

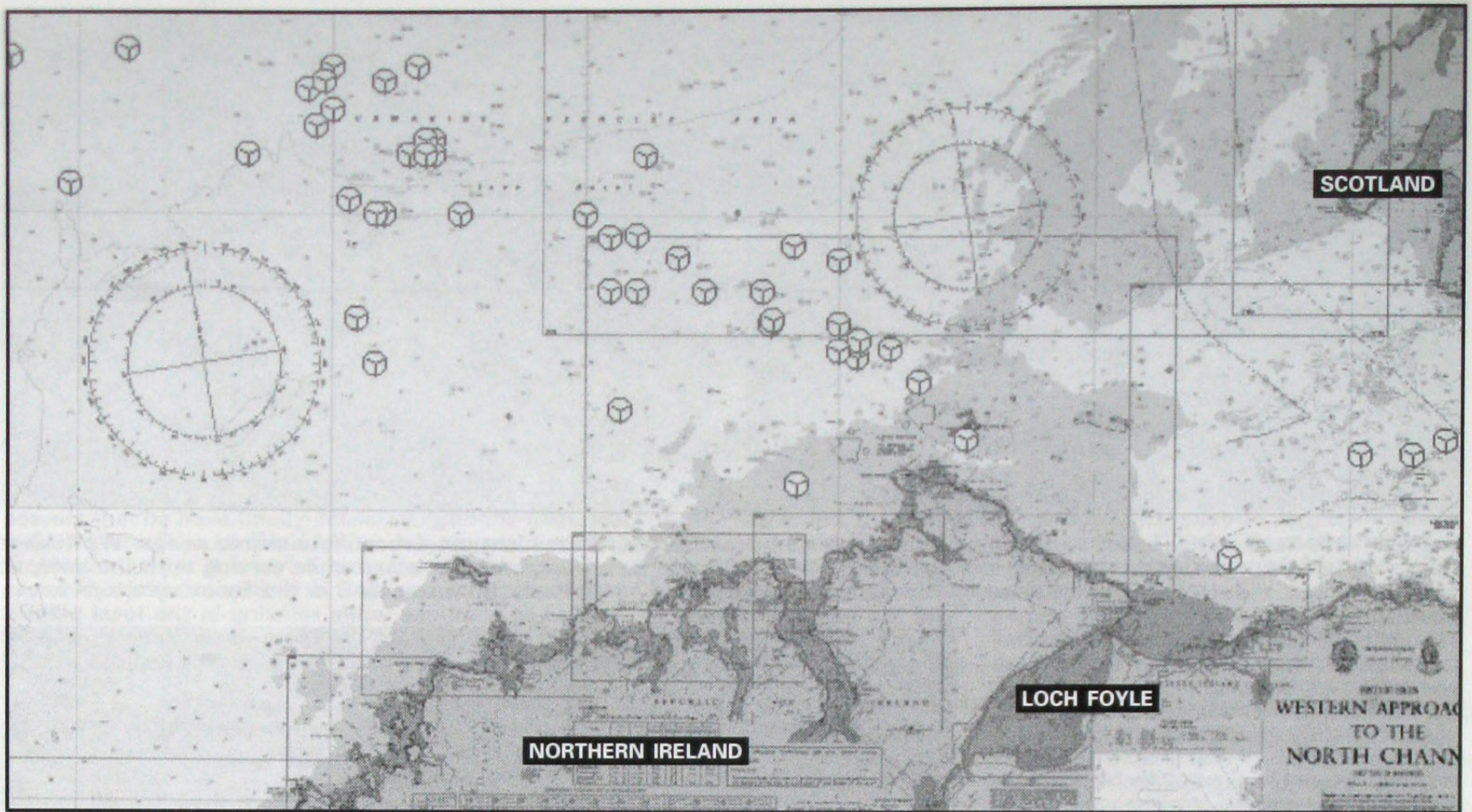
AFTER THE BATTLE

'DEADLIGHT' U-BOATS
PIPELINE UNDER THE OCEAN
RECAPTURE OF GUAM



£3.25

Number 116



Germany began the Second World War with 57 U-Boats and over the course of the war another 1,089 boats were built and commissioned. During hostilities, 830 took part in some 3,000 operations and the U-Boat arm claimed to have sunk over 3,500 merchant ships (although British records state 2,603 vessels lost of which 2,452 went down in the Atlantic). In addition, U-Boats sank 175 Allied warships. These successes cost the Germans 636 U-Boats lost at sea and 63 destroyed in U-Boat bases and yards. Another 85 were lost through other causes,

154 surrendered after the capitulation and 218 were scuttled on the eve of surrender in May 1945. Of the surrendered U-Boats, 28 were distributed between the Allies as spoils of war. The remainder were subject to an Anglo-American-Soviet agreement and to be disposed of by sinking in deep water in the Atlantic (save for odd boats in the Far East like the *U-219* at Batavia, the *U-195* at Sourabaya and the *U-181* and *U-862* at Singapore which were to be sunk locally). Operation 'Deadlight' was to be completed by February 15, 1946.

