

# BOOK REVIEWS

HADLEY, Dunstan. *Only seconds to live. Pilots' tales of the stall and spin.* Airline Publishing Ltd 1997. 208 pages, 32 photographs. 19 illustrations. ISBN 1 85310 877 4. Price £19.95.

(reviewed by LIEUTENANT COMMANDER J.S. SHEARS RN Ret'd)

Although the front cover of this anthology says that the book makes exciting reading, I am afraid that this reviewer can not endorse that description. Over 200 pages on one specific subject does tend to put into the text book category, to be read in parts, both by pilots and aviation enthusiasts.

The author (Editor), has reproduced many articles on the subject and even includes extracts from RAF publications. The painting on the cover of the book shows LIEUTENANT Wilfred PARKE RN struggling to regain control of an AVRO biplane on 25 August 1912. He was to become the first man to recover from an unintentional spin and live to tell the tale. The first third of the book then goes into great detail trying to establish who was the first man to recover from an intentional spin. After seventy plus pages one is left with the impression that no one is really sure who was that man and one is tempted to ask does it really matter.

The next third really reflects the description on the front cover and contains some frightening tales of spinning in all types of aircraft. The most spectacular must be 'Chuck' YEAGER's spin in the X-1A, on 12 December 1953, when he came down 51,000 feet in 51 seconds. The pictures of WING COMMANDER BEAMONT spinning the English Electric P1A in June 1958, are also impressive!

The final third is again very much theoretical and focuses on the arguments for and against teaching spinning during pilot training.

An interesting anthology that should be in every flying club/military library and available to all aviators.

LEIGH-JONES, Chris. *A Practical Guide to Marine Fuel Oil Handling*. The Institute of Marine Engineers, 1998. 120 pages, over 50 diagrams and illustrations. ISBN 0 907206 94 8. Price £16.50, or £13.20 to I Mar E members. (reviewed by DAVID JORDAN, BA, HONS, BSC, CENG, MIMECHE, RCNC, Head of Section ME216, Naval Fuels and Lubricants, Ship Support Agency)

Anyone who has read the Marine Engineers Review (the journal of the Institute of Marine Engineers) lately will have seen the excellent articles about Fuel Handling in the occasional 'Handy Hints' series. Now the author, Chris LEIGH-JONES, (Managing Director of Kittiwake, successful maker of fuel and lubricant test kits), has put these articles together in a pocket sized book. The handbook is the first in the Institute's new 3rd volume of its Marine Engineering Practice Series - a whole set of practical guides popular for reference on the job or during training. The publishers say the book is ideal for students studying for their Class 1&2 Certificates of Competency.

Although aimed at the wider market of the commercial shipping world primarily concerned with residual fuel, it is still of interest to Royal Navy readers. It contains a wealth of information written clearly and concisely and with good diagrams, photographs, and tables. It has some small errors—coalescers are described as 'classier filters' in the contents! All the photographs of test kits etc. are 'courtesy of Kittiwake' so the book makes a good advertising platform. But why quibble? It is very readable. LEIGH-JONES writes in a straight forward, down to earth style.

I find it is a very handy little volume. I particularly liked the summary of the key points at the end of each chapter which makes for quick revision.

I hope Chris LEIGH-JONES is going to write some more in this series of handbooks, particularly on lubricants; in which case I will be looking out for them.

KOOP, Gerhard.; SCHMOLKE, Klaus-Peter. *Battleships of the Bismarck Class*. Greenhill books, London, 1998. 159 pages, 185 photographs, 15 line drawings. ISBN 1-85367-320-X. Price £25.

(reviewed by EUR ING David K BROWN, RCNC)

This book is primarily a picture book and, bearing in mind the short life of these two ships, the authors deserve considerable praise for the very large number of photographs which they have brought together. Understandably, the quality is variable; there are numerous good pictures backed by 'atmospheric' ones of snap shot style.

The text comprises 27 pages on *Bismarck*, a further 12 pages on *Tirpitz* and 4 pages of conclusions. This text is superficial and sometimes seriously misleading; the DEUTSCHLAND class ('pocket battleships') were not 'around this limit' of 10,000 tons but varied from 10,600 to 12,340 tons standard. The claim that the two BISMARCK class were designed for 35,000 tons seems unlikely since they completed either side of 42,000. The suggestion that BALLARD's expedition to the wreck shows that 'The hull does not appear badly damaged' is quite wrong; GARZKE has written 'there are over 400 holes to disprove such stories. (See *Journal of Naval Engineering* Volume 36.1. pp.84-90).

