

BOOK REVIEWS

BROWN J. David; HOBBS David (Editor). *Carrier Operations in World War II*. Seaforth Publishing 2009. 304 pages, 288 photographs, 55 tables. ISBN 978 1 84832 042 0. Price £40.

(reviewed by John SHEARS)

David BROWN was the head of the RN Historical Branch when he died in 2001. This book is the culmination of his life's work, which contains material from the first two volumes, first published in 1968 and 1974 respectively. The draft of the third volume has now been edited by David HOBBS and combined with the first two, completely revised and with new illustrations, has produced an excellent reference book.

It is very hard to review a book from authors with such a proven record, as it lives up to what is expected of it. The book is a source of so much information, which is not surprising given how important the carrier was to become during the war, leading up to the great carrier engagements in the Pacific.

Volume one covers the Royal Navy from September 1939 - September 1945. There are five chapters:

1. The Atlantic and Arctic;
2. Mediterranean Fleet;
3. Force H;
4. Indian Ocean;
5. The British Pacific Fleet.

As stated before the book is full of facts only, for instance the loss of HMS *Glorious* is described in one paragraph and *Taranto* on two pages.

Volume two is titled Pacific Navies December 1941 - February 1943. This time 4 chapters:

1. First Strike Pearl Harbour;
2. The Philippines and East Indies Campaign;
3. The First Parries;
4. 'Watchtower' - Guadalcanal.

Both the Japanese and Americans had been studying what had been happening in the Mediterranean and had learned some valuable lessons. Ultimately, this would lead to the great carrier actions such as Corral Sea and Midway.

The new volume 3 - Pacific Navies February 1943 - September 1945 has 5 chapters:

1. The Coming of the Fast Carrier Task Force;

2. The Central Pacific and the Solomons;
3. The 'Leap-frog' Strategy;
4. The Philippines;
5. Closing in on Japan.

This one book is a must for any researcher studying the development of carrier operations.

CHILDS Nick. *The Age of Invincible. The Ship that Defined the Modern Day Royal Navy*. Pen and Sword Maritime 2009. 189 pages with 14 plates. Together with Notes, a Bibliography and an index. ISBN 978 1 84415 8577. Price £19.99.

(reviewed by Iain HIME)

To those of us who served in the RN at any time from the late 60's to 2005 the title of this book will conjure a great variety of images. Mostly good! Some will say that *Invincible* was embarrassingly light weight but most would agree that the RN/FAA performed remarkably well with it - in the best tradition of the FAA at Taranto. So here was a book to read with anticipation.

So to start at the beginning, Nick CHILDS acknowledges a dazzling array of stars who gave of their time, and forthright views, including our very own Ray LYGO. Then comes the Foreword by The First of all The Sea Lords - Jonathon BAND. Next is a six page Introduction by the author - reads fine. And then we arrive at Chapter One all fired up to hear about *Invincible*. However, (and the clue is in the title) it will be sometime before *Invincible* emerges from the pages of this book - chapter 6 page 65 to be exact. Because being about the *age* of *Invincible* the story starts with the demise of CVA-01, which left the Navy with a distinct lack of focus. The ensuing thinking about the shape and size of the RN and its role are succinctly reported. The ambivalence of so many politicians exacerbated by the often bitter inter service fighting for money and prestige are an essential part of setting the ship in context. Chapter 4 describes the struggle to win the SEA HARRIERS fight and just how finely balanced this was. And eventually CAPTAIN Michael LIVESAY joins his new ship and the age of *Invincible* is properly underway.

But within a year and just when it was becoming clear that this new capability was going to be even more effective and versatile than had been hoped, along came John NOTT. And before the first commission was completed *Invincible* was up for sale and a contract was about to be signed with the Australian Government. However, the year was 1982 and GENERAL GALTIERI was about to make a serious error of judgement and invade the Falkland Islands. Here *Invincible* proved her worth and spent 166 days at sea before a triumphant homecoming. The war marked a seismic shift in people's understanding of maritime power and *Invincible's* sale was cancelled. All around, the world was changing. The Wall came tumbling down and NATO won the Cold War. Demands for a peace dividend grew until another unpredictable event showed the need to retain a high degree of flexibility. Saddam HUSSEIN invaded Kuwait and this Gulf War was

hotly followed by trouble in the Balkans. *Invincible* played her part in these affairs and as the FA2 entered service demonstrated a limited strike capability using Laser Guided Munitions. But it was the embarkation of the HARRIER GR7s in the Baltic that heralded a new approach to joint operations and a seriously improved power projection capability. Talk of a new Carrier programme gathered pace. A new Prime Minister took office and almost immediately used our carriers in a successful intervention in the Gulf. It shaped his thinking that Britain needed a flexible and powerful littoral intervention capability to backup his foreign policy.

