

BOOK REVIEWS

SUTHERLAND, Jon & CANWELL, Diane. *The Battle of Jutland*. Pen and Sword Books, Barnsley, 1907. 214 pages, 51 illustrations. ISBN 1 84415 539 3. Price £19.99.

(Reviewed by Eur Ing David K BROWN, RCNC)

Another book about Jutland! This battle has led to so many books that new, serious works can be justified only in the light of new evidence such as diving on the wrecks. On the other hand, books aimed at attracting new, general readers are always welcome. Popular histories are not easy to write as lengthy justifications must be avoided whilst still touching on the latest evidence.

The treatment is straightforward; the pre-war building race is outlined. The Admiralty is criticised for failing to adopt the POLLEN fire control system. (The authors do not seem to have read BROOKS' *Dreadnought Gunnery* and *The Battle of Jutland* which puts a strong case for the DREYER gear) A description of the earlier actions of the battlefleets in the early years of the war follows. There could have been a little more on the failure of BEATTY's signal team at Scarborough and Dogger Bank. The Battle of Jutland proper begins on page 81.

The main story follows the usual chronological order dealing with the battle cruiser action, the brief encounters of the battle fleets and the night action. A few track charts would have helped, particularly if traditional charts had been revised in the light of the position of the major wrecks, now surveyed. The authors make good use of eye witness accounts some of which, particularly the German ones, are little known.

Some aspects are less certain than the authors' account. For example, it is possible that *Indefatigable* was sunk by a shell penetrating the deck but there is no clear evidence to that effect. *Marlborough* may have been hit by V48 but *Wiesbaden* is also possible. The effect of the hit was less dramatic - an initial heel of 7-8°, soon reduced. The illustrations begin with portraits of the admirals involved, not just the overall Commanders seen so often but the lesser squadron flag officers. There is a representative selection of ship pictures.

The book needed more careful proof reading as there are far too many slips which, though trivial in themselves, are so numerous as to damage the credibility of the whole - A few examples:

- *Dreadnought* did not have 12-12in guns (p 8);
- *Queen Elizabeth* did not have 13.5in guns (p 10);
- *Invincible* did not have a speed of 27 knots (p 9) though the correct figures are given on later pages;
- On page 90 we learn that the range of the battle cruiser action opened to 1,500 yards.

OSBORNE, Richard, SPONG, Harry & GROVER, Tom. *Armed Merchant Cruisers 1878-1945*. World Ship Society, Windsor, 2007. 328 pages, numerous illustrations. ISBN 0-9543310-8-7. Price £45.00 (£30.00 to WSS Members).

(Reviewed by Eur Ing David K BROWN RCNC)

There have been few accounts of the conversion and service of the RN's armed merchant cruisers (AMCs) and those which have appeared concentrate on a few well known actions. This new book explores the story in great detail from 1878. The first short section details the purchase, conversion and life of the *Hecla*, seen as a prototype for other AMCs. She was soon converted into a torpedo boat carrier and had a long and active life.

During the 1880s there were several threats of war and in 1883 and again in 1885 the same 16 ships were requisitioned. Merchant ship design had diverged considerably from that of warships and there was considerable debate as to the essential features needed in an AMC. In particular, subdivision was seen as important and only ships which would float with one main compartment flooded were considered. It became apparent that ships which met the Admiralty requirement were less likely to be sunk by accident; collision or grounding. Hence the Admiralty rules became the basis of safety legislation for passenger ships. Brief particulars and history of these ships are given.

Part 3 deals with history of AMCs in World War I. Early in the war it was discovered that the elderly cruisers used to maintain the blockade to the north of the British Isles were insufficiently seaworthy for these stormy waters and the task was transferred to AMCs. Pre-war, it had been thought that the largest and fastest liners would be most suitable but it was soon found that their fuel consumption was too great and ships of moderate size and speed were more suitable. The smallest ships were not capable of withstanding the weather on the Northern Patrol.

