

## BOOK REVIEWS

BROWER, Jack. *The Battleship Bismarck*. Conway Maritime Press, London, 2005. 160 pages, 13 photographs and innumerable line drawings. ISBN 0 85177 982 4. Price £30-00.

(reviewed by EUR ING David K. BROWN RCNC)

This new book follows the usual format of the 'Anatomy of the Ship' series. The brief introduction outlines the development of German heavy ships from the pocket battleship *Deutschland*. That ship completed at 12,630 tons compared with a treaty limit of 10,000 tons an 'error' dismissed on the fallacious grounds that everyone was doing it – they weren't. This attitude recurs in a later section where it was decided that *Bismarck* should be designed for 41,000 tons at the very time that the German government was negotiating a new treaty with a displacement limit of 35,000 tons. There is no mention of the design ancestry from *Baden*.

There follows a chronological history of the ship's short life followed by a brief account of recent explorations of the wreck. A detail description of the design fills the next 12 pages. The structure, machinery, armour, armament and equipment are described in detail with relevant specifications. There are some splendid photographs, mainly from the Bundesarchiv.

The meat of the book come in the 130 pages of detail drawings – and don't forget the reverse of the dust jacket which carries a large scale profile, upper deck plan and lines plan. Inside, there are drawings of parts of the ship, equipment such as gun mountings, boats, armour arrangement etc. A model maker's delight.

The publisher's blurb on the jacket claims that *Bismarck* is the most famous warship ever but no attempt is made to justify this statement. If you want the basic facts and a very fine set of drawings you will need this book.

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DOUST Michael J. *Phantom Leader – the life and times of a flying sailor*. Adhoc Publications 2005. 448 pages, 77 b & w photographs. ISBN 0-946958 42 4. £25. (reviewed by Douglas MACDONALD).

I was pleased to be sent a review copy of this book as I had worked for the author, albeit briefly, and served with him in his two appointments to *Ark Royal IV*. Having also spent 9 years in the PHANTOM world I looked forward to his assessment of this fine aircraft. Much of the book covers Michael's early years growing up in Kent and his early years in the Royal Navy and the Fleet Air Arm. His time in the PHANTOM world from conversion to the aircraft in VX-4 at NAS *Point Mugu* in 1968 to his time in the Directorate of Naval Air Warfare in the late 70's, covers some 140 of the 448 pages. In many ways the book is an easy and interesting read but never far from the surface, this particular large segment of the book is riddled with errors in times, names, places and most importantly facts. The book can not in any way be considered as a definitive historical snapshot of Naval Aviation history.

Two major flying occurrences during this period have not been covered with adequate research and would appear to be written from rather vague memory. The Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range firings described from page 338 occurred in February 1972 and not in 1976. The weapons firings were to be both AIM 7E-2 SPARROW and AIM 9 SIDEWINDER firings and the missile fired was a SPARROW and not a SIDEWINDER. The unfortunate target fired at was the Electronic Counter Measures A-3 SKYWARRIOR and not the C-130 drone carrier.

The author's description of the incident is totally wrong. His description on page 340 of reporting to ADMIRAL KIDD that the British PHANTOM could not carry the American AIM 7-E Sparrow is just nonsense. He can only be thinking of the detachment of 892 PHANTOMS, which flew from the East Coast of the States to Point Mugu to pick up, from RAYTHEON, latest modification SPARROW missiles for the forthcoming 1976 missile shoot at AFWR.

His description of the PHANTOM fatal accident from page 296 has muddled facts with another later similar accident and the author's observer on the flight he describes could not have been Steve PARK (a BUCCANEER observer) but could only have been Jerry PARKES (a SEA VIXEN and PHANTOM observer)! Ruffled feathers there will be too. Several senior officers are taken to task throughout the book and it would be interesting to hear the version from the other side. Howlers such as the bright red haired engineer pilot at page 149 with accompanying assessment of his future career. A visit to his good friend Jonathan TODD (TOD) and the visiting ADMIRAL Luis LE BAYLIS (Louis LE BAILLY) at page 239 should have been bowled out with better proofing and editorial. I can only assume that there are similar mistakes throughout the book as those during his actual time as PHANTOM Leader.

- If you want to know what the author thinks of your mates, or even yourself, this is a good read but don't go looking for an accurate slice of aviation history.