The last chapters provide a good insight into the arguments that have led to our two new carriers. The agreement with the RAF was essential and remains so. We will have to wait and see how this fifty year old saga ends, but there is no doubt that *Invincible* has played a huge part in keeping our hopes alive.

Now I have two observations to make:

Firstly

One of the great strengths of this 'excellent and very readable account' is how it has drawn on so much telling information garnered from interviews with senior officers involved in both debate and action. It lends credence to the tale.

Secondly

The title is all wrong and rather misleading. It needs a more accurate, if less catchy title such as:

A Concise Account of the RN Since the Demise of CVO-1 and the Part the INVINCIBLE Class Played in it and in Shaping the Future Navy.

FLINTHAM Vic. *High Stakes. Britain's Air Arms in Action 1945 - 1990*. Pen & Sword Books Limited 2009. 432 pages, 188 Black and White photographs, 82 colour. ISBN 978 184415815 7. Price £40.

(reviewed by John SHEARS)

In the preface the author explains that after many years he has been persuaded to write an update to his first book *Air Wars and Aircraft*, published in 1988. Since then, he states, much more information has come to light and more conflicts have erupted. So the outcome is an update of the first book in parts plus new chapters. The author is congratulated on producing such a comprehensive account of all the conflicts that have occurred over that 45 year period. In fact it was quite a shock in reminding this reviewer how many conflicts/incidents there have been.

There are nine chapters, each subdivided into sub sections. For instance chapter 3 is titled *Colonial Conflicts in the 1950s*, with 3.4 having the heading *Kenya 1950-53*. Each sub chapter then has a brief background to the conflict followed by a full history and sequel.

Then there is a table listing all the units that were involved. Although not in this sub chapter, other sub chapters have a description of the aircraft participating in this action.

In such a book it is sometimes easy to nitpick and some of mine are:

- On page 271 it is stated that the WHIRLWIND HAR9 shown, served at *Brady* in 1963. On page 280 it states that the RN didn't receive its first Mk9 until 1965.
- On page 195 it shows a WESSEX from 815 with *Ark Royal* markings and states it was from HMS *Centaur*. The squadron did transfer to *Centaur* from January to November 1964. Obviously when the photograph was taken they hadn't got round to remarking the aircraft.
- In the Northern Ireland section, I could not find any reference to 845 1977 - 1982; 707 1993 - 1994; 846 when they took over from 707.

The photographs are very good, but the majority seem to be from RAF sources. The author had produced an excellent reference book which is thoroughly recommended.

GARDINER Ian. *The Flatpack Bombers. The Royal Navy and The Zeppelin Menace*. Pen and Sword Aviation 2009. 144 pages with 43 plates. Together with 3 Maps, Notes, a Bibliography and an Index. ISBN 978 1 84884 071 3. Price £19.99.

(reviewed by Iain HIME)

Ian GARDINER is a Royal Marine with an impressive pedigree, war in Dhofar, command of a rifle company in the Falklands War and four operational tours in Northern Ireland not to mention any number of staff appointments and a tour as Equerry to The Chooka Emberrer. This is his second book and was inspired by John BABINGTON's personal account of the Friedrichshafen Raid.

And what great timing because this is the story of the birth of the Royal Naval Air Service starting with the ill fated order for the aptly named airship the *Mayfly* - it didn't!

But to set the scene. This is before WW1 and the great German Airships - the ZEPPELINS - are in their infancy. The RN recognizes their potential as a reconnaissance vehicle which, properly employed, could largely negate the advantages that the Grand Fleet had over the German High Seas Fleet. HG WELL's story *War of the Worlds* had terrified the public and Colonel Giulio DOUHET of the Italian Balloon Regiment had been cashiered and sent to prison for daring to foretell the destruction and mayhem that air warfare could bring. London was vulnerable.

And CHURCHILL is First Lord and a keen supporter of aviation.