'DEADLIGHT' U-BOAT INVESTIGATION

In the winter of 1945, the Allies disposed of 116 U-Boats in Operation 'Deadlight' which represented the bulk of Germany's submarine fleet which had surrendered in May of that year. Only 58 U-Boats (exactly half) reached the allocated dumping grounds, all the rest lie at a depth of less than 100 metres.

To the knowledge of the expedition, only a very few of the submarines had ever been visited by divers. Certainly little was known about any of the wrecks and their identities were generally a mystery. In the event, the expedition was able to locate and identify ten

With such a wealth and variety of U-Boat wrecks in the 'Deadlight' sinking area, it is very surprising that little attention has been paid to them in the past. With the exception of a plan announced in 1996 to salvage some of the vessels for profit (see *After the Battle* No. 92, page 42), no attempt has been made to try and investigate what lies on the seabed. Although the area has been surveyed to a high standard, the identities of the individual submarine wrecks located was not known and scant interest has been shown in trying to identify those worthy of note. The purpose of the Operation 'Deadlight' Expedition, masterminded by our author, diver/historian Innes McCartney, was to dive on as many of the wrecks as possible in a two-week period and attempt to target those U-Boats which are of particular historical importance. Here the preparations for the expedition are underway at Portpatrick near Stranraer in Scotland.

U-Boats in the Operation 'Deadlight' area, two of which turned out to be war losses.

By Innes McCartney



OPERATION 'DEADLIGHT'

When the Second World War ended, the remainder of the U-Boat fleet fell into Allied hands. The surviving vessels were a mixture of training boats, prototype designs, operational U-Boats, and revolutionary new designs which were working up to operational efficiency during the last months of the war. In essence, the Allies were in possession of every single class of U-Boat built since the end of the First World War including examples of every technological advance the Germans had made during this time.

In order to evaluate the more recent designs, it was agreed that limited numbers of the surrendered U-Boats would be distributed amongst the Allies. The USSR took ten and the other Allies another 18 between them. The tripartite agreement, which led to Operation 'Deadlight' (see *After the Battle* No. 36), was signed by the USA, USSR and Great Britain in August 1945. It stated simply that the remaining U-Boats had to be sunk in waters deeper than 100 meters by February 15, 1946.

The submarines were assembled in Loch Ryan on the Scottish coast and Loch Foyle in Northern Ireland. The decision was made that they would have to be towed to the dumping areas, primarily because of the difficulties of retrieving the U-Boat crews at sea in bad weather, but also because it was recognised that many were deteriorating due to an absence of maintenance since the end



In this British official photograph taken in Loch Eriboll on the northern coast of Scotland, two Type VIIC boats have surrendered. On the right is the U-826 which was scuttled in Operation 'Deadlight' but the other vessel — given as the 'U-236' — must be a mis-identification as that submarine had already been damaged by Allied aircraft off Denmark on May 4 and scuttled by her crew.

CONFIDENTIAL.

WARNING.—This is an unparaphrased version of a secret cypher or confident code message, and the text must first be paraphrased* if it is essential to communicate it to persons outside British or Allied Government Services.

***(NOTE: Messages shown as having been sent in a One-Time Pad ("O.T.P.") are excepted from this rule.)**

To: C. in C. Rosyth.
F.O. S/M

From: Admiralty.

Date: 31.10.45.

It is intended to scuttle 86 U-boats from Loch Ryan and 24 from Lisahally in position 56 degrees North 10 degs. 05 mins. West.

2. A large proportion of these will require towing and therefore as many destroyers, escort vessels and tugs as can be spared from other commands will be sent to assist. Further signal follows.
3. F.O. S/M is requested to make necessary arrangements as regards U-boats in order to meet requirements of C. in C. Rosyth who is requested to control the operation.
4. Approval to commence the operation is expected shortly.

