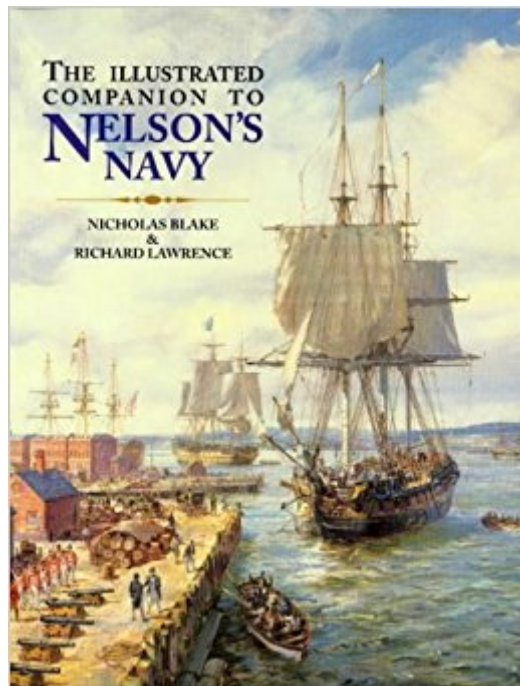




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The Illustrated Companion To Nelson's Navy: A Guide To The Fiction Of The Napoleonic Wars



Synopsis

No other period of history has spawned such a huge fictional oeuvre as the Nelsonic era - Marryat, Forester, Pope, Kent, O'Brian and Donachie are just some of the authors whose heroics are portrayed as sailors in the Royal Navy. Their exploits have fascinated readers in countries all around the world but for many of them the real world of Nelson's navy is a closed book. This book describes in detail every aspect of the navy of that period and seeks to relate it to the novels that are based on its operations and feats in battle. The workings of the admiralty, the design and building of the ships, life on board, food and drink, entertainment, discipline, medicine, fighting tactics, gunnery, seamanship and shiphandling, and merchant fleets and opposing navies are described and explained in succinct texts and illustrated with over 5000 commissioned sketches, maps and diagrams as well as four-colour artwork; throughout there are cross-references to the novels inspired by this great fighting force.

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Customer Reviews

"The Illustrated Companion to Nelson's Navy" is a wonderful repository of information about ships, life at sea, and naval warfare during the era of Jack Aubrey, Richard Bolitho, and Horatio Hornblower (frequent mention of these and other fictional Royal Navy officers is made in the book, placing them in the real life context). The range of material covered is very broad, and it is attractively and concisely presented, often in a graphical or tabular form. The book is illustrated with hundreds of drawings, paintings and diagrams, many of them from contemporary sources. If you want information about ship types, naval weapons, life on board, battles, ship handling, sails and

rigging, watches and bells, rates of pay, distribution of prize money, and seemingly almost anything else you can think of, this is a very handy place to find it. I strongly recommend this book for anyone interested in learning about the background to the novels of Patrick O'Brian, Alexander Kent, Dudley Pope, and C.S. Forester.

This is a handy supplement to the larger "Nelson's Navy" and worth picking up. I would have given it four stars but for some of the lesser quality "sketches" that make up a large portion of the illustrations. That being said, the book IS a great little quick reference guide.

The previous reviewers have said it all, and well. I'll just add my weight and say that the book is packed with just the kind of information that someone new to the subject wants, is an excellent value and a great companion to whatever nautical fiction series you may be reading. It's true that some illustrations will make you scratch your head (What is the purpose of the painting of H.M.S. Victory on pg. 24 that looks like it was done by a second-grader?) but the vast majority are helpful. If the topic becomes a hobby, you will want more technical drawings of the ships and it will be time to pay more for a book with a more specific subject. As an introduction, this book is first-rate.

A good reference for model ship builders and the history enthusiast. Numerous photo's, drawings, diagrams, a good glossary of sea terms. Written as an addition to Nelson's navy the ships, men and organization 1793 -1815. Both books give a very thorough history of the Royal Navy of the time. Worth the price.

Excellent information - useful when reading Patrick O'Brien's Aubrey and Maturin series (starting with Master and Commander) or the Hornblower books.

Very complete and a great resource!

I found this book to be quite useful due to the amount of information presented in a relatively small space. All of the data can easily be found in other books, but it's nice to have so much of it all in one place. The writing is competent and the author obviously loves his subject. Overall the book provides an entertaining glimpse into the British navy at the height of it's power during the great age of sail. My problem with the book is in it's presentation. The illustrator, Richard Lawrence, has a style that might most charitably be described as amateurish. Further the layout of the book is a

mish-mosh of period illustrations (often badly or muddily scanned and printed in garish blue), Lawrence's original art as well as his copies or adaptations of period illustrations, and less than stellar "Adobe Illustrator"-style drawings used to illustrate some technical points (the jacket illustration is by Geoff Hunt and is quite nice). The overall effect is jarring and the lack of competence in the design and illustration makes the book a difficult read. I guess my major complaint is simply that I've been wanting a book just like this one for years (it might have been great) and I'm just dissatisfied at the ham-handedness of this volume's presentation.

When the world discovered Patrick O'Brian a decade and a half ago, the immense popularity of the Jack Aubrey novels also engendered a cottage industry of explanatory volumes for those not versed in the history and daily life of the Royal Navy in the Napoleonic era. I've read nearly all those books and nearly all of them have something useful to say about the ins and out of sail-driven warships, the dense tangle of jargon, the naval bureaucracy, the nature of strategy and tactics at sea, and the key players who make up the background to the novels. And that's true here, too, to a considerable extent. It's a pity that the execution is so sloppy with this one. Unlike experts like Brian Lavery and Geoff Hunt and James McGuane and Steve Pope, Blake is not an expert in the field. He's a desk editor at Macmillan -- who apparently declined to publish his book themselves. He organizes what he wants to say under the usual rubrics: The background, the navy, the sailors, the ships, the war itself. He includes numerous diagrams and maps and charts and lists. And he doesn't restrict himself to O'Brian, bringing in quotes and examples from C. S. Forester and Dudley Pope and a number of other authors -- though I spotted a number of errors regarding the literature without even the need to pull of my own copies off the shelf. On the facts of the real world of the Royal Navy, it's not bad.. But it's an illustrated book, and the artwork simply sucks. I've seen many of the illustrations before, in earlier books like this -- that's inevitable -- but here Rowlandson's satirical portraits, for example, are reworked as foggy watercolor washes devoid of useful detail. Some of the illustrations are simply impenetrable (look at pages 103 or 119 or 127!), especially when it comes to uniforms and ship's gear. Instead of an impressionist, Blake should have hired a trained draughtsman. The reader of a book like this wants to see careful, precise, detailed treatments of the subjects that interest him, not muddy sketches or unnecessary re-imaginings of classic drawings and prints. The citations are pitiful, as well; "from a nineteenth-century source" is not a useful reference. The text is actually pretty good (bar some sloppy copyediting) but surely the words are embarrassed by the images with which they share the page. It will be most useful to the reader who already is familiar with the subject matter -- much less so to the novice. But for a reference work, I recommend Lavery

or Hunt.

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