Factoid 1:

*Wind direction can be gauged by observing cows who face into wind to,
"Avoid experiencing their own flatulence"*

CHURCHILL and the RNAS spent considerable energy in devising plans to combat the ZEPPELIN. But they initially had no aircraft capable of climbing faster or higher than an airship and no satisfactory weapon to attack them. So when war broke out they took the war to the enemy and attacked the ZEPPELIN facilities in the fatherland.

Factoid 2:

Height above ground can be gauged by observing sheep who ignore aircraft until below a certain height when they bolt

"This height is about 350 feet"

CHURCHILL ordered the,

"Largest possible force of naval aeroplanes to be stationed in Dunkirk .. to attack any airship bases within 100 miles"

The first raid was on Dusseldorf. After many mishaps 4 aircraft took off, two to attack Cologne and two Dusseldorf. They were armed with two 20lb HALES bombs. You will have to read the book to find out what happens but LIEUTENANT Charles COLLET of the Royal Marine Artillery was awarded the DSO for this exploit 'the first ever strategic bombing raid in history'.

Factoid 3:

The RNAS was responsible for UK air defence for the first years of WWI while the military arm of the RFC concentrated on reconnaissance missions and defence of the Army's frontline.

The second raid on Friedrichshafen forms the ventral tale in this book and what a cracking good yarn this is. You could not invent a more bizarre story involving the CO conducting his own spying in Germany - and nearly getting caught - of secret arrangements with the French to use one of their airfields provided no one found out. With pilots and maintainers shipped out in secrecy and not allowed out of the hangar as they put together the 4 'flatpacked' AVRO 504s that arrived with them. Not to mention the mission itself across France (without maps) and across part of Germany with inadequate maps in terrible weather. Three aircraft got airborne, one aircraft was lost at the target (pilot OK), one got home and one got quite close. Was any damage done? Battle damage assessment was abysmal, but who cares! It was magnificent and proved the concept.

Factoid 4:

Passed over MAJOR Hugh TRENCHARD of the Royal Scots Fusiliers earned his wings in a week. BUGLER Arthur HARRIS of the First Rhodesian Regiment qualified as a civilian pilot in 30 minutes.

The Cuxhaven Raid involved the Grand Fleet, the Harwich Force, and three seaplane carriers - *Engadine*, *Riviera* and *Empress* each with three aircraft with folding wings and three 20pb HALES bombs. It was a shambles really but it was

a wonderful endeavour and all the pilots survived and it was without doubt the First Carrier Strike.

Well I see I have hardly scratched the surface of this entertaining book but everyone who has enjoyed or taken an interest in FN100 should get a copy. It is scarcely credible that in those first few years our predecessors should have laid the foundation of so much that remains intact today. As Ian GARDINER writes,

"The story of our forebears is a ripping, gripping rollercoaster of a yarn".

But it.

Factoid 5:

TRENCHARD was appointed Chief of the Air Staff but resigned within two months, his resignation taking effect twelve days after the formal birth of the RAF.

WINDLE Dave; BOWMAN Martin. *Profile of Flight. Bombers. Vulcan, Valiant and Victor.* Pen and Sword Aviation 2009. 54 pages plus 24 colour pages of Profiles of Flight. 40 pictures, 4 tables. ISBN 978 1 84415 827 0. Price £19.99.

(reviewed by John SHEARS)

Being of generation who used to watch these aircraft at Farnborough as they came into service and thinking they were some of the best looking aircraft there, I couldn't resist diving into this book. It is a very easy read and gives the reader a good insight into the V Bomber Force.

The RAF requirement for a medium range bomber with a range of 3,500 nautical miles, capable of carrying a 10,000 lb load, was issued to industry on New Years Day 1947. From this requirement the three V bombers were produced, with the VALIANT being the first to fly in May 1951. This aircraft was destroyed during a test flight on 12 January 1952. The VULCAN made its maiden flight in January 1953 and the VICTOR on Christmas Eve that year. In June 1957 the first production VICTOR became the first large four engined jet aircraft to achieve supersonic flight.

It was thought on their introduction that these aircraft would be able to fly high enough to avoid attack, but this all changed when Gary POWERS was shot down in his U-2 by a SAM Missile. The aircraft were switched to the low level attack mode, a role they were not designed for. The first aircraft to be scrapped due to fatigue was the VALIANT, then the VULCAN followed by the VICTOR. Also, when the Navy took over the nation's deterrent role, the role of the VICTOR became primarily that of a tanker. The VICTOR was to be in service for 36 years.

