



**RAF B.E.2 / B.E.2a / B.E.2b by Paul R. Hare. Windsock Datafile No.163, 32 pages plus covers, illustrated. Published by Albatros Productions Ltd. 10 Long View, Chiltern Park Estate, Berkhamsted, Herts., HP4 1BY, U.K. and available from the publisher at £11.80 plus p & h.**

The opening Datafile for the World War One centenary is fittingly an aircraft series that started that conflict for the British, 100 years ago. The B.E.2 series of aircraft are perhaps unfairly remembered today more for their poor later service in that conflict when, used well-beyond their useful service life and too stable and slow to counter the excellent German scouts flown by ever improving pilots, they suffered serious losses. However, the early B.E.2 and its successors were good, reliable and stable aircraft ideally suited to their role in 1914, and would go on to give a good account of themselves in the early days of the war.

This Datafile starts with an excellent cover painting by Paul Monteagle, of a 4 Squadron aircraft flying serenely over the Kent countryside, en route to France in August 1914, and the rear cover has three colour side profiles of examples from 1913, 1914 and 1915. Inside front and rear covers are adorned with ten colour close-ups showing details on the RAF Museum's B.E.2b reproduction. The author's narrative is both interesting and informative, with a number of anecdotes of the aircraft in service sprinkled throughout, all of which enliven the story considerably. Describing each aircraft type's development and how they all interlink with one another, his knowledge of his subject is evident and makes for fascinating reading. The written story concludes with the usual Colours and Markings information and useful Appendices, which include production and serial details for all three variants.

The best feature of this Datafile however, at least in this reviewer's opinion, is the profusion of archive photographs, 71 in fact, plus superb scale drawings by Mick Davis. The former include many that are unfamiliar to me, and are a far better visual record of this aircraft series' development than I have seen previously anywhere else. Mick Davis too excels, his unprecedented eleven pages of drawings including profiles of the BE1/BE2 Development, Early BE2a (unequal span), BE2a fuselage structural details, BE2a (Early version), BE2b, Early BE2a and Late BE2b in both 1/48 and 1/72 scales. The latter are a visual feast, and the best this reviewer has seen anywhere. Overall, this is a fantastic first offering from Albatros Productions in this, the World War One centenary, and a must-have for both modellers and aircraft enthusiasts alike.

For more details on this and other Albatros Productions Ltd. publications, visit their web site at [www.windsockdatafilespecials.co.uk](http://www.windsockdatafilespecials.co.uk). Very highly recommended. – Peter Chapman