

## REVIEWS

If Heathcote had compared British policies towards Baluchistan with those followed in, for example, Waziristan then this book could have made an even more valuable contribution to our understanding of British frontier politics. Such an account might have started with a recognition that the Raj subsidized indigenous chiefs both along the Bolan and the Khyber Pass. It might then have shown how radical Islamic religious tendencies along with the *mullahs* and *jirgahs* played a more volatile part in Waziristan than in Baluchistan. This would then have allowed Heathcote to draw analytical conclusions as to the relative reasons for British involvement in Baluchistan. This would have demanded greater use of the (typically much underutilized) military department proceedings at the National Archives of India, New Delhi.

Such details aside, *Balochistan, the British and the Great Game* is a good addition to the frontier studies of British India and will be of interest to anyone who wishes to understand the ongoing volatility in Baluchistan today.

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**Warren FitzGerald, *All in the Same Boat: The Untold Story of the British Ferry Crew Who Helped Win the Falklands War*. London: John Blake, 2016. Appendices, photographs, 263pp. ISBN: 978-1-786-06006-8. Hardback. Price £16.99.**

Bacon butties, self-styled poufs and honky-tonk joannas make this probably the lightest book on the Falklands Conflict to date; it is certainly the only one that highlights diverse sexual orientations. The focus is the North Sea Ferries' *Norland*, whose steward and Liberace-style pianist Wendy (Roy) Gibson came to national prominence through Para Ken Lukowiak's controversial memoir, *A Soldier's Song* (1997).

*All in the Same Boat* compiles ten informal personal testimonies to create a chronological history. This is the partial tale of how a matey, 94-strong, civilian 'family' switched from chugging between their Hull homes and Zeebrugge to hosting and transporting thousands of often antagonistic military guests to the far-off South Atlantic: Naval Party 1850; 2 Para; 3 Para; and three lots of Argentinian POWs partook of the *Norland's* maternal hospitality.

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Military masculinity encountered camp *Norland* stewards – Wendy, Frankie and Mimi – and supportive shipmates enjoying that late twentieth-century phenomenon: floating ‘gay heavens’. This book records for the first time the perky tales of that unexpected aspect of war culture.

Captain Don Ellerby’s announcement on 17 April 1982 that their home was to become one of the fifty-plus STUFT ships in the Task Force begins the fifteen chronological chapters. They conclude in 2014 with the telling struggle to raise funds for a memorial to the Merchant Navy Falklands veterans, who still suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Unlike some of the commercial vessels, such as the *QE2*, the *Norland* was at risk many times because it was as close to the action as many warships. The most telling moments include when Chief Officer Bob Lough asks why the Navy is suddenly making his ship the lead vessel of three going into San Carlos Water. Chilling answer: because the harbour entrance may be mined. ‘You couldn’t deny it was good military thinking,’ comments Bob; ‘a mere passenger ferry was expendable, whereas *Fearless* and *Intrepid*, both warships, were not.’ (p. 104). Bob does not protest, indeed the crew seldom complain about the extent to which they find themselves combatants or rejected outsiders. Wendy nurtures audiences with *Tipperary* on his tinsel-garlanded piano and against the RSM’s wishes the Assistant Purser orders 2am bacon rolls just before the amphibious assault: ‘I can’t let those men go off to war without something hot inside them,’ (p. 97).

It would be a mistake to dismiss this *Norland* Falklands story as *Carry On Camping*, or *Benny Hill* meets RUSI and the *Pink Paper*. Superficial, an off-the-point chatty romp? No. This is not just a simple story of an ice-cream vs guns contestation either. Nor is it a tale of car-ferry life transposed to Wonderland. Instead it is a deceptively light evocation of a very important interface: a Dionysian carnivalesque culture meets the Apollonian military machine. The book complements John Johnson-Allen’s MN history of the conflict, *They couldn’t have done it without us* (2011), which did not have the space for such cultural riches as jokes.

The author made some mildly regrettable small decisions: no index; no references; no discussion of how participants’ narrative re-constructions of events are a complex outcome of many factors including tabloid spin and proud gay performativity; and no reference to the 2007 and 2012 commemorative events. In 2012 at Hull’s *Norland* anniversary party in Frankie’s Vauxhall Tavern members of 2 Para explained to me that they were never anti-gay, just against furtive sexuality. Wendy himself, still glittering on the piano, firmly made clear ‘I may be a pouf but I’m still a *Man*,’ meaning proud to be semi-combatant.

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Illuminated by this experience and my previous interviews with queer participants from other Falklands ships I am convinced that this is an important book in that new category: military and maritime diversity. It is as valuable as Mike Seer's *With the Gurkhas to the Falklands* (2003) for showing how war looks from a minority's viewpoint. Poignant, rich, and bravely direct it deserves to be on all maritime and Armed Forces reading lists.

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