

May 2010

I missed out on that e-mail I just sent I should have put ... wake up BRAT we have had the privilege of reading and seeing about Sid's famous Dad quite a few times over the years ...

He commanded HMS Wren which was part of Walkers famous Escort Group 2.....

He was also in command of HMS Burwell and was SNO in the exciting capture of U-boat 570 ... he later went aboard her in Iceland and explored her there ... later she was taken into the RN and sailed as HMS Graph.

He was in Clan line before and after the war

Sid is the cause of much grief to Madeleine as it was a result of looking for some info for Sid about HMS Wren that I became engrossed in, collected books and have studied in great depth The Battle of the Atlantic my library now extends to some 100 books ranging in value from \$5 to \$350 I have even caused another OW to gather some of the authoritative books too Barnsey

Note to above - Having made a perfectly civil request about Sid Wood's Father OW, this is the standard of the sort of abuse one gets from our beloved Kiwi brethren, Barnsey. (David Barnes). Ah well, shouldn't expect anything else really. He'll never change - hopefully.

Colin

May 2010



Mum, Dad and I in the wardroom of HMS Wren in Leith



HMS Burwell



Sid Wood's (OW) Dad (OW) on HMS Wren



HMS Burwell and U-570

See after page 3 for interesting story about U-570 sent to me by David Barnes OW



HMS Wren

The Old-timers of H.M.S. Witch

H.M.S. Witch, 18-year-old destroyer, boasts more veterans than any other ship of her size in the Royal Navy. Among her ratings are 19 men who are more than 40 years of age, the sum of their years being 861. Oldest of the veterans is Leading-stoker L. Anderson, aged 50, of Tavistock, Devon, who has spent 28 years at sea.

During the present war many of the pensioners returned to the Service, and have served in many waters.

They have escorted convoys up the East Coast, through "E-boats" Alley, have worked on Atlantic convoy escort duty, and performed similar duties off the eastern seaboard of North America and in the South Atlantic. They were in the Norwegian campaign, and helped to evacuate part of the B.E.F.

A proud possession is a letter from Colonel Frank Knox, U.S. Secretary of the Navy, thanking the ship's company for the rescue of the crew of an American merchantman in a gale off the American coast 18 months ago.

The ship also cherishes a number of pets. There are two monkeys, a dog and a cat with a kitten.

Picture shows A.B. M. Sexton, aged 47, holding Peanut, one of the ship's pets. With him are some of the other old-timers.

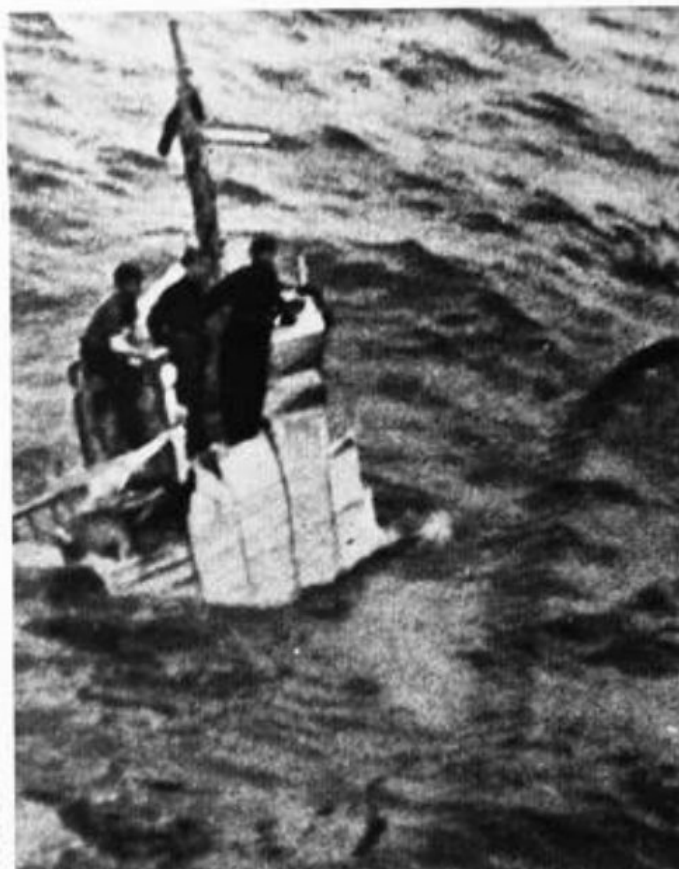


Lieut.-commander S. R. J. Woods, commanding officer of the Witch.



surface. The captain of H.Wren, Lt-Comdr R M Aubury, RN, hung a lifebelt to the injured swimmer and after picking him up, manoeuvred alongside the bobbing mainplane stump to allow the other five survivors to climb aboard. Six of the Australian crew were lost, including the skipper, Fry, whose raw courage in pressing his attack and then trying to save his crew can only be described as incredible. The survivors' only satisfaction was to learn that their target, U-454, had been smashed in two and sunk within seconds.

