

INTRODUCTION

Previous volumes have covered the HSLs, “the spitfires of the sea”, (Vol 1), the larger “workhorses” of the general service types (Vol 2) and the “sprinters”, seaplane tenders and “firefighters”, fire floats at the smaller end of the scale (Vol3). Following the trend of previous volumes, Volume 4 covers craft from 27ft down to the smallest at 9ft, and thus covers all the tenders, classes of both motor and dumb dinghies, inflatable craft and flare path floats. These craft might be considered “also rans”, but they were of equal importance in keeping the Marine Craft and Flying Boats serviced. They were taken for granted as “always being there” - and perhaps this is why there are relatively very few photographs of the types. However, it is hoped that the coverage in this volume is as thorough for the 15ft Dumb Dinghy as it was for say the 63ft Whaleback HSL. Thus due to the number of pages, adding the airborne lifeboats would have taken the total over a comfortable number for binding. The Airborne Lifeboats will be covered in Volume 5 along with aircraft dinghies.

The sourcing of drawings for a lot of the classes covered was very difficult, but with assistance from Ken Hunter and Donald Smith, these were eventually tracked down, even some of more obscure types popping up at places not expected. Finding photographs was, as usual, made a great deal easier with the assistance of the aforementioned, but also through the vast collection loaned from Peter Birch, who managed to collect views of craft that no others bothered to take. Once again the RAF Museum both at Hendon and at Stafford provided valuable assistance and some of the material was once again only possible through the files held at the PRO. The craft covered in this volume in one way are very similar, especially the tender types and the dinghy types, and therefore, as in volume 3 and to avoid repetition of construction details etc, I have picked certain Mk's of a type which are described thoroughly, with a read across to other Mk's of that type. As with previous volumes and craft covered in them, I have included details of craft transferred to other services, other nations and some indication of similar types built for either private or commercial use, but based on craft built for the RAF. There are still hundreds of craft to cover, these are mostly locally acquired craft or those requisitioned during WWII, but also there are the auxiliaries, tugs and mooring vessels. These will be described from volume 6 onwards.