

Frank Ledwidge, *Aerial Warfare: The Battle for the Skies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 184pp. ISBN 978-0-19-881813-7 (hardback). Price £12.99.

At first glance one might assume there is little requirement for yet another general survey of the history of air power, particularly in a volume as slim as *Aerial Warfare: The Battle for the Skies*. On closer inspection however, one realises that general surveys of air power are actually few and far between and there are even fewer as concise and reliable as Dr Ledwidge's work.

Past histories of air power, both popular and academic, have tended to restrict themselves within self-imposed boundaries of one sort or another. There are surveys that examine various individual national approaches to air power and there are those that confine themselves to defined wars or campaigns. Then there are works that concentrate on technological development, or certain air power theorists and practitioners or individual strands of air power such as strategic bombing or support to the land battle. The strength of Dr Ledwidge's work is that it does all of these things.

Aerial Warfare takes the reader from the earliest appearance of air power in balloons at the end of the eighteenth century through reconnaissance, air-to-air combat, strategic bombing, nuclear warfare, counter insurgency and stealth right up to contemporary thoughts on space and cyber warfare with a score of other strands and topics in between. Dr Ledwidge has generally approached his subject chronologically but has woven in the doctrinal thinking of influential air power theorists throughout. Boelcke, Boyd, Douhet, Seversky, Warden and a dozen others all make frequent appearances, which are not restricted solely to their own era. *Aerial Warfare* also ranges far and wide to highlight relevant and important developments in air power and includes examples from the Sino-Japanese War, the Arab-Israeli and the Indo-Pakistan wars. South America is perhaps a blind spot but the shortcomings of the Argentinian air force during the 1982 Falklands War are ably dealt with.

A keen student of air power might point out that none of this is very different to the work in Professor Jeremy Black's excellent 2016 survey, *Air Power: A Global Review*. However, what Professor Black manages in 386 pages Dr Ledwidge has achieved in just 184. At first this brevity might appear to be a weakness, for instance developments during the First World War are dealt with in just sixteen pages but, in fact, *Aerial Warfare's* concision is its strength. Dr Ledwidge has successfully extracted and presented the key doctrines and developments associated with each era, technology and theorist, woven them together and supported them with an array of examples and statistics. The result is eminently readable and manageable in a single sitting. One criticism is the paucity of references and the absence of any links to the text, which is frustrating but, on the other hand, a mass of footnotes might slow the pace of this

REVIEWS

particular approach. Nevertheless, this is a reliable and readable survey that should prove particularly useful to those beginning on a path through air power studies.

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Nigel Atter, *In the Shadow of Bois Hugo: The 8th Lincolns at the Battle of Loos*. Helion & Co., 2017. 144pp. ISBN: 9781911512776 (paperback). Price £16.95.

In the Shadow of Bois Hugo is a short volume that deals with the experience of 8th (Service) Battalion, Lincolnshire Regiment, during the ill-fated Battle of Loos in September 1915. Atter, an independent scholar, has written an attractive and well-illustrated account that deals with one of the New Army battalions that went into action on the second day of the battle (26 September 1915). During the action the Lincolns suffered a terrible baptism of fire, sustaining heavy losses around a small copse known as Bois Hugo. Atter is at pains to argue that far from ‘bolting’ from the action without good cause (as has sometimes been claimed), the battalion fought with courage and determination and, as such, ‘deserves much better from contemporary historians’.

Over the course of nine chapters, Atter discusses the formation of the battalion and then goes through the development of British offensive operations on the Western Front during 1915, which led up to the Battle of Loos. The text then moves on to the first and second days of the fighting, before looking at the lessons of the battle. Seven appendices then complete the volume, including a roll of honour, selections of letters, a list of those who became prisoners-of-war, and the known graves of those who fell. Indeed, there are so many chapters, sub-chapters, headings and sub-headings, that it sometimes feels more like a series of lists and gobbets than a work of considered historical analysis. For example in the chapter on the first day, Atter provides a cursory description of the events of 25 September, with short sections on the involvement of each division, most of which are only incidental to the fate of the Lincolns. Chapter 7 is entitled ‘Analysis’ and is followed by chapter 8, ‘The Lessons of Loos’ (composed of only three or four short paragraphs), before we get to the final conclusion. This surely would have been improved by combining them all together in a more considered concluding section. As a result, the book often feels broken up and fragmentary.

In the Shadow of Bois Hugo does well at examining a New Army battalion that has escaped previous attention from historians, albeit for perfectly understandable reasons