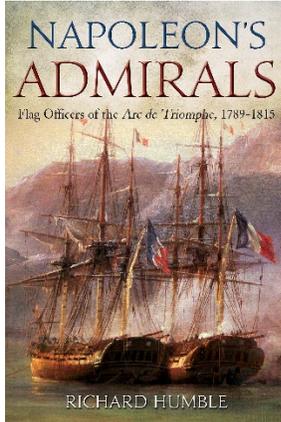


The Napoleon Series Reviews

Humble, Richard. *Napoleon's Admirals: Flag Officers of the Arc de Triomphe, 1789-1815*. Oxford (UK): Casemate, 2019. 272 p. ISBN# 9781612008080. Hardcover. \$45/£35



Although I have dabbled in the military of many nations in the Napoleonic era, I have not yet examined the naval campaigns, or the navies in anything like the same detail and I opened this book as a novice. What a pleasant surprise I found! Richard Humble's `potted bios` of 26 French admirals named on the Arc de Triomphe opened my eyes to a new world. His treatment is not as arid as the entries on these men that one finds in the highly respected, 2-volume work by George Six and each one blossoms into a rip-roaring yarn of men against the elements and men against men, spanning the globe, when travel by sea was much more of an art than it is today and much, much more uncertain and dangerous.

The book lends emphasis to the other - no less lethal - dangers which confronted so many French officers of this age - those of the Revolution. Naval officers seem to have come off relatively lightly in this period, compared to their colleagues in the army, although many endured years of enforced idleness at the whim of the politicians. The coverage includes all admirals who served from 1789 - 1815, under the constitutional monarchy, the convention, the directory, the consulate and the empire. In an appendix there are brief biographical sketches of the four admirals whose names do not appear on the Arc.

This book is not only authoritative; it makes a very enjoyable and instructive read, with 249 pages and I thoroughly recommend it.

Reviewed by [Digby Smith](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: December 2019