If you want the pictures, this book will suit you.

LENTON, H.T. *British and Empire Warships of the Second World War*. Greenhill Books, London, 1998. 768 pages, 634 photos. ISBN 1-85367-277-7. Price £100.

(reviewed by EUR ING David K. BROWN, RCNC)

It is claimed that nearly 20,000 ships and craft are listed in this vast book. (I haven't counted them!). It contains entries for many smaller and requisitioned vessels which are not readily available elsewhere. Even for landing craft one will usually find the builder listed and, in many cases, key dates such as launch, disposal.

There is a background introduction to each type of warship followed by a note on the development of individual classes. He is a little too inclined to credit designs to commercial yards rather than the Admiralty. For example, 'Bill' HOLT's steam gunboats are credited to Denny and his 105ft MMS to the Rowhedge Iron Works. This is, of course, due to a different usage of the word design. To my mind, the concept was the important aspect and this was HOLT's and does not detract from the good work done by the firms in fleshing out that concept. On the other hand, Vickers (Specifically J.S. REDSHAW) should have been given the credit for the COLOSSUS class carriers, one of the great designs of all time.

All the usual details of dates, dimensions, armament etc. are given - commendably, submarine diving depths are given, a key topic too often omitted in reference books. The author even picks up the 50 feet extra depth for welded boats. In many cases, the post war fate is summarized together with changes of name. On the other hand, cost is rarely mentioned and a ship is said to be 'better' regardless of resource utilization. The classic example are the two Thornycroft HUNT class destroyers. Few would deny that they were more capable than the standard, Admiralty design but they were very much more expensive and the first of class costs incurred for just two ships must have been excessive. (The author describes Admiralty objection to the proposal as 'petty') One also feels that the author has read very few recent books and articles; his note on wartime cruiser designs omits recent work by G. MOORE. Wartime changes are outlined, necessarily briefly.

It is not easy to find new photographs of good quality in such a well researched area. The author has done well and the illustrations meet the need of a major reference book though some are not well reproduced.

However, a reference book must stand or fall by its accuracy and this one is disappointing. In particular, there are many errors in the picture captions. Radar sets are frequently wrongly identified—if he isn't sure he calls it a 286—and there are incompatible dates where sets are visible which were not in service at the date given for the photo e.g. *Enterprise* with radar type 273 (introduced 1941) said to be in 1940. There are also too many literals e.g. a perfectly good description of the LCT MkIV is headed Mk V. Though many of these errors are trivial, there are far too many.

It is not meant to be a technical work but there are some serious errors. Longitudinal framing was not introduced in the JAVELIN class destroyers as an economy measure—the price went up—but to give a stronger structure. There is little mention of the problems of British machinery, heavy, uneconomical and demanding in maintenance.

With a little more care it could have been a great book. It is still a very useful starting point but the user will be well advised to cross check any information he uses.

REYNOLDS, Leonard C. *Dog Boats at War*. Sutton Publishing, with the Imperial War Museum, Stroud, 1998. 299 pages, 154 illustrations. ISBN 0 7509 1817 9. Price £25.

(reviewed by EUR ING David K. BROWN, RCNC)

The 'Dog' boat—properly the Fairmile D type MGB/MTB—was based on a design by W.J. 'Bill' HOLT RCNC adapted by Noel Macklin's Fairmile organization for easy production. The only engines available were Packard marine engines giving 1250bhp and running on 100 octane petrol; 5,000 gallons were carried below deck and more in cans on the upper deck for long range work. The first boats had a speed of 32½ knots but the weight of ever increasing armament reduced this to about 30 knots. By the end of the war the usual armament included two semi automatic 6 pounders on power mounts, a twin Oerlikon, four 0.5 inch and four 0.303 machine guns together with a couple of torpedo tubes.

The author served in MGB 658 for three years, publishing a book on his experiences in 1955. Many years of research has enabled him produce this very detailed history of the 'Dogs'. They were involved in 273 actions, 136 in home waters, 104 in the Mediterranean and 33 in Norwegian waters. The treatment is a mixture of geographical and chronological; for example, the Mediterranean is covered in three chapters with visits elsewhere in between.

