

## Steam Pinnace – Newsletter – July 2023



### Update

Edited report from Brian Mansfield: The second part of the 199 boiler test was arranged on 21<sup>st</sup> June and in recognition that a lot of work has taken place, not least in putting proper supporting feet under the forward end, improving its support and position. John and Tom raised steam the day before, reducing the time to 'lift off' for today's inspection. The safety valves were proved to lift as required (photo overleaf), thus protecting over pressure, similarly supporting feed pumps and ancillary machinery passed inspection. Not quite clean bill of health, however, as Inspector Andrew detected a small leak on the boiler front where the end cap is riveted to the steam drum (photo below) The leak is small and not obvious in the photo, it is in the stained seam area.



In view of the age of the boiler he considers it wise to drain down and when cold he will inspect the inside of the drum, hopefully all that will be required is to re-caulk the seam (done with a hammer and chisel, but by an expert – while these boilers are made very robustly the movements could have caused slight movement of the seam/caulking) but as he says - we do have to check it is not due to a crack by a rivet. While unlikely it cannot be ruled out without closer inspection. Hopefully this can all be arranged this month, perhaps delaying our first Solent trip until next month. There are a couple of other minor recommendations these are all self-fix (reseat an olive connection in the steam whistle supply pipework and change two steel elbows in the blow down lines, as these are not steam pressure rated.

After doubling up on the fore-spring we ran the engine, it is always good to give it a turn, but primarily to flush and test the condenser after its Fernox treatment. It still has a slight leak, exactly how to stop the leak is an ongoing debate, and it was considered a further Fernox clean, this time of the condensate side would be beneficial. Our engineers will attend to this leak correction along with the further descaling treatment; while any leak is far better fixed, the condenser leak in itself, is not a show stopper.

You may think this amounts to a busy day: it was. The seaman team were working on 199's appearance in view of the BH4 impending open day on 1<sup>st</sup> July. The Chippy's were adjusting the fit of teak that will be let in to replace the damaged gunnel and there is professional varnish work underway on the rear cabin. Former Coxswain Reg came to help with the Seamanship programme but we did find time for coffee and cake.... and when all the workers were clear the decks were given a saltwater wash down.





Above - Safety valves being floated VIC56 in the background - photo by John Sheehan.

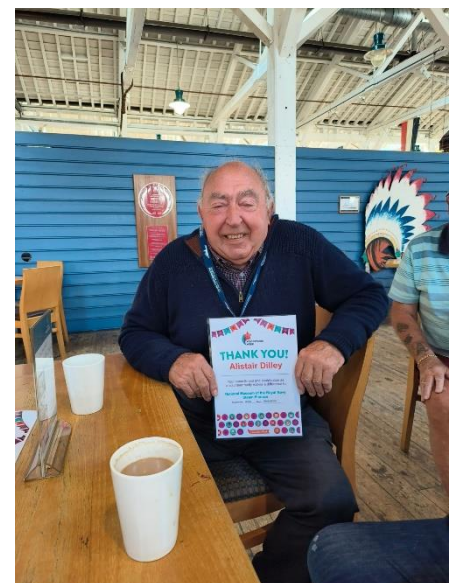
**National Museum of the Royal Navy Volunteer Thank You Certificates** were handed out to crew members during Volunteer Week. The team had been heavily involved in preparing the pinnacle for the Gosport Marine Festival.



**Brian Mansfield**



**Paul Woodman**



**Alistair Dilley**



**Bruce Prior and John Sheehan**



### **Grounded but not aground!**

Despite the accolades above, around 23 June the steam pinnace was advised that the NMRN have requested that we suspend all activities on the Steam Pinnace whilst a review is carried out on our Health and Safety and other relevant policies to ensure that they comply with those in force within the NMRN itself. This suspension will include any operational activity, including static public exhibition; repairs, general and engineering maintenance. We will be allowed to continue with rounds insofar as they are necessary to safeguard the vessel herself. We have been assured that the review process will be carried out as speedily as possible". A meeting has been arranged for 6<sup>th</sup> July.

