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AHOY SHIPMATE

RNA Torbay Newsletter

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British Phrases That Always Confuse Americans. (More next issue)

Although Americans and Brits both speak English, there are tons of confusing British phrases, words, and slang that have unique meanings. Here are the ones you should know.

"A right bodge job"

This is one those British phrases that refers to something someone has done poorly.

"Getting pissed"

This British slang phrase means getting drunk.

"I'll give you a bell"

This means you will call someone on the phone later. It has nothing to do with an actual bell!

"Horses for courses"

This phrase essentially means different people like or are made for different things.

"Totally chuffed"

At first glance, you might assume this means being worn out or tired. But it actually means pleased or thrilled!

"Having a chinwag"

Having a chat or a talk is the same as "having a chinwag"—which makes sense since our mouths move when we speak!

Editorial

By Shipmate Norrie Millen

Hi! Shipmates,

Athis will be the last newsletter of the year, may I begin by wishing all shipmates, their wives & families **Peace, Happiness and Joy for Christmas and a Prosperous New Year**

Once again a very successful Trafalgar Night largely due to all the hard work put in by our Acting Local Unpaid Social Secretary (Pro Tem) I thoroughly enjoyed myself as I feel sure all that attended did as well. The entertainer Sandy Sparkle had the dance floor packed for the entire length of her show. By the time you get to read this I will have attended a Pickle Night at the Lord Leycester Hospital for veterans. Similar to Chelsea Pensioners, but 150 years older. What is Pickle night some you might ask? I will give you a brief rundown on Pickle Night.

November 4, Pickle Night, marking the arrival of HMS Pickle in Falmouth with news of the victory and of Nelson's death.

Lieutenant John Lapenotiere on HMS *Pickle* was carrying the news of victory over the French and Spanish fleet at Trafalgar and the death of Lord Nelson. He reported 'Sir, we have won a great victory, but we have lost Lord Nelson!'

HMS *Pickle* was one of the superyachts of her day. Carefully maintained by the Admiralty, her officers and crew were handpicked, and her fore-and-aft rig and her copper-bottom - which was cleaned and repaired at least once a year - gave her a speed advantage over other ships. Traditionally, Trafalgar Dinner is celebrated by officers of the Royal Navy whilst Pickle night is celebrated by Warrant Officers and Senior rates.

Tradition dies hard which is not a bad thing, although I very much doubt that counts for much in Britain's modern navy!

The way I see it anyway!

WISHING YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES A HEALTHY AND HAPPY 2019



Chairman's Corner

By Shipmate John Soanes

Our 2018 Trafalgar Night Dinner at the Redcliffe Hotel was a complete success, we enjoyed the company of invited guests from Newton Abbot RNA, The Royal British Legion and the local RAF Association, swelling our total to well over fifty including wives and partners sitting down to a first class dinner presided over by our President S/M Terry Membery.

Our guest of honour Kevin Foster MP accompanied by his wife Hazel certainly seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves. Kevin's speech prior to proposing a toast to 'The Immortal Memory' was very interesting and enjoyed by all, his wife Hazel was presented with a lovely bouquet of flowers by Terry's wife Wendy.

A special word of thanks must go to our Branch Secretary S/M Tony Mordaunt MSM who made all the arrangements and not forgetting S/M Ken Dustan for enthusiastically selling the raffle tickets; not forgetting S/M Norrie Millen, who printed all the amusing place and menu cards. RNA members are to be congratulated for the quantity and quality of the prizes. The first prize the bottle of Pusser's rum kindly donated by our Patron Captain Chris Wreford-Brown was won by another submariner S/M Mick Readdy.

Sandy Sparkle entertained us all with an excellent rendition of popular well

known songs, I have never seen so many people of the dance floor!

"FROM MOPEDS TO MINEHUNTERS"

In the summer of 1993 *HMS IVESTON* was one of many Ton Class vessels laid up in Portsmouth awaiting transfer or disposal. The Ministry of Defence announced that at least two of them were to be made available to Sea Cadet Units.

Lieutenant Bob James RNR the Commanding Officer of *HMS BOXER*, the Thurrock, Essex Sea Cadet Unit, made application and was awarded the care of *HMS IVESTON*

The ship was towed by a tug from Portsmouth and arrived at her new berth at Tilbury, Essex in Saturday 28th August 1993. (*Not towed overland and re-floated as reported in the National Press*)

The next day Sunday 29th August engineers with the aim of restoring power to the ship. attempted to start one of the ship's six cylinder Foden supercharged diesel generators, but not surprisingly after over a year laid up in Portsmouth the generator failed to 'fire up'.