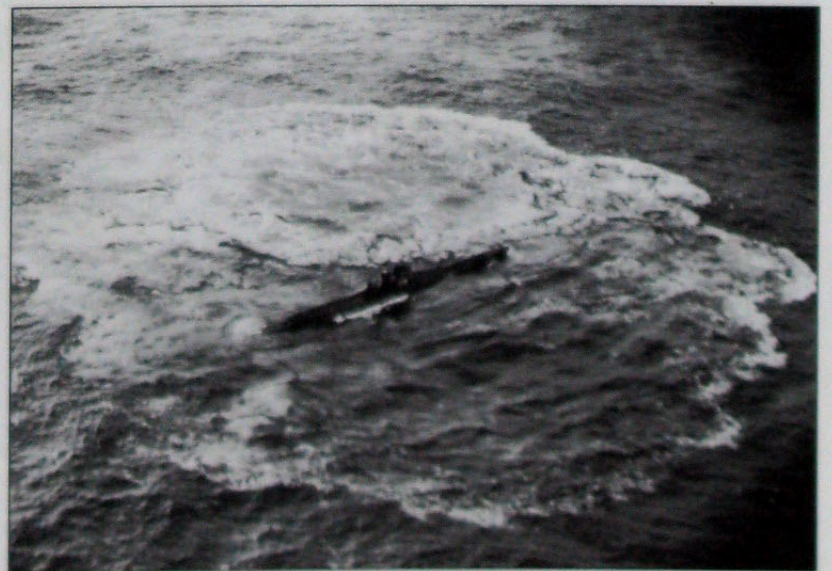
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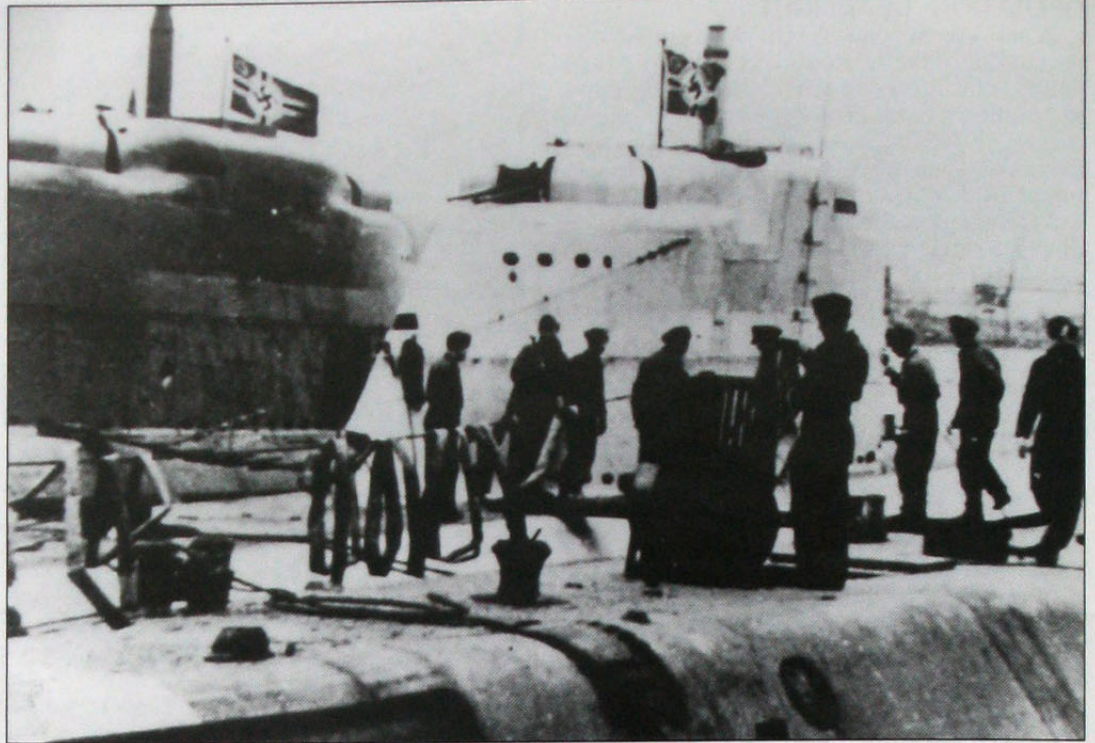
of the war. Submarines are notoriously difficult to tow and herein lay one of the reasons why the objectives of the operation were only half-met.

Once the U-Boats had been towed to the allocated dumping areas, they were to be sunk either by demolition charges, torpedoed by HMS *Tantivy* or by aircraft. In the event of bad weather or a failure of the charges, gun-fire was to be used.

The U-Boats were to be disposed of in groups of six. Right from the outset, problems were encountered during towing. The worse the weather, the more the towing cables broke, or the U-Boats simply foundered under tow. In these cases gun-fire was used to sink the submarine. On some days no U-Boats at all reached the dumping area, whilst on other days, most did. The best that can be said about Operation 'Deadlight' was that it was completed before the deadline.

