



## Book Review

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*A Fleet Under Review for a Century: An Essay on “Dreadnought to Daring – 100 Years of Comment, Controversy and Debate in the Naval Review”*. Seaforth Publishing, 2012, pp. 518. Captain Peter Hore, RN, ed.

This essay is a modest effort to try and encapsulate some, and only some, of the areas in which the writers and readers of the *Naval Review* from the British Royal Navy and of the Commonwealth have observed, commented, critiqued, even despaired. Very possibly, improved the effectiveness of the Royal Navy in particular through 100 years of war and peace since the first issue appeared in 1913. Having read and reflected on what the book seeks to convey, this writer feels that this collection of 28 chapters/essays form an informative and riveting book. This book’s intent is rather eloquently worded by the editor thus:

*And since for most of the last hundred years some of the most erudite and literary of the Royal Navy’s officers have written for the NR, no such study could be*

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*undertaken without an examination of a journal intended for private circulation amongst its officers, a journal which may be said to be the Royal Navy at prayer.*<sup>1</sup>

As Captain Hore points out, starting such a journal had its difficulties, not the least being resistance from senior officers who might have had the most to benefit from the ideas and candour from the RN's wardrooms:

*The NR was part of a revolution in naval affairs at the beginning of the twentieth century... by the Naval Society whose aim was to encourage thought and discussion on topics affecting the fighting efficiency of the (RN). It was very nearly strangled in childhood by the first of many attempts by senior naval officers to suppress it or to censor its contents, and indeed it was suspended, in October 1915, after less than a dozen quarterly issues.*<sup>2</sup>

While the US Naval Institute's magazine *Proceedings*, started in 1873, is better known to IN officers, the NR is found only in a few libraries. Its paperback size and understated outer cover may even militate against it being picked up. This writer readily confesses that, while he has been a regular reader of the *Proceedings* from his younger days, he came upon the NR only as a brass-hat and that too as a need to pursue a reference from another book. One has remained a reader (albeit with gaps because of the NR's limited availability in IN wardrooms and libraries) and consistently found it candid, useful, ticklish, well written and worth chewing on. This could be said about the *Proceedings* as well but with one important difference. NR writers were free to use a *nom de plume*. Most did so and for years, with the identity known only to the editor who guarded them in his own "Tower of London" for a 30-year period. Personally, this writer would not agree on the virtue of anonymity, because it does not seem "officer-like" and the USNI did quite well with the opposite requirement. While the measure by NR may not have been virtuous, it perhaps had its utility and the parallel with the anonymity of Near-Miss reports comes to mind. Captain Hore explains why this was so:

*In a hierarchic and uniformed society, newly emerged from the deferential Victorian age, this is an unexpected and even counterintuitive pronouncement... which finds few parallels in other disciplined services or professions. Nevertheless,*

*many officers, junior and senior, took advantage of this rule including, I have detected, at least four future Admirals of the Fleet.*<sup>3</sup>

This brings us to another thought: *What propels naval professionals to write in such journals?* Recognition, visibility, even an occasional medal or prizes are perhaps factors, but hardly the whole story. As the book brings out in almost all essays, it was often the so-called “Young Turks” who wrote and they were the more dedicated and committed officers with an interest in their chosen profession deep enough to put forth their thoughts; to counter some policies of the day; to engage in a debate; to stick their neck out; and take the risk of breaking HF silence! Captain Hore notes that almost all First Sea Lords of recent years had, as junior officers, contributed to NR. Interestingly, authors did not need to take clearance for their articles, and they still don’t need to. Perhaps no real breaches of security or crossing the line of decorum were really seen in the last hundred years. During the suspension of the NR by some senior officers in the First World War, officers wrote to the press often about action that they had seen and some of it was perceived as a security breach but was in fact not so. *The question we may ponder over is that do the more conscientious of officers who write for such journals impose a mature self-regulation so that their thoughts on paper help, not harm, their nation and navy?* In their long decades of contributing to naval thinking, the NR and *Proceedings* experience seems to suggest this. At any rate, it is quite likely that the editors, themselves naval officers in most cases, used their discretion to edit or discard articles which could be genuinely ill-advisable to publish. Today, we live in a world where information and views, accurate or otherwise, well-intentioned or with mal-intent, are rather freely available. Quite a few military personnel visit blogs, assume pseudonyms, and sometimes unwittingly interact with camouflaged enemies. There is perhaps more reason than ever before to have a published forum for exchange of ideas with as few restrictions and a stress on an individual’s “good order and naval discipline” to do the right thing. Were this to be so, the damage due to off-the-cuff remarks, intemperate language so apparent in cyber-space or the edit-unfriendliness of the “send” button could only reduce.