A civilian instructor with the Cadet Unit decided to contact his father who was an

RAC patrolman who duly arrived with his patrol van and eventually



with aid of very long jump leads. connected his Isuzu Trooper patrol van and one of the officer's cars. He eventually fired the huge generator into life. Everyone was 'over the moon', the ship was alive again and there were happy faces all around.

The RAC patrolman commented at the time "It's definitely the biggest thing I have ever had to jump-start

but the principle is the same whether it's a car, a plane or a ship - It's still an engine"

He thinks this is probably the heaviest non-start job attempted by any patrolman, unless you know better!

John Soanes

With thanks to the Thurrock Sea Cadet Unit.

ACTING LOCAL SOCIAL REP'S CORNER



I don't wish to repeat all that has already been said about the Trafalgar Dinner, other than to thank Members for supporting the event.

35 Members and their guests attended the Dinner along with 28

colleagues from other veteran groups around the Bay and their guests. 35 is a

good number but 53 is a whole lot better and a thanks go to all those who supported us.

It is very important that the veteran groups around the Bay support each other

at social events it makes for a much better evening or lunch and the events more sustainable. I urge all those who are able to support our colleagues in the Newton Abbot RNA and the RMA with their social events Newton Abbot RNA and the RMA with their social events.

Next on the Agenda is our Festive Lunch, I really feel we need a different name for this Lunch as the Festive Season has faded into the past by the time we have our Lunch; perhaps it could be called Torbay Annual

Lunch or something similar. Anyway, to get back on track, your support for this event is needed, you can start your diets afterwards, along with decent raffle prizes.

I am always looking at ways we may get together more regularly, it doesn't have to be a formal dinner or Lunch it could be anything. Sensible Ideas to this poor soul please, it doesn't have to involve food and alcohol but I think it certainly



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helps.

## **Hon. Secretary's Corner**

*By Shipmate Tony Mordaunt*

*I'll Quill if you Quill!*

Welcome to Secretary's Corner where I will be trying to keep you informed of events past and present. It has been a busy few months and I must thank Norrie for noticing my deliberate mistakes and correcting them for me.

I feel the biggest talking point over the last few months has been the very generous legacy left to us by David Cartwright. David was a truly inspirational man to everyone who knew him, never a complaint and always willing to give anything a go, no matter how hard or uncomfortable it was for him. He always had a smile and a laugh for almost every occasion and he will be



missed by many. We would be failing him if we did not keep his memory alive, which brings me on to my next point.

I am of the belief that we should be actively supporting the Torquay Sea Cadets; we should have a strong liaison with them. David's legacy is just the incentive we need, and I wholeheartedly support the proposal that one of our Members presents the trophies we have and will be presenting to them to the winning cadets. I feel there is a place for a Sea Cadet Liaison Officer if we can find someone willing to take on the role. After all some of the Cadets may well be us in the future.

As this is the last Newsletter of the year, may I wish everyone a very happy Christmas and an even happier New Year..



Larger and more pictures on Branch website at

[https://www.candoo.com/ulsternorrie/rna\\_torbay/2018/traf2018.html](https://www.candoo.com/ulsternorrie/rna_torbay/2018/traf2018.html)

## How F-35A fighter pilots are harnessing high-tech 'see-through' helmets

*By Allison Barrie Defence Specialist*

The F-35 Gen III Helmet Mounted Display System, made by Rockwell Collins, lets pilots "see-through" their fifth-generation fighter jets. Like the new F-35A Lightning II, the helmet takes technology to an entirely new level and introduces a host of new capabilities.

Hill Air Force Base in Utah is home to the U.S. Air Force's first operational F-35A squadron. While inside the area where pilots don their state-of-the-art gear before getting in the cockpit of an F-35A, Maj. Jayson "Vato" Rickard of the 419th Fighter Wing gave me an inside look at the helmet from a fighter pilot's perspective.

### So how exactly can pilots see "through" the F-35

F-35s leverage DAS –the Distributed Aperture System. In the simplest of terms, it means that aircraft has a number of external cameras and sensors that can feed data seamlessly to the pilot. The helmet plugs into the plane, linking the helmet computer with the aircraft's. There are optical and magnetic trackers that track 360 degrees wherever the pilot points his or her head. "The cameras cover a 360-degree sphere around the aircraft so I can move my head in any direction and be able to access those sensors.

Particularly useful for night-time," Rickard explained.

