

the court. But this does not detract from what is otherwise a splendid volume, produced to very high standards by the Irish Manuscripts Commission.

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*De Ruyter Dutch Admiral* by Jaap R. Bruijn, Ronald Prud'homme van Reine and Rolof van Hovell tot Westerflier

Karwansary Publishers, Rotterdam, 2011, €70 (hb)

280 pages, with numerous colour and black-and-white illustrations, bibliography, index  
ISBN 978-94-90258-03-0

The 400th anniversary of the birth of Michiel de Ruyter, the greatest Dutch admiral, gripped the Netherlands in 2007. Much like Nelson in 2005 the great man was honoured with several new biographies and a fleet review. This striking new book, the launch vehicle for a series on 'Protagonists of History', stresses de Ruyter's international role, and brings together a remarkable team of experts from seven countries to address a range of subjects from Dutch trade with North Africa to the memorialization of the hero in seventeenth-century Dutch culture. These divergent approaches enhance the reader's understanding of the context in which the great man operated.

Jaap Bruijn introduces the book, and provides key chapters dealing with the maritime world of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic and the constellation of flag officers it employed. These provide critical settings for de Ruyter's career. Ronald Prud'homme van Reine's essays on the construction of a landmark in naval biographical writing, Gerald Brandt's *Het Leven en Bedryf van den Heere Michiel de Ruyter* of 1687, and the portraiture emphasize de Ruyter's impact on contemporary Dutch society. Brandt's biography ran to over a thousand pages, and broke the mould of exemplary lives based on Tacitus. Brandt had written studies of the Reformation, and lives of the great historian Hooft and the poet Vondel, works that melded national and personal history around the critical role of the hero. Brandt's book, quickly translated

into French and German, has long occupied a distinguished place in Dutch letters, akin to Southey's *Life of Nelson*, an endlessly reprinted and re-read classic. The inner history of the Admiral's portraits reveals a man careful with his money, using cheaper regional artists rather than market leading Amsterdam painters, and a taste for restrained display suited to a man of simple but strong Calvinist faith. That said he commissioned surprisingly large numbers of such images, of himself, his wife and family. Modest he may have been, but Michiel de Ruyter took some pleasure in his image, staring out from left to right, baton in hand sword on hip, and suitably armoured for the fray. Karim Bejjüt's study of Dutch commerce and diplomacy in North Africa takes a distinctively modern perspective, avoiding the dangers of Orientalism, breaking down the old 'Barbary' monolith to stress the positive interaction of the Dutch with key local players in Morocco, in contrast to more confrontational contact with Algiers. De Ruyter spent more than a decade trading and negotiating in these waters before the Second Anglo-Dutch War brought him into permanent naval service. The late Jan Glete's examination of the Dutch Republic as a Great Power explains some of the secrets of Dutch success. A country with less than 2 million people managed to mobilize enough military and naval power to fight Spain and France, both of which had nearly 10 times the population. Glete argues that this success was built on the localized administrative structures so often criticized by historians of state building. With five Admiralties Dutch commercial operators could influence decision-making at a local level, and share in political power. High taxes were achieved by consent, not coercion. They were used to pay soldiers and sailors regularly, and feed them as well as possible. Little wonder so many foreigners volunteered. If the Dutch navy reflected the state that it served; its success demonstrated the validity of the political model. The way in which this was done is ably explained in John Hattendorf's treatment of navies, strategy and tactics, which emphasizes how quickly the Dutch responded to the shifting nature of naval warfare in the mid century. David Davies' examination of British perspectives on the great Admiral, the

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'Good Enemy', opens with the interesting fact that he spoke English, and some Irish as well. De Ruyter quickly became a household name in England, a paragon of naval virtues to be contrasted with unworthy English officers. His greatest English admirer was a fellow warrior, James, Duke of York, the Lord High Admiral. After his death de Ruyter could be held up as an exemplary figure, receiving an English biography in 1677. Niels Probst stresses the key role de Ruyter played in saving the Danish Kingdom in 1659–60, when Swedish attempts to conquer Denmark and close the Baltic to foreign fleets posed an existential threat to a maritime trading economy that depended on imported timber, hemp and tar. Henk de Heijer's study of de Ruyter's West Africa campaign of 1664–5 focuses on the opening stages of the Second Anglo-Dutch War. In a rapid, effective and economical campaign de Ruyter recovered the Dutch trade posts, and the African trade. Michel Vergé-Franceschi's study is the only one that leaves de Ruyter on the sidelines. It is more concerned with Abraham Duquesne, the French Admiral who defeated de Ruyter in his last battle, and the development of French naval policy under Louis XIV and Colbert. Mortally wounded in battle off Augusta, de Ruyter died at sea, off Syracuse, in April 1676 aged 69. All maritime nations paid tribute to the dead hero who, as Davies notes, stopped off at Spithead, as Nelson would, on his journey to Amsterdam's Nieuw Kirke. This new publisher has maintained the high standards that have long been a hallmark of Dutch printing. The text is heavily illustrated with full colour plates, mainly contemporary works by Dutch artists, portraits, seascapes, battle pieces, maps and three dimensional artefacts that testify to the rich material culture of navies and commerce in the Dutch Golden Age. The editors and authors have produced a book, rather than a collection of essays, that will be essential reading for students of seventeenth century navies, states, commerce and warfare.

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*The Court of Admiralty of Ireland 1575–1893*  
by Kevin Costello

Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2011, €55 (hb)  
322 pages, with 8 colour plates, bibliography,  
index  
ISBN 978-1-84682-243-8

The story of the Irish admiralty court is inherently interesting to maritime historians. Much has been made of the severe disabilities under which Irish seaborne commerce struggled before Ireland's constitutional reforms of the late eighteenth century. The Cattle Acts (1663, 1671), the Woollen Act (1699), and the various incarnations of England's Acts of Trade and Navigation (beginning with the Staple Act of 1663) are well known to students of the tortured Anglo-Irish relationship. Less well known is the vitality of Irish trade. Ireland enjoyed a well established commercial relationship with the European continent where expatriate Irish trading communities figured prominently in the Atlantic ports of France, Spain, and the Low Countries. Irish trading vessels were a regular presence in the ports of Great Britain, and in the western Atlantic, huge quantities of Irish beef, pork, butter, and other salted provisions arrived aboard Irish, British, North American, as well as French, Spanish, Dutch, and Danish bottoms. Even less is known about the legal infrastructure in Ireland that supported commercial life. This is the subject of Kevin Costello's *The Court of Admiralty of Ireland*. Costello is a lecturer in the school of law at University College Dublin and the author of *The Law of Habeas Corpus in Ireland* (2006).

The book consists of six chapters. In the first, 'Establishment, 1575–1660', Costello deals with the court's innocuous beginnings in a period of turmoil and uncertainty in Ireland. Chapter 2, 'The Court of Admiralty of Ireland in the later Stuart period, 1660–1710', carries the story from the Restoration through consolidation of political power in Ireland by the victors of the Williamite War (1689–92). The following chapter deals with the terms in office of two notorious Admiralty judges: the 'indolent' Dr Hawkshaw and 'mad' Dr Baillie. In 'Constitutional re-organization and public scandal, 1756–1830', chapter four, the court is buffeted by dramatic political and social