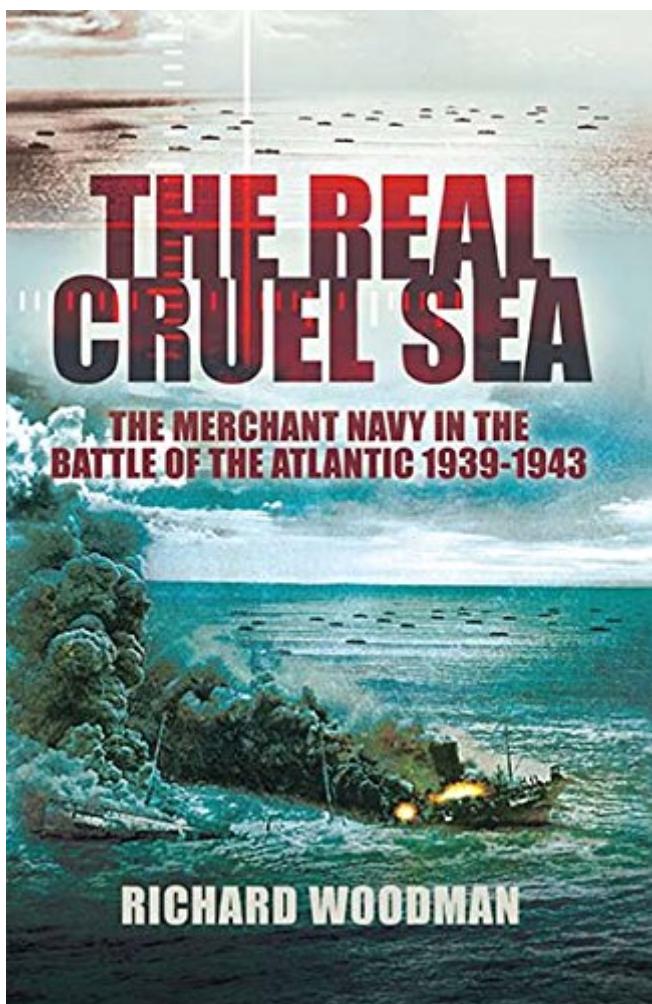


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# The Real Cruel Sea: The Merchant Navy In The Battle Of The Atlantic 1939-1943



## **Synopsis**

For the British, the Battle of the Atlantic was a fight for survival. They depended on the safe transit of hundreds of convoys of merchant ships laden with food, raw materials and munitions from America to feed the country and to keep the war effort going, and they had to export manufactured goods to pay for it all. So Britain's merchant navy, a disparate collection of private vessels, became the country's lifeline, while its seamen, officially non-combatants, bravely endured the onslaught of the German U-boat offensive until Allied superiority overwhelmed the enemy. In this important, moving and exciting book, drawing extensively on first-hand sources, the acclaimed maritime historian Richard Woodman establishes the importance of the British and Allied merchant fleets in the struggle against Germany and elevates the heroic seamen who manned them to their rightful place in the history of the Second World War.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Nearly eight hundred pages of well researched facts and opinions, a wealth of information, and an index not to be believed. I sailed as an apprentice/deck cadet for 3 years in the British Merchant Navy during the Korean War, and could identify with what it must have been like. Several of my

company's ships (Silver Line) went down back then, some with all hands. The sailors were certainly taken for granted, and their paycheck stopped when the ship went down! The narrative is filled with quotations from the diary notes of ship's masters, so it may be said that the credentials are there. The index gives the name of every single ship, and every single U-boat, and where to read about them in the text. The descriptions of starving voyages in lifeboats and rafts and maybe just floating flotsam will take your breath away. I feel the choice of title is poor. It gets buried in the power of the Monsarrat book "The Cruel Sea", which is a novel after all. This is a fact-filled reference book, and more. I have bought several copies and sent them off to friends I still have from the old days, who were connected to the sea way back. This should be a best seller, but I fear it is not. It will take the serious reader several days of concentrated reading to absorb all of the material. The real villain of the piece is Admiral Doenitz. The crafter of the U-boat war. That he escaped the hangman's noose after Nuremberg is amazing. You will be left with a feeling of wonder, and sadness, at the colossal waste of human lives. Did it have to be this way? Hitler meets Churchill. Irresistible force meets immovable rock. Thank God for Pearl Harbor! And Thank God nuclear weapons didn't exist in the early part of the war. As we enter a new era, the young generation coming up may have to learn the same lessons the same hard way. When will we ever learn. When will we ever learn.

This is the best history of the MN in WW2 I have ever read, and I have read many. The breadth and depth of detail is outstanding. As a former marine engineer I can sympathize with the constant nightmare it must have been being on watch below, and on the bridge, and the death and destruction when the torpedo struck. Great book, thanks Richard... John

This book is by Richard Woodman, who wrote the best book on the British struggle to keep Malta from falling in World War II. This book is not that good- the subject matter in this book is too big to cover in one volume. First, much of the battle will never be known- no one knows how many in the Allied or Axis armed forces or civilians were killed in this battle, for example. Mr. Woodman gives a history of the Allied merchant fleet from 1939-May, 1943. This was the period of greatest German success and the question of Great Britain's survival was at stake. No other book I am aware of concentrates on the merchant fleet, all the other books I have read concentrates on the Allied and German navies and the battles they fought. While I feel that two volumes on this topic would have been better, I feel this book is essential to anyone interested in this battle. It has my highest recommendation.

We hear and see a lot of WWII as an important part of our history. A lot of very good men and women lost their lives in those action filled years. The numbers of people, planes, ships tanks and everything was enormous. What we forget about is the part the merchant marines played in the total war effort. They were attempting to cross the Atlantic to supply England with war materials for a couple of years before we entered the war. The number of merchant ships and men lost is staggering. We pride ourselves with our ability to make new "Victory ships" but we need to remember that they were replacing ships that went down with everything and everybody. The Other Cruel Sea is the right title for this book. It chronicals so very well the merchant marine struggles. For example, can you imagine a one hundred ship convoy with ships that burn coal and wood trying to keep up with more modern ships that were themselves so very slow. It was a shooting heyday for the German wolf packs...not dissimilar to the pac games on the computer, except these were real ships and real men. This is not a work of fiction. But the fact is, the real story is a vibrant one and makes for good reading...and an important collection of real life and death chapters.

My book arrived well before the estimated time. It was in excellent condition. Haste free.

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