

NIGHTRAIDERS: US NAVY, ROYAL NAVY, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY AND ROYAL NETHERLANDS NAVY MINE FORCES BATTLING THE JAPANESE IN THE PACIFIC IN WORLD WAR II

Reviewed by: Chris O'Flaherty

Nightraiders is Bruhn and Hoole's second book in a series capturing the minewarfare battles of the two World Wars. The wonderful chronology of this volume melds the rich seams of US Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) records from US forces alongside British Naval Staff Histories, Commonwealth reports and Dutch naval papers. The narrative then interweaves more modern sources from internet histories together with personal interviews conducted as part of a growing number of verbal archive projects. This contemporary breadth of sources gives *Nightraiders* a uniquely statuesque place in the libraries of historians who strive to gain the widest practicable understanding of minewarfare operations.

The scope of the book is clearly set out, focussing on surface-ship minelayers and associated minesweeping forces. More than sufficient credit is also given to their compatriot submarine and aircraft minelaying forces to ensure that this is a comprehensive history, whilst clearly describing the bravery and zeal of the surface warriors in the Pacific region. The highly descriptive narrative is interspersed with some excellent data-tables, giving those of a numerical disposition just as much enjoyment from this book as those who prefer prose. Epitomising the camaraderie and humour of minewarfare forces it also contains a few lovely asides, such as the description of 1940's American Auxiliary Minelayers, who not only served as a tender and flagship for yard minesweepers by carrying stocks of their minesweeping gear, they also "provided handling of pay, radio guard services [and] furnishing of ice cream".

Bruhn and Hoole's multiple chapters on the sequential minewarfare battles along the row of Pacific islands leading allied forces back to Japan should be seen as especially important contributions to the corpus of naval history that captures this campaign. Whilst selectively quoting from Arnold Lott's seminal work 'Most Dangerous Sea', they have uncovered and incorporated many primary source Action Reports by ships involved, and Task Group Commander battle summaries. These accounts give a richness and originality to this work that is particularly noteworthy.

It would be interesting to understand the rank hierarchy of the two authors; the book uses predominantly American-English, US spelling and US Navy terminology, giving consistency even when describing Royal Navy actions, but usefully decoded by a short glossary of some British and American nautical terms. The book is also well illustrated with some vivid photographs of key minewarfare ships and events obtained from the collections of the NHHC and Rob Hoole's personal collection.

Nightraiders is yet another gem from the pens of Bruhn and Hoole. It is highly recommended not only for those who wish to learn lessons from naval history but also for those who wish to place into context the tens of thousands of mines laid and also swept by allied forces as part of WWII's Pacific campaign.