



Flying The Flag

British victories over our European partners

By John Taylor QC

Book Review

Mark Baillie - Literary Editor Salisbury Review

We need reminding more and more what British means, how our history is evolutionary and how our patriotism is or was so different from European (and now Scottish) nationalism: love of country rather than hatred, envy or resentment of other countries. Monsieur Chauvin was, of course, French. This is an internal social problem as well as an international political one as we become subsumed into the post-democratic mandarin of the EU, so QC and gifted amateur historian John Taylor wanted a list of British victories over what are now called our European partners, that dangerous euphemism for rivals. He could not find one so he made his own. Oozing charm from every pore.

If, like me, you are a bit vague about the Battle of Kentish Knock, the capture of Havana or the Battle of the Herrings, you need this thorough but succinct and lively guide. If, like me, you think you know a bit about El Alamein or the Lines of Torres Vedras, you will learn or be reminded of details of context and action.

Taylor opens with a sensitive and sensible essay on patriotism and his sensitivity is reflected in the absence of any alleged successes against our American cousins in their

War of Independence (not that there were many but he includes two good naval victories against the French, the real enemy). He also excludes individual World War I land battles, all subsumed into Armistice Day, a commemoration of sacrifice but not a celebration. His description of the low shenanigans of the Versailles Treaty shows that the armistice barely counts as a victory, just a lull while Germany's resentment could be restoked.

There are bound to be mistakes of fact or interpretation here and there: if you want full history, there is a thorough bibliography. This and the indices mean you can use it any way you want, selecting the battles of your favourite regiment or ship or selecting the ones that you feel changed the course of history. Use it as a calendar reminder, a reference book or a spine-stiffener for yooof and federalists (it is heavy enough to thump them with).

Best of all, *Flying The Flag* is the ideal present, for Christmas, birthday or St George's Day. The recipient will immediately dip in and get hooked, rather than putting it aside with the rest, and it can be used at any time, in whole or in part, throughout the year and every year. No batteries needed.

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