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Tall Ships and War Ships

THE YEAR 1985 MARKED THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY of the Royal Canadian Navy, established by Act of Parliament on 4 May 1910. Predictably, the commemoration inspired the writing of a number of books highlighting aspects of the history of the "senior service". A year earlier on 15 April 1984, a fleet of sailing ships departed the port of St. Malo, France, bound for Canada. This flotilla marked the anniversary of Jacques Cartier's first voyage of discovery, 450 years earlier. Dubbed by the media the voyage of "the tall ships", the event served to focus the attention of Canadians and especially Atlantic Canadians, on "our heritage the sea...". Both anniversaries provide an historical backdrop for the collection of books under review. In 1986 there are compelling reasons for concentrating attention on the all-pervading influence of the sea. Following a period of neglect there has been, in recent years, a welcome renewal of interest in the significance of both naval power and the maritime experience.[1]

An appropriate starting point is James L. Stokesbury's *Navy and Empire* (New York, William Morrow, 1983). On first glance, the dustjacket description of the book — "four centuries of British seapower and the rise and decline of British imperialism" — is calculated to leave the reader breathless. A mere bibliography of sources on this theme would fill more than a volume. Yet the author manages to pull it off. *Navy and Empire* is an extremely skilful weaving of strategic, economic and political themes within broad chronological divisions. One reason for the appeal of the book is its style. Writing with the general public in mind, Stokesbury has not only mastered the art of condensation, but he has done so with verve and subtle humour. Consider his delineation of early naval tactics: "One school called the Formalists, insisted that the line should be rigidly adhered to as long as the battle lasted, that both sides ought to match up ship for ship, sail along parallel courses, and slug it out until one side or the other had enough...The second school called the Meleeists believed that once the opposing fleets were ranged together, the line should be broken, ships bearing down individually on their opposite numbers, and then fighting it out as best they might. Over the years the Formalists tended to become the admirals; the Meleeists tended to win the battles" (p. 73). Specialists may have the occasional quibble with some of the conclusions reached in *Navy and Empire*, for understandably, controversial interpretation is not a prominent feature of the book. Rather, Stokesbury hews closely to the line so clearly enunciated by the greatest of 19th century naval historians, Alfred Thayer Mahan: "Master your principles and then ram them home with the illustrations that history provides".

Between France and New France: Life Aboard The Tall Sailing Ships by

1 See "Perspectives on Imperialism and Decolonization", Special issue, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* XII, 2 (January, 1984); P.J. Marshall, "European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century", *History Today*, XXXII, 5 (May 1982) pp. 49-51; A.P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea: A Study of British Power* (New York, 1985).

Gilles Proulx (Toronto, Dundurn Press, 1984) covers an aspect of social and naval history long overlooked. What were conditions like on the sailing ships that plied the North Atlantic run in the 18th century? One approaches this book in the hope that it might shed light on the seaboard lives of 18th century seamen in the manner of Judith Fingard's *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada*,[2] a first-rate analysis of the life of sailors ashore during the 19th century golden age of sail. But such is not the case; *Between France and New France* promises much more than it delivers. Included within its covers there is interesting material awaiting the persevering reader, but this is more than offset by a lack of direction and anything approaching a critical examination of the social conditions of the period. We are left with snippets of information ranging from details of the sailor's diet and a bawdy song (why *only* one!) to photographs and descriptions of artifacts from the sunken frigate *Le Machault*, largest of the three French vessels sunk in the Battle of Restigouche in 1760. Some of the illustrations are excellent, yet others such as the ships' plans on pages 22, 23, and 48 are worthless because of the poor quality of reproduction. The narrative is strongest when direct quotations are used. Thus we have a firsthand account of the *coureurs de bois*: "They plunge themselves into sensual pleasure up to their necks. Wine, women and song, everything! They set off again when they have spent all their money, thus dividing their youth between misery and debauchery. In a word, these trappers live like most European sailors" (p. 127). Unfortunately, we have little in the way of conclusions regarding life aboard "the tall sailing ships" for these same European sailors.

