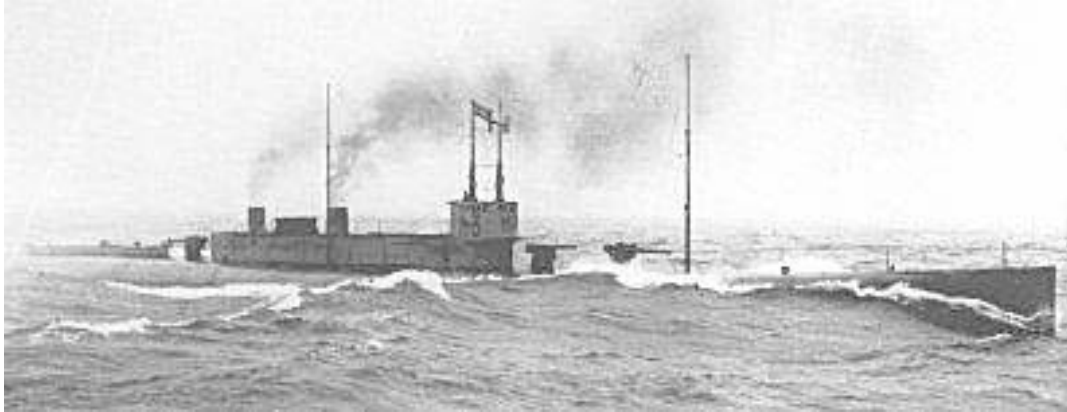


K-13 Submarine Disaster: part two

Written by Donald Fullarton - Last Updated Sunday, 12 March 2017 17:54



ONE of the saddest events in the history of the Gareloch is the K13 submarine disaster, which took place on January 29 1917.

What follows is the second of three accounts of the tragedy.

This article, entitled “57 Hours Under Water — Thrilling Rescues from a Submarine”, appeared in The Times of November 21, 1918, although the actual incident took place on January 29 the previous year.

Strangely, this account does not name the skipper, Lieutenant Commander Godfrey Herbert, who played such an important part in the whole incident, and it is very much in the style of a newspaper report of that era . . .

Of the many thrilling stories which might be told of naval heroism during the war, few, if any, can rival that of a British submarine which went down in the Gareloch, near the Clyde.

The story has in part already been told, as it related to the act for which the late Captain Goodhart D.S.O., who was captain of the not yet completed K-14, was posthumously awarded the Albert Medal in gold, as announced in The Times on the 24th of last April.

The submarine was on her trials. She had on board 73 persons, including naval contractors and men from the yard where she had been built.

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The order was given for her to submerge, and when she had just gone beneath the surface water began to pour into her aft, and she descended stern downwards into 15 fathoms. The ventilating shafts had been accidentally left open.

Those in the rear of the submarine, 31 in number, were immediately drowned. The forepart of the vessel was shut off, and the 42 who were at that end were saved. How their rescue was accomplished is a tribute to the skill of the Admiralty Salvage Department.

A few hours had passed before divers went down to the submarine on what they considered a forlorn hope. Getting to the bottom, they discovered that the stern of the vessel was embedded in many feet of mud. They knocked at the hull, and to their amazement, there was a responsive tapping, showing that some at least of those inside were alive.

Then Captain Goodhart essayed the task which cost him his life. The high-pressure air bottles were brought into use, and the captain undertook, with their aid, to be projected through the conning tower and shot into the water in the hope of reaching the surface and conveying to the rescue party information as to the condition of those below.

He was hurled upward at terrific speed, but his head struck a support in the tower, and he was immediately killed.

His example was followed by another ship's commander onboard, who was fortunate enough to reach the surface and was caught and saved by the salvage men.

Acting on his information, divers again descended and got into communication with the imprisoned men by means of Morse signals.

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