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Warships Of The Anglo-Dutch Wars 1652–74 (New Vanguard)



Synopsis

During the 17th century England and Holland found themselves at war three times, in a clash for economic and naval supremacy, fought out in the cold waters of the North Sea and the English Channel. The First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-54) pitted the Dutch against Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth Navy, which proved as successful at sea as his New Model Army had been on land. Following the Restoration of 1660 the two maritime powers clashed again, and in the Second Dutch War (1665-67) it was the Dutch who had the upper hand. They humiliated the English by burning their fleet in the Medway (1667), forcing Charles II to sue for peace. This peace proved temporary, and the Third Dutch War (1672-74) proved a well-balanced and bitterly-fought naval contest. The Royal Navy eventually emerged triumphant, establishing a tradition of naval dominance that would last for two centuries. This was a revolutionary era in several key areas - warship design, armament and in naval tactics. In effect the ships and fleets that began the conflict in 1652 were by-products of an earlier age - warships designed to fight chivalrous duels with their enemy counterparts. By the close of the Third Dutch War these warships had evolved into fully-fledged ships-of-the-line - the warships that would dominate the age of fighting sail until the advent of steam. This book traces the development of these warships during this critical evolutionary period in naval history, and shows that while both sides evolved their own doctrines of warship design and armament, it was the English notion who created a battle-winning navy of sailing ships-of-war.

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Customer Reviews

“Author Angus Konstam does a superlative job of discussing both the historical background of these wars as well as the ships involved, the tactics used and the way crews were trained... Overall, an excellent reference and most interesting read in a period of history that has escaped the notice of many of us. Highly recommended.”

— Scott Van Aken, *Modeling Madness*

Angus Konstam hails from the Orkney Islands, and is the author of over 50 books, 30 of which are published by Osprey. This acclaimed and widely published author has written several books on piracy, including *The History of Pirates and Blackbeard: America's Most Notorious Pirate*. A former naval officer and museum professional, he worked as the Curator of Weapons at the Tower of London and as the Chief Curator of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum in Key West, Florida. He now works as a full-time author and historian, and lives in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Any review of this book would have to start out by pointing out the fact that it is part of Osprey Publishing's *New Vanguard* series. Books in this series are only 48 pages in length and, due to the fact there are many illustrations, the text is considerably less than that (very, very roughly about 60% of that). Hence if one is looking for an in-depth academic treatise on the topic this is not it. The author states as much. On p. 6 he writes “The size of this book means that this [book] can never be more than a primer – a small taster of the subject.” The relevant question hence becomes, as is applicable to all books in this series, how well does the book cover its topic despite this serious limitation? The answer is surprisingly well. The book covers, in a very succinct manner, the physical characteristics of both the English and Dutch warships. Even though both sides' vessels are covered, the book is balanced (albeit slightly) towards the English navy. The book's research bent is also more geared to the English navy. The author, Angus Konstam, makes use of many primary sources in his discussion of the English navy but just about none (unless in the English language) of the Dutch fleet. No original Dutch language sources are cited in this book (apparently the author does not know Dutch). This is also reflected in the book's biography. However, considering the book's non-academic nature, this is not a serious problem. The reader gets a decent introduction of the main physical characteristics and, surprisingly, the roots of these differences. The reader learns how the British fleet consisted of larger, more heavily gunned and more durable vessels while the Dutch fleet consisted of lighter, more maneuverable but less durable

and less well armed vessels. There were a number of reasons for this. A major one involves the waters around the Dutch coast. They are much shallower than the deep waters around England and English ports. Hence Dutch ships could not be as heavy as the British vessels. In addition, naval tactics before the 3 Anglo-Dutch wars were more of a melee type. Fighting along ship-of-the-line tactics did not exist before this time. Nor was there a need or expectation that this type of naval warfare would develop during these 3 wars. After all, nearly all naval battles, including the fight against the Spanish Armada and the Dutch navies against the Spanish fleet were of a melee type. In that type of struggle smaller, more maneuverable ships would have a distinct advantage over larger, heavier, less maneuverable vessels. However, ship of the line tactics developed, that enabled the British vessels, due to the advantages inherent in their larger size (i.e., more durable, greater firepower) to seize the initiative and advantage. The Dutch with their lighter and less well armed vessels were not able to stand up to the British in this type of fight. Nor were they able to develop tactics to break the British ship-of-the-line tactics. Mr. Angstrum sums up (p.39)

