

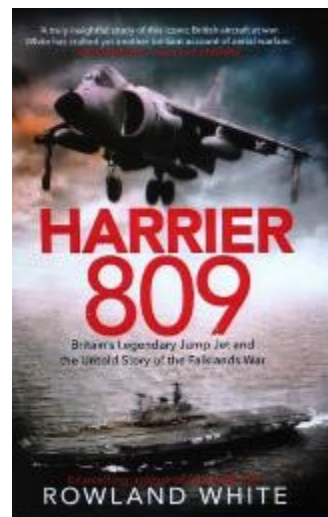


From the **BOOKSHELF**

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HARRIER 809
Author Rowland White
Published by Bantam Press
ISBN 978-1-787-63158-8

Reviewed by
JOHN COX



This book was published in 2020 and deals with the period when war raged in the South Atlantic skies (Falklands) and includes **previously untold stories**. Following Argentina's invasion of The Falklands Britain mobilised a task force to retake the islands some 8,000 miles away.

The two frontline **Sea Harrier** squadrons 800 and 801 travelled south with the task force on the aircraft carriers **HMS Hermes** and **HMS Invincible**. These have been well served by a number of excellent previous books written by pilots who flew the Harriers. A third squadron, **809**, was hurriedly put together and barely three weeks later transported to the South Atlantic on a converted merchant ship, **Atlantic Conveyor**. The aircraft transferred to the aircraft carriers before the Atlantic Conveyor was sunk.

Whilst researching this book, the author discovered **a much bigger story** hiding in the shadows, much of which **is still classified to this day**.

The creation of 809 Sea Harrier Squadron by Lieutenant Commander Tim Gedge is a fascinating story in itself. The mix of ingenuity, lateral thinking, and circumvention of bureaucracy and sheer bloody mindedness that produced an operational squadron from nothing in weeks will be familiar to those who have read '*Vulcan 607*', also written by Rowland White. The meat of the narrative is, of course, concerned with aerial combat over the islands and '*Harrier 809*' does not disappoint

We learn a lot more about the merchant ship *Atlantic Conveyor* which played a critical role and initially served as a virtual third aircraft carrier. There is a parallel and equally absorbing foray into the RAF's efforts to provide the reconnaissance that would be vital to forces trying to retake the islands. There has been much speculation over the years and this content is particularly enlightening.

This book makes a compelling read and I have no hesitation in recommending it.

JOHN COX

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