### **What's on**

**Evesham River Festival - 8 July** Sankey Marina <https://theeveshamriverfestival.uk/>

**The 44th Thames Traditional Boat Festival, 14th - 16th July** Fawley Meadows Henley-on-Thames RG9 2HY. . <https://www.tradboatfestival.com/>

**Bristol Harbour Festival 14-16 Jul 2023** Bristol Floating Harbour <https://www.bristolharbourfestival.co.u>

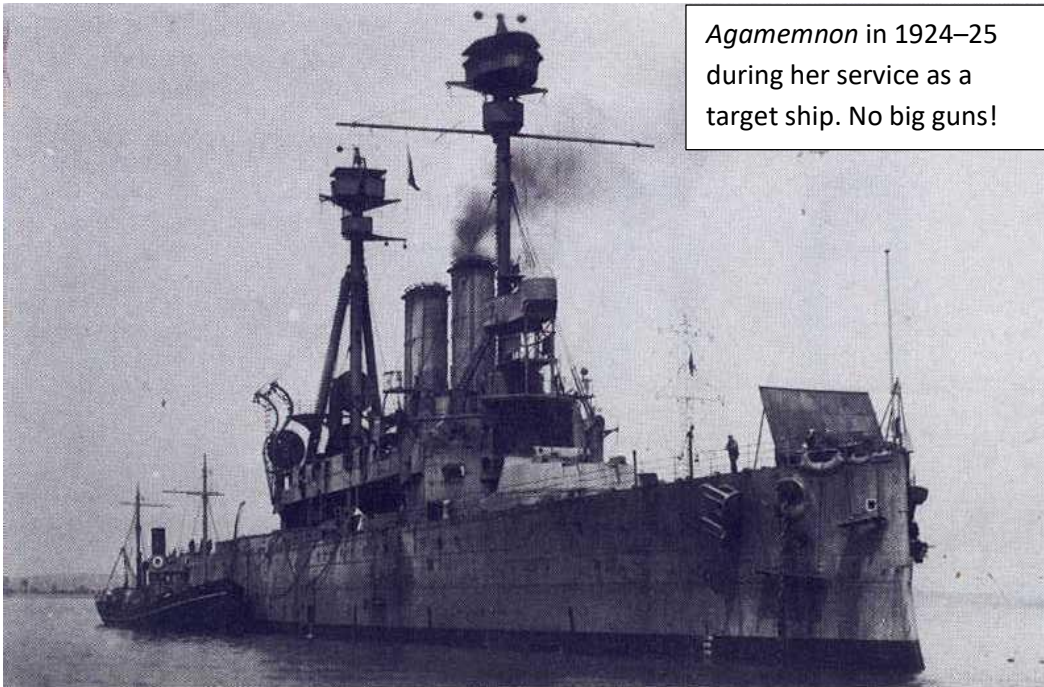




## Early Radio Controlled Warships

Heather Johnson, Librarian (Special Collections) National Museum of the Royal Navy, has kindly provided some information and references on very early radio control of warships:

“The only World War One radio controlled boat to survive is CMB 9/ DCB 1. It will be at the traditional boat festival in July <https://www.tradboatfestival.com/>. Surviving radio control equipment for these drones is in the Imperial War Museum archives. They also have a transmitter that was developed by the same group for Commander Brock for the remote controlled mines used on the raid on the Mole at Zeebrugge in 1918. There was a secret DCB Section at Calshot in 1917 and 1918. They converted CMBs, Motor Launches and Submarine C4 for radio control from 'mother' aircraft. These developments are the reason the RN were able to convert HMS Agamemnon to radio control in 1921. HMS C4 involvement in the DCB programme is