A number of incidents are described in detail. The Northern Patrol will always be associated with ADMIRAL de CHAIR but he was replaced in March 1916 by ADMIRAL TUPPER whose reports on inspections of his new command form an invaluable source of information. Eleven AMC were lost on the Northern Patrol alone, almost all to submarines. Particulars are given of about 75 ships. The need for the Northern Patrol disappeared with the entry of the USA into the war.

Part 4 opens with a lengthy account of inter-war planning for AMC. The Admiralty were obviously well satisfied with the performance of these ships in the First World War as by 1919 consideration was being given to the stiffening of suitable ships on build. Money was scarce but the Treasury were not unhelpful and much was done. There were difficulties such as what happened when a ship stiffened at Admiralty expense was sold abroad. By the late 1930s plans had been prepared for conversion in three stages -

- Emergency;
- Semi-complete;
- Full.

Detail plans had been worked out for the liner *Carthage* and copies sent to suitable yards worldwide for guidance.

The description of wartime actions follows the style of the earlier section. A number of incidents are described in detail and some general topics considered. The new Northern patrol died with the fall of Norway and their duties became escort and patrol. As these became less important most were converted to troopships. There were a number of engagements with German surface raiders which were normally fairly small, fast cargo ships. Their guns were as ancient as the British ships but they had been given new mountings to increase their range. Hence the AMCs were frequently exposed to long range fire to which they could not reply. A few ships were modernised in 1942-3 with longer range guns, fire control, radar and aircraft. The very large number of ship records fill 57 pages of the book. There are seven Appendices listing the date of conversion and the disposition of the AMCs.

The numerous illustrations are quite remarkable, in most cases showing the ship in wartime state - even sinking. Private collections have been used to good effect. The authors have been working on this book for many years and it is an invaluable reference book. It is also fascinating to read and is strongly recommended.

GRIER, Howard D. *Hitler, Dönitz and the Baltic Sea*. U S Naval Institute, 2007 (UK Greenhill books). 12 maps, photos. ISBN 1-59114-345-1. Price £--

(Reviewed by Eur Ing David K BROWN RCNC)

The author suggests that HITLER's determination to hold on to the Baltic coast from Leningrad (St Petersburg) to Courland was not sheer stubbornness but, was a determination to retain the use of the Baltic for U boat training. Prompted by DÖNITZ he saw the Type XXI U boat as the only war winning weapon.

In support of this thesis the book opens with seven chapters on the land fighting along the coast. This campaign is little known and the book is worth reading for this aspect alone. Considerable attention is paid to the relationship between HITLER and his generals, all too often with arguments over permission to withdraw. An unusual character is the little known FIELD MARSHAL SCHÖRNER who had an unusual skill in persuading HITLER to agree to a withdrawal and even, on occasion, withdrew without getting permission. DÖNITZ comes across as a dedicated Nazi, not the "simple sailor" sometimes portrayed. He certainly argued hard for holding the Baltic front. Chapter 8 covers the difficult relationship with Sweden.

Chapter 9 is the key to the argument. It discusses the submarine war in general while concentrating on the Type XXI programme. The author covers most of the problems. There were frequent delays due to the bombing of key factories making components. Dimensional tolerances on hull sections were too big and often not met so that mating of sections was very difficult. The hydraulic system was much more complex than in previous U boats - Germany was surprisingly late in

developing comprehensive systems. It proved difficult to rectify these problems. This was exacerbated by loss of skilled workers and was a major cause for delay.

The performance and capability is well covered but there are two errors which might seem trivial but would have had a major effect on AEW operations. The submerged speed is given as 18 knots but 16½ for one hour was more realistic. Since the best ASW ships of the LOCH class could only reach 20 kts, this error is important. On the other hand, the diving depth is quoted as 376 ft but, on trial, U2529 reached 220 metres. Fast submarines need a considerable safety margin and post war British studies suggest 500 ft as a usable depth. But by early 1945 much of the Baltic was within range of allied bombers and U boat losses were heavy, particularly due to mines.

