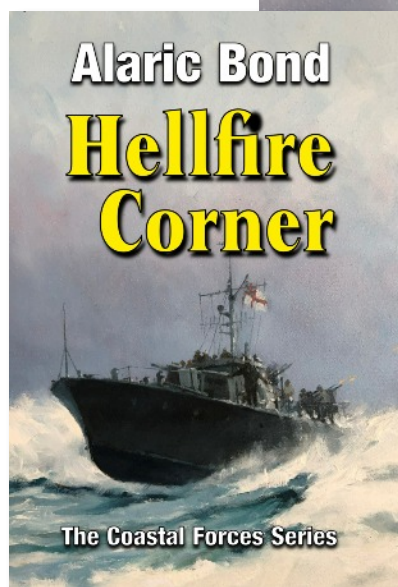
These flatboats were used again at Quebec in 1759, at Belle Isle in 1761 and at Havana and Saint Lucia in 1762. During the American Revolution they provided vital littoral mobility.

Their design lineage can be traced through to the twentieth century, their successors landed allied marines and soldiers at Okinawa and Salerno, to name just two of the successful amphibious operations of the Second World War. Two hundred years later they came full circle by landing the greatest seaborne invasion force of all time on the Normandy beaches.

The history of the Seven Years War provides the background to the Carlisle and Holbrooke naval adventures. Edward Carlisle is a captain in George II's navy and a native of Williamsburg, Virginia, a feasible if somewhat unusual arrangement at a time when the population of the American colonies was loyal to the British crown. George Holbrooke starts the series as a young master's mate from Hampshire, England who has difficulty in coming to terms with the peacetime navy, but is stimulated by his first taste of battle. He earns his commission as a lieutenant in a desperate fight in the Mediterranean and his first command after the Battle of Cape François, off what is now Haiti.

In *Perilous Shore*, the sixth of the Carlisle and Holbrooke Naval adventures (see page 26), you can read how the fictional sloop-of-war *Kestrel* took part in Pitt's strategy of raids on the French coast in 1758, and how George Holbrooke, no longer a reluctant master's mate but now a young and ambitious master and commander, played his part.

Visit Chris Durbin online at
www.chris-durbin.com



Detail from a painting of a British motor gunboat by English marine artist Geoffrey Hubbard, RSWA.

Alaric Bond

English novelist launches new Coastal Forces series

ON A BRILLIANT AUTUMN afternoon we sat in The Swan, Hyde Park, a historic London pub dating back to at least 1721, with English novelist Alaric Bond and his wife Kitty.

It was our first face-to-face meeting, after corresponding for several years, as Bond's Fighting Sail Series stretched to twelve titles, including the latest, *Sea Trials*.

Amy and I had arranged to meet with the Bonds and fellow author Philip Allan and his wife Jan at the public house, our "local" when in London. Once the Allans arrived, we settled into a discus-



Alaric Bond

Photo by Kitty Bond.

sion over lunch that naturally touched on publishing in general and nautical fiction, as well as what Alaric and Philip were writing at the time.

Surprisingly, Alaric revealed that he was leaving his Fighting Sail Series for a time to launch a new series featuring Britain's Coastal Forces during the Second World War. The first title, *Hellfire Corner* (see review on page –), is due out in early 2020.

The Strait of Dover, which is the narrowest channel between England and continental Europe, was dubbed "Hellfire Corner" during the Second World War. British and German ➤



Alaric Bond views a map in Dover Museum detailing Hellfire Corner's artillery defenses during a research trip to Dover.

Photo by Kitty Bond.

“The war had only been over for fifteen years when I started school and we played Spitfires and Hurricanes in the playground.”

long-range artillery bombarded shipping, coastal towns and military installations in this dangerous stretch of the Channel.

Coastal Forces operated out of Dover, with much of Bond's story focused around Hellfire Corner, thus the title for his novel.

Bond's ardor for the Royal Navy's “Little Ships” was evident as he described his work on *Hellfire Corner*, but he was also clear that the Fighting Sail Series will also continue with a new book in 2020.

In the wake of our London visit, Bond discussed his Coastal Forces venture with *Quarterdeck* in this interview.

— George Jepson

Hellfire Corner is a departure from your Age-of-Sail novels. What inspired you to write about the Second World War?

As a child of the 'fifties it has always fascinated me. The war had only been over for fifteen years when I started school and we played Spitfires and Hurricanes in the playground. Most of my friends' parents had been involved – my father was Grenadier guardsman – and many bomb sites and other signs remained (they still do if you know where to look). Now when I realize World War II actually began over eighty years ago it makes me feel very old.

What inspired you to write about Coastal Forces?

It was the combination of fragile, fast craft crewed mainly by men who, until a short time before, had been bank managers, schoolteachers and the like. The officers came from the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, while ratings were classed as Hostilities Only (or “Hostiles”), meaning they only served during times of conflict. Their approach might not always have been “RN and Pusser” yet they took to the sea and the job they were given to do as if born to it.

How did you research the story? ►

Were you able to get first hand accounts of service aboard Coastal Forces boats?

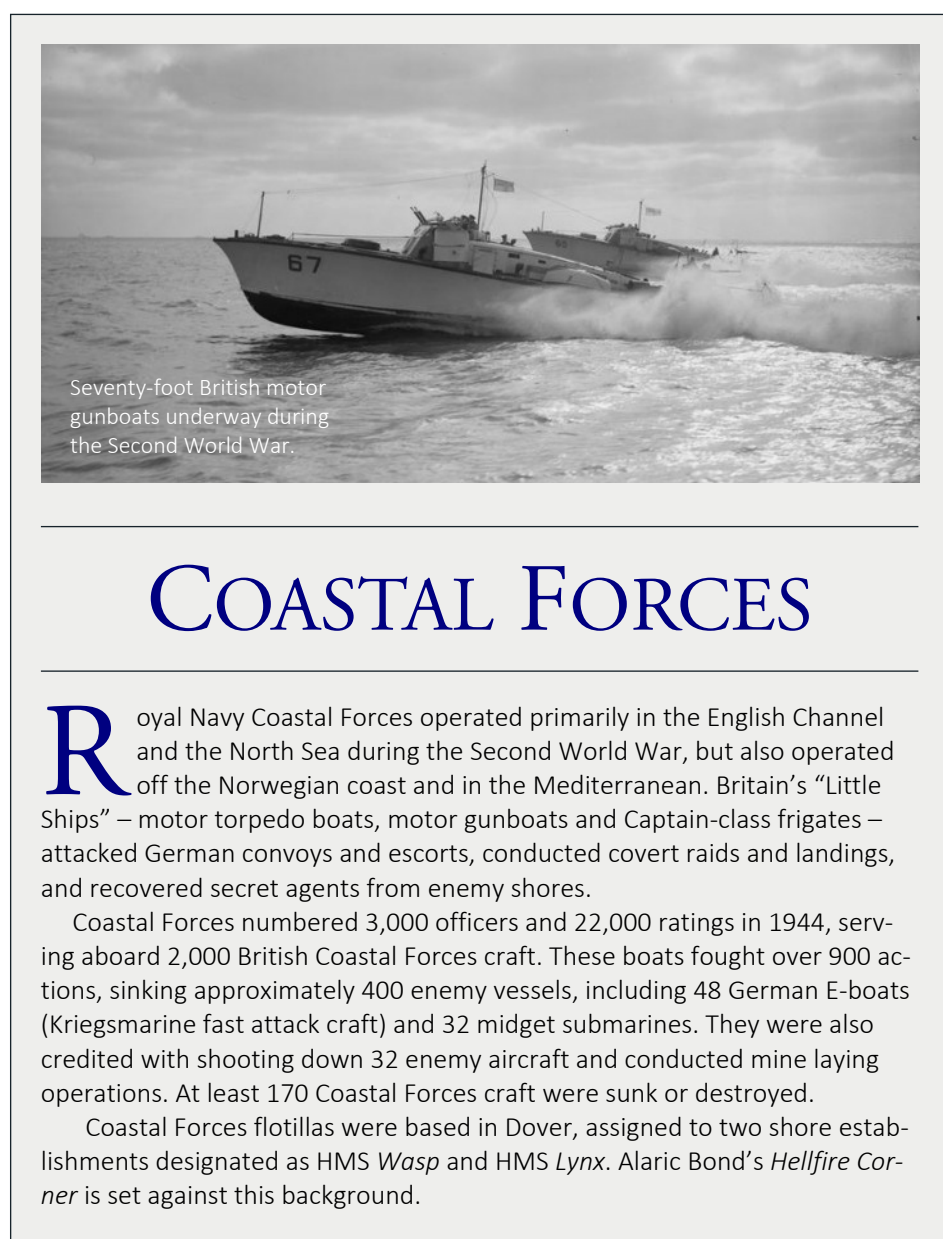
I read extensively and have spoken or written to several veterans who survive. There is also newsreel footage, which is a bonus for someone used to exploring the early nineteenth century. A few boats remain, some have been put to different uses, many were later converted into houseboats or pleasure craft, but others are now being restored.

What was the most challenging aspect of your research?

This was the big surprise. Until *Hellfire Corner* my focus was always on the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. I had thought moving to a later era would be easier, with no Victorian “historians” to distort the facts. Consequently, it was disconcerting to discover a lot of conflicting information. Sometimes this is noticeable in autobiographies, where pinches of salt can be suspected, but even respected reference books have anomalies and conflicts. Such things make my job trickier, but then I do so enjoy the research aspect, and an element of detective work is no hardship.

