

In the book's final essay, Hughes places these wide-ranging events in perspective: "There are no monuments on the ocean, no crossroads in the great waters, no places echoing in the heart and mind like Gettysburg, Shiloh, or Chickamauga. . . . Names that resonate are long-gone ships such as *Alabama*, *Kearsarge*, *Florida*, *Shenandoah*. The mostly unknown men who sailed them carried the conflict to the ends of the earth through every extreme of sea and storm with no less conviction than land-bound compatriots. They struggled and fought and suffered even when the enemy was more often Neptune's wrath and Aeolus's breath. There were very few of them, comparatively speaking, but they had impact well beyond their numbers." (p. 281).

The collected essays that comprise the book are four-to-six-page vignettes that ramble like a literary slide show. Editors of a collection of essays usually attempt to make the writing appear uniform, but this compendium is at times a little uneven. Still, this ambitious work appends little-known obscure heroes, background events, and battle stories to the better-known elements of the Civil War's maritime history by craftily coloring both sides of conflict. This reviewer therefore recommends *The Civil War on the Water: Favorite Stories and Fresh Perspectives from the Historians at Emerging Civil War* to any "Civil War buff" without reservation.

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David E. Johnson and Gary Guinn. *Midwatch in Verse: New Year's Deck Log Poetry of the United States Navy, 1941-1946*. Jefferson North Carolina, McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 2023, 241pp., illustrations, bibliography, glossary, appendices, index. US \$24.99, paper, ISBN 978-1-4766-8926-5

During the age of sail and the early years of steam, a good-natured New Year's custom occurred beginning at midwatch, the duty watch that occurs from midnight to 4 a.m. As eight bells chimed midnight on the special watch, the oldest man on board was assigned to ring those bells, followed by eight more by the youngest crewman. This was the only time when the midnight hour was marked by sixteen bells, symbolizing the passage of the old year to the new.

That ritual largely disappeared, but in the twentieth century a different New Year's tradition has emerged. Typically, a naval ship's official deck log is meticulously recorded, devoid of any creative flair. However, an exception developed on certain vessels during the initial four hours of the New Year's mid-watch. During this specific day and time, a relaxed adherence to the revered log regulations is permitted and, on many ships, it is encouraged

to mark the commencement of the New Year by composing a verse. This annual poetic deck log of the New Year fostered individuality and sporadically provided a glimpse into the vessel's shipboard life.

Nevertheless, Navy regulations remain unwavering. Even creative liberties are governed by strict Navy Regulations issued by the Chief of Naval Operations. The deck log succinctly and meticulously chronicles the daily locations and movements of the ship and records all significant events that transpire either aboard or in the immediate vicinity of the vessel. The log entries are painstakingly reviewed each day by a designated ship's officer to ensure clarity. Once approved, they become a legally binding administrative document.

In *Midwatch in Verse* each chapter focuses on a specific vessel that engaged in combat during World War II, beginning with an overview of the ship's history but then spotlighting its most important and most engaging actions and experiences. The book's authors then centre on one or more midwatch poems written during specified years and considers the elegiac poetic works as representative of a specific moment in history. Each chapter ends with a biographical sketch of the writer, thus bringing a note of humanity to the person who was caught up in war, perhaps allowing an additional understanding of World War II in an untraditional manner. According to the authors, during the writing of this book the poems were shared with many families. Many family members were unaware of the poems' existence and were surprised and delighted to learn about them. This became an unanticipated memorial to their loved ones, many of whom were no longer living. This also tells the stories of the wide range of navy vessels from battle ships, light and heavy cruisers, destroyers, LSTs to unnamed small patrol crafts. These vignettes are forgotten tales that needed to be told. Of particular interest were the poets' candid comments about their poems in one of the appendixes.

Poetry being part of sea lore was theatrically demonstrated in Gilbert and Sullivan's 1879 operetta *Pirates of Penzance*, where the Pirate King character asks:

For what, we ask, is life
Without a touch of Poetry in it?
(The kneeling ensemble then intones)
Hail, Poetry, thou heav'n-born maid!
Thou gildest e'en the pirate's trade.
Hail, flowing fount of sentiment!
All hail, all hail, divine emollient.

