

No.4797

COMPLETE 63-PAGE ACTION STORY

Commando

FOR ACTION AND ADVENTURE

WAR
AT SEA

1914-18



U-BOAT HUNT

TANK KILLERS

Panzerfaust — Germany

Probably the world's first throw-away anti-tank missile, the Panzerfaust consisted of a simple tube and a hollow-charge grenade. The warhead was launched by a simple black powder charge; no rocketry involved. Often associated with the Volkssturm, they were in fact widely used from 1943 on and claimed many Allied tanks and other vehicles.



Range	60metres
Calibre	149mm
Weight	6.8kg
Length	98.5cm
Projectile	6.25kg High-Explosive shaped charge

U-BOAT HUNT

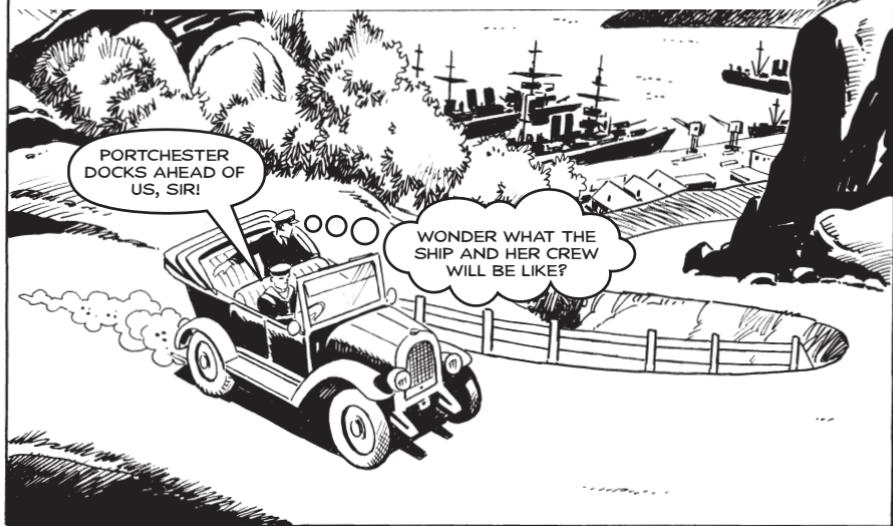


ROBERT PATERSON HAD DUE CAUSE TO HATE U-BOATS — PARTICULARLY THE ONE THAT HAD SUNK HIS SHIP. NOW HE COULD HUNT THEM DOWN USING THE ROYAL NAVY'S LATEST WEAPON — THE Q-SHIP.

STORY
BILL
STYLES
ART
JAUME
FORNS
COVER
JANEK
MATYSIAK



BEFORE THAT, IN 1915, AFTER THE START OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, NEWLY PROMOTED LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ROBERT PATERSON R.N. WAS ARRIVING AT THE NAVAL BASE WHERE THE VESSEL THAT WAS TO BE HIS FIRST COMMAND WAS WAITING FOR HIM.



ROBERT WAS PIPED ABOARD THE SHIP. HIS NEW OFFICERS GREETED HIM AS HE REACHED THE DECK — LED BY LIEUTENANT MARTIN SPICER.

WELCOME ABOARD H.M.S. DANAE, SIR. WE'LL SHOW YOU YOUR QUARTERS THEN PERHAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO INSPECT THE REST OF THE SHIP?

VERY GOOD, NUMBER ONE, CARRY ON.

SPICER STARTED HIS TOUR WITH THE SHIP'S WEAPONS.

THE MAIN ARMAMENT IS THIS FOUR-INCH GUN AND ANOTHER AFT. SMALLER GUNS AMIDSHIPS, THEY'RE THREE- POUNDERS, AND SHE EVEN HAS THE NEW LEWIS LIGHT MACHINE GUNS BEHIND THE BRIDGE, SIR.

WELL,
AS LONG AS WE DON'T
HAVE TO FACE THE FIFTEEN-
INCH GUNS OF A GERMAN
BATTLESHIP, WE'LL BE FINE.

SPICER SHOWED ROBERT THE SHIP'S ENGINE ROOM. LIEUTENANT JIM BURKE, THE CHIEF ENGINEER, EXPLAINED THE MACHINERY HE WAS IN CHARGE OF.



SPICER INTRODUCED ROBERT TO THE OTHER OFFICERS. THEY TOLD HIM MORE ABOUT THE 1200-TON, 250 FEET-LONG SHIP.



THE NUMBER ONE TOOK ROBERT INTO THE RADIO ROOM.

WE HAVE THE LATEST WIRELESS TRANSMITTING AND RECEIVING EQUIPMENT. THE PETTY OFFICER HERE IS FULLY VERSED IN MORSE CODE.



THAT'S VERY GOOD, WE CAN REPORT BACK WHILE ON PATROL. ONE DAY, PERHAPS ALL SHIPS WILL BE FITTED WITH THIS.

AFTER DOING HIS ROUNDS OF THE SHIP FOR THE FIRST TIME, ROBERT OPENED HIS SEALED ORDERS. IT WAS TIME TO LEARN WHERE THEIR FIRST PATROL WOULD BE.

WELL, GENTLEMEN, WE ARE TO PROCEED THROUGH THE CHANNEL AND UP INTO THE NORTH SEA, THEN BACK DOWN AND INTO THE ATLANTIC. WE WILL SCOUT FOR ANY SIGNS OF THE GERMAN NAVY, INCLUDING U-BOATS.



HUH! U-BOATS! THEY ARE JUST TOYS, THEY WON'T COME TO ANYTHING.

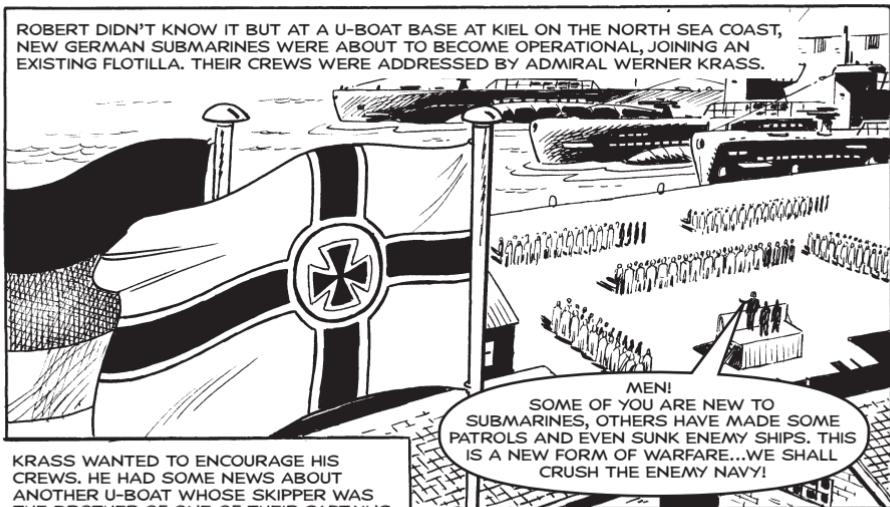
SO THE DAENAE SET OFF ON HER FIRST PATROL UNDER THE COMMAND OF CAPTAIN ROBERT PATERSON. THE FIRST WEEKS WERE UNEVENTFUL.

ANOTHER QUIET DAY, SIR.

PERHAPS TOO QUIET, NUMBER ONE. THE ENEMY MUST BE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE.



ROBERT DIDN'T KNOW IT BUT AT A U-BOAT BASE AT KIEL ON THE NORTH SEA COAST, NEW GERMAN SUBMARINES WERE ABOUT TO BECOME OPERATIONAL, JOINING AN EXISTING FLOTILLA. THEIR CREWS WERE ADDRESSED BY ADMIRAL WERNER KRASS.



KRASS WANTED TO ENCOURAGE HIS CREWS. HE HAD SOME NEWS ABOUT ANOTHER U-BOAT WHOSE SKIPPER WAS THE BROTHER OF ONE OF THEIR CAPTAINS.

A U-BOAT CAPTAINED BY OTTO PLETSCH, WHOSE BROTHER COMMANDS ONE OF OUR OWN SUBMARINES, HAS JUST SUNK A BRITISH BATTLESHIP AT THEIR SCAPA FLOW BASE!

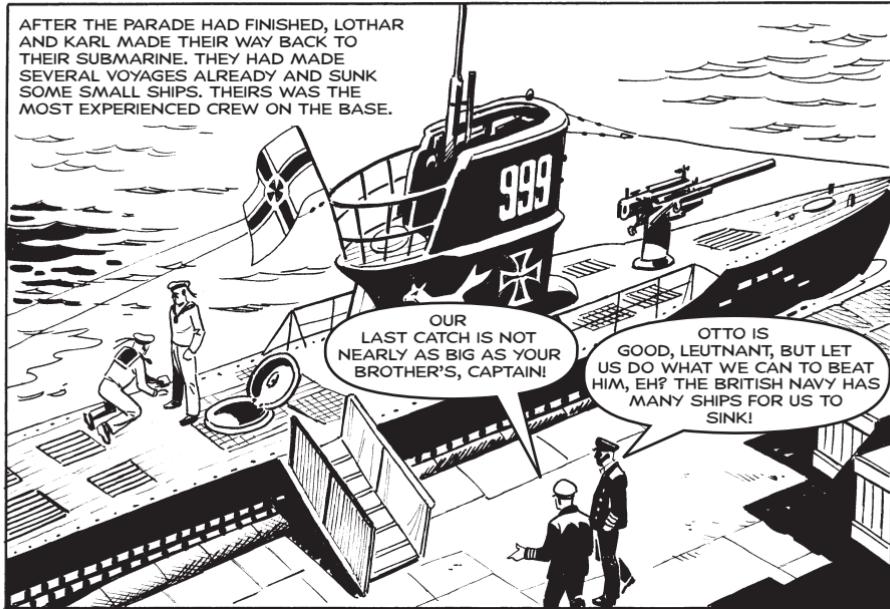


oberleutnant zur see lothar pletsch, commander of u-999 and his second-in-command, leutnant karl thaler, were pleased by the news and keen to get back to sea to add to their own score.

so my brother's sunk a battleship...wunderbar! bet he doesn't let me forget it, though, ha ha!



AFTER THE PARADE HAD FINISHED, LOTHAR AND KARL MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO THEIR SUBMARINE. THEY HAD MADE SEVERAL VOYAGES ALREADY AND SUNK SOME SMALL SHIPS. THEIRS WAS THE MOST EXPERIENCED CREW ON THE BASE.



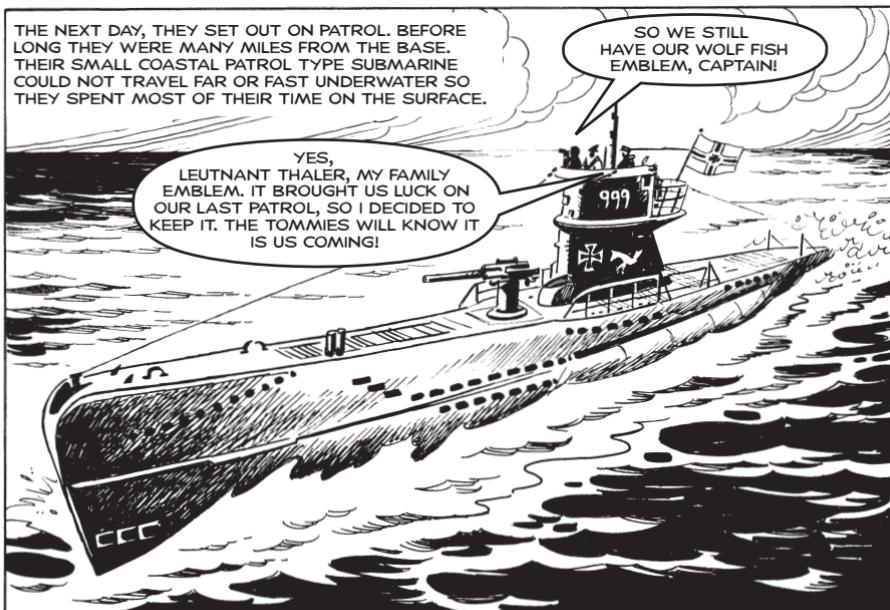
LOTHAR AND KARL TALKED TO SOME OF THEIR CREW IN THE SUB'S TORPEDO ROOM WHERE THE OFF-DUTY SAILORS ALSO SLEPT. THERE WAS VERY LITTLE ROOM.



THE NEW RECRUITS WERE SHOWN TO THEIR PLACES BY VETERAN SAILOR WILLI DURST. HE HAD BEEN IN THE GERMAN NAVY SINCE SAILING SHIP DAYS, BUT WAS KEEN ON THE NEW SUBMARINES — ALTHOUGH HE WOULD NOT ALWAYS ADMIT IT.



THE NEXT DAY, THEY SET OUT ON PATROL. BEFORE LONG THEY WERE MANY MILES FROM THE BASE. THEIR SMALL COASTAL PATROL TYPE SUBMARINE COULD NOT TRAVEL FAR OR FAST UNDERWATER SO THEY SPENT MOST OF THEIR TIME ON THE SURFACE.



WATCHKEEPER DURST SPOTTED SEVERAL BIPLANES HIGH ABOVE THE SUB. THEY WERE HEADING FOR THE FRENCH COAST AND DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE SEEN THEM. LOTHAR DECIDED TO KEEP ON THE SAME COURSE.

