

INTRODUCTION

For many years I have been an enthusiast with regards the history of small military craft of all three of the UK's Armed Forces, and for more years than I wish to mention, I have dreamed of a definitive book aimed at RAF Marine Craft of all types. Alas no-one ever published one, however Geoff Pilborough compiled what is a lengthy and somewhat difficult read, but which is packed with detail if you persist with the small print, whilst Keith Beardow produced a very good potted history. John Pritchard covered the HSLs in articles in the Model Boats magazine and produced some very good drawings.

After establishing contacts in the Small Craft Group (SCG), and through them many others outside the group, I was encouraged to have a go at compiling the "book" myself. Sourcing drawings and photographs was made a great deal easier with the assistance of Ken Hunter at the RAF Museum and my colleague Donald Smith. The drawings arrived in rolls, copies of GA's from builders and from magazines etc. All had to be copied and many reduced down to A3 size, after which the majority were attacked by copious amounts of "snopake" and then redrawn over with a fine drawing pen. All wording was expunged, so that the finished drawing could then be reduced to A4R size and further to a size suitable to fit the page in the compilation. The photographs were laser copied and attached to the master pages. Information was taken from many other publications and sources as indicated in the Acknowledgement page. The format of the specification or principal particulars was taken directly from a list produced by the RAF in 1943. The tables which include the take on charge dates and disposals were constructed using information from Marine Craft Record Cards (A.M. Form 564s) for individual craft with additional information from many other sources. For the purposes of presentation the "title" photograph for each type (i.e. the one facing the specification page) was left without credits, however these are listed on a separate page. I decided on a presentation which resulted in the standard layout of the principal particulars (specification) and drawing on the left hand page with a title photo and general description on the right hand page for each type. Additional pages were added as required and if an odd number, the reverse of one page was left blank intentionally to maintain the aforementioned layout. The source of the drawings and the relevant numbers etc. are also listed separately. Each drawing, as it appears in the compilation, is the result of approximately 10 hours work, however some took a considerably much longer time to clean up. The whole volume has taken over a year to produce, but has had many years of previous research.

This volume is then the first of a series that will cover all classes / types / sub-types of RAF Marine Craft, irrespective of size or use, from the largest (120ft Seal class LRRSCs) down to the smallest (9ft Pram dinghies). Future volumes will include craft that were requisitioned during WWII, vessels and craft of the RAF Mooring Service, RAF auxiliaries and miscellaneous craft used by the RAF. In this and subsequent volumes on the different types, survivors that exist today whether they be as preserved craft, museum exhibits or house boats have not been listed. This is because the details (names /locations/existence) are still changing and would therefore have to be continually updated. Consequently the last volume in this series is intended to be devoted purely to those former RAF Marine Craft that survive today in whatever form.

I have refrained from including individual histories of craft, except where it is relevant to the craft's development or where only one of the type existed. I have however included details of the histories of craft that continued to serve in another "service", either in UK or foreign (where details are known). This for many types includes details otherwise not published on RN, Army and other "Services" from the relevant archives. I have also included details of craft of the same or similar type to those built for RAF service, that were built for other services/ countries. The best example in this volume is the Miami type HSL.

For those whose appetite is already wetted, compilation of the next volume is already underway and the craft that will be covered includes the 60ft Pinnaces (all types), Refuellers, Ferry Boats, Landing Craft and Fireboats to name but a few.

The cost of this compilation reflects the actual cost of printing, postage and packing and just a little extra to cover the "snopake" lake, and laser copying and the like. The compilation was done with enthusiasts in mind, and as it is my hobby, I hope that any errors will be pointed out to me for rectification. Your copy is one of a limited edition, I hope you enjoy it and it answers all you ever wanted to know on the craft covered.