

### Geography: Maps, Charts, Travel, Exploration, Navigation

DEREK HOWSE and NORMAN J. W. THROWER, editors, *A Buccaneer's Atlas: Basil Ringrose's South Sea Waggoner. A Sea Atlas and Sailing Directions of the Pacific Coast of the Americas, 1682*. Foreword by David B. Quinn, with special contributions by Tony A. Cimolino, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1992. xii + 314 pp. Numerous b/w plates, 1 colour plate. \$75.00. ISBN 0-520-05410-5.

In 1680, a group of English buccaneers ventured across the Isthmus of Panama from the Atlantic Ocean. No doubt following the example set by the famous privateer, Henry Morgan, their plan was to attack the city of Panama, believed to be the richest city in the New World, capture a small fleet of ships and make their fortune through pillage of the Spanish colonies along the western coast of North and Central America. The various histories of their exploits, preserved in no fewer than seventeen manuscript versions and six printed editions, became the stuff of pirate legend. Within eighteen months, the English had succeeded in causing more than four million pesos of damage to the Spanish fleet, with twenty-five ships destroyed and more than 200 Spanish sailors killed. Since Spain and England were supposedly at peace at the time, the Spanish Ambassador to London demanded that the band be sought and brought to trial. The captain, Bartholomew Sharp, and some of his fellow officers were duly charged with several counts of murder, felony and piracy. Surprising only to the Spanish Ambassador, all were acquitted 'for want of sufficient proof'.

Perhaps the greatest trophy of the whole expedition was a 'great Book full of Sea-Charts and Maps, containing a very accurate and exact description of all the Ports, Soundings, Creeks, Rivers, Capes and Coasts belonging to the South Sea [the Pacific Ocean], and all the Navigations usually performed by the *Spaniards* in that Ocean'.<sup>1</sup> It is hard to overestimate the value of these early 'waggoners'.<sup>2</sup> Information about the coasts of the New World and its harbours was jealously guarded. The growth and prosperity of the expanding empires of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries depended, in large part, on the exclusivity of information available. Indeed, as Sharp reports, in the journal he prepared for the Admiralty some time after 1686, 'the *Spaniards* cried when I gott the book (farwell South Sea now)'.<sup>3</sup>

Basil Ringrose's *Waggoner* (London, National Maritime Museum, classmark P. 32) was written about 1682. It is a compilation of material taken from the original Spanish route book captured from *El Santo Rosario* in 1681, supplemented by Ringrose's own observations. The material preserved in the *waggoner* is unique in its description of the Pacific coasts of California, roughly from Pelican Bay (41° 50'N) to Cabo San Luca (22° 52'N). Equally, the sailing directions, which accompany each chart, record Ringrose's own navigational insights, as well as advice gleaned from Captain Sharp's experience.

Both Derek Howse and Norman J. W. Thrower should be commended for producing the first printed edition of Ringrose's *Waggoner*. The scholarship, evident in the accompanying text and numerous appendices and notes, is first-rate. The reader is provided with a full transcript of the *Waggoner*, complemented by meticulous annotation, a summary description of the buccaneering campaign, a codicological examination of the manuscript itself, an informative chapter on the state of geographic and navigational knowledge *circa* 1680 and several short biographical studies of the *dramatis personae* involved in the expedition and in the resulting publications.

The only aspect of the editorial policy that one might query was the way in which the Introduction was structured, conflating a number of the versions of journal entries concerning the buccaneering adventure into one more-or-less continuous narrative. The jumps between the different prose styles and the need to insert explicatory notes into the body of the text make for very difficult reading. For example, after a lengthy passage of seventeenth-century prose, full of parentheses, we are told 'so runs, outside the brackets, the entry in Ringrose's own manuscript journal... , the words inside the brackets being the amendments of the editor of the printed version... who, if he was not Bartholomew Sharp himself, certainly had Sharp's welfare in mind' (p. 11). Also, some readers might have welcomed a bit of help with some of the more archaic navigational terms, such as 'larboard' and 'to make sufficient offing'. This reviewer, for one, has learned to be much more circumspect in using the American slang to describe a night out as 'careening' about town. Nevertheless, although the edition is relatively modest in size, it is extremely weighty in valuable insights and erudition.