CAPTAIN!
AEROPLANES HIGH AHEAD!
THEY HAVE BRITISH ROUNDEL
MARKINGS!

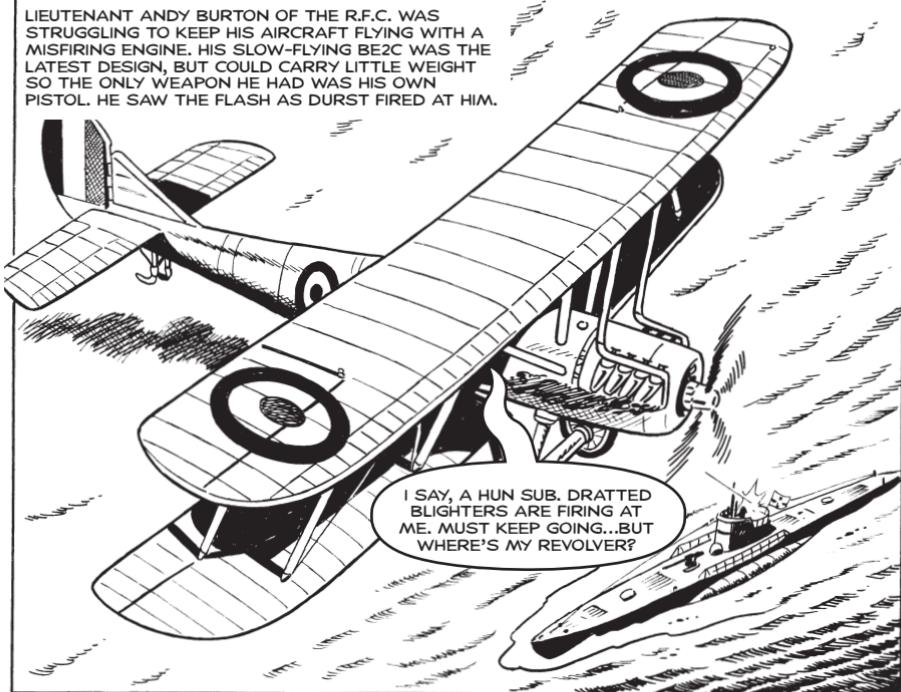
THEY
ARE PROBABLY BEING
DELIVERED AS SCOUT PLANES
FOR THE BRITISH ARMY, FLOWN BY
THEIR ROYAL FLYING CORPS. THEY
ARE JUST STICK AND STRING
TOYS, THEY CANNOT HURT
US.

THE FIRST AIRCRAFT HAD PASSED BY BUT THEN THE CONNING TOWER CREW HEARD ANOTHER PLANE HEADING FOR THEM. THE ENGINE SOUNDED VERY ROUGH AND IT TRAILLED SMOKE.

LOOK OUT,
HERE'S ANOTHER
ONE, MUCH LOWER,
COMING CLOSER!

SOUNDS
LIKE HE'S IN TROUBLE.
SEAMAN DURST, GET A
RIFLE AND TAKE A SHOT
AT HIM!

LIEUTENANT ANDY BURTON OF THE R.F.C. WAS STRUGGLING TO KEEP HIS AIRCRAFT FLYING WITH A MISFIRING ENGINE. HIS SLOW-FLYING BE2C WAS THE LATEST DESIGN, BUT COULD CARRY LITTLE WEIGHT SO THE ONLY WEAPON HE HAD WAS HIS OWN PISTOL. HE SAW THE FLASH AS DURST FIRED AT HIM.

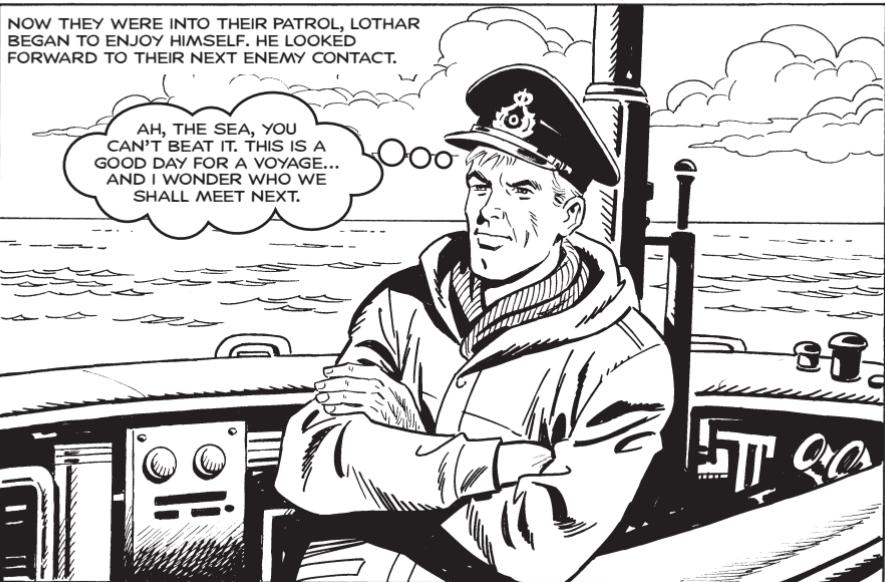


THE PILOT'S SHOT WAS NOTHING BUT A GESTURE. SLOWLY, HIS BE2C FLEW ON TO JOIN HIS COMPANIONS AND THEIR PLANES IN FRANCE. SOON THEY WOULD BE SCOUTING OVER THE WESTERN FRONT.



NOW THEY WERE INTO THEIR PATROL, LOTHAR
BEGAN TO ENJOY HIMSELF. HE LOOKED
FORWARD TO THEIR NEXT ENEMY CONTACT.

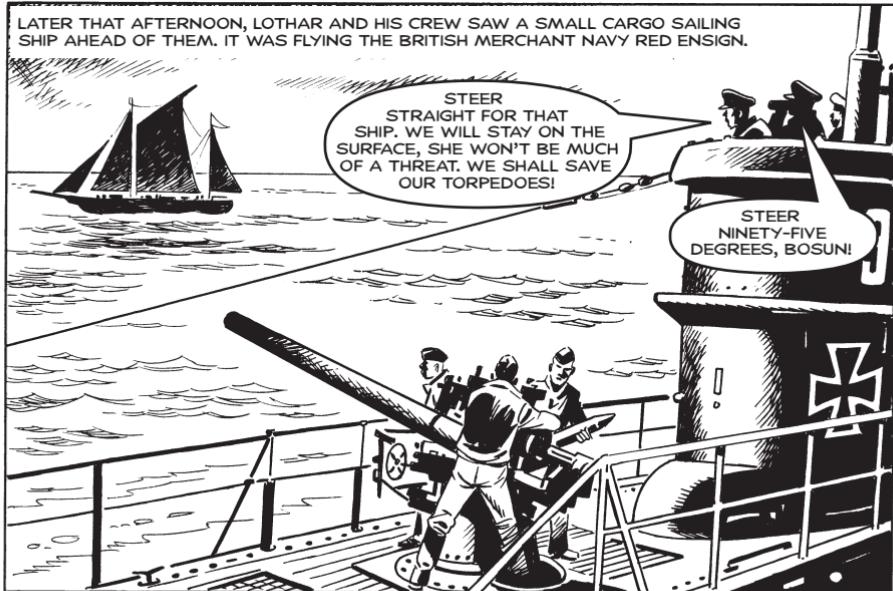
AH, THE SEA, YOU
CAN'T BEAT IT. THIS IS A
GOOD DAY FOR A VOYAGE...
AND I WONDER WHO WE
SHALL MEET NEXT.



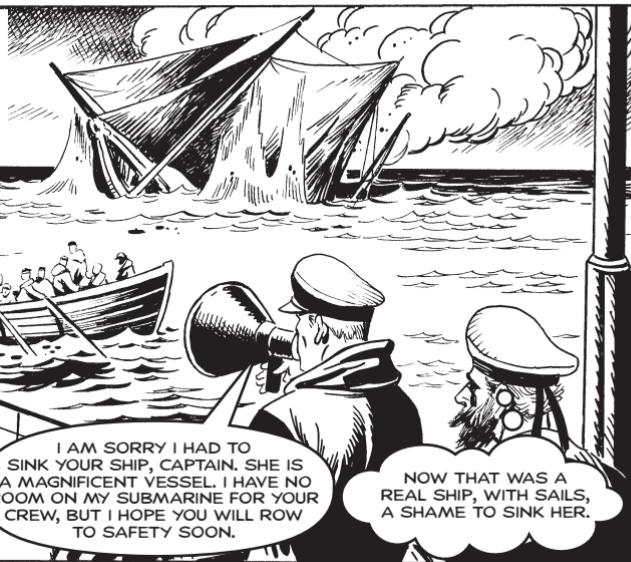
LATER THAT AFTERNOON, LOTHAR AND HIS CREW SAW A SMALL CARGO SAILING SHIP AHEAD OF THEM. IT WAS FLYING THE BRITISH MERCHANT NAVY RED ENSIGN.

STEER
STRAIGHT FOR THAT
SHIP. WE WILL STAY ON THE
SURFACE, SHE WON'T BE MUCH
OF A THREAT. WE SHALL SAVE
OUR TORPEDOES!

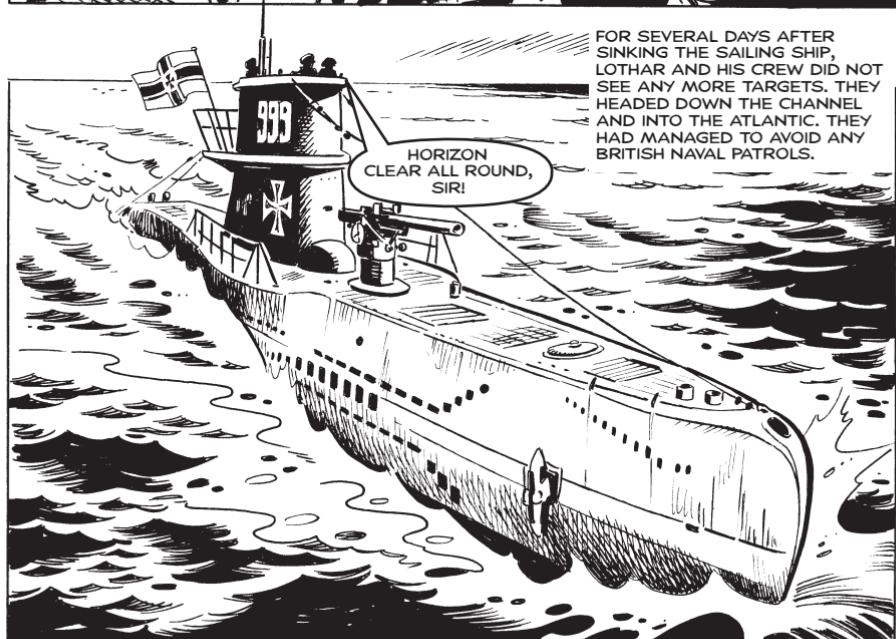
STEER
NINETY-FIVE
DEGREES, BOSUN!



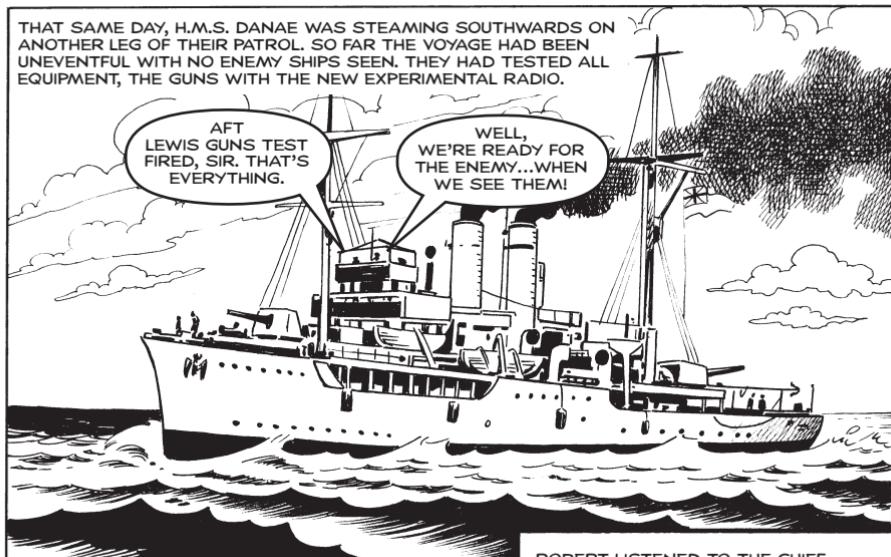
WHEN U-999 CAUGHT THE SAILING SHIP, LOTHAR GAVE THE CREW TIME TO GET INTO THEIR LIFEBOATS BEFORE THE SUB'S DECK GUN SANK THE VESSEL.



FOR SEVERAL DAYS AFTER SINKING THE SAILING SHIP, LOTHAR AND HIS CREW DID NOT SEE ANY MORE TARGETS. THEY HEADED DOWN THE CHANNEL AND INTO THE ATLANTIC. THEY HAD MANAGED TO AVOID ANY BRITISH NAVAL PATROLS.