Due to the passing of the years one forgets how tense world affairs were in the fifties/sixties, but one is reminded how it was when reading the account of life as a 'Duty Crew' with their aircraft armed up and ready to go. Obviously the Falklands and the VULCAN raid is covered, but mainly on the role of the 18 VICTOR tankers required to support the one VULCAN.

The photographs are good, but this reviewer became slightly confused when the text refers to VALIANTs and the pictures on the page are of VICTORs. As six VULCANs were converted to tankers it is a pity there isn't a photograph of one in this role. Also, there are mentions of prototypes crashing, plus one picture of VULCAN prototype VX770 breaking up over RAF *Syreston*. We learn that the first prototype VICTOR crashed at Cranfield when the tailplane separated from the top of the fin and then the first B Mk2 crashed into the sea with the Boscombe Down crew, cause unknown. There were no causes given for the other accidents and no mention is made of inservice occurrences. From a grand total of 329 aircraft there must have been a few aircraft lost.

This book is thoroughly recommended.

WRAGG David. *A Century of British Naval Aviation. 1909 - 2009*. Pen and Sword 2009, 252 pages. ISBN 184884036-5. Price £19.99.

(reviewed by Nick KERR)

Not surprisingly the centenary of British Naval Aviation has brought forth a crop of related books. These books and particularly this one concentrating on the many operations during the 100 years also provide a framework for all the other books written which cover only particular periods or events. This book recounts the many attacks, battles and campaigns that the F.A.A. was and still is involved and how the success of these operations were due to the skill and tenacity of the aircrew and maintainers involved.

The author rightly describes that squeezed between the Surface/Submarine Fleet of the RN on one side and the RAF on the other the FAA was us the Cinderella Service and it is only when the particular abilities of the Air Arm are acknowledged that major advances in many campaigns were realized. A prime example of this was when escort carriers and MAC ships and their aircraft were introduced into the Battle of the Atlantic. They immediately greatly reduced the loss of shipping but also carried the battle to the Germans sinking many of their submarines and allowing sufficient force to be built up to invade Europe. An interesting aside is that of the catering arrangements on the carrier *Vindex* which refused to recognize the 24 hour needs of the air group, not providing meals during the night for either the ground crew or the night flying crews. Amazingly a similar situation occurred on one of our carriers during the 60's.

In the book the sheer size of the FAA in WW.II is dramatically revealed not only in numerical terms but in the description of the forces involved. In the pursuit of the *Tirpitz* 6 carriers and 14 squadrons were deployed: in the attack on Palembang 4 carriers and 13 squadrons were used, both whilst many other squadrons were operating around the world.

The author also points out the inability of British industry to produce a suitable aircraft for carrier use during the whole 6 years of the war and how the FAA slowly but gratefully traded in their obsolete SKUAs, BARRACUDAs etc. for US aircraft.

After a very complete review of WWII the author moves onto the post war years, particularly Korea and Suez where virtually all air support was provided by the FAA as there were no convenient airfields for the RAF. A point conveniently forgotten in the 60's Defence Review where the RAF were allowed to get away with their assertion that they could cover the world. If it was needed the Falklands campaign completely proved the fallaciousness of that claim.

For the future the author questions (as I do) the requirement for two strike carriers and argues that three or four smaller carriers with light attack and an amphibious capability would suit the UK's needs better and would have a better chance of being funded than the two political carrots now being offered. What were the Naval OR Staff of 15 years ago thinking of?

This is a very well researched and readable book which yet again one can only hope that our political masters have a chance to absorb and understand from it the importance of the FAA to a maritime nation.

SPRINGER Shaun & HUMPHREYS Stuart. *Private Beatson's War*. Pen & Sword Books Ltd (Publishers) Published: 17 September 2009. Hardback, ISBN: 9781848840829. Price £19.99.

(reviewed by Steve GOLDER)

"I have often found that it is not possible not to prejudge a book. My background is 37 years in the British Army and my personal interest is usually piqued by the author, the subject or the context. With 'Private Beatson's War', it was the latter, having recently reread 'All Quiet On the Western Front'. Regrettably for me, that did not change throughout my read. All that I received was more context against an era of war that one hopes will never be experienced again in modern times. Lance Corporal Beatson's diary records do not dwell upon the underlying brutality of war itself, but rests with the feelings of hope and despair of a strong, yet gentle minded individual. Important as it is, his story is but one story of many poignant records.

