

Book Review

VAN HILLE, Jean-Marc (ed.), *Dictionnaire des marins francs-maçons: gens de mer et professions connexes aux XVIIIe, XIXe et XXe siècles*, Introduction by Pierre Mollier (Paris: SPM-Lettrage, 2011), 529 pp, €46.50, Pbk ISBN-10: 290195281X, ISBN-13: 978-2901952817, French.

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This substantial biographical dictionary concerns freemasons who were connected in some way with seafaring. It is the latest incarnation of a work that began life in Nantes in 2005 as the first volume of *Travaux de la loge de recherche The Link # 2*, comprising 119 pages. By 2008 it had become a volume of 310 pages, published by Editions Le Phare de Misaine, also of Nantes. Now it is published by the Parisian imprint SPM as a work of some 529 pages describing more than 2,000 freemasons. The task of creating the dictionary in this form has been led by a small team of masonic researchers belonging to the Nantaise *Loge maritime de recherche 'La Pérouse'*, together with a number of associate contributors worldwide, all working under the banner of *L'Association ponantaise d'histoire maritime* (Aspoma). As a result, this biographical dictionary is truly international in its coverage, although unsurprisingly the content is weighted towards French subjects.

In form, the vast majority of entries are very brief, being restricted to the salient facts of each individual's maritime and masonic careers. In most cases these facts are presented simply and minimally, without interpretation. The following is typical:

WADE William H., vétéran de l'*US Navy*, né le 11 juillet 1943 à Milboro Springs, il servit deux années dans la marine et en fut officier de réserve pendant 26 ans. Membre de la *Millboro Masonic Lodge* n° 28 et 32^{ème} du Rite Ecossais, William H Wade est décédé le 8 mai 2009.

But not all entries are quite so mundane and there is a great deal here that has the potential to enrich non-maritime masonic scholarship, such as the fascinating two-page entry concerning the life of the Franco-Irish Dominique Huegarty (1699–1789) who played a part in the early history of French freemasonry in company with such figures as the English aristocrat Charles Radcliffe (1693–1746) and James MacLean (1703–1750).

The data in this book is certainly rich and wide-ranging, helping to chart any number of global masonic maritime networks, such as second world-war US-navy medics or eighteenth-century Dutch East India traders, and the entries provide useful data on maritime masonic lodges and their members.

However, any investigator hoping to use this book to support detailed research will have to contend with the absence of a comprehensive set of indexes to map the material; indeed there is no index of any kind beyond the simple alphabetical

ordering of the individual subject entries. Furthermore, although this book offers the reader a separate bibliography of sources, there is an almost complete lack of referencing to connect the sources with the facts that are presented in each case.

While the book's basic structure may have been suitable for the much briefer first edition, for this ambitious work—which is more than four times the size of the original—it is unsuited to the needs of robust research. Although the book is available in a downloadable version for e-reader, making it possible to run simple word searches across the text, this cannot compensate for the fundamental lack of scholarly apparatus. Nonetheless, until a better edition is published, this large slice of maritime masonic history should find a place on the shelves and in the e-readers of all self-respecting research collections.