

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.

Peter K.H. Mispelkamp
Pointe Claire, Quebec

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

aim to be a comprehensive history of these three ships and readers should treat the book as a starting point for both researchers and enthusiasts with strong background knowledge of naval weaponry, navigation technology, and aviation. Newcomers to this subject, even with a background in naval history, may find the technical detail, particularly in relation to weapons systems, overwhelming and difficult to understand. Without a prior understanding of what these weapons are and how they function, the sections dealing with armaments of the carriers will be difficult for these readers to follow.

It is also important to note that the book is concerned with the three aircraft carriers as ships first and foremost. The author does discuss the air group of the *Midway* in the operational history section (27–29) and provides accompanying photographs; there are only two other brief discussions of the aircraft deployed on the carriers in the rest of the book (32, 41). While the author's focus is on the ship itself, the carriers only exist to facilitate aircraft operations. As a reader who came to this book through an interest in naval aviation, a greater focus on the aircraft flying off of the ship and how changes to the configuration and technology on board the three carriers impacted aircraft operations would have been appreciated.

Similarly, the operational histories of the three carriers focus on their deployment as aircraft carriers and not on the activities of the aircraft operating off of these ships. Hence, in the operational history of *Coral Sea*, its seven deployments during the Vietnam War merited only one paragraph that covers strikes against North Vietnam in 1965 through to actions during the North's Easter Offensive in 1972 and mining of North Vietnamese harbours in May 1972 (40). For readers who are interested in the USN's role in the air war in Vietnam, a work like Thomas McKelvey Cleaver's *The Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club: Naval Aviation in Vietnam*, also published by Osprey Publishing, is a better choice.

Overall, Mark Stille and Adam Tooby have produced a visually impressive reference work for experts looking to deepen their knowledge of this particular class of aircraft carrier. The book serves as an excellent take-off point for those looking to do further reading and research on related topics. Those seeking an authoritative work on these ships or on their aviation wing may be disappointed but will have a better grasp of the history and technology behind these impressive war ships.

Adam Coombs
Ottawa, Ontario