The authors have done well to have the penmanship of Henry Allingham for the Forward, but I am left wondering how well this record of war will survive amongst the heady acknowledgements, the editors' note, the introduction the prologue, the epilogue, notes and bibliography. I was ready to close the book before I got to the diary itself.

My penultimate point is that I found the editorial argument against the use of Lance Corporal Beatson's rank from the time of his promotion to be weak and offensive. The man earned that rank in the most extreme of conditions and there is no argument that can support otherwise.

Notwithstanding this, I am sure that there will be those that will benefit from the editorial strategy taken by Messrs Springer and Humphreys. In this regard, I commend 'Private Beatson's War' to them, but it would not be my first choice."

SPRINGER Shaun & HUMPHREYS Stuart. *Private Beatson's War*. Pen & Sword Books Ltd (Publishers). Published: 17 September 2009. Hardback, ISBN: 9781848840829. Price £19.99.

(reviewed by D J SWINDELL, Principle Engineer)

This book portrays the very short life of one very brave young First War Scottish soldier through his own personal diary of daily event's.

It covers the period from his departure from Edinburgh in February 1915 as a volunteer in the 9th Royal Scots to fight a war which became one of the darkest periods in European history to just before his tragic death on 23 July 1916 some 15 months later.

It's partially sad that his death followed less than 6 months after marrying his sweetheart bride 'Carrie' before returning to the front line never to return.

Beatson was tragically killed in one of many failed suicidal attempts to capture a piece of land at High Wood against massive German machine gun defences.

His body along with many others, some 8000 during the third week of the battle of the Somme was never recovered.

It was interesting to read that even in the face of daily death & destruction Beatson could still show sympathy and compassion to all those around him including local French & Belgian villagers to the individual German soldiers he was fighting.

This was the first time I have read a book of the Great War and I'm grateful to Beatson for the telling insight into the thoughts and reactions of young men confronted with the horrors of Warfare on the Western Front.

His brief comments regarding weaponry manufacture and public opinions from the homeland are issues I have never heard of before and highlight the lack of knowledge and understanding many in the UK were under.

You would think this book would make the most depressing of reads, but Beatson's writing is impressive, it certainly gave me a vision of life and death in the trenches.

The only negative thing I can say is the introduction & acknowledgements are a bit drawn out but stay with it because the actual diary is well worth the read.

WATERS Conrad. *World Naval Review 2010*. Seaforth Publishing, Published 30 October 2009. Hardback, 192 pages. ISBN: 9781848320512. Price £25.

(reviewed by A. BETTS)

Lets make no bones about this book it is most definitely a reference book and therefore would not live in the 'damn good read' category. It does sit quite nicely in the reference category where it is designed to go. The book itself is split into three main parts; Naval fleet reviews from around the world, the latest and most significant ships and lastly a section on some of the technology used by Navies.

The first main section is sub divided into global regions, each region is then further divided into those countries who own a Navy. These parts have a section with an overview of that particular Navy, often with details of what direction that Navy is to take and how this has come about. There is always a table with data such as tonnage, numbers of ships, their speed and propulsion etc.

The second section, titled 'Significant Ships', is a detailed section based on three of the latest ships from around the world. The development, build, features, systems, weapons and in some instances the politics of each ship are dealt with.

The last section reviews two areas; Naval sensors and weapons is the first, the second topic being Naval Aviation. Here the ever shrinking Navies are compared against the evolving weapon systems and sensors and the increasing variety of missions Navies are asked to conduct. The next area here reviews the role of Naval Aviation and how it is used. Particular attention is given to its future use in combat at or from the sea.

Overall the book is well laid out with lots of photographs and graphical drawings where a photograph is not yet available. On the one hand it has lots of information, on the other it has very little. Allow me to explain; you could spend time looking for specific details only to be disappointed. The subject matter of the book is a huge topic whereas the book is relatively small. If specific detail is required there are better books to refer to. This book is filled with a more general style of information. As a result you may find yourself looking for information, finding some details and then carry on with the passage to discover other interesting facts. This is the nature of the book; do not expect too much from it and you may just be surprised learn a little more from it along the way.

