

REVIEW COLUMN

- DAVID LEGG

Once again, I am grateful to publishers for sending books to review. We have several this time, most with either Catalina or more general flying boat content. The contact details for the publishers are at the end of this column – do please check out their full range of books...

Despite having been involved in Catalinas and associated research for several decades and having a contact network of like-minded researchers and enthusiasts, I had not previously come across the author **Louis Bontya** so was surprised to learn of his book **Consolidated Aircraft Factory History – US Navy Early P2Y and PBV Aircraft History and Profiles**. I contacted Louis in the USA and he kindly sent me a review copy. Given the full title of the book I was really interested to see what the author had written, but having read it all through I was left scratching my head slightly! So, taking the contents in order, the Factory History element is brief and take up just over one page and includes an incorrect date for the first flight of the PBV's prototype, the XP3Y-1. The next chapter covers P2Y Ranger aircraft units, a representative colour side profile, some nice plans and a list of individual aircraft serial numbers. This is followed by a similar chapter on PBV aircraft and in this section there are many more colour profiles covering the P2Y and early PBV models up to and including the PBV-4, although the serial number table goes on to cover the first batch of 167 PBV-5s. This section will be of particular help to modellers as the colourful pre-WWII markings are covered in depth, both by way of the profiles and in line drawings. Thereafter, the book covers a number of topics – a history of US Navy Patrol Wing 10, chapters on the 'Navy bases at North Island, San Diego; Coco Solo in the Panama Canal Zone; and Sand Point, Seattle plus a section on various pre-war mass formation flights of P2Ys and PBVs.

As I tend to do, I went through the data in the book and compared it to my own and discovered some typos and errors, in particular as regards dates in the tables and some engine details. Whilst overall I found the contents to match the book's sub-title, it did come across slightly as an unfinished, albeit interesting project. And although I take issue with some of the data, the book certainly has strengths, in particular the drawings and profiles and the photographic content. The format is close to A4, paperback and with 155 pages of text and illustrations. It is published by **Fulton Books** in the USA, ISBN 979-8-89221-3 and is also available digitally. It does not seem to appear on Fulton's website but is easily available at various prices on the internet from various suppliers...

Rob Mulder's **European Airlines** is well known for publishing high quality books on often esoteric aircraft types and aviation subjects. For example, some years ago we reviewed its book on the Noorduyn Norseman by Nils Mathisrud. The company's books are published in Norway and whilst some titles are in Norwegian, many are either bilingual with English or solely in English. A recent series of three books in Norwegian under the title **Flaggets Heder** (Honour of the Flag) has been published, again written by **Nils Mathisrud**, one covering the training that took place in 'Little Norway' in the USA between 1940 and 1945 and one about the types flown by the Norwegians within the RAF during the Second World War. It is the third titled *Gjenreisningen 1945-1959* that we are interested here and it describes the colours and markings of Royal Norwegian Air Force aircraft that were delivered after

the 'war and until American arms aid started in 1949. A wide variety of aircraft types is covered including some seaplanes – the Arado Ar 196, Noorduyn Norseman and Northrop N-3PB floatplanes as well as the Catalina. The Norwegians flew the Catalina in both amphibian and non-amphibian versions within the wartime RAF during the Second World War but continued to use non-amphibians post-war hence their inclusion in the book. Although ex-US Navy PBV-5A amphibians came later, those in the book are confined to the non-amphibious Catalina IVB version all of which had been originally supplied to the RAF under Lend-Lease and which were flown with 333 Skv (Squadron). The Catalina section features rare photos and excellent colour drawings as, indeed, do the sections covering other aircraft types. Other parts of the book give precise details about markings and colours. Although the books are apparently aimed primarily at modellers and therefore do not feature data such as serial lists, my view is that based on the volume reviewed, they are of equal value to the non-modeller. In this day of translation software, the fact that it is written in Norwegian is not a great disadvantage. ISBN for this 184-page hardback is 978-82-93450-32-0. Go to the European Airlines website for costs outside Norway...

The **Air World** imprint of **Pen & Sword Books Ltd** has recently released **Flying Boat Pilot in War & Peace** by **Mark Alderson**. Sub-titled *Disaster and Survival: the Extraordinary Life of Captain MJR 'Roly' Alderson*, this is the biography of 'a very private man' by one of his sons who, along with the rest of his family, knew very little of his father's flying career other than that he had 'flown boats'. Having been persuaded to write the story, he was fortunate to be able to refer to the letters, papers, photographs, voice recordings, logbooks and ephemera that, despite his father's apparent reticence to discuss his aviation past, had nonetheless been collected and retained. For reasons that are fully explained in the book, at the age of 17, Roly was an impoverished orphan. He had been home-schooled following illness and had developed a keen interest in cars and motorcycles but had no formal qualifications. However, he went on to be privately tutored then study engineering at Cambridge. He joined the Cambridge University Air Squadron and underwent his first training flight at Duxford on November 8th, 1927 in the Lynx powered Avro 504N biplane J8527. He went 'solo' in another '504N, serial F8713, from Old Sarum on July 4th, 1928 gaining his 'wings' on August 6th, 1929 having already gained a private pilot's license on November 8th the previous year.

Initially working as a draughtsman with the Fairey Aviation Company in Hayes but at the same time gaining several hundred hours flying in what would now be considered 'classic' British light aircraft, his big career move came in 1933 when he joined Imperial Airways. During the period 1933 to 1936, he flew the Avro 818X, Armstrong Whitworth Atalanta and Handley Page HP.42 airliners and, in late-1934, gained his captaincy. Thereafter, Roly was destined to fly flying boats with Imperial, starting with the flying boat conversion course, training on the Saro Cutty Sark then the much larger Short Calcutta. After a brief return to the land-based Westland Wessex and de Havilland DH.86A Express, and at 29 years of age, Roly boarded the Short S.23 Empire flying boat G-ADUT *Centauros* at Hythe to fly, as co-pilot, on the Imperial service to Durban. Thereafter, he continued to fly on Short Empire services, gaining his captaincy on September 8th, 1937 when he flew a 20 minute familiarisation flight out of Hythe in G-ADUV *Cambria* followed by his first commercial service in command to Athens via Marseille, Lake Bracciano near Rome and Brindisi, again in *Cambria*. He continued on various routes