

## GUNS ACROSS THE RIVER: THE BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL, 1838

by Donald Graves

Toronto: Robin Brass Studio for The Friends of Windmill Point,  
263 pages, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Commander  
Michael Craven

In Canadian popular imagination, the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada during the period November 1837 to December 1838 are often thought to have been critical to the development of responsible government in the provinces of British North America. While the underlying causes of dissatisfaction in the two regions were fundamentally different, the objectives of the rebels — patriots, as they have been more generously characterized — were generally similar and included government reform and enhanced democratic powers. The activities of the *Patriotes* in Lower Canada, led by an idealistic Louis-Joseph Papineau, no doubt posed a legitimate threat to civil order and authority in that jurisdiction. However, the antics of the rebels in Upper Canada, led by the peculiar and tempestuous William Lyon Mackenzie, were amateurish in comparison. Even though both groups were poorly equipped and ill-organized, the response of the colonial authorities against these forces of anarchy involved direct military action by British Army regulars and the Canadian militia.

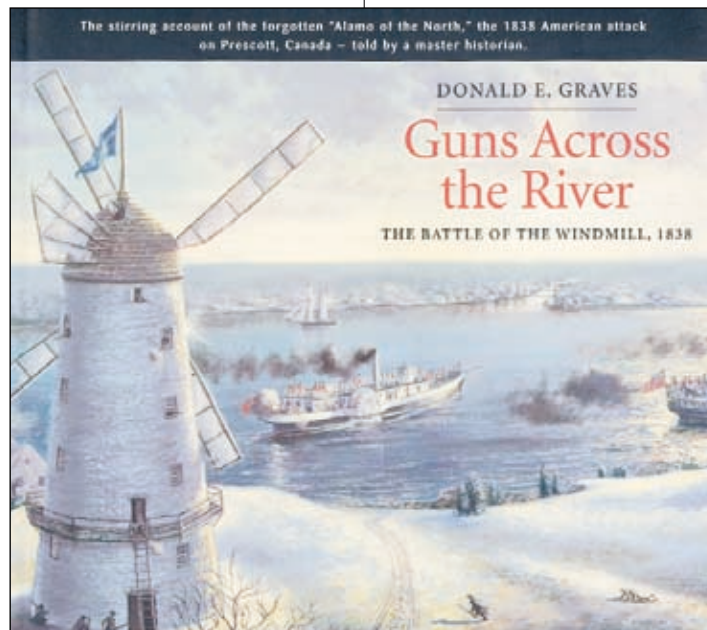
The general uproar of these troubled days had a distinctly trans-border dimension. The Canadian rebel leadership, faced with the complete failure of their activities at home, and being subject to arrest on sight, fled to America. Partly as a result of their agitation and encouragement, a number of cross-border incidents occurred, all involving attacks by American citizens on Canadian soil. The incursions were in all instances effectively repelled, but were curiously recast as the work of exiled Canadians operating from the safe haven of America. This fanciful revisionist ‘spin’ persisted well into the next century. It is to one particularly blatant distortion of these facts that Canadian military historian Donald Graves, best known for his accounts of The War of 1812 and the Second World War, turns his attention in *Guns Across the River*. Candidly acknowledging in his preface that he never found “the Canadian Rebellions of 1837... particularly enthralling”, Graves goes on to provide a detailed and incisive analysis of events leading up to,

during, and after the incident known as the Battle of the Windmill.

It is mid-November 1838. The setting is “a straggling little hamlet called Newport ... consisting of about a dozen stone and wooden buildings clustered around [a] gristmill” located in Edwardsburgh Township, immediately north-east of the village of Prescott on the northern shore of the Saint Lawrence. The dominant man-made feature was the McQueen brother’s wind-powered gristmill, of circular rubble stone construction some sixty feet high and twenty-five feet in diameter. Its stone walls were three feet thick and, as subsequent action would prove, of sufficiently stout construction to easily withstand the effects of early 19th century light and medium artillery. On the opposite shore was the American town of Ogdensburg which, since the signing of the Treaty of Ghent 24 years earlier, had enjoyed harmonious relations and much beneficial cross-river trade with the town of Prescott.

