

From Flowers to Lochs

The failings of the Flower class corvettes in the excellent article provided by Jim Dell arose primarily because although they were designed to be coastal escorts rather than being involved in Atlantic Ocean conditions, it was their lack of speed that became the primary reason for their eventual replacement. The development of the Type IX U-boats meant that to pursue a surfaced submarine or to quickly regain station in a large convoy, an escort really required 22 knots rather than the Flowers'16.

As this would have required steam turbine propulsion, it was decided to compromise with a "twin-screw corvette" capable of 20 knots with a Flower-type reciprocating engine on each shaft. The urgency of the need for higher capacity corvettes meant that this need could be produced only by redesigning for construction from prefabricated modules fitted out to a rigidly standard specification. This meant the resulting Loch-class frigates thus comprised large numbers of elements, none heavier than 3 tons, produced by non-shipbuilding concerns and transported to dedicated assembly and fitting-out facilities.

Complex curvature was avoided, the result retaining the earlier River-class characteristics but with greater sheer and flare forward. Being slightly larger than either the River or Castle classes meant a Loch could accommodate a double Squid in the elevated "B" position. The associated Asdic, which made the system so deadly was situated adjacently, in an office extending from the front of the bridge.



HMS LOCH FADA

By the time the first-of-class, Loch Fada was completed at the end of 1943, the conventional U-boat were a spent force. Only 31 hulls were therefore completed as Lochs but despite their limited numbers they still accounted for 16 of the enemy. With emphasis shifting to Pacific operations the next 19 hulls were completed as Bay-class AA escorts with their Squids being suppressed in favour of a Hedgehog and two twin 40mm Bofors.



HMS ST AUSTALL BAY

By an amazing twist of fate, one of these Bay-class Lochs, HMS St Austell Bay, was reunited with six of her ancestors when in 1950, she, in company with HMS Veryan Bay, spent five months in New Zealand on exchange with NZ's Taupo and Hawea.



HMS VERYAN BAY