



ARMCHAIR AVIATION

We take a look at what's available for the aviation history enthusiast in the world of books and other literature, from hot-off-the-press publications to reissued classics

Britain and the Bomb: Technology, Culture and the Cold War

By W.J. Nuttall; Whittles Publishing, Caithness, Scotland, KW6 6EG (www.whittlespublishing.com); 6¾in x 9½in (170mm x 240mm); softback; 240 pages, illustrated; £18.99. ISBN 978-1-849953-89-4

DESPITE THE TITLE of this book, the bulk of the text concerns a subject close to many TAH readers' hearts — the BAC TSR.2 saga. The author does have a wider purpose here in analysing the relationship between technology — especially British nuclear weapons — and the UK's place in the world. However, seven of the 12 chapters are devoted to the ill-fated TSR.2 and its context in the evolution of British post-1945 military aerospace. The remainder considers the Polaris-Chevaline programme of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Here lies the book's central problem — what is its exact theme? The author's commentary and analytic intent mainly focus on the nuclear question, but the emphasis on the TSR.2 seems at odds with this *leitmotif*. The aircraft was to have had a nuclear role, which the author explains in interesting detail, and this aspect of the specification certainly became more important after the collapse of Blue Streak and the shift to Polaris submarines. Important, that is, to the RAF, which was rapidly superseded as the delivery system of Britain's bomb.

As a history of the TSR.2, there are no new revelations here, although the avionics and electronics aspects are especially well considered. The sources are primarily well-trodden secondary materials, with Roland Beamont, Stephen Hastings and Derek Wood well to the fore. Strangely, the best of such sources, the chapter in Humphrey Wynn's *The RAF Nuclear Deterrent Forces* (HM Stationery Office, 1994), which had early access to the government record, is not cited. There are some diversions along the way; a discussion of the

Miles M.52's cancellation, the Lightning test programme and the Profumo scandal. I must admit to finding several of these irritating.

A more serious problem, to my mind, is placing so much significance on the TSR.2. It was certainly symbolic of Britain's military technological hubris in the late 1950s, as well as the Tory government's over-commitment of resources. It did have an emotional impact every bit as much as a commercial effect on the aerospace industry, certainly for the staff at the BAC factory at Warton. The aftermath of the TSR.2's cancellation and the ill-fated General Dynamics F-111 purchase is also well described, but the fundamental shift to international collaboration in military aerospace endeavours receives less significance than it deserves.

By the same token, the Blue Streak-Skybolt-Polaris story is given equally limited attention. For this reviewer, outside the history of the British bomb itself, this trio of delivery systems is very much the core historical episode linking Britain's experience of "technology, culture and the Cold War", and which I believe was a more central feature of the post-1945 political and strategic narrative than the story of the TSR.2.

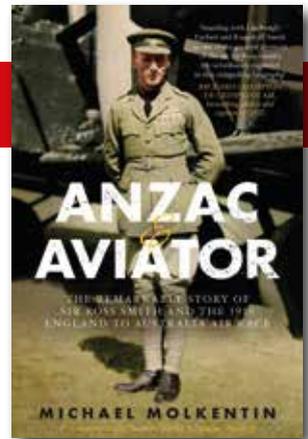
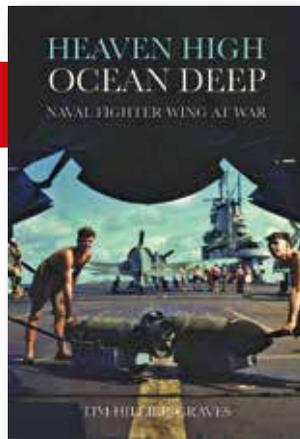
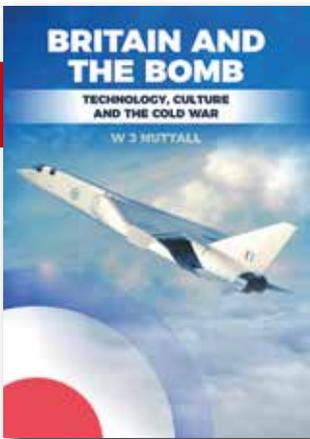
Overall, this is an interesting read, but perhaps attempts to take on too many themes for one, albeit complex and controversial, aircraft to carry.

