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Peter Goodwin, *The Ships of Trafalgar The British, French and Spanish Fleets October 1805*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, US edition of Conway Maritime Press, 2005.

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Goodwin has produced a solid reference work on one of the most well-known naval battles. His publisher is to be commended for not cashing in on Trafalgar's bicentennial by reprinting an older work (as some companies have done), but by producing a new one, lavishly illustrated.

The volume divides into a number of parts – introduction, then sections on the three fleets, a summation with their material requirements, and appendices reproducing primary sources. Following the introduction, that explains the book's approach and sets the scene for Trafalgar, Goodwin naturally begins with the ships of the British Royal Navy (for which he has most the detailed material). Each ship (set within its class) has its own separate description. Goodwin provides the ship's specifications, its progress book or repair history, a list of its captains, a chronological history (with a greatly expanded section on the battle – tied to the primary documents and often substantially quoting from them), and the author's drawings of the ship. (The last are either the ship's lines, a cutaway view or the deck plans.) When he has found them he also provides contemporary images of the ship. These chapters derive from the admiralty documents and the most authoritative secondary works. The author's substantial knowledge of Royal Navy practices (arising from his academic studies and career as the curator of HMS *Victory*) sustains this portion of the book.

The French and Spanish sections of the book are significantly briefer than the British one. In terms of pages the ratio is 69:145, despite the allied fleet possessing seven more ships. Several reasons account for this discrepancy. The author did not consult the relevant foreign archives. The French ships, due to wartime losses, were newer and had shorter service histories than

British ones. The Spanish fleet, although having older ships than the French, had less active service histories than their British contemporaries. The author provides the specifications of the allied ships, but only rarely does he present captain lists, repair accounts or drawings.

The conclusion of the ships' histories is not the end of the work. The concluding chapter deals with the industrial demands of the fleets. The discussion of respective national dockyards reveals that the allies built their ships more quickly, but that the British repaired theirs faster. The latter finding is paradoxical, because the French strove for standardization of ships of the same gun battery, which should have enabled them to repair their warships as speedily as or in less time than the British. The section also contains information on the amount of timber, cooper, iron, canvas (for sails), cordage and gunpowder required by the fleets – in other words Goodwin demonstrates the immense strains placed on industrial capacity (and by implication on national treasuries) in building and maintaining large battle fleets. A number of appendices, including information on the sailing qualities of eight British ships concludes the book. There is a separate bibliography and an exhaustive index (vital for a reference work). A collection of 29 color images (in the middle of the volume) is another testimony to the publisher's desire to make the work appealing and informative. Goodwin has produced an impressively researched and attractive book.

There are two criticisms of the work – one methodological and the other interpretative. The lack of allied source material is notable. While challenges of time or inhibited its inclusion, the effort would have been worthy of the investment. Goodwin had developed connections with researchers in the Spanish archives, but these apparently were insufficient to allow citations to the documents. The French archival sources, located in Paris, seem to have been entirely inaccessible to the author. The exclusion of the allied archival material provides the grounds for a definitive second edition, which hopefully the publisher will pursue.

The interpretative qualm arises from the introduction where the author underestimates the significance of the battle. He asserts (p. 8) that the destruction of the allied fleet only hampered French operations in Italy. He sees no evidence of any protection of Britain from invasion (since Napoleon had already cancelled any immediate attack before the battle). For 1805 that was certainly true, but the survival of the allied fleet would have allowed the revival of invasion plans in 1806 or later. Further, the absence of French naval power inspired Napoleon to institute the continental system (as the only means of attacking British manufacturing and commerce),

which led to his break with Russia and the disastrous campaign there. Finally, Nelson's victory gave Britain the opportunity to achieve supremacy of the seas – with all that meant for British military operations (the Danish and Iberian campaigns), commerce and empire. When late in the book (p. 242), Goodwin does admit the battle's broader significance; it is only in the context of the post-1815 world. The restrictive perspective of his interpretation of the battle does little to undermine the excellent value of the author's presentation on the ships and the requirements in the three nations.

The volume should entice a number of categories of readers. Those interested in Nelson and the Napoleonic wars would obviously enjoy it. Ship modelers and wargamers will find it a rich mine of information. Academic historians will find much material for comparative studies, as well as a model for a treatment of other battles. With the exception of the first and last chapters the book is best read selectively due to the repetitive nature of the entries. The work is a fine memorial to one of the world's most significant naval battles, and one that should inspire new works



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