After several weeks’ gestation, a group of New York Patriot ‘Hunters’ — an American group dedicated to the overthrow of the British in North America — decided largely on their own initiative to attack Fort Wellington at Prescott. This group, in their misguided wisdom, was convinced that successful seizure of the fort would cause thousands of Canadians to join the cause and shed the yoke of British tyranny. Accordingly, on Sunday 11 November 1838, a force consisting mostly of Americans, with a small sprinkling of other nationalities, sailed from the New York state side of the river. Almost from the outset, things went badly.

Colonial authorities had effectively penetrated the Hunter organization with spies, and were more or less alerted to their general intentions. On arrival at Prescott very early in the morning of 12 November, alert militia sentries patrolling the waterfront met the invaders. Having failed to land at the primary objective, two of the three American vessels succeeded in running aground on a mud bank, not to be freed until after daybreak. By this time the alarm had been raised as far away as Kingston, and a bad situation for the invasion force became very much worse. Her Majesty’s Steam Vessel *Experiment*, armed with carronades, arrived on the scene and entered the fray. After a short action that saw the pilot of the unarmed American steamer *United States* decapitated and one of its engines disabled, British naval supremacy was established along the Canadian side of the river. This



## BOOK REVIEWS

was bolstered with the subsequent arrival of HM armed steamers *Cobourg* and *Queen Victoria*.

Whilst the naval drama unfolded, an advance party of Americans, led by Nils Gustaf von Schoultz, succeeded in landing at Windmill Point, about a mile upriver from Prescott. Von Schoultz, a Swede inclined to misrepresent himself as a Polish aristocrat and cavalry officer, is described by Graves as "a charming rogue who ... impressed all who met him, including several young ladies and a future Prime Minister of Canada." A participant in various foreign adventures prior to his immigration to the United States, von Schoultz was quick to appreciate the tactical advantages of the Windmill Point location, which was further reinforced throughout the remainder of the day. However, many of the invaders (including their cowardly commander, John W. Birge) had already reconsidered the endeavour and elected not to land or, in the case of some who had already arrived, decided to retreat back across the river. Graves assesses that by nightfall on 12 November, von Schoultz, now elected commander, probably had no more than 250 men on the Canadian shore.

On Tuesday morning British regulars and Canadian militia, supported by artillery from the naval vessels, launched a spirited attack. Owing to the more modern small arms of the Americans and the defensive advantages of the Hunter position — the windmill and adjacent stone buildings were virtually impervious to 6- and 12-pounder shells — this attack drove back but failed to dislodge the invaders, with casualties on both sides. Wednesday and Thursday were days of consolidation and improvisation for the British and Canadians, who probed and sniped from land and conducted an ineffectual bombardment from the river. A cease-fire was briefly arranged to permit the evacuation of wounded from Tuesday's field of battle. However, both sides were determined to continue an ugly fight. In a disturbing development for the invaders, American authorities on the opposite riverbank were now actively involved in arresting Hunters and their supporters, and effectively aiding the colonial forces by cutting off hope of reinforcement or retreat.

After the failure of the first attack, the British and Canadians took stock and revised their plan. The naval force was augmented with four barges manned by Tyendinaga Mohawk boatmen, each barge mounting a single 18-pounder gun. Concurrently, Major Forbes Macbean, commanding officer of Number 4 Company, 5th Battalion, Royal Regiment of Artillery, requisitioned the two best 18-pounder guns from the naval store at Kingston and had them mounted on improvised field carriages for transport to Prescott. The stage was set for the final push, a joint attack by British regulars

and Canadian militia, supported by the 12- and 18-pounder artillery pieces of the Artillery, and naval fire from the four barges and three steamers in the river.

