

## BOOK REVIEWS

BOWCOCK, Andrew. **CSS Alabama, Anatomy of a Confederate Raider.** Chatham Publishing, London, 2002. 191 pages, 36 photographs, 230 line drawings. ISBN 1 86176 189 9. Price £30.  
(reviewed by EUR ING David K. BROWN RCNC)

This book provides an exceptionally detailed description of *CSS Alabama* as designed and as built. It does not describe the adventurous service life of that famous ship.

It is surprising, considering the interest shown in the *Alabama* over the years, that there have remained doubts over her exact configuration. The author has taken great pains to bring together all the evidence from contemporary models, drawings, specifications and photographs both from her life and from the remains recently discovered. It seems unlikely that any future work will change any of his conclusions.

The book has detailed drawings of the complete ship, sails and rigging, engines and boilers, guns and mountings and of many of their components. The drawings are clear and easy to follow. These drawings make the book essential for *Alabama* enthusiasts, particularly model makers, and those making models of other ships of the period will also find the details of considerable value.

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CAMPBELL John. **Naval Weapons of World War II.** Conway Maritime Press, London, 2002. 413 pages, innumerable photographs and plans. ISBN 0851779247 Price £45  
(reviewed by EUR ING David K. BROWN, RCNC)

This book was first published in 1985 and has been reprinted to satisfy continuing demand. It describes in great detail the naval weapons (including air force anti ship weapons) of the seven major naval powers with brief notes for eleven smaller navies. For a gun and its mounting one is told bore, weight of gun, shell and charge, length, rifling details, muzzle velocity, rate of fire, life and range and much else. The text lists the principal classes of ship, which carried the gun and comments on reliability etc. Other weapons are described in similar detail. For most there are drawings and there are many photographs.

There is a lengthy introduction to each of the major powers covering gun and mounting design, propellants, shells, fire control including high angle and close range weapon control. For the RN the introduction runs to 20 pages, guns take another 47 followed by underwater weapons 19 and bombs etc. 2 pages. Numerous artists have contributed to the splendid drawings and even more individuals have helped the text and tables.

The value of a reference book such as this depends entirely on its accuracy - It has been one of my principal references since it appeared in 1985 and I have never had reason to doubt. Before his death, the author gave me a short list of corrections which were all quite trivial, mainly additions to the list of ships carrying a particular weapon. (This is a reprint of the original, without changes). He also completed a companion volume on weapons of World War I, which we hope will be published one day.

It should be clear by now that this book is strongly recommended to anyone interested in the subject.

de S WINSER, John. **British Invasion Fleets - The Mediterranean and beyond 1942 - 1945**. World Ship Society, PO Box 706, Gravesend, 2002 (Softback). 152 pages (A4), 157 photographs and Illustrations. ISBN 0-9543310-0-1. Price £25 (£17 to WSS members) + £5 postage.  
(reviewed by EUR ING David K. BROWN, RCNC)

This is a companion volume to the author's D Day Ships published in 1994. Part A tells the story of 10 landings from Madagascar through North Africa, Italy, the South of France to Burma and Malaya and the ships which took part in them. The operations occupy 36 pages which are followed by 80 pages listing the ships, naval and civilian, which took part in each. There is a detailed list of sources and a key to the code names used. The Foreword is by CAPTAIN Chris PAGE, Head of Naval Historical Branch.

The operational accounts in Part A are brief but clear and there is a map of each area. They concentrate on British and British controlled ships; US led Task Forces are given credit but not described in detail and land operations are not covered. These invasions are far less well known than that of Normandy and this book is welcome for that reason. Plans for the invasion of Malaya are covered and there is brief mention of the British Commonwealth contribution to the invasion of Japan. The organization of the invasion fleets is made clear and the significance of the convoy designation letters is explained.

Section B outlines the adventures of individual ships divided into merchant or naval and then into main categories. Tonnage and date of build are given. Photographs in Part A are contemporary including some sad views of ships sinking. The author is to be congratulated on identifying ships in the background. In Part B many of the photographs are peacetime shots but there are a few 'before and after' illustrations showing war time changes. The identification numbers of photographs from major collections are given so that prints may be ordered. Overall, the numerous photographs are well chosen and clearly reproduced, indeed, I suspect many customers will buy the book for the photographs.

The index shows how a few ships were used time and time again; one may single out the converted LSTs (*Bachaquero*) and the Mk Is (*Thruster*). Deployment distances were far greater than for Normandy so there are many large liners.

A fascinating book.

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LAMBERT Andrew. **Trincomalee – The last of Nelson's Frigates**. Chatham Publishing 2002. 160 pages, 41 photographs, 46 illustrations. ISBN 1-86176-186-4. Price £20.

(reviewed by John SHEARS)

This excellent book by DR LAMBERT, recently appointed Professor of Naval History at King's College London, follows the ship's life from 1812 to the present day. Obviously the star is the ship, but the author explains the changing role of the Royal Navy over the period and the effects this would have on the ship and crew.