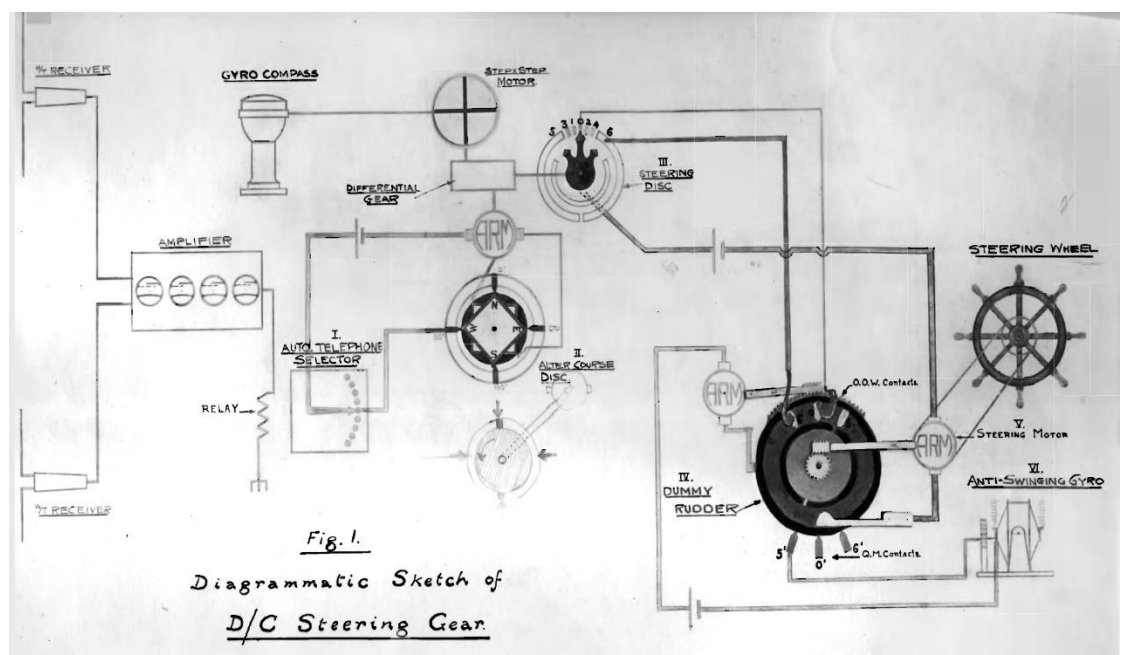


*Agamemnon* in 1924–25 during her service as a target ship. No big guns!

probably the reason this was the only C Class not to be scrapped at the end of the war. Information courtesy of Steve Mills (author 'The Dawn of the Drone') More detail has been put on Wikipedia.”

Agamemnon was part of the British squadron that went to Constantinople in November 1918 following the armistice. She returned to the United Kingdom in March 1919, where she paid off at Chatham Dockyard and went into reserve on 20 March.

In September 1918, the Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet, Admiral David Beatty, had called for a large target to be provided which would allow realistic gunnery practice for the battleships of the Grand Fleet, which had seen little action since the Battle of Jutland in 1916. Tests against armour plate in 1919 demonstrated that firing 15-inch (381-mm) guns at any pre-dreadnought would sink her quickly, but the use of a pre-dreadnought for target practice and tests by



Agamemnon RC steering gear system. See photo overleaf.

guns of 6-inch calibre or smaller seemed practical. At first, the pre-dreadnought Hibernia was suggested for target duties, but ultimately Agamemnon became available and was selected instead.

Based on the earlier experience in Radio Control British drone weapons Agamemnon was modified at Chatham Dockyard for use as a target ship between 6 December 1920 and 8 April 1921. The ship was rewired for radio control and stripped; the 12-inch turrets remained aboard, but all of her guns and their equipment were removed, as were her torpedo equipment, flying deck, sea cabins, main derrick and boat equipment, lower conning tower, masts and yards, most of her crew amenities, and other unnecessary equipment. Unnecessary hatches, coamings, scuttles, and lifts were removed