Are the characters based on real-life figures?

No, and neither do I portray or involve historical figures of the time. The action is set in Dover. The Coastal Forces shore establishments HMS *Wasp* and HMS *Lynx* are described, as is the town itself, but my flotilla is fictitious and the characters are an amalgam of typical RNVR and RN types. It seemed the right approach and differs only slightly from my Fighting Sail books. That said, anyone who has read my earlier work will know I am very character led. Personal dynamics are important, and a story set in a small boat crewed by a handful of men, (with some individuals representing entire departments in larger vessels), simply



COASTAL FORCES

Royal Navy Coastal Forces operated primarily in the English Channel and the North Sea during the Second World War, but also operated off the Norwegian coast and in the Mediterranean. Britain’s “Little Ships” – motor torpedo boats, motor gunboats and Captain-class frigates – attacked German convoys and escorts, conducted covert raids and landings, and recovered secret agents from enemy shores.

Coastal Forces numbered 3,000 officers and 22,000 ratings in 1944, serving aboard 2,000 British Coastal Forces craft. These boats fought over 900 actions, sinking approximately 400 enemy vessels, including 48 German E-boats (Kriegsmarine fast attack craft) and 32 midget submarines. They were also credited with shooting down 32 enemy aircraft and conducted mine laying operations. At least 170 Coastal Forces craft were sunk or destroyed.

Coastal Forces flotillas were based in Dover, assigned to two shore establishments designated as HMS *Wasp* and HMS *Lynx*. Alaric Bond’s *Hellfire Corner* is set against this background.

lends itself to opportunities for storylines.

Was the transition from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century difficult?

Actually, I found it surprisingly easy. People don’t change; the same faces appear in cartoons drawn in both 1800 and 1940. They might have different values and standards, but we are all made of the same stuff.

Your descriptions of life in the Royal Navy in your earlier books are ex-

tremely vivid. How did you capture life in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s?

Autobiographies are a tremendous help and, again, there are newsreels and films of the period. Newspapers are also a great source, and so many are now available online; even contemporary novels can give a flavor of the era. And I’ve always had an interest in the music of the ’30’s and ’40’s. I played trombone in a big band for a while and am now learning jazz guitar. Music certainly helps to get into the mood.

It’s been eight years since our last ➤



Photo by Kitty Bond.

Alaric Bond aboard HMS *Victory* in the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. After *Hellfire Corner's* launch in early 2020, Bond will return to the early nineteenth century with a new title in his Fighting Sail Series.

interview. Since then you've moved house. Describe where you write in your new surroundings.

The new place could not be more different. For fifteen years we had a fourteenth century Wealden Hall House which my wife ran as a traditional British restaurant and tea rooms. It was full of low beams and crooked ceilings. The vault contained the bricked-up entrance to a tunnel, one staircase led straight into a stone wall and an upstairs room could only be entered through a wardrobe (predictably that became known as the Narnia Room). Where we live now was originally built in the 1920's as squash courts for a nearby manor house. Probably because of this the brickwork is amazingly thick and the whole place very Art Deco in design, but the main attraction to us was its position. The place is off the map, literally, and at the entrance to our friend's dairy farm, so the only traffic is cows and the occasional tractor. It's much more private than living in a restaurant and the perfect environment for

writing. One day I might buy somewhere conventional, but I am in no rush.

If you could host a dinner party for four historic figures who would you invite?

Nicholas Monsarrat would be one. He was an RNVR man himself, and I would argue one of the best nautical writers of the twentieth century. Robert Hichens should also be included; the most decorated RNVR officer in World War II and gifted when it came to gunboat strategy. Another would be from an earlier time; Adam Duncan took a worn-out fleet manned mainly by former mutineers and won victory at Camperdown. When his adversary, Jan de Winter, offered his sword in surrender Duncan brushed it aside with the words, "I would rather take a brave man's hand than his sword" – the two became lifelong friends. But the most honored guest would be a man I actually met, if only briefly.

For our first family holiday we booked

the guardroom of a castle in the West Country. Unbeknown to me, the owner was a former naval officer who had been the Commander aboard *King George V* and later captained HMS *Argonaut*. We soon discovered our mutual interest and later corresponded. In one letter he says: "it's blowing a proper south westerly at the moment and reminds me of the time we were heading for Ireland in *KGV*, desperately short of fuel after sinking the *Bismarck*." He was a small, quiet and unassuming man; I named one of my first characters after him.

Is there another Second World War novel in your future?

Oh yes, I hope the Coastal Forces series will run for some time to come.

What is on the horizon for your Fighting Sail series?

I'm starting the next book in the new year and already have the outline planned. Roughly the same set of characters and crew will be featured, although other changes are on the horizon and, after several books being set there, I'm definitely moving away from the South Atlantic.

Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

I've really enjoyed writing *Hellfire Corner*; the change of time and theatre has been stimulating and researching a different era a real pleasure. But I do still hanker for the rag-and-stick stories of my Fighting Sail books and am looking forward to getting on with the next. Ideally it would be good to run both series in parallel. Incidentally I am delighted that Geoffrey Huband, RSMA, a marine artist I greatly admire, has provided the cover art for *Hellfire Corner*. ■

Visit Alaric Bond at
www.alaricbond.com



Portsmouth Point as depicted in 1811 by British caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson.

Kydd's Portsmouth

BY KATHY STOCKWIN

Kathy and Julian Stockwin work closely as a creative team producing the Thomas Kydd tales. A former magazine editor-in-chief, Kathy brings an impressive range of skills to the table and in this fifth of a series of special features for 'Quarterdeck' she writes about a city that was at the forefront of the Royal Navy's activities in Georgian England

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE with Portsmouth was in 1990 when Julian and I upped sticks in Hong Kong and moved to England. He was working on a software project for NATO and we were based in Portsmouth – “Pompey” – for several months.

Julian was actually quartered in Portsmouth during his time



Kathy Stockwin

Photo by George D. Jepson.

in the Royal Navy and he delighted in showing me some of his old haunts. I became well acquainted with the city's many maritime attractions, although the Kydd Series had yet to be conceived; that was not to happen for another ten years.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

There are numerous suggestions as to the origins of the name “Pompey.” Probably my favorite is the story that a snoozing, drunken sailor on shore leave in Portsmouth, interrupted a lecture on the Roman Empire given by naval temperance worker, Dame Agnes Weston, founder of

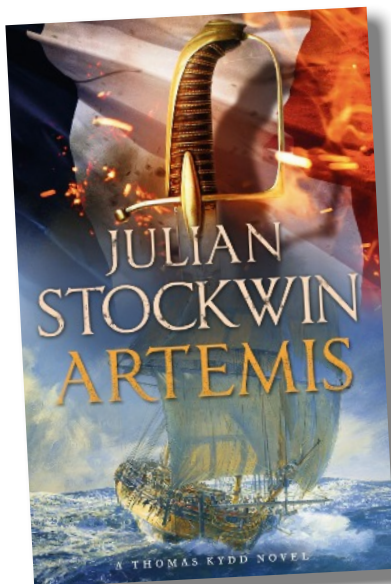
the Royal Sailors Rests, “Aggie Westons.” When he heard that the emperor Pompey had died, the sailor shouted out “Poor ➤

old Pompey” in a drunken slur; the name was taken up by others at the lecture and moved into common usage. Another explanation put forward that Julian likes more is that ships entering Portsmouth harbour used to make an entry in the ships log “Pom. P.” as a reference to Portsmouth Point (this being too long to write). Navigational charts also used this abbreviation.

TRIUMPHANT RETURN

Julian wrote of Thomas Kydd’s victorious sailing into Portsmouth after a famous battle at sea in *Artemis*, the second book in the series:

The salute banged on – the full twenty-one for a King of England. They were now passing through the close entrance. They glided past the rickety old buildings of Portsmouth Point close in to starboard, every window full of cheering figures. On the opposite side of the entrance was the darkened brick so-



lidity of Fort Blockhouse, and beyond it Haslar naval hospital. As many wounded and sick sailors that were able to had hobbled down to the water’s edge, and a military band thumped out “Heart of Oak.”

On they sailed, past the low white medieval turrets of the gun wharf, then where the harbour inside widened again, to Portsmouth Hard with its taverns and hostleries alive with crowds. Two men-o’-war moored mid-stream had manned ship. Hundreds of men lined along bare masts and yards

gave full-throated cheers to the now famous frigate.

Abruptly they were upon the long dockyard buildings. There was a flurry of activity as Artemis swung about into the wind and slowed. Her sails were brailed up and lines were relayed ashore by waiting boats and they were warped in alongside the dock.

KYDD AND L’AURORE

In *Victory* we see Captain Kydd take coach to Portsmouth to assume command of the frigate *L’Aurore* – and share in his excitement at his new command:

The rain had cleared by the time they made the Landport gate and Portsea and then the short distance to the George Posting House. He



Photo by George D. Jepson.

Victory Gate at Portsmouth Dockyard through which Britain’s naval heroes have passed over the centuries.

had no wish to see his rooms – in a fever of excitement there was only one thing he wanted to set his eyes on, and she was lying somewhere in the dockyard past the Hard.

He paused at the dockyard gate and looked up at the pair of golden globes that surmounted the entrance. It brought him back to the time that seemed so distant, when he had passed through these very gates as a young sailor to adventures that could fill a book. His eyes misted and he stood for a while, letting the feelings surge.