An understandable blindspot for many Atlantic Canadians is the history of the Pacific coast and in particular the role of the Royal Navy in the exploration and colonization of this coastline, one of the last great frontiers of discovery. Barry M. Gough's two books *Distant Dominion: Britain and the Northwest Coast of North America 1579-1809* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1980) and *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians 1846-1890* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1984) go a long way toward filling this gap.[3] Both books are the result of painstaking research in the Public Record Office, British Library, National Maritime Museum, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of British Columbia and the Public Archives of Canada, to mention only the major sources. The two books have, as a result, authority and a sense of authenticity. The latter quality is enhanced by the fact that Gough, a native British Columbian, is very familiar with the Northwest coastline and descriptive passages bear the imprint of personal experience.[4]

2 For an extensive, if severe, discussion, see Richard Rice, "Sailortown: Theory and Method in Ordinary People's History", *Acadiensis*, XIII, 1 (Autumn 1983), pp. 154-68.

3 These volumes form part of a trilogy which included *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America* (1971).

4 For example, on the controversial topic of Drake's anchorage, Gough writes: "on 25 November 1976 I visited [the area] in order to examine the waters and [study] the topographical features...

Gough examines in detail the unfolding of the imperialist ideal in a "beach head of empire" now known as British Columbia. Using the word "dominion" in its broadest sense to mean the power or right of governing or controlling a territory, *Distant Dominion* suggests that imperialism was no anomaly but was firmly rooted in economic realities. By 1789 British activity in the Pacific fur trade had reached a value of 288,000 Spanish dollars, more than twice the combined value of the trade by their French, Spanish and American rivals. The turning point for British interests was reached during the Nootka Sound controversy of 1789-94, which centred on the rival claims of Spain and Britain for control of the region. Eventually each nation was forced to recognize the rights of the other and neither could claim exclusive sovereignty. On the surface this might appear to be the proverbial draw, yet the event was to spell the beginning of the end for Spanish claims. Throughout, British involvement in the Pacific Northwest was very much in line with Lord Palmerston's famous dictum (quoted approvingly by Mikhail Gorbachev at the 1985 Geneva Summit) — "England has no eternal friends or eternal enemies...England has only eternal interests". Gough provides a convenient checklist of the successful ingredients for implementation of such a policy: a strong navy, useful alliances, adequate finances, sufficient material, ample manpower and adroit diplomacy.

Gunboat Frontier is a more focused book, covering as it does the span of a mere half-century, 1846-1890. This time the author concentrates on Amerindian-white relations and provides a case study approach to the gunboat diplomacy so characteristic of the heyday of British Imperialism. The interaction between the various Amerindian tribes of the Northwest and the white man's sense of "law and order" as represented by the Royal Navy, is faithfully recorded. The stage was set in 1851 by the so called "Newitty Affair". The Newitty were an ancient warrior race inhabiting Vancouver Island's north shore and adjacent islands. Unfortunately, it was their lot to become embroiled in a controversy over three English sailors who deserted ship. It started with a case of mistaken identity, as the deserters became confused with three missing Scotsmen. A reward of 30 blankets was offered "par tete" for the recovery of the Scots but no one bothered to clarify matters with the Newitty. Eventually, the deserters, not the Scots, were killed. Was this murder? The Newitty offered furs as a traditional form of compensation but this, in the eyes of the naval officers, merely confirmed guilt. In the end, the offending Newitty were handed over (dead) and, so far as officialdom was concerned, the case was closed. Regrettably, it became but the forerunner of further incidents. Although the mistakes, misunderstandings and misadventures are all chronicled, Gough pays attention to the positive side of the ledger. The British naval presence was a check on the "nefarious" liquor traffic; it helped stamp out slavery by ending intertribal feuding; it protected shipping, secured settlers and in general "preserved law and

when Drake sailed past Point Reyes looking for a safe harbour, even assuming excellent visibility, he could not have seen the entrance to San Francisco Bay then 26.5 nautical miles away": *Distant Dominion*, p. 154.

order". As Gough concludes, the naval officers who manned the *Gunboat Frontier* were "servants of an Imperial cause, guardians of a British peace, and, in their own, reluctant way, pathfinders of an empire" (p. 211). One unfortunate result of the fulfillment of this Imperialist dream is that "today only the last fragments remain of a culture that existed at the time of the Whiteman's coming two centuries ago" (p. 215). That we continue to witness the fallout from this 19th century confrontation is amply demonstrated by the contemporary conflict between the Haida people and logging interests on Lyell Island in the Queen Charlottes.

