

Notices

National Inventory of Documentary Sources in the United Kingdom. CHADWYCK-HEALEY. Cambridge, England: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., 1984. Microfiche.

Researchers working in British history have never had the benefit of a comprehensive published guide to archival material in Great Britain. The National Register of Archives, which collects information and finding aids related to the holdings of British archives, does not publish its material; researchers must go to its office to take full advantage of the information. Chadwyck-Healey is attempting to remedy this situation by publishing a large number of finding aids from British archival institutions. According to the company's publicity material, the list of repositories now participating includes the Bodleian Library (Oxford), the Cambridge University Library, the libraries or archives of the universities of North Wales, Bristol, Hull, Keele, Liverpool, Nottingham, Reading, Sussex, and Warwick, the National Library of Scotland, National Library of Wales, House of Lords Record Office, many city and county record offices, and some miscellaneous repositories including the Labour Party Archives, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine. The finding aids are listed by repository, and there is also a detailed index to personal names and subjects.

The fiche are sold in "units" of approximately four hundred fiche each. Customers must buy the entire set, at about £750 per unit, and may not buy units out of sequence. As of November 1985, eight units had been issued, covering thirty-five repositories. The cost of these eight units would total £6000 or about \$12,000 Canadian. Unfortunately, many important British archival offices and institutions are not participating in this project. Only a small portion of the holdings of the British Library is included (Chadwyck-Healey has done a separate project on the British Library); and the Public Record Office, the Scottish Record Office, the National Register of Archives, and the National Register of Archives of Scotland are not listed at all. Perhaps they will be persuaded to join, but potential subscribers cannot be sure of this. Regrettably, in the current period of financial restraint, many research institutions will not be able to make an open-ended commitment to subscribe to this inventory, knowing they will be obligated to buy all the units and not knowing which archives will participate. This is a pity because the basic idea of the inventory is excellent and archivists will welcome the initiative. If Chadwyck-Healey wants to make this inventory attractive to the North American market, I would

recommend that they look into the possibility of selling the units separately instead of requiring purchasers to buy the entire set.

Grace Hyam
Manuscript Division
Public Archives of Canada

In All Respects Ready: The Merchant Navy and the Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945. FREDERICK B. WATT. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1985. 222 p. ISBN 0-13-453648-7 pa; 0-13-453630-4 cl. \$19.95.

In this memoir, F.B. Watt recounts the origins and activities of the Naval Boarding Service (NBS) during the Second World War. The NBS was responsible for ensuring that merchant vessels carrying essential war supplies between Canada and Britain were prepared for the long and dangerous trek across the North Atlantic. As the name implies, the NBS personnel boarded merchant ships prior to their departure from Halifax, inspected the hold to ensure the proper and safe storage of cargo, and assessed the morale and ability of captain and crew. The Boarding Service was initially established at Halifax, the main convoy assembly point in Canada, but by the middle years of the war the service was also instituted at Sydney and Vancouver.

Watt's memoirs are not, however, a thorough or complete history of the merchant navy in the Battle of the Atlantic as the subtitle promises. A large portion of the book is devoted to the early years of the boarding service and Watt's personal involvement in its success and expansion; the final two years of the war are dealt with quickly and in little detail. In spite of this, Watt adds to our knowledge of the merchant fleet in the Second World War — he paints a good picture of the tensions and dangers faced by masters and mates as they left port on yet another fearsome crossing of the Atlantic, and he is convincing. The boarding service was not glamorous war work, but it was definitely essential.

The King's Yard: An Illustrated History of the Halifax Dockyard. MARILYN GURNEY SMITH. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1985. 56 p. ISBN 0-920852-44-0 \$9.95 pa.

This is a small book consisting of seventy-two illustrations, mainly photographs, documenting the history of the Halifax dockyard from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. The author describes briefly the history of each of the structures in the yard including the residences, magazines, wharves, hospital, and so on. This is set in context with a very general overview of Canadian naval history. There are a number of typographical errors that mar the text and the narrative portions could have been edited more carefully. In spite of this, the illustrations make for good visual history and underscore the need for a fully documented history of this important naval facility.

Gunshield Graffiti: Unofficial Badges of Canada's Wartime Navy. THOMAS G. LYNCH and JAMES B. LAMB. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1984. 144 p. ISBN 0-920852-27-0 \$12.95 pa.

During the Second World War, an unusual art form developed among the ships of the Royal Canadian Navy. For reasons which are now obscure, the practice of painting