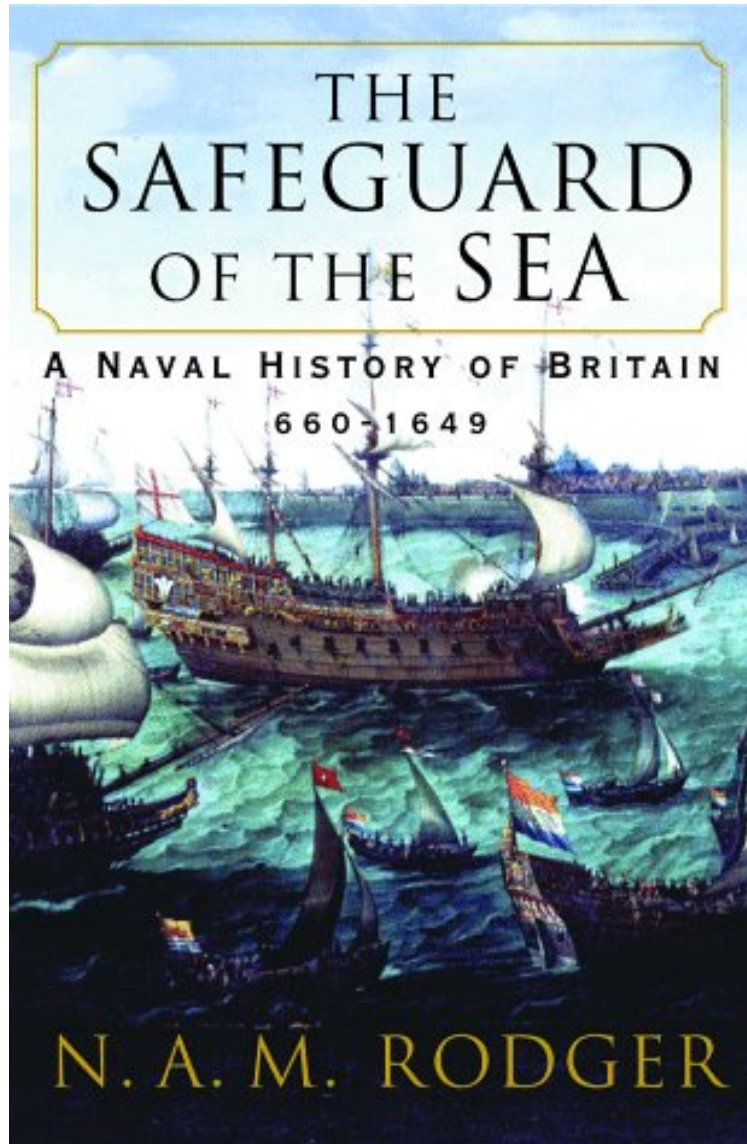


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## The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660-1649

*N. A. M. Rodger*

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**N. A. M. Rodger : The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660-1649** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660-1649:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. History of the English Navy before there was an English (or British) NavyBy J. P SpencerSuperbly researched and densely detailed history of military use of naval vessels from the days of Alfred the Great up to the execution of Charles I. As Rodger points out, it is not really a history of the British Navy as

we understand that term. Until the last half century covered by this book, there is no such thing. The "navy" consisted of privateers, commandeered merchant vessels, etc. The first half the text (which totals only 434 pages, the other two hundred pages consisting of appendices with lists of when ships were built, commanders, naval terms, and notes), covering up to the Tudor era is fairly dry and academic. There is little else that can be done with this part of the history: we simply don't have the details for Rodgers to be able to tell tales of sea battles, commanders, and incidents at sea. But once Rodgers gets to the Henry VII and primary source materials include these details, while never losing sight of the goal of a serious academic history, he starts telling a tale worthy of any adventure story. The stories of Drake, Hawkins, and the characters on the Navy Board were great reading and set up the other parts of the book on other aspects of war at sea. Rodgers rights his book as a series of chapters on these different aspects over specific periods of time. Thus he gives us chapters on the different types of Ships 1066 - 1455, Operations 1266-1336, Administration 1216 - 1420, and Social History 1204-1455, the latter discussing where both the commanders and the sailors came from. All of these subjects are essential to understanding how what would become the Royal Navy came to be. My only real criticism is that while the book contains a fair number of black and white plates mostly showing images of vessels as they were represented in their own times there is not much to show what the ships really looked like in any kind of proportional representation. I've built model ships, been to several naval museums with lots of models etc. so have a good notion of what ships of the 18th century and later were like but could not get any real sense of what the ships, galleys etc. of medieval England that Rodgers talks about were really like or even how big they were. There is one half page set of silhouettes comparing four ships from the 15th - 17th Centuries with the Victory which one can see in Portsmouth. But this is a small portion of the subject matter of the book and the comparison is limited to the largest of the ships from this era: Henry Grace a Dieu (1514), Sovereign of the Seas (1637), Wasa (1628), Grace Dieu (1418). There is nothing depicting the smaller vessels to any kind of scale and for most of the period of this book, these smaller vessels were what English Naval History was all about. Still this is a small quibble and I enjoyed this enormously, recommending it highly to anyone interested in English history (specifically English, not British or European; the naval forces of Scotland, Ireland, and the continent are mentioned only insofar as necessary to understand what is going on the English) generally or naval history of any kind particularly in the age of sail. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fight and Drown for King and Country! By Geraldtonjeeper This thoroughly researched and meticulously written history of the early naval activities around the British Isles and western Europe is endlessly fascinating in its breadth and accuracy. N.A.M. Rodgers writes authoritatively about the Navies defending the British Isles and includes information not readily available from other sources. I have read a number of his books and always find myself better educated for the effort of reading these large, heavy books. The slow development of British Naval power was a hit and miss affair! Funded initially by private interests who did not always remain loyal to the crown! Oh how the winds of perfidy blow cold!! The gradual understanding of naval architecture and stability enabled larger and larger ships to be built ending, of course, with the Georgian fleet at Trafalgar in the early 19th century (covered in the next book in this series). Now for the book covering the later part of British Naval history.....can't wait! Excellent! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Safeguard of the Sea is a By Robert O. Johnson Jr. book on a subject I've wanted to explore in depth for a while. I've always had an interest in the early days of the Navy and this book fits the bill. N.A.M. Rodger does a very good job in exploring the early days of the England's Naval History. He doesn't just focus on the main battles, although that is an important part of this work. He presents a very comprehensive history of the social history and the technological aspects. Considering how limited the information is on the early days, Mr. Rodger does a fantastic job of researching and presenting it.