SURVIVORS. After attacking and sinking the U-454, Flight Lieutenant K G Fry of 10 SQUADRON RAAF crashed and lost his life on August 1st, 1943. Here the few crew survivors are clinging to the only floating section of the Sunderland wreckage as they were about to be rescued by HMS Wren from the convoy Fry was protecting. In foreground a rope is being cast to the airmen.



Most petted ship in the Navy

By Your Special Correspondent

HER NAME IS WREN AND SHE "BELONGS" TO THE WRENS

because of her name, but also because she was launched by Mrs. Vyra Laughton Matthews, director of the WRNS.

Showing me the autographed photograph of Mrs. Matthews on the wall of the ship's wardroom, Lieutenant Con Taylor, RNVR, one-time solicitor, of Birkenhead, spoke of the woman's touch that was self-evident aboard the ship.

"Everywhere we go," he smiled, "we get presents from the Wrens."

"When we were in tropical waters the Wren personnel ashore sent down a couple of cartloads of oranges for the crew."

"They have made curtains for the wardroom and officers' cabins, sent pictures for the walls, and often when we put in at port they organise dances and the Wren officers come aboard."

The Wrens contributed several thousand pounds to defray the cost of building the ship—by each Wren giv-

ing up voluntarily a day's pay.

The first-lieutenant of the sloop, the Hon. Peter Vanneck, is married to a transport driver in the Wrens, and the gunner's mate, John Henry Connor of Portsmouth, also led a Wren to the altar.

And the men of the sloop have made their provision, too, for their sisters in navy blue. In a place of honour in the wardroom hangs a girl's leather handbag—containing all the clothing that a Wren would need, were she saved from the briny by the ship-o-war.

"Walker's little ships" get four more U-boats

Walker's "little ships" group of little ships (shown in the picture) has been ordered by the Admiralty to hunt for U-boats. The group is now based at the Admiralty, and will be sent to sea in the near future.



H.M.S. Wren, a sloop, is shown in the picture. The ship is a member of the "Walker's little ships" group, and is now based at the Admiralty.

Walker's little ships group is now based at the Admiralty, and will be sent to sea in the near future.

Here are photos of a third prize my Dad won in 1923. The instruments are getting pretty rusty but they are getting on in years just like us!



We were in desperate need of technical information about U-boats. Important considerations in deciding upon the tactics to be used against them were their speed on the surface and when submerged, their turning capacity under water, and the period during which they could remain at sea without returning to harbour. Most important of all was whether the pressure hull was constructed of riveted plates or consisted of one long, welded hull of steel. The pressure hull was, in fact, the true hull of the U-boat, shaped like a cigar, with various tanks containing water and oil stuck like streamlined blisters on its sides, and a deck, bridge, and conning-tower on top. Whether it was made of steel plates, as in the case of our own submarines, or in one welded piece, would determine the area in which our depth-charges would prove lethal, as a welded pressure hull would prove much more resistant to sudden pressure of water from an explosion, and would also enable U-boats to submerge to greater depths. My old friend the Director of Naval Construction at Bath had stoutly maintained that an all-welded pressure hull was impossible to produce. He was wrong.

The story of the capture of U570, a 500-tonner, is in itself an epic of the sea.

U570 was built at the Blohm and Voss yards, Hamburg, and, with full ceremonial, commissioned on May 15, 1941. She was given a crew of four officers, three chief petty officers, eleven petty officers, and twenty-five men. That she felt proud is evidenced by a special photograph of her Captain, with dress sword at his side, standing at the salute in the conning-tower, while the Swastika flew over his head. No doubt this picture was reproduced throughout Germany to illustrate that the might and power of the German Navy was more than a match for the audacity of the English in daring to sail merchant ships across the Atlantic.