Rather than just scuttling the U-Boats using internal explosive charges, 36 vessels were made available for training aircrews from RAF Coastal Command and the Fleet Air Arm who had not had previous experience attacking U-Boats. Others were to be used for target practise by Royal Navy submarines firing torpedoes. Any which survived these attacks were to be finished off with gun-fire.





WHY ARE THE WRECKS HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT?

While many of the wrecks are 'run of the mill' U-Boat types, some are of undoubted historical importance. These fall into two distinct categories.

First are those late-war designs made up of the Type XXI and Type XXIII 'electro-boats'. They were revolutionary designs — the world's first true submarines — having the ability of operating underwater throughout an entire patrol. The increased number of batteries allowed these boats to run submerged at high speeds and indefinitely, being fitted with the Schnorchel breather tube to enable recharging underwater. The smaller Type XXIII was used in operations along Britain's East Coast at the end of the war, with limited success. However the larger Type XXI was potentially a severe threat to the Allies. It had a vast range and would have been a menace on convoy lanes in the Atlantic, where it would have been difficult to locate and hunt down. The *U-2511*, the only Type XXI to approach an Allied convoy before the war ended, is among the wrecks of Operation 'Deadlight'. (The *U-3008*, another Type XXI, was also on patrol at the end of the war — see *After the Battle* No. 111, page 37.)

Then there are the highly successful wartime U-Boats. Interestingly, on some occasions, the German Navy tried to ensure that once a U-Boat had become a success it was not put at risk of destruction by the Allies as this was considered to be bad for national morale. As a result these U-Boats were often relegated to training roles. There are others among the 'Deadlight' fleet that have connections with famous commanders, too. Some examples include U-Boats commanded by Knight's Cross holders, such as Adolf Piening, Heinrich Lehmann-Willenbrock (the commander around whom the film *Das Boot* was based), Adalbert Schnee and Jürgen Oesten.

Many of these wrecks lay in depths that the expedition could reach so to locate and explore some of the more famous was one of the key motivations behind the project.

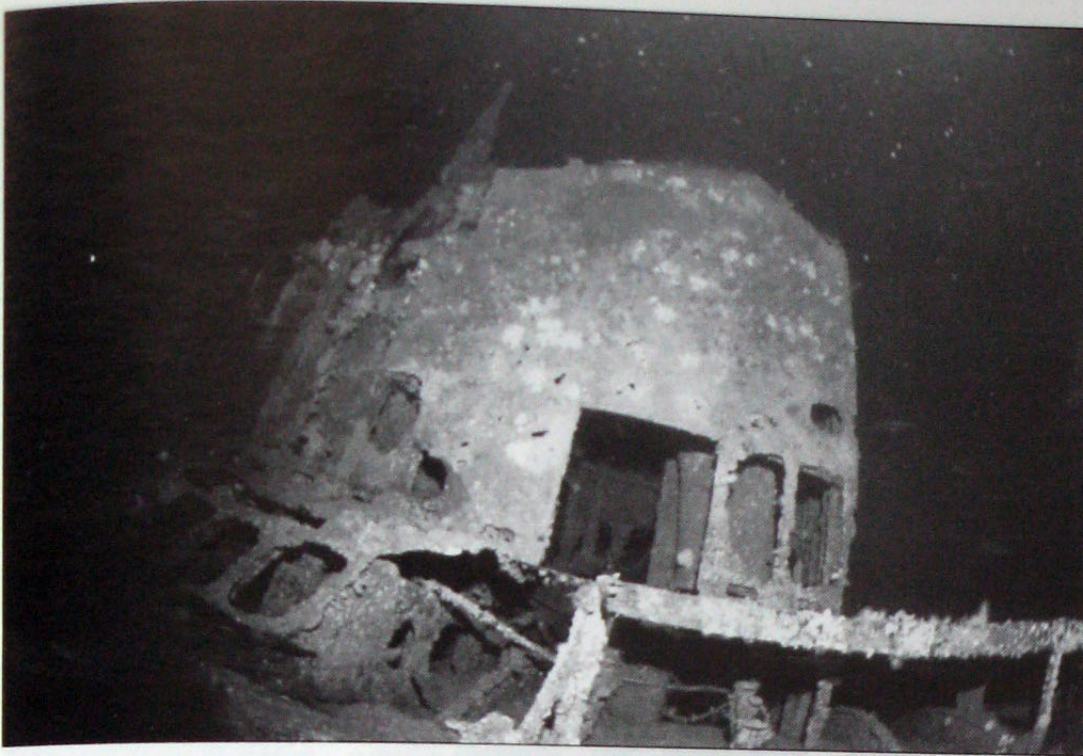
Blessed with great weather, in July 2001 the expedition was able to dive on ten different wrecks. It turned out that eight were 'Deadlight' U-Boats and two were U-Boat war graves from World War Two. Of the former, six are thought to be *U-2511*, *U-218*, *U-778*, *U-281*, *U-155* and *U-637*. Two other Type VIIC U-Boats could not be satisfactorily identified.

