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‘The Deadliest Thing that Keeps the Seas’:

The Technology, Tactics and Terror of the Submarine in War Illustrated Magazine

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Introduction

This paper explores the developing representation of the submarine and submarine warfare in the popular British First World War publication War Illustrated. In reporting on the varied and valorised activities of the Royal Navy’s submarines, and depicting the peril embodied by the predations of German U boats, War Illustrated enthusiastically embraced the submarine as a subject for popular media representation. Within the magazine’s pages the submarine as a scientific apparatus and an offensive weapon became the focus for celebration, pride, hatred and fear in line with contemporary propaganda discourses, and in tune with related perspectives upon the place and significance of national character, morality and technology in the present war. As such, the submarine’s pivotal role in the First World War, and its emergence and evaluation within twentieth century warfare, can be traced through the problematic and contradictory popular responses to its unique capabilities and contribution to the naval campaign in this popular contemporary source. Ironically this coverage itself mimics the operation of the submarines of both sides, being marked by conspicuous, visible and overt histories, and covert, submerged and inferential narratives. In Britain, the dismissive evaluation of the submarine as ‘the weapon of the weaker naval power’, along with attempts by the Royal Navy to tailor the submarine to its global naval operations, provoked uncertainty as to its place and purpose in war, and consequently ambiguity in its portrayal within this British publication.[1]

A perhaps predictable example of the manner in which the submarine gained its infamous foregrounding in the consciousness of War Illustrated’s readership can be seen in the way in which the magazine portrayed the controversial torpedoing by U-20 of the liner Lusitania in May 1915. Although this well-known event became the focus of both contemporary and retrospective commentary because of its significance within the wider conflict, what was most prominent in War Illustrated’s treatment was the direct linkage the magazine’s article created between the sinking and the country and leader of Germany. Accompanying a photograph of the interment of 64 victims of the sinking (fig.1) was text which labelled the Kaiser (held personally responsible for the atrocity) the ‘Pirate Emperor’, a leader ‘more terrible than Attila, more ruthless than Herod or Nero’.[2] Picturing him wearing the uniform of the ‘Death’s Head Hussars’, the caption asserted ‘the Jolly Roger is the most appropriate ensign for the Undersea Huns.’ This example epitomised the visual and verbal demonization of the enemy, its leader and its submarines within contemporary British news publications, which strove to suggest a deliberate uniformity of ruthless intention and barbaric execution in the use of the German U-boat. The frequent use of epithets and slurs of piracy and murder attached to U-boat attacks clearly accrued powerfully around an incident like the sinking of the Lusitania. However, the foregrounding of the Death’s Head insignia and the attribution of the Jolly Roger to the U-boat ignored or obscured the adoption of this flag as a mark of a successfully completed patrol by British submarines a year before the Lusitania’s sinking.[3] This marked contrast between an

[1] Duncan Redford, The Submarine: A Cultural History from the Great War to Nuclear Combat (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), pp.xv-xvi.

[2] Anonymous, ‘“My Handiwork” – By the Pirate Emperor,’ The War Illustrated vol.2 n.40 (22 May 1915), p.319.

[3] Richard Compton-Hall, Submarines at War 1939-45 (Penzance: Periscope Publishing Ltd., 2004), p.62.

icon ascribed as a symbol of universal national disgrace, and the same image embraced as an individual and elitist distinction, illustrates the contradictions at work contemporarily, and retrospectively in the depiction of the submarine.

Page 319 *The War Illustrated*, 22nd May, 1915.

"My Handiwork!" By the Pirate Emperor

The banner of the Death's Head Hussars, which should also be the flag of the Kaiser's pirate fleet. The "Jolly Roger" is the most appropriate ensign for the Undersea Huns.

"LET us ring the joy-bells in Berlin to celebrate a great German victory. Let the news of our prowess penetrate throughout the Fatherland and to the remotest corners of the earth. Rejoice, ye Huns, over this spectacle of sixty-four coffins which contain the mortal remains of innocent women and children. At my orders have they and countless others been done to death. Have I not told you that I am more terrible than Attila, more ruthless than Nero and Herod? Woe to humanity! Woe to civilisation!"

These words, if not actually used by the Lord of Torture and Bloodshed and Vanity, no doubt are expressive of his sentiments in regard to the Lusitania outrage. He is the arch-fiend—his the shame.

THE KAISER in the uniform of a Death's Head Hussar.

Touching scenes were witnessed in the picturesque little cemetery of Queenstown when the unfortunate victims of the Kaiser's blood-lust were interred. This photograph was taken at the moment when the last rites were being celebrated over one of the graves, dug by the soldiers training in the district, which contains sixty-four coffins.

