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Rebuilding the Royal Navy: Warship Design since 1945

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provides a valuable firsthand account that historians will continue to use to understand these years.

To take the volume as a whole, Middendorf's purpose in writing his book is quite different from that of other memoir writers. He clearly tells his own story, not in self-justification, but rather as a series of lessons learned for anyone who might have similar ambitions for public service. Thus, his tone and focus, are modest and even self-deprecating, while the book tends toward a broad narrative punctuated by well told and illustrative stories rather than detailed relations of particular issues.

A descendant of Captain William Stone of the Continental Navy, who had brought the Navy its first warships named *Wasp* and *Hornet*, Middendorf has a personal naval experience that goes back to his undergraduate days at Harvard. In the first of his chapters on his period as secretary, he relates his first meeting with Admiral Zumwalt, while still ambassador to the Netherlands. Middendorf clearly supported and encouraged Zumwalt's initiatives in support of larger roles for women officers. Among his achievements as secretary, Middendorf counts as first the acquisition of the *Ohio*-class submarine with its Trident missile, followed closely by the Aegis cruiser shipbuilding program. Clearly, the greatest pleasure he had as secretary came in employing his knowledge of and interest in naval history, as he presided over the Navy's contribution to the celebration of the bicentennial of the United States in 1976.

Throughout, Middendorf has kept in mind that his is a cautionary tale for those who might be exposed to Potomac fever and be led to follow a similar path. In his conclusion the eighty-six-year-old

notes that "the path through life is a checklist of things that you don't have to do again. Life is all about seeking equilibrium, the rarest of human conditions. It's about moving forward without going over the cliff, finding success without losing our way, smelling the roses without getting stung by the bees."

JOHN HATTENDORF
Naval War College



Brown, David K., and George Moore. *Rebuilding the Royal Navy: Warship Design since 1945*. London: Seaforth, 2012. 208pp. \$30

This title is the fourth and final in the authors' best-selling technical series, which covers the development and design of the Royal Navy's iron and steel warships since HMS *Warrior* in the 1850s. The volume under review, a reprint of its first edition of 2003, covers the awkward and challenging half-century since the end of the Second World War. This was not an easy time for warship designers, particularly in Europe; they had first to deal with stringent postwar austerity measures that dramatically curtailed their aspirations, and later with the advent of guided-weapon technology, which completely altered the rationale behind the established classes of warships. Nowhere was this more obvious than for the cruiser classes, which had been so much of a war-fighting staple for the Royal Navy following the reductions in the battle fleet as a result of the naval treaties of the twenties and thirties.

The authors' focus has been to present the whole story in terms of the designs covered, giving equal prominence to conceptual designs that often never saw

the light of day and to their better-known, living ship counterparts. For the first five chapters George Moore is the lead author, ably covering the more historical aspects and leaving the technically demanding era of guided weapons and nuclear propulsion to the highly experienced David Brown, whose personal involvement as a constructor during this period clearly shows. Together, they span the whole spectrum of naval capability, from aircraft carriers to submarines and minor war vessels, even venturing into the support classes. The coverage verges on the technical in some areas and is richly illustrated with line drawings, black-and-white photographs, and designer's artistic impressions. The downside here is that many of these illustrations lack any mention of their subject's individual particulars, something that should possibly have been rectified with an additional appendix.

Their comprehensive strategy, though, is successful in other ways—making it, for example, easier for the reader to follow the development of trends in naval design thinking between the established classes. It is less effective when it comes to identifying why the truly landmark designs were individually so successful and why they became so influential to shipbuilders internationally. For example, the light fleet carriers of the *Hermes* and *Majestic* classes that did so much to establish the technological baselines of postwar naval aviation, variously introducing the angled deck, mirror sight, steam catapult, and so on, are given no more prominence than CVA-01, a more advanced design resembling a smaller *Forrestal* class that despite its obvious promise was destined to face the politician's axe. Similar things

could also be said about the splendid Type 12/*Leander* frigate designs, the *Oberon*-class patrol submarines, and the *Ton*-class MCMVs, all of which had long careers and variously set the worldwide standards in their classes for a great many years. An enhanced coverage of these ships, as designs that were truly influential in “rebuilding” the Royal Navy, would have been most welcome and could certainly have been accommodated in this volume, which is noticeably thinner than its forebears.

These comments notwithstanding, the book is still a very worthwhile addition to the library of anyone with an interest in warship design or the postwar Royal Navy. Both authors' credentials are impeccable, and together they have provided a detailed survey of the designs and thinking in the Royal Navy during the postwar era, along with a fascinating insight into how naval design teams respond to the political, societal, and economic pressures of their times.

In truth, however, and despite the rather open-ended implication of the title, the book really goes no farther than the designs that were conceived in the late seventies and early eighties. The section entitled “A Glimpse of the Future” is already dated and superficial, with the classes covered now at sea and well beyond the conceptual stage. So, if you are looking for a detailed design and service history of the more famous classes or something that is up-to-the-minute, you will have to look elsewhere. But in most cases these areas have already been covered by individual technical monographs or the periodical press.

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