

decisions might expose them to disciplining, prosecution, and even persecution. The sometime recourse to anonymity was balanced by the defiant ingenuity of others. On the other hand, the illusion of uniform application of the law, and the distance of oversight which enabled cruelty, gives way before instances of power not abused, and workhouse residence not enforced. Ultimately, “the New Poor Law was a network of individuals working within loose societal and legal frameworks, rather than as a single closely bound and unified system of law or practice” (321).

It is good to see, therefore, that people are seen to matter in both the interpretation of the dataset and in its devising. This is one of a growing cohort of books predicated on the labour of volunteer researchers. Members of the Pauper Letters Research Group are listed in the acknowledgements, and quite rightly so. A brokerage of research across community, academic, and heritage partners is the way forward in any historical project which aspires to full inclusivity.

There is one thing justifiably missing from this book: the ends of most stories. The correspondence is analyzed entirely in its own right, rather than by reference to parallel records of workhouse admissions, Guardians’ decision-making, or outcomes for paupers in specific cases. This means that some questions remain for readers around the fate of challenges to the implementation of the Poor Law Amendment Act, and the consequences for individual people who (typically) were trying to remain on relief but outside of the workhouse. This is felt most acutely whenever a pauper’s story is followed at length in the letters, but of necessity dropped as soon as the MH 12 paper-trail ends.

Apart from this and aside from slightly repetitive reference to “linguistic registers,” the book is hard to fault. It will be the foundational text for researchers of the pauper’s voice and perspective after 1834 for years to come.

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PHILIP MACDOUGALL. *The Great Anglo-Russian Naval Alliance of the Eighteenth Century and Beyond*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2022. Pp. 234. \$115.00 (cloth).  
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This deeply scholarly book provides a detailed account of the intense naval relationship which linked Russia and Britain from the time of Peter the Great to the Crimean war. I say “relationship”, because I don’t quite agree with MacDougall’s characterization of it as an “alliance”. Certainly the interests of the two countries were intertwined for much of this period: Britain became profoundly dependent on Russian naval stores and there were some largely abortive commercial treaties between the two states as well as an attempted mutual defense pact in the 1760s. However a formal alliance this was not—but MacDougall’s use of the term is intended to highlight how much closer, if not always friendlier, relations between the two powers were before the onset of their bitter global geopolitical rivalry in the early nineteenth century. If Anglo-Russian relations since the 1850s have been characterized by hostility punctuated by brief periods of *détente* in 1907–17, 1941–45, and 1991–2006, then the pattern for the previous 150 years was more or less the reverse: good relations interrupted by brief periods of hostility in 1720–8, 1788–91 during the crisis over the Ottoman fortress of Ochakov, (which MacDougall persistently mis-spells as “Ochakpov” [122–6]) and 1807–8 after the Treaty of Tilsit. Even at these times the bedrock of the relationship—Britain’s


dependence on Russia for naval stores, and the favorable terms of this trade for Russia—remained largely unaffected.

MacDougall is at his strongest on the technical side of ships and shipbuilding in the age of sail. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of the properties of different kinds of timber, of the varying quality of naval tar from different sources, and the centrality of this and hemp both to ropemaking and to rendering wooden vessels watertight. The book has regular tables displaying the staggering quantities of all these stores which Britain had to import to maintain and extend its growing maritime naval and commercial supremacy in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Between 1802 and 1807, at the height of the struggle against Napoleon, Russia was responsible for over 95% of Britain's hemp imports, 80% of its flax, 63% of its great masts, and 45% of its tar (161). Without these commodities not only could the navy not have put to sea, but the global network of seaborne trade on which Britain depended would also have dried up. While there were some alternative sources of timber and tar in Scandinavia and above all Britain's remaining North American colonies, the former had no great masts, while transport and other costs rendered the latter uncompetitive for much of the eighteenth century. For Britain, then, the relationship was in some ways existential. For Russia this was not the case, but it was both highly profitable (since until the early 1800s these goods were mainly paid for in bullion) and essential to her own aspirations to become a naval power. Throughout this period, beginning with Peter the Great's famous sojourn in Deptford, Russia imported British shipbuilding expertise and British naval officers, many of them Jacobites. They played a crucial role in creating both the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets, and in providing the skills to lead them successfully in battle—the architect of the great Russian naval victory over the Ottomans at Çeşme in 1770 was the Scottish captain (later Vice-Admiral) Samuel Greig, who had been seconded to the Russian navy with the blessing of the British authorities. In the same period at least thirty Russian officers gained experience in the Royal Navy, including the future Admiral Dmitrii Senyavin (102). The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars saw the most intense operational collaboration between the two navies, with the Russians making frequent use of British naval facilities at Spithead and Gibraltar, while the two navies acted together in the Eastern Mediterranean and Adriatic—until Alexander I's defeat at Friedland in 1807 forced him to break off relations with Britain. In 1808, for the first and last time before the Crimean War, the two navies would clash in the Baltic.

