

## **Spanish Galleon 1530-1690**

Osprey New Vanguard series No. 96 (2004)

Text by Angus Konstam; illustrated by Tony Brian

### **Review by Rob Morgan**

I have returned to this title originally published five or six years ago, after considering the new range of Spanish Armada period warships by Tumbling Dice, in 1/2400<sup>th</sup> scale. Perfect for a decent large-scale conflict on the table top as opposed to the larger 1:1 or squadron-sized actions best suited to the larger scales. Everything you need for the period is available in the Tumbling Dice range, and by utilising a few of the medieval and later Dutch wars craft an astonishingly large fleet, for Spain, Holland and England, can be built up, and at a very reasonable cost.

The Osprey covers -- though as always in a short text -- the major features of this splendid and attractive (Drake loved them; he took lots home!) lumbering warship. The development of the type from earlier carracks into what Konstam calls 'one of the most romantic ship types in history' is first dealt along with the method of building. I liked the next section, far too short, which dealt with the armament of these beasts; of course, terminology differed widely in the early days, so some weapons may be unfamiliar. The *modus operandii* of the galleons, the fleets which carried treasure from the New World, is described as a system. Sometimes it was!

Next section deals with the crew, the soldiery always a part of galleon society, and life on board, before the volume closes with an account of the galleon as a warship type during a century and a half of almost consistent Spanish warfare. He discusses the change in tactics and what we'd call 'fighting instructions' after the 1588 disaster (for Spain) and the use of the vessels as huge gun platforms and as 'floating fortresses'.

Rightly, Konstam states that the Spanish big ships achieved virtually nothing during the 30 Years War, a much neglected period among naval wargamers, and ends with the last great flourish of this warship at the Battle of the Downs in 1639. It lingered of course, for decades beyond, and in remote places.

It's one of the better Osprey titles, I think. The illustrations are exquisite, colour plate B of the *San Mateo* is particularly evocative, though unsurprisingly the black-and-white illustrations in the text are by and large well known.

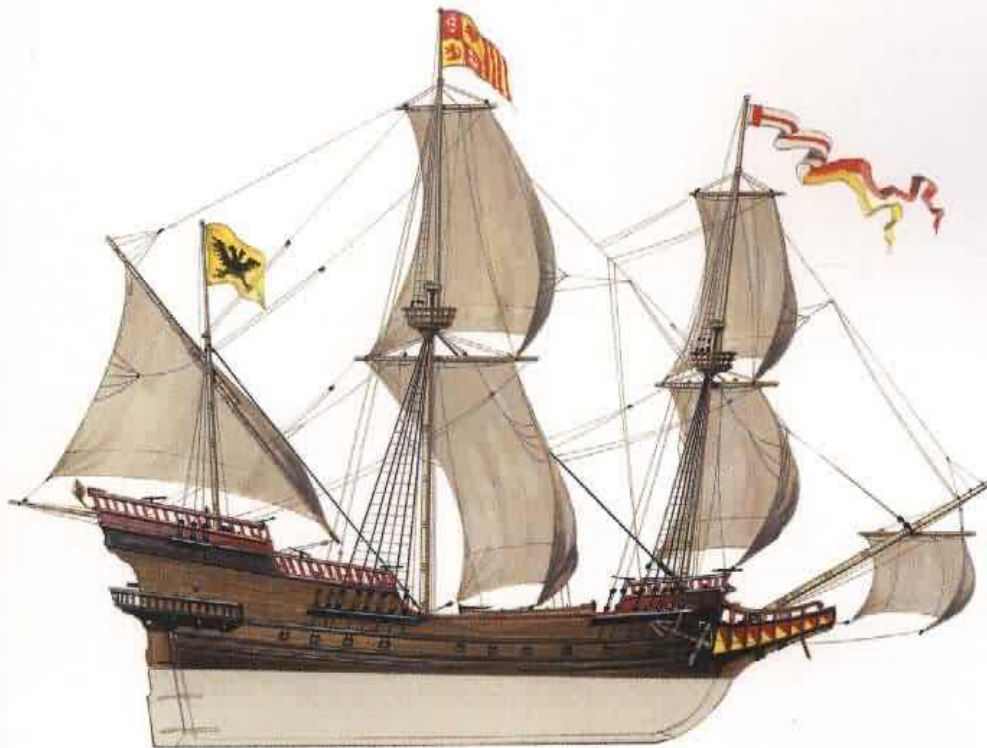
One possible Galleon-Galley combination which I'll explore later in an article is the Armada of 1588. Originally, Parma insisted on at least 40 galleys accompanying the main sailing force against the enemy. This didn't happen, only four were available in the event. This was due to Ottoman pressure, supported by Queen Elizabeth, but a galley fleet 40-strong operating in conjunction with, but in smaller squadrons, against the shores of Southern England could have done enough to destroy the English defences. What did 'Gloriana' have to oppose them? The Tumbling Dice galleys, incidentally, are every bit as attractive models as the larger galleons and carracks (the latter make great 'hulks').

**(Cover photo is below.)**

New Vanguard

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