That other great Canadian frontier, the Arctic, provides the focal point for Hugh N. Wallace's *The Navy, The Company and Richard King* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980). Although the Royal Navy and the Hudson's Bay Company occupy due attention, the book is woven around the provocative and controversial personality of Richard King (1811?-1876). Indeed, it is the spirit of King that makes the book come alive. By profession King was a surgeon-naturalist who served in Sir George Back's expedition to the Great Fish River 1833-35. Later he was assistant surgeon in the unsuccessful Franklin rescue mission of 1850. As a result of this personal experience King became an advocate of light indigenous Arctic travel, in contrast to large-scale, heavily equipped expeditions, such as that of Franklin's last voyage. Characterized by "impetuosity, self confidence...egoism...he could on occasion speak in so rapid and clipped a way as to be difficult to understand" (p. 21). Indeed, it is the conclusion of Wallace that "King was a voice crying literally about certain things in the wilderness, yet also one crying *in* the wilderness. From one point of view a great oddity, he was from another, the chorus in a developing Greek tragedy" (p. 48).

In the final analysis, it was King's "very accuracies" that appeared to work against him. He had the temerity to criticize the Hudson's Bay Company and propounded theories concerning the "peninsularity" of Boothia and King William's Land that ran counter to conventional wisdom. In the end, many of his deductions were to be proven correct; however, in the process he succeeded in alienating most of the Arctic establishment, including the Royal Geographical Society, the Admiralty and the Royal Navy. Wallace maintains that had King been "less shrill" and "taken more seriously", the Northwest Passage might have been discovered much earlier and conceivably the tragedy of the Franklin expedition averted. The book concludes that "As contemporaries did not recognize Richard King, so posterity has failed fully to understand him" (p. 158). *The Navy, The Company and Richard King* goes a long way towards redressing the balance. As with *Distant Dominion* and *Gunboat Frontier* Canadian and overseas archival sources have been mined effectively. The notes are particularly complete and aid greatly in following the text. The story of *the* Navy, *the* Company and Richard King is recounted with detail and erudition. Unfortunately, the text is marred in several places by verbiage; thus the manuscript would have benefitted from the attention of a stern editorial hand. Nevertheless, *The Navy,*

The Company and Richard King will stand for a long time as the definitive study of an important chapter in Canada's northern sea-heritage.

During April 1982 the sixth conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project was held at Memorial University. *Change and Adaptation in Maritime History: The North Atlantic Fleets in the Nineteenth Century* (St. John's, Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1985) is a record of papers presented at that conference. Sixth in a series, this volume marks the culmination of several years of active research by members of the Project. Regrettably, two founding members, David Alexander and Keith Matthews, were claimed by death while work was still in progress. This volume is dedicated to Matthew's memory, and in a sense, the proceedings comprise an unofficial festschrift in honour of the many and varied contributions of both scholars to Atlantic shipping history.

The principal thrust of research undertaken by the ACSP has been to produce, with the use of computerized data, an historical analysis of the industry in Atlantic Canada. Over the years historians have been given to perpetuating a number of myths in their explanation of the decline of the golden age of sail. Chief among these is the proposition that shipping languished because sail could not compete with iron-hulled steamers. One firm conclusion revealed by the research of the project is "that the decline can no longer be explained *simply* by reference to the technological transition from sail to steam and from wood to iron" (p. 36). The 1982 conference brought together specialists from the countries of the North Atlantic Rim — Britain, Germany, Scandinavia, the United States and Canada. Thus, the importance of the proceedings lies in the effort made to place Atlantic Canadian shipping within an international context. We learn that the Scandinavian shipping industries went through the transition to steam and survived, while the industry in Atlantic Canada fell into decline. The Canadian situation was further complicated by the shift in investment capital to a broad range of landward industries. Not for this region was there an "outpouring of maritime enthusiasm" as that to be found in Germany. Instead, "Maritimers became Canadians and enthusiasts for landward development" (pp. 36-7).