Throughout the chronicle of Britain's history, one factor above all others has determined the fate of kings, the security of trade, and the integrity of the realm. Without its navy, Britain would have been a weakling among the nations of Europe, could never have built or maintained the empire, and in all likelihood would have been overrun by the armies of Napoleon and Hitler. Now, for the first time in nearly a century, a prominent naval historian has undertaken a comprehensive account of the history and traditions of this most essential institution. N. A. M. Rodger has produced a superb work, combining scholarship with narrative, that demonstrates how the political and social history of Britain has been inextricably intertwined with the strength--or weakness--of her sea power. From the desperate early military campaigns against the Vikings to the defeat of the great Spanish Armada in the reign of Elizabeth I, this volume touches on some of the most colorful characters in British history, among them Sir Francis Drake. It also provides fascinating details on naval construction, logistics, health, diet, and weaponry.

.com "Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves...." The dominance of the British Royal Navy in maritime history is legendary, but this has not always been the case. Various attempts to build and sustain a national standing Navy were attempted by a number of rulers, from Edward the Confessor in the 11th century to Henry V in the 15th century. It wasn't until the Tudor reign (1485 to 1603), however, that a permanent, effective Navy emerged. Until this time the shores of Britain had been susceptible to attack and invasion. N.A.M. Rodger's compendium on the history of the Royal Navy (the first of a four volume set) reminds us that "the successful navies have been those which rested on

long years of steady investment in the infrastructure ... of a seagoing fleet." Emphasizing the important role the Tudors played in building the financial foundation for the Navy, Rodger focuses on the role of Elizabeth I's administration and the amount of money shipbuilding absorbed during her reign. He also traces the evolution of professionalism in the Navy, demonstrating how the rank of naval officer became socially respectable, even though it was not exclusively open to just nobles--indeed, Francis Drake came from an impoverished background--setting a standard that would see the British Navy dominate the oceans for many years. A fellow in the British National Maritime Museum, Rodger's unique understanding of this history comes across well as he explores a number of themes, ranging from policy and strategy to ship and weapon design. He gathers this information from Anglo-Saxon, Danish, French, Irish, and Spanish sources, carefully weaving these materials into an immense tapestry of incredible depth and scope. In years to come The Safeguard of the Sea promises to be the definitive account of British Naval History long after Britannia has stopped ruling the waves.

From Kirkus sA comprehensive thousand-year chronicle of naval history around the British Isles and of the vital importance of sea power in safeguarding a realm that provided an inviting target for marauders. Rodger (The Insatiable Earl, 1994) assistant keeper at London's Public Record Office, notes that England, in the period from the seventh to the ninth centuries, was profoundly vulnerable to penetration from the sea; Vikings, Celts, Danes, Bretons, and others raided without hindrance. Rodger lucidly covers both the tentative British exploration of the sea and the long evolution of seagoing ships, ranging from Viking longboats to the large galleys and caravels of later centuries that combined economy, speed, and maneuverability. Ships were vital to trade, and thus to a nations growth. Rodger points out that the sea, once English ships began to patrol it, served as both a defensive barrier and as a highway for trade and exploration. It took a long time, however, for England to effectively make the sea its first line of defense. Many incursions occurred even after the Norman conquest in 1066. Henry V, the first monarch to understand the use of sea power as a primary weapon of war, built a fleet that struck at the heart of French power in Normandy in 1415, finding it more effective than launching an expensive, risky overland campaign. The defeat of the seemingly invincible Spanish Armada in 1588 under Elizabeth I raised Britain to the status of world power. Government-backed piracy against English rivals brought home much revenue, since the sea was regarded as being beyond laws, treaties, and truces. Rodger includes over 250 pages of illustrations, notes, maps, a chronology, exhaustive data on ships, a glossary, and a bibliography, creating a kind of pocket reference library about England and the sea in the time period covered. An outstanding reference work, and a considerable scholarly achievement, but not a work recommended for leisurely reading. -- Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. A splendid book. It combines impressively detailed research with breadth of perception. . . . [Rodger] has prepared an admirable historical record that will be read and reread in the years ahead. -- London TimesCrucial to Britain's survival as a nation was its mastery of the waves, recounted in vivid detail, with actors from cabin boys to kings. -- A New York Times Notable Book of 1998; New York Times Book , 6 December 1998