Fig.1 22 May 1915 '"My Handiwork" – By the Pirate Emperor' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

War Illustrated was 'a pictorial record of the conflict of the nations', incorporating abundant maps, photographs and illustrations, and the work of war artists alongside weekly reporting, editorials and commentaries on the conduct and consequences of the war. Its articles included contributions and columns from notable figures, such as Sidney Low, H.G. Wells, Jerome K. Jerome, Fred T. Jane and Carlyon Bellairs. It was published by William Berry, then owner of the Daily Telegraph and first appeared on 22 August 1914. By the war's end, its weekly circulation had risen to 750,000.[4] Through most of the conflict the magazine was sold at a price of two pence (2d.), rising to three pence by 1918. This retail price for a weekly publication, in

[4] Anonymous, 'The Press: war Weeklies', Time Magazine 25 September, 1939. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,761998,00.html (Accessed 09/03/2013).

an era when daily newspapers typically sold for a penny (1d.) suggests, along with the length and vocabulary employed in its articles, that an adult, middle-class readership was its target audience, though its highly illustrated form meant that it may well have also appealed to a younger or less well educated audience. A regular weekly column addressing the 'War by Sea' was introduced in the first twelve months, and another consistent feature was the special treatment of outstanding recent events in a series entitled 'The Great Episodes of the War' – an example of which was 'The Demoniacal Destruction of the Lusitania'.[5]

Re-evaluating War Illustrated now in the circumstances of the present centenary of the conflict provides the opportunity for appreciation of the form and extent of contemporary reporting, extant knowledge and conscious narrativisation of the war, tempered with an informed retrospection. It is worth noting that the magazine was not simply, or not entirely, a conformist propaganda organ obediently reiterating establishment discourses: it also engaged in inquiries into and critical commentary upon the conduct and controversies of the war, such as the handling of the disastrous Dardanelles campaign in 1915 and the uncertain outcome of the Battle of Jutland in 1916. While its capacity and readiness to demonise the enemies of the Central Powers were not in doubt, it also articulated and enabled judicious, democratic debate upon the management or alleged mismanagement of the war. Both of these facets were relevant to the reporting of the perceived and actual danger embodied by the German U-boats. In this way the magazine's illustrated form, its complex textual interplay of word and image (and the often revealing distinction between the image types it used, such as war artists' work, illustrations and photography), can be seen to be crucial to the views it espoused, the themes it pursued and the voices it raised as the war developed.

The German U-Boat

In terms of the specific representation of the submarine's place within the conflict, an early example (from the very first edition) illustrated the contradictory terms under which the craft can be depicted. While illustrating and describing the operating procedures of 'powerful new submarines', the article attests that performance details are as amongst 'the most jealously guarded of Government secrets'.[6] However, this technological mystification of the submarine is alloyed with the reassuring defeat of this menacing marvel in an account of 'the first encounter between [British] warship and [German] submarine'.[7] Speculation upon the submarine's role and impact in naval warfare had been marked within Royal Navy circles, not least because no effective countermeasures had been developed in the period immediately preceding the First World War:

> No active remedy for attacks from submarines existed, but their lack of speed, which prevented them from accompanying a battle fleet, meant that the threat posed by such warships in a general engagement was probably regarded as negligible, at least for the time being.[8]

[5] Anonymous, 'The Great Episodes of the War XXII: The Demoniacal Destruction of the Lusitania', The War Illustrated vol.2 n.40 (22 May 1915), p.318.
[6] Anonymous, 'First Encounter of Warship and Submarine', The War Illustrated vol.1 n.1 (22 August 1914), p.18.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, 'A Matter of Timing: The Royal Navy and the Tactics of Decisive Battle, 1912-1916', The Journal of Military History, vol. 67, n.1 (2003), 85-136 (132-33), p.92.

The magazine's text detailed the instant taming of the threatening craft by HMS Birmingham's gunners, who disabled the U-boat's periscope with 'extraordinary accuracy of aim': noting pre-war speculation as to the danger the submarine was presumed to pose, this story stated encouragingly that 'this matter' has been 'decided in the first historic skirmish'.[9] Unsuccessful attacks upon British ships by German submarines in August 1914, the sinking of U-15 by HMS Birmingham (actually accomplished by ramming), and the entirely unmolested passage of the British Expeditionary Force to France, appeared to confirm this view of the impotence of the U-boat.[10]

A more sombre awakening to the submarine threat occurred barely two months later with the reporting of the sinking of the three cruisers HMS Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue by U-9 through a variegated page of illustrations.[11] Alongside the inclusion of the work of a German artist showing the joyous welcome offered to U-9 and its crew on their return to Wilhelmshaven were photographs of the cruiser HMS Hawke, another recent victim of submarine attack, and some of her surviving crewmembers. All that this article could salvage from this debacle, 'a deplorable incident [and] the first real shock to the Navy'[12], are the respectful phrases (credited to U-9's commander Otto Weddingen) acknowledging the bravery of the ships' crews as 'true to their country's sea traditions'.[13] The foregrounding in this article of notions of naval tradition, in the face of entirely new weapons and the intractable threats they manifested to conventional warships, underlined the problematic image and perception of the Royal Navy in a transitional, technological age.