The illustrations include some clear maps, line drawings of the craft and weapons (by John LAMBERT) and many photographs. Most of the photographs were taken by crew members at the time and are fascinating even though the quality of wartime film was not always good. I particularly enjoyed a shot of two Norwegian MTBs camouflaged in a fjord—it took me some time to find them. The very hazardous work by these Norwegian boats is a high point of a fascinating book.

SAVAS, Theodore P. *Silent Hunters. German U-Boat Commanders of World War II* Greenhill Books 1998. 215 pages, 22 photographs, 4 illustrations. ISBN 1 882810 17 1. Price £18.99.

(reviewed by LIEUTENANT COMMANDER J.S. SHEARS RN Ret'd)

A great deal had been written about the U-Boat war, but the editor of this book felt that while many of the 'aces' have enjoyed considerable recognition, the careers of other commanders have not been told. To this end he has chosen 6 U-boat commanders and persuaded 6 separate authors to write them up. The 6 commanders appear to have been carefully chosen as their histories etc. are all so different.

The first commander is Engelbert ENDRASS, who served as the First Watcher Officer on U-47, commanded by Gánther PRIEN, the boat that sank the *Royal Oak*. This essay is by Erich TROPP, himself an ace, and is a translation of a tribute he wrote to Engelbert when it was obvious that he had been lost on his last patrol. It was written by TROPP on his 15th patrol whilst in the Atlantic and is not an easy read.

Next is Karl-Friedrich MERTON who comes over as the solid dependable type, but whose impressive accomplishments rank him among the war's top tonnage aces. He was a late comer to U-boats and because of his character he was given command of a type 1XC boat, U-68. These boats were slower to dive, sluggish to handle and had proved very vulnerable in convoy actions, so they had become the 'lone wolves', roaming far and attacking the lone ship. During one of his patrols in the South Atlantic, he was caught refuelling from the supply ship *Python* by HMS *Devonshire*. *Python* was sunk but U-68 escaped. When he returned to the scene he organized the rescue of 414 survivors and their return to France 5,000 miles to the North. The last ship he was

to sink was the *City of Cairo*, 500 miles south of St. Helena. He originally thought he had sunk a cargo ship, but soon realised it was a liner with women and children on board. Because of the *Laconia* incident he was under orders not to pick up survivors. He did, however, go amongst the lifeboats and assist them in recovering survivors that were in the water. After providing them with the course to steer to St Helens he departed saying,

“Goodnight, sorry for sinking you.”

Ralph KAPITSKY who fought an epic surface to air battle in the Caribbean. This action was at the time Dönitz had decided to withdraw the U-boats from that theatre of the war. Although he was to lose his life and the boat, he diverted so many US assets to the fight, that many of his fellow U-boat Commanders were able to escape into the Atlantic.

Fritz GUGGENBERGER, the man who sank the *Ark Royal*. Having survived a tour in the Mediterranean with U-81, he was to be captured when in command of U-513 which was caught on the surface 40 miles off the coast of Brazil. As a POW he was part of the organization that led to the largest escape attempt in America.

Victor OEHRN—*The Ace with no name*. The essay has this title as he was Dönitz's staff officer who laboured behind a desk, but always wished to be in the action. Eventually his time came and he was given command of U-37. In only three patrols he was to sink 24 ships totalling just over 100,000 tons, before being recalled to that desk.

Heinz-Wilhelm ECK, the only U-boat Captain to be tried and executed for war crimes at the end of the war. The incident occurred on the first and last patrol of U-582 when he sank the *Peleus*. The majority of this essay is about the trial and discussing whether ECK really was a war criminal.

The book contains 22 pages of Notes, which for a technical document are essential, but can interrupt the flow. These notes are in some cases quite long and if not read can make the text unclear (i.e. the *Laconia* incident mentioned above). The Index is another 10 pages.

An interesting book, which should also be held as a reference document.

SIMMONS, Joe J. *Those vulgar tubes; External sanitary accommodations aboard European ships of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries*. Chattam Publishing, 1998. 106 pages, 41 illustrations. ISBN 1 86176 031 0, paper back, price £12.95

(reviewed by D. J. CURRY, Ship Support Agency.)