U570 then sailed from Kiel for her trials, which were carried out in Oslo Fjord. During these trials she took sudden fright on July 23, 1941, at an aircraft, suspected of being British, and crash-dived, striking a submerged reef that happened to be in the way;

THE CAPTURE OF U570

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surface. Squadron Leader Thompson circled, and then, having no more depth-charges, opened fire with his guns. This particular aircraft could dive at 20 degrees from the horizontal, blazing an effective fire on to the target.

The next step in the drama was when a dozen of the crew emerged from the conning-tower on to the bridge and, without making any attempt to man and fire back from their own gun, waved a white flag, which subsequently turned out to be the Captain's best dress shirt. Shortly afterwards the entire crew gathered on the deck. The sea was far too rough to float a raft, and there was the Hudson, flying round in circles with a beautiful surrendered U-boat, but not quite knowing what to do with it. This went on during the morning, with the crew huddled miserably on the deck. Squadron Leader Thompson called on his wireless for immediate assistance, and at 1.45 P.M. a Catalina flying-boat from his squadron came upon the scene and relieved the Hudson, which must have been running short of petrol.

The Catalina naturally did not attack the U-boat, which had surrendered, but as the day wore on some of the crew pulled themselves together and "regained some measure of composure." The confidential books and papers and a cipher machine were thrown overboard, and certain gear was smashed. A signal was sent to the Vice-Admiral, U-boats, giving their position, and clumsy attempts were made to repair damage. At 10.50 P.M. the British trawler *Northern Chief* arrived gaily on the scene, upon which all attempts at repair automatically ceased.

At 5.50 A.M. the next day H.M.S. *Burwell*, a former United States destroyer, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander S. R. F. Woods, R.N.R., arrived to take charge, and immediately received this signal from U570: "Will you take off our crew?"

The Captain of *Burwell* must have done some very rapid thinking. If he agreed to take off the crew of the U-boat—down she would go, and a glorious capture would be lost. So he replied, "Blow the main ballast tanks and send half your crew below."

No reply came to his invitation, and *Burwell* passed a further signal to urge matters on: "Do not attempt to throw any papers overboard, and do not attempt to scuttle!"

This, however, defeated the linguistic capacity of U570, who mournfully replied, "What does 'scuttle' mean?"

There is no reason to doubt that the Captain of *Burwell* had a suitable reply in the language of the sea.

Burwell and *Windermere*—the latter having meanwhile crept

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she was an unlucky craft. However, she got out of this trouble and returned to dock to get herself a new bow.

On August 22 of that year Admiral Doenitz, despite the inexperience of her crew, sent her out on her first patrol to the south of Iceland. With justifiable nervousness she dived twice to avoid the attentions of our aircraft, but her main difficulties appear to have been with machinery going wrong. These teething troubles were, however, smoothed out; she had more than enough petty officers aboard to cope with the situation.

In the early morning of August 27 the crew of a Hudson aircraft from No 269 Squadron, on patrol over the Atlantic from its airfield in Iceland, observed the swirl of a diving U-boat. At the time visibility was poor, and an hour passed before a careful search yielded a glimpse of the enemy submarine. The pilot at once attacked, but his depth-charges failed to drop and the U-boat escaped unscathed. However, he sent wireless reports warning his base, which brought questing aircraft to the scene.

A little later in the morning U570 encountered heavy seas, and her crew became very seasick—so much so that a deep dive was called for by the Captain in order to get a steady keel and some respite from tossing and rolling upon the waves. About 10.50 A.M. the Captain decided to surface in order to obtain a sight. Warned by his previous escapes from our aircraft, he might have taken the elementary precaution of ensuring through his periscope that it was safe to do so. He failed to do this—with the most lamentable consequences.

Squadron Leader J. H. Thompson was piloting his Hudson aircraft, "S," from 269 Squadron of Coastal Command, in what appeared to be a completely uneventful search for this U-boat. Beneath him rolled the foam-flecked waves, and sea and sky merged in one grey monotone, when, somewhat to his surprise, U570 surfaced immediately beneath him to take a breath of fresh air. The position was 62° 15' North and 18° 35' West. The gallant Squadron Leader was equipped to cope with just this sort of emergency, and as the U-boat, sensing danger, started to crash-dive he dropped a stick of four depth-charges, each of 250 pounds, alongside her. These duly exploded, causing considerable trouble to U570, putting out lights and fracturing gauge glasses, through which sea water commenced to pour. The auxiliary lighting system also failed. The panic created when the raw crew plunged into a turmoil of blackness caused the Captain to return to the

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up during the night—then endeavoured to tow U570, but were unsuccessful.