Four of these wrecks in particular resulted in fantastic dives as the targets themselves are historically important.

Kapitänleutnant Adalbert Schnee (*left*), awarded the Ritterkreuz in August 1941 when he commanded the *U-201* (see *After the Battle* No. 55, page 44) having sunk a total of 23 ships. He was transferred to U-Boat headquarters late in 1941, the Oakleaves being added to his award the following July. He was specially selected by Admiral Dönitz to command the first of the new Type XXI craft — the *U-2511* (*right*) — which was commissioned on September 29, 1944. Sea trials were cut short so that she could carry out the first Type XXI war mission.



How fascinating to rediscover Schnee's submarine now on the seabed off the northern coast of Ireland having foundered on its way to the deep-water scuttling area. Here Innes takes underwater video of the wreck which lies at a depth of around 250 feet. A sub-aqua diver can only spend 20 minutes at this depth and then has to spend another two hours decompressing during the return to the surface.



Left: The conning tower after being submerged for 55 years. Right: The 30mm Flak gun in its turret.

U-2511

Alan Wright located the wreck of *U-2511* in 1999. Since then it had not been re-visited until the expedition went there and photographed and videoed it extensively. Diving at midday on Sunday, July 15 in bright sunshine, on descent the wreck became visible at a depth of 45 metres and it was possible to see the entire submarine lying on a white sandy bottom, clearly recognisable as Adalbert Schnee's *U-2511*.

A tour of this wreck reveals that it lies on its port side and is essentially completely intact. The pointed section of the bow has gone and the divers could clearly see all six of the forward torpedo tubes. Continuing along the hull, the torpedo-loading hatch was open. Beyond that, the massive conning tower, which dominates the wreck, came into view. The forward flak turret is still in place, looking absolutely spectacular, as did the slightly raised sky periscope. The conning tower hatch was open as was the hatch that led to the stern flak turret. This has fallen off the tower and lies upside down on the seabed. Aft of the tower, the wreck is complete, all the way to the stern, where the hydroplanes and single rudder are still in position.

The *U-2511* was sunk by gun-fire after her towing cable broke and there is a sizeable shell hole in her starboard side alongside the tower. Swimming into this hole revealed a mass of cabling and many batteries all along the keel section of the wreck. Looking forward, the divers could see the open bulkhead door leading to the forward compartment.

This was one of the most spectacular U-Boat dives we made as it is a rare sight to have such good visibility underwater to see an entire submarine in view at 69 metres. This was made all the more significant by the fact that the wreck was the *U-2511*, the only Type XXI to approach an Allied navy convoy, and perhaps the most historically important U-Boat in the 'Deadlight' fleet. She has now been photographed and filmed for posterity, recording the spectacular, if salutary reminder of the massive jump in submarine design and technology carried out by the Germans during the war.

On the last day of the war, just as she was told to surface and surrender, Schnee spotted a Royal Navy convoy of some destroyers screening a cruiser. To test the attack potential of the Type XXI, Schnee approached the convoy at 16 knots, reached a position where he could not have missed the cruiser, but then turned away and escaped unnoticed.

Interestingly, when one looks at photos of *U-2511* in Norway, or during Operation 'Deadlight', she appears to be a light grey, even white, while the other Type XXIs around her seem to be painted in the standard navy-issue grey. It appears that Schnee had taken a ride in an aircraft over his base

in Norway and seen the way that the XXIs stood out from above. He then decided to re-paint *U-2511* with a brighter colour which gave it a higher degree of camouflage. She is therefore the easiest U-Boat to identify from archival photos, being essentially unique.