Having heaped great praise on the editors, however, one might wish to note that they do seem to have been rather badly served by their publishers and printers. It might have been considered

flagrant to reproduce a full set of the *Waggoner's* charts, but when the decision was made, there should have been an understanding that it should be done well. The fresh charm of Ringrose's pen and colour-wash drawings has all but disappeared in their translation into muddy and slightly fuzzy plates. Certainly this volume was not inexpensive to produce, but the lack of quality in the plates recalls those art books that were published 'on the cheap' in the 1960s. Similarly, the designer made a rather bizarre choice in the decision neither to number nor, in several instances, to caption the plates in the accompanying text. Bits and pieces of printed and manuscript chart are lovingly scattered about, without the slightest clue of source or intent. This is particularly confusing when (as on page 7) the plates seem to have been printed in reverse order. 'Fig. p. 7, top' on pages 6 and 8 should read 'bottom'. One finishes with the feeling that had a little more thought gone into the production of the book itself, the whole experience could have been made easier—leaving the quality of the text and its apparatus to shine out more brightly.

<sup>1</sup> Quotation taken from William Dick's version of the campaign, published in John Exquemelin, *Bucaniers of America: Or, a True Account of the Most Remarkable Assaults...* (London, 1684), pp. 81–2. Cited by Howse and Thrower, p. 22. There is great confusion over Exquemelin's nationality and Christian name. The second edition of 1684 (cited by Howse and Thrower as their source) is credited to 'John Esquemeling, one of the Bucaniers', but the 1759 London and 1762 Glasgow editions list the author as 'Joseph Esquemeling'. French-language editions usually label him as 'Alexandre-Olivier Oexmelin'.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'waggoner' is an anglicization taken from the name of the Dutch cartographer, Lucas Janszoon Waghenar, who edited the first printed sea atlas in 1584.

<sup>3</sup> See London, Naval Historical Library, Ministry of Defence, Ms. 4: 'Entry for 29 July 1681'. Cited by Howse and Thrower, p. 22.

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PHILIP F. REHBOCK, editor, *At Sea with the Scientifics. The Challenger Letters of Joseph Matkin*. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1993, xii + 415 pp. \$38.00.

This is an excellent book, and certainly the most significant addition to the *Challenger* literature to be published this century.

Joseph Matkin was born in Uppingham, Rutland, in 1853, the second of four sons of a bookseller who subsequently established a successful printing and stationery firm in Oakham which remained in the family's ownership for many years. Firmly in the Victorian middle class, albeit in the second division, the young Matkin received a solid, if fairly basic, education, amply confirmed by the breadth of his interests and the quality of his writing which forms the basis of this fascinating volume.

After leaving school at 12, Matkin joined the merchant navy when he was 15, sailing to Australia twice and spending a year ashore in Melbourne. He joined the Royal Navy shortly before his seventeenth birthday, serving as ship's steward's boy on two 'conventional' naval vessels before being transferred, in November 1872, to HMS *Challenger*, then preparing for her epic three-and-a-half year scientific circumnavigation, frequently identified as marking the birth of oceanography.

By the end of the voyage he had had more than enough of naval life. Within weeks of the *Challenger's* return he retired from the service and sank into the relative obscurity of a singularly unremarkable family life and a career as a minor civil servant. Eventually, like his more illustrious *Challenger* shipmate, John Murray, he fell foul of the growth of road traffic when he was run over by a motor cycle and died in 1927. But for these few years at the beginning of his adult life, Joseph Matkin played a small part in one of the most significant scientific undertakings of the century.

The *Challenger* Expedition is one of the best documented of all voyages of exploration, for apart from the official accounts written or edited by Charles Wyville Thomson, the scientific director, and his successor, John Murray, several more personal accounts were published by the ship's officers (Spry, Campbell, and Swire) and scientists (Moseley, Buchanan, and (posthumously) von Willemoes-Suhm). As was common at the time, several other officers also kept journals which were never published. But until now, no account from the lower deck has appeared.

Matkin undoubtedly would have been aware of these literary endeavours of his 'betters', and whether inspired by these examples, or totally self-motivated, he also kept a journal throughout