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I. C. B. Dear, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. viii + 677 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-860616-1.

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A Venerable Maritime Reference Reconstituted

Dictionaries of naval and maritime terms have a long history in the British tradition. Malachy Postelthwayt's *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* appeared in 1774 having borrowed heavily from Jacques Savary des Bruslons's dictionary in French (*Dictionnaire universel de commerce* [1723]). William Falconer's *New and Universal Dictionary of the Marine* appeared thirty years later and was followed by a handful of other dictionaries that sought to organize and explain maritime subjects to nineteenth-century readers. With the coming of the twentieth century, another dozen maritime dictionaries and encyclopedias helped to inform a growing audience from both the general public and academia.[1] One of the most informative of these twentieth-century reference works was a single volume published in 1976 entitled *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea.* Edited by Peter Kemp, this dictionary was well received and went through a number of reprints. The second edition, also published by Oxford University Press in 2005, bears the late Kemp's title, but was brought to fruition by I. C. B. Dear, who served as general editor. Dear drew on the expertise of scores of experts who contributed to either the original edition or joined in the effort to write the latest version. The current edition also deserves approbation even though it differs from the original in several ways.

Organized alphabetically, the latest *Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* is described on the dust jacket as "comprehensive and authoritative." While these terms might be applied to such a wide-ranging and well-researched volume, it is interesting to note that the first edition is larger both physically and in the number of entries. The 1976 edition has smaller font, more lines of text per page, and was 971 pages in length, including the appendix. The current edition, in contrast, is easier on the eye with larger font and fewer rows of type, but is 677 pages, with an index as opposed to an appendix. More importantly, the "comprehensive" second edition has just 2,600 entries as opposed to the first edition's 3,700 entries. This is not to say the new edition is not a valuable addition to any library, even those that already hold the first. Valuable it is as it sheds light on hundreds of obscure nautical terms as well as a variety of additional subject areas.

When comparing the number and the nature of entries between the two volumes, it is important to note that the 2005 edition includes a number of topics that were not deemed vital to the user in 1976 and were therefore excluded. Entries dealing with the environment, climate change, pollution, and a variety of policy issues, such as EEZs (Exclusive Economic Zones) give the new edition a timeliness that only enhances the value of a book that also explains the meaning of arcane maritime terms such as box-hauling or smiting line. These topics join myriad other entries that concern the objects, events, technologies, people, places, and vessels that have acted on, in, under, and near the salt sea. Additionally, the second edition introduces the reader to a wide range of the flora and fauna of the sea. Such entries in the original edition had been consciously avoided except for species that had significant economic importance, like the great whales. The 2005 edition relies most particularly on the work of Martin Angel, a well-respected and prolific marine scientist, for numerous entries regarding life beneath the sea's surface. As a result, brief but informative entries about the likes of crustacea, plankton, and jellyfish populate the recent version of the work.

While whole new areas of study are included in the 2005 edition, nearly one-third of the entries that were found in the original volume have been deleted from the new edition. Some of the more obscure historical terms, events, and actors will no longer be found, or will appear only in passing. A case in point is John Jervis, first Earl of Saint Vincent. The victor at the Battle of Cape Saint Vincent, Jervis's long and distinguished career in the Royal Navy included serving as First Lord of the Admiralty and Admiral of the Fleet at the height of the Napoleonic Wars.

While the first edition dedicated nearly four pages to the life and career of Jervis, in the current edition he is only briefly mentioned in the entry for Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson. Many other entries in the 1976 edition have suffered a similar fate.

There is no question, however, that the 2005 edition of *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* is an important reference that should grace the shelves of universities, libraries large and small, and the collections of maritime scholars and enthusiasts. This reference is accessible to experts and beginners alike through its asterisked cross-references, 25-page index, and 250 illustrations. It is to be commended for embracing subjects that are increasingly important in today's world of changing climate, advancing technologies, and complicated ocean policies. To expand its comprehensive limitations, however, one may want to utilize this most recent edition with the original edition within easy reach.

Note

[1]. See Robert G. Albion, *Naval and Maritime History: An Annotated Bibliography* (1963; Mystic: Marine Historical Association, 1972); and Benjamin W. Labaree, *A Supplement to Robert G. Albion's Naval and Maritime History: An Annotated Bibliography* (Mystic: Mystic Seaport, 1988).

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