

The Sloop of War 1650-1763

By Ian McLaughlan

Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2014

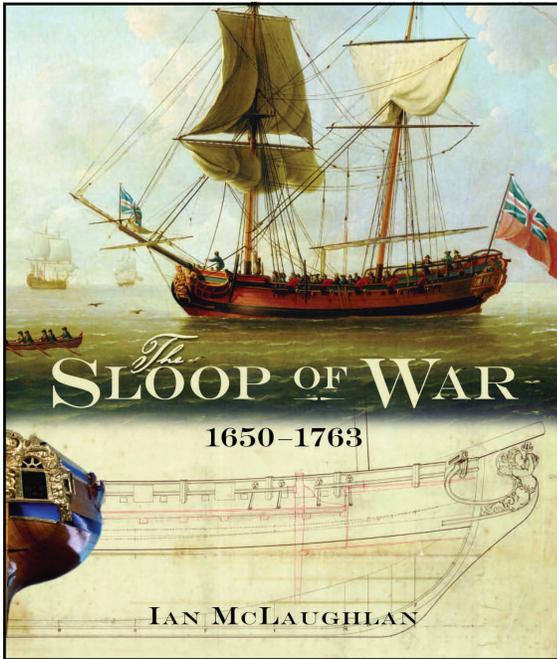
10" x 11 3/4", hardcover, 288 pages

Illustrations, drawings, appendices, notes, bibliography, index.

ISBN: 9781848321878

Distributed in the United States by Naval Institute Press,
Annapolis, Maryland

It's interesting to note that in recent years the sloop of war, as a modeling subject, has seen an increase in popularity. This is exemplified by the number of new kit releases and practicums being offered that feature these trim little vessels. Yet, for a class of warship that would become the largest in the Royal Navy, documentation concerning their origins, history, and design have been



largely neglected in favor of the dashing frigates and imposing ships of the line. It is conceivable that much of this can be attributed to the confusing and numerous variables that would define these craft. These included differing hulls, rigs, armament, operational roles, and the rank of the commanding officer.

Author, Ian McLaughlan, discusses all of these facets, and more, in *the Sloop of War 1650 – 1763*. This particular period in European history was a turbulent era punctuated by wars between England, France, Holland, and Spain. The author provides insight into the political, economic, and military aspects that precipitated these conflicts, as well as a brief history of the wars themselves. In each case, an overview of the small craft adapted, or built, to fulfill particular wartime requirements is noted. Subsequent chapters are devoted to these craft that go into greater detail, and explain how these vessels would have contributed to the evolution of the sloop of war.

The opening chapter is unique in that it deals with different types of rig, which includes sail variations, how they were deployed, and the arrangement of masts and spars.

This information can be especially useful for the model ship builder. The author feels that this departure is justified due to the fact that rig can be the defining issue when discussing sloops. This is a common theme throughout the book. A brief, yet intriguing, discussion on the stability of these craft is also provided.

Outside influences are cited often in the book, with segments being devoted to craft originating in the Mediterranean, Spain, Holland, and France. They include vessels such as double shallop fishing boats, Dutch yachts, and French privateers. An interesting analysis of French *Barque Longues* and corvettes provides a comparison to their English counterparts, with an emphasis on how the philosophies of the rival navies often influenced the design and use of these ships.

An unexpected surprise is the appearance of the bomb vessel and fireship in this book. The author admits that including them in the 'sloop' family may be open to question, but their occasional cruising role justifies that distinction. The developmental and operational history of each vessel type is provided, as well some of the unique construction details these vessels possessed.

This book is profusely illustrated. Ian McLaughlan is also an accomplished artist, and many of the author's own line drawings and watercolor sketches appear throughout. These drawings are especially beneficial in discussions concerning earlier craft where less documentation exists. Photographs of contemporary models and paintings, all black and white, as well as numerous plans from the National Maritime Museum are also provided. An added plus is the fact that each NMM draught is accompanied by the plan's Product Code, which can be searched online. This is especially useful information if the reader is interested in obtaining a copy, or wants an unimpeded view of a featured draught that happens to extend into the gutter of the book.

The Sloop of War 1650-1763 should not be considered a "one stop" reference for the model ship builder, since it was not intended to provide an in-depth anatomy of these ships. However, useful information is provided in the appendices that provide armament characteristics, mast and spar dimensions, a selection of sloop plans, and a brief description on how to make a rudimentary interpretation of these plans. Considering the extensive number of possibilities available, this will most certainly help in choosing a subject.

One might think that a book of this type can be a bit "dry" at times, but that is not the case. With his insightful comments and astute observations, Ian McLaughlan will keep the reader engaged as he traces the evolution of this important warship. Historians, naval enthusiasts, and model ship builders will find this book to be entertaining, as well as informative. *The Sloop of War 1650-1763* is highly recommended.

Reviewed by
Bob Filipowski