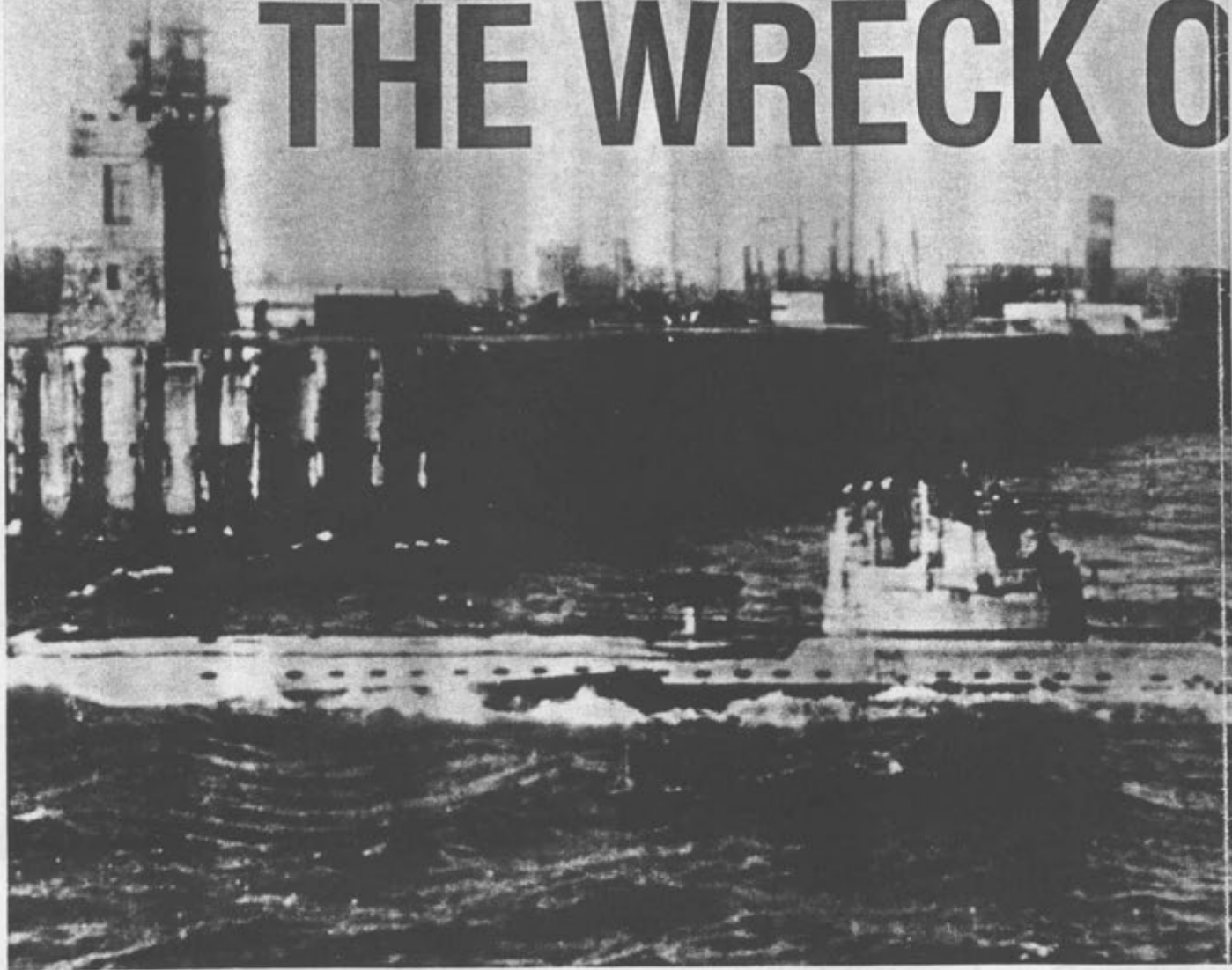


THE WRECK 0



Combing the seas off Whitby for wrecks, Andy Jackson and Carl Racey got soundings from a cylinder on the seabed in the area where a German U-boat had been sunk in 1918. Later, when Mick Mullane dived the site with them, he didn't know what they were looking for. He got a surprise

ANDY Jackson swung *Volunteer* around in another sweep. The wreck we were originally going for was gill netted. After weighing up the odds, A.J. decided to move on to W12 – another unknown. Time was getting on and we did not want to miss slack. Half kitted up, I was getting unpleasantly hot in my suit when A.J. called out of the wheelhouse.

"Stand by with the anchor."

"Standing by" I replied, as I edged the anchor towards the gunwhale.

Volunteer's twin diesels knocked back to idle.

"Let's be having it in then."

The anchor shot overboard, and I threw spools of rope out behind it to speed it into the depths. This time there was a dumper attached; there would be no dabbling around trying to anchor in, just straight over the side with a 'waster' line.

A.J. gave us our instructions..

"Tie one of the ropes in as soon as you can"

"OK A.J. – What's the sounder marking?"

"About 47-48m, but you can add a couple to that."

"What are those dans? Is that a gill net?" I asked, concerned.

Twin-set on, I sat on the gun-

whale. I looked at Carl. He gave me a nod, and disappeared over the side. I followed closely.

The mega viz and cool water were a relief from the excitement on the boat.

Falling down the dead straight line like firemen down a pole, squirting the stab every now and again, torches went on at around 35m. Here and there strands of stinging lion's mane jellyfish tentacles swayed around the rope. My lips tingled at the thought of previous encounters.

