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British Carrier Aviation: The Evolution of the Ships and their Aircraft

Christopher C. Wright

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Terzibaschitsch, S. *Aircraft Carriers of the U.S. Navy*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1989. 344pp.

Probably no one has more lovingly detailed the appearance and technical data of each U.S. Navy aircraft carrier than Stefan Terzibaschitsch. Readers who do not own the 1980 first edition should be delighted that the Naval Institute is printing this updated and revised photographic and textual history.

Terzibaschitsch divides his coverage into pre-1950 and post-1950 surveys. In both, he presents technical information applicable to carriers generally and to specific classes. He then devotes several pages to each ship, with large photographs, capsule reports on service history and electronics configuration, and numerous drawings and deck plans by Eberhard Kaiser and Klaus-Dieter Schack. Forty pages of appendices document, *inter alia*, construction histories, technical data, and air wing compositions.

Although three pages are given to the two Great Lakes training carriers, escort carriers (CVEs) are not included (Terzibaschitsch covers these in a separate volume, also from the Naval Institute Press). The most noticeable change from the first edition is an additional twenty-two pages to update coverage of operational ships and include the *Carl Vinson* and the *Theodore Roosevelt* (CVNs 70 and 71).

Earlier errors or now-outdated assertions have been corrected on at least three dozen pages. Some remain

for the eagle-eyed: Mark Morgan zeroes in on squadron and aircraft goofs in *The Hook* (Winter 1989).

This is a wonderful book for those who love carriers, from the very old ones to the very new.

TOM GRASSEY
Naval Postgraduate School

Friedman, Norman. *British Carrier Aviation: The Evolution of the Ships and their Aircraft*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1989. 384pp. \$44.95

It has been stated many times since the early days of World War II that the Royal Navy's loss of its naval air arm to the Royal Air Force in 1918—an organizational embodiment of the "indivisibility of airpower" concept—led to significant and avoidable operational and materiel disappointments during World War II. These wartime shortcomings in turn have been said to demonstrate the need for naval authority to command the entirety of its air element: aircraft, ships, and all their personnel, and also the design, procurement, and training thereof. On the other hand, the Royal Navy—which recovered full authority over embarked aviation on 24 May 1939—has been credited with inventing, following World War II, several key aircraft carrier design features that were later adopted by the U.S. Navy: the so-called "angled" flight deck (the overhanging deck extension making possible flight operations without risk of crashes into

aircraft parked further forward); the steam-powered aircraft catapult; and deck-edge "mirror" aircraft landing aids.

Norman Friedman's new study of British carrier aviation relies on a great deal of new archival research, primarily in the U.K. but also in the U.S., to advance our understanding of these and other items of accepted wisdom important to the history of seapower. Although published individual operational histories are available for many British aircraft carriers (e.g., the *Ark Royal*, *Illustrious*, *Victorious*, *Glorious*, *Bulwark*, *Vindex*, etc.), and a few overall naval aviation histories exist, until now there has been no comprehensive archivally-based study of British aircraft carrier design and characteristics to parallel the standard reference works produced over the last twenty years on British battleships (by Oscar Parkes, John Roberts with Alan Raven, and R.A. Burt); or World War II cruisers (Roberts and Raven); and on all destroyers (Edgar J. March). Note must be made, however, of one existing solid study of policy, Geoffrey Till's *Air Power and the Royal Navy 1914-1945: A Historical Survey* (Jane's Publishing Co., 1979), reviewed in the *Naval War College Review* for March-April 1981, pp. 124-125. *British Carrier Aviation*, however, gives a more detailed description of the technical aspects of carrier design and characteristics than does the earlier work.

Dr. Friedman's book provides a better appreciation of the military operational effectiveness of the carrier

force than do many books on aircraft carriers, by combined treatment of both the ships and their aircraft. British naval aircraft have been described previously in considerable detail in several aviation histories, but with little regard for the design constraints and operational aspects of shipboard operation.

British Carrier Aviation adopts a format similar to that used in Dr. Friedman's "Illustrated Design History" series on U.S. Navy warships published by the Naval Institute Press. There are extensive illustrations throughout, including numerous scale line drawings from official plans produced for this book. About twenty-five ships are illustrated with particularly valuable sets of drawings (inboard profiles and deck plans) with keyed identifications of various internal spaces. Aircraft are generally illustrated with photographs rather than drawings. The book's unusually large physical size—roughly 11 inches square—has permitted the publisher to avoid burying most of each illustration in the spine of the book. The photographs are excellent.

There are a few shortcomings, none major. There are more typographical errors than desirable (e.g., the steam catapult is said to have been conceived in "1963" when probably "1936" was meant). This reviewer, at least, remains somewhat confused by the internal organization of the Admiralty, a point relevant to the design debates; some organizational line diagrams for a couple of representative years might have been worthwhile.

(Some useful examples appeared in Eric Grove's *Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy since World War II*, Naval Institute Press, 1987.) The ship line drawings are in outline, rather than constructional, so that fine detail of structure such as scantling strength and shell expansion is omitted. Finally, the effects of budgetary pressures on British carrier aviation are mentioned often but are not explained as well as in another excellent new book, Jon Sumida's *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy 1889-1914* (Unwin Hyman, 1989).

There are several particularly fascinating aspects of *British Carrier Aviation*. Somewhat surprisingly, full attention is given to the many converted merchantmen of World War I. These carried a handful of airplanes in direct support of the battle fleet prior to the advent of the now classic "flat-top" fleet carriers in the 1920s. That these early ships, and also the aircraft borne on the catapults of surface combatants, were quite significant between the wars, is an important finding. On more recent topics, much new information is provided on carrier designs during the early 1950s, and on the final big aircraft carrier design, the "CVA.01" of 1963-66, as well as on later V/STOL aircraft carriers.

To return to the initial point about the flaws of Royal Air Force management of naval aircraft and aviators between the wars, Dr. Friedman argues that certain hitherto overlooked aspects of the Royal Navy's aviation

doctrine imposed constraints that were more far-reaching than any air force indifference toward meeting navy needs. Two examples were: (1) requiring tactical aircraft to be capable of flying from battleship and cruiser catapults as well as flight decks; and (2) storing all aircraft in carrier hangars with none on the flight deck. No special reason, either organizational or individual, is cited for the Royal Navy's history of inventiveness in carrier design.

British Carrier Aviation concludes that the Royal Navy's carrier aviation record has been outstanding "strategically, operationally, technologically." This book is an invaluable guide to understanding how such a successful naval force was created and, as such, it will give valuable historical insights to students of current naval aviation issues.

CHRISTOPHER C. WRIGHT
Baltimore, Maryland

King, Randolph W., ed. *Naval Engineering and American Sea Power*
Baltimore, Md.: The Nautical &
Aviation Pub. Co. of America,
Inc., 1989. 487pp. \$29.95

This work is a classic example of the saying "You can't tell a book by its cover." While its title and textbook-style appearance convey an intimidating impression of a highly technical volume suited only to the dedicated student of naval engineering, the truth is actually quite different. Written in an easy-to-understand style, this book will appeal to both the