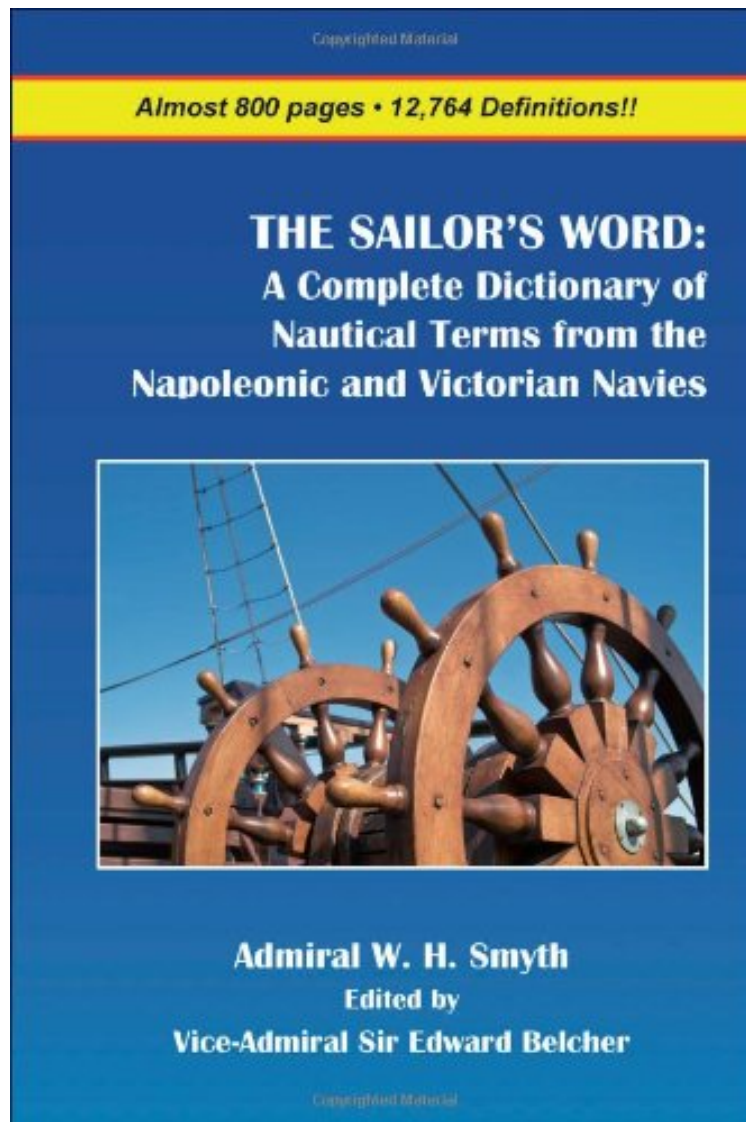


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THE SAILOR'S WORD: A Complete Dictionary of Nautical Terms from the Napoleonic and Victorian Navies

William Henry Smyth

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1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great Reference Book By Thelma Wickwe Having recently been devouring the Patrick O'Brian "Jack Aubrey" series, I found myself in need of a specialized dictionary -- "The Sailor's Word" fits the bill. A large, rather unwieldy and expensive paperback, it is chock full of archaic terms you'll be hard-pressed to find elsewhere. Unfortunately, it is not set up as we are used to dictionaries: it has no pronunciation guides, no words at the top and bottom of the page corners to help flip through. This is the only reason I deducted a star. If you find yourself needing to look up nautical terms from the Napoleonic and Victorian era navies, this is the book for you!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Glossary for the Age of Sail By Michael Wonio Since it first appeared a century and a half ago, this precious volume has appeared in several editions under varying titles, usually some variation of "The Sailor's Word-Book". Starting as a boy on a West Indies merchantman, Rear Admiral William H. Smyth (1788-1865) excelled as a hydrographer, some of whose charts were in use for a century. Besides his 25 year career in the Navy, he also became a Dr. of Civil Law, President of the Royal Astronomical Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and was a founder and president of the Royal Geographical Society. In 1836 he began deliberately collecting material for a complete nautical handbook. In 1858, at the age of 70, he actually started editing the mass of material he had gathered. When he finally retired at 77, he realized he would only be able to prepare a good glossary on the subject. Within just a few months he was dead. His literary executors selected his colleague Sir Edward Belcher (1799-1877) to carry on the task. Besides the obvious maritime jargon, he included general terms in their nautical usage, as well as the relevant parts of naval architecture, astronomy, natural history, arms armor, fortifications, mathematics, nautical cookery, and nautical slang. He included many terms then nearly obsolete but still current, but, wisely, little etymological speculation. To be highly recommended to aficionados of maritime fiction and all sailors of tall ships. With this and "The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea" you'll rarely, if ever, lack the significance of a nautical term or turn of phrase.

M. L. Wonio, Volunteer, the 1877 Iron Barque Elissa, Galveston Texas

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An Essential Resource for Age of Sail scholars enthusiasts By Maurice Depas A real first rate lexicon of sea terms particular to the age of fighting sail and the Royal Navy. I consider this book to be a "Must companion" for all lovers of Patrick O'Brian, Forrester and Suthren as well as an excellent reference for scholars and historians of the period.

Almost 800 pages . 12,764 Definitions. The Most Complete Reference of Its Kind It's one thing to compile a dictionary of nautical terms from the Age of Sail; but it's quite another when the people doing the compiling actually lived them. That is exactly the situation in The Sailor's Word. William Henry Smyth (1788-1865) was in the Royal Navy for over 25 years, rising from a ship's boy on a West India merchantman to a Royal Navy Admiral. In addition to commanding several Royal Navy ships, he became world famous as a hydrographer (some of his charts were still in use in the 1960's), and as an astronomer (he eventually became president of the Royal Astronomical Society). The last years of his life, however, were spent compiling The Sailor's Word from his vast storehouse of nautical experience; but he died before he could see it published. His family decided to go forth with the publication of his final work. Their selection of an editor couldn't have been better: Sir Edward Belcher (1799-1877). Sir Edward was a Royal Navy officer with even more experience than Smyth. In his 40 years of service he captained numerous ships and generated a well-deserved reputation as a naval surveyor. His final command was of the unsuccessful expedition to find the missing and ill-fated explorer, Sir John Franklin. A cousin of Frederick Marryat, it can be plausibly argued that his novel, Horatio Howard Brenton, was the real model for C.S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower. If you want to understand modern nautical fiction, you have to understand the language they used and the way they actually used it-not the way you think they used it.