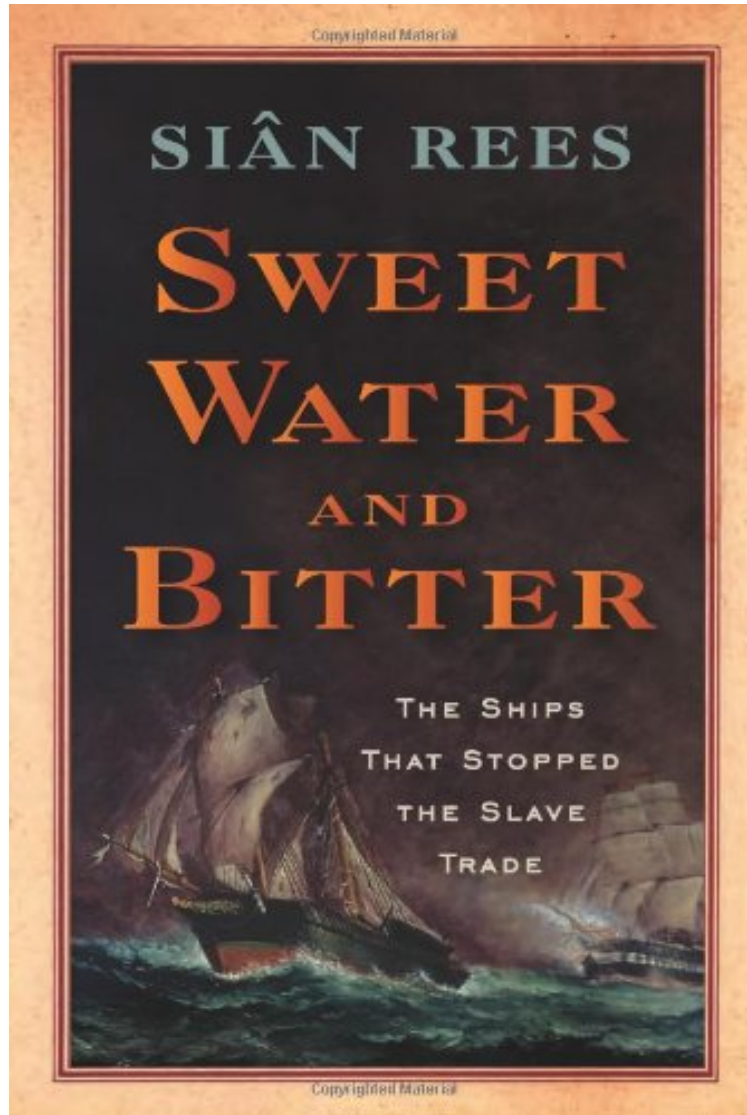


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Sweet Water and Bitter: The Ships That Stopped the Slave Trade

Sin Rees

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Sin Rees : Sweet Water and Bitter: The Ships That Stopped the Slave Trade before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sweet Water and Bitter: The Ships That Stopped the Slave Trade:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Things you didn't know about the Slave Trade.By Dan HarrisThoroughly enjoyed the book, an easy read packed full of facts about the Slave Trade that I had not encountered before.Anyone who has been brow-beaten with claims that race problems are all the fault of the Trade should read this book.Slavery, in Africa and many other parts of the world was a well established method of trade long before

Europeans commenced shipments to the New World. Africa had no official currency so a slave was looked upon as a walking banknote to be exchanged for goods required by the regional kings. African kings tended to ship to the west coast and Arabs to the east. In 1807 the UK was the first of the European countries to outlaw slavery, closely followed by the Dutch but it took another 50 years before Spain, France, Portugal and America stopped. In fact America was the last to halt the trade. The Royal Navy paid a heavy price in implementing international treaties, 17,000 deaths mainly through sickness and the loss of many ships, all paid for by the UK. Their task was made more difficult by other countries exploiting loop-holes in any agreed treaty so they could continue to profit from the trade whilst paying lip-service to the prohibition. Many people had a vested interest in keeping the trade going, from corrupt officials and commissioners down to the local grocer who sold West Indian sugar. The book explains why it took so long to finally stop the trade. A great read. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. a story not often told