It is impossible within the confines of a review article to do justice to the six well-documented and expert papers in *Change and Adaptation in Maritime History*. With this basic work behind them, it is to be hoped that members of the project will now provide historians with an overall synthesis of their research. Questions such as those posed by David A. Sutherland in an earlier review in this journal,[5] need to be addressed within the total perspective of the project. As matters now stand, interested readers must consult key articles in a number of journals as well as various conference proceedings.[6] An all-embracing overview

5 David A. Sutherland, "Wooden Ships and Iron Men Revisited", *Acadiensis*, VIII, 1 (Autumn 1978), pp. 101-7.

6 See, for example, Eric W. Sager and Lewis R. Fischer, "Atlantic Canada and the Age of Sail Revisited", *Canadian Historical Review*, LXIII, 2 (June, 1982), pp. 125-50; Eric W. Sager and

of the results of the productive research of the project is in order and would be most welcome.

From time to time serendipitous discoveries of old documents are made. Usually these have been hidden for years, and by mere chance, miraculously preserved for posterity. Two such finds form the basis for John W. Froude, *On The High Seas* (St. John's, Jesperson Press, 1983) and R.J. Cunningham and K.R. Mabee, *Tall Ships and Master Mariners* (St. John's, Breakwater Books, 1984). *On The High Seas* is the actual diary of Captain John W. Froude (1863-1939) of Twillingate, Newfoundland. A personal saga of adventure on the high seas, the diary is printed exactly as penned by Captain Froude. The variable spelling and punctuation (or lack of same) are easy to follow and add charm to the account. As Froude explains, "I have sailed around the great globe or the bounding billows of 5 great oceans the 7 seas to 32 different countries 77 seaports one hundred fifty nine thousand seven hundred miles in my travells [sic]". Sprinkled throughout the diary are detailed accounts of life at sea and of adventures in ports as widely spaced as Hobart, Leghorn, Shanghai, Port Said and Sevastopol, not to mention "the length and breadth of labradore and Newfoundland where I first saw the rising sun". Fortunately, there is a good glossary of naval terminology and place names to guide the reader through Froude's descriptive prose. *On The High Seas* is a tale told in the tradition of Joshua Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around The World*. Such firsthand accounts add flesh and blood to 19th century life at sea.

Tall Ships and Master Mariners is also based on original sources, namely two folio manuscripts of ships' logs kept by Simon Graham (1796-1878) of Richibucto, New Brunswick. Covering the years from 1833 to 1855, they detail some 80 voyages to all parts of the globe and afford ample raw material for many a stirring tale. Unlike *On The High Seas*, *Tall Ships and Master Mariners* is not a verbatim account of Graham's voyages but rather a resumé of his career with each chapter highlighting the major events and voyages of his life at sea. Interspersed throughout are folksongs and rhymes (many composed by Graham), and *Tall Ships and Master Mariners* will appeal to readers with an interest in this genre. The book is in actuality two separate accounts: one, the saga of Simon Graham, the other an outline of research undertaken by the authors. The chief merit of the book lies in the account of their painstaking investigations in 19th century shipbuilding and naval lore. As Cunningham and Mabee express it, "To comprehend seamanship it proved necessary to know the vessels. That demanded a knowledge of construction which rested on materials, the times, the shipbuilding locations, the people, their tools and so on...nor could one part of Simon Graham's life be examined and the rest be left without relevance" (p. 7). The result is a significant contribution to the study of material culture in Atlantic Canada.

Lewis R. Fischer, "Patterns of Investment in the Shipping Industries of Atlantic Canada", *Acadiensis*, IX, 1 (Autumn 1979), pp. 19-43.

