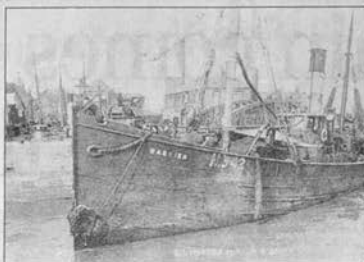
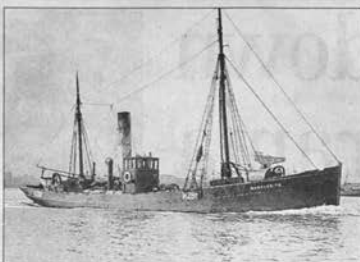


## Hope of fresh search at site of Great War sinkings – and German's act of mercy



**TARGETS:** Divers from Scarborough Sub Aqua Club have discovered the resting places of at least six of the trawlers lost in a U-boat attack in the North Sea in 1916. The fishing boats destroyed – 11 from Scarborough and one from Hull – included, from left, the *Otter*, the *Marguerite* and the *Harrier*. The divers have recovered the bells from these three and hope to try to find more in the coming season. Pictures: George Scales collection.

# Divers trawl for relics where attack launched by U-boat

Alexandra Wood

AS DAWN broke more than 90 years ago over the North Sea a U-boat captain gleefully ordered the destruction of the Scarborough fishing fleet.

Long after his daring attack in 1916 which sent a dozen trawlers to the bottom of the North Sea, Karl Von Georg recalled: "What a massacre of ships that was! We steered back and forth firing at full speed with the bow gun. One after another the ships hit at the water line, listed and plunged, until all had vanished from the surface of the sea, save the one on which the survivors were crowded."

It could have been a lot worse –

**What a massacre of ships that was! We steered back and forth firing at full speed with the bow gun.**

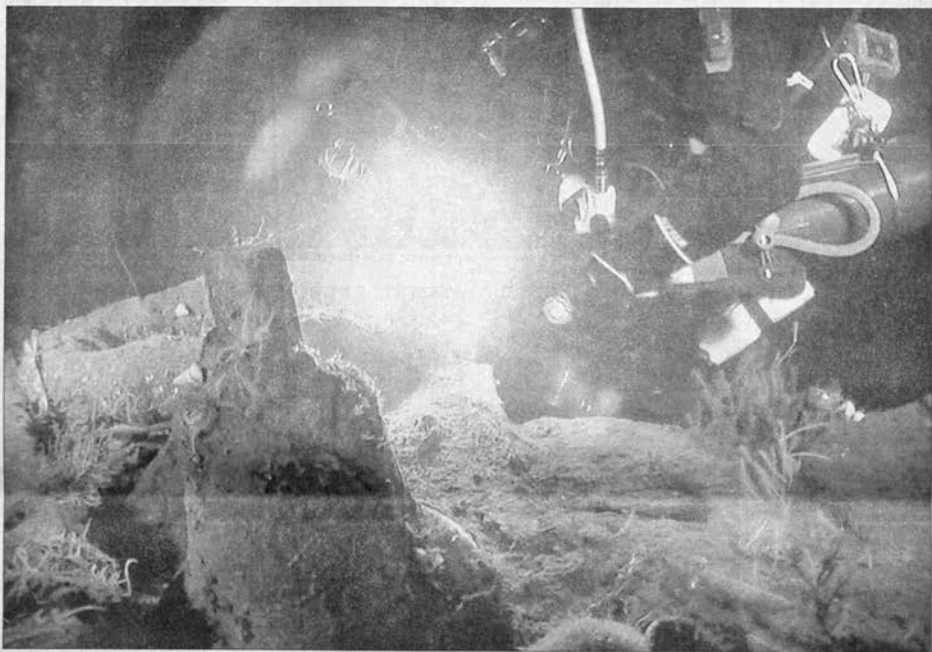
and Von Georg, of *U57*, has gone down in history as a humanitarian who saved more than 120 lives, making sure they were all transferred to a boat to carry them home.

Now divers from Scarborough Sub Aqua Club have discovered the resting places of at least six of the trawlers, recovering three bells, and this year they will be trying to find yet more.

The trawlers lie more than 20 miles off the East Coast in water more than 230ft deep and they soon realised that diving to them safely would mean getting a new boat and using a different type of breathing gas to avoid narcosis.

Narcosis, or rapture of the deep, describes the alternation in consciousness – akin to being drunk – that divers can feel at depth. Well-known researcher and diver Andy Jackson said: "For the first dive we picked the shallowest at 223ft.

"The view was absolutely fantastic – you could see the wreck



**RESTING PLACE:** A diver approaches the bell of the Scarborough-based *Otter*, one of the trawlers lost in a U-boat attack in 1916 and lying more than 20 miles off the East Coast.

from 130ft down. They are all very intact.

"They were mostly scuttled or shelled on the waterline, so they went down in one piece. We haven't come across one yet that's not upright."

"There's no superstructure but the hull and gunwales are perfect and there's a lot of fish and fishing gear."

"Diving at this depth doesn't take any prisoners – everything has to be perfect. Everybody has to be fit and the kit has to be

right and the anchor has to be in the middle of the wreck."

In the first season only one wreck was dived – the second produced better results and three bells from the *Harrier*, *Otter* and *Marguerite*. The aptly named Colin Bell found the bell of the *Marguerite* still sitting on top of the wheelhouse.

"There are no clues to the other three," said Mr Jackson, a manager for Yorkshire Water. "Bizarrely we found the compass on all of them but not the bell.

They could have fallen off and through a gap and got buried – or they could have been taken by the Germans."

"In the early part of the war they used to recover the bells and go back to base with half a dozen hanging off the side."

This year's terrible weather has meant the divers were unable to go back to the site, but Mr Jackson had four or five readings he wants to investigate in the coming season.

He said: "The sinking of the

Scarborough trawlers is not a famous military encounter but it is a fascinating piece of social history and it has created tremendous interest."

"Von Georg was obviously a gentleman who took a great personal risk to make sure the fishermen were safe."

The loss of 11 trawlers – there was another, from Hull, called *Trinidad* – reduced the Scarborough fleet to just three and threw many out of work.

Von Georg (1886-1957) was

later awarded the Order for Merit – the Blue Max – Imperial Germany's highest decoration for valour.

Other recipients included Hermann Göring and Erwin Rommel.

To see more of Andy Jackson's diving exploits see [subseaiv.com](http://subseaiv.com). For a wealth of information on Scarborough's maritime history visit [www.scarboroughmaritimeheritage.org.uk](http://www.scarboroughmaritimeheritage.org.uk).

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