

## **THE TRENCHARD TOUCH**

**CYRIL HAVARD**

**Countrywise Press, Chichester, 2000**

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In his Trenchard Memorial Lecture to the Royal United Services Institute in September 2000, the Chief of the Air Staff invited historians to consider a renewed look at the life of Trenchard. The only substantial biography, by Andrew Boyle, is now somewhat dated and such an influential figure would benefit closer analysis – in particular his relationship with Sir Frederick Sykes who has almost been ‘air brushed’ from history. This book by Cyril Havard is not what CAS had in mind and is barely worthy of the title chosen. Havard is a retired surgeon, ‘a successful novelist’ and has recently published a book of medical eponyms. Would that he had stuck to these areas.

Havard sets himself the exam question of looking at whether Bomber Command’s losses could be justified, with follow-on query as to whether their ‘young lives were sacrificed as the

result of bigoted beliefs held by honest but misguided personalities...’. Emotive stuff. The efficacy of the Bomber Command strategic campaign has long been a popular topic, with some good analysis and a lot of background noise. Professor Richard Overy’s *Air War 1939 – 1945 and Why the Allies Won* are prime examples of the detailed analysis that is needed if anything approaching full justice is to be done to the subject. Regrettably neither of these works are cited in the bibliography and nor are the many learned journal articles available. (Annoyingly, Harris’s *Despatch on War Operations* is cited twice suggesting sloppy proof reading.) The treatment of both Trenchard and his so-called strategic bombing legacy are, likewise, extremely superficial with the inevitable quotations taken out of context.

Regrettably this book does justice neither to the men of Bomber Command to whom it is dedicated nor to Trenchard. It is most definitely not recommended.

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