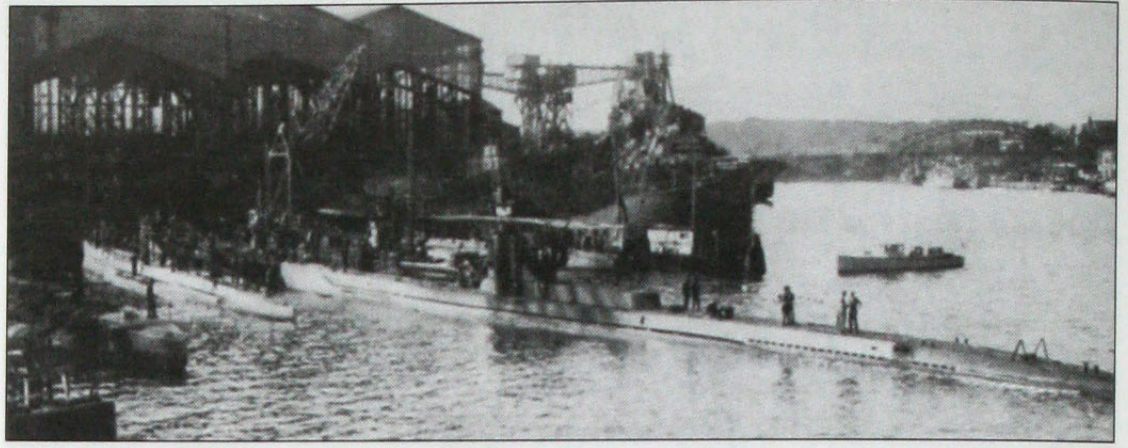
The starboard propeller. The battery power of the Type XXI was trebled compared with earlier boats but still only gave an endurance of 30 nautical miles when running fully submerged at 15 knots. However, with the diesel engines breathing through the Schnorchel, this range was increased to some 285 miles at the lower speed of six knots.

U-218

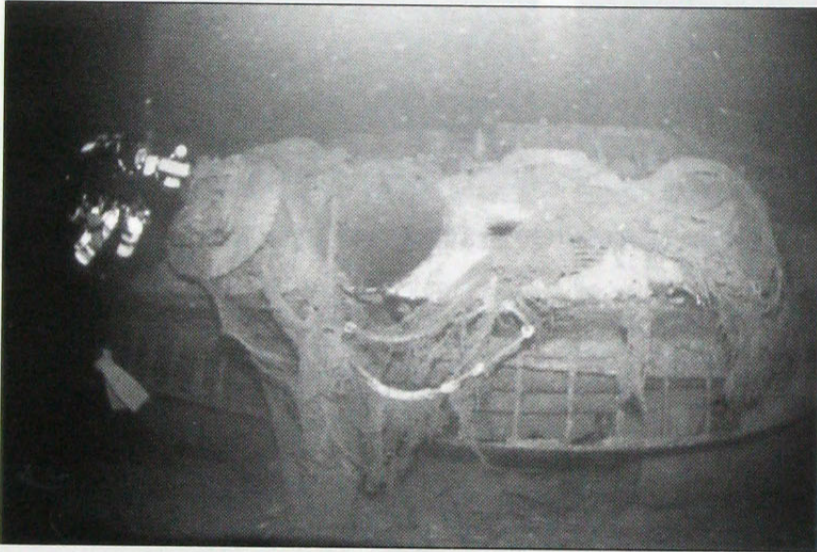
This wreck lies 1½ miles away from its reported sinking position. The *U-218* — one of the very rare VIID minelaying variant designs — foundered under tow while on her way to be expended as an aircraft target.

We found the wreck at a depth of 60 metres in very good visibility with much ambient light. She was an absolutely incredible sight and the superb conditions made for high quality video and stills images.

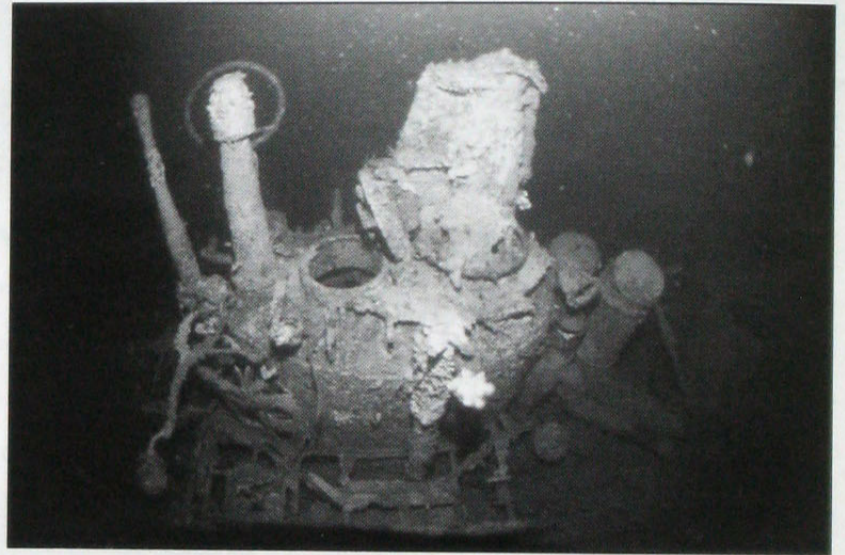
She lies at an angle with a 45-degree list to port but, apart from minor damage to bow and stern, the U-Boat is completely intact. The five-chute mine section behind the conning tower made this wreck easily recognisable. So far she is the only VIID in the world that has been dived on which made her a rare treat for the diving team.



