

attempts and a summary is made of how this progressed from the early 16th to the late 19th century towards the style of charts we recognise today.

The reader is then taken, in six delightfully illustrated chapters, on a virtual passage around the British Isles viewed from the perspective of the navigator using early charts and plans. The voyage begins in the Thames before progressing along the South Coast and then north through the Irish Sea to describe the West Coast of England and Wales. Diverting in the fifth chapter to encompass the whole coast of Eire and Northern Ireland, the next describes the charting of Scotland and the outer Isles. The last chapter takes the mariner southwards, along the East Coast of England to a final landfall in Harwich. Each section of coast is geographically and anecdotally described, somewhat in the style of a modern tourist guide, but nonetheless interesting for that. Chapters are all generous-

ly interspersed with plates copied from archived charts and other material, which illustrate historical facts or interesting features that the author has highlighted. Each illustration is separately supported with short, factual and very well referenced notes. The book can therefore be read from cover to cover or dipped into at any point for either reference or simply enjoyment.

After a career in the Royal Navy, in 1996 John Blake initiated the licensing of material in the UK Hydrographic Office archives. Having gained a lot of inside knowledge from doing this he is clearly making good use of this experience in his book. He has made a genuine contribution to the record and perhaps more importantly, to extending public awareness of the fine history of hydrography in the British Isles.

Reviewed by Paul Edge

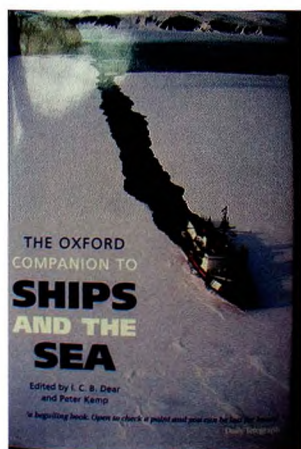
Book Review

The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea

By I.C.B. Dear and Peter Kemp, Published by Oxford University Press (Second edition 2005, First edition 1976), ISBN 0- 9-860616-8 / ISBN 978-0-19-860616-1

Since its first edition in 1976 the Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea has been a source of both delight and practical information to its wide spectrum of readers.

These range from professionals in all marine fields, through yachtsmen and other recreational sea users, to those who simply have an inter-



est in the sea, its people and the English language - of which the sea is an inherent source.

The strength of the book lies in its clarity of explanation, frequently taking a subject which is intrinsically complex yet describing it in understandable terms and clear illustration. Its

excellent cross referencing system allows the reader to broaden his or her knowledge of the subject from other sections of the text and to expand this externally via the references which follow many entries.

Where there is not consensus on a particular entry – a simple example being the use of ‘plain’ or ‘plane’ sailing - all views are represented.

The breadth of expertise which has contributed to the entries ensures that they cover all primary historical and present day areas of interest – from Amerigo Vespucci, through satellite navigation sys-

tems, to the current variations in North Sea cod distributions. In these respects the sea and its uses are constantly evolving; marine transport through systems are expanding around the world and the sea itself is becoming an increasingly valuable renewable energy resource. Today’s Exclusive Economic Zones reflect the high value which national administrations place on their contiguous waters.

This book will find its way to many desks, bookshelves and bedside tables.

Reviewed by Captain Colin Brown