The outcome was predictable enough and, by supertime Friday 16 November, the final battle, which Graves characterizes in all its ruthlessness and savagery, was over. A small number of Patriot Hunters escaped, but most were captured and marched into custody at Fort Henry pending court-martial in Kingston. Graves calculates, in a final casualty estimate, that up to 80 British and Canadians were killed or wounded, while 50 of the invaders were killed and 160 captured. Included in an excellent set of extremely detailed appendices is the final fate of the luckless Hunters, one of whom was defended (unsuccessfully as it turned out) by a young Kingston lawyer named John A. Macdonald. Considering the large number of dead and wounded, the colonial authorities were relatively lenient. Graves establishes with certainty that only eleven of the invaders were hanged, with another sixty being transported to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania). The remainder were pardoned and allowed to return to their homes.

The central theme of Graves' well-written examination of the fascinating events of the Battle of the Windmill is the exposure of the myth of exiled Canadian patriots storming across the border from the south in a coordinated effort to encourage rebellion and the establishment of responsible government. He effectively argues that this shibboleth is more suited to the political expedients of the next century than the historical realities of 1837-38. Graves concludes that not even twenty men of a force numbering perhaps 250 were actually from the Canadas, and these twenty certainly were not highly placed, either in the Hunter organization or the invasion force. Graves provides numerous other interesting insights, including the steadiness of the Canadian militia under fire, the extensive preparation of artillery prior to the final battle, the important naval contribution to the operation, detailed descriptions of a number of the more intriguing personalities involved, and the aftermath of the affair in terms of its effect on participants and non-participants alike.

Attractively priced, containing a well-chosen range of illustrations and maps, fully footnoted, and filled with fascinating asides, *Guns Across the River* is a splendid addition to the body of literature dealing with a turbulent time in the development of distinctly Canadian political and military institutions. It is highly recommended.

---

Lieutenant-Commander Michael Craven is a staff officer in National Defence Headquarters.

## L'ARME BLINDÉE FRANÇAISE TOME 2: 1940-1945! DANS LE FRACAS DES BATAILLES.

by Gérard Saint-Martin

Paris: Economica, Collection Campagnes et stratégies,  
471 pages, no price given.

Reviewed by Major Michael Boire

**F**inally, we have a thorough and remarkably balanced narrative which describes the restoration of the fighting power of French armour in the Second World War. At nearly 500 pages, it is a comprehensive study of an armoured corps re-establishing its reputation by confronting the lessons of its own experience. We see that story unfold at every level of war; the author takes pains to depict the strategic challenges facing French armour at each stage of the conflict. As well, we get an insider's view of the early Franco-American doctrinal debates that surrounded the unresolved question of how best to achieve armour's potential for operational manoeuvre. Those who have commanded armoured fighting vehicles will appreciate the effortlessness with which the writer describes how the French improved their tactical handling of tanks as they learned hard lessons from each engagement. There is something here for every student of the history of armour.

The story is ably told by Gérard Saint-Martin, one of a prolific group of retired French army officers who continue to contribute to our understanding of their army's history and battlefield performance. The author has the background to lend this work a unique credibility. A graduate of Saint-Cyr, he was a cavalryman during his regular service and is a veteran of the Algerian *djebel*. In the first of this two-volume work, he describes the defeat of French arms in 1940. In this second volume, we read of French armour's return to excellence on the modern battlefield.

Citing the heroism of the Saumur cadets' skilful defence of the Loire bridges in the closing days of the Battle for France, the author reveals that the cavalry spirit was not vanquished in defeat. His sombre portrayal of French armour's role in the virtually impotent post-Armistice French Army sets the stage for the dramatic story of its re-birth in Leclerc's victories during the closing days of the Desert Campaign. From their for-

mation in Great Britain and North Africa, we follow the progress of the three French armoured divisions which fought in the campaigns for the liberation of Europe.