From a fighter pilot's perspective, what difference does the new helmet make? "It's huge for

situational awareness for us ... flying at night. Most important for safety," Rickard said. "It gives me a horizon reference - when it is completely dark outside I can use those infrared cameras that tell which end is up, where the sky is, and where the ground is."

### Other important features

Integrated night vision is another key advance. "We've got several cameras up here. One of them is a day vision camera and one of them is a night-vision camera, so independent of that with the DAS we talked about, with the 360 degrees and looking through [to demonstrate, he looked through the floor of the aircraft]... there's actually a camera up there that allows me to fly without night vision goggles as I would in my visor... this little outer visor is a sun shield and in here is where the image projects ... it's what we call the display visor."

"There's about a 30 to 40 degree image over both eyes - handy at night, but we use it extensively in the daytime for keying our weapons and maintaining situational awareness," he added.

Is it hard to use such an advanced piece of tech? "They made it very well. They made it very intuitive so cavemen fighter pilots such as myself can just plug it in and it just adds another layer of situational awareness ... so very easy to get used to, takes maybe 5 to 10 minutes of looking around before you have it figured out," said Rickard.

### Heads up

One notable absence from the F-35A





cockpit is the large piece of glass for the pilot's heads up display. But it's not missing –the heads up is integrated into the Gen III helmet. "The heads up display is actually displayed right there in my visor, so it's just completely seamless as I look at where a heads up display would be, there's a very perfect, very stable heads up display," said Rickard. "So that's a new fifth-generation improvement - we don't actually have a heads up display as a separate piece of glass."

"Tactically, it's very useful as well because I can look out the window and find a target on the ground, I can designate and employ weapons targets on the ground or up in the air" he added. "What it really brings is my ability to look around 360 degrees and target bad guys."

The Major said that the system encourages him to look around. "As fancy as our fifth-gen fighter is with all our sensors there's nothing that substitutes for looking out the window and picking out a bad guy and this display actually encourages me to do that instead of just staring inside," he said.

### **Bespoke Helmets**

The bespoke helmet weighs about four pounds and has a great center of gravity. "This helmet is specifically built for me," said Rickard. "In fact, I sat in a scanner and they took lasers to scan my head to fit this thing so it fits me extremely well ... as

bulk



y as it looks it is actually very comfortable."

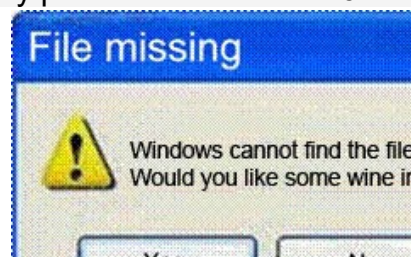
"Has to be custom built," he added. "Very critical that the helmet fits perfectly because any movement laterally, up or down, affects my ability to use the helmet sensor....[without this precise fit] the symbology wouldn't line up, I'd have a difficult time targeting stuff on the ground, stuff and in the air, so it's very critical that it's fit specifically to me."

### **Post Mission Analysis**

The Air Force will use data from the Gen III helmets for reconstructing missions. "The reason we are the best air force in the world is because we spend hours debriefing everything," he said. "In an hour and half sortie we might spend three or four hours debriefing ... so that actually records my helmet image and allows us to reconstruct a mission ... figure out what we did right what we did wrong and develop lessons learned."

### **From an F-35 fighter pilot's perspective**

Rickard says that F-35A will prove a critical weapon in the Air Force's arsenal. "It's absolutely where we need to go for taking the fight to the enemy, particularly in tomorrow's wars the enemy continues to get more and more advanced, the 5<sup>th</sup> generation aspects, the stealth, the sensor fusion [tech] ... is going to allow us to operate in a very contested environment, to where we will have a difficult time getting there with some of the legacy platforms like the F-16."



## Amazing Photos Of Russia Dismantling An Outdated Nuclear Submarine

*Compiled from an idea submitted by Shipmate Gord McLennan*

Russia is currently expanding and modernizing its navy

Russia has nuclear submarines that are dangerously past their prime, considering the fissile materials that are still stored onboard.

This rusted behemoth was transported to a factory in the far eastern port city of Vladivostok, close to the Korean peninsula, for decommissioning.

With the vessel fully out of water, the pictures offer an amazing perspective on how massive and complex even an outdated class of nuclear submarine really is.

The decommissioning of Russian nuclear-powered vessels is an issue of major concern to the United States and to the Scandinavian countries near Russia.