Before delving into some of the other essays, let us jump to VADM Blackham’s “Coda”, which concludes the book. In analysing the possible impact of the NR, despite its travails, his observations deserve reflection. Of the more recent articles, including the fallout of the HMS Cornwall incident, or the way the “Wardroom Bar”

blog is shaping up, he observes, “this is a rich menu indeed, with no sign of diminishing quality or commitment to intellectual examination of maritime and naval questions.”<sup>4</sup> On the problems of attitude to younger officers’ thoughts, he is quoted below:

*It is certainly true that senior serving officers have always had mixed views on the place of the NR, some regarding it as a valuable source of debate and education whilst others have seen it as almost improper, even as a risk to discipline, since it appeared to encourage more junior officers to question the decisions of their seniors, and even of the Navy Board. This too is a long-running debate, but it would be wrong to fail to record that contributors have on a number of occasions been right when their seniors have been wrong. And all of them have the good of their Navy firmly in their minds.<sup>5</sup>*

We must note the word “serving” because it perhaps has been a universal experience that the need for internal organisational candour generally becomes more apparent upon retirement!

The first essay, “The Founders”, is by RADM James Goldrick, RAN (retd). In it, he names the “Young Turks” and traces the difficult beginnings of the NR.<sup>6</sup> There are succinct paragraphs on some like Admirals Henderson and Herbert Richmond (known to many of us in the IN for his naval thinking); the impossibly named Reginald Plunkett-Ernlé-Drax who wrote in the NR for 50 years and, by rocking the boat often, benefited the RN more than could be then fathomed by his contemporaries. Goldrick makes two rather significant points. The first:

*The legacy of the founders lies not within our journal but in the operational record of the navy from 1939 onwards. Richmond and his contemporaries found much to content themselves in the achievements of their Service from the onset of the Second World War and with good reason. The Battle of the River Plate, the Altmark Incident, and the first and second Battles of Narvik were only the start of a record of calculated aggression, and a sustained demonstration that strategic defence requires tactical offensiveness to be truly effective, and which warmed the hearts of the most discontented from the previous conflict.<sup>7</sup>*

What might the author of the essay be trying to convey? Perhaps that navies may suffer, like the RN did, from “The Long, Calm Lee of Trafalgar”. These evocative words are the title of a superb chapter in Andrew Gordon’s book, *Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, and its concerns could be extrapolated since many navies have had their Trafalgars and possibly some may also experience the negatives that could ensue in the lee of such successes. The second point that Goldrick makes is:

*... the uncertain position of the Royal Navy within the United Kingdom’s national understanding in the early years of the twenty-first century does raise one question. If the founders were to assemble at the centenary, would they be moved to form a ‘Society for the propagation of Sea-Military Knowledge within the Service – or outside it?’<sup>8</sup>*

The very small, modestly funded editorial staff of the NR deserves credit for archiving back issues of the NR from 1913 until 2002. It is a work in progress. Thanks to the essays in the book being reviewed, this writer has spent quite a few evenings going through the archives to fully read some of the references and happily wander off to other articles and letters/comments. What does strike one is the abundance of tactical discussions; the arguments over ship-design and their inadequacies; over ship’s routine; analyses of past battles and campaigns and even some relatively mundane issues like uniforms, action messing or “bull”. Apart from other improvements, it is likely to have bred tactical aggressiveness as Goldrick points out. Of course, the NR, as the author laments above, has lesser penetration into policy levels than perhaps does the USNI *Proceedings* or the US Naval War College Review in the American context. Yet, this writer believes the most useful impact of such journals has necessarily to be internal to the navy that it serves while addressing the quandary that Admiral Goldrick underscores.