He gulped, then stepped resolutely forward. The porter’s lodge was just inside and he sought him out. Nothing escaped the eye of the gate porter of a Royal dockyard. “Can you give me a steer for L’Aurore d’ Égalité, frigate just caught?”

“Le Roar? Aye, I can. Past yon ropewalk an’ th’ basin and hard by y’r block mills. She’s docked, havin’ her lines taken off, y’ knows.”

“Thank you,” Kydd smiled, leaving the man staring at the crown piece in his hand.

He strode off through the busy dockyard, past the mast ponds and ropewalk, between the steaming kilns and dock basins with their mastless hulls in all stages of fitting out and repair, and on to the new block mills, said to be the wonder of the age.

There was only one dry dock in front of them and Kydd knew that there he would find her. He hurried forward. His first sight was of three stumpy lower masts protruding above the dock edge. ➤



The docks were designed to take the mightiest first rate battleships and the frigate was swallowed up in the space.

And then – there she was! HMS L'Aurore d'Égalité or whatever she would be named eventually. Sitting neatly, even primly on keel-blocks was the naked hull of his new command. In the muddy depths of the dock teams of men were at work and on impulse he found the chain-guarded stone steps leading down to the bottom and descended.

The gigantic immensity of the dark hull above him was awe-inspiring. Then his seaman's instincts translated what he saw into the actuality of a seaway. That fine entry forward and long clean run aft spoke of speed but at the same time no doubt meant her being wet in anything of a head sea. Her unusually steep turn of bilge would help with leeway and the pronounced tumblehome might imply tender handling, but Kydd was left with one overriding impression: speed.

THE ROYAL DOCKYARD

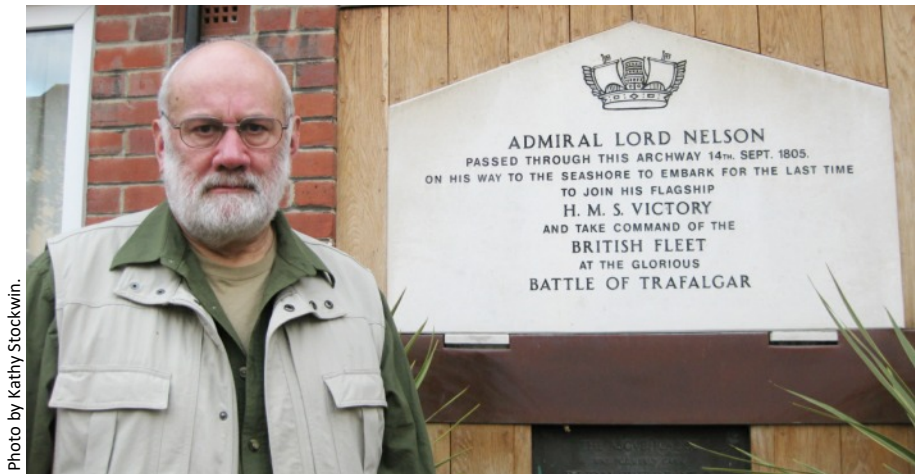
In Kydd's day England's six Royal Dockyards were the biggest industrial enterprises in the world, The most important ones being Portsmouth and Plymouth. During the Napoleonic Wars, 15,000 men worked in these dockyards, including 5000 shipwrights. (Julian himself trained as a naval shipwright and would no doubt have little trouble should he find himself transported back in time to take up his adze again.)

The dockyard at Portsmouth covered 33 hectares, a vast complex of timber and ironwork stores, smithies, tanneries, seasoning sheds, saw pits, rigging houses, rope walks, block mills and much more. The dockyard did not just build and repair ships, it boasted massive bakeries, salting houses for preserving meat and vast breweries.

And indeed the dockyard was a tourist attraction, even being honored with Royal patronage, including Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. In the early 1800's one visitor to the dockyard noted that the heat of the anchor forge was so intense that the men working there had to be supplied with nearly nine pints of beer a day. He marvelled that this, together with wages of 20 shillings a week, sufficed to tempt "these Cyclops to abridge their lives and live in this emblem of Tartarus for hours a day."

THE SHIPS

There've been many famous ships connected with Portsmouth's proud maritime history – *Mary Rose*, *HMS Warrior*, to name but two, but one ship stands head and shoulders above the rest: *HMS Victory*, now currently undergoing major restoration in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard to ensure her preservation for future generations. Julian and I visited this iconic vessel a number of times when we lived in Portsmouth and, of course,



Julian Stockwin at the sally port where Admiral Lord Nelson embarked aboard his boat, which rowed him to HMS *Victory* and immortality.

when he came to write *Victory* he undertook very intensive research and was granted privileged access to all parts of the ship. To this day *Victory* proudly fulfils a dual role as flagship of the First Sea Lord and a living museum of the Georgian navy.

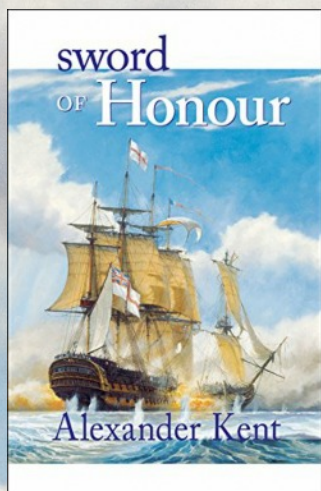
THE IMMORTAL MEMORY

Admiral Lord Nelson's final steps ashore were in Portsmouth before he boarded *Victory* in 1805, sailing on to both victory and a tragic death on October 21. The fleet had anchored just outside Portsmouth Harbour and thousands of well-wishers had gathered to pay their respects to Nelson. The streets became so crammed with people that Nelson chose not to walk his usual route to the sally port. Instead he left the George Hotel in the High Street and took a narrow passage, which led through an opening in the Redoubt wall out onto a beach where his boats were waiting to row him to his flagship. On the anniversary of his death each year, Trafalgar Day, a solemn ceremony is held aboard *Victory* and all around the world glasses are raised in the toast: "The Immortal Memory."

A VERY SPECIAL BOOK LAUNCH

April 4, 2002 was an evening to remember, with over seventy friends and people from the book world toasting *Artemis*, Julian's second Kydd title, at a magnificent party at the McCarthy Gallery in the Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth. The guests had come from as far afield as the United States and Denmark, as well as all over the United Kingdom. The Royal Navy was well represented, with five captains and a commodore present. And just yards away, proudly standing in all her glory, was *HMS Victory*. ■

Visit the Stockwins at
www.julianstockwin.com



Detail from "Sword of Honour," an original oil painting by English marine artist Geoffrey Huband.

When Heroes Die

BY KIM REEMAN

Kimberley Jordan Reeman worked alongside her husband and literary partner Douglas Reeman until his death in 2017. "When Heroes Die" originally appeared on her blog, *Onward*, which is available on the official Douglas Reeman website, www.douglasreeman.com. Kim's novel "Coronach" was recently released in a new edition by Troubadour Publishing.

The scene: the bloodied quarter-deck of HMS *Frobisher*, the smoke and fury of close action, and then the admiral turns and stares at his old friend, the coxswain, as if he would speak but cannot.

Then he saw Bolitho fall . . . he leaped forward and caught him



Kim Reeman

Photo by Fabrice Rizzato.

around the shoulders, holding him, lowering him carefully to the deck, everything else without meaning or purpose.

Men were cheering, some firing their muskets. It meant nothing.

From the starboard gangway Tyacke saw him fall, but knew he could not leave his men while they were boarding the enemy, following his orders. Midshipman Singleton, who had become a man this day, also saw him fall, and was on his knees beside him with Allday and Avery . . .

Shadows moved across the sun, and there were faint cheers, as if they came from another time, another victory. Some one reached around him and dabbed his face with a wet cloth. Bolitho recognized the sleeve: it was Le-froy, the bald surgeon. ➤

He heard Allday's painful breathing, and needed to tell him, to reassure him.

... But when he tried to reach out for him, he realised for the first time that his hand was tightly gripped in Allday's. Then he saw him watching him, his hair shaggy against the smoke and the sun.

It was wrong that he should be so distressed. One who had done so much. He tried again and said, "Easy, old friend, be easy now." He felt Allday nod. "No grief, we always knew..."

Lefroy stood slowly, and said, "He's gone, I'm afraid."

– *Sword of Honour* by Alexander Kent

The typewriter keys continued to tap for ten minutes or so, and then there was silence. I looked into the study and my husband, Douglas Reeman, writing as Alexander Kent, was sitting staring at the page with an expression as stricken as any officer or man on that shattered quarterdeck.

"I never even saw him fall," he said. "It just happened. I didn't know it was going to be like that."

It was the end of *Sword of Honour*, but it was not the end of the series: only his own death in 2017 could, and did, conclude it. But he never really recovered from the emotional impact of the death of his fictional hero, Richard Bolitho, and neither have his readers. The explosions that resulted, and the return fire from devotees of the Alexander Kent novels, rivaled the Battle of Trafalgar. We got, and as new readers discover the series, I still receive indignant or outraged or horrified messages beginning: "Why did you kill off Bolitho? Can't it have been a case of mistaken identity? Can't he still be alive somewhere, waiting to come back?" Or: "I could hardly finish the book, and I will never, ever, be able to read it again." Serial re-readers, and there are thousands, actually refuse to read *Sword of Honour* again because they know what's coming, and won't put themselves through the anguish of reliving it. They skip it entirely and go on to the next in the series.