From 1950 to 2003, the Soviet Union and its major successor state, Russia, constructed the largest nuclear-powered navy in the world, more ships than all other navies combined: 248 submarines (91 attack submarines, 62 cruise missile submarines, 91 ballistic missile submarines and four research submarines), four Kirov class battlecruisers, and a missile test ship, as well as nine icebreakers. Many were or are powered by two reactors each, bringing the total to 468 reactors. With the end of the Cold War and with its navy chronically underfunded, Russia has decommissioned many of these



**At 117 yards, the Victor-class submarine is longer than a football field**

vessels, and according to one report dated November 2008, intended to scrap all decommissioned submarines (more than 200) by 2012. However, the safety records of the Soviet and Russian navies and the budgetary constraints on the Russian government are matters of great concern. Ships awaiting decommissioning receive little maintenance, and there are insufficient waste storage facilities, raising worries about possible ecological damage from accidents or improper storage.

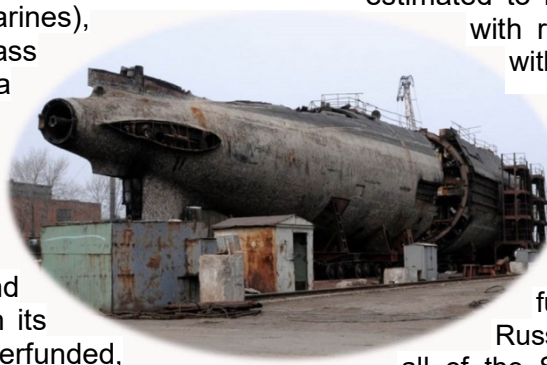
### Overview

In the midst of the Cold War, the Soviet Union was more concerned about building up its fleet, rather than making provisions for the disposal of aging nuclear-powered vessels. It was not until 1986 that "the Central Committee of the Communist party and the Supreme Soviet ratified Decree No. 095-296 which laid down formal procedures for decommissioning and dismantling inactive nuclear submarines." By this time, the first generation November class submarines had been in service for over 20 years. By comparison, the service life expectancy of the more modern Delta IVs is estimated to be between 20 and 30 years with regular overhauls, or 10 to 15 without.

Progress was hindered by the large number of government bodies involved, resulting in much confusion and competition. The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 further complicated matters. Russia assumed responsibility for all of the Soviet Navy's nuclear-powered ships, but agreements between agencies



**In its apparant state of decay, it's no wonder the sub had to be hauled to its seaside destination.**





responsible for decommissioning had to be renegotiated.

The major issues are financial. In 1995, a Northern Fleet submarine based near Murmansk nearly suffered a nuclear meltdown when power was cut off due to unpaid electricity bills. Decommissioned vessels are often left in floating storage until funds can be allocated for their dismantling. As of November 2001, "up to 40% of the decommissioned submarines have been in floating storage without much maintenance for more than 10 years".

The situation has caused concern in other countries, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Japan and the Scandinavian countries, which have contributed funding and assistance. The Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC) was a joint Norwegian, Russian, and American government consortium (later joined by the British) set up to deal with military environmental issues, mainly the dismantling of Russia's nuclear submarine fleet in Europe. After the "somewhat acrimonious dissolution" of AMEC, the Norwegian and British governments shared the £3.9 million cost of dismantling a November class submarine. Under AMEC's successor, Cooperative Threat Reduction, the British government financed the dismantling of two Oscar I submarines. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program has been responsible for the deactivation and destruction of many weapons, including 33 nuclear submarines. With the "Star of Hope" program, Japan has funded the dismantling of five Victor III and one Charlie I submarines in the Far East.

Security is also an issue. Russian sailors have been convicted and jailed for security breaches.

## Reactor disposal

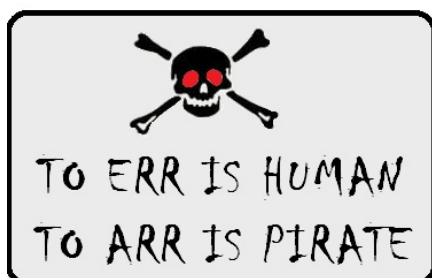
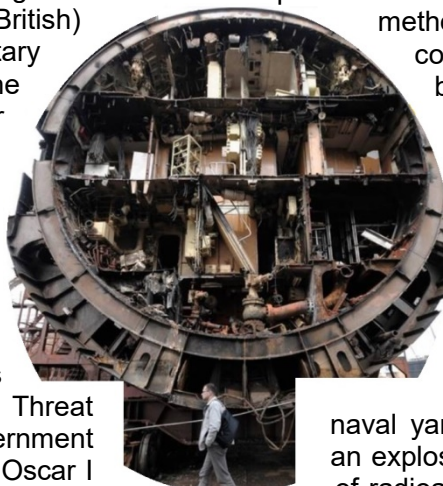
Removing the fuel from a nuclear reactor requires a specially trained team. The coolant is drained first. A reactor must be cooled down for at least three years after its final shutdown before this can be done.<sup>[1]</sup> The hull above the reactor is then removed, followed by the top shield. The fuel elements are extracted and transported by ship and then rail to a storage facility.