PROFESSOR KEITH HAYWARD FRAeS

Heaven High, Ocean Deep: Naval Fighter Wing At War

By Tim Hillier-Graves; Casemate Publishers, 106–108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JE (www.casematepublishing.co.uk); 6in x 9¾in (152mm x 228mm); hardback; 224 pages, illustrated; £19.99. ISBN 978-1-612007-55-7

THIS HANDSOME HARDBACK charts the history of the 5th Naval Fighter Wing during 1944–45, in the Eastern/British Pacific Fleet



(BPF), operating the tough, dependable Grumman Hellcat. This is far more than just a history, however, being told via the personal stories of a number of the Wing's personnel, using interviews conducted by the author and contemporary material such as diaries and letters. As such, it gives a remarkably personal insight into the war in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, in a way that will soon not be possible to achieve. Indeed, the personal nature of the narrative extends to the author, whose motivation for writing the book stemmed from his father's Fleet Air Arm career, serving alongside several of the men whose stories are told within its pages. This is enhanced by the presence of many photographs from the aircrews' own collections, including lots of personal "snaps", although there are also plenty of familiar press photographs, including some well-known colour images. (Most of the photographs are simply printed in black and white on the running pages, but there is a small plate-section in the middle with better-reproduced images on glossy paper.)

The narrative begins with a rundown of the formation of the Wing and the training its crews underwent before heading east, interestingly showing the strain that even this could impart on men, some of whom had already been flying and fighting for years. The remainder of the book is devoted to the Wing's service aboard *HMS Indomitable*, apart from a brief spell when photo-reconnaissance aircraft and crews were detached to *HMS Formidable* at the very end of the war. We see the Wing go from "green" and not trusted to take part in early raids in the Indian Ocean, to battle-hardened and highly dependable, and finally to war-weary and overstretched. The book follows the Wing through raids against Sumatra, intended as much to prepare the BPF and prove their worth as for their actual military value, into the Pacific and finally against the Japanese home islands.

As an historian who generally writes with

the benefit of access to primary source material released years after the event, it can be tempting to be wise after the fact. It is fascinating and enlightening, therefore, to see the way *Heaven High, Ocean Deep* shows the developing Eastern war as it was viewed by those who were there — sometimes from their recollections, but often backed up by their own writings at the time. An example of this is the suspicion many of the aircrews had that Philip Vian, in command of the First Aircraft Carrier Squadron, was overly aggressive and demanded too much of a force that was still finding its feet. Particularly moving is the story of "Gammy" Godson, one of the Wing's senior officers, who was widely felt by his men to be struggling with the strain of eight months of operations and who died shortly before he would have been relieved. Similarly, the fate of Jack Haberfield, who survived being shot down only to be murdered after the Japanese surrender.

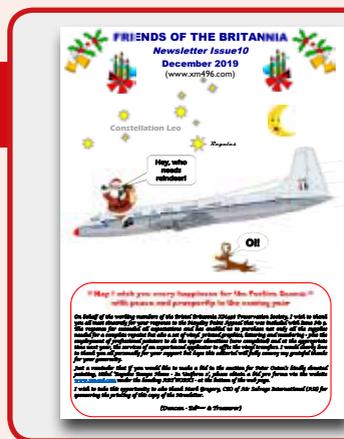
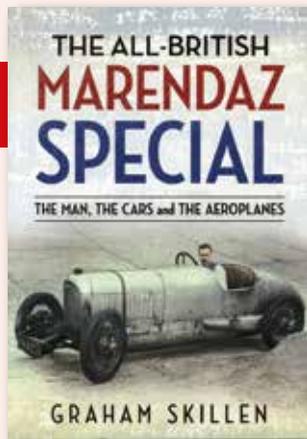
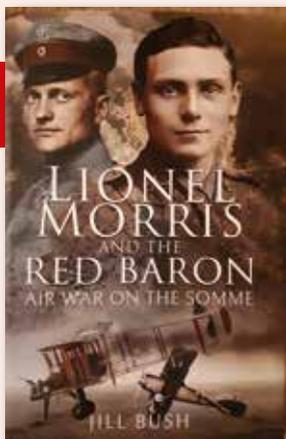
Overall, despite a few too many avoidable typos, *Heaven High, Ocean Deep* can be thoroughly recommended to anyone interested in the "Forgotten Fleet", and beautifully complements more heavyweight works such as David Hobbs's history of the BPF, with a pleasingly personal touch.

