

David K. Brown. *Atlantic Escorts: Ships, Weapons, and Tactics in World War II*. Barnsley, South Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, www.seaforthpublishing.co.uk, 2022. 176 pp., illustrations, maps, glossary, appendices, notes, bibliography. UK £16.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-39902-004-6. (E-book available.)

This work is a new paperback edition of Brown's 2007 study of the various escort vessels and their associated technologies fielded by the Allies during the Battle of the Atlantic. Primarily focused on the Royal Navy, with some relevant coverage of Canadian and American contributions, this analysis of frigates, corvettes, and destroyer escorts that thwarted the German submarine threat delves into an often-overshadowed facet of the Second World War's longest running engagement. Part chronology, part technical study, Brown examines the perpetual struggle of "quality verses quantity" as improvements in anti-submarine warfare faced off against the ever-present need for increased numbers of ships and crews to be placed in service (8). While some figures are rounded for simplicity's sake, Brown provides numerous comparative tables on a range of subjects to further supplement the text. Concluding chapters and appendices offer additional focused information on details such as weather conditions, ship construction methods, pressure hull strengths, and ASDIC set variants, with notes, a biography, and an index rounding out the work.

The majority of *Atlantic Escorts* is centered around a chronological retelling of the Battle of the Atlantic. The situation at the start of hostilities in September 1939 is laid out in a preliminary chapter on the interwar period, covering the extant models of warships and early adaptations of small ship ASDIC systems. The introduction of new ship designs and technologies is then woven into the narrative of the war itself, coupled with information from the German Kriegsmarine on relevant aspects of submarine design and their crews. The crucial decision of the Royal Navy to allow those suffering from burn-out to take shore positions and educating the next wave of crews versus the German philosophy of keeping a U-boat crew in action until they were lost is brought up early, highlighting one of the more human aspects of the battle (77). American contributions are largely addressed in terms of vessels supplied to the Royal Navy through early Lend-Lease actions and later purpose-built classes. These ships are presented in both their original configurations and as modified by the Royal Navy. More notable convoys which saw extensive defensive actions by escorts, such as ONS5, are covered in detail, and details like the Hedgehog forward-flung munition and camouflage measures are addressed throughout the text as well.

The final three chapters act as an overall conclusion, covering ship production, the technical aspects of fighting in the Atlantic, and Brown's overall evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-submarine vessels during the war. The

addressing of human factors within the technical aspects is appreciated, as it offers further insight into how the men assigned to often-cramped escort vessels viewed life aboard ships and the resulting improvements. This section also allows for a more direct comparison of the various ship classes on key points, such as production time, endurance, stability, and overall availability for operations. In his final remarks, Brown covers several studies that have argued over which of the various classes was the most efficient at their assigned escort roles, but holds to his own summary that the Flower-class was needed to achieve the high numbers required early in the war, with this giving the breathing room necessary to create more efficient and better armed escorts for the mid- to late-war conflict (158).

Among the few possible improvements, tighter editing would remove some of the unnecessary repetition, sometimes within just a few pages. Technological advancements addressed within the chronology also lead to some tangential diversions. This results in Brown covering the eventual culmination of some advancements before jumping back to the main narrative. This is more noticeable in the early war chapters when the technologies of ASDIC and shipborne radar were in their relative infancy. Finally, American naval escorts are given rather sparse coverage, often dealing with relevant shared technological upgrades or vessel classes designed and produced in American yards specifically for the Royal Navy. Given the fact that over 300 Evarts, Buckley, and Cannon destroyer escorts were completed with many seeing service in the Battle of the Atlantic, more in-depth study of the classes and a comparison of American versus Royal Navy crews would be useful. These points do not hamper the core data provided within the text, however, and given Brown's passing in 2008, any alterations would only make sense in the form of an edited compendium of several of his studies.

Atlantic Escorts provides a good overview of the often-overlooked small Allied escort vessels used in the Battle of the Atlantic. Brown offers a relatively concise examination of the various classes of ship, their evolving anti-submarine arsenal of detection technologies and offensive weapons, and a chorological summary of escorts from their initial interwar existence to the secession of hostilities in 1945. Such a focused study offers another insight into the protection of transatlantic convoys during the Second World War and serves as a useful resource for those studying escort ships, early sonar and radar technology, and the implementation of large-scale anti-submarine efforts under wartime conditions.

Charles Ross Patterson II
Yorktown, Virginia