Certainly, DÖNITZ believed that the capability of the XXI would change the balance in the Atlantic and he tried to convince HITLER of that. Whether this strange man accepted DÖNITZ view we can never know. Readers must make up their own mind as to whether the author has proved his thesis but the effort will be worthwhile. There is still much to be learnt about the last year of Nazi Germany. The author might have looked at developments on the other side. By 1945 sonobuoys were in limited use and trials were in hand using helicopters from ships. Plans were well advanced to fit SQUID to the CAPTAIN class. The XXIs would not have had it all their own way - and, horrid thought - would the allies have accepted defeat with a couple of atom bombs in store.

GOODWIN, Norman. *Castle Class Corvettes*. Maritime Books, Liskeard. 2007. 541 pages, numerous illustrations. ISBN 978-1-904459-279. Price £30.00.

(Reviewed by Eur Ing David K BROWN, RCNC)

The CASTLE class entered service from 1943 onwards at a time when the peak of the Battle of the Atlantic had passed. In consequence, these fine ships are little known; a gap in our knowledge which this book fills well. It leans heavily on personal accounts and Norman GOODWIN (who served in two of the class) prefers the title of "Complier" with Steve BUSH as Editor.

After the usual preliminaries, Section 1 contains a brief, factual description of the ship and its equipment. This section concludes with a very interesting account of the SQUID/ASDIC 147 A/S weapon system written by some of those who actually used it. I would quibble with the statement that the kill rate of SQUID was 50%. Surely this relates to the double squid of the LOCH class with a lower figure for the CASTLE's single SQUID?

Section 2 opens with a description of the convoy system – Few people realise that a convoy of 60 merchant ships arranged 10 columns of 6 ships had a front of 4½ miles and a depth of 2 miles. Tactics are outlined for A/S, and A/A action and avoiding action for homing torpedoes. A number of specific actions, mostly U boat sinkings are described in detail. The war was coming to an end and 5 CASTLES were converted to rescue ships with merchant crews becoming small troopships after the war. A little known duty was to act as beacons and, should it be needed, air sea rescue ships during the airborne repatriation of US troops. This

showed their ability to loiter in mid-ocean for long periods and four were converted into ocean weather ships. Several were used as training ships, a role for which they were well suited with the combination of the most modern ASW equipment and a small crew.

Section 3 forms the meat of the book with 285 pages of individual ship histories of 26 RN, 12 RCN and one Norwegian ship. The format is standard; the first page carries a photo and brief history of the ship. This is followed by several pages of tabulated data on wartime voyages concluding with notes on her post war fate. The remainder is anecdotal – reminiscences of her career, mostly interesting, some sad, some hilarious. In some cases there are "snaps from the family album" – groups of sailors, posed or working.

To avoid duplication, actions with two or more CASTLEs are described in Part 4 under Escort Group. I found this confusing and feel that cross referencing between parts 3 and 4 would help, particularly as there is no index. There are 108 pages of fascinating but disconnected accounts.

The book closes with no less than 25 appendices covering a very wide range of topics. The first gives production dates starting with orders at the end of 1942. A year later 15 British ships and all Canadian building were cancelled. One may wonder if it would have been better to transfer the shipbuilding manpower to the Lochs which suffered from labour shortage. Another appendix contains sample Standing Orders while several outline standard manoeuvres. My choice is Canteen Messing, something which is little known.

This book provides a long needed review of the CASTLE class but also contains much on tactics and equipment of the Battle. Above all, the anecdotes help in understanding life at sea in small warships.

A Personal note.

Designing a new class of Offshore Patrol Vessel I was guided in choice of length by subjective accounts of wartime life in FLOWERS, CASTLEs and RIVERs. This suggested that a length about that of the CASTLEs was right, an impression later confirmed by computer studies and now re-enforced by this book. (See *WARSHIP 2006*, Conway).

ADLAM, Henry 'Hank'. *On and Off the Flight Deck*. Pen and Sword Books Ltd 2007. 237 pages, 41 photographs, 6 illustrations. ISBN 978 1 84415 6290. Price £19.99.

(Reviewed by John SHEARS)

Earlier this year the BBC serialized *Fanny Hill* and now we have the memories of Hank! Seriously, it is so good to read the autobiography of a young pilot during the war in which the whole story is told and not just the technical details of the aircraft he flew.