The *U-218* pictured on August 17, 1942 after final commissioning work had been completed at the Germania shipyard at Kiel.



The main difference with the Type VIID was the mine tubes (left) fitted behind the tower (right). The D series could carry 15 mines and a minefield laid by the *U-218* off Lizard Head in



Cornwall in August 1944 is reputed to have claimed one of the last victims of the war — a fishing trawler sunk two months after the end of hostilities.

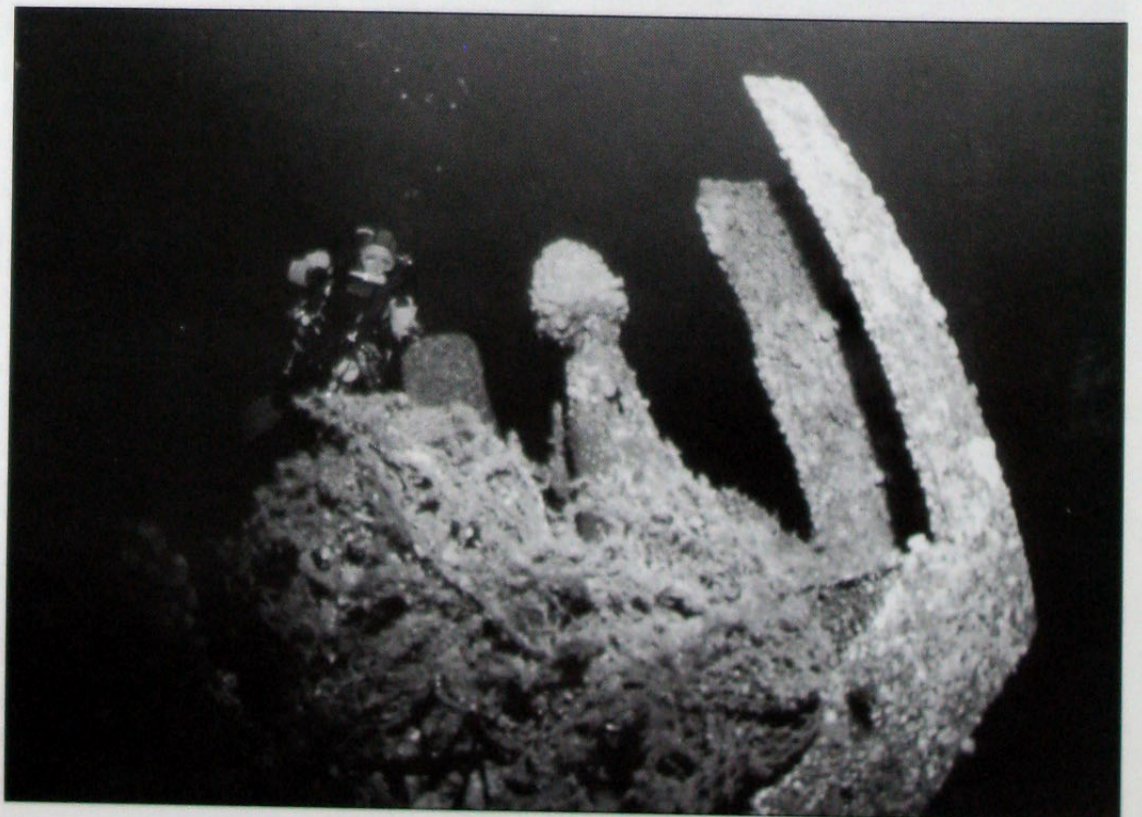
U-155

The location of this most famous submarine was one of the key expedition targets and everyone wanted to be the first to dive on Adolf Piening's U-Boat. In stunning visibility at 73 metres, the unmistakable giant shape of the Type IXC was found sitting bolt upright on the bottom. Her forward hydroplanes and torpedo tubes have fallen off to one side, revealing the bow end of her pressure hull but, apart from this damage, the wreck was entirely intact. This included all of the outer cladding attached to the pressure hull which gave this wreck the 'beamy' shape of the Type IX.

The Schnorchel was still in place on the starboard side of the foredeck (with round dipole); the heavily reinforced support for the winter-garden still intact; and the conning tower was hatch open allowing the divers to clearly see into the control room via the opened lower hatch. The aft dingy recess on the deck was empty and both external torpedo doors were shut. This was undoubtedly

one of the most impressive dives carried out during the expedition. Piening took *U-155* on several long patrols off Africa, South America and the Caribbean and sank 25 ships in the process. Among them was the aircraft carrier *HMS Avenger* which he sent to the bottom with over 600 of her crew off Gibraltar on November 15, 1942. She was the sixth-largest warship to be sunk by a U-Boat in WW2.

