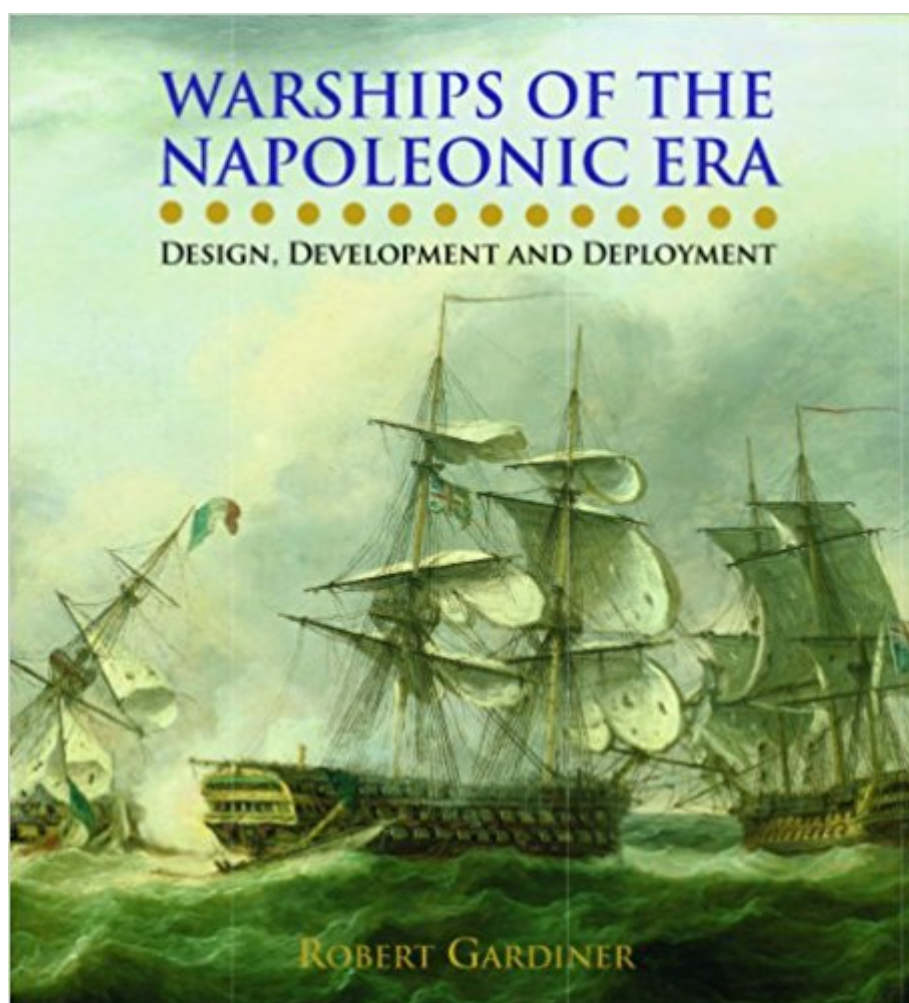




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Warships Of The Napoleonic Era: Design, Development And Deployment



Synopsis

Between 1793 and 1815 two decades of unrelenting naval warfare raised the sailing man of war to the zenith of its effectiveness as a weapon of war. Every significant sea power was involved in this conflict, and at some point virtually all of them were arrayed against Great Britain. A large number of enemy warships were captured in battle and the Admiralty ordered accurate drafts to be made of many of these prizes. Consequently, ships from the navies of France, Spain, the United States, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, as well as from Britain, were illustrated by an unprecedented variety of paintings, drawings, models or plans.

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Customer Reviews

Robert Gardiner is the author of a number of books, including *Frigates of the Napoleonic Wars* and resides in England.