This is not the story of an Ace, but of a good squadron pilot. We follow him from basic training, through fighter school and onto America where he joins his first

front line squadron, 890, which was being equipped with new Mk4 WILDCATS. Up to this point he had survived a crash during his first night solo and convinced the Fighter School that he should remain on the course, despite his initial failure to land a HURRICANE successfully!

The author was then to spend the war as a fighter pilot operating from several carriers in home waters, the Mediterranean and the Far East. During this time he develops strong views on:

- Senior Officers in charge of Aviation matters who had never flown;
- American versus English design of both carriers and aircraft.

Obviously, readers may not agree with all his views, but when one realizes he has witnessed a number of needless accidents and the death of many of his friends one can fully understand his points of view, which is shared by many of his contemporaries. From his first deck landing he held the antics of the Batsman with some contempt. But during his operational flying, when conditions become difficult and he has to rely on the batsman his views begin to soften. It is therefore ironic that when recalled from the Pacific, as he had exceeded his time on operations, he was sent on a DLCO course!

Having qualified he is appointed to HMS *Begum*, which soon sails as a ferry carrier to the Far East. By the time the carrier gets to Alexandria they meet up with four other carriers. By this stage, being bored during nothing, he managed to get himself transferred to HMS *Colossus*. Here he was able to prove his theory and convince the powers to be that he should be able to fly onboard the aircraft he was expected to bat on. This achieved but then it slightly backfired when he was transferred as a pilot to the embarked CORSAIR squadron. But before he was to fly operationally again, the war ended.

At this stage he realized that he made a great mistake when he accepts a Short Service Commission and does not leave the service to go to university. But he does return to *Yeovilton* as an Instructor where he was to meet his future wife.

In this excellent book we find out where the name 'Hank' came from, but more importantly he writes honestly about his feelings and what it felt like to be a fighter pilot at sea operating under often hazardous conditions. He admits at the end he was getting the 'twitch' and it would appear Pink Gins helped him through this phase. He writes very movingly how he felt when friends were killed and his anger when he considers it was due to a failure in the Command structure.

This superb book is thoroughly recommended.

BUTLER, Tony. *The de Havilland SEA VIXEN*. Air Britain (Historians) Ltd. 256 pages, 245 plus 55 coloured photographs, 10 plus 4 coloured illustrations. ISBN 0 85130 364 1. Price £42.00, Members £28.00.

(Reviewed by Douglas MACDONALD)

A long overdue definitive book on the Royal Navy's SEA VIXEN is at last in print and is available to FAAOA members at a reduced price direct from the publishers AIR-BRITAIN.

A4 hardback with a healthy selection of black and white and coloured photographs, some of which are unique and have not been published before. It also contains some of the very memorable shots including the mark 1 on final approach to *Ark Royal's* deck taken from above and astern and the mark 2 overflying Seaballs on Salisbury Plain. With a foreword by the most senior RN VIXEN pilot. ADMIRAL Sir Michael LAYARD, the contents of the book fall neatly into place in a logical sequence from design and development through production and test flying to Squadron histories.

Other contents include a roll of honour, potted histories of the 3 DH110 and SEA VIXEN designers and some detail on SEA VIXEN data, weapon and radar systems.

The bulk of the book is taken up by Squadron's histories, what was it like to fly and individual aircraft histories. The latter seemingly a straight copy from Ray STURTIVANT'S Fleet Air Arm Fixed-wing Aircraft since 1946. The other 2 main chunks of the book are freshly published and make for fascinating reading. Squadron and Unit histories are contained within 70 pages in the middle of the book and cover in much detail history, names of Squadron Commanding Officers, Squadron Officers, aircraft and bases, with appropriate photographs of men and machines.

