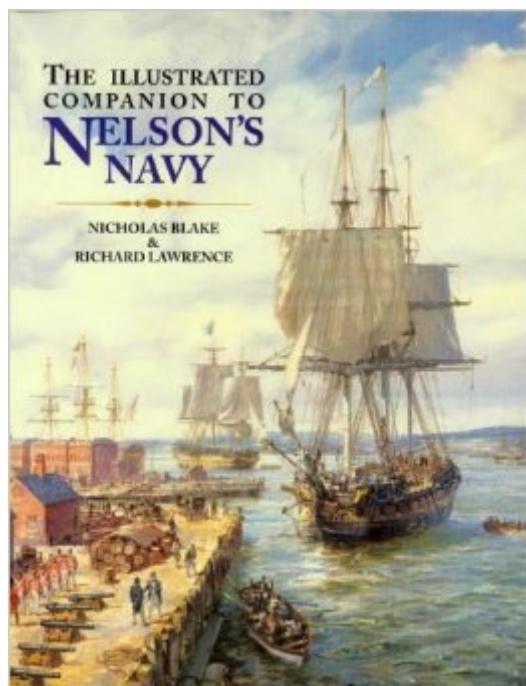


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The Illustrated Companion To Nelson's Navy: A Guide To The Fiction Of The Napoleonic Wars



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Customer Reviews

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 off 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.

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