

## Book Review

Jews in the Merchant Navy in the Second World War – Last Voices.

By Martin Sugarman

Elstree: Vallentine Mitchell October 2017 ISBN 978 1 910383 52 0

Martin Sugarman, a well - known author and archivist at AJEX, has again produced a valuable book that, on this occasion, places on record two aspects of the second world war that are less familiar to much of the general public. The contribution of Jews to the allied cause in both world wars was significant, and out of proportion to the actual size of the Jewish population. As far as the 'Merchant Navy' was concerned, its role in feeding and supplying the nation was critical to Britain's survival and eventual victory. By combining both elements, Sugarman's research highlights these contributions, on a personal and strategic level, using official records and personal testimonies to good effect.

Whilst this work is more record than narrative, its contents do manage to convey the diversity of the men and ships that sailed under the Red Ensign, and in allied and commonwealth merchant fleets, serving all over the great oceans and seas of the world. As a former merchant seaman myself, I appreciated the down to earth nature of the testimonies, (especially where cockroaches were concerned) which described the merchant seaman's life, afloat and ashore, that came with its own civilian based self - discipline. It was this and a powerful commitment to defeat the Nazis that underwrote the determination of these seafarers to see the 'job done.'

The Jewish sailors' stories are, of course, of immigration, of running away to sea at the age of 14 or 15 and cover every rank and specialism from Deck Boy to Master; they do indeed provide a fitting tribute to all those that fought to keep Nazism at bay.

Sugarman has captured these records and sentiments just as the generation of the Second World War is passing, and this thoroughly researched book provides valuable reference and testimony for all those interested in the Jewish contribution to the war, and in the role of the Merchant Navy.

Dr. Martin Watts, BA (Hons.), PhD., FHEA,  
Senior Lecturer, Modern History,  
Principal Research Fellow, Centre for Kent History and Heritage.  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Canterbury Christ Church University

Author of 'The Jewish Legion and the First World War (Palgrave:2004)

**From:** Toby Harris [mailto:toby.harris@vmbooks.com]  
**Sent:** 07 November 2017 15:42  
**To:** 'martin.watts@canterbury.ac.uk'; 'modernjewishstudies@gmail.com'  
**Subject:** FW: Re: Book Review

Dear Karina and Martin,

I would be delighted for this review to be used in the journal Modern Jewish Studies.

Do you mind if I send a copy to Martin Sugarman?

Best wishes

Toby

Toby Harris

Marketing

Valentine Mitchell Publishers

----- Forwarded Message -----

**Subject:Re: Book Review**

**Date:** Mon, 6 Nov 2017 13:59:29 +0000

**From:** Watts, Martin ([martin.watts@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:martin.watts@canterbury.ac.uk)) <[martin.watts@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:martin.watts@canterbury.ac.uk)>

**To:** Karina Stern <[modernjewishstudies@gmail.com](mailto:modernjewishstudies@gmail.com)>

**CC:** Deborah Mulqueen <[deborah.mulqueen@vmbooks.com](mailto:deborah.mulqueen@vmbooks.com)>

Dear Karina,

You must have a crystal ball! This morning I sent off the attached review to the publishers (copied in), and you are welcome to use it if they agree.

Best wishes

Martin

Dr. Martin Watts, BA (Hons.), PhD., FHEA,  
Programme Director & Senior Lecturer, Foundation Year,

Senior Lecturer, Modern History,

Principal Research Fellow, Centre for Kent History and Heritage.

Room No. Es07

Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Canterbury Christ Church University

Tel: +44 (0) 1227 92[3243]

**From:** Karina Stern <[modernjewishstudies@gmail.com](mailto:modernjewishstudies@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** 06 November 2017 12:22

**To:** Watts, Martin ([martin.watts@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:martin.watts@canterbury.ac.uk))

**Subject:** Book Review

Dear Dr. Watts,

I am writing on behalf of the Journal of Modern Jewish Studies to ask if you would consider reviewing a book for us entitled:

Jews in the Merchant Navy in the Second World War. Last Voices, by Martin Sugarman

It would be wonderful to have your contribution to the Journal. We normally ask for reviewers to email their book review back to us within 18 months , which should be between 300-500 words. If you are unable to do this can you please suggest another reviewer.

Karina Stern, Managing Editor/Book Reviews Editor  
Journal of Modern Jewish Studies

Clarendon Institute Building

Walton Street

Oxford OX1 2HG

UK

[www.tandfonline.com/cmjs](http://www.tandfonline.com/cmjs)