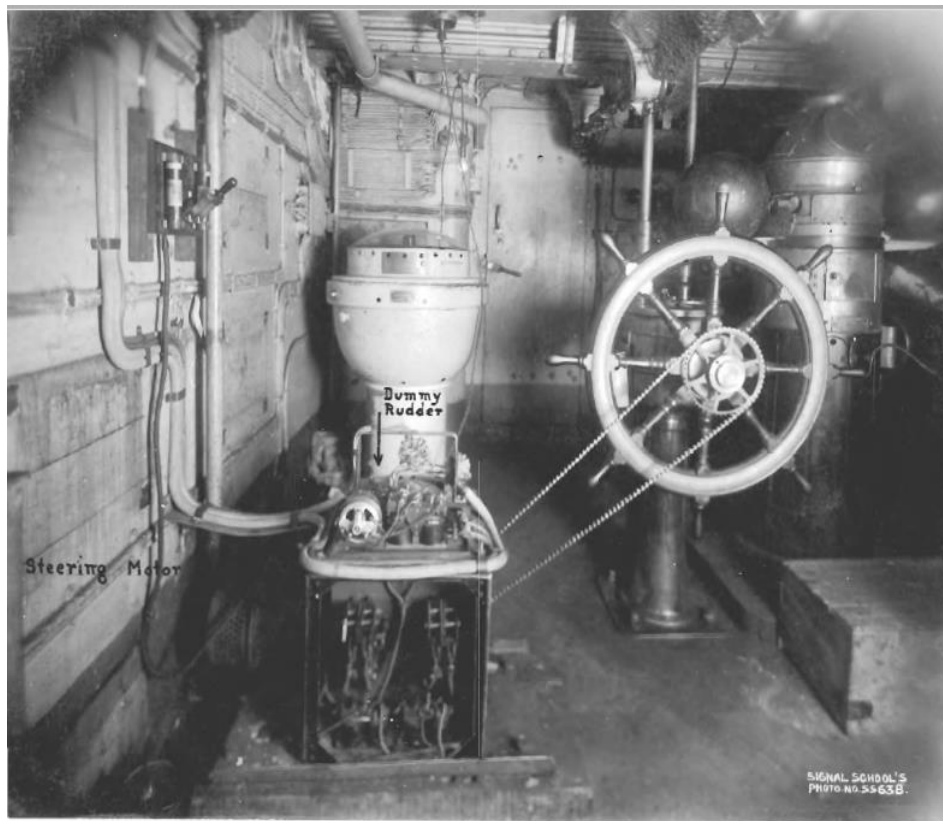


Fig. 22.  
LOWER G.T. IN H.M.S. "AGAMEMNON"

Steering motor and wheel

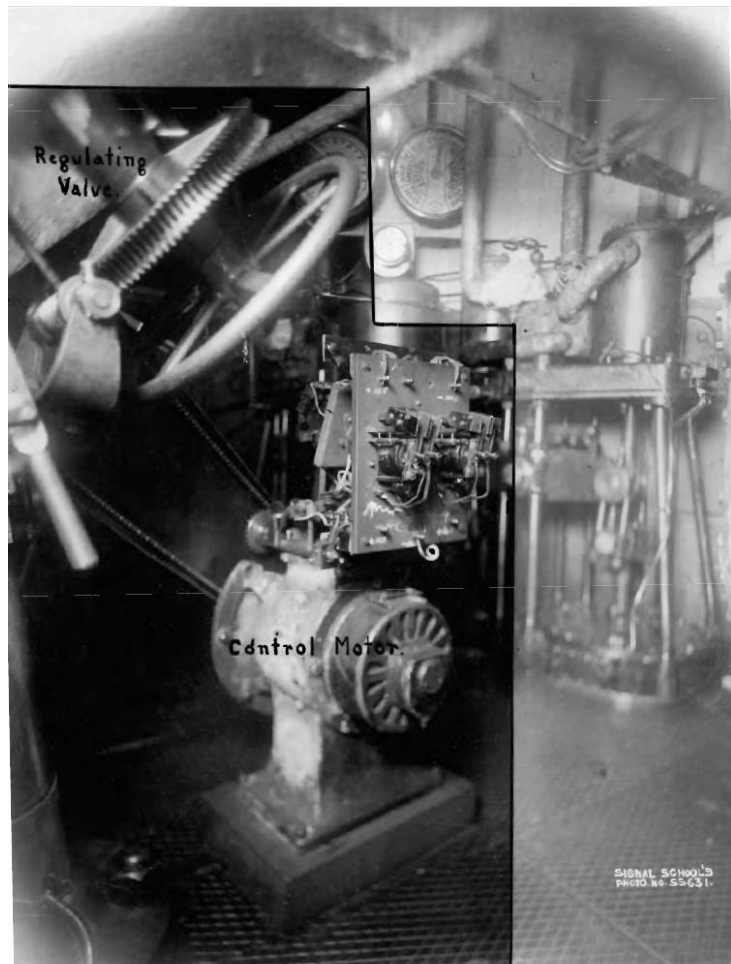


Fig. 10.  
MAIN STEAM VALVE CONTROL.

and plated over, and she was ballasted differently than she had been as a battleship. It was not intended to sink her, so she was assigned a crew of 153 to maintain and operate her when she was not under fire.