ADLAM Henry 'Hank'. *Life is a Yo-Yo*. Arrowsmith 2009. 294 pages, 58 photographs. ISBN 978-0-9562919-0-5. Price £20.

(reviewed by John SHEARS)

If you enjoyed the author's first autobiography, *On and Off the Flight Deck*, then you will enjoy this book too, Hank is a natural storyteller and in telling his life story he doesn't hang back. Sometimes his frankness can make the reader feel slightly uncomfortable. We follow him through all the highs and lows of his life, but there is one period when, at the beginning of this century, it reaches its nadir. Understandably, the author is reticent about this time of deep personal loss.

The book starts just after the war when the author makes one of the many mistakes in his life in that he doesn't leave the Navy then or try for a permanent commission. When he does leave in May 1949, he is too late for any Government money to enable him to go to University and obtain any qualifications. So despite his war record he finds he is totally unqualified for civilian employment.

Despite the uphill path ahead of him and the deep learning curve required, Hank recounts his progress in life with his usual sense of humour. After various jobs he ends up as Bursar of Clifton College. His childhood can be described as unusual

and this is not meant to be unkind, but driving cars around the South of France at 15 (having obtained a licence), can not be described as normal.

As an established artist, there are many of his 'daubs', as he describes them, around *Yeovilton* and the Bristol area. He says with great delight that the first picture he sold was to hang on the walls for an institution for the blind!

An excellent read and thoroughly recommended.

BRISTOW Alan with MALONE Patrick. *Alan Bristow Helicopter Pioneer - The Autobiography*. Published by Pen and Sword Aviation 2009. 384 pages, 87 photographs. ISBN 978 1 84884 208 3. Price £25.

(reviewed by Iain HIME)

This is a larger than life story of a larger than life character. I don't know what part Patrick MALONE played in writing this autobiography but every word seems to come directly from the mouth of Alan BRISTOW. And what a month some would say because you are never left in any doubt as to Mr BRISTOW's opinion and I am pretty certain that that is how he was in real life. Love him or hate him you have to admire him. (I can't keep writing 'Alan BRISTOW' in this review so from now on he is 'AB').

The story starts in Bermuda where his father was the Senior Naval Officer to His Majesty's Dockyard. His father went on to become an Honorary Commodore running the bomb-shattered dockyards at Valletta when invasion looked imminent. AB's upbringing was pretty privileged and clearly shaped the man. He was clever enough to win a place at Clare College, Cambridge but war intervened and he persuaded his parents that he should take out an apprenticeship with a merchant shipping company. The BRITISH INDIA STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY won that lottery and for the next two years AB sailed the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. He was sunk twice - once by the Japanese and once by the Germans. And then he deserted!

He had been bitten by an urge to fly and swiftly made his way to London and applied to join the RAF as a fighter pilot.

"Sorry we only want Air Gunners"

I need to digress a little here because one of the key things about AB's life is that as one door closed another immediately presented itself to him and being the man he was he grabbed every opportunity that came his way. This time as he wandered disconsolately from his RAF interview he spied a sign which read 'Join the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Pilot Y Scheme'. And so he did - that day. And soon he found himself in Canada, passed his BFT but to his bitter disappointment was 'volunteered' to fly the SIKORSKY YR-4B. At this stage he had never even seen a helicopter! By 1944 he was sent to 771 NAS and became the first pilot to land on a battleship - HMS *Anson* in Scapa Flow. After VE day he was invited to make a long term commitment to the Navy and sought advice from his father.

"What year were you at Dartmouth?" he asked.

"I didn't go to Dartmouth."

"Exactly" said his father.

So he left. After an interesting interlude and just as he was wondering what to do next he was invited by WESTLAND to apply for a job as a Test Pilot. And so began an on off relationship with WESTLAND that was to finally end in tears with the 'THE WESTLAND Affair' and ministerial resignations.

On the way he had more adventures than a hero from *Boys Own*, made millions, changed the face of helicopter operations, decided that offshore oil was here to stay, ran an airline, survived a major strike at his Aberdeen facility and even planned and executed the escape of his team and their aircraft from Iran without loss. A feat that was immortalised by his school friend James CLAVELL in *Whirlwind*.

I hope this whets you appetite for a well written story of daring do that could certainly be made into several unbelievable films. I won't tell you the ending save to say it was a bit like falling off a cliff. From a peak to a trough in a matter of moments. Definitely worth adding this to your reading list in 2010.