Many of the notable nineteenth century poets were known for their sea focused works such as: Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach"; Lord George Gordon Byron, "The Sea"; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner";

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Secret of the Sea"; John Masefield, "Sea Fever"; Robert Louis Stevenson, "Requiem"; Lord Alfred Tennyson, "Crossing the Bar"; and Walt Whitman, "O Captain! My Captain!" These poets, while less notable, follow in this tradition.

Midwatch in Verse contains many poems, and as a reviewer I wish to share parts of three that are clever, touching or amusing. For instance, Lieutenant P.E. MacArthur, writing the New Year's Eve deck log entry on the USS *Washington*, opened his long and cunningly written poem with a repetition of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*. MacArthur borrowed from first stanzas and went on from there:

Once Upon a midnight dreary, while I slumbered weak and weary,
 Dreaming of such far off places as New York and good old Philly,
 Suddenly there came a tapping, and someone opened up my chamber door,
 "Tis a visitor," I muttered as he uttered - "Twelve to four."

Only that, and nothing more.

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
 Groping blindly through the darkness, to the quarterdeck I wandered,
 Then while I nodded, nearly napping, someone near me began yapping,
 All about the boats and people somehow caught off on the shore,
 And leaving me, said nothing more! (p. 111)

Another by Lieutenant W. E. Norton on the USS *Daly* in 1952 is an example of clever brevity:

My log has been writ, the saying's been said
 To hell with mid-watches, I'm headed for bed. (p. 224)

Sometimes lines taken from inside a longer poem captured the mood eloquently, such as these from Lieutenant T.J. Thornton, which were penned in 1969:

We show no navigation light
 For darken ship this New Year's night
 LT Thornton the OOD
 Says things look good, and we should see
 A sunrise with the pass of time
 To bring us into "69"
 There are some things we hold so dear
 Among them peace in this new year
 Good cheer, good luck, a safe trip home
 And with that though I'll end this poem. (pp. 231-232)

Some traditions of the sea have changed or persist in a modified form.

The poems and stories in *Midwatch in Verse* make them accessible to those who wish to explore this “salty” but sometimes stirring quasi-rite. Johnson and Guinn’s book is both an enjoyable and often moving read for maritime historians.

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Sarah Kerr, *The British Lighthouse Trail, a Regional Guide*. Dunbeath, Scotland, Whittles Publishing, www.whittlespublishing.com, 2019, xvi+302 pp., illustrations, maps, index, UK, GPP18.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-84995-449-2.

It seems appropriate that Sarah Kerr was raised on an island off the south coast of England and lives in the far north of Scotland since her book illustrates and details more than 600 lighthouses from the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, where the bulk – 294 – are located. The data enables readers to follow a coastal trail of navigational aids including in the Bristol Channel and Thames Estuary, and on remote islands like Shetland, Orkney, the Western Isles, and the Hebrides.

This guide to “fixed structure[s] that w[ere] built to exhibit a light for the purpose of aiding maritime navigation and allow ... access for at least one part of it” is not meant to describe approaches to lights from seaward (IX). The book tells us how to practically and wisely approach these engineering marvels from shore – and return in one piece. Kerr is a proven pharologist who spent months trekking coasts to remote lights, and photographing, documenting, and describing lighthouses. It is her wish to provide “a regional guide to lighthouses throughout the mainland and islands” meant to help readers “on your lighthouse trail as you travel to many of our nation’s iconic, unique, and awe-inspiring maritime aids to navigation” (VII). She blends coverage of her chosen lights with hard data, vivid color photos and more than 25 maps. Many of the images show the vessels the lights are designed to protect in the near or far distance.

The book disclaims any use “to assist maritime navigation,” and excludes unlit daymarks, light vessels, light towers without any access, those that have been de-capped or sealed off, and non-maritime lights. She covers traditional lights, covering position, location, establishment, notable designers, description, and characteristics, giving bespoke information on how to access sites safely and intelligently. Chart 1, Region 1, Shetland, covers no fewer than 49 lights from Muckle Flugga and its old sector in the far north and Fair Isle South, on a small islet south of Shetland. Who would have known there