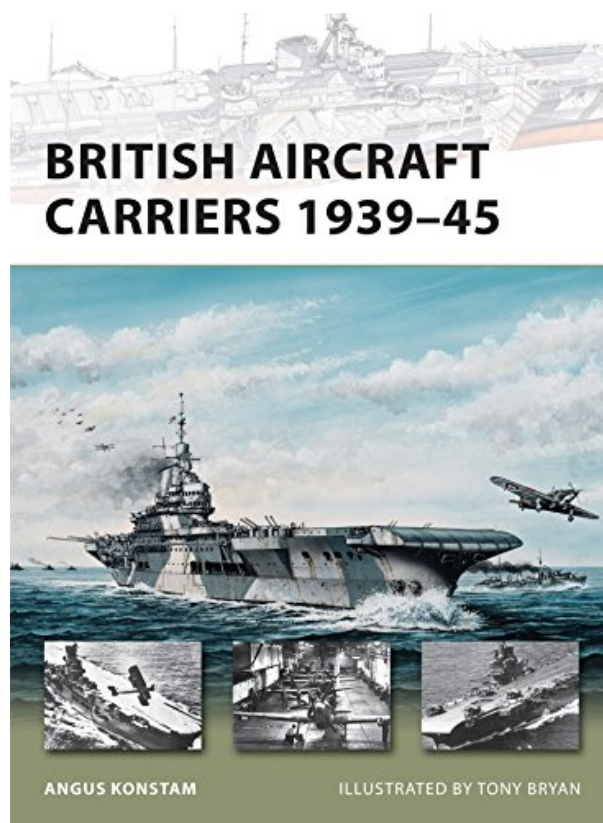


BRITISH AIRCRAFT CARRIERS 1939-45 (NEW VANGUARD) BY ANGUS KONSTAM

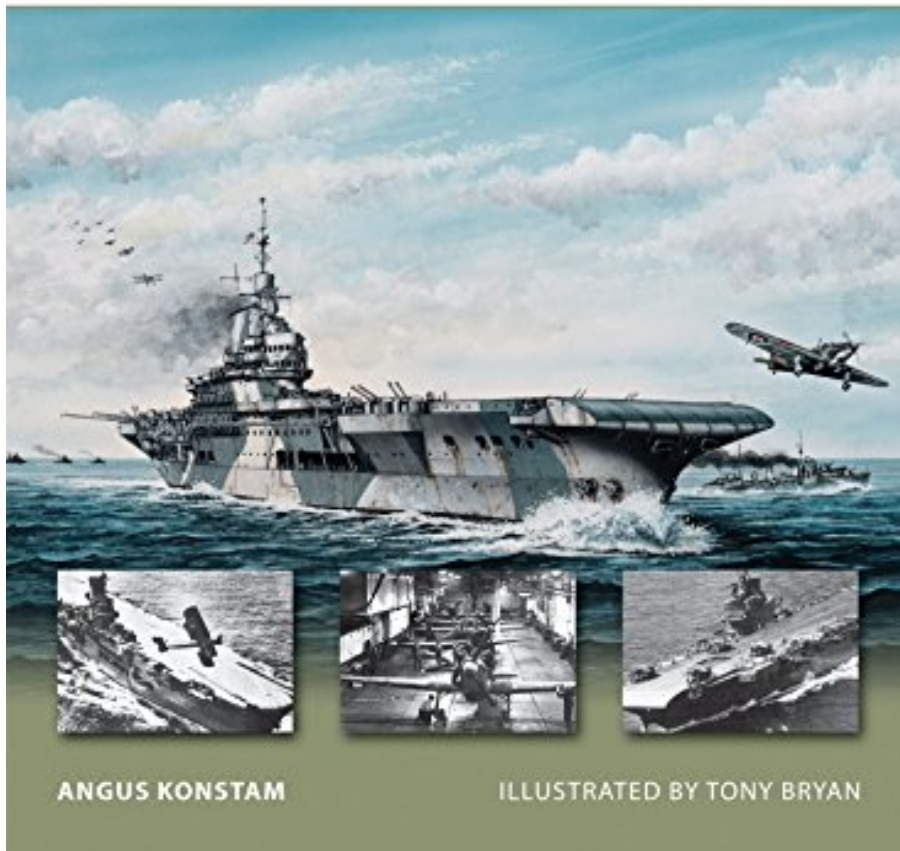


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Review

“This excellent survey of the craft's capabilities is a must for any in-depth military, aircraft or World War II collection!” ?The Midwest Book Review (October 2010)

“An excellent book on a most interesting subject and one that I am positive you will find to be of interest. One that will be pulled from the shelves time after time and one I can highly recommend to you.” ?Scott Van Aken, Modeling Madness

About the Author

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BRITISH AIRCRAFT CARRIERS 1939-45 (NEW VANGUARD)

BY ANGUS KONSTAM PDF

In August 1917, at the height of the First World War, a small biplane landed on the makeshift flight deck of HMS Furious - the first ever carrier landing in aviation history. This small act ushered in a new era. Two decades later, when Britain stood on the brink of another World War, the Royal Navy had a small fleet of aircraft carriers, with several more nearing completion. When war came the newly-formed Fleet Air Arm would demonstrate that what it lacked in modern equipment, it made up for in skill and daring.