THAT SAME DAY, H.M.S. DANAE WAS STEAMING SOUTHWARDS ON ANOTHER LEG OF THEIR PATROL. SO FAR THE VOYAGE HAD BEEN UNEVENTFUL WITH NO ENEMY SHIPS SEEN. THEY HAD TESTED ALL EQUIPMENT, THE GUNS WITH THE NEW EXPERIMENTAL RADIO.



ROBERT AND SPICER TALKED ABOUT THE SHIP. RADIO WAS A NEW THING AND THEIR SET WAS NOT WORKING WELL.



ROBERT LISTENED TO THE CHIEF ENGINEER, BURKE. THERE HAD BEEN A MAJOR LEAK IN A STEAM PIPE FROM ONE OF THE BOILERS TO THE ENGINE. THEY WOULD HAVE TO STOP WHILE IT WAS FIXED.



IN FACT IT WAS NEARLY FOUR HOURS BEFORE BURKE WAS ABLE TO REPORT FROM THE ENGINE ROOM THAT THE REPAIRS WERE COMPLETE. IT WOULD STILL TAKE THIRTY MINUTES TO HAVE ENOUGH STEAM TO RUN THE ENGINE.



H.M.S. DANAЕ HAD BEEN IMMOBILE FOR TOO LONG. IT HAD DRIFTED INTO THE PATH OF U-999. THE U-BOAT'S LOOKOUTS SPOTTED THE GIVE-AWAY COAL SMOKE AS THE SLOOP'S STOKERS TRIED TO RAISE STEAM AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.



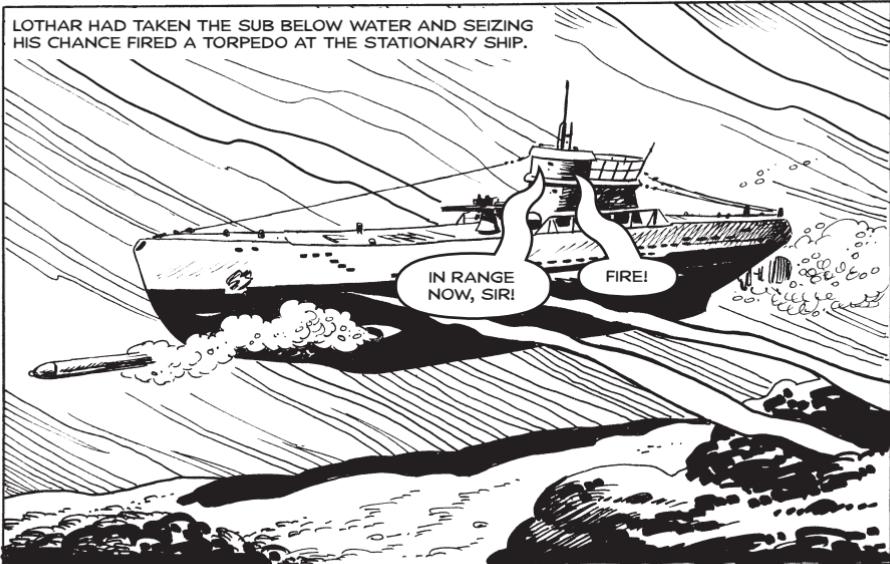
AS THE SUBMARINE MOVED TOWARDS THE SMOKE, LOTHAR COULD SEE THE SUPERSTRUCTURE OF H.M.S. DANAE RISING ABOVE THE HORIZON. IT WAS TIME TO TAKE ACTION.



ON BOARD H.M.S. DANAE, ROBERT AND HIS CREW WERE NEARLY READY TO GET UNDER WAY AGAIN. ONE OF THE LOOKOUTS, ABLE SEAMAN JEFF BROOM, THOUGHT HE SAW A SMALL VESSEL APPROACHING ON THE HORIZON, BUT THEN COULD NOT SEE IT ANY MORE U-999 HAD SUBMERGED.



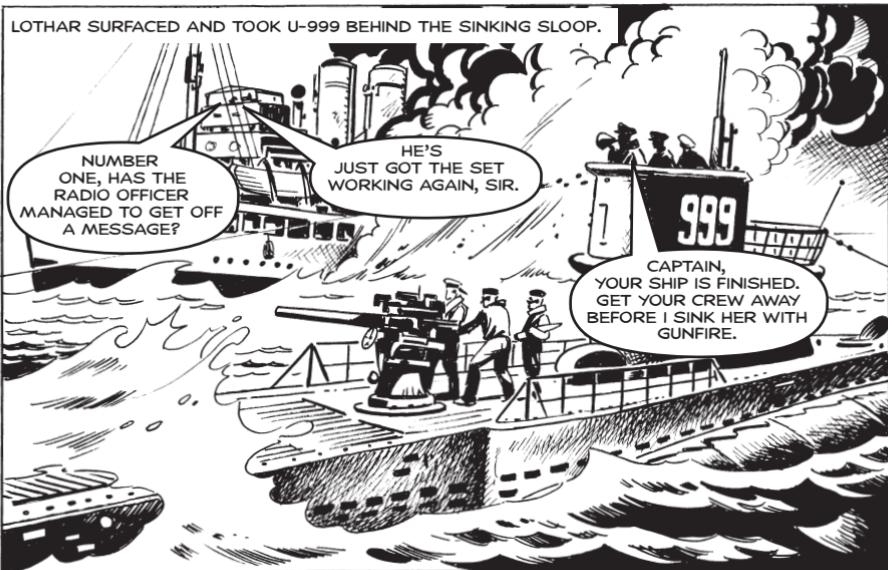
LOTHAR HAD TAKEN THE SUB BELOW WATER AND SEIZING HIS CHANCE FIRED A TORPEDO AT THE STATIONARY SHIP.



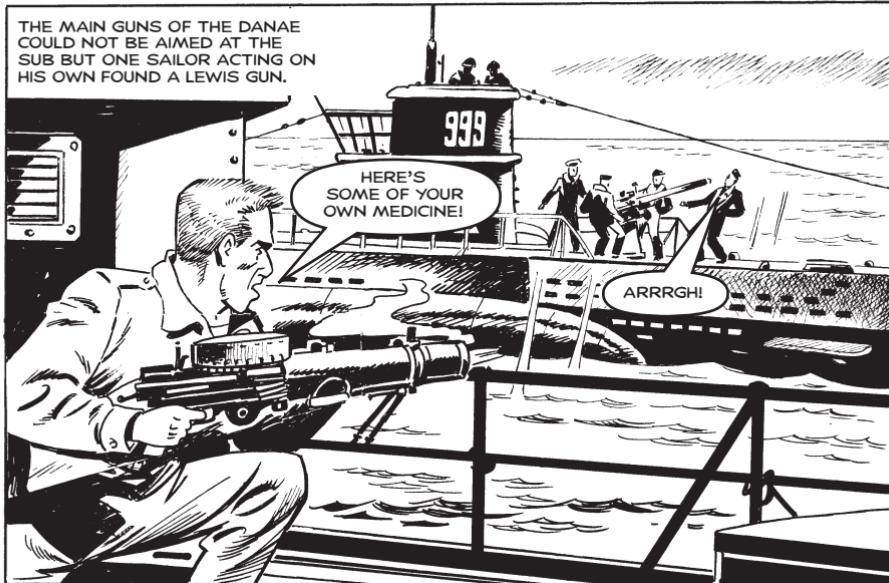
THE STATIONARY SHIP MADE IT EASY FOR
LOTHAR AND KARL TO AIM THE SUB SO THAT
THE TORPEDO HIT THE DANAE AMIDSHIPS.
THE SLOOP DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE.



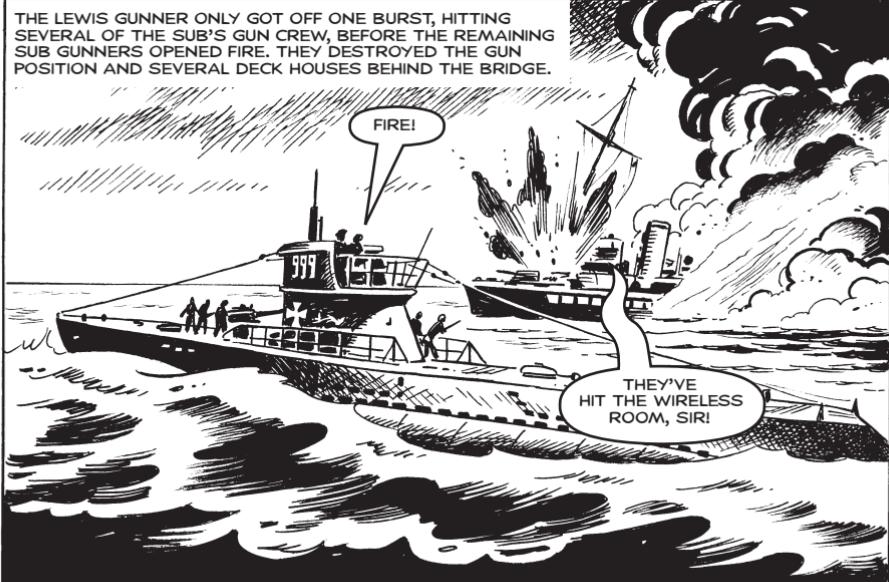
LOTHAR SURFACED AND TOOK U-999 BEHIND THE SINKING SLOOP.



THE MAIN GUNS OF THE DANAE COULD NOT BE AIMED AT THE SUB BUT ONE SAILOR ACTING ON HIS OWN FOUND A LEWIS GUN.



THE LEWIS GUNNER ONLY GOT OFF ONE BURST, HITTING SEVERAL OF THE SUB'S GUN CREW, BEFORE THE REMAINING SUB GUNNERS OPENED FIRE. THEY DESTROYED THE GUN POSITION AND SEVERAL DECK HOUSES BEHIND THE BRIDGE.



LOTHAR TOLD THE GUN CREW TO STOP FIRING. THEY HAD KILLED THE LEWIS GUNNER AND THERE WERE NO MORE WEAPONS ON H.M.S. DANAЕ THAT COULD NOW BE USED. HE CALLED OUT TO ROBERT VIA MEGAPHONE.



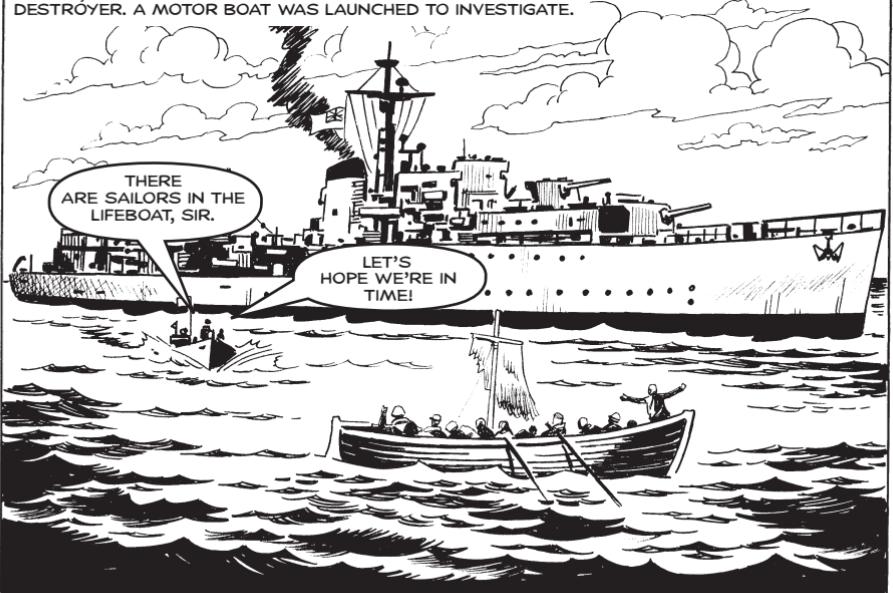
ROBERT HAD NO CHOICE IF HE WANTED TO TRY AND SAVE HIS CREW. HE GAVE THE ORDER TO ABANDON SHIP AND THE MEN TOOK TO THE BOATS. THE SLOOP BEGAN TO SINK RAPIDLY. LOTHAR HAD NO NEED TO USE ANY MORE AMMUNITION.



MANY DAYS WENT BY AFTER THE ATTACK ON THE SLOOP. THE LIFEBOATS DRIFTED APART AND FOOD AND WATER RAN OUT. THE WEATHER GREW STEADILY WORSE.



FINALLY, ROBERT'S LIFEBOAT WAS SPOTTED BY A ROYAL NAVY DESTROYER. A MOTOR BOAT WAS LAUNCHED TO INVESTIGATE.



FIND
MORE
FREE
MAGAZINES

FREEMAGS.CC

TAKEN BACK TO ENGLAND, ROBERT WAS IN HOSPITAL FOR WEEKS BEFORE HE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS. HE WAS VISITED BY A HIGH-RANKING NAVAL OFFICER WHO HAD SOME BAD NEWS.



IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED AS HE REGAINED STRENGTH, ROBERT COULD ONLY THINK OF U-999 AND ITS CAPTAIN. HE BECAME OBSESSED WITH DESTROYING IT.



