

= German submarine U @-@ 853 =

German submarine U @-@ 853 was a Type IXC / 40 U @-@ boat of Nazi Germany 's Kriegsmarine during World War II . Her keel was laid down on 21 August 1942 by DeSchiMAG AG Weser of Bremen . She was commissioned on 25 June 1943 with Kapitänleutnant Helmut Sommer in command . U @-@ 853 saw action during the Battle of the Atlantic in World War II . She conducted three patrols , sinking two ships totalling 5 @, @ 783 tons .

On her final patrol , U @-@ 853 was sent to harass United States coastal shipping . She destroyed USS Eagle Boat 56 near Portland , Maine . Just days before Germany 's surrender , U @-@ 853 torpedoed and sank the collier Black Point during the Battle of Point Judith . American warships quickly found U @-@ 853 and sank her 7 nmi (13 km ; 8 @. @ 1 mi) east of Block Island , Rhode Island , resulting in the loss of her entire crew .

U @-@ 853 is a popular deep sea diving site . She rests in 121 feet (37 m) of water . Holes in the hull permit access to the interior of the submarine , though it is a war grave with most of the 55 crew bodies remaining inside .

= = Design = =

German Type IXC / 40 submarines were slightly larger than the original Type IXCs . U @-@ 853 had a displacement of 1 @, @ 144 tonnes (1 @, @ 126 long tons) when at the surface and 1 @, @ 257 tonnes (1 @, @ 237 long tons) while submerged . The U @-@ boat had a total length of 76 @. @ 76 m (251 ft 10 in) , a pressure hull length of 58 @. @ 75 m (192 ft 9 in) , a beam of 6 @. @ 86 m (22 ft 6 in) , a height of 9 @. @ 60 m (31 ft 6 in) , and a draught of 4 @. @ 67 m (15 ft 4 in) . The submarine was powered by two MAN M 9 V 40 / 46 supercharged four @-@ stroke , nine @-@ cylinder diesel engines producing a total of 4 @, @ 400 metric horsepower (3 @, @ 240 kW ; 4 @, @ 340 shp) for use while surfaced , two Siemens @-@ Schuckert 2 GU 345 / 34 double @-@ acting electric motors producing a total of 1 @, @ 000 shaft horsepower (1 @, @ 010 PS ; 750 kW) for use while submerged . She had two shafts and two 1 @. @ 92 m (6 ft) propellers . The boat was capable of operating at depths of up to 230 metres (750 ft) .

The submarine had a maximum surface speed of 18 @. @ 3 knots (33 @. @ 9 km / h ; 21 @. @ 1 mph) and a maximum submerged speed of 7 @. @ 3 knots (13 @. @ 5 km / h ; 8 @. @ 4 mph) . When submerged , the boat could operate for 63 nautical miles (117 km ; 72 mi) at 4 knots (7 @. @ 4 km / h ; 4 @. @ 6 mph) ; when surfaced , she could travel 13 @, @ 850 nautical miles (25 @, @ 650 km ; 15 @, @ 940 mi) at 10 knots (19 km / h ; 12 mph) . U @-@ 853 was fitted with six 53 @. @ 3 cm (21 in) torpedo tubes (four fitted at the bow and two at the stern) , 22 torpedoes , one 10 @. @ 5 cm (4 @. @ 13 in) SK C / 32 naval gun , 180 rounds , and a 3 @. @ 7 cm (1 @. @ 5 in) as well as a 2 cm (0 @. @ 79 in) anti @-@ aircraft gun . The boat had a complement of forty @-@ eight .

= = Service history = =

U @-@ 853 was built by DeSchiMAG AG Weser of Bremen . Ordered on 5 June 1941 , her keel was laid on 21 August 1942 and she was commissioned on 25 June 1943 .

The Germans nicknamed the U @-@ boat der Seiltänzer (" the Tightrope Walker ") , and her crew painted an emblem of a yellow shield with a red horse on her sail .

= = First patrol = =

On her first patrol from May to June 1944 , U @-@ 853 was assigned to weather @-@ watching duty under the command of Kapitänleutnant Helmut Sommer . This was its first war patrol . German intelligence believed that weather conditions in the Atlantic could be used to help predict the timing of an Allied invasion of Europe . On 25 May 1944 U @-@ 853 spotted RMS Queen Mary , loaded with American troops and supplies . The U @-@ boat submerged to attack , but was outrun by the

much larger and faster ship . As she surfaced in Queen Mary 's wake U @-@ 853 was attacked by Fairey Swordfish aircraft from British merchant aircraft carriers MV Ancyclus and MV Empire MacKendrick . The U @-@ boat took no significant damage and returned fire , hitting all three aircraft . The planes were able to return to their carrier , but after recovery one was deemed a total loss and jettisoned .