Following the Napoleonic Wars, the Navy had a number of worn-out, war-built frigates that needed to be replaced. A lot of these vessels had been a 'one-off' design, often based on captured French warships. It was therefore decided that cheap wasn't the best solution and that the new replacement frigates would be built to one design in the Royal Dockyards carefully i.e. with no rush to meet the latest war demands and with the best materials. Some were to be built in India, using teak and *Trincomalee* was ordered in 1812. The Honourable East India Company constructed her in Bombay in the Company's dockyard, under the

direction of the great Parsi shipbuilder Jamsetjee Bomanjee. She was finally delivered at a total cost of £30,323 in May 1818 and then with a reduced crew sailed for England, arriving at Spithead in March 1819. On arrival she was placed in the Reserve Fleet for the next 25 years.

By now she was no longer a modern front line warship and so in January 1845 it was decided to cut her down from a 42 gun frigate to a 26 gun corvette. The conversion cost £10,539, and on completion she was a modern fighting ship. Because of her size and lack of steam power she did not join the great battlefleets in the Mediterranean and the Channel, instead she was destined to spend her active career on the less glamorous distant stations.

The first Commission from 1847–1850 was under CAPTAIN Richard Laird WARREN, on the North American and West Indies Station. This was not a particularly happy ship as the Captain maintained discipline with a firm hand and not a little flogging! The second Commission (1852–1857) under CAPTAIN Wallace HOUSTON, was as part of the Pacific Squadron. The scale of the station placed a great deal of pressure on good sailing capabilities, adequate stowage and small crews. Between 1850 and 1860 there were normally 12 warships on station. During the commission they spent half the time at sea covering 110,000 miles. Of her original complement of 240 officers and men, 144 remained onboard for the whole Commission. The biggest problem the captain appeared to have to deal with was drunkenness among both the officers and crew. Too many good runs ashore were had and what MIDSHIPMAN MASSEY was doing on the Accommodation Ladder, when acting as Officer of the Watch, shows that nothing changes over the years!

In April 1860 she was fitted out as a Training Ship and remained in this role until 1895 when she was sold in 1897 to Ship Breakers for £1,323. Between 1862 and 1877 she was stationed at Hartlepool. Her ultimate saviour was Geoffrey COBB who had a passion for the sea and had bought HMS *Foudroyant* (NELSON's Flagship 1799-1800) for £5,600 and had her restored for £3,400. He then had her towed round England visiting resorts and training destitute boys. In June 1897, when caught on a lee shore, she was run aground and completely wrecked.

In spite of the loss of a 'National Treasure,' COBB was determined to continue and when he approached the Admiralty he was pointed in the direction of the *Trincomalee*. After being converted on the Isle of Wight, where she spent five years, she eventually arrived at Falmouth having been renamed *Foudroyant*. In 1912 he obtained the *Implacable* which joined the *Foudroyant* and the two ships provided seamanship training to young men before they entered either the RN or Merchant Navy. In 1925 COBB could no longer afford running both ships and so *Implacable* was handed over to an independent Committee. After his death in 1931, his wife found herself the owner of one wooden warship and the custodian of another. She eventually handed over the *Foudroyant* to the *Implacable* Committee.

Over the years the training objective changed from the destitute boys to short residential training courses, i.e. a floating holiday centre. During the 2nd World War the ships were used by the Admiralty as the Naval Unit HMS *Foudroyant*. During this time one bomb did land between the two vessels, but despite a large amount of mud neither was damaged. After the war the ships were returned to the Committee, but as the *Implacable* would have cost £200K to restore, she was taken out into the channel and scuttled. *Foudroyant* carried on in the training role until 1987 and in that time went from one financial crisis to another. In 1983 when the future of the Georgian section of the Portsmouth dockyard was under consideration, *Foudroyant* was not asked to the party. Eventually on 29 July 1987 she returned to Hartlepool, 110 years since her last visit, to be restored.

Chapter 7 covers the restoration of the ship. The Trust investigated where the ship would be based and, as the Royal Dockyards were unable to offer an attractive proposal, at the end of the decade it was agreed that Hartlepool would become her new home. In March 1990, as it had been agreed to restore her to her original design, she reverted back to her old name.

The final chapter describes the efforts the Trust had to undertake to raise the money for the project. In 1999 they received another set back when the National Historic Ships Committee excluded them from their register on the grounds she had been built in India. Despite all the set backs she is now fully restored after 11 years and at a cost of £10½ Million. So as well as recommending this book, it is hoped that all the readers will travel up to Hartlepool and visit this remarkable ship.

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LANGTREE, Christopher. **The Kelly's. British J, K & N Class Destroyers of World War II.** Chatham Publishing, London, 2002. 224 pages, 100 photographs, 37 drawings. ISBN 1 86176 166 X. Price £25-20.  
(reviewed by EUR ING David K BROWN RCNC)

This fine book outlines the design and the service histories of 24 destroyers of the J, K and N classes. The design features of the destroyers of the 1936 Programme gave rise to considerable debate. It was felt that the previous TRIBAL class was too big and had an insufficient torpedo armament. Emphasis on night torpedo attack led to a requirement for a small silhouette. A high angle main armament was considered but there was no suitable gun mounting. Various combinations of twin and single 4.7 were considered before the Controller (HENDERSON) decided on three twin mounts with two sets of quintuple torpedo tubes.

