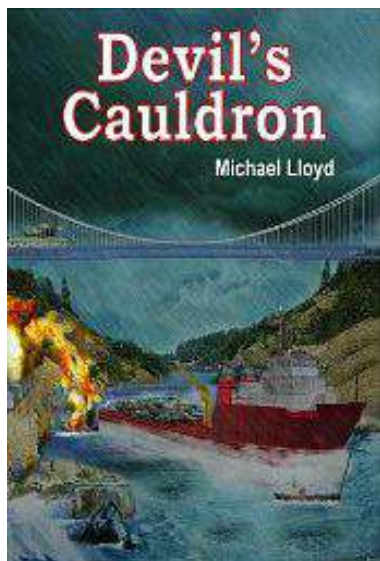




Book Review

Devil's Cauldron by Michael Lloyd (56-58)



This is Michael Lloyd's first novel, published in 2012. Michael has written many nautical text books in recent years. He has now decided to put his undoubted talents to work in producing fiction; a second work is on the way.

As an eminent OC, he is to be commended for blending his old ship into the narrative, making Harry, the ship's Master and central figure a Conway boy.

The book is set onboard an old Russian-built oilfield support vessel in the Congo river, well known to many who served with ED's and Palm Line, to name but a few old British lines.

It is easy to see how his flowing style of writing has transferred from his many technical books to a work of fiction, with a strong factual base dwelling on the demise of the Red Ensign with the breakdown of law and order in central Africa. The author appears to have struck the right note between personal involvement, technical

knowledge and the story line to ensure an excellent read. Most Old Conways with a deep knowledge of the sea will be satisfied with the level of accuracy without the book turning off the casual reader. The story develops at a good pace ensuring that the reader keeps turning the pages to find out what happens next.

Harry, his crew and the many other characters are well developed to a point that the reader really cares about what happens to them. Michael Lloyd has pulled his long and varied sea service into giving substance to these varied personalities, which in turn makes them feel real. Their flaws, idiosyncrasies and failings are dwelt on which only adds to making the various characters fully understood, with the reader getting fully immersed into the story. Fictional love affairs can get overblown but Michael touches on the seafarers' sensibilities to give a realistic and human approach.

The *Devil's Cauldron* gives the reader an insight into shipboard life without detracting from the imaginatively narrated story in any way. It culminates in a final battle and escape to sea. Well recommended at an easily affordable price.

I hope the characters can be woven into more novels as these people should be brought to life again, with hopefully an Old Conway again taking command of the situation. Talking to Michael onboard Wellington recently, the busy floating livery hall of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, there is indeed another nautical yarn under way.

The Devil's Cauldron can be obtained from Amazon, as a paperback. £4.99