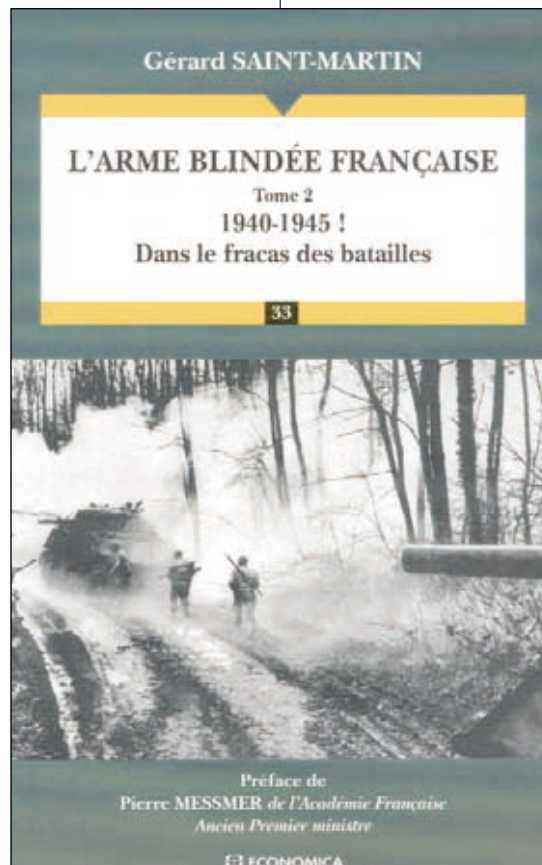
The operational history of these divisions is Saint-Martin's real centre of gravity. Equipped with American materiel and constrained, initially, to operate in accordance with US armour doctrine, the 1<sup>e</sup> et 5<sup>e</sup> Divisions Blindées formed the vanguard of de Lattre de Tassigny's First French Army. From the shores of Provence in August 1944 to the Austrian Alps in the spring of '45, it is in the 'dash' of their manoeuvre that we see the reflection of *Audace! Toujours l'audace!*, one of the enduring mottoes of French cavalry. The saga of Leclerc's 2<sup>e</sup> Division Blindée is recounted with the attention to detail that the French cavalry's most famous formation deserves. Fighting within the ranks of the

American armies from Tunisia, through Normandy, Lorraine, Alsace and the Black Forest to Berchtesgaden, was a feat of endurance and resolve. The author's capable treatment of its many minor and major actions leaves us with an accurate impression of Leclerc's deft handling of his division in the attack and pursuit of German armour. For the reader who wants detail, there is plenty. The book contains a complete chronology, pictures, maps, charts and, for a change, user-friendly matrices comparing French and American fighting vehicles characteristics and penetration tables.

This is a balanced and complete insider's view of French armour in the last war, which recognizes the efforts made by her allies to set the conditions, through re-equipment and training, for the success of French arms. Moreover, it provides an excellent example of competent and engaging military history.

Saint Martin avoids the posturing and pontification that some French authors have brought to the study of the French military machine as it rebounded from defeat to full participation in the Allied victory. This book could be an enlightening bit of reading for those serious students of armour who can appreciate an operational history uncoloured by the once fashionable anti-French bias still apparent in some anglo-saxon renditions of the evolution of armoured warfare.

Major Michael Boire teaches history at Royal Military College while working on his PhD.



## THE LETTERS OF MAYO LIND: NEWFOUNDLAND'S UNOFFICIAL WAR CORRESPONDENT 1914-1916

by Francis T. Lind

St. John's, Newfoundland: Creative Book Publishing, 2001,  
155 pages, \$12.95 softcover.

Reviewed by Brereton Greenhous

**F**rancis 'Mayo' Lind was a 35-year-old bachelor clerk in Fogo, Nfld, and a third generation Newfie when he enlisted in September 1914 and began twenty-one months' service as a private soldier. Before he died — together with 309 of his comrades — at Beaumont Hamel, on that dreadful 'first day on the Somme', 1 July 1916, he wrote thirty-two 'letters' — they might better be described as despatches — that were published in the St. John's *Daily News*. They were collected into the first edition of this book and published in 1919, together with a brief biographical sketch, and they have now been reprinted by the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, with a foreword by historian Peter Neary.