Chapter 9 covers 50 pages on 'what was the aircraft like'. Again with appropriate photographs of those who made a little bit of Fleet Air Arm history and their aircraft. There are pieces by Squadron CO's, Pilots, Observers, Artificers, an aircraft handler and a FDO. Across the board tales of derring do and there I was upside down with nothing on the clock but the maker's name. I particularly enjoyed Wally BURGHER'S serious but hilarious tale of a night diversion to Subic Bay, which ended up with the crew ejecting from the aircraft short of the airfield.

I commend this book to everyone who flew and maintained the SEA VIXEN during its admirable service in the Royal Navy.

CUDMORE, Michael. *The WINDFALL Yachts - A Legacy of Goodwill*. Topsy II Publishing, PO Box 22, Stoke sub Hamdon, Somerset TA14 6WW. 200 pages, 103 photographs. ISBN 978-0-9542547-1-1. Foreword by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

(Reviewed by Mike FORBES)

Michael CUDMORE introduces this fascinating book with the words,

"This is an unusual story, unique in our maritime history and not told before. It is about a large fleet of ex German yachts mainly built in the 1930s and

taken over by the occupying forces in 1945. Many were then sailed to England and formed the core of post war services offshore sailing before branching out into a wider outside world. The yachts were appropriately called WINDFALLS, a name, which continues today. A surprising number are still sailing, as classic boats. More are languishing under covers while just a few have known graves. Others have simply disappeared."

The author states that the book has taken a long time to research and produce and the result has been well worth the wait. Many thousands of our countrymen and women received their taste of yacht sailing in these beautifully built wooden vessels. Indeed my own experience of being cold, wet and seasick in a 50 square metre at Dartmouth failed to deter me from a life at sea and a continuing love of sailing. I had forgotten that they generally had no engines - much later, as a sailing instructor, I sometimes wondered whence certain skills had originated.

The book is well-produced with plenty of photographs, showing their beautiful lines, and a well-judged sprinkling of personal experiences and passages in the WINDFALLS.

The history of the yachts in pre-war and wartime Germany is well-covered as well as the complex and sustained operation to bring the yachts, mostly from Kiel, to southern England, mostly in 1946.

As the author suggests, this excellent book is but a start. There is a chapter entitled 'So where are they today?' which is necessarily incomplete. Hopefully, Mike CUDMORE or the National Maritime Museum in Falmouth, which has agreed to compile a WINDFALL Register, will be inundated with stories and news from all over the world about those yachts still sailing, or at the least still surviving. The author is generally donating all proceeds from the sales of the book to the charity Seafarers UK (KING GEORGE's Fund for Sailors) and the book can be bought online with credit or debit card at www.windfallyachts.com by post for £21 cheque (including UK p & p) from the Publisher. In addition RNSA members can get it through the RNSA office.

FRANKS, Richard A. *SEA VIXEN. DE HAVILLAND'S Ultimate Fighter Aircraft*. Dalrymple & Verdum Publishing 2006. 112 Pages, 91 plus 19 coloured photograph, 20 coloured illustrations. ISBN 1-905414-04-8. Price £16.95.

(Reviewed by Nick KERR)

Books about the SEA VIXEN are like London (or Bristol) Buses, nothing for ages and then two come along at the same time. Having contributed to Tony BUTLER'S book I must be careful not to compare the two.

They have one thing in common however and that is they are both almost entirely technical in nature. Tony does include a series of jolly stories from aircrew, not quite 'There I was upside down with nothing on the clock variety' but giving a human element to the narrative.

Richard FRANKS gives a very full account of the aircraft's development with various changes in requirement, differing involvement of the RAF and the RN, as always singing from different hymn sheets, changes in direction by De HAVILLAND to keep in the contest and during testing many major accidents requiring massive redesign. It was not a happy start to an aircraft that was to provide fighter cover for the Fleet as well as carry out many other roles filling in mainly for the SCIMITAR that were not originally thought of.

The entry into Service and subsequent deployments by the four squadrons are narrated but completely lack any human interest. The VXEN is described solely as a machine carrying out these missions with no reference to the crews flying them. Descriptions of both the Mk. I and Mk. II follow closely the sales blurb from De HAVILLAND and the Admiralty and do not reflect the true capabilities, some better, a lot worse than the published version.