The shock of Tilsit and the prospect of being cut off from Russian supply altogether finally tipped the scale in favor of the North American production of great masts. In 1807 Britain imported just 2,735 of these from Canada (as opposed to 16,988 from Russia). In 1808 this shot up to 13,333, which with another 2,870 from New Brunswick almost compensated for the loss of Russian production (166). Although Alexander quickly broke with Napoleon once again, this marked a long-term winding down of British dependence on Russian naval stores, which would accelerate as the two countries embarked on a new rivalry in the Mediterranean and Asia after 1815. Britain was increasingly able to pay for its imports with high-value industrial manufactures, rather than bullion, which altered the balance of trade and generated official resentment in Russia. Meanwhile new materials—principally wrought iron—began to replace timber and hemp for certain crucial items, such as knees (structural supports between hull and deck) and anchor cables, and steam power slowly began to reduce the need for masts. By 1840 Britain was importing five times as many great masts from North America as from Russia, while by 1850 the East India Company's territories in India were providing over half of Britain's hemp requirements.

When war finally came in 1853 it was not caused by this dwindling naval relationship, but it would have been very difficult for Britain to challenge Russia in the Black Sea and the Baltic had her older dependence on Russian naval stores not been so greatly reduced. MacDougall has shown how much can be explained through careful attention to these questions of commodities and supply, and as a naval history this book is very successful, albeit written almost entirely

from a British perspective. For a full-scale diplomatic history of Anglo-Russian relations in this period the use of Russian sources would have been essential—MacDougall does not employ any—but that is not what this book is trying to achieve.

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PAUL MALGRATI. *Robert Burns and Scottish Cultural Politics: The Bard of Contention (1914–2014)*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023. Pp. 280. \$110.00 (cloth). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2023.227

In *Robert Burns and Scottish Cultural Politics: The Bard of Contention (1914–2014)*, Paul Malgrati examines the numerous controversies that have surrounded the figure of Robert Burns in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Malgrati primarily focuses on the political appropriation of Burns’s legacy by differing Scottish groups, each with the express purpose of enlisting Burns in such causes as Unionism, Scottish nationalism, and communism, among others. Malgrati succeeds in demonstrating just how significant Burns has been (and continues to be) in Scottish politics and culture.

Malgrati begins with an event held on 22 January 2018, at 10 Downing Street; giving readers a seat at the table, Malgrati recounts the first ever Burns Night celebrated at the office of the British prime minister. Led by Theresa May, the ceremony appears to have been an awkward affair intended to promote British unity in the wake of Brexit, which over sixty per cent of Scots had opposed. Malgrati then pivots back to the first celebrations of Burns’s birthday begun in 1801 by the Scottish Reverend Hamilton Paul, which set the template for a yearly ritual still performed in Scotland and abroad. Malgrati argues that “Burns Night is not a festival of Scottish unity” but rather an instance of “Bardocracy,” in which “a stateless nation . . . has found both a representative and an ambassador in the shade of its national bard” (6). Malgrati nods to the inauguration of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 as an instance of such “bardocracy.” During this epochal moment, singer Sheena Wellington performed a rendition of Burns’s “A Man’s a Man,” a song that insists that “Man to Man the world o’er / Shall brothers be for a’ that.” Bookending May’s Burns Night celebration with the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, Malgrati claims that “the conflation of Burns’s legacy with social-democratic devolution reveals a profound shift in Scottish cultural politics” (22).

In subsequent chapters, Malgrati recounts a variety of extreme political shifts as groups maneuvered to appropriate Burns’s legacy and turn it into political capital. In chapter 1, Malgrati examines British governmental appropriation of Burns during the First World War; for instance, his poem “I’ll Go and Be a Sodger” was used as wartime propaganda to promote enlistment. This ideological usage is opposed to the efforts of left-wing activists like Frances Parker and Ethel Moorhead, who had tried to destroy Burns’s birthplace cottage in July 1914 with a bomb. This literal battle over the poet’s legacy is also investigated in chapters 2 and 3, which focus on the decade of 1920 to 1930. The poet Christopher Murray Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid) emerges as a figure with outsize influence in the cultural politics surrounding Burns; his wavering appreciation for his predecessor is said to have been “inspired by the broader ideological debate about the poet” following the First World War (53). Other key figures from these chapters include Burns’s biographer Catherine Carswell, poet and translator Edwin Muir, and novelist Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassie Gibbon). Malgrati also provides valuable commentary on lesser-known characters like Duncan McNaught, a leader of the Burns