By Les Fearn
A history of the 19th century Royal Navy Preventive Squadron - the naval vessels set up to end the African slave trade with the Americas. It is not a story often told: how 160,000 slaves were set free between 1815 and 1869, how new settlements for these liberated and repatriated slaves gave rise to the new countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia, as well as helping to bring about the annexation of Nigeria by Great Britain. Rees makes it clear that the American slave trade was but a modern extension (albeit the most inhuman element) of a "business" long rooted in native African and Arab culture and society with many kings and tribal leaders amassing huge fortunes by supplying fellow Africans to the slave shippers. It is also shown how, at least to begin with, many of the Royal Navy ships were fired not by philanthropic motives to free Africans but on the possibility of taking "prizes". At the time, if a Royal Navy vessel captured an enemy/slave ship it would qualify as a "prize" to be sold off and the proceeds divided amongst the officers and crew. Paradoxically, the slaves were often "freed" as apprentices and sold to landowners. The proceeds went the prize crew also..... However the heart of the drama is in the machinations used by slavers and governments to defy, undermine and escape the Navy patrols determined to block the transit of Africans as slaves. France, Spain then the new independent states of Latin America all sought ways to continue the trade (the legal methods alone used to circumvent the squadron would make present day international bankers proud!) until treaty, bribery or blunt coercion forced them to stop and join a growing coalition of anti-slave states. This took a long time and in the process 17,000 squadron sailors lost their lives, mainly due to diseases such as yellow fever. By the 1850s only the USA and Cuba were still slave running, however Lincoln's war torn northern government put its weight behind the aims of the Preventive Squadron and the illegal Atlantic trade ended. I found the book heavy going in places (which may say more about me than the author) and found the narrative difficult to hold on to at times as it moved from one vast and often unfamiliar geographical area and set of individuals to another (a process not helped by the provision of a single map which does not show all the places mentioned in the text). Equally the conclusion is very abrupt.

In 1807, at the height of the Napoleonic war, ships of nearly all the European nations crowded the malarial wharves of West Africa where merchants traded at the great slaveholding pens and packed their human property into ships holds bound for the sugar mills of Cuba and Haiti, and the tobacco plantations of Virginia. In that same year Great Britain passed the Abolition Act, and the last English slave ship left the African coast with her cargo, shortly to be replaced by the ships and men of the Royal Navy's Preventive Squadron. For the next fifty years this small fleet patrolled 3,000 miles of treacherous coastline in a determined, unilateral, and only quasi-legal effort to interdict vessels with their human cargoes. The squadron lost more than 17,000 men to disease, conflict, and varied misfortunes, but they liberated more than 150,000 African slaves, and slowly through negotiation, intimidation, and military and diplomatic triumphs and setbacks they helped put an end to the rich, shameful, peculiar institution of European and American trade in West African slaves. Through firsthand accounts of naval adventures, ship-to-ship actions, bold raids into the interior, and daily life at sea, Sin Rees brilliantly colors this huge canvas in a series of vivid portraits of the men and officers of the Preventive Squadron. *Sweet Water and Bitter* is a moving chronicle of suffering, exploitation, and one nation's determination to suppress slavery.

What more can you ask of written history? Oxford scholar Sian Rees' *Sweet Water and Bitter* is a well-researched narrative of an epic saga little known here. Britain's attempt to abolish all transatlantic slave trade in the 1800s interwoven with smashing high-seas adventure worthy of Patrick O'Brian. *Newcity Lit* A study of the Royal Navy Preventive Squadron, a small fleet of ships that captured slave ships along the African coast and emancipated their captives in the era after Britain abolished slavery. *Chronicle of Higher Education* Rees presents a well-researched account of Britain's attempt to stem the Atlantic slave trade by creating the Preventive Squadron to enforce the 1807 Abolition Act. . . . Her use of case histories and personal narratives make this an especially engrossing read. Readers not well acquainted with African geography and nautical nomenclature may find the myriad details overwhelming, but Rees does an overall solid job of crafting a readable but dense narrative for serious readers. . . . Rees presents a little-known but historically significant chapter in nautical and slavery history, an important addition to 19th-century studies. Recommended to students and informed lay readers in British history and African geography. *Library Journal* "The good news is that trafficking in persons today is probably less profitable than slavery was in the 19th

century or drugs are in the 21st. . . . We can reasonably hope to see modern-day slavery dramatically diminished in our lifetime, but we need the sobriety that *Sweet Water and Bitter* provides." *Books and Culture* Rees is a gifted writer with a wry turn of phrase . . . Hers is a packed history of bounty-hunting and piracy, of high principle and low skullduggery, of roiling surf and disease-infested swamps, and of the seemingly endless African coast. (The Daily Telegraph) About the Author SIN REES grew up around boats and shipyards in Cornwall. She read modern history at Oxford, has traveled widely, and is the author of the bestsellers *The Floating Brothel* and *The Ship Thieves*. She lives in Brighton, England.