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GOODWIN, Peter. *The Ships of Trafalgar. The British, French and Spanish Fleets October 1805.* Conway 2005. 256 pages, 70 Illustrations, 16 photographs, 30 colour, 217 Tables. ISBN 1 84486 015 9. £35.

(reviewed by John SHEARS)

Peter GOODWIN, Keeper and Curator of HMS *Victory*, has produced an excellent work that examines every vessel that was present at the Battle of Trafalgar. There have been many books produced about the battle and this reviewer found it more interesting to read about the history of the ships themselves than the actual engagement.

The history of each vessel is told from birth to grave! We learn about their construction, refits and repairs, which include costs, etc. There are line drawings of the hull, tables containing the ships' specifications, guns, captains, etc. Their role in the battle is covered, but their earlier lives and eventual fate is intriguing.

NELSON's favourite, the *Agamemnon*, for example could be described as giving good value as she eventually succumbed to hard and continuous work. A 3rd Rate

of 64 guns built to the lines of the ARDENT class. Designed by Thomas STRIDE and built at the private Yard of HENRY ADAMS at Bucklers Hard on the River Beaulieu at the cost £38,303. 15s. 4d. From 1781 to 1793 she appears to spend considerable time in dock, where the cynics suggest she was brought up to the required standard having been built by a private contractor! Then NELSON commanded her and she appears to have been continuously in the thick of the action around the world until in 1809 she went aground at Maldonado Bay. Due to her poor condition (in desperate need of a refit), the decision was taken to abandon her.

The other ship to mention is the 74 Gun Ship *Duquay Trouin*. Built in 1802 and captured at Trafalgar, she was renamed *Implacable*. She became a Training Ship at Devonport in 1842 and was loaned to Wheatly COBB in 1908. During WWII she was passed back to the RN and with *Foudroyant* they became HMS *Foudroyant*, a training establishment for senior sea cadets. In 1947 when money was not forthcoming to restore her, she was scuttled off Selsey Bill.

This act of destruction was remembered by the World Ship Trust. When it was founded in 1979 to prevent Historic Ships being lost, the Trust chose the motto '*Implacable, Never Again*'.

This must be the reference book for all those studying NELSON and a must for anyone interested in our naval heritage.

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MARQUARDT, Karl-Heinz. *The 44-gun Frigate USS Constitution 1812*. Conway Maritime Press, London, 2005. 128 pages, 26 illustrations and innumerable line drawings. ISBN 1 84486 0 10 8. Price £25-00.

(reviewed by EUR ING David K. BROWN RCNC)

This fine book describes the Frigate, USS *Constitution*, the oldest warship still afloat (at Boston). The introduction deals with the politics of her order – Main Gate was difficult even then. The chronological listing of her career lists her defeat of the British *Guerriere* and later of the *Java* in 1812. Her active career extended to 1855 though she remained in service as a training ship for many more years. This section is followed by 17 pages of detailed description of the hull and equipment. There are 21 photographs or paintings.

The meat of the book lies in the drawings, which occupy 80 pages (and the reverse of the dust jacket). There are line plans, general arrangement, sail and rigging plans and very many details of guns and other fittings. The author raises a point which applies to most historic ships, that the ship today is a mixture of about 10% of original ship, replacement of 'wear and tear' whilst still in service and later restorative work. Many fittings e.g. capstan date from a late period in her service. However, she is an interesting ship, well worth a visit if you are in Boston, and well served by the author of this book.

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PARSHALL Jonathan; TULLY Anthony. *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*. Potomac Books, Dulles, VA 2005; 640 pages, 37 B&W photographs, 53 drawings and diagrams, 11 appendices. Price \$35 (UK distributor: Transatlantic Publishers Group, £21.95) ISBN 1-57488-923-0  
J.Nav.Eng. 43(1).2006

(reviewed by John JORDAN)

This review begins with what the authors would undoubtedly term a 'spoiler'. Some readers will find some of the language used in this book inappropriate to a serious work of maritime history. According to PARSHALL and TULLY:

The carrier *Akagi* had 'a huge meat cleaver of a prow'.

Japanese aircraft were 'built to dish it out but weren't really intended to take it'.

The drop angles of the US torpedo planes of VT-8 were 'lousy'.

Other aircraft featured in the book fly 'on the deck' – a confusing phrase when dealing with carrier aircraft! – or end up 'in the drink'.