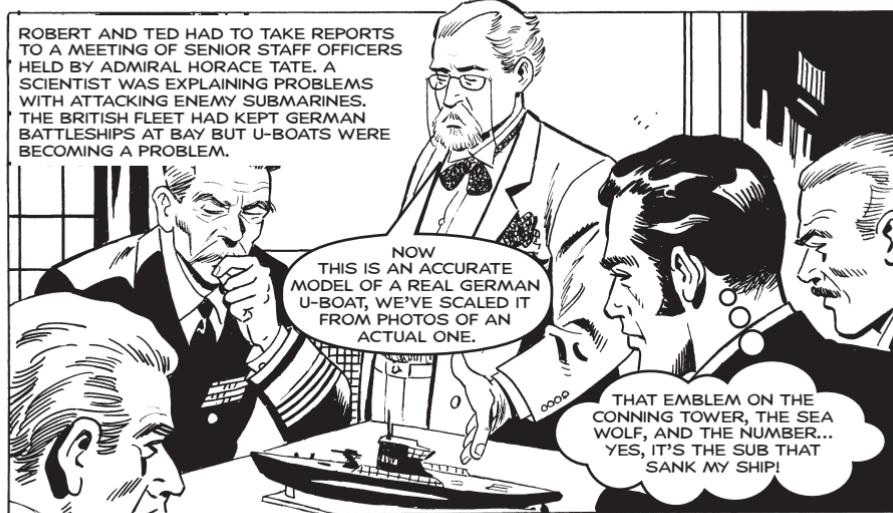
THERE WAS A NAVAL INQUIRY INTO THE SINKING OF H.M.S. DANAE. ROBERT WAS EXONERATED. HE HAD DONE ALL HE COULD THAT DAY.



MONTHS WENT BY AND ROBERT STILL DID NOT HAVE ANOTHER COMMAND. HE JUST WANTED TO HUNT DOWN U-999. HE WORKED AT A STAFF JOB WITH ANOTHER OFFICER, TED WATERMAN.



ROBERT AND TED HAD TO TAKE REPORTS TO A MEETING OF SENIOR STAFF OFFICERS HELD BY ADMIRAL HORACE TATE. A SCIENTIST WAS EXPLAINING PROBLEMS WITH ATTACKING ENEMY SUBMARINES. THE BRITISH FLEET HAD KEPT GERMAN BATTLESHIPS AT BAY BUT U-BOATS WERE BECOMING A PROBLEM.



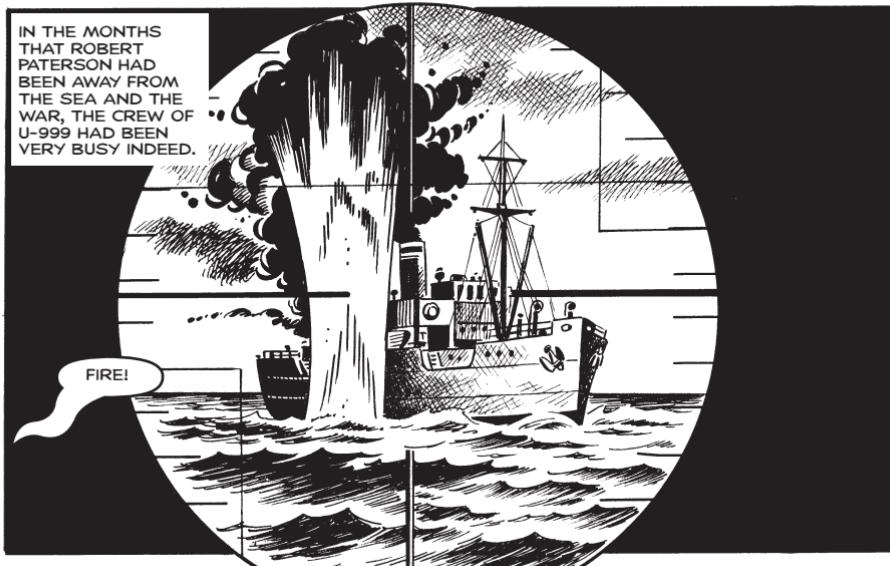


ROBERT'S BEHAVIOUR AT THE MEETING MADE ADMIRAL TATE VERY ANGRY INDEED.





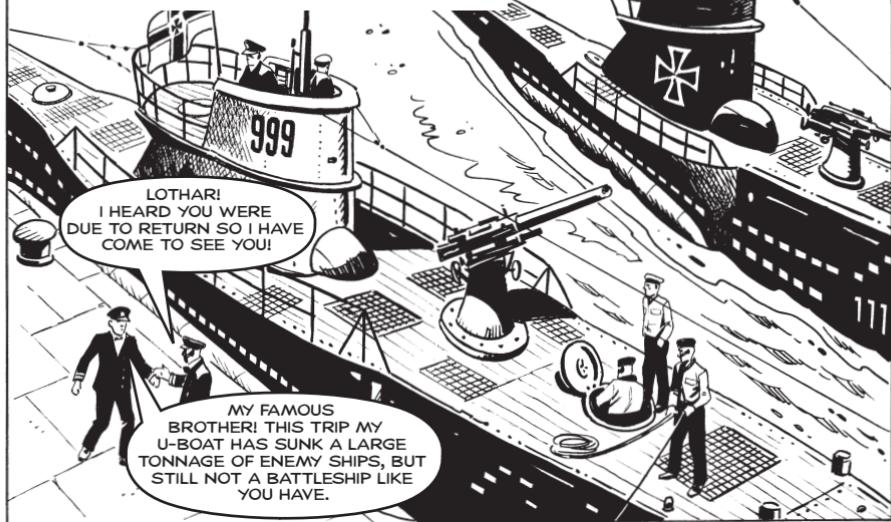
IN THE MONTHS THAT ROBERT PATERSON HAD BEEN AWAY FROM THE SEA AND THE WAR, THE CREW OF U-999 HAD BEEN VERY BUSY INDEED.



oberleutnant lothar pletsch and his crew were learning more about the capabilities of their new weapon. they were sinking more ships on each trip they made. their luck held.



U-999 RETURNED TO BASE AFTER THEIR SUCCESSFUL PATROL. AS HE LEFT THE SUB, LOTHAR WAS VERY PLEASED TO BE GREETED BY HIS BROTHER, OTTO. HE WAS ON LEAVE WHILE HIS SUBMARINE WAS PREPARED FOR ITS NEXT MISSION.



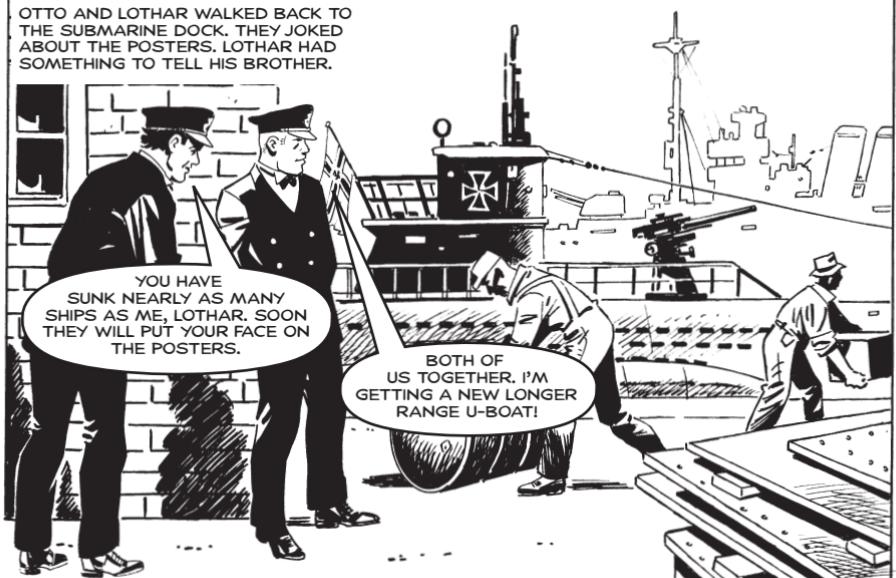
THE TWO BROTHERS DECIDED TO GO FOR A WALK OUTSIDE THE DOCKYARD. THE GERMAN NEWSPAPERS HAD MADE OTTO INTO A PUBLIC HERO. LOTHAR WAS PLEASED FOR HIS BROTHER.



AS THEY WALKED BACK TO THE DOCKYARD, OTTO AND LOTHAR WERE SURROUNDED BY EXCITED CIVILIANS. THEY HAD RECOGNISED OTTO. HE HAD BECOME FAMOUS.



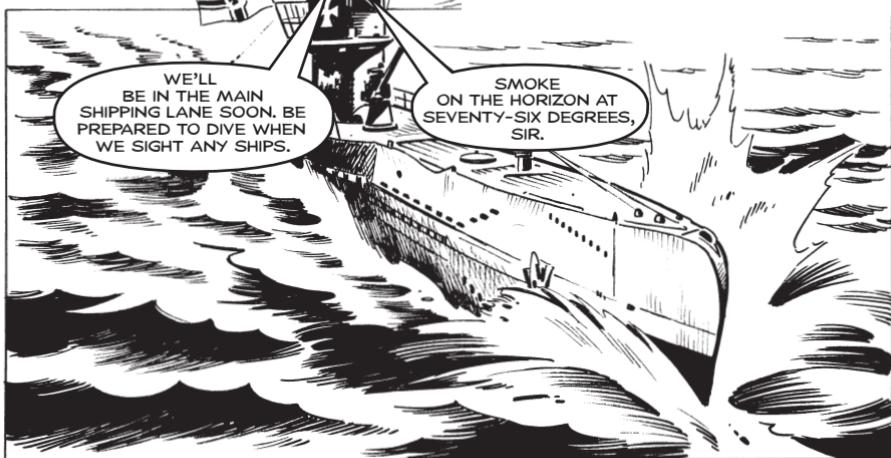
OTTO AND LOTHAR WALKED BACK TO THE SUBMARINE DOCK. THEY JOKED ABOUT THE POSTERS. LOTHAR HAD SOMETHING TO TELL HIS BROTHER.



LOTHAR'S NEW BOAT HAD A GREATER RANGE AND COULD TRAVEL FURTHER INTO SEA LANES TO SINK SHIPPING FAR FROM SHORE. THE GERMAN BLOCKADE OF BRITAIN WAS BEING STEPPED UP. BUT OTTO WAS BECOMING WORRIED.



THE LAND WAR WAS NOT GOING WELL. MANY SOLDIERS DIED FOR VERY LITTLE RESULT. THE GERMAN HIGH COMMAND DECIDED TO USE UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE ATTACKS ON ANY MERCHANT SHIPPING, BRITISH OR NEUTRAL, CARRYING SUPPLIES TO BRITAIN.

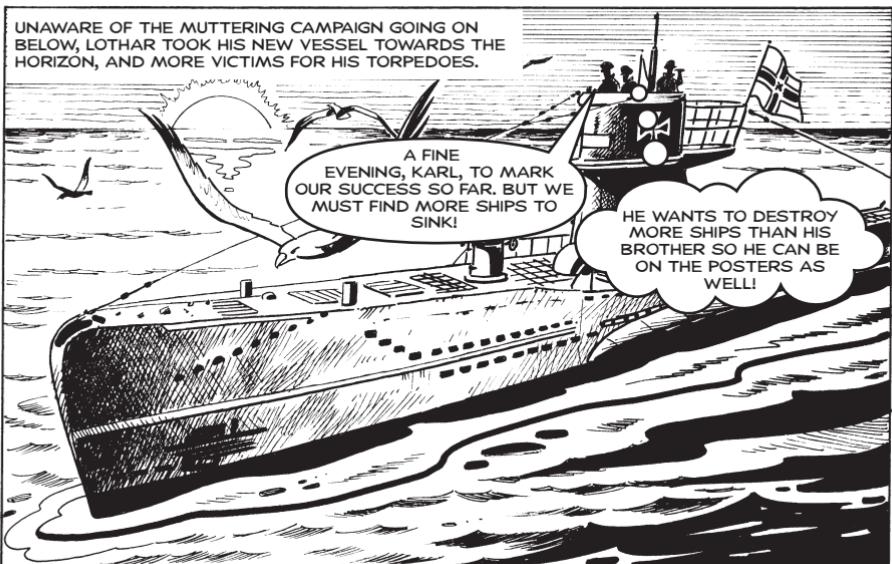


THERE WERE RICH PICKINGS FOR LOTHAR'S NEW U-BOAT. THE CARGO SHIPS WERE LARGELY UNPROTECTED. THIS WAS A NEW MENACE AND THERE WERE VERY FEW SUITABLE BRITISH WARSHIPS AVAILABLE FOR ESCORT.



BUT AFTER THE ACTION, NOT EVERYONE WAS SO PLEASED. VETERAN SAILOR WILLI DURST STARTED AN ARGUMENT. HE DID NOT THINK THE GLORY ON THE POSTERS MATCHED THE REALITY THAT THEY KNEW.