It is now 40 years since the end of the Second World War and time is running out for the writing of firsthand accounts of wartime experiences. Fortunately the 75th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Navy served not only as motivation for the writing of reminiscences, but also inspired historians to reassess the role of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Battle of the North Atlantic. *In All Respects Ready: The Merchant Navy and The Battle of the North Atlantic* by Commander Frederick B. Watt (Scarborough, Prentice-Hall, 1985) is a personal memoir detailing the activities of the little-known Naval Boarding Service. The Naval Boarding Service, largely the brainchild of Commander Watt, was established in Halifax, early in the war, to assess the physical and psychological readiness of supply ships and crew about to face the rigours of the North Atlantic. "Crew trouble" was not the only problem on many merchant ships; there was always the possibility of espionage. However, many members of the inspecting staff were former seamen, thus rapport was easily established with officers and crew. So successful did the venture become that a similar service was established in nine other Canadian ports. Later in the war, the Royal Navy became interested in the scheme and Commander Watt made two trips overseas to brief British officials. In addition to a distinguished naval career in both world wars, the author has other claims to fame, as a journalist and poet. "Encounters with men who knew the loneliness of command" stirred Watt's impulses as a writer and the narrative poem *Who Dare To Live*[7] was the result.

In All Respects Ready is filled with stories of humour, pathos and the stark reality of war at sea. Of the many incidents surrounding ships in Halifax harbour, one of the most dramatic concerns the Yugoslav freighter *Dubrovnik*. Fire on board ship was an ever-present hazard; however, in the case of the *Dubrovnik* it had an unusual twist. A careless sailor placed a lighted cigarette on the lip of a forward hatch. Unfortunately, the previous cargoes had been wheat, nitrate and sulphur. The accumulation of dust "added up to...low grade gunpowder." A major fire broke out, but fortunately it was contained. When the incident was over Watt learned that beneath the cargo was a lower hold filled with bulk explosives. As he laconically observes, "the event might well have blasted the Mont Blanc explosion [of 1917] into a secondary place in history" (p. 186). Aside from recording a fascinating episode in Canadian naval history *In All Respects Ready* is recommended as "a good read".

Cassie Brown, *Standing into Danger* (Toronto, Doubleday, 1985) is also a wartime story, but one with a difference. *Standing Into Danger* recounts the harrowing details of one of the North Atlantic's major disasters, the wrecking of the *USS Pollux* and the *USS Truxtun* on the bleak south coast of Newfoundland in the winter of 1942. Based on numerous interviews and a study of all available documentation, *Standing Into Danger* makes the point that there were perils in the North Atlantic other than German U-Boats. An understanding of the events described can best be conveyed in the terse wording of a memorial

7 Frederick B. Watt, *Who Dare To Live* (Toronto, 1943).

plaque commemorating one of the worst disasters in the Battle of the Atlantic: "Presented by the President of the United States to the people of St. Lawrence and Lawn, Newfoundland, on behalf of the people of the UnitedStates in gratitude: For the dauntless valour displayed on 18 February 1942, when during a snowstorm, two ships of the United States Navy, the *USS Truxton* and the *USS Pollux* were wrecked on the barren and rocky coast of Newfoundland, the intrepid and selfless residents of this community at great risk to themselves and in the face of cold and high winds undertook rescue operations and gave aid and comfort to the survivors of the two ships" (p. 311).

On the snowy dawn of 18 February 1942 three American ships bound for the Argentia naval base were hopelessly off course and unknowingly close to land. A navigational error, an obsolete radar set and unfamiliar ocean currents meant that the ships were being blown northeastward toward the coast. In the inevitable shipwreck, one of the three, the destroyer *USS Wilkes* was able to stay afloat and eventually backed away from danger. The destroyer *USS Truxtun* and supply ship *USS Pollux* were pounded to destruction with a loss of 203 lives. But for the superhuman effort of the local inhabitants the death toll might have been much greater. In all, 185 survivors were rescued and given shelter until outside help was available. The events leading up to the disaster, the rescue operations and the ensuing legal proceedings are told clearly, concisely and without sentiment. The author demonstrates a sure knowledge of the navigational, military and legal problems involved in the case and carries the story through to the final court-martial. To add to the personal element, she completes the account with revelations and reminiscences drawn from interviews with survivors. *In All Respects Ready* and *Standing Into Danger* were written for a general audience; both authors have a story to tell and it is well told. Regrettably, neither book has an index or bibliography, although sources are cited in the text. The inclusion of an index would have made the cross checking of details easier to follow.