By the start of the following year, gathering awareness and anxiety about the impact of the submarine was clearly discernible in the devotion of both covers of the edition from 27 February 1915 to the gathering threat to merchant shipping. The front cover shows an artist's illustration of 'Brave British Merchant Sailors on the look-out for German Pirates', while the back cover (fig.2) consists of a map showing 'The Submarine "Blockade" of Our Sea-Girt Isles'.[14] In this instance 'blockade' was perhaps placed in speech marks because the German submarine campaign could not be considered the material or moral equal to the blockade imposed by British surface warships on Germany, or because a starvation-inducing blockade of the British Isles as yet represented an unthinkable proposition. In this treatment the submarine was connected directly to other instances of German atrocity by the indication of a line of what was termed 'submarine frightfulness', along which individual sinkings were marked and dated. This balder, factual accounting of the unseen impact of submarine attacks stood in contrast to the emotive front cover illustration's frozen moment of human drama (fig.3). In the picture the members of the bridge crew of the merchant ship were seen gesturing at an unknown object, looking through binoculars, reaching for the engine telegraph, and turning the ship's wheel in response to the invisible threat. The unspecified source of their anxiety ('Is it a Submarine?'), and the unknown outcome of the depicted event, created an atmosphere of menace and uncertainty which emphasised the men's bravery through exacerbating the insidious threat. The didactic address evinced by these illustrations, and their

[9] Anonymous, 'First Encounter of Warship and Submarine', The War Illustrated vol.1 n.1 (22 August 1914), p.18.
[10] Robert K. Massie, Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany, and the Winning of the Great War at Sea (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), pp.78-9.
[11] Anonymous, 'Germans Wildly Rejoice at Our Naval Losses', The War Illustrated vol.1 n.11 (31 October 1914), p.253.
[12] Arthur Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904-1919 vol.II The War Years: To the Eve of Jutland (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.55.
[13] Anonymous, 'Germans Wildly Rejoice Our Naval Losses', The War Illustrated vol.1 n.11 (31 October 1914), p.253.
[14] The War Illustrated vol.2 n.28 (27 February 1915).

The War Illustrated, 27th February, 1915. viii

THE SUBMARINE "BLOCKADE" OF OUR SEA-GIRT ISLES

Map illustrating Germany's desperate plan of submarine-blockading the British Isles, which came into force on February 18th. Neutral ships have been warned to take the narrow channel (marked safety zone), about 30 miles wide, north of the Shetlands and skirted by the Scandinavian and German coasts. The black line running through the English Channel shows the trail of the "blonde beast" of the sea up to the time of going to press.

I HAVE hinted once or twice that I have in store for WAR ILLUSTRATED readers a pleasant surprise. This will take the shape of two beautiful photogravure plates, to be given away without extra charge. Instead of following the conventional line of giving photogravure portraits or scenes, I have had a famous decorative artist draw two beautiful designs to be used as mountings for photographs.

Our Photogravure Gifts

As almost every reader of THE WAR ILLUSTRATED must have some relative or friend who is on active service, it is most desirable to preserve some enduring record of his patriotism. These decorative plates, which I have had made exclusively for our readers, provide the means. Do not frame any portrait of your soldier friend until you have got one of these plates.

The first will be given away with our issue of March 13th, and is intended for soldiers' portraits, the design being a military one. The design of the second plate is naval, and it is meant to enshrine portraits of our heroes of the sea. By a very ingenious arrangement, each design is made capable of containing a photograph of any size from a "print" to a "postcard." These plates, when framed, will give greatly increased value to the photographs mounted on them, and will be an ornament to any house.

Next week I shall publish photographic reproductions of the military design, which will show exactly how these beautiful gifts can be utilised for the purpose intended.

The total amount received for our "Something-to-Smoke" Fund during the twenty-second week amounts to £17 3s. 7d.

EDITOR.