Author, academic and – good heavens like Julian Corbett – an historian and lawyer, Professor Andrew Lambert’s essay “Sir Julian Corbett and the Naval War Course” is not about what was written in the NR by Corbett (actually just one article in 1920). Rather, it is about his deep impact on people like Jacky Fisher, Richmond and on the political leadership but also, how his efforts in teaching young and middle rank officers attending the War Course, proved to be long-term investments in the RN and in those who wrote for the NR. Lambert underscores that

*Strategy is a practical subject: it produces results that have a practical utility... If we try to understand what happened in a particular war or campaign we operate as historians. If we want to know how those events might inform choices, we act as strategists. The evidence is the same, the questions are different...<sup>9</sup>*

Corbett educated the RN to enable many young leaders to think about strategy because some of them would be contributing to its drafting and/or to its execution. *Corbett's challenges were not small; he had to overcome the "anti-intellectual and anti-theoretical tendency of the naval mind."*<sup>10</sup> Lambert also recounts the challenges a boat-rocking admiral like Jackie Fisher experienced and the role that his friend and supporter (and mutually so) played in making Fisher understand over time "the value of intellectual honesty".<sup>11</sup> The NR (and indeed its reverse, the RN!) has always benefitted from the contributions of authors – and professors – like Lambert, Eric Grove and Geoffrey Till (there are many others) who have ably carried on what Corbett began.

At the time of this writing (May 2013), the IN is celebrating the diamond jubilee of our naval aviation at Goa. This book has an essay by Professor Eric Grove "The Naval Aviation Controversy 1919–1939;" a second also by another academic, Dr Tim Benbow, "The Post 1945 Struggle for Naval Aviation;" and the third, "Full Circle: Queen Elizabeth to Invincible and Back Again" by Captain Jeremy Stocker, RNR. All three articles are of historical as well as current interest to all of us. Historical as well as contemporary, because we did not have to go through many of the organisational, training and "turf" struggles that took place between the young RAF and naval aviation precisely because of the common "DNA" between the RN and IN. It is quite an oxymoron really to talk of turf when concerned with water and air, and yet the issues are worth reading. To be fair, the RNAS was created out of the Royal Flying Corps and in the initial years the RFC/RAF worked very closely with RNAS, akin to the early years of our own naval aviation and the IAF. Professor Grove writes, based on the RN's official history of the First World War, that "Ironically, the Grand Fleet got its best air support after the creation of the RAF rather than before it."<sup>12</sup> (However), "the stage was set for a major inter-service controversy that would run until in 1939, when the Admiralty obtained full control of the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) of the RAF which had been set up as an uneasy compromise in 1924."<sup>13</sup> The sobering reality of *war-fighting* during every war perhaps reduced the *in-fighting*

between the two Services as can be read in a nuanced way in all three essays as well as those covering the 1982 Falklands war, and in other essays. Overall, sea-sense of the RN coalesced well with the need to develop air-mindedness and, uniquely in the case of the maritime environment of the UK, the RN and the RAF learnt from and taught each other both these attributes probably not perfectly or happily, but perhaps adequately! In any case, naval aviation and air forces have had their issues in several countries, not the least in the USA and sometimes it needed a “Revolt of the Admirals” to retain the advantages that naval air brought to making war.

The pages of NR over the decades dealt with many issues concerning aviation and aviators including dismal career management in the early years and the problems that Observers faced even more so than pilots. Captain Stocker’s piece is very contemporary when he traces the troubles over the carrier “Queen Elizabeth.” In fact, the debate continues and one could recommend a series of articles by David Mugridge, an ex-RN officer, on the SDSR and many aspects of force-structuring in 2010 issues of the NR. Certainly, he cannot be charged for sugar-coating his observations!

“From Selborne to AFO 1/56” by Commander James McCoy, is a particularly interesting essay from the IN’s perspective because much of what we do in terms of initial officer-training and education still bears the stamps of Jacky Fisher and Admiralty Fleet Order (AFO) 1/56. Nonetheless, as we expanded, observed other navies, we also made important departures and these have been to our benefit. As the Bachelor of Tech output from the Indian Naval Academy spreads into the fleet and gains traction, there is every reason to believe that only good can come out of it. Of late, Indian media and internal studies often allude to the social churning that is impacting on the sources of officer entry and then leading on to rather fuzzy, and perhaps even prejudiced inferences. Certainly, we are becoming egalitarian and that is for the better. It is in this context as well that McCoy’s essay is of interest because many prejudices had to be overcome in Britain for changes in training, or branch structures themselves to be initiated. It needed a Jacky Fisher to do so in 1902 as Second Sea Lord. The primary change was the merger of executive and engineering branches which made it similar to the Line officers of the US Navy. “Fisher’s solution was radical to the point of revolution: to remove all distinctions between the engineer and the executive officer . . . with similar prospects of promotion and command.”<sup>14</sup> This caused quite a furore in the RN, and “The more progressive welcomed it whilst