At the National Maritime Museum is an extensive display of ship models, dating from the seventeenth century and later. Mainly of warships, these are the Navy Board models, for demonstrating the features of new designs and for approval by their lordships. The detail in these models makes them show-pieces and a delight to study. One such detail on many of them is what can only be ‘seats of ease’, set forward in the forepeak, very exposed and, no doubt at times very wet.

These and other models are just some of the evidence behind *Those Vulgar Tubes*. Contemporary descriptions, pictures and scant archeological evidence are also used, supplemented by intelligent guesswork to develop a methodical, chronological account of ships' sanitary facilities from the fifteenth century onwards.

Why start at the fifteenth century? By then, hull construction had developed to incorporate forecastles and forward projecting ‘beakheads’ at the bow, together with gallery arrangements that incorporated the stern rudders. Thus were provided structures convenient for direct overboard discharges, and

hence for external sanitation. Prior to then, any facilities that might have existed were inboard and likely to be leaking into the bilges. It is not surprising that the resultant 'pestilential funkes' had been unbearable

If the alternative was 'pestilential funke,' then the bracing experience of a healthy wave up the backside must have been well worthwhile. Options ranged from urinal to privy. Steep tubs, used as garderobes on side shelves mid-ships might give a little protection, but there is a worrying uncertainty here, since steep tubs were also used for soaking the salt meat. For greater privacy, no doubt for the use of officers, little round houses appeared at the bow and garderobes were incorporated into the quarter galleries. As the centuries passed, those highly ornate structures around the stern continued to house those same basic functions, with the same simple discharge below.

An interesting monograph, although with its methodical, chronological treatment you may wish to skate over some of the repetitive detail (appropriate for the serious student of the subject). Of course, if you are not too concerned with exactly when pissdales were first used, then you can amuse yourself with a little euphemology, or even consider the inadvisability of rowing close under those ships.

Altogether, a good read for those who have gone at sea, or may yet wish to.

THOMAS, Roger D.; PATTERSON, Brian. *Dreadnoughts in Camera*. Sutton, Stroud, 1998. 192 pages, 150 illustrations. ISBN 0 7509 1446 7. Price £19.99. (reviewed by EUR ING David K. BROWN, RCNC)

This book contains a magnificent collection of photographs of DREADNOUGHT battleships and battlecruisers under construction. They are mainly drawn from the archives of John Brown, Beardmore, Vickers and Portsmouth Royal Dockyard. The section on 'propulsion' has 16 photographs of machinery being assembled or installed and the gunshop is well represented. The captions are clear, generally accurate but not very technical.

The text, too is generally sound and is most interesting on labour relations. It is, perhaps, a little biased to the Union side but the authors are right in pointing out that the work was often uncomfortable, sometimes dangerous and not well paid. Just think what a modern safety inspector would make of the staging shown in many pictures—and it was little changed until well after World War II. The description of the design and building process is sound—with the exception of one howler. Having begun the section on models correctly by saying that Froude's model tests were to 'analyse and fine' the hull form the text continues;

'The major function of the wax models ..... was to obtain a complete presentation of the shell plating'.

This was the function of the (wooden) half block model!

Anyone interested in warship building at the beginning of the century will find much of interest in this book and it is strongly recommended.

WYNN, K. *U Boat Operations of the Second World War, Volume II, U511-UIT25*. Chatham Publishing, London, 1998. 312 pages, 9 maps. ISBN 0 86176 069 8. Price £30

(reviewed by Eur Ing David K Brown, RCNC)

Volume I was reviewed in the June 1998 issue of the *Journal* and Volume II follows the same style. This book contains short but very detailed service histories of all U boats after U 511 and those taken over from foreign navies. Notable among these is UB, formerly HMS *Seal*, which surrendered on 5 May 1940 (her captain was honourably acquitted by a court martial). She was commissioned as UB on 30 November 1940 and served until 31 July

1941. She was scuttled at Kiel on 3 May 1945. On the other hand, U570 became HMS *Graph* after surrendering to an RAF HUDSON.

The nine appendices consist of cross references to Commanding Officers; Post office numbers, groups, Allied warships and merchant ships attacked, sunk or mentioned in the text. These indexes are very useful and a few spot checks supported their accuracy.

The fact that this review is short is not a reflection on the quality of the book but solely because the style was covered in the June review of Volume I. This is a reference book, not for bed time reading, but essential for any serious student of the submarine war.