Below: David Blenkurn swims towards the barnacle-covered conning tower of the *U-155*, the same one once occupied by the legendary Kapitänleutnant Adolf Piening, pictured (left) when he won his Ritterkreuz in August 1942. The framework of the bridge can be seen, along with the surface-firing control pillar and double periscope housing.





Unfortunately, problems with the stills photography prevented pictures being taken of the *U-778* and the *U-1014* but those of the other war grave loss discovered during the expedition are reproduced here. At first, Innes believed they had come across the wreck of the *U-743* which had been depth-charged near the 'Deadlight' sinking area in September 1944.

However, further research indicated that it is more than likely that it is the wreck of the *U-1003* which was known to have been rammed in this area by the Canadian frigate *New Glasgow* on March 20, 1945. Above: These two views show the remains of the conning tower with the periscope bent over at right-angles and the ready-use ammo locker for the AA guns.

U-778

The wreck of this U-Boat is the most intact that the author has ever seen and it is certainly the finest example of a sunken Type VIIC U-Boat anywhere in the world. The conning tower retains its cladding and all of its bridge equipment — a very rare sight indeed.

The wreck has a mounting for an 88mm deck-gun and it is Schnorchel-equipped. There were no life-raft canisters remaining on the bow.

The *U-778* only made one patrol off Peterhead during the last weeks of the war, sinking no ships, and her newness at the time of her sinking may account for her remarkable state of preservation.

THE WAR GRAVES

U-1014

After a period of bad weather, we left Portrush to dive on what we hoped would be the *U-1014*. She was a Type VIIC launched in January 1944 and attacked by the Royal Navy frigates HMS *Loch Scavaig*, *Loch Shin*, *Nyasaland* and *Papua* on February 4, 1945. After being depth-charged she was sent to the bottom and we found the wreck to be extremely badly damaged. It appears to have suffered several direct hits as it has been holed in at least three places, reducing the submarine to a useless hulk. It is clear that the crew must have died quickly. The blast holes are in the forward torpedo room, the area around the captain's bunk/sound/radio rooms, and aft of the winter-garden. The damage amidships is so bad that little of the conning tower remains and the hydraulic elevator for the Schnorchel is now lying where the captain would have slept! Only the 'Atlantic' bow and the stern remain undamaged.

The wreck is heavily populated with lobsters and conger eels. And as it is classified as a war grave, we only inspected it from the outside.

U-1003

The team was in the process of attempting to find another Type XXI U-Boat when we came across something very different right on the outer edge of the cluster of 'Deadlight' wrecks. At 69 metres, we found the wreck of a Type VIIC U-Boat which must be a war loss and not one of the 'Deadlight' fleet because:

- a) The attack periscope and Schnorchel have been damaged at about the height of the conning tower. The base of the Schnorchel stands upright, still located in its collar on the conning tower, but the attack periscope is bent right over, so that the lens is buried in the seabed.
- b) There are closed ready-use ammunition lockers around the collapsed winter-garden area whereas the 'Deadlight' U-Boats were stripped of all ammunition.
- c) All the hatches on the wreck are closed suggesting that it was schnorcheling at the time of sinking. There are also no signs of damage to the pressure hull as could be expected if this had been sunk during 'Deadlight' scuttlings.
- d) The position does not tally with any Type VIICs sunk during 'Deadlight'.

From the damage to the wreck, it seems likely that this submarine was in a collision while schnorchelling, which resulted in the boat flooding. Other observations made on the wreck included the fact that it had not been fitted with life-raft canisters on the bows and that it seemed to have been constructed to carry a deck-gun as the mounting

could be seen forward of the conning tower. There was no evidence of an air radar search receiver on the head of the Schnorchel.

Investigating a wreck that seems to be a war grave was a sombre experience for the expedition divers, and the author, working with the German historian Dr Axel Niestle, first identified this boat as the *U-743* which had been depth-charged by the frigate HMS *Helmsdale* and the corvette *Portchester Castle* in September 1944.

OPERATION DEADLIGHT 2002-3

There are still many U-Boats left to visit for the first time since 1945, and some old friends to look up again, so over time we should be able to build up an accurate record of all the accessible 'Deadlight' wrecks and work toward identifying them all. A huge body of information relating to these wrecks is being assembled and all will be codified into a final report sometime in the future.

For more information about Operation 'Deadlight', the wrecks and the expeditions, and availability of the video of the expedition which includes underwater footage of all the wrecks go to: www.periscopublishing.com



The broken-off Schnorchel lies nearby on the sand.