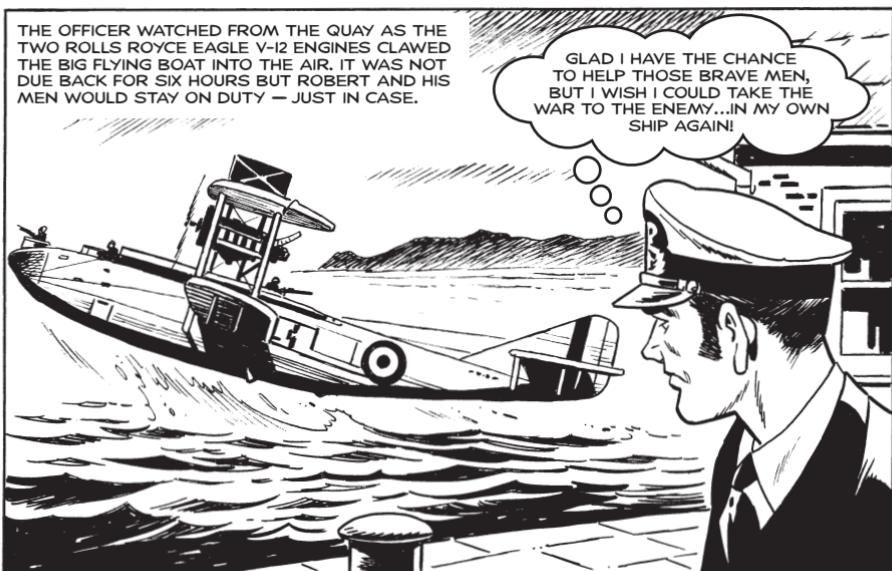




ROBERT, ITCHING TO GET OUT TO SEA AGAIN, STILL WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT ONE PARTICULAR SUB.



THE OFFICER WATCHED FROM THE QUAY AS THE TWO ROLLS ROYCE EAGLE V-12 ENGINES CLAWED THE BIG FLYING BOAT INTO THE AIR. IT WAS NOT DUE BACK FOR SIX HOURS BUT ROBERT AND HIS MEN WOULD STAY ON DUTY — JUST IN CASE.



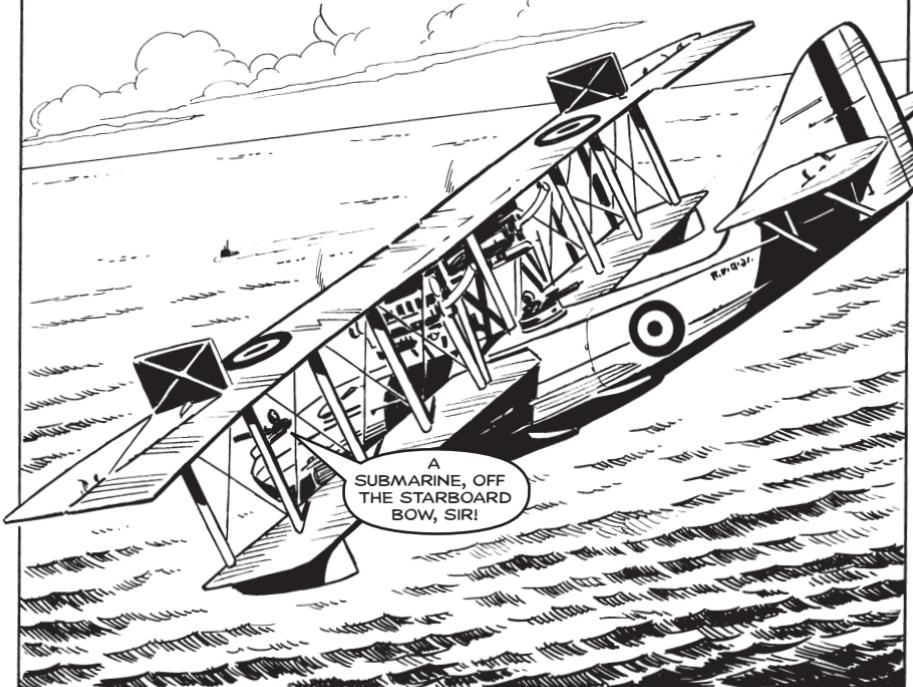
THE F2A FLYING BOAT COULD CARRY ENOUGH FUEL TO PATROL MANY MILES INTO THE NORTH SEA TO LOOK FOR GERMAN SHIPS AND U-BOATS RETURNING TO THEIR BASES. NO OTHER NAVAL AIRCRAFT OF THE TIME COULD FLY SO LONG. FOR THE FIRST FOUR HOURS THE SEA WAS CLEAR.

STILL NOTHING, SO FAR.

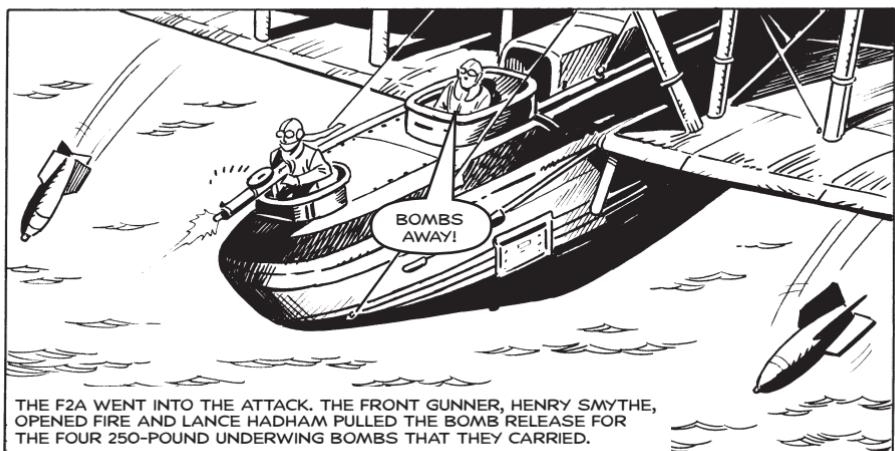


THE AIRCRAFT WAS JUST ABOUT TO TURN FOR HOME WHEN THE FRONT GUNNER SAW WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN A CONNING TOWER ON THE HORIZON.

A SUBMARINE, OFF THE STARBOARD BOW, SIR!



THE GUNNER WAS RIGHT. HE HAD SEEN A SURFACING U-BOAT. LANCE TURNED THE BIG FLYING BOAT AND STARTED TO DIVE TOWARDS IT.



THE F2A WENT INTO THE ATTACK. THE FRONT GUNNER, HENRY SMYTHE, OPENED FIRE AND LANCE HADHAM PULLED THE BOMB RELEASE FOR THE FOUR 250-POUND UNDERWING BOMBS THAT THEY CARRIED.

THE F2A DROPPED ALL ITS BOMBS AND CLIMBED AWAY. THE WEAPONS EXPLODED EITHER SIDE OF THE SUB. THE CREW KNEW THEY HAD DONE ALL THEY COULD. THEY WERE ALSO NOW LOW ON FUEL.

DIDN'T GET A DIRECT HIT BUT PERHAPS IT'S DAMAGED. MUST GET BACK TO BASE.



IN THE CONNING TOWER, LOTHAR, KARL AND WILLI WATCHED THE PLANE FLY AWAY. THE BOMBS HAD EXPLODED TOO FAR AWAY TO CAUSE TOO MUCH DAMAGE BUT THE U-BOAT WOULD STILL NEED SOME HULL REPAIRS.

WE NEED OUR GUNS TO BE ABLE TO FIRE UPWARDS...TEUFEL! WILLI, GET A RIFLE, ANYTHING, AND SHOOT AT THEM!



DO AS THE KAPITAN SAYS, DURST.

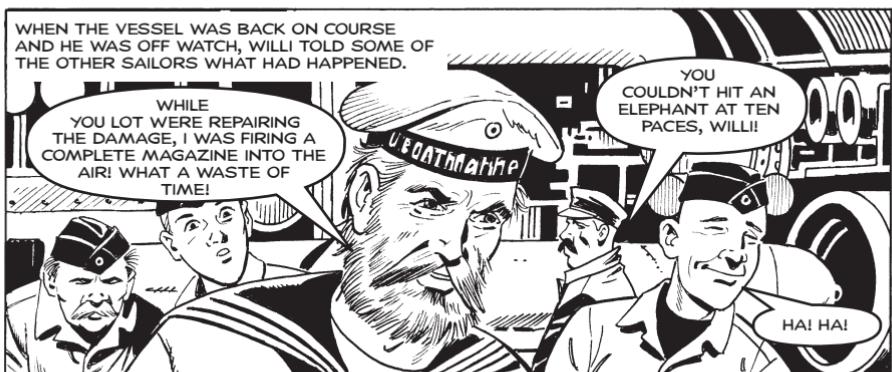
AYE, AYE, SIR.



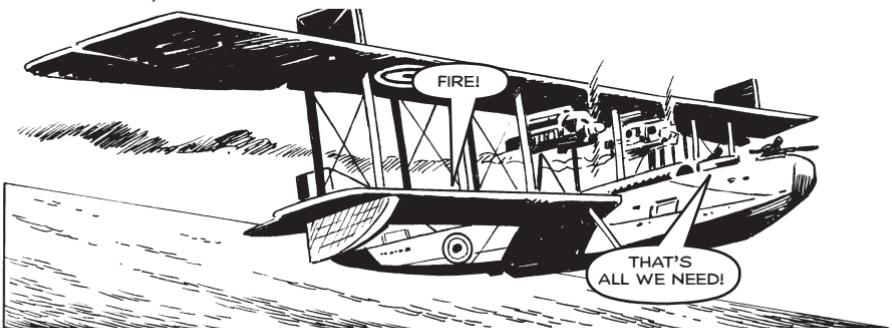
THE U-BOAT WAS INTENDED TO SINK SHIPS AND THE MAIN GUNS WOULD NOT TRAVERSE HIGH ENOUGH TO FIRE AT AN AIRCRAFT. WILLI GOT A RIFLE AND FIRED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE FLYING BOAT.



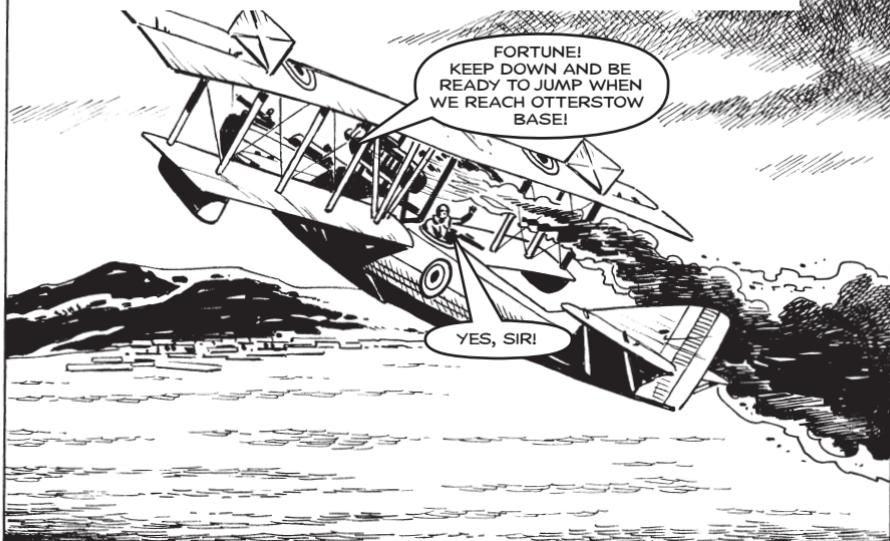
WHEN THE VESSEL WAS BACK ON COURSE AND HE WAS OFF WATCH, WILLI TOLD SOME OF THE OTHER SAILORS WHAT HAD HAPPENED.



DURST DIDN'T KNOW IT BUT BY A FREAK CHANCE A RANDOM SHOT FROM HIS RIFLE HAD HIT ONE OF THE FLYING BOAT'S ENGINES AND FRACTURED AN OIL LINE. NOW, TEN MINUTES LATER, REAR GUNNER PETER FORTUNE SAW SMOKE STARTING TO POUR OUT.



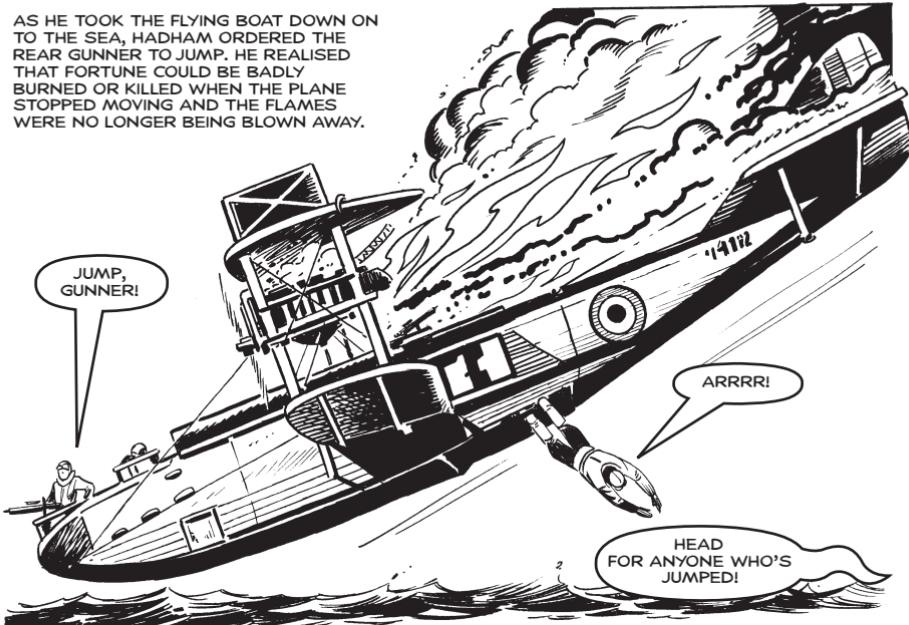
HADHAM HEADED FOR THE BASE AS FAST AS HE COULD. THE PORT ENGINE WAS NOW ON FIRE AND IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE IT SPREAD TO THE REST OF THE PLANE. HE TALKED TO THE REAR GUNNER THROUGH THE SPEAKING TUBE.



