

SEANYMPH thereupon turned back on her track and set course 209° to search. The weather at 1200Z, 15th September, was reported as: Wind S. to S.E. 4, sky 0, sea 4-5, visibility 7.*

36. At 1213Z STUBBORN, towing X.7, and on the adjacent route to SEANYMPH and X.8, sighted what was at that time believed to be a U-boat in an estimated position 68° 51' N. 8° 34' E. and dived, surfacing at 1323Z.

37. At 1550Z, while proceeding at 7 knots, X.7, in tow of STUBBORN, broke from her tow. X.7 surfaced immediately and the auxiliary tow was passed. At 1700Z STUBBORN again proceeded with X.7 in tow.

38. At 1630Z, X.8 sighted and closed STUBBORN who was at that time getting X.7 in tow again, and at 1718Z STUBBORN, with X.7 in tow and X.8 in company, proceeded to look for SEANYMPH. No contact was made, however, and at dusk (1900Z) STUBBORN proceeded northwards with X.7 and X.8. STUBBORN reported the situation by W/T to Admiral (Submarines) at 1954, who passed the information to SEANYMPH.

39. Meanwhile, SEANYMPH, having searched the area unsuccessfully, passed a signal to Admiral (Submarines) at 2045Z informing him of the loss of X.8. At 2151 she received Admiral (Submarines') signal referred to in paragraph 38 and proceeded to intercept.

40. X.8 proceeded in company with STUBBORN and X.7 until 2359, when contact was lost.

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The reason was explained at 0400Z, when it was found that since 0001Z, X.8 had been steering 146° instead of 046° (the result of a phonetic error in passing orders for the course).

41. At 0300Z, dawn showed to STUBBORN that there was no X.8; but at 0315Z a submarine was sighted and identified as SEANYMPH, in position 69° 35' N. 10° 16' E. All relative information was passed to SEANYMPH who proceeded to look for her errant charge, STUBBORN and X.7 proceeding to the northward.

42. Between 1200 and 1350Z, SEANYMPH sighted and spoke SCEPTRE, and at 1700Z she made contact with X.8. By 2005 she had her once more in tow and, as the weather was favourable, transferred to her the operational crew.

43. In the meantime there had been another case of tow-parting which was not to have such a happy ending. Until 0145Z on the 16th, in estimated position 70° 49' N. 11° 40' E., SYRTIS and X.9 had had an uneventful passage. At 0120Z, X.9 dived after her period on the surface for ventilating and charging. Speed was then gradually increased to 8½ knots. SYRTIS reports the weather at 0001Z/16 as: Wind S.S.E. 3, sea and swell 2-3.† SYRTIS decided not to bring X.9 to the surface at 0300 after so short a spell dived but continued until 0855Z, when speed was reduced to 5 knots.

Admiralty footnote —

* Wind force 4—moderate breeze (11-15 m.p.h.)

Sky 0—overcast

Sea 4-5—rough to very rough

Visibility 7—7 miles

† Wind force 3—gentle breeze (7-10 m.p.h.)

Sea 2-3—slight to moderate

At 0907Z, three signals-underwater-exploding were fired to surface X.9. X.9 did not surface and at 0920Z the tow was hauled in and found to have parted. SYRTIS turned to the reciprocal course at 0955Z, to return as soon as possible to the vicinity of where it was thought X.9 might have broken adrift. From the log readings and fuel consumption this was estimated to have been between 0145 and 0300Z. However, no contact was made with X.9; but at 1545Z SYRTIS sighted a well defined oil track which it was considered might have come from an X-craft, running in a direction 088°-090°, which was the direct course for the slipping position, 200 miles distant.

44. Subsequent search revealed no sign of X.9 and no further news has been received of her. It can only be hoped that the Passage Commanding Officer (Sub-Lieutenant E. Kearon, R.N.V.R.) made the Norwegian coast, scuttled his craft, and made his way ashore with his crew. It is not considered that X.9 took any part in the attack. The passage crew were not trained for it, neither did they have sufficient information to carry it out.

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45. The regrettable loss of X.9 was not known to Admiral (Submarines) until some days later, as at the time the loss was discovered, SYRTIS was in an area where, by the orders, it was forbidden to break W/T silence. At 0143Z therefore, having abandoned the search, SYRTIS proceeded north to pass a signal by W/T from north of 73° North.

46. Meanwhile the remaining five submarines were proceeding with their X-craft in tow, and TRUCULENT and THRASHER, neither of which had had any difficulties, both made their landfalls from the vicinity of their ordered landfall positions during the day. At approximately 0600Z STUBBORN and SEANYMPH sighted each other in the vicinity of position 71° 04' N. 15° 56' E., and later, between 1447 and 1508Z, STUBBORN and SEANYMPH were again in contact and spoke to each other by S.S.T.‡ It was comforting to STUBBORN to learn that X.8 had been met.

47. At 0725Z X.8 experienced some difficulty in maintaining trim. Trim became worse as the day went on, air could be heard escaping from the starboard side charge and the craft took up a list to starboard. It was apparent that the buoyancy chambers of the starboard charge were leaking. At 1630Z, with the compensating tank dry and No. 2 main ballast fully blown, and trim still difficult to hold, the Commanding Officer of X.8 (Lieutenant B. M. McFarlane, R.A.N.) decided to jettison the starboard charge, and this was set to "safe" and released at 1635Z in about 180 fathoms. In spite of the "safe" setting, however, the charge exploded at 1650Z, about 1,000 yards astern of X.8, in tow of SEANYMPH. Both vessels were dived at the time. The explosion was loud but caused no damage.

48. Although this charge had been released, X.8 still had difficulty in maintaining trim and now had a list to port, indicating that the port charge also had flooded buoyancy chambers; and the Commanding Officer decided he must jettison it too. Before doing so X.8 surfaced and, distrusting the "safe" setting, set the

Admiralty footnotes —

‡ S.S.T.—submarine sound signalling apparatus.