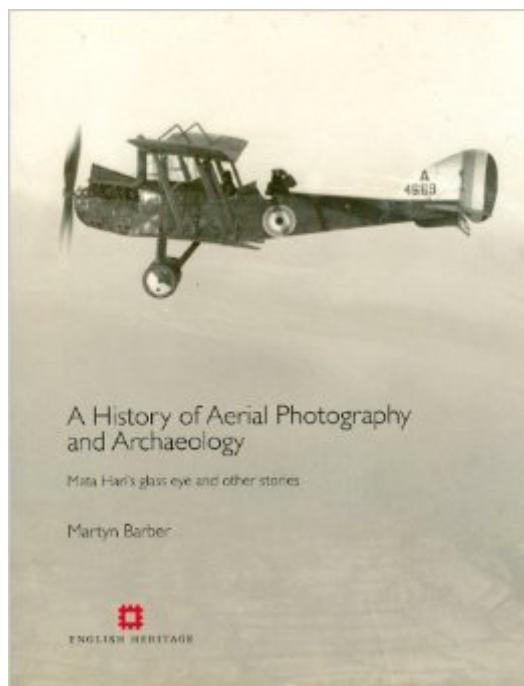


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History Of Aerial Photography And Archaeology: Mata Hari's Glass Eye And Other Stories



Synopsis

In England, more archaeological sites are discovered every year through the study of aerial photographs than by any other method. New reconnaissance flights continue to discover previously unknown traces of the past, while the study of historic photographs held in archives records even more. This book begins by telling the story of the first aerial photographs of an archaeological monument to be taken in this country. However, when a military balloon rose above Stonehenge in September 1906, aerial photography was already almost half a century old, and people had been flying since the late 18th century. The first half of the book tells the story of the balloonist-adventurers who first experienced the landscape from above and who pioneered the use of the airborne camera. The second half begins with the First World War, explaining the development of aerial survey on the Western Front and the subsequent adoption of these survey techniques by archaeologists. The book describes some of the key individuals and discoveries of the inter-war years, and outlines the role that many well-known archaeologists played as military air-photo interpreters during the Second World War. The book includes nearly 200 colour and black-and-white photographs and other images, ranging from the earliest known painted representation of the view from a balloon, some of the earliest images taken with cameras from balloons, and intriguing photographs from the Boer War as well as the First World War, in addition to a wide range of shots of archaeological sites from 1906 to the 21st century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The story of aerial photography has been told in numerous books here in the U.S. and abroad. But there are fewer sources on the role of aircraft in archaeological research, and this is a fine survey of that topic. Focused on England (and thus only four stars) as the publisher, English Heritage, is the entity which operates countless castles and other sights there, we learn that aerial imagery is well over a century old if you include the use of balloons (or even kites). The focus here, however, is on aircraft use over England, and begins with the first photos taken from an airplane of--perhaps not surprisingly--the iconic Stonehenge--this back in 1906. The struggle to develop methods (cameras, films, photo angles, and suitable aircraft) is well told here. And the story is well-illustrated with a host of photos well reproduced on coated paper stock. Of interest as well are the two chapters telling the story of photo intelligence during both World Wars, for as with so many other things, wartime demands led to more rapid development of efficient aircraft and aerial cameras. Some of the key British figures in the developing field of aerial archaeology were hugely helpful during both wars, as they were up to speed on what might be accomplished. And they could quickly be trained in what the military needed them to look for. This is a fascinating story, well told and well illustrated.

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