ROBERT WAS ABOUT TO SET OUT IN ONE OF THE LAUNCHES THAT ACTED AS A RESCUE BOAT IN CASE OF PROBLEMS. HE SAW THE APPROACHING F2A.



AS HE TOOK THE FLYING BOAT DOWN ON TO THE SEA, HADHAM ORDERED THE REAR GUNNER TO JUMP. HE REALISED THAT FORTUNE COULD BE BADLY BURNED OR KILLED WHEN THE PLANE STOPPED MOVING AND THE FLAMES WERE NO LONGER BEING BLOWN AWAY.



ROBERT'S LAUNCH WENT AFTER THE MEN IN THE WATER WHO NEEDED THEIR HELP. HE KNEW THAT HIS MEN WOULD FIGHT THE FIRE WITH THEIR STEAM POWERED PUMPS AND THAT THE OTHER BOATS WOULD RESCUE THE AIRCREW.



ROBERT COULD SEE THAT FORTUNE WAS GOING UNDER THE WATER. AS THE LAUNCH DREW NEAR, HE STRIPPED OFF HIS JACKET AND DIVED IN AFTER THE AIRMAN.



ROBERT GRABBED FORTUNE JUST IN TIME AND SWAM BACKWARDS TOWARDS THE LAUNCH UNTIL THE CREW COULD HELP THEM ON BOARD.



HADHAM THOUGHT THAT THE SUPPORT BOAT CREWS HAD DONE VERY WELL IN EXTINGUISHING THE BURNING FLYING BOAT AND RESCUING ITS CREW. ALSO ROBERT HAD SAVED THE BASE COMMANDER'S SON FROM DROWNING. ROBERT ASKED ABOUT THE U-BOAT HADHAM HAD ATTACKED.



LIEUTENANT COMMANDER FORTUNE TOLD ROBERT THAT HE WAS BEING CALLED TO THE ADMIRALTY TO BE TOLD ABOUT A NEW POSTING. HE THANKED HIS FELLOW OFFICER FOR SAVING HIS SON BUT SAID THE REAL REASON WAS THAT PATERSON HAD ORGANISED THE SERVICE AND RESCUE BOAT FLOTILLA SO EFFECTIVELY.



ROBERT'S ACTIONS HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF ADMIRAL TATE BY COMMANDER FORTUNE. THEY WERE LOOKING FOR SKIPPERS FOR SHIPS THAT WERE A NEW TYPE OF WEAPON.



ROBERT WENT TO THE NAVAL BASE WHERE HIS NEW SHIP WAS MOORED. H.M.S. WATERSMEET WAS AN OLD CARGO SHIP THAT LOOKED NOTHING BUT U-BOAT FODDER.



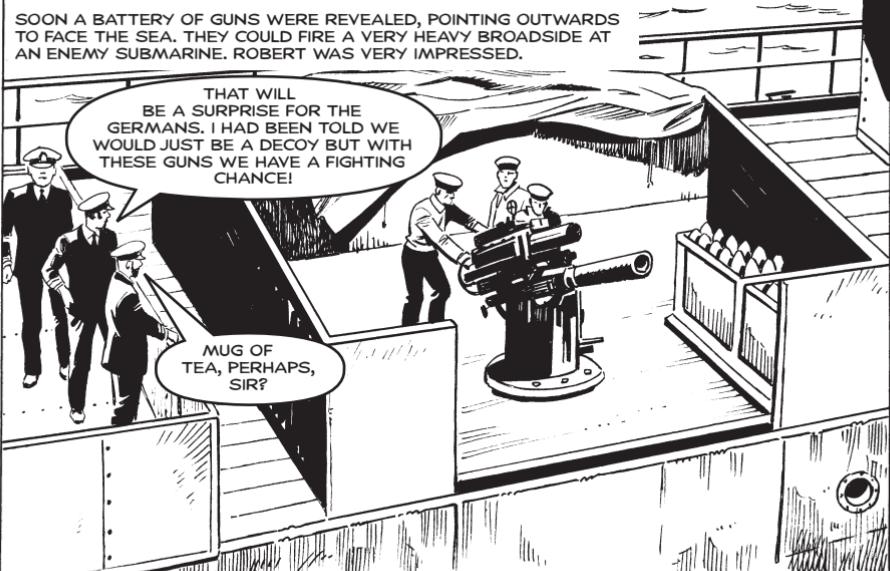
HE BOARDED THE SHIP AND MET SOME OF HIS NEW CREW. LIEUTENANT CHRIS PARKINSON-BROWN WHO WAS THE NUMBER ONE, THE NAVIGATING OFFICER LIEUTENANT JOHN TAGGART AND CHIEF PETTY OFFICER DAVID "TAFFY" EVANS.



ROBERT KNEW THAT U-BOATS, DEVELOPING FAST BUT STILL PRIMITIVE, WERE REALLY SURFACE WARSHIPS THAT COULD SUBMERGE FOR A WHILE. HE HAD SEEN THAT THEY WOULD SINK SMALLER SHIPS ON THE SURFACE USING GUNFIRE. THIS OLD FREIGHTER WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE.



SOON A BATTERY OF GUNS WERE REVEALED, POINTING OUTWARDS TO FACE THE SEA. THEY COULD FIRE A VERY HEAVY BROADSIDE AT AN ENEMY SUBMARINE. ROBERT WAS VERY IMPRESSED.



S.S. WATERSMEET SET OFF ON ITS FIRST MISSION AS A Q-SHIP. TAGGART PLOTTED A COURSE THAT WOULD TAKE THEM TO AREAS WHERE U-BOATS WERE KNOWN TO ATTACK.

ANOTHER FEW HOURS AND WE'LL BE IN THE DANGER ZONE, SIR.

GOOD! THEY'LL THINK WE'RE A SHIP THAT HAS LOST ITS WAY.

ROBERT, OF COURSE, HOPED THEY WOULD MEET THE U-BOAT WITH THE SEA-WOLF EMBLEM ON IT.

IN FACT THEY DIDN'T COME ACROSS ANY U-BOATS OR INDEED ANY SHIPS AT ALL, FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

THIS IS GETTING BORING, MUST BE SOMETHING OUT THERE.

WE'RE A SITTING DUCK, JUST LIKE THE DANAE WAS.

EVENTUALLY THEIR PATIENCE WAS REWARDED. A SUBMERGED GERMAN U-BOAT SPOTTED THEM THROUGH ITS PERISCOPE. SEEING A SMALL CARGO SHIP THAT DIDN'T APPEAR A THREAT, THEY PREPARED TO SURFACE AND SINK IT WITH THEIR GUNS.



THE U-BOAT CLOSED IN AS THE CAPTAIN PREPARED TO SINK THE FREIGHTER. THEN THEY NOTICED SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THE SHIP.



BEFORE THE ASTONISHED U-BOAT OFFICERS COULD REACT, WATERSMEET HAD LOWERED THE FALSE SUPERSTRUCTURE SIDES AND FIRED A MASSIVE BROADSIDE.



THE U-BOAT WAS SUNK WITH ONE VOLLEY. THE CREW WERE TAKEN BY SURPRISED AND HAD NO TIME TO FIRE BACK. THEY HADN'T STOOD A CHANCE.



SOME WEEKS LATER, ROBERT DISCUSSED HIS NEW ORDERS WITH JOHN AND CHRIS. THEY HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL WITH THE NEW Q-SHIP, CATCHING SEVERAL U-BOATS UNAWARES AND SINKING THEM.



WATERSMEET ANCHORED AT THE LOCATION MARKED ON THE CHART, SOME WAY FROM THE COAST. THE CREW WAITED AS THE SHIP ROCKED IN THE SWELL.



A GERMAN SUBMARINE SPOTTED THE Q-SHIP ON ITS WAY BACK TO BASE. THEY WANTED TO ATTACK BUT SOMEHOW WERE SUSPICIOUS OF IT. THEIR SKIPPER WAS THE VERY EXPERIENCED U-BOAT ACE, OTTO PLETSCH AND HE WONDERED WHY IT WAS ANCHORED THERE.



ROBERT ORDERED THE SIDES TO BE DROPPED AND THE GUNS TO OPEN FIRE. THE U-BOAT WAS TOO FAR AWAY TO BE SURE OF SINKING IT BUT THIS WAS THEIR ONLY CHANCE. MOST SHOTS FELL SHORT BECAUSE OF THE RANGE.



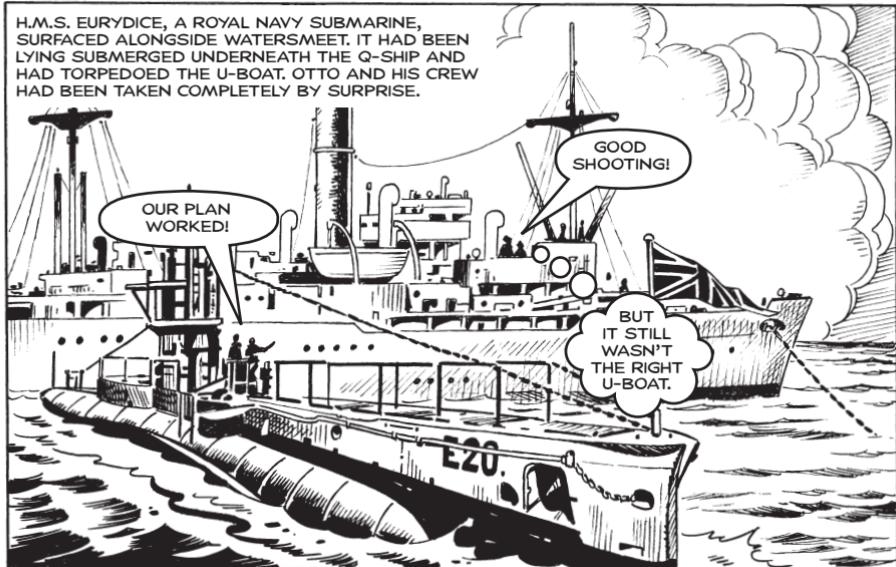
THE U-BOAT WAS NOW OUT OF RANGE OF THE WATERSMEET'S GUNS. OTTO INTENDED TO TORPEDO THE Q-SHIP ONCE THEY HAD CHECKED THE SUB FOR DAMAGE. BUT THEN ONE OF THE CREW SPOTTED SOMETHING HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THEM.



ALTHOUGH JUST OUT OF RANGE OF THEIR GUNS, THE U-BOAT EXPLODED. ONLY THE BOW AND STERN COULD BE SEEN AND SOON THE WRECKAGE HAD VANISHED UNDERWATER.



H.M.S. EURYDICE, A ROYAL NAVY SUBMARINE, SURFACED ALONGSIDE WATERSMEET. IT HAD BEEN LYING SUBMERGED UNDERNEATH THE Q-SHIP AND HAD TORPEDOED THE U-BOAT. OTTO AND HIS CREW HAD BEEN TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE.



SEVERAL WEEKS LATER, WHILE HIS U-BOAT WAS IN PORT, LOTHAR PLETSCH WAS CALLED TO SEE ADMIRAL KRASS. HE WAS SINKING MORE AND MORE SHIPS. KRASS COMPLIMENTED LOTHAR ON HIS SUCCESS RATE THEN HE TOLD HIM HE HAD SOME VERY BAD NEWS.



THE ADMIRAL HAD TOLD LOTHAR THAT HIS BROTHER'S SUB HAD PROBABLY BEEN SUNK BY A NEW TYPE OF SECRET WEAPON BUT THEY WERE NOT SURE WHAT IT WAS. PLETSCH WAS ENRAGED. FROM NOW ON HE WOULD ATTACK ANY BRITISH SHIPPING HE COULD, NO MATTER HOW DANGEROUS.



LOTHAR HAD BEEN HIT VERY HARD BY THE LOSS OF HIS BROTHER. HE WOULD NOW THINK OF NEW, MORE DIFFICULT MISSIONS TO VOLUNTEER HIS U-BOAT FOR. KARL THALER BEGAN TO SERIOUSLY DOUBT HIS SKIPPER'S JUDGEMENT.



ON THEIR NEXT MISSION, LOTHAR'S SCORE CONTINUED TO RISE BUT HE WAS INSISTING ON TAKING MORE AND MORE RISKS. AFTER THE LAST SINKING, U-558 WAS LUCKY TO ESCAPE FROM THE GUNS OF A BRITISH DESTROYER.

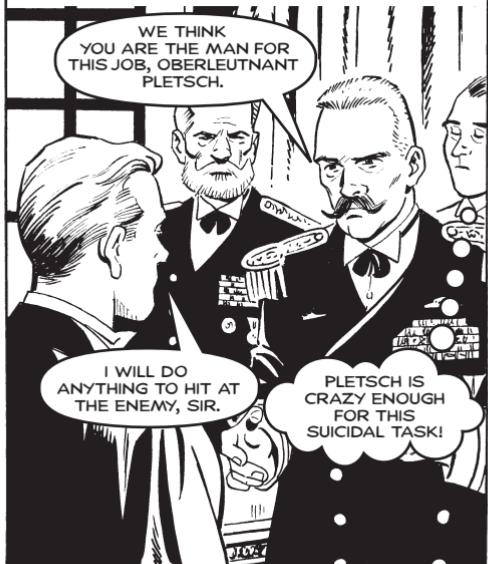


THE BADLY DAMAGED U-558 LIMPED BACK TO ITS BERTH. IT HAD BEEN A VERY DIFFICULT TRIP AFTER THE ATTACK BY THE DESTROYER AND THE CREW WERE LUCKY TO RETURN. SOME SAILORS WERE CLOSE TO MUTINY.