Many times the U-boat signalled to *Burwell*, "Will you take off our crew—we are sinking."

Despite these pleas for mercy, there was little likelihood of the U-boat sinking so long as her crew were aboard, and *Burwell* signalled at 10.30 A.M., "Blow all fuel overboard."

There was no indication that the Captain of the U-boat was obeying this order, and none of her crew went below. Her tactics appeared clear, and she was settling deeper and deeper in the water. Stern warning measures were called for, and Lieutenant-Commander Woods ordered a burst of machine-gun fire over her bridge. It should be remembered that very heavy seas were running, and the gunner's aim, over the heads of the wretched crew huddled on the bridge of the U-boat, was affected by the violent rolling of *Burwell*. As a result he fired by accident into them and wounded five. This mischance was the last straw, and the Germans must have thought that they would be annihilated unless they immediately obeyed the orders given by the British commander. Several rushed below through the conning-tower and operated the valves that blew the main ballast and fuel tanks, and, for the first time since her capture, the U-boat floated with ease and buoyancy.

The next stage in the operation was of great interest and significance. After several attempts to take her in tow had failed U570 requested that her wounded should be removed. At 1.50 P.M. the trawler *Kingston Agate*, which was by now assisting, lowered a Carley Float with two officers and ratings to take the wounded. This raft got alongside the U-boat, and there was immediately a concerted rush by her officers to save themselves, leaving their wounded men behind to drown. Amid the turmoil of wind and waves they were beaten back to the U-boat by our men in order that the wounded could be saved first. This action of the Germans was a monstrous breach of that great and honourable tradition of the sea which gives the wounded first consideration and insists that officers leave a ship last. These were the officers who had paraded under the Nazi ensign at Kiel!

During the next few hours the surrounding trawlers removed all officers and crew to their ships, and this resulted in a loss of control over the U-boat, so that it took seven hours of anxious and continuous toil before a tow could be effected. As it was, the U-boat appeared to be slowly sinking, and there was danger that all the

efforts and risks run would be thrown away and the prize lost. She was therefore towed to the nearest land, which was an estuary open to the Atlantic on the south-west coast of Iceland and named Thorlákshöfn, and here she was beached some twenty-four hours later. It was intended to anchor her bows on to the shore, but in fact she beached herself broadside on, and lay heaving in the endless surf.

On receiving this information the Admiralty took instant action and dispatched Lieutenant G. R. Colwin, R.N., Warrant Engineer Giordan, and two petty officers by air to Reykjavik. They arrived on August 30, and next day proceeded to board U570 through the breaking surf. They found her on a gentle shelving beach of soft sand, completely open to any gale from the south-east, which, if it had blown up, would have smashed her. She had, in fact, been driven well up the shore by a moderate swell, and had a heavy list to starboard, which, as she lay, was towards the land.

Upon examination, the interior of the U-boat proved to be in complete chaos, and as the naval team made their survey by torch-light the scene was almost indescribable. Gushes of oil and water had leaked through broken gauge glasses from internal tanks and mingled with quantities of provisions such as dried peas and beans, soft fruit, flour, and scores of loaves of black bread. This syrup had joined with masses of cloth and bedding to form a morass that was knee-deep.

The crew's water-closet had been used as a food-store, as well as for its fundamental purpose, and the contents of overturned buckets added their quota to the fetid stench. The engine-room had been flooded to the deck by the removing of a strainer plate, and various apparatus in other parts of the U-boat had been smashed. There was a three-inch-long split in the pressure hull on the port side, due to depth-charges, which also cracked 90 per cent. of the battery-containers, caused a bulkhead to buckle and the gauge glasses to break.

The party under Lieutenant Colwin, despite the difficulties, proceeded to make the U-boat seaworthy, and worked like galley slaves from Sunday afternoon, August 31, until Friday morning, September 5. They restored lighting and traced all air and water services throughout this Hamburg-constructed boat. They found and shut off all vents and valves, blew the main ballast tanks of sea water with what little air-pressure remained, pumped the bilges dry with a small rotary pump, and finally engaged in the unpleasant task of cleaning the ship of some of its filth. At 5 A.M. on Friday morning the salvage tug *Salvonia* proceeded to haul the

U-boat off the sand into deeper water, where she floated with only a three-degree list to starboard and slightly down in the bow. A corvette then brought an air-compressor alongside to complete the blowing of the main ballast tanks, and at 1 P.M. the passage by tow, through icy waters to Hvalford, was commenced. During this passage the stench inside the vessel was still so great that the Lieutenant and his party preferred the extreme cold of the bridge. Fortunately the weather remained favourable, and the tow was completed by 9.30 A.M. on the next day, Saturday.

