

within a couple hundred yards of land despite the dispatch of ships to rescue them. Only 37 people survived. The *Ship of Lost Souls* is the fascinating story of this tragedy, about what went wrong at sea, on land, in time, and in policies. The reader is left with the thought “If only...” There are a staggering number of issues in this maritime accident in slow motion, that, if approached in a different matter, might have resulted a completely different outcome. A definite must-read.

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**Smith, William. *Churchill's Arctic Convoys: Strength Triumphs Over Adversity***

**Pen & Sword, 2022**

247 pp., illustrations, appendix, tables, notes, bibliography, index  
ISBN 9781399072298 (hardcover) £25.00, US\$42.95

The story of the Arctic convoys which supplied vital war material to Stalin's forces during the Second World has long been popular with historians and naval history enthusiasts. It should be no surprise that their narrative attracted the interest of Pen & Sword, which is a very well-known publishing house of the United Kingdom, one with a well-deserved reputation for works on naval and military history. Its author, William Smith, is a retired civil servant with ties to the Royal Navy and NATO, and this is his first major published work. This Oxford graduate's choice of subject matter was in part inspired by his family's naval service throughout two world wars.

This work is divided into nine chapters of disparate lengths which cover the story of each convoy on the Murmansk run from its inception in 1942 to the return voyage of the last convoy in May 1945. Somewhat surprisingly, the editors chose to label both the Introduction and Conclusion as separate chapters. Six of the remaining seven chapters focus on separate phases of the Arctic convoys which sailed under the appellations of PQ, QP, JW and RA. Perhaps, appropriately, the remaining chapter deals with individual sailings which took place during the break in convoy sailings due to shipping shortages and the increased ferocity of German attacks on the last of the PQ-named convoys. This historical intermission of the story of these convoys also marks the transition point between the QP and JW convoys. This period was marked by a number of individual sailings intended to assuage Russia's concerns that the Allies intended to stop shipments of war material all together. Each chapter has an all too perfunctory account of the global and local war situation during

each of the sailing phases.

The well-written text is ably buttressed by various maps, illustrations, an appendix and 14 tables. The latter are perhaps the highlight of this work and reveal that Allied losses were far more severe than most readers would surmise. While they are well chosen and clearly reproduced, the vast majority of the photographs clearly focus on the Allied effort, not the German one, thereby confirming the focus of this work. The few photos that depict German forces are of *Luftwaffe* aircraft rather than German surface vessels or U-boats. This volume is rounded out by a very select Bibliography and Index. While the former lists older classics like B. B. Schofield's *The Arctic Convoys* and the requisite primary and early post-war studies it is clearly focused on more modern accounts. In addition, perhaps reflecting our modern world, it also includes a number of websites.

Readers who are expecting a blow-by-blow account of the Arctic Convoys à la Schofield's classic will, unfortunately, be disappointed with this work. Overall, it is clearly focused on the Royal Navy's admittedly heroic endeavours to bring these convoys through despite the severe weather of the Arctic Circle and the interdiction efforts of the German *Luftwaffe* and *Kriegsmarine*. Smith has deliberately chosen to offer a detailed, diary-like but almost single-minded account of the voyages of each of the convoys, with minimal detours offering insight into Germany's attempts to intercept them. A discussion of the Allies' strategies for dealing with the varied threats posed by German forces are also missing. For example, the various attacks on the *Tirpitz*, the *Kriegsmarine*'s largest warship, are only given passing mention. The same applies to the attacks made by German surface vessels on these convoys. Thus, none of their generally ill-fated attacks throughout this period receive more than scant mention. However, U-boat and *Luftwaffe* attacks on the convoys are somewhat better covered. While the contributions of the United States Navy to the escort forces also receive minimalist treatment, the author does acknowledge the important contributions of the American merchantmen who sailed among the convoys. That being said, the irony of the *City of Flint*'s role-reversing return to Murmansk from *Kriegsmarine* prize to Allied supply ship seems to have escaped the author's notice. The reception of Allied merchantmen and warships upon their arrival in Russia is also at best dealt with in a cursory manner. Even the Russian efforts to support the convoys receive scant mention.

In short, while this volume is well researched and written it does suffer from a too narrow focus. While the actual accounts of each convoy's voyage are very informative, one gets the feeling that like a late comer to a buffet, many of the menu offerings were left off the table. This is by no means a definitive and balanced story of these convoys and their importance to the

Allied war effort and Germany's ultimate failure to deny them success. While it is a good addition to our knowledge of these convoys it is not the definitive global account of these convoys – but neither was it intended to be.

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**Stille, Mark; illustrated by Adam Tooby. *Midway-Class Aircraft Carriers 1945–92***

**Osprey Publishing, 2024**

96 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index

ISBN 9781472860484 (softcover) CA\$27.00; 9781472860477 (e-book)

CA\$21.60

Construction on the aircraft carrier USS *Midway* began in October 1943, the first of a projected six of its class. However, by the time it was launched in September 1945, the war with Japan was over and only two of the projected five CVB-class large aircraft carriers were subsequently completed. While built for an already concluded conflict, all three carriers of the *Midway* class went on to serve the US Navy (USN) in multiple conflicts around the globe, from Vietnam to the Gulf War, almost a half century later. It is the *Midway*-class aircraft carriers which are the focus of the new book by Mark Stille and illustrated by Adam Tooby, aptly named *Midway-Class Aircraft Carriers, 1945–92*.

In only 46 pages the author chronicles the history of the *Midway*-class carriers from their design and construction during the Second World War through to their mid-life modernizations and combat deployments throughout the world. The book is divided into two main sections of equal length. The first focuses on the design, construction and modifications to the three carriers over their lifespan. The second section provides operational histories for all three ships, including discussions about their role in the Vietnam War, the only conflict where all three carriers saw action. To supplement these two sections, the book contains seven full-page illustrations of the carriers at various points in their respective lifespans. Combined with a number of photographs, all of which come from Naval History and Heritage Command, the book makes extensive use of visuals to explain all aspects of the *Midway*-class carriers, from flight deck configuration (25) to the changes as a result of various modernization programs (43).

The author has produced a monograph that functions as a detailed reference work for those interested in this class of aircraft carrier. The book does not