Annex III, 'The Production List' does on examination provide some very disturbing information. Out of the 128 aircraft listed, 24 were written off in fatal accidents. The phrase 'Crew killed' nestling alongside 'Transferred to FRADU'! Another 12 were involved in serious but non-fatal accidents. All Air Arms or Forces have their 'window-makers', the German Navy had their very dangerous F.104, the French their early Standards etc. but without doubt the Fleet Air Arm's was the SEA VIXEN. All of us who survived one, two or three tours all lost friends and later have had to face the widows and children, some of whom have recently been interested in finding out how and why their fathers died.

The account of squadrons deploying off to the Mediterranean or Far East contains no account of the effort required to keep the aircraft flying. On 892's first deployment to the Far East the maintainers worked 12 hours on 12 hours off continually for the whole commission. They did occasionally get a day off in harbour. Young artificers joining in January 1961 returned to the UK one year later as old men. Very rough calculations for that deployment give approximately four hundred thousand hours maintenance time for approximately eighteen hundred flying hours or over two hundred hours maintenance per hours flying. That must be a record. If there is an official figure I would like to know it.

There is a fantastic collection of photographs that cover the whole of the SEA VIXEN'S life and every aviator and maintainer will probably be able to say, "I remember THAT!" The pictures of the various liveries of the SEA VIXEN show a remarkable continuity whilst in the RN and the violent colours of other versions make for easy identification.

All in all this is a great book for the technical historian and I can only sum up by saying it is the shortened version of the Train - Spotter Guide to the SEA VIXEN.

HOBBS, David. *Moving Bases. Royal Navy Maintenance Carriers and MONABs*. Maritime Books. 176 pages, 110 photographs. ISBN 978-1-904459-30-9. Price £20.00.

(Reviewed by John SHEARS)

When the decision was taken in 1943 to deploy a large force to the Pacific, it was very apparent that the Royal Navy was not prepared for such a move. Our Allies made it very plain that no way would we be able to use their resources and that the Admiralty would have to create a fleet train similar to the Americans from within their own resources.

The Navy was aware of the problem of long-range support of destroyers and submarines, but during the two wars they were in the hands of the RAF, and carrier support had to compete with the procurement of land based aircraft. But ADMIRAL Sir Reginald HENDERSON, a Gunnery Officer who had commanded *Furious* in 1926, had recognized the problem. Having become the first Rear Admiral Aircraft Carriers, and with three carriers under his command he developed carrier strike tactics that were ahead of those used by other navies. But more importantly he insisted that a maintenance and repair carrier should support the carriers and *Unicorn's* keel was laid down in 1939.

The book is divided into several sections. The First section covers the creation of the organization required to support the British Pacific Fleet and covers all aspects such as:

- Air Engineering;
- The Logistic Lifeline;
- Air Stores and Equipment;
- The Provision of Trained Aircrew.

Each of the subjects listed above are explained in an easy and understandable style.

Next follows a small section titled the Air Train. Again this is divided into the separate headings:

- Aircraft Maintenance Ships;
- Component Repair Ships;
- Engine Repair Ships;
- The Maintenance Process.

In this last sub section it is interesting to learn that as soon as an aircraft arrived onboard it was surveyed to see if it was worth repairing - the rough yardstick being 1,000 man hours. If this was exceeded then over the side it went!

This section is followed by life histories of the three Aircraft Maintenance Ships. An unknown fact, useful for Pub Quizzes, is that *Perseus* in the 50's was to become the Royal Navy's first dedicated helicopter carrier. A small chapter follows on Repair Ships and Ferry Carriers and then one on the Mobile Naval Airfield Organization (MNAO). The MNAO comprises two different types of units:

- Mobile Operations Naval Bases (MONAB);
- Transportable Aircraft Maintenance Yards (TAMY).

Brief histories of the 10 MONABs and one TAMY follow.

The photographs in the book are well chosen and the ones this reviewer particularly liked was the one showing how many men it took to spread a SEAFIREs wing and the catapult trials on HMS *Perseus*. Once again the author has produced a very readable book which is an excellent reference volume and is thoroughly recommended.