So why, at the risk of alienating readers, do we as writers "kill off" our characters? Why, particularly, the most beloved, the hero of a best-selling series?

Because all that is mortal must die. And if we as writers consider it vital to reflect the truths of life and death, we must acknowledge this. No one is immortal.

In the early 1970's, when the Bolitho series was becoming hugely popular, the publicity director at Hutchinson, subsequently to become part of the Random House group, designed a promotional bookmark featuring a chronology of Richard Bolitho's life. It was a chronology that determined, even so early in the series, the trajectory of Bolitho's life and career, from his birth in Falmouth in 1756 to his death on *Frobisher's* quarterdeck in 1815.

Eventually it became inevitable: that book, *Sword of Honour*, had to be written. Douglas approached this philosophically (at first), saying, "It stands to reason that anybody who was born in



Photo by Michael Brett.

Douglas Reeman

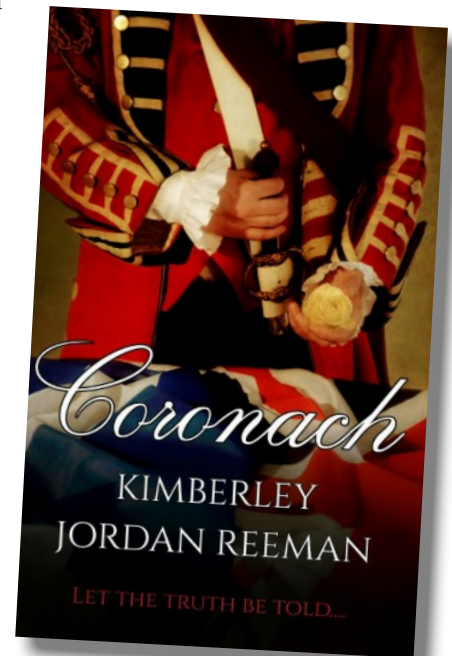
1756 would be dead by now." It was not, however, a book he was eager to write.

He dreaded it. But he wrote it. To do otherwise, he said, would have been cowardly. And he was no coward, either physically or morally.

I learn, even now, from his integrity. There are three significant deaths in my novel *Coronach*, none of them deliberately engineered by me. One is the catalyst that brings together a man and a woman, both beloved by the man who dies. One is inevitable, and yet so shocking that when I had written the end of the scene I sat in complete silence for a few minutes, feeling I'd been kicked in the teeth. And the third is the finale, the last, lingering note in the symphony that is *Coronach*, and when I wrote that I felt, not exultation, but a sense of its fitness, that it could not have been other than what it was. As Thomas Hardy defined the highest tragedy: "The worthy encompassed by the inevitable."

To write the story otherwise, to soften the lessons of life and death, to deny the truth, is to compromise.

And all heroes, mine and yours, transcend death, and in our hearts we hold them forever. ■



Hellfire Corner

BY ALARIC BOND

IN JUNE 1940, the *Pas-de-Calais* region in France was occupied by a British enemy for the first time since the Napoleonic Wars. The Fall of France and the subsequent German occupation left England exposed to invasion across the narrow Straits of Dover.

By early August, long-range coastal artillery from both sides was bombarding shipping in the Channel, as well as coastal towns and military installations.

This dangerous stretch of water was aptly nicknamed “Hellfire Corner.”

Alaric Bond, the author of the Fighting Sail Series, introduces a new saga about British Coastal Forces during the Second World War, with the launch of *Hellfire Corner*.

British convoys passing through the bottleneck of the Dover strait to transport critical supplies – particularly coal – were under constant threat from German guns, aircraft, and heavily-armed Kriegsmarine fast attack E-boats.

The Royal Navy’s swift, but fragile, motor gunboats (MGB’s) and motor torpedo boats (MTB’s) were charged with protecting convoys and attacking enemy coastal shipping passing through the Straits.

Lieutenant Robert Harris, a career naval officer, commands *MGB 95*, a 63-foot wooden shell powered with supercharged Rolls Royce Merlin engines that “could bring the boat close to forty knots – more if the conditions were right.” Harris’s small crew includes a first officer – his “Number One” – and a mix of veteran and volunteer ratings.

Operating from HMS *Wasp*, a naval shore base in

Dover, *MGB 95* and her sister boats venture into the Channel night after night, dueling with heavier, faster and better-armed E-boats or exposing themselves to fire from German ships along the French coast.

Lethal British and German boats sparring at high speed, ducking in and out of squalls in heavy seas, are in Bond’s words “like a bunch of drunks fighting in the dark.” His narrative reads like the memoir of a man blooded in the crucible of war with a story to tell.

Intense action aboard the British gunboats is palpable. The ear-splitting staccato of machine-gun fire, the thump, thump, thump of the Oerlikon cannon mount on the stern, and the deep-throated roar of the engines reverberate off the pages.

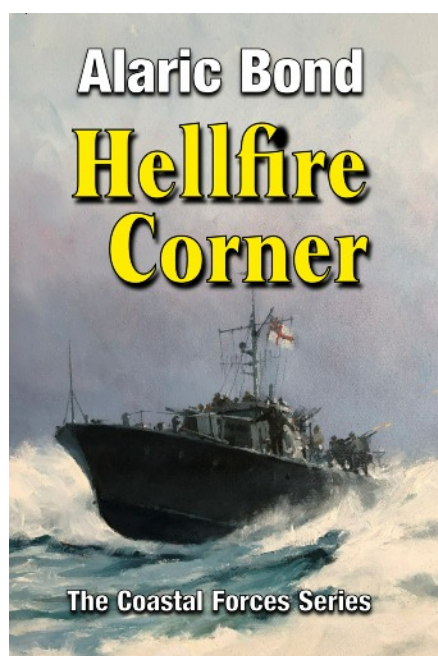
Bond truly shines with his sensitive depiction of ordinary men and women caught up in the ravages of war during the prime of their lives. Fighting a faceless enemy in darkness and returning to Dover where life goes on despite frequent shelling and air raids is surreal.

Authentic characters, a Bond signature, abound. Harris, a loner, finds command a challenge, while his Number One, Sub-Lieutenant Ian Anderson, a reserve officer, is “determined to learn.” An American war correspondent eager to chronicle Brits at war,

two girls in the Women’s Royal Naval Service (Wrens), and *MGB 95*’s disparate crew bring the story alive.

Hellfire Corner is a lively naval thriller in the tradition of Douglas Reeman and Nicholas Monsarrat, with the promise of more to come from Bond. ■

– George Jepson



Hellfire Corner

BY ALARIC BOND

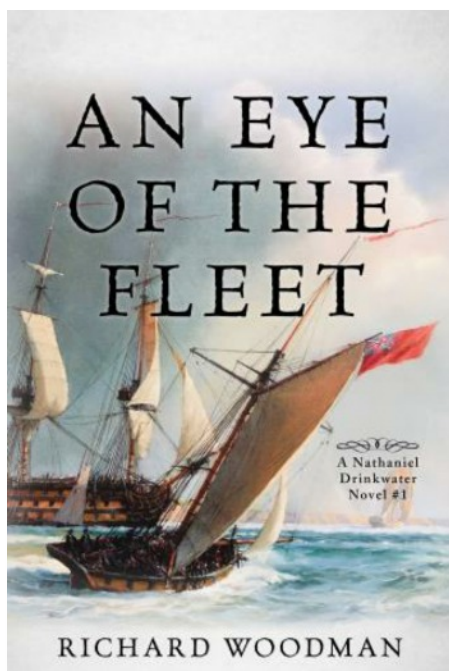
Old Salt Press, US Trade Paperback, \$14.25

\$8.99, Kindle

FEBRUARY

An Eye of the Fleet

BY RICHARD WOODMAN

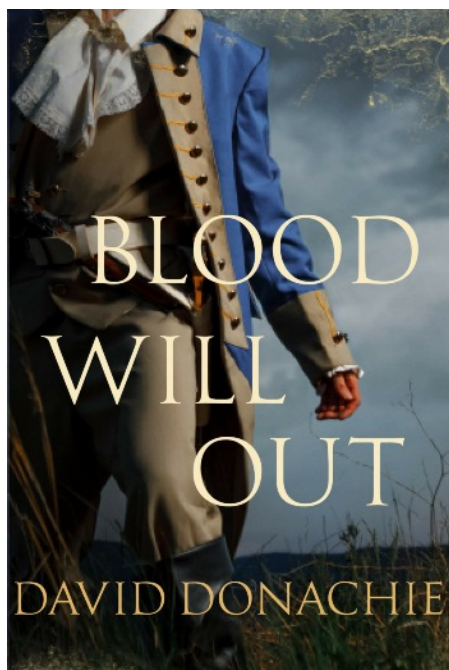


(McBooks Press, \$16.95, US Trade Paperback / \$15.99, Kindle & NOOK) Nathaniel Drinkwater's life at sea begins with HMS *Cyclops*' capture of the *Santa Teresa* during Admiral Rodney's dramatic Moonlight Battle of 1780. Subsequently, Drinkwater's courage and initiative are put to the test as *Cyclops* pursues American privateers threatening British trade and is later dispatched to the swamps of South Carolina, where many lives are lost both at sea and ashore. Gradually, Drinkwater matures into a capable and self-assured sailor. As he contends with enemy forces, the tyranny of the *Cyclops*' midshipman and the stark contrast between the comfort of home life and the brutality of naval service, he finds strength and sustenance in the love of his beloved Elizabeth.