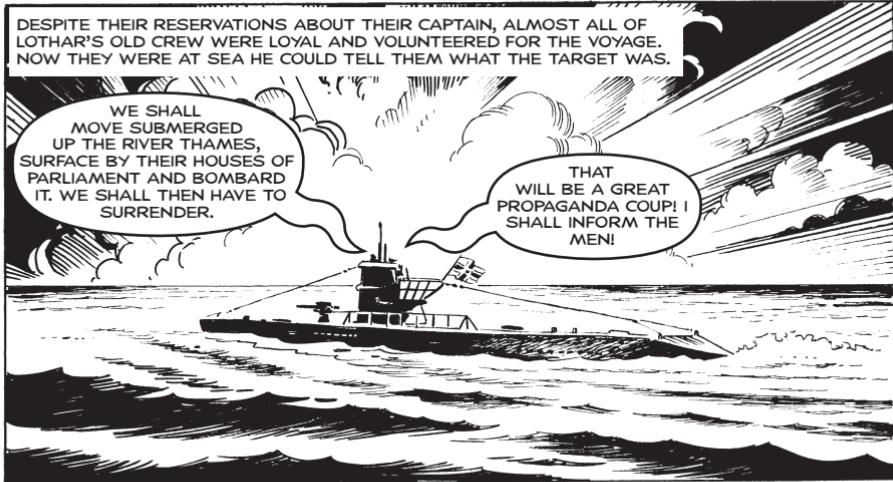
THEY HAD ALSO BEEN ATTACKED BY ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE SOPWITH ½ STRUTTER BOMBERS USED FOR ANTI U-BOAT PATROLS. THEIR ACCURATELY DROPPED BOMBS HAD DAMAGED THE HULL.

KRASS AND TWO OF HIS STAFF OFFICERS TALKED TO LOTHAR. THEY HAD A VERY DANGEROUS SECRET MISSION THAT THEY WANTED HIM TO CARRY OUT.

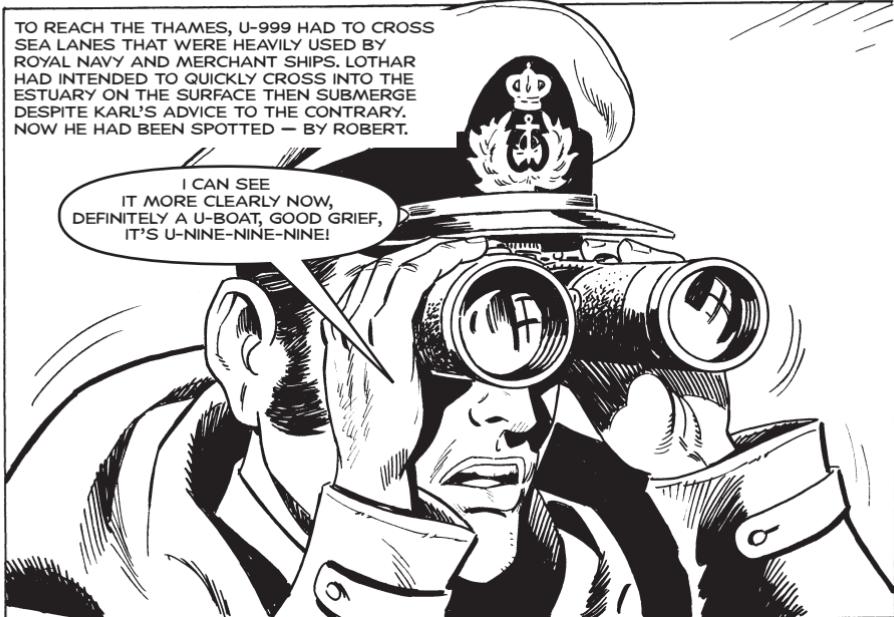


LOTHAR SOUGHT OUT KARL. U-558 HAD BEEN BADLY DAMAGED AND REPAIRS WOULD TAKE A LONG TIME. HE HAD BEEN ALLOCATED HIS ORIGINAL SUB, U-999. HE NEEDED A SMALLER BOAT FOR THE MISSION.

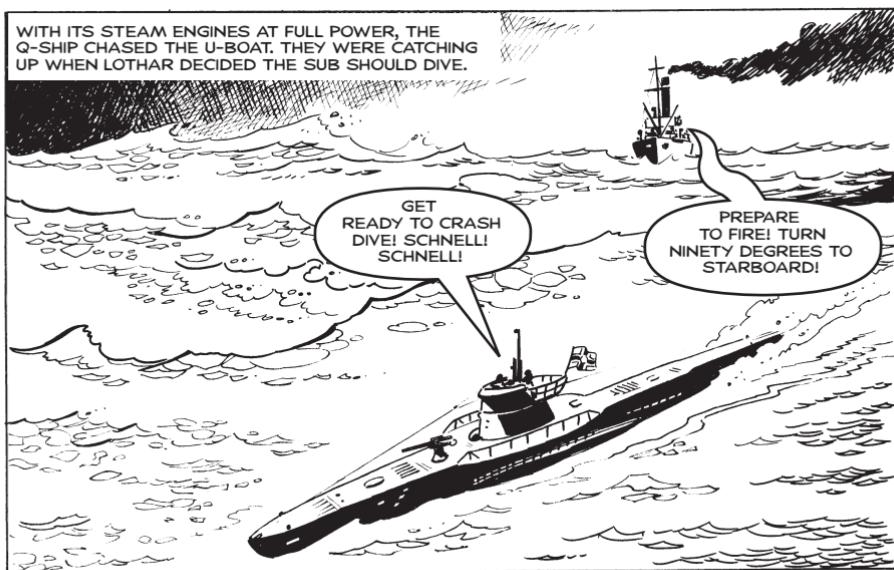




TO REACH THE THAMES, U-999 HAD TO CROSS SEA LANES THAT WERE HEAVILY USED BY ROYAL NAVY AND MERCHANT SHIPS. LOTHAR HAD INTENDED TO QUICKLY CROSS INTO THE ESTUARY ON THE SURFACE THEN SUBMERGE DESPITE KARL'S ADVICE TO THE CONTRARY. NOW HE HAD BEEN SPOTTED — BY ROBERT.



WITH ITS STEAM ENGINES AT FULL POWER, THE Q-SHIP CHASED THE U-BOAT. THEY WERE CATCHING UP WHEN LOTHAR DECIDED THE SUB SHOULD DIVE.



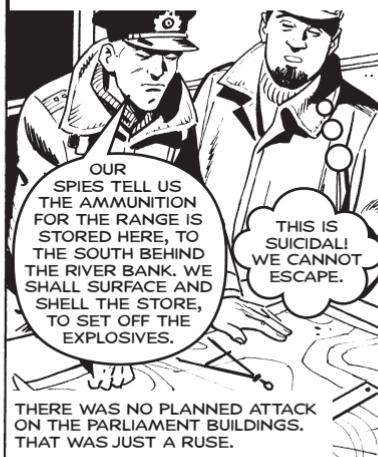
THE Q-SHIP HAD TO TURN AWAY FROM THE CHASE TO LET THE SIDEWARDS FIRING GUNS AIM AT THE U-BOAT. IN HIS HASTE TO SINK THE SUB, ROBERT ORDERED THE MANOEUVRE TOO SOON.



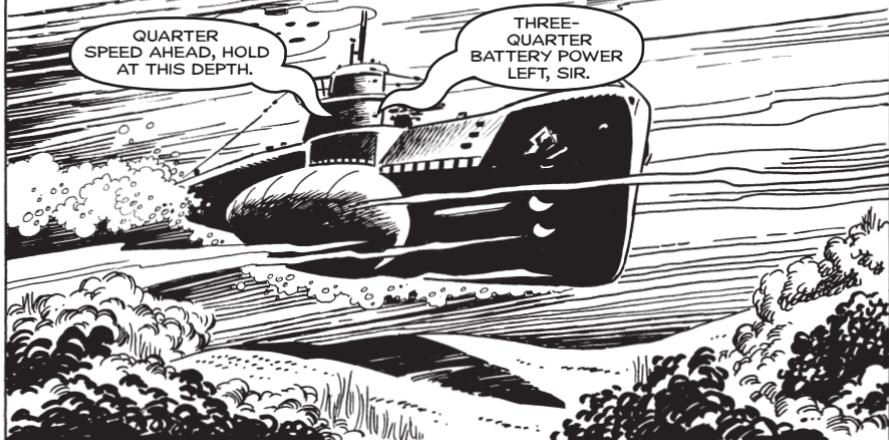
KARL WAS SHAKEN. THEY HAD ESCAPED FROM THE ATTACKING SHIP, BUT THEY HAD ONLY BEEN SPOTTED BECAUSE LOTHAR HAD ORDERED A COURSE ACROSS THE SHIPPING LANES IN DAYLIGHT. IT HAD BEEN FAR TOO BIG A RISK.



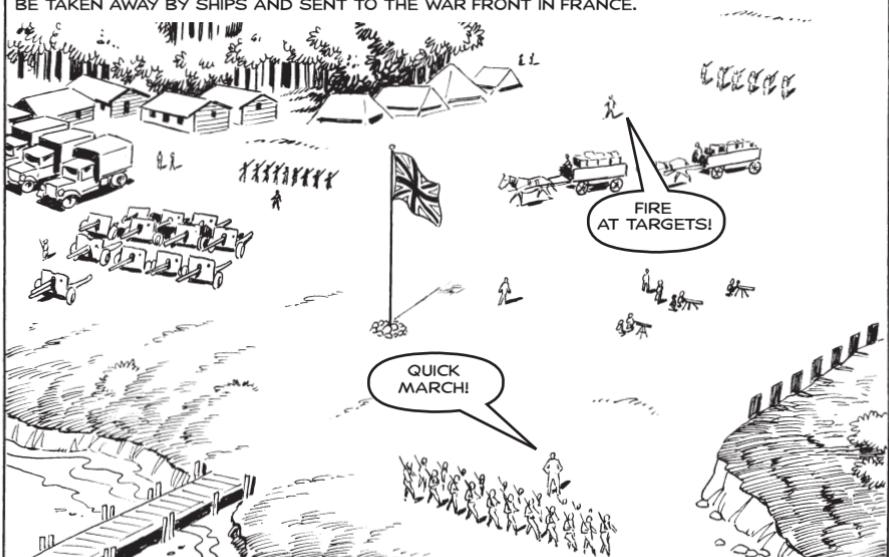
THEIR REAL MISSION WAS TO DESTROY AN AMMUNITION DUMP AND EXPLOSIVES STORE BY ARMY FIRING RANGES ALONGSIDE THE LOWER RIVER THAMES. APART FROM THE RANGE, MANY SHELLS WERE SENT TO THE WESTERN FRONT FROM THERE.



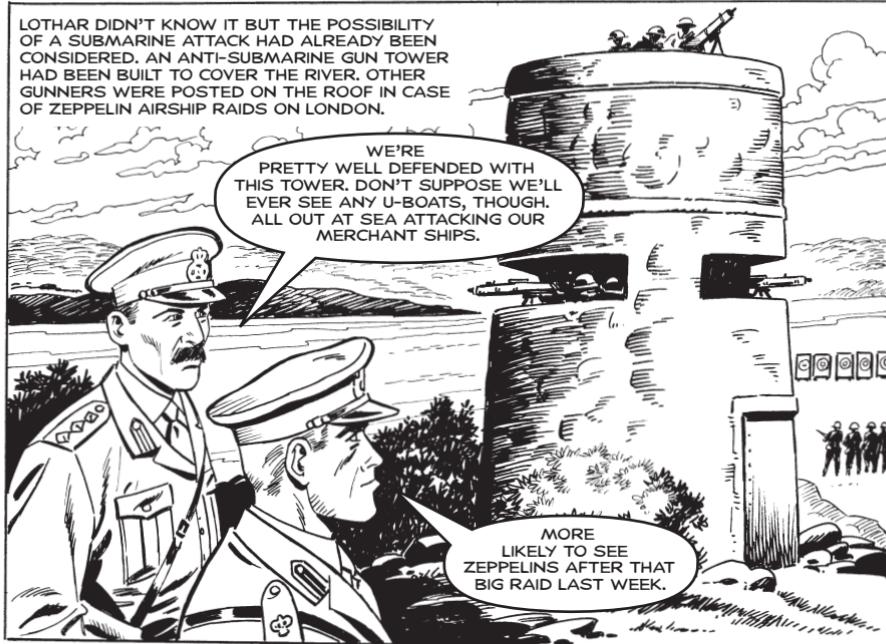
THE RIVER WAS DEEP ENOUGH FOR A SMALL U-BOAT LIKE U-999 TO RUN BELOW THE SURFACE AT PERISCOPE DEPTH BUT THE CREW HAD TO BE VERY CAREFUL TO AVOID HITTING THE BOTTOM. RUNNING ON BATTERIES, THEIR REMAINING RANGE WAS ONLY JUST ENOUGH TO GET BACK TO SEA AFTER THEIR ATTACK.



