



Daniel Albert Baugh

July 10, 1931 – February 9, 2024

Daniel Albert Baugh, emeritus professor of history at Cornell, and a leading scholar of British naval and maritime history, died at his home in Williamsburg, Virginia on February 9, 2024. He is survived by his wife of sixty-nine years, Carol, three children, Nancy Fortunel, Charles Baugh and John Baugh, ten grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

Dan Baugh grew up in a family of scholars. His father, Albert C. Baugh, was a distinguished professor of Middle English Literature at the University of Pennsylvania, and co-author of a classic work on the history of the English language. Dan's mother, Nita S. Baugh, was herself a scholar of Middle English holding a Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr. Dan also excelled academically, first at the Episcopal Academy, Merion, and then as an undergraduate at University of Pennsylvania on a scholarship from the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps. He received his B.A. with honors in History in 1953, and his M.A. in 1957. From 1954 to 1957 Dan served in the U.S. Navy on the USS Wilkinson as a First Lieutenant and Assistant Gunner Officer. In 1957, he resigned active service to begin a Ph.D. in history at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. His experiences as a naval officer would continue to inform his scholarship on naval history.

Dan was much influenced by his Cambridge Ph.D. advisor, John Ehrman. In a moving memorial to Ehrman in the British Academy proceedings (2013), Dan called him 'an ideal Ph.D. Supervisor', though as it turned out, Dan was to be Ehrman's only research student. Ehrman had himself served in the Royal Navy and was one of the historians commissioned by the British government to write an 'official history' of the Second World War. His two volumes on 'Grand Strategy' were published in 1956, just before Dan Baugh arrived in Cambridge. Ehrman's focus on 'grand strategy', along with his interest in the details and logistics of naval administration and warfare (Ehrman has also written a history of the British navy in late seventeenth century), helped to set the course of Dan's scholarly career.

Dan's surroundings as a young research scholar were genteel; he later recalled discussing his draft thesis chapters with Ehrman 'at the Garrick club after a nice lunch'. But the historical

methods he was imbibing were extremely demanding, even austere. Ehrman believed in the exhaustive study of existing archives; while writing his 'official' history of the Second World War, he had decided that 'a published account must include all or nothing', otherwise risking distortion. Ehrman's characteristic method, Dan later wrote, involved 'thorough exploration combined with fondness for laying out tableaux of interacting elements' in order to explain 'what the government did, and did not do, and why'. Archival thoroughness, attention to 'interacting elements', and an awareness of historical roads not taken, became touchstones for Dan's scholarship as well. Not the least of the durable historical virtues Dan learned from Ehrman was staying power. Ehrman's three volume biography of Pitt the Younger took him forty years to complete. Dan's great history of 'the Global Seven Years War', published in his eightieth year, was also the work of decades.

After receiving his doctorate in 1961, Dan taught for eight years as an instructor then assistant professor at Princeton University, before becoming associate professor at Cornell in 1969, and full professor in 1982. Dan's appointment to teach British history at Cornell followed the successful publication of his revised doctoral thesis, as *Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, 1965), a pioneering account of the inner workings of the largest sector of the eighteenth-century British state. Weighing in at 557 pages, the book uncovered previously unrecognized innovations in naval infrastructure and logistics, especially debt-financing, in the first half of the eighteenth century. In an age when 'the business of government', as the introduction noted, 'was, to a large extent, the business of waging war', a study of naval administration touched 'many fields'. Thus, while densely packed with intricate detail trawled from the Admiralty archives, *Naval Administration* had very wide implications: it revealed the political, social and economic conditions that enabled the consolidation of Britain's global power during a sustained period of great-power rivalry with France. In the *American Historical Review*, George B. Cooper praised the book as a 'refreshing departure from the general run of administrative histories' in the way it drew connections between mundane processes of manning, victualling and financing and broader questions of 'political and constitutional history'. Cooper also noted the 'lively style' of writing that also became a Dan Baugh trademark.