Intense work now commenced to make the U-boat fit to proceed under her own power to Barrow-in-Furness. A full complement of officers and ratings was flown over to man her, and after two days of sea trials she sailed for England on September 29, escorted by H.M.S. *Saladin* and flying the white ensign. She made a good thirteen knots on the passage, and arrived triumphantly at Barrow on October 3, 1941. Thus, after running hazardous risk from depth-charges, avoiding being scuttled by her German captain and crew, being salvaged by the skill and courage of British sailors, and finally gaining the good fortune of calm seas, U570 lay safely in an English dock, and every secret of the deadly U-boats was in the hands of the Royal Navy.

Never before had an enemy submarine been captured intact in battle. The experts of the Director of Naval Construction and technical officers engaged in anti-U-boat warfare descended upon her like bees on a honey-pot. Tests of every kind were carried out, her instruments and machinery dissected, and full drawings prepared, and my ancient friend, the expert on armour, had half-scale and full-scale sections of her hull prepared to ascertain the lethal area of depth-charges. The pressure hull was discovered to be welded and of just under one-inch-thick steel at the conning-tower amidships, tapering to one half-inch in thickness at the bow and stern—a piece of superb engineering construction.

Naturally, some of the experts desired to carry out various explosive experiments upon U570, but my Lords of the Admiralty held other views.

"Find out everything about her," they said, in effect, "but then she sails as a British warship."

Innumerable calculations were made from her instruments and machinery, and many of these reduced to mathematical diagrams—so much so that she was named the *Graph*, and it was as H.M.S. *Graph* that she sailed upon her first patrol for the British Navy.

After extensive research upon the newly christened *Graph* by

naval constructors, the hydrophone department, the electrical experts, the engineers, and the compass personnel she was inspected by many high-ranking officers, and then duly fitted out for carrying on sea warfare in the Atlantic. Her subsequent history was not without interest.

Before proceeding on patrols she came to the Thames Estuary, where I was able to examine her and meet her Captain. He was a young submariner, with a most refreshing grin, who held a high opinion of his ship and crew; he invited me below, and then presented me with two of her German tabs as souvenirs. During this inspection I observed that every inch of space on the internal wall of the pressure hull was taken up by machinery and instruments of one kind or another. This vivid picture of the internal congestion led to an idea which will be mentioned later.

The *Graph* was ordered to patrol south of Ireland from October 8 to 29, 1942, and in company with another submarine, *Ursula*, slipped her moorings from Holy Lock. Lieutenant P. B. Marriott,¹ who was then her Captain, kept a sharp look-out for any of those ill-chances so apt to occur, but until the afternoon of the 21st there was nothing unusual to report. The *Graph* was then cruising in the Bay of Biscay in a position of about 44° North and 7° West, with a heavy swell running and in seas which were 2500 fathoms deep. At 3.52 P.M. the asdic indicated a large object on a close bearing, but, unfortunately, owing to the swell, vision through the periscope was brief and intermittent.

Twenty-eight minutes later (submarine commanders are most precise in their timing) a four-engined Focke-Wulf monoplane, pale green in colour, came drifting over *Graph*. Lieutenant Marriott dived rapidly, feeling that this was no time to loiter and watch the ripples on the waves. At this moment a loud noise, which seemed very near, was heard on the hydrophones; putting two and two together, he came to the conclusion that there was a U-boat in his vicinity, which had also taken fright at the Focke-Wulf and crash-dived.

Twelve minutes later Lieutenant Marriott decided to have a look through his periscope, and, by good fortune, obtained a glimpse of the enemy's conning-tower, which was painted with bright green paint that shone in the setting sun. After that the chase was on, and, although several further glimpses were obtained of her conning-tower, the U-boat appeared to have been completely ignorant of the presence of a deadly foe.

¹ Afterwards Captain P. B. Marriott, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.

Links to Info about U-570 the only Submarine to be taken whole and saw action on both sides