However, there is little useful history in them. They constitute more of a social column focussed on Lind's fellow-soldiers of the Newfoundland Contingent (as it was initially labelled), and were obviously written to please and entertain Newfoundlanders back home. Names abound and everyone, without exception, is a fine chap, from the humblest cook to the Commanding Officer! Those names may still touch the heartstrings of many inhabitants of The Rock, but to the rest of us, the letters' chief interest is as an example of the simple, unsophisticated propaganda of the time.

Full of good cheer and happy vignettes, the letters carry the reader through the unit's training in Scotland, a brief sojourn in England, their voyage to Egypt and on to Gallipoli, before being sent to France and the Western Front. Stob's Camp, some fifty miles from Edinburgh, is 'a second edition of Salisbury

Plains' and a splendid camping ground'. At Aldershot, 'nothing could be more comfortable' than Badajoz Barracks. Life on The Rock was always hard, but surely not that hard!

The battalion arrived at Suvla Bay on the Gallipoli peninsula in September 1915 and remained there, as part of the 29th Division, until the peninsula was evacuated in January 1916. They fought no major engagement — the battalion war diary lists only 87 battle casualties — but the weather was atrocious and put many men in hospital with trench foot and/or frostbite, while others suffered from influenza and dysentery. Lind was one of them, hospitalized on 10 December; and 'when I left the trenches our regiment had been *twenty-seven* days in the firing line ... without taking off a stitch or having a wash.... We enjoyed it. Yes, really'. Really, despite the fact that more than half the unit was *hors de combat* for medical reasons at one point. He does get in a mild grumble or two about the looting of mail parcels and the failure of the supply system to provide them with winter clothing. No doubt those responsible for the looting were unidentifiable, but he might possibly have blamed the generals for the inadequate clothing.

After the battalion reached the Western Front (where it became the 1st Newfoundland Regiment) in April 1916, Lind writes, "Did I tell you about the mud here yet? Well, just a word; it is mud and slush from head to toe. We are quite used to it now, and would you believe it, we enjoy it." One wonders how he would have reported Beaumont Hamel, had he been one of those lucky ones who survived that holocaust? Three hundred and ten killed, 374 wounded — three-quarters of the battalion lost in no more than an hour! Perhaps he would have described it as a rather jolly scuffle. Or would it have been 'a glorious sacrifice'?

---

*Brereton Greenhous is a former member of the staff of the Directorate of History at National Defence Headquarters. Among his many books, he is the author of Volume III of the Official History of the RCAF.*

## KENNEDY'S WARS: BERLIN, CUBA, LAOS, AND VIETNAM

by Lawrence Freedman

Oxford University Press, 608 pages, \$56.00.

Reviewed by Jay Hancock

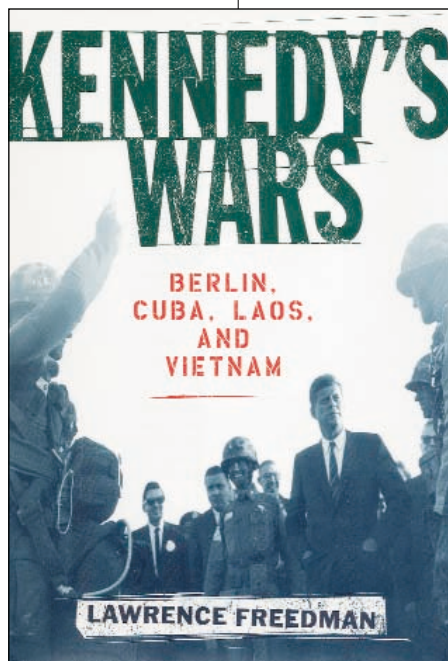
**T**he end to East-West tensions has resulted in the near-extinction of books examining the history of the Cold War. Publishers throughout North America have contributed to the misperception that an audience no longer exists for this literature, and have turned their attention to more recent global and regional conflicts. Lawrence Freedman, Britain's official historian of the Falklands campaign and professor of War Studies at King's College London, has ignored this trend and written a number of books that look at the politics of this period. *Kennedy's Wars; Berlin, Cuba,*

*Laos, and Vietnam*, is an ambitious attempt to examine John F. Kennedy's political and military decisions.