MATTHEW WILLIS

Anzac & Aviator: The Remarkable Story of Sir Ross Smith and the 1919 England to Australia Air Race

By Michael Molkentin; Allen & Unwin, 83 Alexander Street, Crows Nest, NSW 2065, Australia; 6in x 9in (152mm x 232mm); softback; 406 pages; illustrated; AUD\$32.99; ISBN 978-1-742379-19-7

AS HIS VICKERS Viking biplane stalled and spun into a stand of trees at Brooklands, an Empire aviator faced the final seconds of his life.



While his brother Keith watched in horror, Sir Ross Smith's aviation career ended in the place it had begun. Just a dozen years separated the Australian's first encounter with aircraft and his 1922 demise, on the verge of attempting an aerial circumnavigation of the planet.

In this accomplished and eminently readable biography, Michael Mol Kentin has again demonstrated why he ranks among Australia's leading aviation historians. Its title is perfect, encapsulating Ross Smith's service during 1914–18 as a member of the Australian & New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) and his airborne achievements with the Australian Flying Corps. As an observer and pilot in the Middle East, Smith reconnoitred, bombed and strafed Ottoman ground forces, while downing five German aircraft. Yet, notes Mol Kentin, "in none of the hundreds of pages of surviving letters and diary entries that Ross wrote does he use the term 'ace'". This quotation alone illustrates the extensive research, scrupulous observation and human insight that typifies *Anzac & Aviator*.

While Smith is rightly acclaimed for piloting the Vickers Vimy that first connected England with Australia by air, Mol Kentin argues that this feat did not occur in isolation. Having earned his reputation in Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2s, B.E.12s and Bristol Fighters, Smith found his trajectory transformed by the arrival of a single Handley Page O/400 in Egypt in August 1918. Its unprecedented flight from Britain was led by the commander of the RAF's Palestine Brigade, Amyas "Biffy" Borton. Together, Smith and Borton completed a pioneering post-war flight to India, as a prelude to surveying a potential England—Australia air route. It was this practical, logistical and diplomatic experience, suggests Mol Kentin, that underscored Ross and Keith Smith's more celebrated achievement in winning the Great Air Race to their homeland in late 1919.

Soundly grounded in archival research

that spans Australian, British and German collections, this is a carefully crafted biography that balances pace with pleasing detail. Amply illustrated, carefully edited and well produced, it encapsulates the aviation aspirations of the British Empire through the life of one of its premature casualties.

Dr PETER HOBBS

Lionel Morris and the Red Baron — Air War on the Somme

By Jill Bush; Pen & Sword, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS; 6¼in x 9¼in (160mm x 236mm); hardback; 224 pages; illustrated; £19.99. ISBN 978-1-526742-22-3

THERE HAVE BEEN several books published recently by non-specialist authors who have been inspired by a distant relative killed flying during the Great War. Sadly, I have not been able to be complimentary about all of them. But this book is of a much higher quality. Well-written and -edited, it has a decent index and bibliography, and is well-researched with copious references in the endnotes. A foreword by Trevor Henshaw, author of *The Sky Their Battlefield II*, is a good sign.

Lionel Morris was the first victim of the then-unknown Manfred von Richthofen — later to become the dreaded "Red Baron". Morris was 19 and an only child. He and his observer, 21-year-old Tom Rees, were shot down on September 17, 1916, in F.E.2b "7018" of No 11 Sqn RFC. The problem is that, like thousands of other young men who died under similar circumstances, there is very little information about Morris. Only two photographs of him exist.