The first of these carriers were converted from existing ships. Then in 1938 HMS Ark Royal was launched - Britain's first purpose built carrier. Its design set the standard for what was to come. The "Ark" was followed by the highly successful Illustrious Class, and then by others whose design was modified in the light of wartime experience. British fleet carriers had steel flight decks, and although smaller and able to carry less aircraft than the carriers seen in the Pacific, they were better suited to conditions in European waters. It also meant they were more resilient, and could shrug off damage that would cripple their American counterparts.

Over the next six years these British aircraft carriers would launch attacks against a major Italian naval base, attack the Italian battle fleet on the high seas, and cripple the Bismarck, so that the battleships of the Home Fleet could overtake her. They would also see service in every theatre of war, including the Pacific. Inevitably, their success came at a price. Courageous, Eagle and Ark Royal were torpedoed by U-Boats, Glorious was sunk by the guns of a German battlecruiser, and Hermes was lost to Japanese bombs. Most of the rest of the carrier fleet were damaged to some extent during their service lives, but they survived and kept on fighting.

This New Vanguard title tells the story of these remarkable warships, and reveals the secrets of their design, how they operated, and above all, what they achieved.

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Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

British WWII Carriers

By Stone Dog

This New Vanguard #168 is a good overview of British carriers that participated in WWII. Author Angus Konstam provides a fairly good chronicle of British carriers as they evolved and were employed in WWII.

The author begins the story in WWI when the Royal Navy led the way in naval aviation. The earliest carriers were battleships or cruisers with makeshift decks above the forward turrets and, sometimes, the aft turrets. After experience showed these hybrids to be dangerous, they altered hulls to make the first "true" carriers with a flight deck that was the length of the craft.

Konstam then delves into the interwar period in which warship design was constrained by naval treaties. Even as the US Navy converted two battlecruiser hulls into the Lexington and Saratoga and the Japanese converted a hull into Akagi, the British converted existing hulls into carriers. As war clouds darkened in Europe, the Royal Navy planned purpose built ships that became the Illustrious class carriers. All weapons design is a tradeoff in attributes and this new class carriers would trade capacity in terms of number of aircraft for armored protection. In this era, the Royal Navy made the decision that instead of carrying enough fighters to protect their carrier, they would simply button up and depend solely on AA guns and the ships' own armor to defeat an enemy attack.

Although the British carriers were certainly better protected than their American or Japanese counterparts, they could carry far fewer aircraft. The Illustrious class was restricted to only 36 aircraft (not including a deck park) while American and Japanese carriers could carry 70-100. The author delves into British designs for ships planned during the war, but finished after hostilities ceased. I would point out that this book does not cover escort carriers for the simple reason that they were not British - the RN employed American escort carriers provided under Lend Lease and would not apply to this book.

I think the author covers a lot of ground quite well if you consider that this type book can only serve as an overview. I would have liked the author to mention aircraft since the RN had only obsolete or unsuitable types and had to rely on American Lend Lease Avengers, Wildcats, Hellcats and Corsairs for the majority of their carrier aircraft by the end of the war.

This book does a decent job of introducing the reader to WWII Royal Navy carriers and I recommend it to those interested with four stars.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Good BRIEF history of British aircraft carriers.

By J. C. Bednar

This a very good and BRIEF history of WWII era British aircraft carriers. Booklet is about 48 pages long and enough information about each aircraft carrier covered. The first section of booklet describes the advent of carrier-based aircraft, developments, tactics, ships, etc. are discussed. The various classes of FLEET carriers that participated in the war are also described, as well as their plus & minus.

There are color plates of various ships, and plenty of black & white photos - at least 1 photo per each carrier described.

Operational histories and final outcome of each carrier that saw action in the war is given as well.

Overall, a very good booklet. It is what I wanted and expected - a BRIEF history of British carriers. Excellent resource for modelers. Ordered via Amazon and everything arrived in great condition and a few days before expected.

14 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

British Aircraft Carriers 1939-1945

By Michael E. Stiles

A little disappointed in content...or perhaps I should say, lack of content. Good book for fleet carriers and light fleet carriers, but there was no information concerning escort, assault, or strike carriers. The name of the book is British Aircraft Carriers...not British Fleet Carriers, so I believe the lack of any data concerning the escort, assault, and strike carriers makes the title misleading. Yet, it could have been so easy to correct such an oversight if only Osprey had knowledgeable editors.

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