The still heavily radioactive reactor compartment can then be cut away. (Most Russian submarines have two reactors, "in separate rooms, but in the same compartment." Due to a lack of land storage facilities, two adjoining emptied compartments, one forward and one aft, are usually cut off as well to provide buoyancy for storage on water. In some cases, however, only the reactor compartment is removed, and pontoons attached to keep it afloat. A third method involves filling the reactor compartment with polystyrene for buoyancy. "Reactor compartments from Polyarny and other shipyards at the Kola Peninsula and in Severodvinsk, Arkhangelsk county, are towed to Sayda Bay".

On 10 August 1985, control rods were incorrectly removed from a Victor class submarine during defueling at Chazma Bay naval yard outside Vladivostok, resulting in an explosion, the "release of large amounts of radioactivity", and ten deaths. In addition to this Victor, five other submarines have damaged cores preventing their defueling by normal methods.

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A Russian government report acknowledged in March 1993, that "during the period of 1965 to 1988 the Northern Fleet had dumped four reactor compartments with eight reactors (three containing damaged fuel) in the Abrosimov Gulf in 20 to 40 meters of water." Six other compartments, containing nine reactors in all, had also been dumped into the water in the 1960s and 1970s.



I saw a fella with a bumper sticker saying.....
I'm a vet; therefore I drive like an animal.
Suddenly I realised how many gynnaecologists there are on the road



Forgotten Tale of How Allied Bombers Chased a German Sub to Its Doom

From the Internet

Spanish divers have re-discovered the wreck of Nazi submarine 'U-966'

In June 2018, Spanish media reported that divers Anxi González Roca and Eduardo Losada and naval historian Yago Abilleira had re-discovered the wreck Nazi submarine *U-966*.

This is the dramatic story of how five Allied bombers from three countries chased *U-966* for nine hours

Rookie crew, doomed mission

U-966 was a Type VIIC U-boat, the most prolific type to serve in Nazi Germany's undersea campaign to cripple maritime supply lines between the United Kingdom and the United States. The 67-meter long vessel was built in Hamburg by Blohm & Voss and entered service on March 4, 1943 under command of Lt. Eckehard Wolf.

Dubbed "*Old Man*," Wolf was in fact only 25 years old, but his 50 crew were mostly inexperienced 19-to-21-year-olds. His subordinates remembered Wolf as a fatherly but hard-driving commander during their six months of training. "At this rate you will never be the sailors you can be," Wolf chided the crew in a speech, "maybe [good] lumber for bowling pins, but not good sailors!"

Thereafter, the crew named their submarine *Gut Holz* - "Good Wood," and created a coat of arms featuring bowling pins.

Wolf knew the odds of survival were long, having already served 16 months on two U-boats. Over the course of the war, more than 28,000 U-boat crewmen perished and 5,000 were captured—an 80-percent loss rate.

By 1943 the Allies were deploying adequate escort ships with effective sonars, and long-range anti-submarine patrol planes equipped with surface-search radars. Worse, British intelligence had broken *Enigma* code used by the German navy used to unwisely micro-manage its submarine operations.

After months of training in the Baltic, the 960-ton submarine transited to Trondheim, Norway on Sept. 17, pausing along the way to surface among Norwegian fishing boats. Though the startled fishermen offered them fresh catch, Wolf decided to submerge, worried that they might betray their presence to the Allies.

On Oct. 5, *U-966* departed Trondheim headed for the East Coast of the United States on its first — and only — combat patrol.

Under the cover of a sea storm, *U-966* managed to slip through the heavily-patrolled gap between Iceland and the Faroe Island. However, on Oct. 25 it ran afoul of two British destroyers.

Wolf crash dived *U-966* 150 meters below the surface while the destroyers circled overhead, dropping 87 depth charges by the terrified crew's count. The crew survived the bombardment, but *U-966*'s radio did not. The boat was unable to transmit messages.