reactionaries opposed it.”<sup>15</sup> By the time these officers came up for sea command, Fisher was gone and this facet of the Selborne scheme died quietly. These were years of debate in the NR reflecting social divisions or the public school entries versus those from other backgrounds and schools. Then Commander Plunkett railed:

*... against rote learning and the inability of the system to encourage the creative and the spontaneous... excessive effort was expended in cramming the brain with details suitable for regurgitation at examinations, and insufficient to training in imaginative and analytic processes.*<sup>16</sup>

If this brings back some of the less useful aspects of training methods during our own cadets' time or exams in Sub Lieutenants' technical courses, it might have been primarily because we were carrying on with an approach that we had adopted from the RN without much discussion and were slow in modifying. Of course, in the past decade or so, much has changed and is still changing and we should be the better for that. But, to be fair, many aspects did work well and how much of it was because of or despite the systems is likely to remain subjective.

In the UK, the Special Entry officers had done rather well in the First World War and prompted a rethink on the innate talent and quality that college entrants brought into wardrooms and action posts! At a professional level, officers ostensibly born on the “wrong side of the tracks” did well and more than a few of them were senior officers in the Second World War. In 1925, the existing five branches were increased to 12 (electrical officers still held only warrant ranks) by AFO 3241/25. The marine engineers wrote for the NR, but not frequently and could not but help feel they were less than equal. In any case, the general intent of the Selborne scheme was buried in 1925.

A very interesting article was written anonymously by then Cdr William Tennant (referred to on page 266) soon after the Depression and Invergordon mutinies. The title caught this writer's eye. Reading *The Low Tide of the Royal Navy*, by this insightful commander – who was the Captain of HMS Repulse when she sank off Malaya – and later became a full admiral of considerable distinction, is remarkable because much of it could be considered to refer to contemporary problems and solutions.<sup>17</sup> It is highly recommended reading! As the Second World War drew to a close, some engineers wrote in NR, urging a return to the Selborne scheme thus:

... we should perhaps abolish the peculiar brand of would-be ‘Herrenvolk’ who imagine that the mere giving of orders confers upon them the divine right to lord it over all those base-born ones who have the bad taste to show any interest in ‘nuts and bolts’ (or even amps and volts). The probable objections to this scheme are: (i) a woolly idea that anyone common enough to take any interest in machinery is ipso facto incapable of taking part in administration and staff work, and still less capable of ‘taking charge’ and (ii) a still woollier idea that Nelson (or perhaps Drake) would have disapproved of it.<sup>18</sup>

The angst of the writers could partially explain the hyperbole, but the problem for the RN was real. Proficiency in technology and tactics was never a zero-sum game and the US, Imperial Japanese and Soviet navies took a different approach to technical education and organisation without harming themselves.

In the same year, i.e. 1946, a group of Dartmouth House Masters wrote, while comparing boys from different types of schools (and by implication, from different socio-economic classes) in a way that perhaps mixed empathy with their own prejudices:

*Firstly, the spirit of service is frequently lacking and work for the common good is less rigidly given than work for themselves. This habit is not easily or quickly dispelled; and our difficulties would certainly increase greatly should the proportion of scholarship entries be substantially increased. Secondly, when allowance is made for the strangeness of the life, it seems likely that the proportion of potential leaders is lower in this form of entry than among the remainder.*<sup>19</sup>

This reviewer has not been able to determine if their preference for “manor above merit” or any subsequent analyses showed that “this form of entry” was *post facto* inferior to their *a priori* conclusions! Interesting, nonetheless because similar discussions could resonate in messes and wardrooms elsewhere where older generations may explain shortcomings largely by faulting younger entrants.

