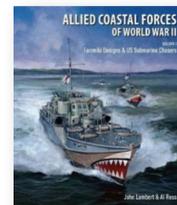


BOOK REVIEWS:

Allied coastal forces of World War II. Volume 1: Fairmile designs and US submarine chasers

by John Lambert and Al Ross

Seaforth Publishing: Barnsley, South Yorkshire; 2019; 256 pp.; ISBN 9781526744449; RRP \$61.50;
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The coastal forces referred to herein are the small warships designed for use in coastal waters such as motor torpedo boats, torpedo-armed patrol (PT) boats, motor gun boats, launches, submarine chasers and the like. Such warships served in World War II as patrol boats, convoy escorts, minelayers, minesweepers, harbour defence vessels, light landing craft, air-force rescue boats, and transports for agents and clandestine operations.

This volume is a reprint of an edition originally published in 1990. It provides technical detail in words, photographs and drawings, of the small wooden, mostly-prefabricated, warships designed by the Fairmile Marine Company together with the smaller 72-foot Harbour Defence Motor Launch and the larger United States Navy 120-foot Subchaser. As such, the volume is of particular interest to Australians as Fairmile ships, mostly Type B motor launches and harbour defence motor launches, were built under licence in Sydney during World War II. Subsequently, they served with the Royal Australian Navy in the coastal waters of Australia, New Guinea and the islands of the south-west Pacific from 1943 to 1945. Their shallow draft, effective armament, speed and manoeuvrability made them a unique part of the navy's war effort.

The author, the late John Lambert, gained detailed technical knowledge of warships in the Royal Navy and later undertook research on small warships and naval weaponry. He combined this knowledge with his excellent technical drawing skills to produce books on the subject of which this is one. His co-author, Al Ross II, also is the author of several books on small warships and produces plans for modellers of small warships of the World War II and Vietnam eras.

The first half of this book describes each of the vessels in detail: the Fairmile A and B-type motor launches (including the Canadian B-type), C-type motor gun boat, D-type motor torpedo/gun boat, and F-type motor gun

boat 2001; and the 72-foot harbour defence motor launch and the SC 497-class 110-foot subchaser. There is, though, no mention of the Fairmile H-type landing craft.

The second half of the book provides details of equipment – depth charges, anti-submarine equipment, radars, camouflage, engines, engineering, and habitability; and selected weapons systems – Holman projector, PAC rocket, 2-inch rocket flare, smoke-making apparatus, 0.303-inch Lewis machine-gun, 0.303-inch Vickers gas-operated machine-gun, 3-pounder Hotchkiss gun, 2-pounder Mark XI and XII guns, and 2-pounder Vickers 40mm gun.

Additional data are provided on other weapons and minelaying systems, the deployment of motor launches during the war, and the depot ships and shore bases they used. There are also 12 appendices which focus on the ship builders and ship performance. There is a good bibliography, but, unfortunately, no index.

I was, though, unable to find any reference to the building of Fairmile ships in Australia and only a minor reference to those used by the Royal Australian Navy. For those interested, I would recommend *The Fairmile ships of the Royal Australian Navy* (Australian Military History Publications: Loftus, NSW) Volume 1, by Peter Evans, 2002; Volume 2, by Peter Evans and Richard Thompson, 2005.

Allied Coastal Forces Volume 1 could be read from cover to cover, but readers may prefer to use it as a reference book, locating items of interest via the contents as there is no index. The photos and drawings are of good to high quality; and the technical detail and data appear to be sound, although I am unqualified to comment on marine engineering.

I recommend the book to those interested in this fascinating class of small warship.

David Leece