As the title of the book suggests, Freedman has divided his work into separate sections based upon the four major conflicts encountered by Kennedy and his staff. This approach is designed to present the reader with a fresh view of the topic. Unfortunately, it is this structure that becomes the main stumbling block in understanding the successes, and failures, of Kennedy's policies. Freedman's isolation of each conflict provides, from start to finish, a sequential development of Washington's responses to each conflict. This proves to be a useful technique in avoiding confusion over the separate policies for each challenge, but limits a proper understanding of how the decisions for one crisis influenced the next. This technique dilutes the political connections between

each conflict and impedes Freedman's otherwise critical observations.

One example of how this structure interferes with an analysis of Kennedy's policies is found in the examination of the 1961 Berlin Crisis, entitled "To Vienna and Back". Freedman goes into great detail to explain the differing viewpoints of a solution within the Kennedy administration. Several officials in Washington believed in the power of summit diplomacy, while the President, without the knowledge of his closest aides, opted for negotiations through unofficial channels. Freedman emphasizes both the President's, and Secretary of State Dean Acheson's, approach to a resolution, while briefly mentioning NATO's contingency plan "Live Oak". Throughout the seventy-five pages dedicated to the Berlin question, the influence of American activities in Cuba is almost non-existent. A brief sentence concerning Kennedy's hostile reception by Khrushchev at the Vienna summit in 1961 is the sole indication of how Operation "Zapata" (the Bay of Pigs) affected potential agreements between the Soviets and the Americans over Berlin. It is not until after the Berlin section is complete, and an examination of American foreign policy in Cuba begins, that



the relationship between the two events is clearly established.

The weaknesses in the early sections of Freedman's work are almost completely overshadowed by his detailed analysis of the development of counterinsurgency operations in the Far East. It is at this point that the structure of Freedman's analysis pays off. The similarities between American covert operations in Laos, and the lessons learned in Cuba, illustrate the development of Kennedy's political judgment. His exploration of military options when dealing with the former territories of Indochina leads to an effective policy towards the activities of the Communist-influenced Pathet Lao in Laos. Freedman's study of Kennedy's policies in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia provides the reader with compensation for his earlier inconsistencies in the history of Berlin and Cuba.

Freedman's continued contribution to scholarly work on the Cold War fulfills a void that has developed in recent years. We can look forward to the appearance of his next book, entitled *Cold War*.

*Jay Hancock is about to complete a Masters degree in War Studies at Royal Military College.*

## EYES OF THE ARTILLERY: THE ORIGINS OF MODERN US ARMY AVIATION IN WORLD WAR II

**By Edgar F. Raines Jr**

Washington: US Army Center of Military History,  
349 pages, \$US39.00.

**Reviewed by Major J.C. Stone**

**E***yes of the Artillery* is the first archived-based study of the origins of modern army aviation in the United States. It identifies the circumstances and the debates that gave rise to the Air Observation Post programme and identifies the struggles within the Army for control of aerial observation. Although the primary focus of the book is the 1939-1945 time frame, the author introduces the subject with a review of aerial observation up to 1938, with particular emphasis on aerial observation during the First World War.

The pre-1938 discussion of aerial observation is important because it provides both a linkage to past practices and an explanation of why aviators faced some of the challenges that they did in the early stages of the Second World War. For example, Raines indicates that the most important contribution of aerial observation (read balloons) during the First War was

the photographic reconnaissance conducted to improve the accuracy of unobserved massed artillery fires. This emphasis on artillery operations during World War I can be linked to some of the growing pains associated with trying to field the airplane-based aerial observation capability in the Second War. One of the major sources of friction in the early years of World War II was who would operate and control aerial observation — the Artillery, the Army Air Force, or someone else. Other challenges that are highlighted in the book include whether or not personnel had the skills to use the new technology effectively, whether or not the technology could be supported and maintained once it was in the field, and whether or not the doctrine for employing the new capability existed.

