

began to settle, the conning tower disappeared, the stern went up in the air at a fairly sharp angle, and the rudder and screws were plainly visible. Many of the crew were seen in the water. While Chapman circled overhead to photograph the sinking submarine, the conning tower began to reappear. As the Catalina made another run, the pilot saw a crew member run to man the deck guns. Chapman began "jinking" violently, and just after passing over the U-boat an explosion was heard in the airplane. The port engine began to leak oil very rapidly while belching black smoke. The engine was shut down but the propeller could not be feathered. Despite full boost to the starboard engine, the Catalina began to lose height from 1,000 feet down to sea level. It hit heavily and began to sink.

The crew was uninjured and abandoned the airplane in the two dinghys. Some time later, a Warwick made two runs over the crew and dropped an airborne lifeboat. F/O D.J.C. Waterbury swam out to retrieve the lifeboat from the point at which it impacted some 100 to 150 yards away. The others climbed into the lifeboat, which had been damaged in the impact, and was under water bow to stern. They were eventually rescued and W/C Chapman was awarded the DSO.

One of the outstanding events in the history of No. 162 Squadron was the attack on the U-1225 on the 24th of June 1944 by F/L David Hornell and his crew. Early in June the squadron had been able to sink three U-boats. In all instances, however, the subs remained on the surface and put up a murderous anti-aircraft fire resulting in the loss of two Canso A aircraft. F/L Hornell was fully aware of the hazards when he took off on the 24th of June in Canso No. 9754 for a sortie which would end in a gallant and tragic attack on U-boat U-1225 north of the Shetland Islands.

The patrol had lasted for some hours when a fully-surfaced U-boat was sighted travelling at high speed on the port beam. F/L Hornell at once turned into the attack. The U-boat altered course. The Catalina had been seen and there could be no surprise. U-1225 opened up with anti-aircraft fire which became increasingly fierce and accurate. At a range of 1,200 yards, the front guns of the aircraft replied. Then its starboard gun jammed leaving only one gun effective. Hits were obtained on and around the conning tower of the submarine but then the airplane itself was hit, two large holes appearing in the starboard wing.

Ignoring the enemy fire, F/L Hornell carefully maneuvered for the attack. Oil was pouring from his starboard engine which was by this time on fire as was the starboard wing.

U-1225 continued to strike, and the Catalina was nearly uncontrollable, but Hornell pressed his attack home and brought his aircraft down very low, releasing his depth charges in a perfect straddle. The bow of the U-boat lifted out of the water as it sank and some of the crew were seen in the sea. F/L Hornell, by superhuman effort at the controls, tried to gain a little height. The fire in the starboard wing had grown more intense and the vibration had increased; then the burning engine fell off.

The plight of the aircraft and crew was now desperate. With utmost coolness, the Captain took his aircraft into the wind, and despite the manifold dangers, brought it safely down in the heavy swell. Badly damaged and blazing furiously, the aircraft rapidly settled. There was only one serviceable dinghy and this could not hold all the crew. They took turns in the water holding on to the sides. Once, the dinghy capsized in the rough seas and was righted only with great difficulty. Two of the crew succumbed from exposure. An airborne lifeboat was dropped to them but fell some 500 yards downwind.

The survivors were finally rescued after they had been in

the water for 21 hours. By this time, F/L Hornell was blinded and completely exhausted; he died shortly after being picked up. F/L Hornell was awarded the Victoria Cross for this action and the five surviving crewmen were decorated.

On the 30th of June 1944, F/L McBride and crew sighted and attacked another U-boat. The submarine submerged but was sighted again later in the day. An attack was attempted but hangups in the depth charges prevented success. F/L McBride then carried out homing procedures and homed a Liberator of 86 Squadron from an adjoining area which carried out a successful attack and sank the enemy submarine, the U-478.

The next time the Squadron spotted a U-boat, it was on the 11th of May 1945 when F/O R.L. Clarke spotted one flying the black flag of surrender and directed naval units to the scene.

No. 162 Squadron was disbanded on the 7th of August 1945 after an outstanding record in anti-submarine warfare.

The Sighting

Because of the drama of the occasion, the sighting of the BISMARCK is worth repeating here, from *Coastal Command** (excerpted):

On board the "Bismarck" there was much rejoicing, not without good reason. She had damaged the "Prince of Wales." She had sunk the "Hood." That evening there was a large extra issue of sausage, chocolate and cigarettes, and Hitler conferred the Knight Insignia of the Iron Cross on the First Gunnery Officer. True, the speed of the ship had been reduced, for a shell from the "Hood" had partially flooded some of her compartments and had also made it impossible to use the oil fuel in the forward bunkers — it was this oil escaping from the ship which had left the broad ~~stein~~ upon the sea seen by the Sunderland — but a formidable unit of the British Fleet had been disposed of and another, still more formidable, had been damaged. Surely it was now time to return to the safety of the Norwegian fjords!