I am reviewing the expanded 2011 edition of the book, not the original 1999 edition. Most of the previous reviews are of the original edition. The 2011 edition is about 12" x 12" of 168 pages. There are four pages that foldout to produce a four page spread. The text by Robert Gardiner is outstandingly informative. It explains concisely the reasons for the variety of ship types, what functions they were intended to serve, and why they were designed and built the way they were. I doubt any reader will come away with no better understanding of these ships than he started with. For me, the discussion of the sloop was especially illuminating. The illustrations are mainly of three types which is to be expected of a pre-photography era. There are a) reproductions of contemporary artwork, b) reproductions of surviving plans, and c) photographs of surviving ship models. All three

are well captioned and support the text very well. The ship plans are reproduced at many different sizes but usually big enough for the relevant details to be picked out. It would have been nice to have some indication as to how large these plans actually are and to what scale they were drawn. The aforementioned four page spread reproduces a ship plan across all four pages but indications are that the original is much larger. The book is very much a British centric one. The plan of the book is to use the Royal Navy as a more or less "standard" navy. Its various ship types are described and explained in separate chapters. Then the other navies ships, strategies, and resources are described in terms of how they differ from this "standard" in their own chapters. This has the advantage of avoiding a lot of repetition but I'm not entirely sold that it does justice to the various navies. I should point out that this book is not for the sailing navy novice. The book (and Gardiner's books in general) assume a certain degree of familiarity with the subject. Highly recommended.

An interesting book that will help me in my business model. Just a pity that the ships of Spain, France and Holland are mentioned only marginally.

Robert Gardiner has done us all a great service with his series of books on the sailing navies, and the war in which they engaged. This book is no different and is a valuable addition to the series. It is a book of sailing ship plans of all the main, and some of the smaller, belligerents of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. It is somewhat on the line of Chappelle's superb History of the American Sailing Navy, although not as comprehensive. Still, it is scholarly, has Admiralty plans of dozens of warships, from the ship of the line, through frigates, sloops, and brigs, to the lowly bomb ketches. The narrative is authoritative, and the author knows his subject matter thoroughly. This is not a book about naval warfare per se; it is a book about ship design among the different belligerents. I didn't consider it one for pleasure reading, but more of a reference work that can be a great aid to researchers, modelers, and wargamers. This book is highly recommended, but if you're looking for a book that 'telleth of much fyte,' this is not it. For that I recommend others by Robert Gardiner such as his excellent Naval War of 1812. I am looking forward to his book on frigates, which will be a welcome addition to the genre.

This book provides a good quick summary of ship types of the Napoleonic era, including a brief summary of 'enemy' (i.e. non-British) warships of the period. While the ships plans shown are valuable in and of themselves, I found the cursory treatment of non-British warships to be rather annoying. Further, when presenting plans of non-British ships, they invariably (in the case of major

combatants) showed the ships as they were fitted AFTER being taken into British service (i.e. captured) and not as originally built. While this may simply represent a limitation in the collections of historical plans available in Britain, it would have been beneficial if foreign collections had been examined for plans as well. Surely the collections in Paris, Cadiz, Amsterdam and elsewhere have extensive plans that might be included in such a book? Finally, I found the editing of this book to be execrable, with misprints and typographic errors rife throughout, and represents very shoddy work by the publishers and editing team. That said, the scarcity of non-British ship plans in the literature generally makes this book a useful addition to any Napoleonic naval literature collection

According to the book jacket, this book "reproduces original plans of all the principal types of warship employed during the Napoleonic Wars". The quality of these reproductions admittedly varies from ship to ship because of the condition of the original plans (in the files of the National Maritime Museum), but in general they quite clearly depict the hull forms and basic features of the warships in question. Perhaps two-thirds of the plans are from British shipyards, while the rest are plans made from captured ships. Thus, a good representation of the ships of France, Spain, the United States, the Netherlands, and Denmark/Sweden is made, as well as those of the Royal Navy. The emphasis is on the development of types of vessels, rather than individual warships, and Gardiner provides an informative narrative to accompany the plans. While not a book for the casual general reader, it should be of great interest to the dedicated naval enthusiast.

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