NUNN, Wilfred. *Tigris Gunboats. The Forgotten War in Iraq 1914 - 1917*. Chatham Publishing 2007. 288 pages, 28 photographs. ISBN 978-1-86176-308-2. Price £19.99. Introduced by Sir Jeremy GREENSTOCK.

(Reviewed by John SHEARS)

Ninety years after Baghdad was captured by the English in March 1917 and its aftermath, and considering what is happening in Iraq today, this is a good time for Chatham to republish VICE ADMIRAL NUNN's book first published in 1932. At the beginning of the First World War the Author was in command of the sloop HMS *Espiegle* on the East Indies Station. He was sent to the Arabian Gulf to defend British Oil interests (sounds familiar?). He thus became the Senior Naval Officer on the Tigris River throughout the ensuing Iraq campaign.

This is a story of excellence co-operation between the Army and Navy, which started with insufficient facilities (again sounds familiar!). Apart from the *Espiegle*, which could be mistaken for a private yacht, the remaining craft could not be described as elegant. The force over the years would be supplemented with a ragtag and bobtail collection of vessels. As the conflicts progressed, the 'IKEA' principle came in force with vessels being assembled on site. Once again, although the supply of vessels was under way, they were not ideal for the task. This was demonstrated with the capture of HMS *Firefly*. The ship had only one boiler, so when this was hit, the ship became incapacitated and had to be abandoned.

The fighting was continuous, with the ships in close support of the army. Due to the lack of water at times in the Tigris, the ships would spend considerable time aground. This meant they were under sniper fire from both the Turks and Arabs (whose loyalty depended on who they thought was winning at the time!). Navigation was a question of hit and miss, and sometimes the only way of going about was to stick the stern into the bank and let the current swing the bows around.

This close co-operation with the Army could go slightly wrong for instance, when Amara was captured. The Navy got there first i.e. it was easier on a boat than marching in the desert. The Turkish forces were at this stage very keen to surrender and had no idea how they outnumbered the Navy. By a combination of bluff and cheek they got away with it. The next day, just as the enemy was beginning to realise the true situation, the Army arrived! As the armament of the ships was pretty basic, for most of the campaign they would have a detachment of the Artillery onboard whose guns were to prove very effective.

The conditions on the ships were not that good and the opportunity was taken to withdraw ships in turn for refits and to send the crews for R&R in the hills of

Ceylon. Although the ships were in continuous action, the naval losses were not that great and during the campaign 3 VCs were won. One life lost is one too many and these days with modern communication it makes headline news on television when one or more soldiers are killed. One wonders how the nation would have reacted to the following:

"It was estimated that the enemy's losses during the three days fighting at Sheikh Saad had been very heavy, and including prisoners, amounted to some 4,500. Our own losses had been 4,007,"

The book is written in the style of a report, which sometimes makes it hard to follow, as there are so many different names, but there are maps to refer to. This volume is thoroughly recommended, especially as an aid to understanding what is happening in Iraq today.

SMITH, Peter. *The History of Dive Bombing*. Pen & Sword Books Limited 2007. 245 pages with 16 pages of black and white photographs. ISBN Price £19.99.

(Reviewed by Peter RICKARD)

With this comprehensive coverage of the potential and use of the dive bomber, Peter SMITH will barely endear himself to the Air Marshals and RAF historians. Yet the picture he paints of what might have been reflects again the failure of air procurement in the past to provide the right delivery vehicles for the best weapons to match the warfare needs. Cynics may say that these questionable procurement policies are perpetuated today when an expensive high agility fighter is being considered for conversion, as some sort of bombing/attack aircraft, to cater for the immediate warfare needs in an area of operations seemingly not envisaged even fifteen years ago.

The author makes clear, as now does this review, that derived criticism of the provision of suitable air assets and their effective use is not an attack on the bravery of the aircrew involved. Too often however history repeats itself through the poor decisions in the controlling Ministries and there is today ample public debate that we have still not improved in this respect.