MAY

Blood Will Out

BY DAVID DONACHIE

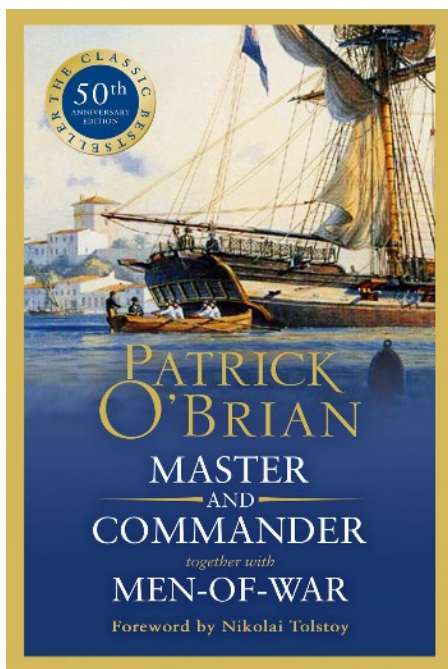


(Allison & Busby, \$25.00, UK Hardback / \$10.99, Kindle & NOOK) 1787. Captain Edward Brazier is wounded and in desperate need of medical attention, but those from whom he could seek help have no idea where he is – although neither do his enemies. With his beloved Betsey currently imprisoned by her brother Henry, who is considering committing her to an asylum to take her off his hands, time is running out for Brazier to rescue her and end the tyranny of the local smuggling ring of Deal once and for all.

JANUARY

Master and Commander (50th Anniversary Edition)

BY PATRICK O'BRIAN

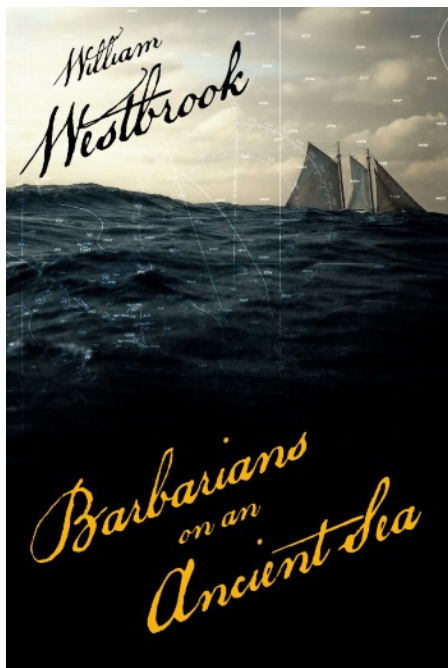


(HarperCollins, £20.00, UK Hardback) This special hardback edition celebrates the 50th anniversary of first publication with a brand-new foreword by O'Brian's stepson and biographer, Nikolai Tolstoy, and artist's note by Geoff Hunt, and includes the complete text of the previously unavailable *Men-of-War*, O'Brian's fascinating guide to the world of Aubrey/Maturin. *Master and Commander* is the first of Patrick O'Brian's now famous novels, regarded by many as the greatest series of historical novels ever written. It establishes the friendship between Captain Jack Aubrey RN and Stephen Maturin, who becomes his secretive ship's surgeon and an intelligence agent. It contains all the action and excitement which could possibly be hoped for in a historical novel, but it also depicts the detail of life aboard a Nelsonic man-of-war, of weapons, food, conversation and ambience, of the landscape and of the sea. O'Brian's portrayal of each of these is faultless and the sense of period throughout is acute. His power of characterization is masterly. This brilliant historical novel marked the début of a writer who has grown into one of the most remarkable literary novelists now writing, the author of what Alan Judd, writing in the *Sunday Times*, has described as "the most significant extended story since Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time*."

AVAILABLE NOW

Barbarians on an Ancient Sea

BY WILLIAM WESTBROOK

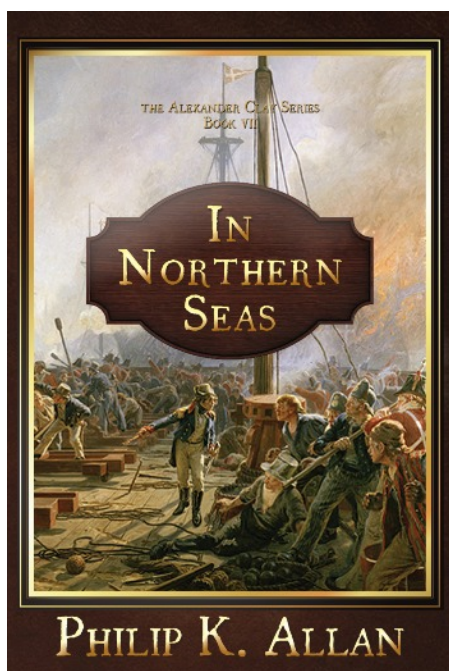


(McBooks Press, \$18.95, US Trade Paperback / \$18.00, Kindle & NOOK) The night turned prematurely dark as the storm seemed to suck the light out of the day. Captain Nicholas Fallon and his crew aboard the British privateer *Rascal* stood to the monstrous seas hour after hour, their minds numb and their bodies bloodied from the fight. Suddenly, a light. Only the remarkable seamanship of *Rascal*'s indomitable first mate Beatrice "Beauty" McFarland can save a simple cod fisherman who brings aboard a fantastic tale of gold ransom, kidnapped Christian slaves and the unimaginable cruelty of the Barbary pirates. Thus, begins a tale of heroism and greed, duplicity and cunning that will thrust Fallon and Beauty into the dangerous currents of American politics and British appeasement of a wicked ruler half a world away. *Barbarians on an Ancient Sea* is awash in battle scenes. Bahamian pirates work in tandem to attack salt ships conveyed by *Rascal*; a French frigate appears within a snow squall like a deadly apparition; a dead American lieutenant is found adrift in a ship's boat, condemned to death by a ruthless pirate who must be lured from his lair and made to pay; and, finally, the armed galleys of the dey of Algiers attack *Rascal* on the high seas searching for something more precious than the gold ransom she carries – white slaves.

MARCH

In Northern Seas

BY PHILIP K. ALLAN

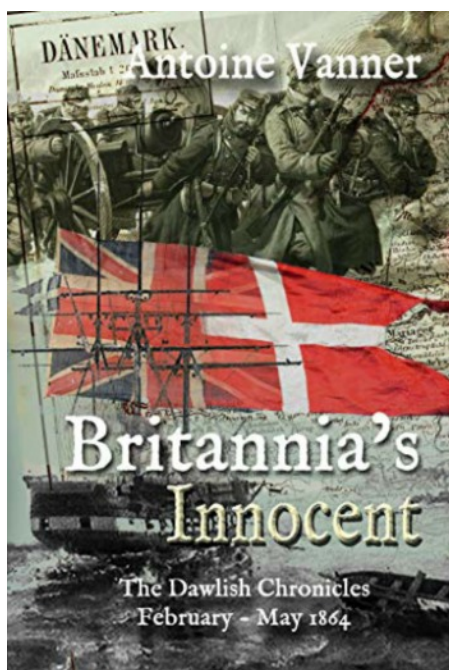


(Penmore Press \$19.50 , US Trade Paperback / \$5.50, Kindle) “As the long war with France enters its eighth year, there is trouble in the Baltic. Napoleon is busy recruiting new allies to cut off Britain’s vital trade in naval supplies. Captain Alexander Clay is given a new command, the Royal Navy frigate Griffin, and sent ahead of the British fleet on a vital diplomatic mission. In that cold northern sea, the dangers he face are legion. Snow and ice, French opponents, palace conspiracies and an assassin trained in the orient. Clay and his crew are expert at battling the French, but how will they manage when they are drawn into the murky world of espionage and intrigue?

AVAILABLE NOW

Britannia’s Innocent

BY ANTOINE VANNER

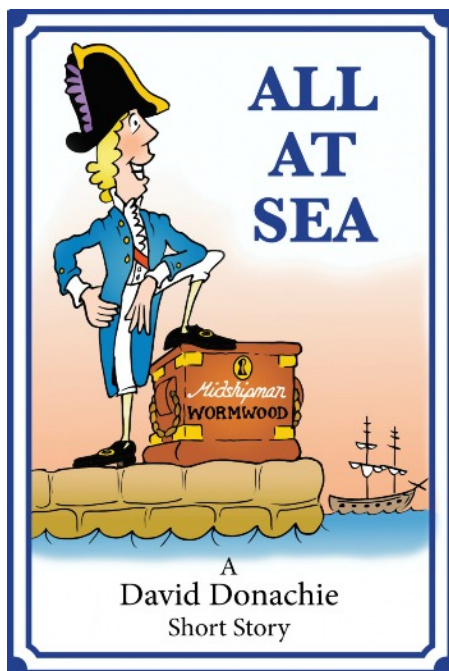


(Old Salt Press, \$12.99, US Trade Paperback / \$3.49, Kindle & NOOK) 1864 – Political folly has brought war upon Denmark. Lacking allies, the country is invaded by the forces of military superpowers Prussia and Austria. Cut off from the main Danish Army, and refusing to use the word “retreat,” a resolute commander withdraws northwards. Harried by Austrian cavalry, his forces plod through snow, sleet and mud, their determination not to be defeated increasing with each weary step. Across the Atlantic, civil war rages. It is fought not solely on American soil, but also on the world’s oceans, as Confederate commerce raiders ravage Union merchant shipping as far away as the East Indies. And now a new raider, a powerful modern ironclad, is nearing completion in a British shipyard. But funds are lacking to pay for her armament and the Union government is pressing Britain to prevent her sailing. Denmark is not wholly without sympathizers however. Britain’s heir to the throne is married to a Danish princess. With his covert backing, British volunteers are ready to fight for the Danes. And the Confederacy is willing to lease the new raider for two months if she can be armed as payment for the lease, although the Union government is determined to see her sunk. Just returned from Royal Navy service in the West Indies, the young Nicholas Dawlish is induced to volunteer and is plunged into the horrors of a siege, shore-bombardment, raiding and battle in the cold North Sea – notwithstanding divided loyalties.