When there are major internal disagreements about the Midway operation among the senior admirals of the Imperial Japanese Navy both sides use staff officers to 'duke it out'.

However, once you get accustomed to the colourful informality of the language and the occasional excursion into journalistic hyperbole this is a remarkable book. Professional historians may be 'sniffy' about the tone of the writing, but in the view of Parshall and Tully these people have spent the past fifty years writing accounts of Midway which have been tantamount to rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic; they, on the other hand, have studied the fine detail of Cunard company policy, analysed the personality, cultural background and training of the Master, looked at the underwater subdivision and damage control arrangements of the ship, and questioned the precise location of the iceberg.

In doing so they have built on the analytical groundwork of prominent naval historians such as H.P. Willmott (*The Barrier and the Javelin*) and John Lundstrom (*The First Team: Pacific Naval Air Combat from Pearl Harbor to Midway*), who provides the foreword. Where this book breaks new ground is in rejecting the Japanese version of events put forward in Fuchida and Okumiya's seminal account of the battle first published in English in 1955, in favour of the official Japanese war history series (*Senshi Soshō*) published since that time, the air group records of the four carriers, and other Japanese-language primary and secondary sources.

This leads to some surprising insights. Contrary to what has previously been written the decks of the Japanese carriers were not filled with strike aircraft when the *Dauntless*' from Yorktown and *Enterprise* dived on them. Although the aircraft which were to make up the Japanese counter-strike were fully-armed and fuelled in the hangars, Kido Butai (the First Air Fleet) had been unable to spot the strike aircraft because up to that point their flight decks had been fully occupied launching and recovering fighter aircraft of the Combat Air Patrol which had been tasked with fending off constant attacks, first from Midway and subsequently from the US carriers. Another major surprise is that the carrier *Hiryū*, which survived the initial dive-bomber onslaught unscathed, had not run on ahead, as in earlier accounts, but was apparently still in company with the other three carriers and witnessed the devastating strike on them. And the devastation wrought aboard the force flagship *Akagi* was in all probability the result of a single 1,000lb bomb striking close to the central aircraft lift.

The focus of this book, unlike the many which have preceded it, is on the operations of the Kido Butai throughout the battle. The extensive research by the authors into IJN carrier air operations allows them to take us into the cramped command spaces and the busy, crowded hangars of the four Japanese first-line carriers, veterans of a succession of devastating strikes in both the Pacific and the Indian Oceans in which they had swept all before them. The appendices provide the reader with a complete and detailed record of every aircraft launch and recovery, the names, rank and training of every pilot, observer and radioman. The breadth and quality of the information about the Japanese Air Groups provided here is simply staggering. There are also excellent profile and plan drawings by Jon Parshall of the four carriers as they appeared at Midway, together with comprehensive tables showing not only the composition of the Japanese forces for Operations MI and AL, but also the projected build-up of forces in the Aleutians following the anticipated success of the Midway operation.

Shattered Sword is equally strong on Japanese strategy and tactics, and on the mentality of the IJN's admirals, brought up in an aggressive culture which favoured the offence over defence, and in which adherence to operational doctrine stifled creative thinking.

When faced with defeat those same admirals would resort to interpretations of the battle in which the primary motivation would be to save the Navy's face – and with it their own – with the result that it took a long time for the scale of the defeat at Midway to be publicly acknowledged in Japan.

Parshall and Tully argue that similar motivations underpin Fuchida's deliberately misleading account, and that the Navy's failure to properly acknowledge the full extent of the strategic and tactical errors at Midway hindered its capacity to learn from its mistakes. They rightly point out that an American admiral who presided over such a major defeat would have been dismissed (or at least relegated to a desk job, preferably in Washington), and a detailed and rigorous inquiry into US operational procedures would have been conducted. Both Yamamoto and Nagumo, on the other hand, continued to exercise their respective commands as before, and changes in Japanese operational procedures were slow to materialize and not always well thought through. For the authors the US Navy did not win the Pacific War simply because of an inevitable material superiority which would eventually overwhelm the ability of the IJN to replace its losses, but also because of the rapidity with which the Americans were prepared to analyse military failure, to learn lessons, and to implement new procedures which took those lessons into account.