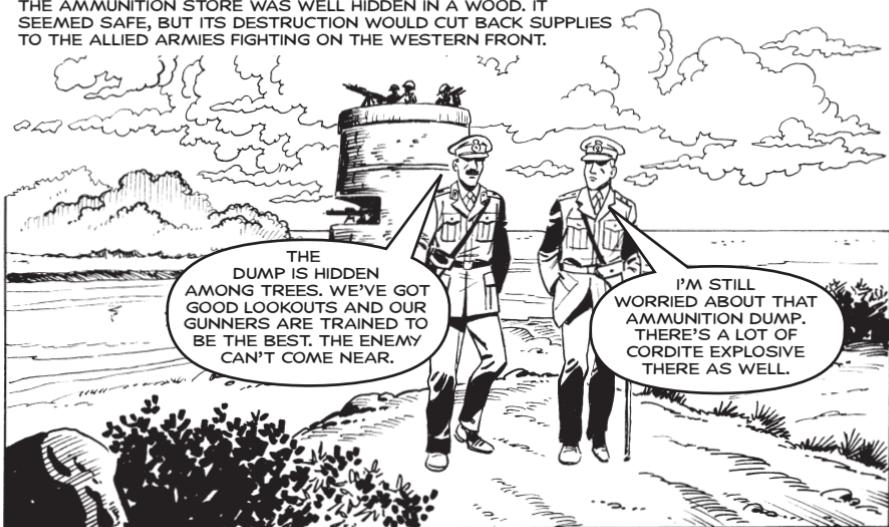
MARSHLAND FIRING RANGE WAS A LARGE CAMP USED TO TRAIN SOLDIERS TO USE RIFLES AND MACHINE GUNS AND PRACTICE THEIR MARKSMANSHIP. BEING BY THE RIVER IT WAS ALSO USED TO STORE AMMUNITION THAT COULD BE TAKEN AWAY BY SHIPS AND SENT TO THE WAR FRONT IN FRANCE.



LOTHAR DIDN'T KNOW IT BUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A SUBMARINE ATTACK HAD ALREADY BEEN CONSIDERED. AN ANTI-SUBMARINE GUN TOWER HAD BEEN BUILT TO COVER THE RIVER. OTHER GUNNERS WERE POSTED ON THE ROOF IN CASE OF ZEPPELIN AIRSHIP RAIDS ON LONDON.



THE AMMUNITION STORE WAS WELL HIDDEN IN A WOOD. IT SEEMED SAFE, BUT ITS DESTRUCTION WOULD CUT BACK SUPPLIES TO THE ALLIED ARMIES FIGHTING ON THE WESTERN FRONT.

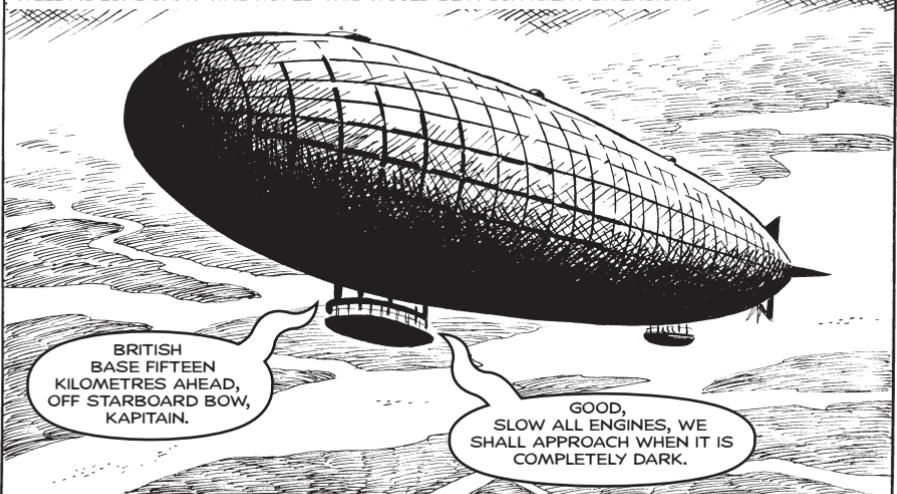


THE SUBMERGED U-999 CRESTED UP RIVER. LOTHAR GAVE ORDERS TO THE HELMSMAN AND PASSED LANDMARKS HE COULD SEE TO KARL WHO IDENTIFIED THEM ON THE CHART. THEY WERE NOW FIVE MILES SHORT OF THE ARMY BASE.

WHEN THE RIVER BENDS TO THE LEFT IT IS SHALLOW ON THE INSIDE OF THE BEND SO KEEP TO THE RIGHT.



THE LIGHT WAS FADING. AS PART OF THE PLAN, GERMAN HIGH COMMAND HAD ARRANGED FOR A P-TYPE ZEPPELIN AIRSHIP TO FLY OVER NEAR THE RANGE WHEN THE U-BOAT WAS DUE TO ARRIVE, TO DRAW ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE RIVER. SEVERAL OTHER AIRSHIPS WERE DUE TO BOMB COASTAL TARGETS AS WELL AS LONDON. IT WAS HOPED THIS WOULD BE A SUFFICIENT DIVERSION.



U-999 SURFACED SOME WAY SHORT OF THE ARMY BASE. LOTHAR WANTED THE GUN CREW IN PLACE BEFORE THEY WERE IN RANGE. THE SUB STARTED TO MOVE SLOWLY UP INTO POSITION.



BUT THINGS WERE NOT GOING TO PLAN. LOTHAR AND THE AIRSHIP COMMANDER HAD ARRANGED THEIR RENDEZVOUS PERFECTLY. BUT AN R.F.C. BE12 NIGHT-FIGHTER HAD BEEN TRACKING THE ZEPPELIN. IT'S PILOT, LIEUTENANT ANDY BURTON, A VETERAN OF THE AIR FIGHTING OVER THE WESTERN FRONT, WAS NOW WITH A HOME DEFENCE SQUADRON AND VERY EXPERIENCED IN NIGHT FLYING. NOW HE HAD THE ZEPPELIN IN HIS SIGHTS.

BURTON DIVED AT THE AIRSHIP THAT WAS NOW CAUGHT IN THE SEARCHLIGHT BEAMS. HIS INCENDIARY TRACER BULLETS FOUND THEIR MARK. THE VICKERS GUN CREW ON TOP OF THE ANTI-SUBMARINE TOWER ALSO HIT THEIR TARGET.

TAKE THAT, YOU BLIGHTERS!

STEADY AIM, LADS! KEEP FIRING, YOU'RE HITTING HIM!

HYDROGEN GAS BAGS WITHIN THE AIRSHIP'S FRAMEWORK CAUGHT FIRE AND THE DOOMED MACHINE BEGAN TO FALL.

THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS AND THE ARMY COULD NEVER AGREE ON WHO HAD SHOT THE ZEPPELIN DOWN, BUT THE BURNING AIRSHIP LIT UP THE COUNTRYSIDE FOR MILES AROUND. THE SURFACED U-BOAT WAS SPOTTED IN THE GLARE BY AN ALERT SENTRY WHO RAISED THE ALARM.

U-BOAT!
ENEMY U-BOAT IN THE RIVER!

THE CAMP WAS FULL OF MANY HIGHLY TRAINED SHARP SHOOTERS. AS THE SENTRIES AND THE GUN TOWER OPENED UP ON THE U-BOAT, EVERYONE OFF DUTY GRABBED THEIR RIFLE AND RAN FOR THE RIVER BANK. CAUGHT ON DECK, THE GUN CREW DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE.



U-999 HAD KICKED OVER A HORNET'S NEST. WITH THE DECK GUN DAMAGED AND THE GUN CREW DEAD THERE WAS NO HOPE OF CARRYING OUT THEIR MISSION. THEY MANAGED TO ESCAPE BY SUBMERGING AND TURNING THE SUB BACK DOWN RIVER.



THE SUBMARINE SET OFF BACK DOWN RIVER, THE WAY IT HAD COME. THEY HAD BEEN VERY LUCKY TO ESCAPE HAVING BEEN CAUGHT ON THE SURFACE BY HUNDREDS OF MARKSMEN EAGER TO SHOW THEIR SKILLS.



AROUND DAWN, WATERSMEET LEFT PORT HAVING TAKEN ON MORE COAL AND AMMUNITION. THEY WERE TASKED WITH PATROLLING THE THAMES ESTUARY FOR ENEMY SHIPS. AN EARLY MORNING SEA MIST WAS RISING.



U-999'S BATTERIES WERE NEARLY EXHAUSTED AND THEY HAD SURFACED TO RECHARGE THEM. LOTHAR KNEW THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NO CHANCE TO CROSS THE CHANNEL TO SAFETY ON THE SURFACE. THEY WOULD NEED A FULL BATTERY CHARGE TO RUN ACROSS UNDERWATER.



AS THE MIST CLEARED AHEAD, ROBERT COULD SEE THE U-BOAT STATIONARY IN THE WATER. HE RECOGNISED THE SEA WOLF INSIGNIA AND THE NUMBER THAT HE HATED SO MUCH.



THE NOISE FROM THE DIESELS KEPT THE SUB'S CREW FROM HEARING THE STEAMSHIP UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE. WATERSMEEET STRUCK U-999 AMIDSHIPS. THE SUB FOLDED IN HALF. TORN IN TWO, IT STARTED TO SINK.



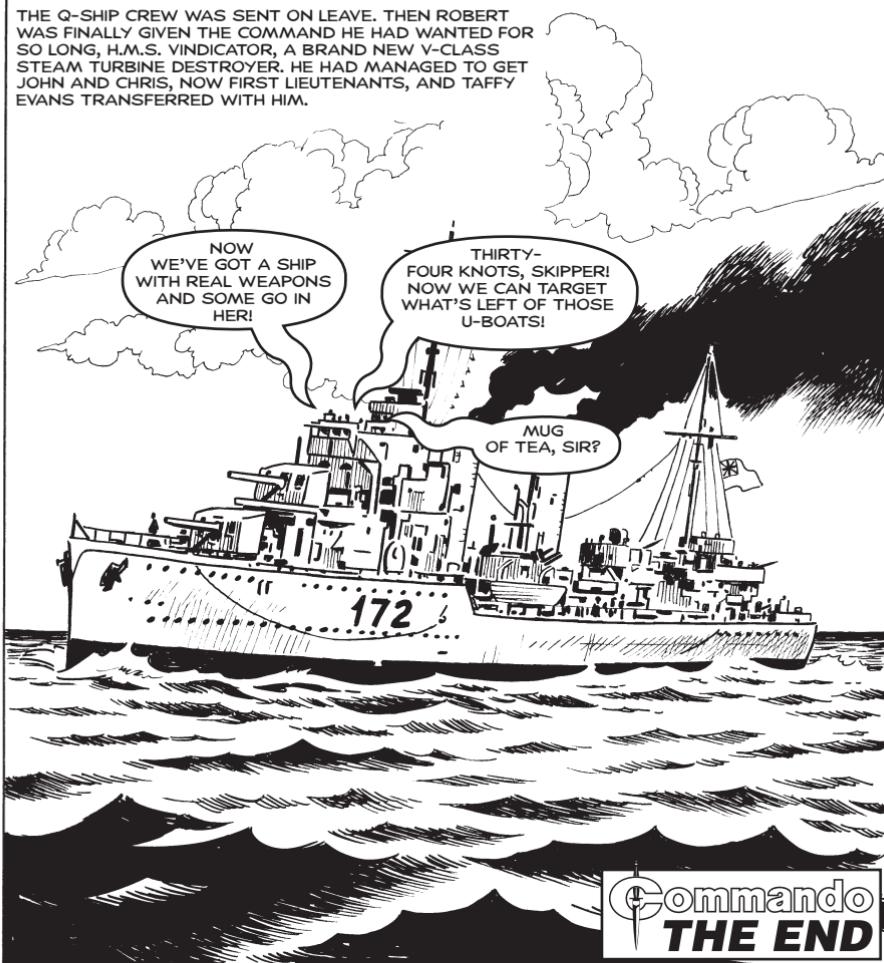
THE Q-SHIP STOPPED AND LOWERED BOATS TO PICK UP SURVIVORS. THE SEA WAS NOW A COMMON ENEMY FOR THE SAILORS. ROBERT HIMSELF WENT IN ONE OF THE BOATS TO HELP. KARL WAS AMONG THE RESCUED, GLAD TO BE OUT OF THE WAR AND THAT HE DIDN'T ARRANGE A MUTINY.



LOTHAR CAME ROUND IN THE SHIP'S SICK BAY. ROBERT HAD COME TO SEE HIM. THE U-BOAT SKIPPER KNEW THAT THE ENEMY OFFICER HAD RISKED HIS LIFE TO SAVE HIM. NOW THEIR VENDETTAS WERE OVER.



THE Q-SHIP CREW WAS SENT ON LEAVE. THEN ROBERT WAS FINALLY GIVEN THE COMMAND HE HAD WANTED FOR SO LONG, H.M.S. VINDICATOR, A BRAND NEW V-CLASS STEAM TURBINE DESTROYER. HE HAD MANAGED TO GET JOHN AND CHRIS, NOW FIRST LIEUTENANTS, AND TAFFY EVANS TRANSFERRED WITH HIM.



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THE END

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U-BOAT HUNT

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Robert was given command of a Q-Ship — a vessel that looked like a merchantman but was fitted with concealed guns that would destroy any U-Boat coming within range.

It seemed Robert might have his revenge!

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