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The Defeat of James Stuart's Armada 1692

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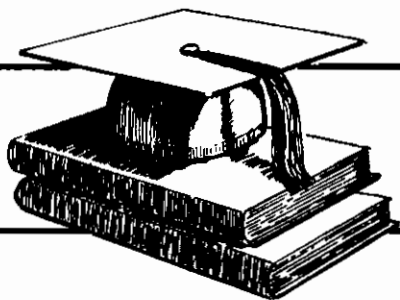
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PROFESSIONAL READING

BOOK REVIEWS

Aubrey, Philip. *The Defeat of James Stuart's Armada 1692*. Leicester, England: Leicester University Press, 1979. 194pp.

The author has introduced this slim volume as an attempt to rescue from neglect a period of naval history virtually unknown to the reading public, but which has much in common with the Armada and Trafalgar. He argues that it was the naval battles in the English Channel off Cape Barfleure and La Houque, in 1692, that prevented an army based in France from restoring James II to the throne of England. This account attempts to give a general overview of naval activities during the war and a more favorable view of Adm. Edward Russell, the commander in chief. A detailed description of the battles is presented, with maps and charts showing various phases of the action. On the dust jacket the publisher states that the book raises many issues of broad general interest: the command and control of a large fleet, its relations with an allied navy, the degree to which a government might interfere in an admiral's conduct of operations, the defense of trade, the mounting of joint operations with the army, the administrative backing and finance for large naval and military forces. "All these things," the publisher tells us, "and more find a place in the narrative."

So they do, but the phrase "in the narrative" is the clue to which might be a disappointment for the reader. These intensely interesting matters are deeply

entwined in the narrative, and it is difficult to extract them. The author presents neither an analysis of these issues nor any particular conclusions about them. They stand, however, as a case study.

The most useful part of the book is to be found in chapters 6 and 7, which detail the actions themselves. The remaining eight chapters summarize the war and present a general picture that places the naval battles of May 1692 as the centerpiece of the war.

Naval historians will appreciate the value of these detailed accounts of battle action along with the detailed appendixes that list ships, squadrons and armament; however, the specialist in the period may have some reservations. A cursory look through G.E. Manwaring, *A Bibliography of British Naval History* (1930) reveals several sources that have not been used. The author has centered his research in the Captain's and Master's logs of the English ships that participated in the action. In addition, he has used some important items from the National Maritime Museum, the Portland Collection, Lord Danby's diary and the Hatton-Finch papers that have been calendared by the Historical Manuscripts Commission. It seems odd that nothing of value was found in State papers (particularly SP 42 and 44), or in British Library manuscripts that include some of the Balthwayt papers, a plan of the battle of La Hogue (Addit.MSS.23618) and a report from a French officer

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(Addit.MSS.15944). Indeed, foreign manuscripts have not been used in France nor the Netherlands. Information on the Dutch ships is apparently based on De Jonge's 1860 history of Dutch seafaring. This work does remain the standard one on the subject, but historians can no longer be content with ignoring manuscript sources available in Dutch and other foreign languages.

More important than sources, however, is the author's contention that it was these naval battles that were the determining factors of the war. This is an interesting and important problem. Writing in the 1890s, Mahan believed that the actions off Barfleure and La Hogue were of little interest and did not support his contention that climactic battle at sea was one of the important elements that led to establishing control over an enemy fleet and, thus, to obtain command of the sea. Aubrey has not presented enough evidence on the general strategic situation during the Nine Years War to prove the point; he has not examined the economic, diplomatic, political and military ramifications of this event at sea in order to reach a proper conclusion. On the other hand, Geoffrey Symcox, in his *The Crisis of French Sea Power 1688-1697* has effectively demonstrated from the French perspective that quite the opposite was true. Indeed, the battle was not a turning point in the war at sea. It was the gradual tipping of the numerical balance of forces at sea that led to the eclipse of the French Navy. As Symcox points out, it was the very presence of a numerical superior English Fleet in the Mediterranean in 1694 that drove the French into port for 18 months. At the same time, the action of the allied fleet in the Channel, following La Hogue and Barfleure, was not an effective sequel to a strategic turning point. Having made those points, however, it would not be surprising to discover that the English view of the event might have been different from

the actual effect that it had on France. Aubrey's work would have been much more effective if he had used Symcox' book directly and countered its persuasive evidence and broadly based account with a similar understanding of the English view and conduct of the war.

Aubrey's study of Barfleure and La Hogue remains a useful and easily accessible account of a fascinating event in naval history.

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Bailey, Thomas A. and Ryan, Paul B.
Hitler vs. Roosevelt: The Undeclared Naval War. New York: The Free Press, 1979. 303pp.

The first part of World War II, which America officially sat out, holds a special fascination. In this period of quasi-peace (or quasi-war) for America, we rendered significant assistance to the British in their lonely stand against Hitler. Even before the Japanese attacked the Pacific Fleet and the United States went to war, the Atlantic Fleet was in effect at war, escorting convoys through submarine-infested waters. In this undeclared naval war German torpedoes sank one American destroyer, severely damaged another and missed a third.

The authors, a distinguished historian and a retired U.S. Navy captain, see this undeclared naval war as a personal conflict between Hitler and Roosevelt. They base their interesting thesis essentially on Hitler's prolonged oration of 11 December 1941 in which he reviewed what he saw as American provocations, castigated Roosevelt, and finally declared war on the United States. Roosevelt's actions from approximately the fall of France in June 1940 to December 1941 in support of Great Britain form the other major evidentiary pillar.

By casting the complex events of this period in terms of a personal conflict,