Dan continued to work on naval history in the 1970s, producing a large source-book on *Naval Administration 1715-50* published by the Navy Records Society (1977), of which he became a council member. But he also struck out in new directions. In the preface to a book of essays he edited in 1975 on *Aristocratic Government and Society in Eighteenth Century England* he stressed the importance of historians 'adhering to a broad outlook' even in an era of intensifying specialization. In line with a wider shift among historians towards social history, Dan began researching the history of eighteenth-century poor relief, immersing himself in theological, ethical and political economic treatises, as well as local administrative archives from parish vestries and poor law overseers. In 1977-78, after publishing an article in the *Economic History Review*, he received a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship to research late eighteenth-century dearths. His Clark Library lecture from 1977, published as 'Poverty, Protestantism and Political Economy' in Stephen B. Baxter ed., *England's Rise to Greatness* (1983), is an erudite and elegant account of eighteenth-century shifts in elite British attitudes towards poverty and charity viewed in the context of changing economic circumstances.

Yet, for all his breadth of knowledge and interests, Dan's real *métier* remained naval and

maritime history. He began to conceive an ambitious study of British defense strategy over four centuries centered on the tension between a ‘blue water’ policy based on naval defenses and maritime strength, and involvement in ‘Continental’ European wars. His classic essay on ‘Great Britain’s “Blue-Water” Policy, 1689-1815’ (*International History Review*, 1988) remains one of the most cited articles in eighteenth-century British history. This work, along with Dan’s earlier study of naval administration, was a crucial influence on John Brewer’s vastly influential book on the rise of the British ‘fiscal-military state’, *The Sinews of Power* (1989).

Arguably Dan’s most signal scholarly achievement was yet to come. After retiring from teaching in 1998, Dan devoted himself to finishing, to widespread acclaim, a massive history of the *Global Seven Years War 1754-63* (Pearson Longman, 2011). In a tour de force of analytical narrative, Dan’s book offered a deeply researched, chronological account of a war fought on three continents, the Americas, Europe and India. To add to the degree of difficulty he analyzed each stage of the war from the perspective of both British and French policy-makers drawing on vast reading in English and French. Animated throughout by Dan’s unique feel for the rhythms and logistical limitations of eighteenth-century warfare, the book quickly established itself as the standard scholarly account of this pivotal conflict in its global and maritime dimensions. Following its publication, Dan was awarded the prestigious Caird Medal from the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. In the preface to his book, Dan paid tribute to the loving and steadfast support of his children and of his wife Carol. The book was dedicated to Carol, who ‘had scrutinized every chapter, sometimes twice’. A second edition, incorporating new sources, followed in Dan’s ninetieth year.

At Cornell, Dan taught a wide range of courses on European and British history, including a maritime history course called ‘War, Trade and Empire’, and advised numerous graduate student theses. In warm remembrances from colleagues and former students, the word most frequently invoked is ‘kindness’, though ‘labradors’, referencing Dan and Carol’s cherished dogs, is not far behind. Dan may sometimes have struggled to reconcile his exacting scholarly standards with the appetites of undergraduates; he wrote to one chair that he was working to make one of his courses more ‘popular’ ‘to the extent that conscience permits’. But for those students who responded to his love for his subject, he became a generous and inspiring mentor. Robert Bucholz, now Professor of History at Loyola University, recalls that as an undergraduate he petitioned Dan to be able to remain in his course despite a lax attendance: he was allowed to do so after successfully naming three French ships from the Battle of Trafalgar. Bucholz recalls Dan’s quiet, unassuming but ‘profoundly substantive’ teaching style. Department colleagues fondly remember Dan and Carol’s Christmas parties where Dan played the piano. In a memoir of Dan in *The Mariner’s Mirror* (2024), his fellow naval historian and friend, Roger Knight, evoked Dan’s talent for friendship, and noted the deep respect in which he was held by many colleagues in Britain. Dan Baugh’s career stands as a labor of love. Those of us who follow after can only be deeply grateful.

Written by Robert Travers