Agamemnon's first target service took place before her modifications were completed. On 19 March 1921, she was exposed to a cloud of poisonous gas to determine the effect of gas on a battleship. It was found that gas could penetrate the ship via her various openings, but the ship had not been sealed against gas before the trial and no accurate results applicable to a commissioned battleship could be obtained. On 21 September, she was subjected to machine-gun fire by strafing aircraft. These trials showed that such strafing could harass a battleship, but could not impair her fighting or steaming capabilities, and helped to determine protection for bridge personnel.

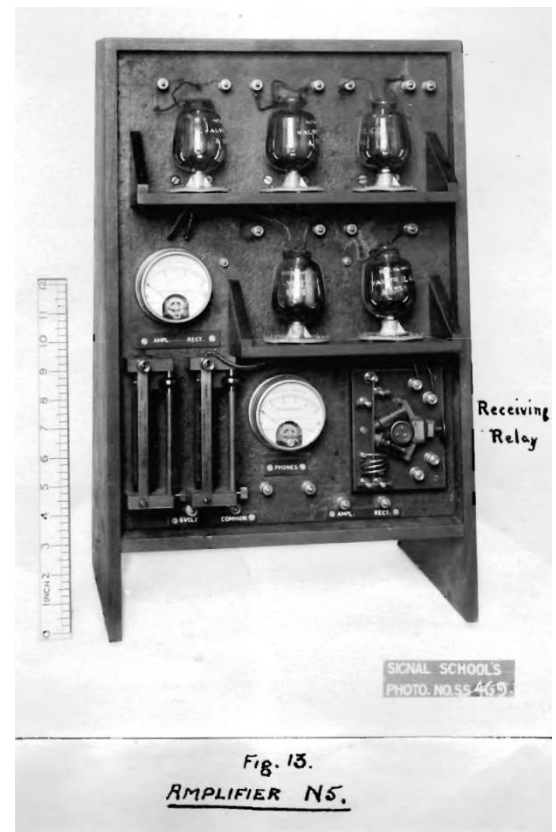
She was also used to test the vulnerability of battleships to 6-inch, 5.5-inch and 4.7-inch rounds fired at her by ships such as the battlecruisers Renown and Repulse while she manoeuvred under



radio control. These tests showed that ships protected as well as Agamemnon, such as the later dreadnoughts, would suffer damage to their upper works if struck by such shells, but would not have their steaming or fighting capability seriously impaired even by numerous smaller-calibre hits. Agamemnon was replaced in 1926 by HMS Centurion when this King George V-class dreadnought battleship was converted to Remote Radio Control. Agamemnon was relieved as target ship by the dreadnought Centurion in December 1926. By then the last British pre-dreadnought battleship in existence, she was sold to J Cashmore of Newport, South Wales, on 24 January 1927 for scrap, and departed Portsmouth Dockyard on 1 March to be broken up at Newport.

By Clive Kidd: The NMRN has a folder on Agamemnon that came from the Collingwood Heritage Collection (by editor – but at a 19 page .pdf it is too long to insert here). The Germans successfully used remote controlled boats to attack monitors off the Belgian coast in WW1. Their control was by wire paid out from the shore and guided by aerial observation.

By editor – thanks to Heather, Clive and Wikipedia. Radio control of a steam battleship underway circa 1920 is an incredible achievement.



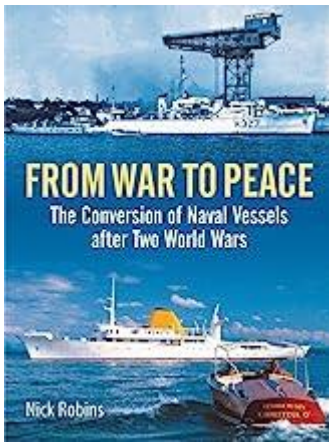
### More Boat Cleaning!

An Imperial War Museum painting found by Clive Kidd. WRNS Officer and Ratings. Boat-cleaning at the Coastal Motor Boat Base, Haslar Creek, Portsmouth 1919. Artist - Arthur David McCormick, Reprinted under IWM's Non Commercial Licence.