RADM Goldrick begins his chapter “Life at Sea and Ship Organisation” with an apt caveat:

*... seeks to examine only efforts to treat these issues in a contemporary context; while there are many retrospectives within the NR, their value has been for*

*historians rather than advancement of the naval profession. Our interest is in periods which the press of events has created feeling that change is necessary and when the NR has identified that the contract between the nation and the people who man its Navy has become unbalanced.”<sup>20</sup>*

The August 1913 NR – the first year of publication and the third issue, carried an unsigned article (later seen as from a Chaplain) called “A Contribution to the Study of Naval Discipline”. He thought that the “wardroom and the lower deck had drifted too far apart; change in the Navy over the previous half-century had been profound; ratings were much more educated and self-aware, as well as more in touch with events ashore.” Does this sound familiar and even contemporary? Goldrick very keenly summarises the Chaplain’s honest observations about the pervasiveness of sodomy and corruption and the conspiracy of silence and the negative role of the ship’s police. (In different ways and in different periods, navies have faced difficult issues and eventually found solutions. Equally, no navy has been able to rest on its oars either.) The NR carried articles about the disparities between officers’ and sailors’ accommodation in ships and this led to slow but sure habitability improvements in the RN.

Tactical improvements like action messing at action posts, ear defenders for gun crews and, as the war prolonged, the three-watch instead of two-watch system had all been junior officers’ ideas in the NR in its very early issues and while the First World War was on. (Incidentally, the action messing in/near action posts was reinitiated by the RN in the Falklands war of 1982 in preference to the more elaborate but actually undoable methods in the dining halls in actual combat. Older IN officers would also remember the adequacy of ‘paratha-in-newspaper’ meals brought to action posts in wicker baskets and eaten together with the men). In explaining corruption, the author points out to articles about the effect on sailors of officers who would take naval stores for their own use while sailors would be dealt with harshly for the same offence.

As the “lee” of the Great War was taking effect, an article by a much decorated officer, also an MP, “was highly critical of the fixation on competitive evolutions at the expense of drills which could practise ships’ companies for battle.”<sup>21</sup> The author has touched upon other aspects as well and it is quite possible that if the threads of the discussions in NR were better hoisted, perhaps the Invergordon mutinies might not have taken place. Before these events, RADMPlunkett-Drax – signing as RX – asked this question: “In what way (or ways) can we produce the greatest increase in fighting

efficiency in the Royal Navy?” This started a vigorous debate that Drax remained part of stating that any survey in the “fleet would confirm the effects of excessive competition, intensive training and ‘promotionitis’”.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, the use and abuse of sports for relaxation, leadership and team spirit came in for comment often. Senior officers thought sports would be a panacea and younger officers saw the flip side: “Fixation on sport was criticised, one writer noting that ‘an entirely wrong attitude has grown up, in which men play as a favour, sometimes at the price of concessions which are little short of blackmail.’” Sail training also created some confusion as to what it would achieve – development of a better sea-sense than was possible under power, or the development of self-reliance and initiative. Goldrick adds that, “this lack of clarity suggests that Admiral Chatfield was wise to abandon the Admiralty’s plans for a sail training squadron.”<sup>23</sup> In those decades, other than at times of the world wars, it is good to remember that many officers had little idea of the lives that sailors led at home, or their problems such was the stratification of British society. Likewise, sailors also had their own stereotypes of officers and these also found their way into NR’s pages and in other media.

The Second World War exposed the USN to the RN as never before. They found habitability, damage control and cleanliness to be much better in the USN. The Dutch navy in exile, operating British-built ships, kept them much better. NR readers observed much, commented and triggered improvements. This writer feels that the IN would, consequently have benefited from these discussions in the better designs of the ships that came from the UK in our early decades. Goldrick recounts a 1962 article “Worm’s-eye View” that “painted a warts-and-all picture of poor serviceability (of the earlier Daring class destroyers), inadequate and badly organised dockyard support, over-manned wardrooms and an over-staffed and over-admired navy.” The author of the essay says that subsequent articles could not easily refute these observations. Some in fact wrote to vouch for their correctness. Nonetheless, improvements followed. The Admiralty was listening, perhaps.

IN readers would perhaps smile at the snippets from NR articles and issues that James Goldrick recounts. Here are some of them:

- Issues as a result of the increased proportion of ratings and junior officers who were married and the implicit but occasional suggestion that marriage and the navy for junior personnel were and should be incompatible (1953).