AVAILABLE NOW

Midshipman Wormwood – All at Sea

BY DAVID DONACHIE

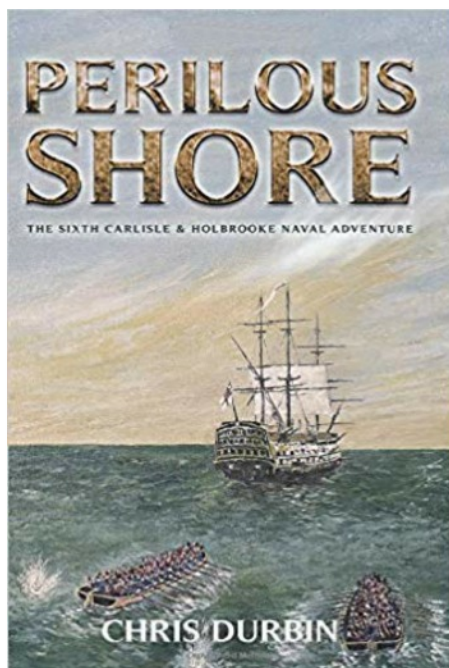


(Two Fingers Books, \$5.00, US Paperback / \$3.88, Kindle) 1793: War with Revolutionary France is on the horizon but selfish rake Charles Wormwood thinks only of his hopes of undertaking the Grand Tour, one in which he can spend a great deal of his wealthy father's money. But the crafty and avaricious Earl of Moidart has other ideas. War means a government spending lots of money and he wants to place Charles in a position to get his hands on a healthy portion of it. To achieve this, his son and heir must join the Army. The wily boy has other ideas and, by an act of outrageous subterfuge, he sets out to deny the parental wish. Successful he might be, but his father will not be thwarted. If the army won't have him, then Charles must join the Navy. So, despite his protests, young Wormwood finds himself aboard HMS *Thetis*, a frigate commanded by his reprehensible Uncle Harry, bribed to see his nephew promoted to Lieutenant, a rank and position to which he has no right to aspire. But hazard intervenes. A short peacetime cruise proves anything but and puts Midshipman Wormwood, far from the bravest of men and in total ignorance of his duties, in mortal danger. Funny it might be, but for Charles Wormwood the situation is no laughing matter!

AVAILABLE NOW

Perilous Shore

BY CHRIS DURBIN

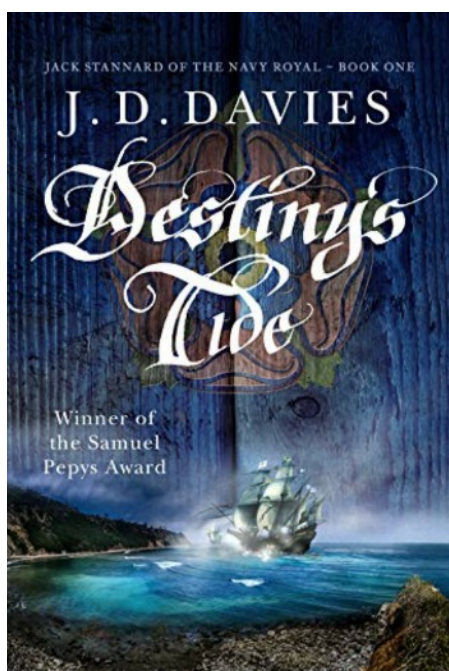


(Old Salt Press, \$14.28, US Trade Paperback / \$6.48, Kindle) Amphibious warfare was in its infancy in the mid-eighteenth century. It was the poor relation of the great fleet actions that the navy so loved. That all changed in 1758 when the British government demanded a campaign of raids on the French Channel ports. Command arrangements were hastily devised and a whole new class of vessels was produced at breakneck speed: flatboats, the ancestors of the landing craft that put the allied forces ashore on D-Day. Commander George Holbrooke's sloop *Kestrel* is in the thick of the action: scouting landing beaches, dueling with shore batteries and battling the French Navy. In a twist of fate, Holbrooke finds himself unexpectedly committed to this new style of amphibious warfare as he is ordered to lead a division of flatboats onto the beaches of Normandy and Brittany. He meets his greatest test yet when a weary and beaten British army retreats from a second failed attempt at Saint-Malo, with the French close on their heels. *Perilous Shore* is the sixth of the Carlisle & Holbrooke naval adventures. The series follows Holbrooke and his mentor, Captain Edward Carlisle, through the Seven Years War and into the period of turbulent relations between Britain and her American colonies in the 1760's.

AVAILABLE NOW

Destiny's Tide

BY J. D. DAVIES

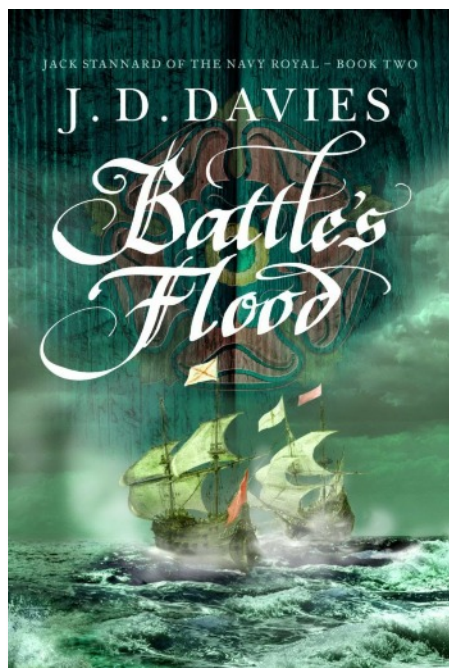


(*Canelo Adventure*, \$0.99, Kindle) 1787. Jack Stannard has spent his whole life at sea, enduring savage beatings from his father and the furious aggression of whip-cracking storms. But a more cruel and dangerous foe is on the horizon. When Henry VIII dissolves the monasteries and wages war against France and Scotland simultaneously, Jack must take up his family destiny at the head of the Dunwich fleet. But enemy blades may be the least of his problems. Aging ships, treacherous rivals and ghosts from the past all threaten to interfere with the war effort. The only man he can trust is Thomas Ryman, a former warrior turned monk. As the English fleet descends on Edinburgh, the dangerous game of politics and war reaches a shattering climax aboard the pride of Henry's navy – the *Mary Rose*. Stannard and Ryman know that it is not just their lives that are at stake, but the future of England herself.

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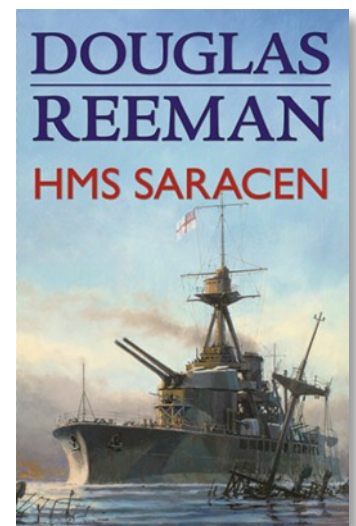
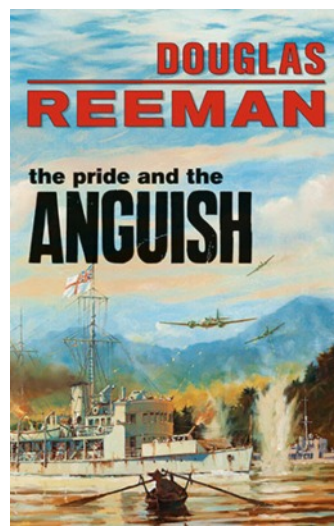
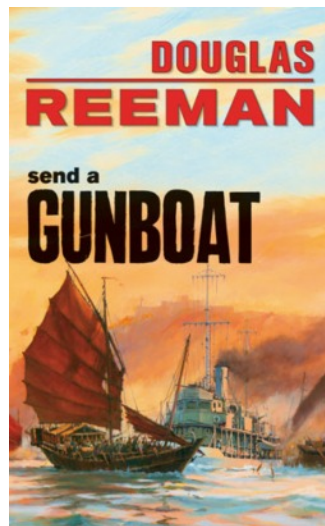
Battle's Flood

BY J. D. DAVIES



(*Canelo Adventure*, \$0.99, Kindle) Captain Jack Stannard showed his worth in the Battle of the Solent. But little did he know how his actions there would change his life forever. After a lucky escape at sea, he is drawn to Elizabeth I's spymaster Francis Walsingham, who sets Jack on an extraordinary mission to Africa and the Caribbean in company with two unscrupulous sea captains, John Hawkins and Francis Drake. Stannard may be a man of the sea at heart, but for the former Dunwich lad, this is adventure on a new and unprecedented scale, from the force of a hurricane to the might of the Spanish fleet.