LAVERY, Brian. *Assault Landing Craft. Design, Construction & Operations*. Seaforth Publishing/Pen and Sword Books Ltd, Barnsley, 2009, 128 pages, numerous photographs and illustrations. ISBN 978 1 84832 050 5. Price £19.99.

(reviewed by Nick NOEL-JOHNSON)

The author has created a fascinating account of the Assault Landing Craft, from the inception of the design, through discussion of the crewing, training and tactics, to accounts of its employment in service. The book also includes some excellent photographs and drawings clearly illustrating the design of this class of landing craft. Some of the photographs help to remind the reader of the operational role of the craft, including a particularly haunting image (p110) of American troops onboard an Assault Landing Craft just prior to the Normandy landings.

For the reader who is not a landing craft spotter, I would recommend starting with Chapter 8 (Operations) which provides a series of interesting accounts of the contribution the Assault Landing Craft made to Second World War operations. After reading this, even the uninitiated should have developed sufficient interest to delve into the other sections. On the other hand, for someone who is familiar with the current landing craft operated in the UK, the entire book should prove to be very interesting and offers a refreshing account of the design and employment of one of the ancestors of the current craft.

Some straightforward mathematics by the author yields a claim that this class of landing craft may have landed half a million troops in action conditions. I wonder how advance knowledge of this figure and the important role the Assault Landing Craft would play throughout the Second World War would have influenced the designer during the development of the concept. What was originally conceived as a humble design to land troops ashore at a time where the publisher reports

“...amphibious operations were deeply unfashionable...” evolved to be a crucial component of combined operations.

FRIEDMAN, Norman with Ship Plans by A D Baker III. *British Destroyers from Earliest Days to the Second World War*. Seaforth Publishing/Pen and Sword Books Ltd, Barnsley, Published: 30 October 2009. Hardback, 320 pages, ISBN: 9781848320499. Price £45.

and

FRIEDMAN, Norman with Ship Plans by A D Baker III and additional drawings by RAVEN, Alan. *British Destroyers & Frigates The Second World War and After*. Seaforth Publishing/Pen and Sword Books Ltd, Barnsley, Published: 16 October 2008. Hardback 352 pages, ISBN: 9781848320154. Price £45.

(reviewed by David CHALMERS)

These two lavishly illustrated volumes are reviewed as a pair although they clearly can be read separately, indeed the second volume historically was published first. The author is a well known internationally recognised military historian with an eight volume series on the design and development of various US warship types to his credit but as these two books show is equally at home with British vessels. Both books are in large format (approx. 290 x 240mm), printed on glossy paper and while all the many illustrations are in black and white this in no way detracts from their value. They are in fact a combination of reference book, history and "coffee table" volume and as such they are value to a wide variety of readers. There are a few slightly irritating historical and editorial mistakes as would be expected in a first edition of this complexity but none of these detract from the books' usefulness. It should be noted that a lot of the technical detail is included in the text directly describing each of the illustrations and the reader has a number of alternatives – to read the main text as history, to read the description of the illustrations for individual ship details, or indeed to read both at the same time. In the latter case it is not always easy to relate the illustration to the relevant place in the main text and a page or section cross reference would have been useful.

The first thing that strikes the reader is the depth of research that has been undertaken, not only to prepare the text but to unearth the incredible number and variety of illustrations, photographs and detailed line drawings. Indeed it is impossible for any reviewer in a reasonable timescale to read and comment on the detail because it is so densely populated. However, commencing with the first book, the structure is as would be expected in historical sequence starting in the first three chapters with the introduction of the Whitehead torpedo, licensed by the British Navy in 1872, and the development of small torpedo carrying boats intended mainly for coastal defence and to deter blockading fleets. Through the remainder of the 19th century these boats grew bigger and more seaworthy so as to work with the fleet and gained guns for self defence and for the destruction if possible of the enemy torpedo boats. The book describes in detail the political, financial and technical arguments that raged over this period concerning the most effective designs for fleet protection and for attack including the need for reliable lightweight machinery for higher speeds and quicker firing guns to deter fast boats

from getting too close. By about 1885 the term "torpedo boat destroyer" had been coined although these were still primarily large torpedo boats.