Below me Carl was at the head of a flitting aquamarine beam travelling near the bottom. I left the safety of the anchor line and arched out to meet him. To my right was a black cathedral-like spire of trawl net, casting a malign shadow.

Below was a tangle of lost fishing gear. It was difficult to sort out what was solid and what was heavy rope and hawser, aged like steel by time and sea. All this was covering a round steel cylinder, a boiler I thought. At least now we had a focus. Idling down its length, a torch beam picked out a fully intact gill net, virtually invisible, hanging wraithlike alongside us, promising

death for the unwary. Underneath, the steel cylinder ran on, and on.

"Christ, this must be a huge boiler," I thought, casting out my torch beam. Then, frozen in blue torch light and draped in net, I caught sight of a deck gun, its breach still open.

"My god, it's a submarine!"

A few metres on and the pressure hull ended abruptly, a few rods protruded where the streamlining hull was attached, some huge nuts still securing plates fast to the hull.

On her starboard side, underneath another lump of trawl net, a round cylinder with what looked like innocent wedges of cheese glowed brightly in torch light – it was the explosive head of a torpedo. In the middle was the primer, standing proud where it was once met by the streamlined steel casing.

Carl tied off to some heavy trawl doors next to the bow. He glanced at me, but there was no need to discuss what to do next. Time was getting on and we both knew where the U-boats had their identity stamped in bronze – on the props. Gliding past the gun we came to the remnants of the conning tower. The ever-present gill net crossed from port to starboard here

F UB-30



and wrapped itself around her twisted periscope. With the plume of trawl net above, and the gill net at our sides, the way on looked impossible, but where the conning tower met the net it held it up like a curtain. Carefully holding in anything prone to snag, we drifted underneath the net towards the stern.

Now visible were the ribs of the saddle tanks, bowing out and disappearing into the sea bed. Pulling along these we arrived at the stern quickly. Both props were scoured clear of the sea bed, their broad blades, like summertime clover, now quiet. We scrubbed and cleaned with hands and cut net between the blades.

Nothing showed through. After 12 minutes it was time to head back.

Returning, we noticed the stern hatch still open. Was it sprung by pressure or in a futile attempt to escape? Taking a deep breath I peered in. I was relieved to find that silt lay to the roof.

Gaining the rope, we left. Torches winking across the wreck. We left it there, silent, in 50m of water, where the sun will never reach, a tribute to the heroism of her crew and a memorial to the insanity of war.

Above: the UB-30 arriving at her home port after a sortie against British coastal shipping. With four torpedoes and a deck gun, she packed a deadly punch. (U-Boat-Archiv.)

The First World War saw the birth of a new type of naval warfare – a savage warfare lacking the old ‘agreements’ formulated to make war at sea ‘decent’. At the spearhead of this new total warfare was the *unterseeboote*, or U-boat.

The north-east coast at that time was busy with many cargo ships and colliers, transporting goods and coal. Many of the vessels were humble steamers whose slow speed and tell-tale plume against the horizon made them easy prey. When the U-boats were sent on patrol, their covert mine laying, lethal torpedo attacks, and brazen surface raiding caught the seamen of the North East with deadly surprise.

UB-30 was a coastal U-boat, small compared to her siblings that prowled the Atlantic, but still packing a deadly punch with four torpedoes and a deck gun. On patrol in the high summer of 1918 off the north-east coast, she torpedoed the trawler, *Madame Renee*, a few miles out from Scarborough’s North Bay. A Navy patrol boat and armed trawlers were sent to the scene. They now knew they had a marauder in their midst, and kept up a vigorous search.

Three days later, on 13 August, *UB-30* came up to periscope depth off the coast of Whitby. Her commander, Stier, had spotted a convoy and was following its movements several miles away.

As *UB-30* lurked beneath the waves, the armed trawler *John Gilman* spotted her periscope a mere 300 hundred yards away; preoccupied with his quarry, Stier had made the fatal mistake of failing to scan the surface fully.

The *John Gilman* sprang toward her prey. Stier, perhaps hearing the trawler’s mighty steam engine, swung the periscope around, only to see the trawler’s bow cutting the sea toward him.

Stier, ordering a crash dive, put *UB-30*’s hydroplanes hard down. As water rushed into the main

How the UB-30 died

Depth charged to death

ballast tank, Stier had gained enough depth to allow the trawler to scrape across the U-boat with the whine of steel on steel as the *John Gilman*’s hull made short work of Stier’s periscope.

Marker darts were dropped overboard, and depth charges deployed, their fuses set at 30m. The hunt had begun.

The *John Gilman* was joined by the trawlers *John Brooker*, *Viola* and H.M. yacht *Miranda II*, which also rolled depth charges into the deep. By now diesel and air bubbles were breaking the surface. *UB-30* was clearly damaged, but it was in no way conclusive.

For two hours hydrophones listened and trawlers circled, then *UB-30* surfaced. Blind without her periscope, Stier unwittingly surfaced in the midst of his pursuers. The *John Brooker* and *Viola* each managed to get off two rounds as Stier dived again. They followed up with depth charges and waited.

Ten minutes later *UB-30* again attempted to surface. But her hull damaged, leaking air and diesel, she was given no respite and was forced to dive. Four more depth charges sealed her fate.

Later that evening sweepers found an obstruction, confirmed a few days later by Navy divers to be the ruptured hulk of *UB-30*.

UB-30 made the mistake of surfacing in the midst of her pursuers.