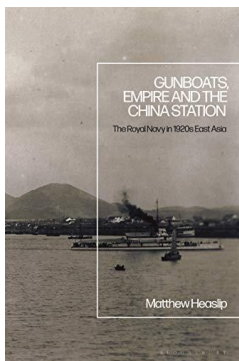
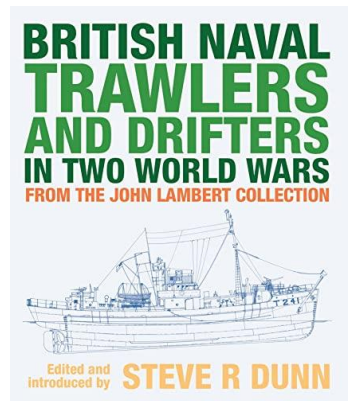
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## Book List 158



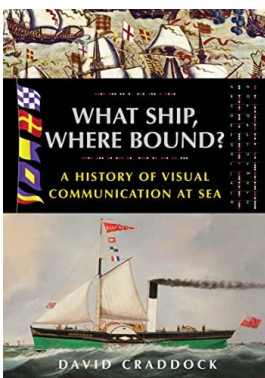
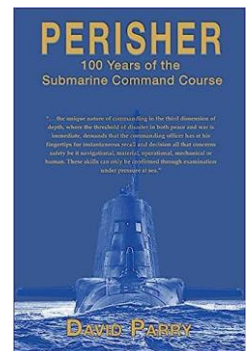
**From War to Peace: The Conversion of Naval Vessels After Two World Wars** Nick Robins; • Seaforth Publishing 2021; 176 pages; ISBN-10 : 1399009583 ISBN-13 : 978-1399009584. The book tells the story of the adaptation from White Ensign to Red Ensign, and to flags of other nations, of the numerous classes of naval ships mainly built during the two world wars and surplus to requirements with the advent of peace. The most successful classes to transfer to the merchant service were the Hunt-class minesweepers of the Great War, Landing Craft, Tank, the salvage tugs of World War Two, and the wooden-hulled Fairmile launches which became familiar at seaside resorts in the 1950s and '60s; and, of course, the MFV classes that helped the fishing industry in the postwar years.

**British Naval Trawlers and Drifters In Two World Wars: The John Lambert Collection** Steve Dunn; Seaforth Publishing 2021; 208 pages; ISBN-10 : 1526794861 ISBN-13 : 978-1526794864. John Lambert was a renowned naval draughtsman, whose plans were highly valued for their accuracy and detail by modelmakers and enthusiasts. Trawlers and drifters served in both world wars in their thousands; and, in their tens of thousands, so did their fishermen crews. Indeed, these humble craft were the most numerous vessel type used by the Royal Navy in both wars. Steve Dunn examines the ships themselves, their design, construction, arming, operations and development; and he also relates how the trawlermen and skippers came to be part of the Royal Navy, describes the roles they played, the conditions they served under and the bravery they showed.



**Gunboats, Empire and the China Station: The Royal Navy in 1920s East Asia** Matthew Heaslip; Bloomsbury Academic; NIPPOD edition 2022); 316 pages; ISBN-10 : 135021356X ISBN-13 : 978-1350213562. Examining Britain's imperial outposts in 1920s East Asia, this book explores the changes and challenges affecting the Royal Navy's third largest fleet, the China Station, as its crews fought to hold back the changing tides of fortune. Bridging the gap between high level naval strategy and everyday imperial culture, it highlights the importance of the China Station to the British imperial system, foreign policy and East Asian geopolitics, while also revealing the lived experiences of these imperial outposts.

**Perisher: 100 Years of the Submarine Command Course** David Parry; The Choir Press 2022; 380 pages; ISBN-10 : 1789633206 □ ISBN-13 : 978-1789633207. The Royal Navy's Submarine Command Course, or 'Perisher', is a unique course, training, assessing and qualifying officers for submarine command which is, itself, unique, challenging and demanding; the epitome of mission command, with no succour, referral or support in a continuously threatening environment. It is therefore essential that those 'in command' are proven to be worthy and capable of their appointment.



**What Ship, Where Bound? A History of Visual Communication at Sea** David Craddock; Seaforth Publishing 2021; 96 pages; ISBN-10 : 1526784823 ISBN-13 : 978-1526784827. David Craddock describes the development of visual communication at sea. He discusses the reasons and purposes of different signal codes in their times, but also pointing to their limits which fostered innovation. The selection of episodes on the less successful use of signals is fascinating as here David Craddock reaches out beyond the repetition of the well-known Trafalgar-signal-story. Depicting different codes systems, the book is helpful when history meets art. If one has ever tried to decipher the flags' meanings in 19th and early 20th century ship portraits, "What ship, where bound?" will give a very well written introduction.