Another book prompted by the Second World War is *Messdeck News: Collected Verse of Messdeck Annie Halifax, 1939-45* (Charlottetown, Ragweed Press, 1985). Compiled by Jessie Coade, a wartime reporter for the *Halifax Mail*, *Messdeck News* is a selection of poems depicting naval life both ashore and at sea. Few of the poems can be cited for their literary excellence but they do convey, in a straightforward manner, the flavour of wartime life in the city code-named "an East Coast Canadian port". Some are mere parodies of well known ballads and songs; however, there are occasional flashes of inspired writing. "Which Way Lies Peace" has a message for 1986 as well as 1944, while "Absent Without Leave" poignantly marks the torpedoing of *HMCS Spikenard* on 19 February 1942. The futility of war is meaningfully portrayed by an anonymous sailor-poet in "The Next of Kin":

> They sleep tonight beneath the moonlit sea
> Far from our shores. And where the convoys
> Eastward from Newfoundland fought sullenly

To far-off lands above them the low voice
Of alien sea in flight forever cries
Across the lonely night time of the world.

The book is attractively printed and is enhanced by a series of fine line drawings by Maritime artist L.B. Jensen. Significantly, all royalties from the sale of *Messdeck News* will be directed to the Canadian Naval Corvette Trust.

The final two studies, Marc Milner, *North Atlantic Run: the Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1985) and Michael Hadley, *U-Boats Against Canada: German Submarines in Canadian Waters* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985) are complementary and should be read in tandem. It is the opinion of Marc Milner that "in the eyes of some historians...the Royal Canadian Navy did not measure up to required standards. For forty years they have borne that stigma. They deserve better" (p. xv). We have, for some time, needed a reappraisal of the role of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War. Now, with the passage of time and the opening of previously restricted sources the full story can be told. Gilbert Tucker's *The Naval Service of Canada*, published in 1952, was too close to the event and could not be expected to provide a definitive account. *North Atlantic Run* is based on research in naval records at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa, as well as important British and American sources. What emerges is a meticulously crafted account of Canada's contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic. Throughout, lack of preparation for war on the Canadian side, scarcity of ships and proper equipment, plus bickering between members of the Allied naval establishment combined to illustrate the complexities of wartime coordination.

The major portion of the book chronicles the story of the North Atlantic convoys and their escort services. By May 1941 the U-Boat threat to Britain's North Atlantic life-line was apparent: "In a little less than two years the fundamental character of the war at sea had changed. Plans...had to be modified to meet a new, unorthodox form of naval warfare...the RCN's fleet of small ships [corvettes] was called upon to bear the burden of operations against the enemy" (p. 13). Throughout 1942 German U-Boats exacted a punishing toll from North Atlantic shipping. Losses were particularly noticeable in the so-called "Black Pit", the area in mid-ocean beyond the range of aircraft cover. The climax came in the autumn of 1942 when an eastbound convoy of 42 ships (Number SC 107) escorted by units of the Royal Canadian Navy suffered devastating losses. This disaster along with others of a similar nature raised questions concerning Canadian competence. As is usual in such cases, explanation was not an easy matter. Milner emphasizes that "without good finding devices and radar, Canadian escorts could not perform up to...standard...the Canadian dilemma [was] the frustration of fighting blind. To know with certainty that U-Boats were lurking on the fringes of the convoy and yet lack the means to deal with them was galling" (p. 181). Eventually, a plan was devised by the British

Admiralty for reallocation of escort services and the development of new convoy routes. Up to this point Canadian interest had been focused on the mid-Atlantic. "Now after stretching and scrimping for the common cause", writes Milner, "the Canadians were being asked to remove their escorts from the decisive theatre of the Battle of the Atlantic" (p. 198). After considerable face-saving diplomacy the British plan was accepted and "for the RCN the most active and important phase of its participation in the Battle of the Atlantic was over...The significance of the RCN's contribution lay in its successful efforts to hold the line until the Allies could assume the offensive" (p. 277). Throughout, Milner handles a controversial topic with fairness and candour. In retrospect, Canadians can take pride in their Second World War corvettes, "those farflung, storm tossed little ships".