AVAILABLE NOW



MODERN NAVAL FICTION LIBRARY

BY DOUGLAS REEMAN

1 – WINGED ESCORT

(McBooks Press, \$18.95, US Trade Paperback / \$9.99, Kindle / \$9.49, NOOK) As the grim years of the Second World War go by, the destruction of Allied shipping mounts. Out of the terrible loss of men and ships, the escort carrier is born. While they were slower, carried fewer planes and were less well armed and armored, escort carriers were cheaper and could be built quickly. At twenty-six, fighter pilot Tim Rowan, RNVR, already a veteran of many campaigns, joins the new, American-made escort (or “jeep”) carrier HMS *Growler*, the flagship of a task force protecting Allied convoys sailing the Arctic route to supply Soviet Russia. Service in the Arctic is harrowing, and not all of Rowan’s adversaries are German. In late 1944, *Growler* is transferred to the Indian Ocean and faces Japanese Kamikazes.

2 – SEND A GUNBOAT

(McBooks Press, \$18.95, US Trade Paperback / \$9.99, Kindle / \$9.49, NOOK) The orders from the Admiralty to the Captain were explicit. He was to take his ship to the small island of Santu, which lay under threat of invasion from the Communist mainland of China, and evacuate the British colony there. The ship, however, was the flat-bottomed, antiquated River gunboat HMS *Wagtail*, waiting in a Hong Kong harbor for the disgrace of the breaker’s hammer to overtake her. And her captain, Justin Rolfe, embittered by the verdict of a court-martial, knew that the assignment offered more than escape from misery and humiliation. It was a reprieve for himself and his ship.

3 – THE PRIDE AND THE ANGUISH

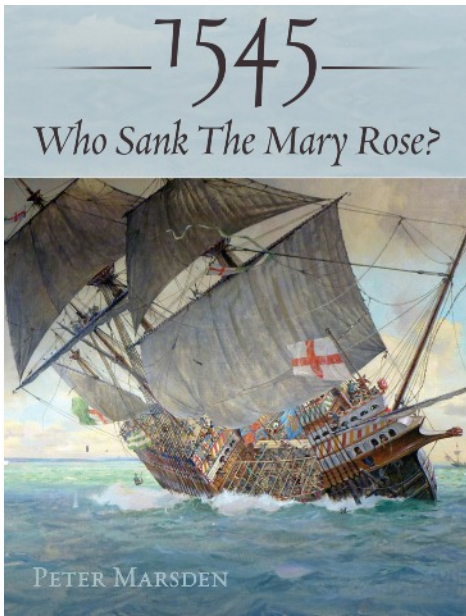
(McBooks Press, \$18.95, US Trade Paperback / \$9.99, Kindle / \$9.49, NOOK) Singapore, November, 1941 . . . They called it the “Gibraltar of the Far East” – a British rock that could not be taken. But suddenly, in a lightning blow, Singapore may be defeated. Call it incompetence or call it false pride. It doesn’t really matter. Just as the warplanes of the Rising Sun take command of the skies. Lieutenant Ralph Trewin, who was a proud recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, arrives at Singapore as second-in-command of the gun boat HMS *Porcupine*. Is it too late to overcome the ignorance and blind optimism he finds in Singapore?

4 – HMS SARACEN

(McBooks Press, \$19.95, US Trade Paperback / \$9.99, Kindle / \$9.49, NOOK) Malta 1941. To most people HMS *Saracen* is just an ugly, obsolete ship with an equally ugly recent history: her last commander is due for court-martial after shelling the troops he was sent to protect. But to Captain Richard Chesnaye she brings back memories – memories of the First World War when he and the old monitor went through the Gallipoli campaign together. It seems that captain and ship are both past their best. But as the war enters a new phase Chesnaye senses the possibility of a fresh, significant role for him and *Saracen*.

1545 – Who Sank the Mary Rose

BY MATTHEW FLINDERS, PHILIPPA SANDALL AND GILLIAN DOOLEY

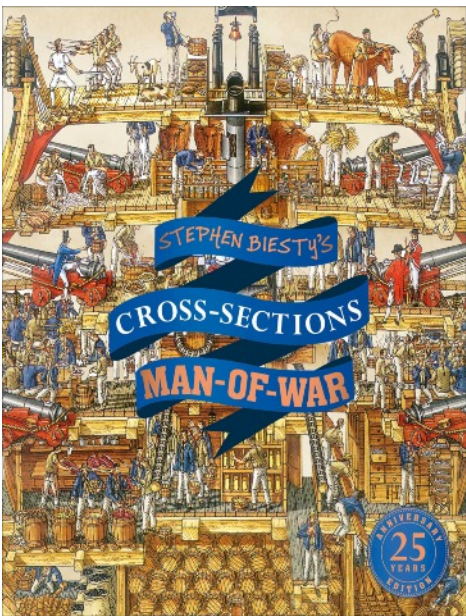


(Seaforth Publishing, \$49.95, UK Hardback) The raising of the *Mary Rose* in 1982 was a remarkable feat of archaeology and her subsequent preservation and display at Portsmouth a triumph of technical skill and imagination. She is more than a relic, however. She has a story to tell, and her sinking on a calm summer's day in July 1545, when under attack by the French, and the reasons for it, have intrigued historians for generations. With the benefit of access to her remains, archaeologists have been able to slowly unravel the mystery of her foundering. This new book contains much that is published for the first time. It has the first full account of the battle in which Henry VIII's warship was sunk, and tells the stories of the English and French admirals. It examines the design and construction of the ship and how she was used. Peter Marsden shows for the first time conclusively that the French fleet arrived unexpectedly to seize the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth a day later than was once believed, that the many bodies found in the wreck reflect her at action stations, and that the ship had had an extra deck added and was therefore more unstable than was previously thought. Finally, the author makes it clear who was responsible for the loss of the *Mary Rose*, after describing what happened onboard in her last moments afloat.

AVAILABLE NOW

Stephen Biesty's Cross Sections Man-of-War

BY STEPHEN BIESTY

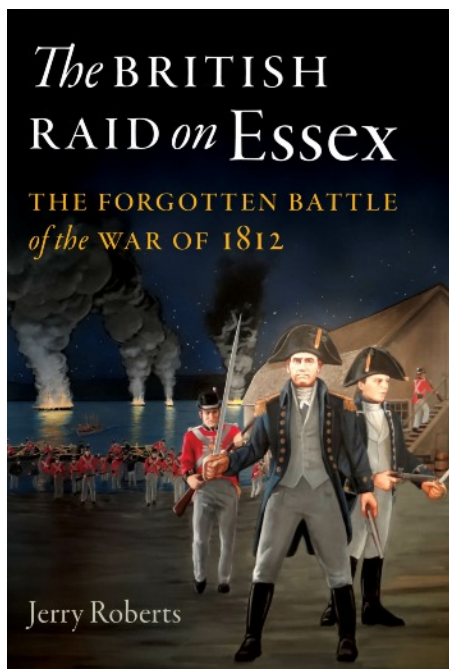


(DK, \$14.99, US Hardback) Celebrating its 25th anniversary, *Stephen Biesty's Cross Sections Man-of-War* remains as entertaining as ever. Look inside an 18th-century warship as it sails into battle on the high seas. Packed with extraordinary illustrations, this history book for young and old covers everything from warship design to navigation. Biesty's incredible drawings slice through a man-of-war to explore every corner, from the crow's nest to the hold. Packed with fascinating facts and details, the pages teem with sailors going about their duties. Find out how gun crews fired a cannon, examine a surgeon's toolkit, and learn the best way to wriggle the maggots out of the ship's biscuits. Look out, too, for the stowaway on every page. He's the one with spiky hair, and there's a reward for his capture! This absorbing book will have children and adults poring over every page.

AVAILABLE NOW

The British Raid on Essex

BY JERRY ROBERTS

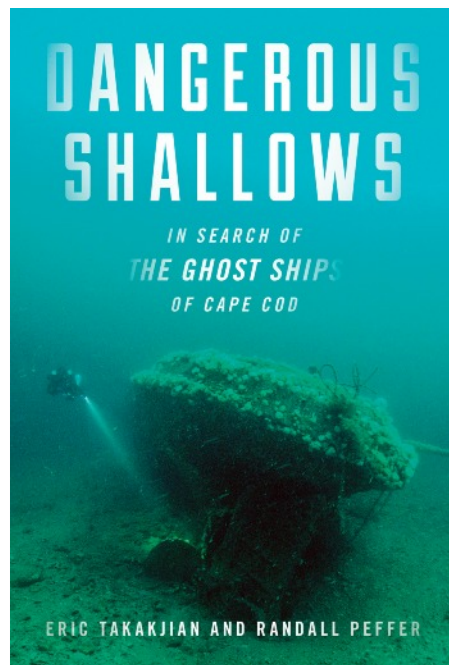


(Lyons Press, \$16.95, US Trade Paperback / \$13.19, Kindle) This is the dynamic account of one of the most destructive maritime actions to take place in Connecticut history: the 1814 British attack on the privateers of Pettipaug, known today as the British Raid on Essex. During the height of the War of 1812, 136 Royal marines and sailors made their way up the Connecticut River from warships anchored in Long Island Sound. Guided by a well-paid American traitor the British navigated the Saybrook shoals and advanced up the river under cover of darkness. By the time it was over, the British had burned twenty-seven American vessels, including six newly built privateers. It was the largest single maritime loss of the war. Yet this story has been virtually left out of the history books – the forgotten battle of the forgotten war. This new account from author and historian Jerry Roberts is the definitive overview of this event and includes a wealth of new information drawn from recent research and archaeological finds. Lavish illustrations and detailed maps bring the battle to life.