While reading the book, one cannot help but recognize the similarity, or perhaps continued existence, of the problems associated with the Air Observation Post programme with problems faced by defence planner today. For example, the book discusses the difficulty in selecting an airplane for light aviation, as it was referred to in the early period of the Second World War. The Artillery and the Army Air Force could not agree on the type of plane, nor could they agree how air units would be organized and controlled — organic to the army unit or supporting the army unit. Although the US Army has its own organic avia-

## BOOK REVIEWS

tion today, there continues to be debate between the Army and the Air Force about how much close air support needs to be provided and the type of aircraft needed to provide the support.

As well, within the context of introducing a new capability to the military, the book indicates the importance of senior leadership support. Throughout the book, Raines provides examples of how well-known leaders such as Generals Eisenhower and Patton were exposed to aerial observation and became supporters of the capability. A utilization comparison between the Pacific and Mediterranean indicates that units in the Pacific remained organizationally stunted when compared to Europe. Generals Eisenhower, Patton, Clark and Lewis had been associated with getting aerial observation started in the US, while General MacArthur, Admiral Halsey, and later, Nimitz were uninterested.

The book is structured chronologically and thematically. The first half of the book is chronological

and broken into time periods matching the development and implementation of the Air Observation Post programme up to December 1943, with particular emphasis on Continental US and Department of Defence/Army issues. The book then turns to the operational use of air observation capabilities, beginning with the initial deployment and combat in the North African and Mediterranean theatres. The European and Pacific theatres are then covered in separate chapters. The book finishes with a return to the development and implementation focus covering the final years of the war.

*Eyes of Artillery* is well written and easy to read, with photos, diagrams and maps providing a good balance to the text. As indicated earlier, as the reader moves from chapter to chapter, he will find himself reflecting on the relevance of the issues being discussed with the challenges of today. Recommended for everyone with an interest in military history.

Major J.C. Stone is a PhD student at Royal Military College.

### THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

by Roy Conyers Nesbit

Stroud, UK: Sutton Publishing, 260 pages, \$US39.95.

Reviewed by Lieutenant-Colonel David L. Bashow

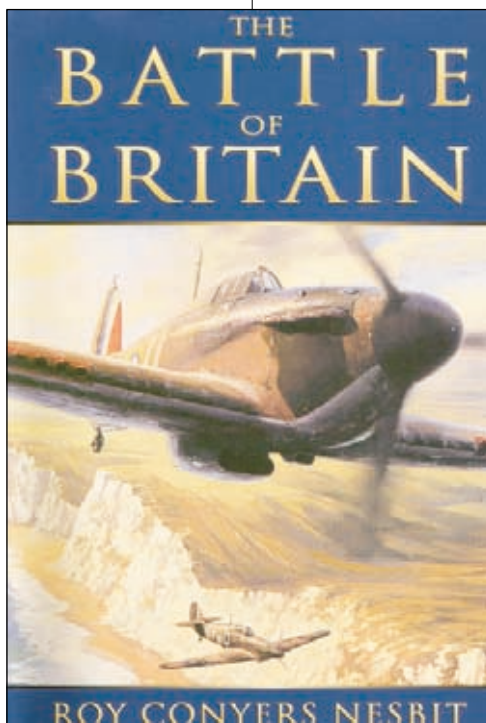
From early July until mid-September 1940, Fighter Command of the Royal Air Force waged a heroic and desperate struggle against the best of the Third Reich's *Luftwaffe*, in which the stakes were the very survival of Britain. However, it was not won, as author Roy Conyers Nesbit reminds us, merely by the fighter pilots of many nations then serving with the RAF, but rather through the fortitude of an entire nation gritting it out together. Nesbit, a wartime bomber and transport navigator, and a respected aviation author with many books to his credit, has brought this epic confrontation to life in *The Battle of Britain*, a handsome tribute to all the participants who came from so many different walks of life.