In the end the result of the battle of Midway is the same: the death of the elite Kido Butai and victory for the carriers of the US Navy, justifiably cast in the role of underdogs. (How many more times will I read an account of this battle in the expectation of a different result!). However, this is an altogether different football match to the one you may have read about in yesterday's papers. This account will undoubtedly revolutionize the way we think about the battle of Midway; it is a towering piece of research by two IJN enthusiasts who have left no stone unturned in their efforts to resolve the plethora of conflicting information which, has bedevilled previous analyses.

Note: This review first appeared in Warship 2006 (Conway Maritime Press, London).

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SUHREN Teddy; BRUSTAT-NAVAL Fritz, translated by JAMES Frank. *Teddy Suhren Ace of Aces*. Published by Chatham Publishing. 248 pages with 79 b/w illustrations and photographs. ISBN 1-86176-272-0. Price £16.99.

(reviewed by Iain HIME)

This entertaining book should be read with a slight German accent – but don't over do it. Teddy SUHREN wrote his memoirs over a period of years after the war and his style is conversational and without pretension. Fritz BRUSTAT-NAVAL edited the diaries and Frank JAMES translated them into English. A form of English, anyway, and one that retains quite a lot of Germanic shape and use of words and phrases. This greatly helps the advice at sentence one above and the read is all the better for it.

Teddy SUHREN is clearly and justifiably proud of his record as a young and highly successful U-boat commander credited with sinking in excess of 200,000 tons (more than 30 ships) of Allied shipping in waters as far apart as the Indian Ocean and the Eastern seaboard of the USA.

From the start of his training SUHREN stood apart from his fellows. His irreverent sense of humour and questioning of authority ensured that his career in the big ship navy was destined to be dull and unsuccessful. But then he discovered submarines and before long had earned the admiration and protection of CAPTAIN DONITZ. When war broke out he was 1st Lieutenant of U-48 and gives a lively account of some of the action in the Atlantic at a time when the rules of war were less harsh and the allies unprepared for the undersea battle. Despite his acknowledged contribution to the success of U-48, SUHREN was firmly told that he would not get command until he was 25: and so it was that shortly before his 25th birthday he was appointed to U-568 then being completed. His exploits as Captain of U-568 are as gripping as any fiction. His determination in attack, his leadership style, his care of his crew and a goodly slice of luck served him well as the Battle of the Atlantic grew in intensity and Allied counter operations began to take their toll. After 15 patrols SUHREN was beached and initially sent to Berlin for debriefing. As a result of meeting HITLER and BORMANN he 'invited himself' to Obersalzberg where he spent some time with the BORMANN family and Eva BRAUN. An intriguing insight into how some of the German leaders were living as late as 1944.

The final section of his memoirs covers SUHREN's time as Fuhrer of Submarines (Norway) and how he had to struggle to get the support his boats needed and how when the war ended he was put first in a POW camp by the British and then in prison. He was eventually released on 12 April 1946.

A cracking good story guaranteed to keep the reader involved and turning the pages.

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MCGRAIL Sean. *Ancient Boats and Ships*. Publications, Princes Risborough, 2006. 72 pages, 54 illustrations. ISBN 13 978 0 7478 0645 5. Price (p/b) £5.99. (reviewed by Eur Ing David K. BROWN RCNC)

This splendid little book forms an excellent starting point for a student of man's early use of the seas. It is much revised and enhanced version of the 1983 Shire book. In the introduction the author points out that such studies overlap with those of constructional methods, water transport and trading patterns etc.

It is not possible to give a starting point to the use of the rivers and the sea but by 7,000 BC such use was well established. All early craft were made of perishable material, wood, rushes, hide, and few traces remain. Occasionally, it is possible to learn something from the imprint left in the soil by a boat, which has been buried. Early excavations in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries usually resulted in the disintegration of the artefact as nothing was known on how to preserve waterlogged timbers.

The introduction of the aqualung ca 1948 made it possible to locate, measure and record underwater artefacts without necessarily incurring the expense of salvage through a few spectacular cases such as *Vasa* and *Mary Rose* have excited public interest.

The main section of the book opens with a chapter on the methods of the archaeologist for excavation, recording, preservation and, above all, publication. Experimental archaeology – the building of modern replicas such as the Greek trireme *Olympias* is covered. The emphasis is on North Western Europe, which rates a chapter. There are log boats, planked boats, hide boats and rafts. The following chapter covers the rest of the world more briefly. There are useful lists of sites to visit, further reading and a glossary.

The illustrations are outstanding; 22 in colour. This little book is most highly recommended.