The escort carrier USS Croatan (CVE @-@ 14) had been hunting weather boats for nearly a month and had already sunk U @-@ 488 and U @-@ 490 . Intercepted radio transmissions led Croatan and six destroyers to search for U @-@ 853 . The U @-@ 853 proved so elusive that Croatan 's crew nicknamed their prey " Moby Dick . " After ten days of hunting , on 17 June Huff @-@ Duff (HF / DF , high frequency direction finding) picked up a weather report from U @-@ 853 only 30 nautical miles (56 km ; 35 mi) away . Within minutes two FM @-@ 1 Wildcat fighters strafed the submarine , killing 2 men and wounding 12 others . Sommer suffered 28 shrapnel and bullet wounds yet still managed to give the order to submerge . In all likelihood Sommer saved his submarine from being destroyed by allied bombers .

Three weeks of pursuit from 25 May until 17 June placed an enormous strain on U @-@ 853 's crew . Twenty @-@ three @-@ year @-@ old Oberleutnant zur See Helmut Frömsdorf took command of the boat on 18 June (his first command) and returned to Lorient . Sommer and a large number of the crew was declared unfit for duty . On 10 July Sommer was formally relieved by Oberleutnant zur See Otto Wermuth .

= = Second patrol = =

The boat remained in port until 27 August . Decorated veteran Korvettenkapitän Günter Kuhnke , Commander of the 10th U @-@ boat Flotilla , took command for her second patrol . U @-@ 853 operated this time in the Western Approaches off the British Isles , but in a period of seven weeks scored no successes . On completion she did not return to Lorient , but continued to Flensburg , arriving 14 October . Kuhnke assumed command of the 33rd U @-@ boat Flotilla upon arriving at Flensburg . He relinquished command of U @-@ 853 back to Frömsdorf , who took the U @-@ boat on her third and final patrol . Before departure U @-@ 853 was fitted with a Schnorchel , a retractable air intake and exhaust that allowed the ship to remain submerged while running her diesel engines . The Schnorchel reduced the need to spend dangerous periods on the surface recharging batteries .

= = Last patrol = =

On 23 February 1945 Germany sent U @-@ 853 on her third war patrol to harass US coastal shipping . Under the command of Oberleutnant zur See Helmut Frömsdorf , U @-@ 853 did not sink any targets during the first weeks of her patrol . Her crossing of the Atlantic was slow because she used her Schnorchel to remain submerged to avoid being spotted by Allied aircraft . On 1 April 1945 U @-@ 853 was ordered to the Gulf of Maine . On 23 April she fatally torpedoed USS Eagle Boat 56 near Portland , Maine . The next day USS Muskegon made sonar contact and attacked U @-@ 853 , but failed to destroy her .

Eagle Boat 56 , a World War I @-@ era patrol boat , was towing targets for a United States Navy dive @-@ bomber training exercise 3 nautical miles (5 @-@ 6 km ; 3 @-@ 5 mi) off Cape Elizabeth when she exploded amidships and sank . Only 13 of the 67 crew survived . Although several survivors claimed to have seen a submarine sail with yellow and red insignia , a Navy inquiry attributed the sinking to a boiler explosion . The Navy reversed its findings in 2001 to acknowledge that the sinking was due to hostile fire and awarded Purple Hearts to the survivors and next @-@ of @-@ kin of the deceased .

= = Battle of Point Judith = =

On 5 May 1945 , President (Reichspräsident) of Nazi Germany Karl Dönitz ordered all U @-@

boats to cease offensive operations and return to their bases . U @-@ 853 was lying in wait off Point Judith , Rhode Island at the time . According to the US Coast Guard , U @-@ 853 did not receive that order , or less likely , ignored it . Soon after , her torpedo blew off the stern of SS Black Point , a 368 @-@ foot (112 m) collier underway from New York to Boston . Within 15 minutes Black Point had sunk in 100 feet (30 m) of water less than 4 nautical miles (7 @-@ 4 km ; 4 @-@ 6 mi) south of Point Judith . She was the last US @-@ flagged merchant ship lost in World War II . Twelve men died , while 34 crew members were rescued . One of the rescuing ships , Yugoslav freighter SS Kamen , sent a report of the torpedoing to authorities . The US Navy organized a " hunter @-@ killer " group that included four American warships : Ericsson (DD @-@ 440) , Amick (DE @-@ 168) , Atherton (DE @-@ 169) , and Moberly (PF @-@ 63) .

