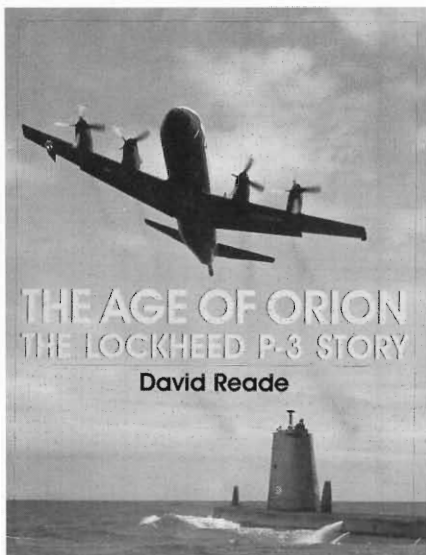


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The Age of Orion: The Lockheed P-3 Story (by David Reade, ISBN 0-7643-0478-x; Schiffer Publishing Ltd, Atglen PA, 224 pages; Contents, 280 photographs, six Appendices with drawings, charts, photos; hard cover, 8.5 x 11 inches, \$49.95 US).

The publication of this book has been eagerly awaited by the maritime community, particularly by the membership of VPI, with whom David Reade has had a close association over the years.

The Age of Orion has been described as the first book to be devoted to the development and use of the Orion, detailing the aircraft's complete history, and describing its development through all its models, versions and variants. It outlines the various missions the P-3 has been called upon to perform during its extensive service, and speculates on tasks it may be assigned in the future.

The title of the book apparently refers to the author's contention that the Orion has been the only MPA used by the USN since the aircraft's introduction in 1962. Staying with this motif, Reade features its name in all of his six chapter headings. Through the medium of these chapters, we are treated to an exhaustive description of all the variants of this versatile aircraft, and the ways in which its employment has changed with concurrent changes in the political and military situations

of the age.

If the reader begins to be a bit overwhelmed by the plethora of superb photographs of P-3s, he can always turn to Chapter 5: "Orion the Versatile." Here may be found pictures of quite peculiar birds: the CIA Black Orions; the EP-3E, with its large APS20-like chin radar dome making it look like an overgrown Neptune; the NRL (Naval Weapons Laboratory) EP-3A, with long, black "canoes" mounted above and below the fuselage; and, perhaps, the most curious-looking variant of all: the EATS (Extended Area Test System) variant, which became known as the Billboard Orion because of a very large extension of the vertical stabilizer.

To the researcher, or the dedicated enthusiast, the six appendices to the book will be a goldmine of information on a myriad of subjects. With numerous line drawings of variant layouts in one appendix, and avionics configurations in another, there are numerous facts and figures available to those who require such information. However, one of Reade's most ambitious undertakings is, without doubt, the compilation, in Appendix D, of the P-3 Orion Bureau Number List which tabulates every P-3 in the world, giving its present location and, in most cases, providing valuable historical data on the aircraft.

The physical structure of the book is one of the sturdiest this reviewer has seen. The paper used is very heavy and of excellent quality, and the price of the book is quite reasonable in view of its quality, and the current prices of books.

David Reade has been generous with his acknowledgement of material and information provided by VPI, and we are fortunate to have had his input to this magazine over the years. He has also assisted with the recording and photographing of our reunions and other VPI events. Our association's members, particularly those who have been fortunate enough to have flown the Orion, Aurora, Arcturus or other versions of the P-3 will find this book of great interest, and a good read during those long winter evenings that are coming up, at least in the Northern Hemisphere.

Reviewed by H. M. Macleod

Coastal Command in Action, 1939-1945 by Roy Conyers Nesbit assisted by Oliver Hoare, ISBN 0 7509 1565 X; Sutton Publishing Ltd, Stroud, UK; 182 pages; Introduction, Contents, Appendix, 185 photographs, Index; hard cover; 8x11in; £19.95).

The heading on the dust jacket of this book tells it all: "Archive Photographs From The Public Record Office." This is really a photo album, containing some of the incredible pictures available in the above establishment. Any of you who have visited the Public Record Office, which is easily accessible from the Kew Gardens Underground station, will know all about the ritual one has to go through to get a Reader's Card, and the treasure trove of books and photographs stored in the PRO.

Appendix A of Coastal Command in Action, 1939-1945: Some PRO Sources of Coastal Command Photographs 1939-1945, will save a great deal of time and searching for anyone who is interested in obtaining copies of some of the pictures in the book. The author suggests that anyone who is thinking about carrying out research in the PRO should get a copy of PRO Readers' Guide No. 8 RAF Records in the PRO, by Simon Fowler et al, from The Public Record Office, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU.

