

## Book Reviews

Roger Branfill-Cook. *ShipCraft No. 26: Riverine Craft of the Vietnam Wars*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.co.uk, 2020. 64 pp., illustrations, bibliography. UK £14.99, US \$24.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-5267-4906-2.

This work is the twenty-sixth entry in the ShipCraft modeling and visual reference series, and author Roger Branfill-Cook's first contribution. A professional translator used to working with French documents, Branfill-Cook covers not only the American vessels of the Vietnam War, but French examples from the Indochina War as well. As is the pattern of the series, *Riverine Craft* consists of a main text, model products guide, and model showcase. These cover the historical background of vessel types, available kits for representing various vessels, and fully constructed example models respectively. A single page of Selected References listing finishes out the work.

The main text of the work is split roughly in half by the modeling section, with the first half covering the introduction and French vessel conversions and the second half covering South Vietnamese and American designs. The text is largely used to explain vessel details for modelers, and as such, there is no overt analysis beyond mentioning the effectiveness and service life of the individual designs. Ship types have their name bolded in the text when introduced, with technical information in a side bar listing date of launch, dimen-

sions, crew, engine, speed, guns, and armour. Period black and white photographs illustrate full length and design details along with scale profile drawings for most ships. Those for smaller field-modified craft are naturally more rudimentary, and the paired profiles of original designs versus riverine modification provide the most interesting detail.

The Model Products section, located after the French conversions text, is divided into four different sections by scale, with a note on compatible figures at the end. Two vessels are listed as available under unusual 'Box Scale' sizes, fifteen for the combined 1:72 and 1:76 scale, five for 1:56, three for 1:48, and a final twelve for 1:35 scale. Most listings showcase either the kit's box art or a completed example, accompanied by a short text on the model's availability, accuracy, and necessary conversion notes. Some personal levity is introduced in this section as well, such as the author noting his rare 1:48 RAG Boat kit "had obviously detonated a VC mine beneath the engine compartment" due to being badly cracked inside the box (22).

The 21-page, full colour Modelmaker's Showcase section is naturally the centerpiece of the work, offering multiple views of 19 different models constructed by nine different individuals. Some of these are stand-alone pieces, but many are shown in diorama format, either underway or carrying out an operation. Perhaps most impressive are

the dioramas of Jan Vererstraeten and Jack Carrico, with the former being a highly detailed Riverine Patrol Boat and Command and Communications Boat diorama, and the latter being multiple detailed pieces created using kits from Masterpiece Models. Unsurprisingly, Branfill-Cook includes many of his own creations in this section, offering good examples of kit conversions to represent French and South Vietnamese craft as well as a variety of American vessels.

In terms of possible improvements, several come to mind. As this is a work primarily intended to help model builders, Branfill-Cook's note that profile drawings of conversion type vessels are "highly speculative" and readers should reach out if they have plans should be located in the introduction rather than as an image caption (10). Additionally, at least two of the photographs have incorrect information. One of the 11-metre FOM pictures states that the visible weapon is "not a .50 cal Browning, and is probably a 20 mm Oerlikon," when the weapon is quite clearly an M2 Browning with the early slotted barrel support of the pre-war Colt contracts (11). Another identifies the turret used for the LVT(A)-5 as coming from an M5 Light Tank, when it is actually from the M8 'Scott' Howitzer Motor Gun Carriage (13). Statements like these could lead to unintentional inaccuracies by modelers. The former Japanese junks used by the French are also not covered in the main text, though model suggestions are provided in the availability section, and there is just a single stern photograph of an LSSC when many more profile and detail images exist. The main text also seems heavily broken up by photographs and drawings. This may be the style of the work, but it does affect the flow of information. Finally, all period photographs are in

black and white, even though many colour images of American vessels exist. Said images would be helpful to readers by showing the period colour schemes and markings, rather than just relying on the models in the showcase section.

*Riverine Craft of the Vietnam Wars* is a decent primer on these vessels and a good reference guide for those seeking to model the Indochina and Vietnam Wars. While the text may be relatively minimal, there is a good selection of images and profiles, especially of the early French conversion efforts often overlooked in the historiography. For modelers, the products section offers a good rundown of available kits paired with commentary on their availability and accuracy, augmented by the stand-alone and diorama builds of the Showcase.

Charles Ross Patterson II  
Yorktown, Virginia

Donald Collingwood. *The Captain Class Frigates in the Second World War*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen & Sword Maritime, [www.pen-and-sword.co.uk](http://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk), 2020. 224 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index. US \$26.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-52678-223-6. Originally published 1999 and re-released April 2021. (E-book available.)

Overall, this is a very interesting book describing the history of the Captain-class frigates (destroyer escorts) in the Royal Navy during the latter part of the Second World War. The Battle of the Atlantic, and the U-boat peril, often has been described as the only event that really worried Winston Churchill during the war. Without the machinery of war, raw materials, food and troops from the United States and Canada, there was no way of defeating Nazi Germany and it all had to come via the Atlantic Ocean.