



THE RAF BE2E AT WAR! by Paul R. Hare. Windsock Datafile No.165, 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 £11.90 plus p&p

One of the workhorses from that long running series of oft maligned British aircraft, the BE2e saw active service in France and elsewhere right into 1917, long after it was obsolete, and continued as a valuable training and home defence aircraft until the end of the war. As such, readers will not be surprised to hear that this aircraft has already been covered in the Datafile series previously, as long ago as 1989 by the late Jack Bruce (Windsock Datafile No.14). With all the new information that has surfaced through tireless research in the interim, it is fitting that this aircraft gets a second look, via the skilled Paul Hare, who has researched the aircraft produced by the Royal Aircraft Factory in great detail over many years.

The front cover is an indicator of what the reader can expect inside, showing as it does a magnificent close-up colour photograph of a BE2e reproduction built by The Vintage Aviator Limited in New Zealand. Inside there are a further 56 colour photos of the most minute detail on not only this aircraft, but TVAL's BE2f serial A1325, an original that has been restored, as well as Oliver Wulff's BE2e reproduction in the markings of Captain Webb Bowen of 7 Squadron RFC. Archive photographs are also well catered for, another 63 of the latter being evenly distributed together with their descriptive captions throughout. The latter show a truly wide variety of these aircraft, from night bomber variants to those used optimistically as 'scouts' in the side shows.

For the technically inclined among you, there are also the original 1/72 and 1/48 scale drawings from that 1989 Datafile, ably produced by the late Ian Stair and still as good today. These are nicely complemented by three new colour side profiles of RFC aircraft from 1917, via Ronny Bar, all with individual notes about the origins of each.

The narrative this time is a bright and breezy history of the aircraft type's development from the BE2c and subsequent adoption as the latter's replacement. There is also, to this reviewer, a very interesting look at the operations carried out by these aircraft and their staggering casualty rate in later years, when already obsolete yet flying through the Arras battles of 1917. In fact, as the author points out, of all British aircraft lost in Bloody April 1917, almost a quarter were BE2es, a sobering thought. The narrative concludes with a short but interesting treatise on the colours and markings applied to this aircraft in service, and there are the usual appendices giving aircraft specifications, and various construction batches which ended up as BE2e, BE2f and BE2g aircraft.

Overall, this latest Datafile is a very interesting update on the original by Jack Bruce, filled with many more photographs and a lot of new information. As such it would be a valuable addition to the library of even readers who have that original Datafile in their collection. Very highly recommended. **Peter Chapman (Journal Editor)**