After going three days without communication from *U-966*, the navy assumed it had been destroyed and stopped sending directions. Deprived of intel, Wolf nonetheless pressed on to the U.S. east coast, dodged a torpedo possibly launched by a fellow U-boat and made an unsuccessful attack on an Allied convoy.

However, the Type VIIC was relatively short-range submarine — 9,800 miles — and without the radio it twice failed to rendezvous for refuelling with Type Xb tanker submarines, one of which had in fact been sunk.

Realizing he was flailing around blindly, Wolf decided to return to base in southern France via the Bay of Biscay, waters heavily patrolled by Allied planes.

The Type VIIC used two diesel engines to generate electricity. While surfaced, the air-consuming generators could run continuously, propelling the submarine to a top speed of 20 miles per hour.



Delivery of U-966 in Hamburg in January 1943

Submerged, it couldn't exceed eight miles per hour, and even that pace would drain the batteries and air supply in a matter of hours. These limitations common to all early World War II submarines meant they had to surface frequently for extended periods of time. Naturally, submarine commanders preferred to recharge batteries at night.

On Oct. 10, 1943 *U-966* was doing precisely that when it was detected by a Wellington GR Mark XI bomber of the RAF Coastal Command's 612 Squadron. The twin-engine medium had a useful maximum range approaching 2,000 miles and mounted a Mark 2 ASV 2 radar that could distinguish a submarine from background clutter produced by waves at ranges of around six to 10 miles in fair weather.

The pilot, Warrant Officer Ian Gunn, soon spotted the submarine in the moonlight. He could have turned on the 22-million candle power Leigh Light slung under one wing to better illuminate his target, but chose take the sub by surprise.

The eyes of the watchman were still adjusting to the dark and he could not hear the airplane over sub's rumbling diesel engines. The Wellington swept down to 100 feet and released six Mark IX 250-pound depth charges full of Torpex explosives, all of which fell short. But depth charges are designed to rupture a submarine's hull without a direct hit.

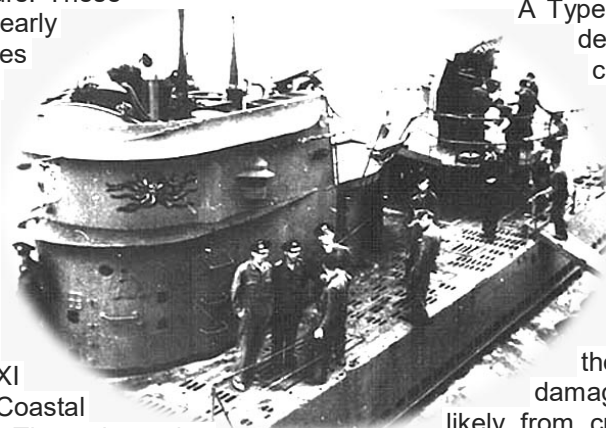
"It was as if an invisible hand grabbed and shook the boat," crewman Herebert Komer recalled. "Complete darkness came over us and in a moment the emergency lights came on. There was total chaos! Everything not tied down went flying and broken glass was everywhere."

U-966 had a twin-barrel 20-millimeter automatic cannon and a heavier 37-millimeter gun for self-defense. These chattered into life, arcing tracers into the night sky. The tail and front gunners on the Wellington raked *U-966*'s deck in reply with 500 rounds, wounding two crew.

Three minutes later, the bomber banked around for another strafing run—but the submarine had disappeared. "We flew over the area for nearly two-and-a-half hours afterwards and searched a radius of five or six miles but we saw nothing more," Gunn later wrote.

In fact, Wolf had ordered a crash dive to 150 meters. But *U-966* was badly damaged, and the submarine continued plummeting beyond its safe

test depth, the pressure causing the tortured metal of its damaged hull to creak and moan eerily.



A Type VIIC submarine's crushing depth at which its hull begins collapsing from the pressure of the surrounding water lay between 250 to 295 meters. *U-966* finally stabilized at 240 meters.

Gunn's attack had inflicted grievous damage, however. One of the main bearings was damaged and water was leaking, likely from cracks in the ballast tanks. Worse, the port side diesel engine had been knocked out, leaving *U-966* with just one functioning generator.

Attack of the Liberators

Gunn's sighting caused hulking four-engine Liberator bombers of the U.S. Navy to begin circling the area. The chunky B-24 was the most-produced military aircraft ever by the United States with around 18,500 built. It boasted long range of nearly 3,000 miles and decent speed, though it was little loved for its difficult handling characteristics.