Michael Hadley's *U-Boats Against Canada* also considers an aspect of the Second World War of vital concern to Canadian naval history. The account begins on 14 October 1939, when a German submarine was reported in the St. Lawrence River, some miles below LaMalbaie (Murray Bay). The ensuing search had all the elements of comic opera and afforded a dramatic illustration of Canada's total unpreparedness for active conflict. When the news was relayed to Quebec City, "the strangest flotilla in Canadian naval lore" was dispatched to the scene. It included: "some arms of World War One vintage"; "a local 'submarine diviner'" complete with undefined "supernatural powers", and "two Vickers guns pulled by a platoon of the Van Doo's" (p. 15). Upon spotting a red flare, a barrage of gunnery finished off a river buoy, the only casualty of the affair. A later search revealed no trace of an enemy submarine. This was a very accurate assessment, since we now know that U-Boats did not penetrate the St. Lawrence until the following year. One of the strengths of *U-Boats Against Canada* is that the author had the opportunity not only to examine the German naval archives, but also to interview many ex-servicemen, both German and Canadian. In addition, his research included U-Boat war diaries, the memoirs of Admiral Donitz, records of the Canadian navy and airforce, and the espionage files of the RCMP. The latter source was especially useful in piecing together the story of the landing of German spies at St. Martin's, New Brunswick and in the Baie des Chaleurs area. To even the score, and to indicate an example of *opera bouffe* on the German side, the "spies" were quickly captured when they attempted to pass out-of-date Canadian currency.

It was not long, however, before the seriousness of the presence of German U-Boats was brought home to Canadians. Even after 40 years, the sinking in Canadian waters of the Newfoundland-Cape Breton ferry the *SS Caribou*, or *HMCS Charlottetown* or *HMCS Clayoquot* (to mention only three incidents), are still firmly fixed in East Coast naval lore. There were three basic motivating factors behind the German U-Boat penetration of Canadian waters. U-Boats were in a good position to gain information on shore defences, convoy movements and particularly weather reports. On one occasion an unmanned German weather station was actually erected on the coast of Labrador. Another clear

objective was to lay mines and to harass shipping by making as many "strikes" as possible. Furthermore, there was also a psychological function. For Germany, the propaganda value of successes so far from home was significant, especially when the war on land was going the other way. The various convoy attacks reached a peak in 1942 and tapered off thereafter as the tide of war began to turn against Germany. It is Hadley's conclusion that the "combat-performance curves" of Canadian and German forces also crossed one another in 1943: "The German strength declined because of their enforced deployment of largely inexperienced crews in hastily built U-Boats, while Canadian technology and training improved and matured under duress" (p. 303). Both *North Atlantic Run* and *U-Boats Against Canada* relate the intricacies of war at sea to the political manoeuvering so prevalent in Mackenzie King's Ottawa and for this reason are of more than regional significance. They can also be classified as essential reading for anyone interested in Canada's role in the Second World War.

The abovementioned books serve to turn the spotlight on a neglected aspect of recent Canadian, and more especially, Atlantic Canadian history, the Second World War. To illustrate, the 1944 Conscription Crisis and the role of J.L. Ralston has engaged considerable attention; but the part played by his two Nova Scotian colleagues, Angus L. Macdonald and J.L. Ilsley, is as yet undefined. Macdonald's tenure as premier of Nova Scotia has attracted scholarly research, yet his 1940-45 stint as Minister of National Defence for Naval Services has been curiously overlooked. In like fashion, some notice has been given the city of Halifax, more particularly the 1945 riots, but what about the preceding five years? Or the impact of the war on other major east coast ports such as Saint John and St. John's? Nor should smaller communities be disregarded; ports such as Sydney, Lunenburg and Shelburne were also on the fringe of the "North Atlantic Run", while the airfields at Gander, Newfoundland and Goose Bay, Labrador became essential links in the Allied war effort. As several books considered in this review have noted, "time is running out", since the ranks of first-hand participants in the Second World War dwindle each year. Herein lies a challenge for the historians of Atlantic Canada. From the era of the tall ships, the maritime experience has been deeply rooted in the region's history, and these books on the war ships remind us that it has continued to occupy an important place in the modern era as well.

WILLIAM B. HAMILTON