- Leave-breaking, particularly by junior personnel was a major topic in 1959–60.
- The extended deployments at sea (1968) earlier seen only during war.
- Dissatisfaction about the demands placed on ships' companies in harbour, with little support from shore in terms of telephones or transport or parking and rigid duty watch arrangements especially for junior sailors and officers.
- Envy for the better lives of nuclear submariners (1976).
- A generation gap in which the professional standards of senior personnel were in question, rather than the young (1976).
- Whether the division between operators and maintainers should continue?<sup>24</sup>

Admiral Goldrick offers thoughtful conclusions to this useful and, in most ways, a contemporary chapter for navies that are blessed to be the maritime instrument of liberal democracies. One, the disadvantage of romanticising the past; “Wrong but Wromantic” and the “uncertainty of the logic applied and the extent to which sentiment was more important than necessity.” Related, even if obverse, younger members of NR who thought that the “Royal Navy of their present day (effectively any day between 1913 and 2012!!) works harder and has less fun and relaxation than that of the past. *They have had more justification for their complaint, but not quite as much as they might believe.*”<sup>25</sup> His next conclusion is also best recounted in his own words:

*The second is that of thoughtful senior officers who have had the chance to see the fleet at sea years after their own retirement. Their affection for the Service may add a tint of rose to their glasses, but their commentaries show no loss of grip and the changes that they comment on are just those which should be expected. Above all, they mention again and again, and independently, the greater professionalism and operational focus than the Navy of their own time. This tendency is also apparent in the contributions of serving senior officers. In this case, while there may be some element of self-serving, there is more often a similar humility and respect for the young in their commentaries.*

Three Commonwealth navies (Australia, Canada and India) are covered in separate essays. “From the Honourable East India Company’s Marine to Indian Navy” has

been written by Commodore Ranjit Rai. With the late Commodore Banger, he has been a regular contributor to NR. Of interest in several essays and by NR writers and editors is the RN's admiration, and increasingly, envy of our Navy because we have been modernising and growing while they are shrinking! Not surprisingly, the RAN's regular contribution to the NR was via 34 editions of "Letter from Australia" has been by "Master Ned" to "Commander M". For several decades RADM Goldrick painstakingly wrote them and insightful he certainly has been. Anglo-American relations, the Falklands War ("The Empire Strikes Back") are also well written and informative. "An External Audit" by Professor John Hattendorf of the US Naval War College traces the longer history of the USNI *Proceedings* and the *War College Review* and compares the different trajectories of these two and the NR. He sums up, most fruitfully, "One who reads them all may conclude that it is not just comparing apples and oranges, but enjoying and savouring an apple, an orange, and a peach."

"Teaching Naval History" (Dr Harry Dickinson) covers the problems of varying attitudes and fluctuating importance given to educating the RN on its own rich history and making it relevant to an unfolding future. Perhaps younger navies like ours may profit, if history (our own and of others as well) is taught in a more analytical way with the telescope swinging to the future once in a while. Professor Geoffrey Till's mastery is obvious in "Development of British Naval Thinking". Pointedly, to underscore the difficulty, he quotes then Commander Plunkett-Drax (NR, 1915):

*I think that Army officers take these questions (ie on strategic thinking) of theoretical education more seriously than we do . . . Until the Navy can evolve 'a school of thought' based on careful training and study, it will never be able to enjoy continuity of policy or unanimity of opinion . . . Moreover, the authorities at headquarters, and flag officers afloat, will never be able to inspire the full confidence of their subordinates.<sup>26</sup>*

Professor Till feels that the NR was/is an important forum for officers and teachers to write and perhaps the objectives of the founding fathers (Young Turks!) were realised because "naval strategic thinking was alive and well by the arrival of war in 1939."<sup>27</sup>

This writer could try and extract nuggets from many of the other chapters, but should start calling finals now and leave the discovery to those who think they could profit from reading the book itself. The focus of the book under review is the utility or otherwise of such a forum as an instrument for advancement of naval thinking. Having edited NR for nearly 20 years, RADM Richard Hill writing Essay 22 (“Facing the Realities of Medium Power, 1945–2001”) gives praise – and criticism – with conviction:

*It will often be found that they (the authors) anticipated, often by some years, the appearance of some issues in the public domain or official pronouncements. The prescience of some contributors was truly remarkable. On the other hand, their reluctance to expose some of the sillier projects coming from within Whitehall, or its failure to pursue sensible ones, was unworthy of a professional journal, even one that regarded itself to some extent as self-censored . . .*

*Whether this stream of thinking influenced the naval and defence staff in Whitehall will be for others to judge; this writer’s conclusion is that it could hardly have failed to do so, particularly as so many of the authors were, or had been, or became, key figures in that staff.<sup>28</sup>*

In our own Service, we have many publications – some feel perhaps too many – of erratic frequency, varying quality of contents and yet with much that could be useful. Perhaps there is a case for some consolidation, stress on self-censorship but more candour.<sup>29</sup> This writer feels that, unlike some other navies, we still lack something that we ourselves, and the world could recognise as the IN’s “flagship magazine”. The “Naval Despatch” could, but does not as yet, meet that aspiration especially of a Service that is respected, admired and tracked on many a distant shore and in many a professional wardroom.

In conclusion, James Goldrick’s words may again be sufficient for a wake as well as a bow wave:

*Nevertheless, the fact that the Navy has been able to get so much more from its people has come at a price, not always recognised either early or sufficiently enough. The pages of the NR have included many perceptive contributions which*

*have identified problems and posed imaginative solutions. And many of those solutions, however the Service arrived at them, were the ones which would eventually be implemented. If the Royal Navy was often too slow to address its problems, and perhaps remains so, the direction of its effort was generally correct. Concerns continue to be raised within the NR and this suggests that there is no room for complacency in its second century. The bargains with the Royal Navy's people must be met, even if its elements change.*<sup>30</sup>

After all, the bow wave as well as the wake are both created by the very same ship and dictated mainly by the hull form and the vigour of her advance. Finally, if, as the editor says in his introduction to this marvellous book, the NR as a journal was “the Royal Navy at prayer” may be an “Amen” could be added as the final word?

## Notes

1. From the Introduction, p. xi; emphasis mine.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. xii. Nonetheless, as VADM Blackham points out in a 2010 NR edition, the trend to use *nom de plumes* is on the decline and reflects creditably on the members as well as the RN. There seem to be no reference in the book or, indeed, for the USNI *Proceedings* as far as this writer knows, of any messenger having been shot!
4. Ibid., p. 446.
5. Page 446; emphases mine.
6. RADM Goldrick, a sailor, a scholar, a military educationist and a reputed naval historian as well, has been a regular contributor to the NR. This writer happily adds “friend” to sailor, scholar and historian. As many in the IN know, RADM Goldrick has authored “No Easy Answers: The Development of the Navies of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka 1945–1996” (New Delhi: Lancer, 1997).
7. Ibid., emphasis mine.
8. Page 17. Italics Goldrick's.
9. Lambert, pp. 37–38.
10. Ibid., p. 41.
11. Ibid., p. 45; emphasis mine.
12. Grove, p. 113 from Roskill.
13. Ibid., p. 113.
14. McCoy, p. 255.

15. Page 256.
16. Page 257. Plunkett wrote as “RX”.
17. Published in NR 1932(2), p. 290 and available in the archives.
18. Page 272.
19. Page 273; emphasis mine.
20. Page 236; emphasis mine.
21. Page 238. article referred to is “Some Impressions of a Temporary Officer” by Lt Cdr Hilton Young, DSC, DSO\*. We must also remember that many of the “hostilities only” officers and ratings during the World Wars contributed to improvements in tactics, deck and platoon level leadership. There is enough written of the impact they had on making British society far more egalitarian, and British generalship far better in the Second World War.
22. Page 241.
23. Page 241.
24. Pages 244–251.
25. Page 252.
26. Page 317.
27. Page 330.
28. Page 347.
29. Page 432. In Professor Hattendorf’s chapter, he refers to the issue of why the USNIPS eschewed anonymity and ensured security by self/editorial and even consultative censorship with the Navy Department. Capt Goodrich, one of the founding members of the USNI put it well: *“punish him for conduct unbecoming of an officer and gentleman if an author exceeds the bounds of common courtesy and confidentiality.”*
30. Pages 252–3.