The U.S. Navy and RAF Coastal Command operated a B-24D variant called the PB4Y-1 and Liberator GR III, respectively equipped with a retractable radar dome and modified .50-caliber machine-gun turrets.

These far-flying Liberators were able to hunt in the "mid-Atlantic gap" previously beyond the reach of patrol planes, closing a window vulnerability *U-boats* had ruthlessly exploited.

Wolf kept *U-966* submerged for as long as possible to avoid detection. But after four hours, his remaining generator was running low on air, so he re-surfaced at 8:30 A.M. Taking up the watch, Wolf ominously ordered his crew to put on life jackets.

Barely a half hour later at 8:59 A.M., the PB4Y-1 flown by Lt. Leonard Harmon from Navy patrol bomber squadron VB-105 detected *U-966* at 44°15 North, 10° West — around 85 miles northwest of Spain.

This time, helmsman Hein Maslock spotted the attacker approaching from 260 degrees. The *U-boat*'s flak cannons riddled the B-24's port tail and stabilizer, jammed its open bomb bay doors and disabled the hydraulic release mechanism for the depth charges.

Unable to drop the charges, Harmon's B-24 instead made two strafing runs, shooting 2,000 rounds of .50-caliber into the submarine before limping home trailing smoke.

U-966 was next picked up at 11:40 A.M. just 18 miles northwest of Spain by a Liberator from VB-103 piloted by Lt. Kenneth Wright. The Navy Reserve pilot had earlier dodged interception by two Junker 88Rs, radar-equipped fighter bombers used by the Luftwaffe to hunt the lumbering Allied patrol planes over the Atlantic.

Ten minutes later, Wright unleashed a pattern of five Mark 24 depth charges that injured three German sailors. Then he swiveled around and launched an acoustic homing torpedo. This missed, as it wasn't designed to attack surfaced submarines. The U-boat was now trailing an oil slick behind it.

Wright harried *U-966* for an entire hour until 1:05 P.M., when he was joined by the VB-110 Liberator flown by Lt. W. Parish, who unleashed all six charges 100 feet parallel to the submarine's starboard side, nearly pitching it over on the port side.

At some point, one of the depth charges actually struck *U-966* and got stuck in its hull vents without exploding.

Wolf aggressively maneuvered the submarine to frustrate the bomber's aim. The flak gunners stitched the skies with more than 12,000 20- and 37-millimeter shells, until one of the twin 20-millimeter cannons overheated and exploded, mortally injuring a gunner.

Wright finally began flying home at 1:30 P.M. The badly-damaged submarine was now just 10 miles away from neutral Spain's Galician coast. The German crew recalled seeing "the white houses and church tower of Cariño."

U-966 had closed the distance to just a few hundred meters at 1:45 P.M. when a final Liberator fell upon it as it limped at 10 knots among Spanish fishing boats off the Ria Ortigueira estuary. First Sgt. Ottokar Žanta from 311 Squadron, the only Czech bomber unit in the RAF, decided not to use his six depth charges for fear of hitting the Spanish boats.

Luckily, he had a back-up armament — braces of four RP-3 armor-piercing 60-pound rockets under each wing.

While Parrish's B-24 provided covering fire, Zanta's Liberator made two rocket runs. Though three of his rockets misfired, four of the 3-inch diameter rockets struck the water and curved upward into the U-boat's hull, rupturing several compartments and the ballast tanks. *U-966*'s speed fell to just two knots.

Zanta made several more strafing runs then headed for home at 3:10 P.M., completing a nearly 12-hour-patrol.

Evaluation of Parish's performance by his unit commander. U.S. military document courtesy of Uboatarchive.net

Tragedy at Estaca de Bares

Wolf's crippled U-boat was on its last legs after nine hours of constant air attack. Suddenly, its crew spotted what they believed was a British corvette in the distance. Wolf had had enough — he ordered that the top secret documents be burned, told the crew to assemble on the deck to abandon ship and instructed his engineer to set a scuttling charge on a five-minute timer.

In fact, Wolf had spotted the Spanish coast guard vessel *Ardia*, which had been monitoring the engagement from afar. The case of mistaken identity almost immediately proved irrelevant as the submarine was suddenly "thrown upwards as if by an invisible fist." It had run aground on the craggy rocks of the Estaca de Bares peninsula near Punta Maeda.

Unfortunately, the turbulent waters swept away the inflatable life rafts before they could be secured. The submariners were forced to swim for their lives to the shore up to 300 meters away. Meanwhile, the engineer opened *U-966*'s flood valves and Wolf and three companions jumped overboard.

