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## Allied Escort Carriers of the World War Two

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States rallied to their side. All three books include a wealth of heretofore unpublished photos, making their narratives even more graphic. Lessons for modern-day shapers of national security abound in all three.

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Poolman, Kenneth. *Allied Escort Carriers of World War Two*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1988. 272pp. \$29.95

*Allied Escort Carriers of World War II* builds on Kenneth Poolman's earlier work, *Escort Carrier, 1941-45*, which deals only with the British escort carrier experience. His new book includes U.S. hunter-killer operations in the Atlantic, as well as escort carrier operations by both navies in the Indian and Pacific oceans. Both books provide a detailed account of day-to-day CVE operations, particularly in the Atlantic.

The present volume has two advantages, aside from additional basic research. It is written in the full knowledge of the very effective first homing torpedo (the U.S. developed Mk 24 "mine"), and the revelation (not emphasized sufficiently) of the use of ULTRA intelligence to determine upcoming German submarine operations. The latter in particular—not publicly known until the late seventies—made the U.S. CVE hunter-killer group concept possible.

The escort carrier was created because of the British need to counter long range air attacks on merchant shipping in the mid-Atlantic where British land-based fighters could not reach. The first CVE was the *Audacity*, a captured German merchant ship upon which a flight deck, but no island or hangar, was built. She operated American made F4F Grumman fighters. Hers was a brief career, beginning in September 1941 and ending on 21 December, when she was sunk by the *U-751*. The U.S. by then was largely involved with the conversion of Maritime Commission C-3 hulls to CVEs. These went first to the British and then, after Pearl Harbor, to the U.S. Navy. Ultimately, the British operated 44 CVEs of which they built six, while the U.S. managed 80 CVEs of four classes, all merchant hull based designs. The U.S. lost one CVE in the Atlantic, and five in the Pacific. The British lost three, all in the Atlantic.

In the Atlantic antisubmarine war, the U.S. Navy got the better deal since it was assigned to close the lower half of the mid-Atlantic gap where the German submarines were safe from shore-based Allied ASW aircraft. There U.S. forces, not concerned with possible surface or air actions, perfected the independently operated CVE hunter-killer group which relied heavily on HFDF bearings and ULTRA intelligence to find enemy submarines.

In contrast, the British CVEs operated near the convoys, shielding them against both air and U-boat

attack. They operated in the stormy North Atlantic on the icy Murmansk run, and in the Mediterranean.

*Allied Escort Carriers of World War Two* chronicles these events in human level detail. Carrier aircraft losses, particularly in the northern latitudes, are grimly impressive. Caused not so much by enemy action as by the elements and the small deck, today these operations would be branded by the press as inhuman and unacceptable. Nevertheless, the British carried on.

The book contains numerous photographs, line drawings of the various CVE classes and a series of excellent aircraft profiles by J.M. Goulding. The last were undoubtedly originally in color and would have been more effective if pulled together in a few color pages.

The last third of the book deals with activities in the Indian and Pacific oceans, where, in general, the CVEs played support roles to the main British and U.S. fleets during the closing year of the war. The highlight is the battle between six CVEs and a Japanese task force led by the *Yamato*, the world's mightiest battleship. At the last minute the Japanese unexpectedly turned away after sinking just one of the six. As in the Atlantic, in the Pacific far more CVE aircraft were lost to operational problems than to enemy action.

There are errors, of course. Two pictures, for example, were miscaptioned, and the author cannot agree with himself on how to spell the *Liscome Bay's* name. These, however,

are minor. The book, overall, with eleven appendices and a bibliography is invaluable for what it does.

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Alden, John D. *Flush Decks and Four Pipes*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1965. Revised printing, 1989. 112pp. \$29.95

Hague, Arnold. *The Towns*. Kendal, England: World Ship Society, 1988. 92pp. \$12

*Flush Decks and Four Pipes* is a general history of the design, construction, peacetime use, and wartime service of the American flush-deck destroyers of the *Caldwell*, *Wickes*, and *Clemson* classes. A total of 273 flush-deckers were built between 1917 and 1922. The *Manley* was the first to commission on 15 October 1917, and the last was the *Decatur* on 9 August 1922. The last surviving flush-decker was not discarded by her owner, a banana company, until 1955. The flush-deck destroyers were built with a heavy gun and torpedo armament for fighting fleet actions. No antisubmarine weapons were installed in the ships as built, but depth charge racks and Y-guns were added to the few ships that were finished in time to serve during the First World War.

The first edition of *Flush Decks and Four Pipes* had a soft cover and an unusual format with two spines, but the revised printing has a hard cover and conventional single-spine format. No changes were made to the