DNC was pressing for two boilers instead of the usual three in the interests of a smaller ship whilst a two boiler installation needed only a single funnel, reducing the silhouette. The E-in-C was strongly opposed but was over-ridden. A.P. COLES, the Chief Constructor of the destroyer section proposed longitudinal framing for the first time since Ardent of 1912. Longitudinal framing was lighter, stronger (particularly against buckling) but harder to build. There was fierce opposition from shipbuilders but HENDERSON backed COLES. In describing the design the author casts doubt on some (not all) claims by MOUNTBATTEN over his involvement.

There follows an interesting section on wartime modifications; radar, light AA guns etc., illustrated by John LAMBERT. John ROBERTS illustrates the section on camouflage with colour drawings.

By far the greater part of the book is devoted to the service histories of the class. This part is helped by the fact that they tended to operate in their original flotillas, at least in the early years of the war. This has enabled the author to tell a more connected story, with less duplication than many class histories.

It is an exciting though sometimes tragic story and is well illustrated with numerous photographs. Inevitably many are familiar but the author has been diligent in his trawl including Paris and Canberra in his sources.

The Js and Ks spent the early war years in home waters during which *Kelly* and *Javelin* were both seriously damaged under MOUNTBATTEN's command demonstrating his seamanship and the toughness of COLE's design. *Kelly* was torpedoed by an E boat causing extensive damage and flooding. It is likely that she would have broken in half if she had not been longitudinally framed and she lolled severely. MOUNTBATTEN had discussed damaged stability with COLE and

had a pre-arranged list of topweight, which could be jettisoned to improve stability. While she was being repaired, MOUNTBATTEN moved to *Javelin* and two torpedoes hit her, removing both bow and stem.

The Ks arrived in the Mediterranean in time for the horrors of Crete where *Kelly* was finally sunk (also *Juno* and *Kashmir*). Then there were the little known Red Sea and Syrian campaigns followed by the Second Battle of Sirte. The class then tended to break up most going East though some remained for the Normandy invasion.

The eight N's were unique in that they were all manned by overseas navies; five Australian, two Netherlands and one Polish. The Netherlands pair were the last to remain in service running on until 1950.

In the last chapter the author tries to evaluate the class generally concluding that they were the best that could be done in 1936. Their biggest fault was probably their heavy, fuel thirsty machinery, which demanded frequent maintenance. Unit machinery with such old-fashioned engines and boiler would have needed a much bigger ship. COLES was right in going for longitudinal framing and also right in using a fairly conservative approach to this structure.

The twin 4.7 was the best main mount available and the author shows that its 501b shell was only surpassed by slower firing guns – with the exception of the USN 5in/38. However, even this gun, with the equally splendid Mk 37 director was not very effective against aircraft until proximity fuses were available. The pom-pom was showing its age but was still a reasonable weapon in 1936. Thoroughly recommended, very readable and accurate.

(Disclaimer: – This reviewer helped the author to some extent on the design chapter)

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**ROBBINS, Guy.** *The Aircraft Carrier Story 1908-1945.* Cassell & Co (Publishers) London, 2001. 288 pages (roughly A4 size). 105 photographs diagrams and maps. ISBN 0-304-35308-6. Price £35.  
(reviewed by Iain HIME)

This is a very well laid out book with a wonderful collection of photographs including a selection from the FAA Museum. Guy ROBBINS has a long background in naval research at the Imperial War Museum and the National Maritime Museum and this is a clearly well researched book with a wealth of detail that is surprising considering its wide scope. It is divided into four sections. The first three sections explore the often-painful development of naval aviation and carriers from earliest days to the end of WWII in the three major Naval Aviation navies:

- The Royal Navy (111 pages).
- The US Navy (56 pages).
- The Imperial Japanese Navy (39 pages).

How from minor successes in the First World War there came a very gradual acceptance of the Carriers utility and an eventual acceptance that the days of the set piece Battleship war had been replaced by the long range flexibility of the Carrier Group. There are fascinating insights into the different approaches taken by the three navies, the concerns the USN had about being 'left behind' by the RN and the struggle Japan had to achieve a sort of parity with the USN prior to outbreak of war. There is also a wealth of difference in recruitment and training that shaped success and failure.

So by the time you get to Section 4, The Carrier War, 1939-1945 you know sufficient about the protagonists, their carriers, their aircraft, their people and their (in)ability to sustain a long a divergent war to appreciate the strategies and tactics as they unfold. And ROBBINS pulls no punches in apportioning fault even to the mighty. So if you like Aircraft Carriers (don't we all?) and can find £35 you should seriously consider adding this book to your library.

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