“The real weakness of the Dutch fleet though, was its inability to successfully blend fire tactics with disruptive ones, and being unable to switch over to a melee battle when the opportunity arose.” Considering the fact that this would require vessels of considerable speed (i.e., much faster than what was possible with sail) and coordination that could not be achieved via flag, but would require basically a wireless set, how could this be done? It was a miracle that the Dutch navy was not destroyed in these 3 wars thanks to this disadvantage. But, thanks to superior seamanship, good leaders and maneuverability, the Dutch navy was not decimated. The tactics that sprang out of these wars though, along with vessel physical characteristics develop therein, set the standard up to the age of steam. Mr. Konstam also answers the important question of how the British developed ship-of-the-line tactics. It was due to the fact that after the restoration politically “unreliable” naval officers and captains were replaced by officers from the army. These army officers believed applying land warfare tactics to the sea. Hence they introduced line formations that also moved as such as opposed to depending on the individual skills of captains and individual tactics. Hence ship-of-the-line tactics were born. Beyond tactics and physical characteristics, the author also provides a decent overview of manning requirements as well as the tremendous effort required to build these fleets and maintain them. During peacetime, for example, most vessels were put in a kind of cold storage until needed. To activate them it took, a few months. All in all, despite the book’s short length, a decent overview of the topic is provided. The book succeeds in accomplishing its goal of serving as a primer.

Osprey is renowned for excellent booklets. This one has superb color illustrations of major warships, van de Velde engravings and copies of paintings. Included is a concise summary of the key players and events, and how the warships evolved. My only complaint is I wanted lots more!
Duff Griffith

Thought i was getting a book not a condensed pamphlet.

Enjoyed it; good to have information on the most important period of war under sail before the Napoleonic period.

Not a bad little book, as it has a fair bit of useful information. But the artwork commissioned for this book is really quite poor!

The stories of ancient methods, seamanship and tactics the author has used in describing Naval Warfare in the days of sail are very vivid and exciting. Great history lesson. I plan to use this as a great reference book. Having over 20 years in the U.S. Navy I served aboard Battleships, Cruisers, and Destroyers as "Gun Fire Controlman, Chief, Warrant Gunner, then commissioned as "Mustang Gunnery Officer". The techniques, weapons, and warfare have changed considerably since the days of sail, however the guts, stamina, bravery, and lore of the fighting sailor still appear to remain the same. After reading this book, I only wished that I had been in some of these decisive battles along with the gunners of yore. Reference: Warships of Anglo Saxon Wars 1652-1674 (New Vanguard)

The book is one in a group that goes through Wars at Sea and the evolution of War ship design, and innovations.

This is an excellent and colourful introductory volume to a particularly colourful period in naval history, as there were a large number of masterful marine painters working in the period, many of whose paintings are reproduced here. The author is an expert naval historian of the age of the wooden ship, and also an excellent writer. The Contents are - P04: Introduction P06: Chronology P07: Design and Development. English Ship Design; Dutch Ship Design P23: Construction and Operation. Shipbuilding; Manpower; Ordnance; Tactics P40: The Ships. Major warships of the English

Fleet 1652-74; Major warships of the Dutch Fleet 1665-67P46: Further ReadingP48: IndexThe Colour Plates -A: The Commonwealth: Naseby (1652) [renamed Royal Charles in 1660, captured at the Medway 1667] - full page showing a full side-view with sails and riggingB: The Restoration: HMS St. Andrew (1673) - a waterline view (at sea) showing the port (left) side and sternC: Early Dutch: Brederode (1653) - at sea, showing the port quarter and sternD: Later Dutch: Eendracht (1666) and Golden Leeuw (1672); 1 - front and starboard view, at sea with masts and sails, etc; 2 - front and port view, at sea, but no mastsE: The Sovereign (1652) [formerly The Sovereign of the Seas, but after the refit of 1651] - a two-page cut-away & keyed side view with sails and riggingF: The Battle of Scheveningen 1673 - the Triumph (60) under fireship attack. This is a spectacular painting (by modern standards) showing a fireship in the foreground obscuring the rear half of the Triumph (but not the stern), which is taking up 2/3 of the page, and another English vessel is in the left 1/3 of the page, facing us almost full-on.G: Raid on the Medway 1667. Another spectacular modern painting showing the Dutch Vrede (36) breaking the boom in the Medway, in the foreground, from the rear and port quarter; an English fourth-rate is dead ahead of her - HMS Unity (42), and to the right, in rear view is a captured English warship being burned.This is well-supported with many colour and monochrome illustrations, the Van de Veldes naturally being prominent.Further ReadingFour Days' Battle of 1666Great Ships: The Battle Fleet of King Charles IIPepy's Navy: The Ships, Men and Organisation, 1649-1689

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