When Jill Bush started researching her first cousin twice-removed, she had only family rumours to go on; however, she found that for a few months he had kept a diary, addressed

FRIENDS OF THE BRITANNIA

Bristol Britannia XM496 Preservation Society; members' biannual print newsletter; Editor Duncan Swift, e-mail dna@dunavon.com; Membership Sec is Jim Brown, 17 Burswin Rd, Carterton, Oxon OX18 1DZ; website www.xm496.com

THE SOLE GENUINE survivor of the RAF's Bristol Britannia fleet, C Mk 1 XM496 *Regulus* is preserved at Cotswold Airport, Kemble, Gloucestershire. It was the world's last flying Britannia, making its final voyage — from South Africa to Kemble — on October 12–14, 1997. Its many claims to fame include involvement in refugee evacuations from Cyprus and Bangladesh/Pakistan in the early-to-mid 1970s, and the transport of Tutankhamun's treasures for the British Museum exhibition in 1972. Friends of the Britannia, who pay a subscription of £10 a year, receive benefits (in addition, of course, to a warm glow for helping to preserve a fine and significant historic aircraft) including this lively newsletter/magazine. The latest edition features an engaging first-hand account by a former ATC cadet of a visit from the UK to Singapore and Malaya aboard XM496 in 1967; an update on recent efforts to repaint the airframe and refurbish the interior; and a report of a recent visit to the aircraft by a former World War Two Avro Lancaster navigator who went on to crew it during the 1970s. The A4-format eight-pager is illustrated throughout in well-reproduced full colour, and a membership subscription is a rewarding way in which to support the preservation efforts of a dedicated team. **MO**

to his mother. It is now in the RAF Museum, which allowed Bush to use extracts from it. Even the complete diary would not be enough to make a book, but, in conjunction with letters written by his CO and comrades after his death, it is possible to deduce that he was a quiet but dependable young man; reliable but probably not a born leader. That is about all we know — except that in von Richthofen's own account of the battle he pays Morris the compliment of believing that he was an experienced air fighter.

What the author has done is to give a general account of the history of any number of boys at Whitgift School, Croydon, who joined the school's Officer's Training Corps and enlisted soon after they were 18, before getting seconded to the RFC and training as a pilot. She includes a full examination of the efforts made to train enough pilots, and the inevitable shortcomings such a rushed programme engendered. Her discussion of the numbers of casualties in training is more balanced than some. She also includes an account of the air element of the Battle of the Somme, and No 11 Sqn in particular, during the period covered by Morris's diary. This is done competently with just a few oversimplifications.

The book has much of interest for readers of all levels of knowledge. Specialists may wonder if it covers only well-trodden ground, but they would have to be very well-read to find nothing new here. A newcomer to the subject will gain a good overview of the RFC in the first half of the war; a small problem is that the history stops on September 17, 1916, so they would not find out that the quality of pilot training improved considerably in 1917.

Jill Bush has done all that she possibly could to commemorate two young men who are now more than just names in a casualty list; and, especially for that reason, this is a book that deserves to be read.

ADRIAN ROBERTS

The All-British Marendaz Special: The Man, the Cars and the Aeroplanes

By Graham Skillen; Fonhill Media, Stroud House, Russell Street, Stroud House, Glos GL5 3AN; 6¼in x 9¼in (172mm x 228mm); softback; 192 pages, illustrated; £25. ISBN 978-1-781557-02-0

ONE HAS TO admire the author for tackling a mercurial character such as Capt Marcus Marendaz, especially as he had previously been the recipient of vicious criticism from his subject. Graham Skillen became the owner of a Marendaz car in the 1980s, and his fascination with both the cars and aeroplanes produced by Marendaz inspired the research that resulted in this book. While most of the content concerns the motor vehicles, there are chapters covering his service in the RFC from 1916, initially on Training Squadrons and then with No 35 Sqn, flying Armstrong Whitworth F.K.8s over the Western Front. His health then deteriorated, and he ended the war as a delivery pilot in the UK.

His undiminished fascination with flying led Marendaz to start dealing in private aircraft in the late 1920s, and with the demise of his automobile business he took up light aircraft design and construction in the mid-1930s, producing the Marendaz Mk III G-AFGG, which was apparently never flown, and the Marendaz Trainer G-AFZX at the outbreak of the Second World War (see *Lost & Found*, TAH28). He also established the Bedford School of Flying in 1938. Unfortunately, at the outbreak of war he was imprisoned under a detention order as a hostile alien, but was eventually exonerated. Post-war, he moved to South Africa and then returned to the UK, where he died in November 1988.

This is a well-researched and absorbing biography of a man who persisted in pursuing his engineering interests despite being beset by troubles of one sort or another.

PHILIP JARRETT

