

**Sanders Marble, *British Artillery of the Western Front in the First World War*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 285pp. ISBN: 978-1-4094-1110-9. Hardback. £85.00.**

Sanders Marble's latest book *British Artillery of the Western Front in the First World War* looks to analyse the changing evolution of how the armies of Great Britain utilised artillery from August 1914 until the ceasefire over four years later. He succeeds in this task by looking at the role artillery played in the ever-changing Western Front.

*British Artillery of the Western Front in the First World War* is an analysis of decisions at the strategic and operational level, and how those decisions played out in real operational terms. The author analyses real case studies, by looking at every major campaign to demonstrate how real evolution occurred.

The book fills a specialized, but large, hole in current historiography. By looking at how artillery use changed over time, the work answers many questions posed by historians. The work is well researched through a blend of archival sources, primarily the National Archives and the Imperial War Museum. These sources are supported and coloured by journal and diary accounts, as well as memoirs and a wide swath of secondary sources. This gives a well-resourced and concise presentation of the evolution of artillery and their causal effects at all levels.

In regards to weaknesses, the book lacks a well-developed index. Although most assets are mentioned in full detail, the evolution of trench mortars into artillery tactics, and, more importantly, their effects are only casually discussed. This is mentioned as outside the parameters of study in the introduction, although its absence does appear to skew the underlying study.

As well, the work tends to favour the Royal Field Artillery to the Royal Garrison Artillery and Royal Horse Artillery. This is most apparent in the background chapter, although even during the war the author has much less to say about the more technical Royal Garrison Artillery. The book mentions the increasing importance of heavy artillery, but analysis is not as heavy in terms of the evolution of the regiment that used it and how they fit in as a whole into the Royal Regiment of Artillery.

Probably the most worthwhile part of this work is the analysis of how personal relationships, issues, and conflict affect how large organizations such as the Royal Artillery function, think, and evolve. This human element forms much of the analysis of what, and more importantly, why, artillery tactics, strategy, and composition change from 1914 until 1918.

The book is a recommended reading for scholars of the Western Front, Royal Artillery, or students of military thought and evolution. It is also of great use for those who study learning curve and how systems create and sustain momentum. The book is a concise, yet expansive, work.

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**Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2012. 263pp. Index. ISBN 978-1-8438-3698-8. Hardback. Price £70.00.**

The historiography of the Royal Navy in the first two decades of the twentieth century is an active and contentious field. It is, therefore, surprising that the subject of war planning has been under-represented in the scholarship. Until recently, historians have tended to limit discussions of war planning to that directly relevant to financial, technical or other elements of naval policy. This has partly resulted from difficulties in interpreting the complex and frequently contradictory statements by the Admiralty and leading naval figures on the subject; a problem exacerbated by the limitations of the surviving archival collections. Shawn Grimes' book positions itself directly in this gap in the literature, taking naval planning, and the bodies which conducted it, as its subject.

*Strategy and War Planning* begins by exploring Royal Navy planning for war with the Dual Alliance of France and Russia, before rapidly moving on to look at the rise of Germany as the key threat envisaged by the Naval Intelligence Department. Grimes highlights the continuity which runs through British planning from the late 1880s until the outbreak of war, something that, he argues, derives from a combination of structural and personal factors. In particular the author emphasises the connections between the naval intellectual renaissance of the 1880s and 1890s and the development of British war planning. As is mentioned above, naval planning is difficult subject matter to pin down, and Grimes does well to offer a detailed survey of developments across the period. At each step in this process the author goes to considerable lengths to demonstrate that the plans were taken seriously by the Royal Navy and were not, as is frequently suggested, a mere smokescreen. This is achieved by linking planning with exercises, manoeuvres and construction to present a more holistic picture of how the service viewed planning issues. This clear narrative of British naval planning has, until now, been largely absent from the literature and represents the book's greatest strength. In providing this picture, *Strategy and War Planning* helps to lay to rest the old argument that the Royal Navy did not have plans