Only a handful made it to shore. Most of the rest, battling against the violent surf and struggling to support wounded comrades, clung on to the razor sharp rocks poking through the surf. Behind them they heard their submarine explode — though whether this was due to the scuttling charge or the pressure-sensitive depth charge lodged in the stern is uncertain.

There was a tragic final act to the day's violent events. The struggling submariners spotted a portly white seaplane approaching them from above. This was a four-engine RAF Short Sunderland III piloted by Flight Officer Arthur Franklin of 228 Squadron. The Sunderland was also a capable sub-hunter. But when Franklin spotted the Wolf's floundering crew, he tossed a life raft to them.

At that moment, a flight of three Ju-88R-2s from II/ZG.1 based in Bordeaux pounced upon the ungainly seaplane. Led by Lt. Albrecht Bellstedt, the twin-engine fighter-bombers raked the Sunderland with their three nose-mounted 20-millimeter cannons and machine guns.



Wellington in the moonlight

Franklin sent out one final radio message before his flying boat's port wing caught fire. The Sunderland split in two and smashed into the water, the wreck belching fire and smoke.

Finally, five local Spanish fishing boats — *Virgen de Covadonga*, *San Francisco*, *La Concha*, *Espasante* and *San Pedro* — braved the perilous reef to rescue the shipwrecked submariners and brought them safely to shore.

All were housed in local hotels, save for three heavily wounded sailors. Out of *U-966*'s 50 crew, three had perished on board the submarine and five drowned while swimming for shore. All 12 men aboard Franklin's Sunderland were killed.

Many sources claim in error that a smaller American-built Catalina float plane was shot down on Oct. 10. In fact, prior to the Sunderland's arrival, a Catalina IB from the Coastal Command's 202 squadron was active in the area, photographing the recovery of the German sailors. However, it returned to base. Records do not attest to any Catalinas being shot down in the area.

The fishermen recovered the bodies of six of the Sunderland's crew and all five of the drowned submariners. They were first interred locally, then re-buried in German and British military cemeteries in Cáceres and Bilbao, respectively.

The Spanish authorities were in an awkward position. Though General Franco leaned towards the Fascists who helped him seize power during the Spanish Civil War, it was clear the Allies were winning the war and it was important to maintain the appearance of neutrality.

Spanish judges determined that the crew counted as combatants, not castaways, leading to their internment at La Graña naval base with the crew of *U-760*, which had been interned at Vigo after fleeing Allied patrol planes.

That December, after a BBC radio broadcast mentioned just 30 of the 42 survivors, 10 of the unnamed men were secretly smuggled to France. Then in November 1944, Eckehard was hospitalized in Madrid, reportedly suffering from a lung condition that proved fatal.

In reality, he was smuggled back to Germany with false papers bearing the name "Erich Weber." Eckehard was promoted to captain and assumed command of a company of marine infantry defending Hamburg.

Shipwrecking in Spain was probably the best thing that could have happened to *U-966*'s crew. Afforded both their regular pay and a 240 peseta monthly stipend from the German consulate, the internees were allowed unsupervised free time in the city of Ferrol, where wine was only two pesetas a bottle and fine cognac was six.

By contrast, at least four of the repatriated German submariners again saw action. Only one survived.

U-966's conning tower could be seen protruding from the water at low tide for many years, though the wreck was scrapped in 1960s and eventually lost. Meanwhile, the crew of *U-966* felt such a connection to the site of their ordeal that they began holding regular reunions there in the 1970s, and Eckehard's son even married a local girl.

When the submarine commander passed away in 1978, his ashes were cast into the water of Punta Maeda near the grave of his only command.

Historian Juan Carlos Salgado [documented](#) an equally important aspect of this tale. The fate of the Allied pilots who hunted down *U-966*.

Fewer than two months after the battle on Dec. 28, 1943, Parish's B-24 crashed into a hill while returning to base. The entire crew died.

Six weeks later on Feb. 14, 1944, Wright shot down a Ju-88 in a dogfight over the Bay of Biscay, but was then forced to ditch his Liberator due to battle damage. His gunner and radio operator didn't make it out in time, and another crewman died from his wounds before the survivors were rescued by a RAF seaplane the next day.

A month later on the evening of March 12, Zanta departed on a mission in his Liberator with seven crew. They were never heard from again.

Harmon survived the war. His airplane passed to another crew, which disappeared over the Bay of Biscay late in February 1944. Wellington pilot Gunn also survived.



**The last Type VII- U-995 (Type VIIC/41)
German U-Boat Memorial Laboe**