AVAILABLE NOW

Dangerous Shallows

BY ERIC TAKAKJIAN AND RANDALL PEPPER

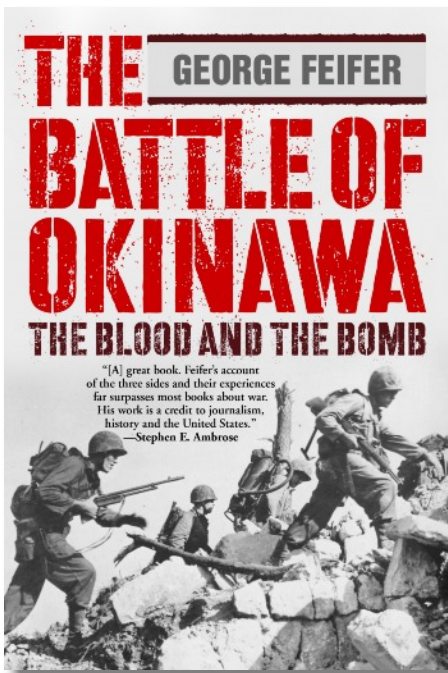


(Lyons Press, \$19.95, US Trade Paperback / \$15.19, Kindle / \$11.49, NOOK) *Dangerous Shallows* tells the story of a quest to solve maritime cold-cases. The odyssey takes the reader along for a moment-by-moment look at the events surrounding the loss of a dozen different ships, and includes the stories of discovering their wrecks and learning about the final hours of each of these ships.

FEBRUARY

The Battle of Okinawa

BY GEORGE FEIFER

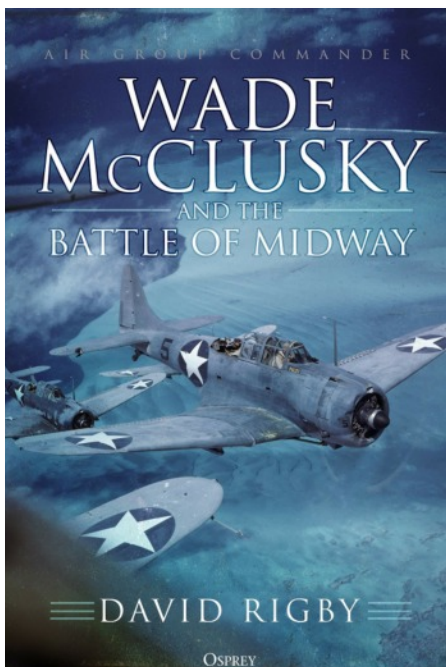


(Lyons Press, \$19.95, US Trade Paperback / \$0.99, Kindle / \$11.49, NOOK) More people perished during the battle of Okinawa than in the ensuing bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. The Battle of Okinawa offers a stunning account of the last major campaign of World War II and the largest land-sea-air engagement in history. Superbly researched and extraordinarily detailed, this masterpiece of military history is told at the level of the participants themselves, soldiers and civilians alike. In examining the disastrous collision of three disparate cultures – American, Japanese, and Okinawan – this book provides an unforgettable picture of men at war and also the context for understanding one of the most ominous events of this century: the decision to drop the atomic bomb.

MARCH

Wade McClusky and the Battle of Midway

BY DAVID RIGBY



(Osprey Publishing, \$35.00, US Hardback / \$13.99, Kindle / & NOOK) During the Battle of Midway in June 1942, US Navy dive bomber pilot Wade McClusky proved himself to be one of the greatest pilots and combat leaders in American history, but his story has never been told-until now. It was Wade McClusky who remained calm when the Japanese fleet was not where it was expected to be. It was he who made the counter-intuitive choice to then search to the north instead of to the south. It was also McClusky who took the calculated risk of continuing to search even though his bombers were low on fuel and may not have enough to make it back to the aircraft carrier *Enterprise*. His ability to remain calm under enormous pressure played a huge role in the US Navy winning this decisive victory that turned the tide of war in the Pacific. This book is the story of exactly the right man being in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. Wade McClusky was that man and this is his story.

AVAILABLE NOW



© Geoffrey Huband, RSMA.

GEOFFREY HUBAND

Chimera



Photo by Ander Gunn.

Geoffrey Huband, RSMA

The Royal Society of Marine Artists (RSMA) presented The Derek Gardner Sea and Sky Award to English marine artist Geoffrey Huband for his painting entitled “Chimera” during its Annual Exhibition in London this past October. This award is given for the painting which best represents sea and sky.

“Derek Gardner was a life time member of the RSMA, who I much admired and, as a consequence, I felt honored to be granted the award bearing his name,” said Geoffrey. “‘Chimera’ is an imaginary monster made up of incongruous parts. Some years ago I was in southern Spain

and I noticed how the makeshift sun shelters made of old sails took on a different, menacing character when the Levanter wind blew strongly. The sails took on a changed character more solid and skull-like. The idea fascinated me. Something made visible only because elemental forces act upon them. I love the ghost stories of English scholar and author M. R. James, particularly ‘Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad.’ So now I guess you may see the painting in a completely new light.”



© Paul Garnett, ASMA

PAUL GARNETT

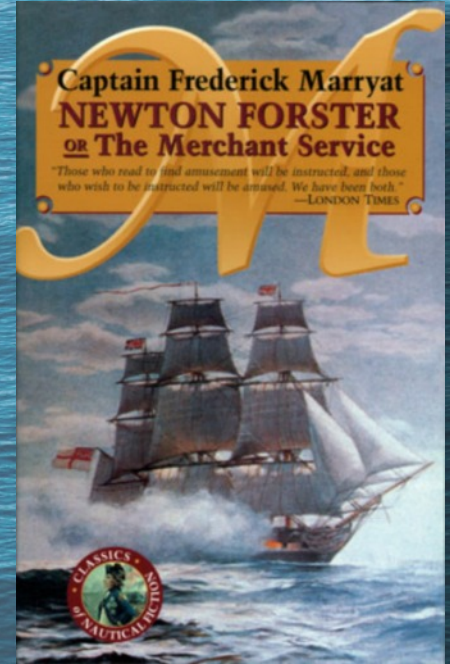
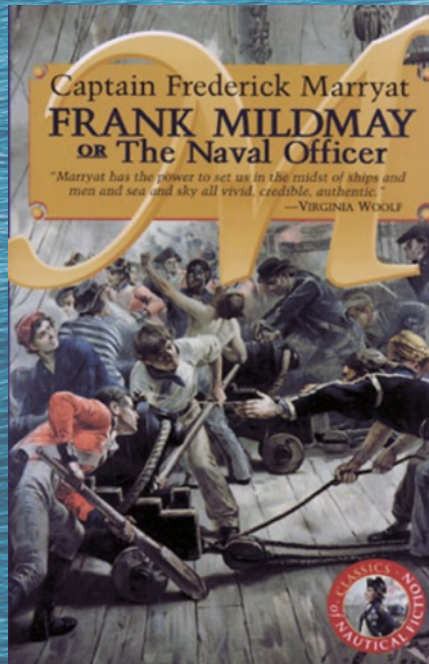
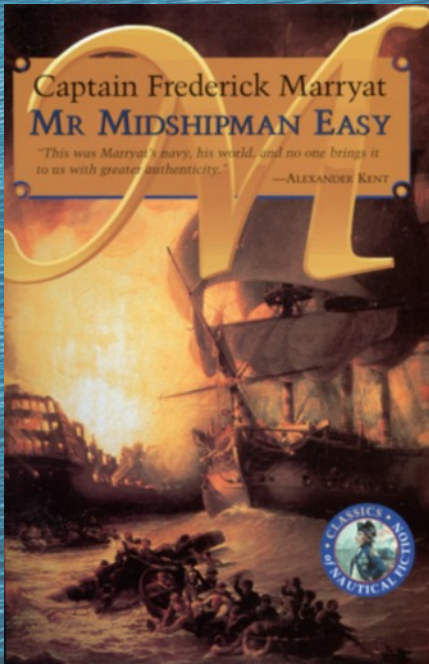
Final Preparations – USS *Constitution* July 21, 1798

In July of 1798, one of the United States' first frigates for its new fledgling navy was fully fitted out for her first voyage under the command of Captain Samuel Nicholson. USS *Constitution* stood at anchor in Boston's Presidents roads on the eve of her departure. It was a warm humid night. Oil lamps and candles could be seen through the haze in the city's waterfront along Ship Street, which is now Atlantic Avenue. Boston was known as "the city on the hill." The distinctive dome of the State House can be seen at its highest point to the right in the painting. The dome, finished only six months earlier, was originally constructed of wood and painted grey. Her distinctive gold leaf would not be applied until after World War II. *Constitution's* men are aboard doing last minute preparations, as boats ply to and from shore delivering final items to be loaded aboard. The stern cabin is aglow with lantern light as Captain Nicholson would be checking the crew's muster lists and all final details prior to weighing anchor the following afternoon.

– Paul Garnett, ASMA

McBOOKS press

THE DESTINATION FOR NAUTICAL FICTION



CAPTAIN FREDERICK MARRYAT