In 1892, to counter a French threat from larger "high seas" torpedo boats the Admiralty ordered six "seagoing torpedo boats of high speed" from different builders, the first of which, HMS HAVOCK, was designed and built by Yarrows, and it seems that it was at this time that this ship type became known as destroyers (chapter 4 to 6). They were required to achieve 27 knots with a complement of 40 and primarily a gun armament and relatively low endurance for operating out of British ports into the English Channel. This was the beginning of a long series of ships of increasing speed, the problems being packing in enough power, leading to the first turbine driven ship in 1898, HMS VIPER, designed by Parsons and Hawthorn Leslie. The book goes on then to describe the developing peacetime and wartime roles of the destroyer and their deployment in squadrons with larger size destroyer leaders.

During WWI (chapter 7) the destroyer type developed for both anti-submarine work and minelaying, with roles for screening the fleet as well as coastal defence. The lessons learnt from the war (chapter 8) and the subsequent development of standard designs (chapter 9) in the inter-war period are described in detail. In WWII (chapter 10) the size, range and versatility of the destroyer types are shown to evolve as convoy escorts rather than working with the fleet, and particularly their anti-submarine and anti-aircraft capabilities with the development of radar and Asdic (called sonar throughout this book). A section covering the 50 Town Class US destroyers transferred to the RN in 1940 is also included.

The second book covers the period from the inter-war period to the design studies for the Type 45, that is almost the present day and as such clearly overlaps in time the first book. This book was, as stated above, published first and its style is slightly different, for example chapter headings have a different font and the incorporation of illustrations into the text is less ambitious, presumably because electronic publishing was not then so advanced. However, this in no way detracts from the book's interest and utility.

The overlapping period, from about 1929 to 1945 is not a hindrance, as in the first book the end of the first evolutionary stage is described. The second book covers it in a different way, with the political and financial restrictions inhibiting the Admiralty's desired expansion of the destroyer type to counter the perceived threat from Japan and Germany. The first four chapters indeed contain a discussion of the various roles of destroyers including convoy protection, defence of trade, anti-submarine and anti-aircraft activities and the numbers, sizes and armaments required for each. From this debate the small destroyer or sloop developed from a trawler design was conceived, and which subsequently became the frigate. Chapter 5 covers the design, armament and equipment of the wartime emergency destroyers, and chapter 6 that of the larger fleet destroyers of the Battle, Weapon and Daring classes. Chapter 7 covers the very many smaller vessels and their armaments, required for long range escort duties, starting with the Flower class corvettes and moving on to the River, Loch, Bay and Castle classes.

In the post war period, chapter 8 and 9 follow the evolution of the fleet destroyer of steadily increasing size, and includes the debate over what was termed the

"cruiser-destroyer" with larger calibre guns, as well the conversion some of the wartime fleet destroyers into radar pickets and other roles. The debate over requirements for speed, endurance and weapon systems is covered in some detail, leading in chapter 9 to the County Class Seaslug Missile Destroyer, in all trying to match the needs of defence to the available budget and industrial capability.

Chapters 10 and 11 revert to the corvettes and escorts and on to the modern frigate, and in particular the Type 12. However, before that came the Type 14 "second rate" Blackwood Class replacing the wartime corvettes as well as the type 15 and 16 destroyer conversions. The type 41 and 61 diesel frigates were all part of a mix to meet the cold war operational requirements. The meaning of the various type numbers is also explained. The chapter concludes with a section on the C Class destroyers and the early Type 12 Whitby Class.

Chapter 12 is headed "The general Purpose Frigate" and covers the Type 81 Tribal and the very successful Leander Class including the many built for overseas navies. Chapters 13 and 14 cover the next generation of destroyers and frigates designed around gas turbine propulsion, the helicopter, towed sonar array and guided missile from the Vosper/Thornycroft designed Type 21 to the various batches of Types 22 and 42 and on the Type 23. At the same time the debates around what was required and what was affordable and a number of abortive design studies are included. The final chapter brings the book nearly to the present with the post Falklands and cold war design concepts leading to the new Daring Class Type 45.

Both books are lavishly indexed both alphabetically and by ship pennant number and full technical details of each class are given together with a very comprehensive bibliography. The only complaint the reviewer has is that where there are a number of ships with the same name the index does not discriminate between them and so finding the one you want can be a matter of trial and error, but this is a minor gripe to have for books of such enormous value and scholarship. Indeed at £45 each it is difficult to understand how the publishers have managed to keep the price so low considering the quality of the production and the uncountable photographs and drawings.