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SUPER SUBS ... In the sub aqua club, from left, Andy Jackson, John Chatterton, Colin Bell, Dan Crowell and Carl Racey

submitted

Maritime history is rewritten by divers

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by Claire Hill and Amy Wilson

DIVERS from Scarborough have rewritten the history books after deep-sea investigations unearthed some fascinating results.

An investigation which began last summer as part of an American documentary has quashed a 1983 theory that two boats sunk together in a deadly embrace off Flamborough Head.

KPI television in New York came to Flamborough Head and teamed up with the Scarborough Sub Aqua Club in July and August last year to make a programme investigating the mystery surrounding how the wreckage of a German submarine and a British steam ship came to be tangled together miles from where the German boat was allegedly sunk at Ravenscar.

The mystery of the freighter - the Malvina, which now lies crushing a First World War German U-boat at the bottom of the North Sea, has puzzled historians since it went down in 1918.

It was first thought the German UB-107 - which was used to harass coastal shipping vessels and torpedoed the Malvina before both boats sank, but divers Andrew Jackson and Carl Racey, of Scarborough Sub Aqua Club, have discovered a fatal flaw in previous findings.

It is now thought the UB-107 was damaged by armed trawlers off the coast at Ravenscar, 18 miles from where it now lies at Flamborough Head.

Andrew Jackson said: "The submarine may have been floating along the seabed after it was damaged at Ravenscar and caught the chain from a mine, pulling it to Flamborough six days before the Malvina sunk.

"We think the Malvina then snagged the mine and was sunk within three minutes,



ON CAMERA ... Being interviewed, Carl Racey is on the left with the cap and Andy Jackson on the right. In the background is Flamborough Head submitted

crushing the UB-107 at the bottom of the murky North Sea in a debris collection point."

A vital clue to the mystery came as a result of filming for the documentary last summer when the divers found the angle of the submarine's radio mast was 90 degrees to the wreck.

In 1918 the radio masts had to be moved manually and this would have left the sub in a vulnerable position, not in attack mode, which sinks the theory that the two ships were at loggerheads.

He said: "We are further on than we were and have eliminated the original 1983 theory that the UB-107 torpedoed the

Malvina, but the investigations are far from over."

Mr Racey said the programme which is being aired on American television now, helps raise the profile of the coast and the part it played in the development in submarine warfare.

He said: "The idea came from a book about the shipwrecks of the Yorkshire Coast. It was picked up by the Americans who approached us to help them.

"The investigation into the wreck was a great experience. We made some good contacts with the Americans and learnt a lot particularly about the production side of things.

"People think submarine warfare went on in the Atlantic but it was pioneered on our coast."

Former borough councillor and maritime historian Ted Agar features in the programme with other experts in the field.

There are around 700 steamship wrecks on the Yorkshire Coast half of which originate from the First World War.

Nobody is yet agreed on the sad end of the entwined shipwreck, but the mystery continues to inspire historians and filmmakers alike.

The programme will be internationally aired on the History Channel next year.

To order a copy visit subseattv.com



LOOKALIKE ... UB-131 is a similar class of U boat to the UB-107. She is photographed here aground at Hastings