The text is rather disappointing. It is comprehensive but unimaginative; the rather slavish regurgitation of what is by now a very familiar story. The source bibliography is a decent mix of some relatively new offerings and some time-honoured classics, but it is not particularly broad or deep. Furthermore, Mr. Nesbit trots out a lot of statistics and specific facts, but does not cite his sources, making these elements difficult to verify. The photo captions are certainly comprehensive, but they

occasionally provide too much extraneous information. Perhaps the single greatest shortcoming, in this reviewer's opinion, is the absence of the voices of the participants themselves, the human face of this historic encounter.

No matter. The words merely serve as a bridge for the superb visual elements of the book, which provide a veritable window on the very heart and soul of the battle, viewed from many different perspectives. Here we see not only kings, queens, tyrants and men of good faith. We also see the heroes — the brave servicemen, especially the fighter pilots, who daily faced such terrible risks; the relatively unsung young women of the Auxiliary Territorial Service; the stalwart air raid wardens, firemen and members of the Home Guard; and the faces of many ordinary people caught up in extraordinary events. We also see the faces of the enemy, remarkable in that they are so unremarkable. This visual cornucopia represents the true magic of this book, expressed in over 200 superb photographs, many from the author's personal collection, ten dynamic, full-colour paintings, and many excellent maps, period documents and wartime posters. The photographs are particularly noteworthy for their uniqueness, diversity and exceptional quality. This book is highly recommended for the visual elements alone.

Lieutenant-Colonel David Bashow, a fighter pilot, is also an Assistant Professor of History at Royal Military College.



**WORLD WAR II: AN AIRMAN REMEMBERS**

by John Patterson

Burnstown: General Store Publishing House. 157 pages, \$19.95.

Reviewed by Second-Lieutenant Marie-Noël Duhaime

From the beginning, the author points out that there is nothing spectacular about his story and that the reader will not devour his book in one sitting. He adds that he is only telling the story of his own military service in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the Second World War. This warning is typical of the modesty so often found in the oral and written memoirs of veterans.

John Patterson served from 7 December 1940 to 20 September 1945, and was by turns a navigator, a bomb-aimer and a flight instructor. He based his book on a diary he kept, on letters sent to his parents, on his flight log, and on several articles he wrote, hoping in vain to have them published. Photographs add rich detail to the account.

Normally, one would expect such a book to explain the various phases of training the author had to undergo; it would describe the missions in which he participated, his many postings, and the aircraft on which he worked. The reader, in short, would expect an account that deals mostly with military aspects. However, this is not the case here. Patterson certainly mentions several

elements that relate directly to military life, but he does so only briefly. For example, he gives details about the mess food, but does not specify the number of combat missions he carried out on his first tour of duty, or on his second. The author has chosen instead to focus on his social life during his postings, on his many leaves, on countless bicycle rides, on the civilians and military personnel he met, and on other activities he appears to have taken up to forget the harsh reality of war, and to escape from the enormous stress of combat missions over enemy territory.

This human approach is a reminder that soldiers, just like the rest of the population of any country at war, had to continue living while dealing with the effects of a world war. Soldiers did not just spend hours in classrooms, on planes, or in hangars looking after weapons; it was also necessary for them to maintain meaning in their lives.

The writing is somewhat verbose. The book is peppered with spelling errors. The sentence structure is sometimes difficult to understand, and often the ideas are not strung together in a logical way. These elements manage to slow the reader down, but will not prevent those interested in the subject from reading the book — perhaps even in

one sitting — and thoroughly enjoying its contents.

Second-Lieutenant Marie-Noël Duhaime is enrolled in the Master's programme in War Studies at Royal Military College.