The group discovered U @-@ 853 bottomed in 18 fathoms (108 ft ; 33 m) , and dropped depth charges and hedgehogs during a 16 @-@ hour attack . At first the U @-@ boat attempted to flee , and then tried to hide by lying still . Both times it was found by sonar . The morning of 6 May 1945 two K @-@ Class blimps from Lakehurst , New Jersey , K @-@ 16 and K @-@ 58 , joined the attack , locating oil slicks and marking suspected locations with smoke and dye markers . K @-@ 16 also attacked with 7 @-@ 2 @-@ inch rocket bombs . Numerous depth charge and hedgehog attacks from Atherton and Moberly resulted in planking , life rafts , a chart tabletop , clothing , and an officer 's cap floating to the surface . With the loss of all 55 officers and men , U @-@ 853 was one of the last U @-@ boats sunk during World War II. and , with U @-@ 881 , the last to be sunk in US waters . Atherton and Moberly received credit for the kill .

= = Legacy = =

The body of one of U @-@ 853 's crewmembers was recovered in 1960 and was interred in the Island Cemetery Annex on Van Zandt Avenue in Newport , Rhode Island . The submarine 's two propellers were on display for many years at the Inn at Castle Hill in Newport and are now in the custody of the United States Naval War College Museum at the Newport Naval Station .

The USS Atherton was transferred to Japan and served as part of the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force until 1975 when she was returned to the United States . She was given to the Philippines in 1978 and served with the Philippine Navy as recently as 2011 . Interest has been expressed in returning Atherton to the United States so she can be restored to her World War II appearance and be opened to the public .

= = Wreck = =

U @-@ 853 lies 7 nautical miles (13 km ; 8 @-@ 1 mi) east of Block Island in 130 feet (40 m) of water . The US Coast Guard pinpoints the location of the wreck at 41 ° 13 ' N 71 ° 27 ' W. U @-@ 853 sits upright with her periscope rising to a depth of 100 feet (30 m) . Most of the 55 crew member bodies remain within the hull , which is a war grave . It is one of the more popular dive sites in Southern New England . The hull has depth charge blast holes : one forward of the conning tower at the radio room and another in the starboard side of the engine room . Entering the wreck is dangerous due to debris , sharp metal edges , and confined spaces .

On 6 and 7 May 1945 , Navy divers attempted to enter the wreck to recover the captain 's safe and the papers within , but failed . Recreational divers first visited the site in 1953 . In 1960 a recreational diver brought up a body from the wreck . This provoked former navy admirals and clergy to petition the US government for restrictions on disturbing the dead . The German crewman was buried with full military honors in Newport , Rhode Island . At least two recreational divers have died from exploring the wreckage . Renowned deep sea diver Stephen Hardick perished in 2005 while filming the U @-@ boat . He surfaced unconscious and could not be revived . Hardick , age 60 , died as the result of saltwater drowning associated with poor health according to the Rhode Island Medical Examiner 's office .

An AP report on the Boston Globe news site cites diver Bill Palmer having retrieved numerous items from the wreck , as well as including accounts 853 from USS Atherton personnel Kenneth

Homberger and the ship commander Lewis Iselin of the US naval action that led to sinking of U @-@ 853 from USS Atherton personnel Kenneth Homberger and the ship commander Lewis Iselin .

= = Summary of raiding history = =

= = Armament = =

= = = FLAK weaponry = = =

U @-@ 853 was mounted with a single 3 @.@ 7 cm Flakzwillig M43U gun on the LM 42U mount . The LM 42U mount was the most common mount used with the 3 @.@ 7 cm Flak M42U . The 3 @.@ 7 cm Flak M42U was the marine version of the 3 @.@ 7 cm Flak used by the Kriegsmarine on Type VII and Type IX U @-@ boats . U @-@ 853 was mounted with two 2cm Flak C38 in a M 43U Zwillig mount with short folding shield on the upper Wintergarten . The M 43U mount was used on a number of U @-@ boats (U @-@ 190 , U @-@ 249 , U @-@ 250 , U @-@ 278 , U @-@ 337 , U @-@ 475 , U @-@ 1058 , U @-@ 1109 , U @-@ 1023 , U @-@ 1105 , U @-@ 1165 and U @-@ 1306) .