Captain Lindemann, in command of the "Bismarck," thought so; but he was overruled by his Admiral, who ordered the "Prinz Eugen" to part company while the "Bismarck" held on her course for a French port. Night fell without further incident, but soon after midnight torpedo-carrying Swordfish from the "Victorious," supported by Fulmars, delivered an attack in which a hit was scored on the starboard side. Survivors from the "Bismarck" subsequently spoke with surprise and admiration of the courage displayed by the British pilots. One Swordfish, they said, after being hit, still tried to get into a position from which to release its torpedo before plunging into the sea. The anti-aircraft fire of the "Bismarck" was tremendous, many of the guns becoming redhot. Our losses in this attack were two Swordfish and two Fulmars, the crews of the Fulmars being saved. It was put about on board the "Bismarck" that forty-seven British aircraft had been destroyed.

Soon after 3 o'clock that morning, 25th May, visibility became very bad, and contact with the "Bismarck" was at last

**Coastal Command. The Air Ministry Account of the Part Played by Coastal Command in the Battle of the Seas, 1939-1942. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1942.*



The large compartment behind the pilot's compartment and forward of the wing housed the navigator and radioman in this view of the interior of an RCAF Canso. (Photo-Public Archives of Canada, via Robert W. Bradford)

of the BISMARCK

lost by the cruisers "Norfolk" and "Suffolk," which had shadowed her so tenaciously since sunset on 23rd May. When last seen her speed had been reduced to 20 knots. It now seemed to the Admiralty that, in view of the damage which she had sustained and her heavy consumption of fuel, she would either double back on her track and return to Norway or make for one of the French ports in order to refuel and refit. Coastal Command did its best to meet both contingencies.

All that afternoon and throughout the night three Catalinas searched the area through which it was considered most probable that the "Bismarck" was teaming. They remained air-borne for 19 hours 36 minutes, 20 hours 54 minutes, and 22 hours 21 minutes respectively. They saw nothing of the enemy....

On board the "Bismarck" the mood of exaltation occasioned by her victory over the "Hood" began to give way to one of anxiety which increased to alarm when, shortly before midday, Admiral Lutjens informed the crew that it had proved impossible to shake off pursuit and that, though aircraft and U-boats would be forthcoming as soon as the ship came within their range, an action would almost certainly have to be fought, in which case the best which could be hoped for would be that the "Bismarck" would take some of the British Navy to the bottom with her. Yet, as the day wore on, and no aircraft appeared over them and no hostile ships were sighted, their spirits rose again, especially when at evening they entered a U-boat area.

Dawn on 26th May broke over a heavy sea above which scudded broken clouds. During the morning the weather became somewhat hazy. At 10:30 a Catalina flying boat appeared above the "Bismarck." It had taken off from a base in Northern Ireland seven hours before and was one of two sent to patrol some five hundred miles out in the Atlantic almost due West of Land's End. Contact with the "Bismarck" had been regained after a lapse of thirty-one and a half hours.

"George" (the autopilot) was flying the aircraft," said the

pilot, "at five hundred feet when we saw the warship. I was in the second pilot's seat when the occupant of the seat beside me, an American said 'What the devil's that?' I stared down and saw a dull black shape through the fog which curled above a very rough sea. 'It looks like a battleship,' he said....

I left my seat, went to the wireless operator's table, grabbed a piece of paper and began to write out a signal. The second pilot had taken over from 'George' and gone up to 1,500 feet into broken cloud. As we came round he must have slightly misjudged his position, for instead of coming up astern we found ourselves right over the ship in an open space between the clouds. The first thing I knew about this was when two black puffs appeared outside the starboard wing tip.

In a moment we were surrounded by black puffs. Stuff began to rattle against the hull. Some of it went through and a lot more made dents in it. I scribbled 'End of message' and handed it to the wireless operator. In between the smudges of the bursting shells I looked down on the ship, which seemed to me to be one big, winking flame. She was taking violent avoiding action by turning hard to starboard, heeling well over."

The Catalina took similar action to dodge the A.A. fire. None of the crew was hit, though a piece of shell passed upwards through the floor between the two pilots as they were changing places. The only casualties occurred in the galley, where one of the crew, who was washing up the breakfast things, "dropped two china R.A.F. plates and broke them"

Touch with the "Bismarck" was temporarily lost, for the evasive action taken by the Catalina had removed her some miles from the ship. At 11:15 aircraft from "Ark Royal," now about 70 miles away, found her again, and another Coastal Command Catalina in the neighbourhood was diverted from its patrol area and reported sighting the enemy at 1:28 p.m. It kept the "Bismarck" more or less in view during the afternoon, though it lost her at intervals owing to the bad visibility. It had to return to base at 6 p.m.

* WQ-Z of No. 209 Sqdn., RAF.