

Flight Bag

The latest products for the discerning aviation enthusiast

ACES, AIRMEN AND THE BIGGIN HILL WING – A COLLECTIVE MEMOIR 1941-1942

Book

Written by: John EC Tan

Price: £25

The work of RAF wartime ground crew tends to be barely mentioned in aviation literature. This book highlights the duties of a typical airman in support of Fighter Command squadrons based at Biggin Hill. The author's late grandfather, David Raymond Davies, was assigned to a specialist armourers' team which eventually solved problems associated with the often temperamental 20mm cannon – his recorded oral reminiscences forming the core of this excellent book. In his armourer capacity, Davies, had close association with such notable pilots as Don Kingaby, Brian Kingcome and Bob Stanford-Tuck, to name but a few. Despite rank and the social divisions of the time, pilots and the 'erks' who looked after them saw themselves as comrades in arms and this comes through very well in the story.

Illustrated with 48 black and white photographs, the text is punctuated by highly relevant quotations from published and unpublished memoirs, plus more recent historical works, as well as extracts from Operations Record Books. The author skillfully weaves these sources into a flowing story that faithfully recreates what everyday life was like on a fighter station. He says in his introduction that he was "wrestling with the difficulties of trying to convey a sense of being there," and he has certainly succeeded.

Published by Pen and Sword Aviation, ISBN 9781473881693, available from www.pen-and-sword.co.uk



LUFTWAFFE EAGLES OVER IRELAND – THE STORY OF GERMAN AIR CRASHES OVER NEUTRAL IRELAND 1940-1945

Book

Written by: Justin Horgan and Paddy Cummins

Price: €35

During World War Two, the Republic of Ireland remained neutral but saw frequent overflights by aircraft of the opposing sides, but the Irish Air Corps had no suitable aircraft to intercept them.

The Luftwaffe's battles with the RAF in the skies around the Irish coast led to many crashes and forced landings in neutral Irish territory. Mountainous terrain and bad weather also played a part. The book describes the events leading up to these incidents, the response of local people and the extensive efforts to save crew members. Among the subjects covered in its 28 chapters are an Fw 200 Condor crash on Mount Brandon, where parts still remain; and another accident involving the same type, where an Irish nurse was awarded a German medal for saving a crewman from the burning wreckage. In contrast is an amusing account of life in Curragh Camp, where German (eventually totalling 56) and RAF internees were allowed out to cinemas and local pubs, honour-bound to return. The final two chapters are Life After Ireland, which covers the Germans after the war; and German Military Cemetery, Glencree, Co Wicklow, which lists casualties.

During more than 20 years of research the authors interviewed many of the survivors. The text is well illustrated with reproductions of official reports, letters and other memorabilia, along with 160 colour and 430 black and white photographs. Sadly co-author Paddy Cummins died in 2013 but he would have been very proud of his involvement in this superb book.

Published by Horgan Press, ISBN 9780995553002, and available from www.horganpress.com



RUSSIA'S WARPLANES VOLUME 2 – RUSSIAN-MADE MILITARY AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS TODAY

Book

Written by: Piotr Butowski

Price: £34.99

The second volume in a series on the aircraft currently in service or under development for Russian military aviation and for export customers – the types featured in five chapters are long-range bombers, maritime aircraft, strategic transports and tankers, theatre and special-purpose transports and trainers. The author is a distinguished expert on Russian aviation and has visited most of the country's aircraft design bureaus and their production plants plus many air bases as well as numerous air shows and defence exhibitions.

The amount of detail packed in is remarkable. Neatly tabulated are airframe and systems, powerplant, dimensions, weights, performance figures, avionics, armament and self-protection equipment. Each type has a well written history which covers its operational career, production and operators, variants and upgrades.

Also included is a 24-page addenda section which updates the series' first volume – on tactical combat aircraft and helicopters, transport helicopters, reconnaissance and special duty aircraft. Involvement in Syria is also brought up to date. A single, short appendix lists aircraft design and production facilities, along with a location map, and there are 200 colour photographs.

The book is a must for air force libraries and defence ministries worldwide – as well as Russian airpower enthusiasts who will find it equally indispensable.

Published by Harpia Publishing, ISBN 9780997309201, available from www.casematepublishing.co.uk



X PLANES: BELL X-1

Book

Written by: Peter E Davies

Price: £12.99

Another of the X-Planes series, this features the first and ultimately successful attempts to break the sound barrier in controlled flight. At the end of World War Two no-one knew if it was possible, but the Bell Aircraft Corporation, which had a reputation for innovative designs, had already built a rocket-powered aircraft with the aim of supersonic flight.

The fuselage of the Bell XS-1 (Experimental, Sonic No 1) was modelled on a 0.50-calibre bullet, a shape known to go supersonic with ease. Because there was no hard data on which to base calculations, the airframe was incredibly strong, being stressed to 18g, at least 50% more than any existing design.

Its first gliding flight took place in January 1946 using a B-29 Superfortress to carry the XS-1 to altitude, as it would for subsequent powered sorties – the first of which came in December 1946.

By now redesignated as the X-1, the aircraft's best known achievement was in October 1947 when Chuck Yeager took it up to Mach 1.06. In 12 years, the type – seven built with four lost in accidents – went on to establish a series of speed and altitude records far in excess of those envisaged at the beginning, including an ultimate speed of Mach 2.4.

Illustrated with seven colour and 58 black and white photographs, plus seven original cutaway and profile artworks and a two-page spread colour painting, this is a very good book, packed with interesting information about a groundbreaking aircraft.

Published by Osprey Publishing, ISBN 9781472814647, and available from www.ospreypublishing.com