Prejudices, inaccurate assessment of operational results and the lack of basic expertise (not to say single service needs overriding the war fighting needs of the whole) too often raise questions and offer hard lessons. As justification for such comments Peter SMITH considers the lessons of the Second World War with the German use of the Ju87 STUKA at the invasion of the Low Countries, Dunkirk, Malta (HMS *Illustrious*), Crete, Tobruk, and indeed the early use of the such aircraft during the Battle of Britain (until the target selection mistakes were made). Yet still with the evidence staring us in the face we seemingly failed to grasp the need for the flexibility of capable tactical aircraft to meet the Navy's and Army's needs.

The author, who is well known to aviation and maritime history readers, with over 65 previously published books, sets out in clear and absorbing text the debate which was to show the blinkered outlook of those in the Air Ministry and the huge

cost in terms of men and machines of the now widely discredited bombing of German cities, to the exclusion of much else in terms of air power (nearly, it might be said, of providing adequate numbers of fighters for the protection of the Homeland).

Yet was the Navy in the clear in all this? The early success of a torpedo attack at Taranto may have clouded judgements in respect of the advantage of the bomb over the torpedo and the great success of the Fleet Air Arm in sinking the *Konigsberg* was overshadowed by the loss of 8 out of 15 aircraft of 800 and 803 Naval Air Squadrons against a highly defended *Scharnhorst* and *Admiral Hipper*, thanks to the warning of the defences by an earlier ineffectual RAF attack, lack of dedicated fighter escorts, extensive ground AA weapons and in the air plenty of ME109s and ME110s.

The title of the book has to be seen as less than an exciting invitation to read it yet it is a history book but one which is exciting, vibrant, well presented and contributing in a major way to the overall history of air warfare with lessons just as applicable in today's conflicts. A follow on book covering Korea and the Arab - Israeli wars and coverage of the mistaken belief that air power alone overcomes a nation (was that not a lesson from the 1943-45 carpet bombing) would be very welcome.

A second very minor criticism (mainly because it might put UK readers off) is the American emphasis on the cover yet in reality without the American realization of the need for a dive bomber the war in the Pacific would have taken on a rather different complexion. We should not lose sight of what happened to *Hermes*, *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall* due to our own disregard of air power and to thus recognize the considerable American success in the Pacific that led to Midway. Thank goodness the Americans were able to see the value of the dive bomber and to be able to neuter the Japanese carrier force.

As regards British Naval success the principal Fleet Air Arm operation against *Tirpitz*, once the weight of bombs became realistically sufficient to destroy or seriously damage ships over and above the lightly armoured cruiser size vessels, showed what could be done even using aircraft not exactly designed for the dive bombing job. But underlying the overall inadequacy were the contributing factors of blinkered Air Marshals and the RAF control of the FAA until it was too late to rectify the shortcomings (until we started to buy American). Just as unfortunate was the lack of appreciation by the Navy's Admirals of what well aimed bombs can do to a warship. Crete being a prime example. Cast the scenario forward to Falkland Sound in May 1982 and consider the success of basic bombing and an attack pattern which avoided the self-destructive dive in the face of modern weaponry.

This book is a fascinating read and worth every penny of its price. Peter SMITH is to be congratulated on a first class contribution to air warfare history in a book, which carries many personal recollections together with the very welcome comprehensive notes to each chapter and a good Index.

Throughout the whole sorry saga of dive bombing (at least as far as the British effort was concerned) is the nagging feeling that procurement as currently practised may leave the sea and ground forces once more without the exact air

weaponry it requires. Hence today's debate about the need for a slower dedicated type of aircraft for ground support in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thus in the past whilst the Navy had managed to hold on to its own air arm the Air Marshals seemingly did all (expressing their own supposed expertise in air matters over the equally supposed inexperienced Admirals) to provide for the dive bombing needs of the Navy in the belief that this would also open the door, when providing adequate support to the ground troops, to lead to pressure for an army air wing and a significantly expanded Fleet Air Arm.

Have these fears been eradicated in today's procurement policies. Doubtful. A well recommended book.