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Fig.2 27 February 1915 'The Submarine "Blockade" of Our Sea-Girt Isles' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

acknowledgement of the submarine's power of invisibility, were matched by another cover by another cover illustration from spring 1915 (fig. 4). The cover illustration provided a miraculous (and inaccurate) disclosure of the interior of the submerged submarine to characterise the covert threat of the enemy (identified inferentially through the Germanic uniforms of the crew members, and by the well-defined silhouettes of the distant but apparently oblivious British warships in the background). Again, the inferred underhanded-ness and danger of the submarine was embedded in the illustration's caption, which read: 'In the small Conning-Tower of a Submarine whence havoc to great Surface Ships is launched'.[15] The revelatory nature of the image, and the self-conscious diction of its caption, again endowed the submarine with an aura of uncanny potency, appearing to re-invoke visually the well-known tragedy of Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue in its inclusion of the line of three cruiser-type ships unaware of their proximity to and observation by the lurking U-boat.

Here the magazine's commentary and aggrandizement of the German submarine appeared to mirror the pre-war and early war perceptions of the threat it posed to warships, rather than

[15] The War Illustrated vol.2 n.36 (24 April 1915).

merchant ships. Although the U-boat would eventually become the predominant strategic threat to the Allied cause through its dedication to the destruction of merchant shipping, before and during the early part of the war it was assumed that U-boat operations could and would exert a crucial strategic influence at sea in an entirely different fashion:

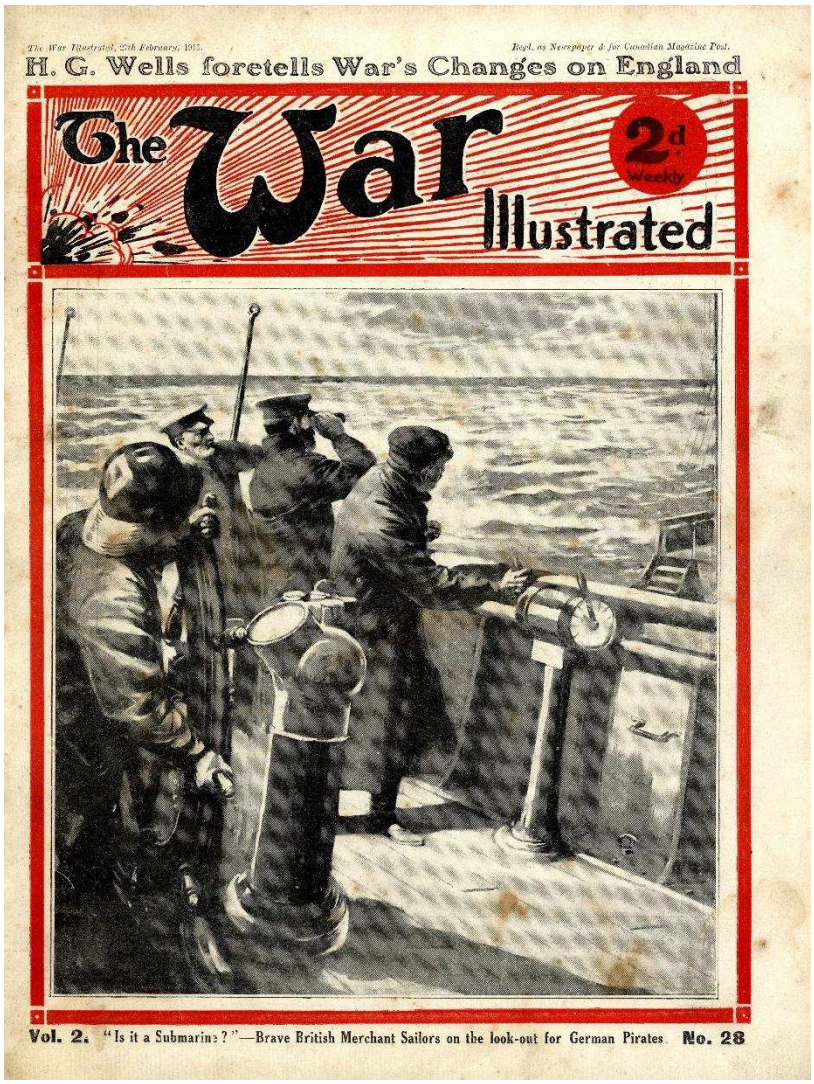

Fig.3 27 February 1915 '"Is it a Submarine?" – Brave British Merchant Sailors on the look-out for German Pirates' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

> Jellicoe's determination not to hazard his capital-ship superiority to the risk of underwater damage from torpedoes, mines, or submarine-and-mine traps. He believed, as did the Admiralty, that the enemy, to compensate for numerical inferiority in ships, would employ these weapons to equalize their strength. His respect for the torpedo […] the mine, and the submarine, although full war

experience was to prove it an exaggerated one in some respects, was shared by the whole navy.[16]

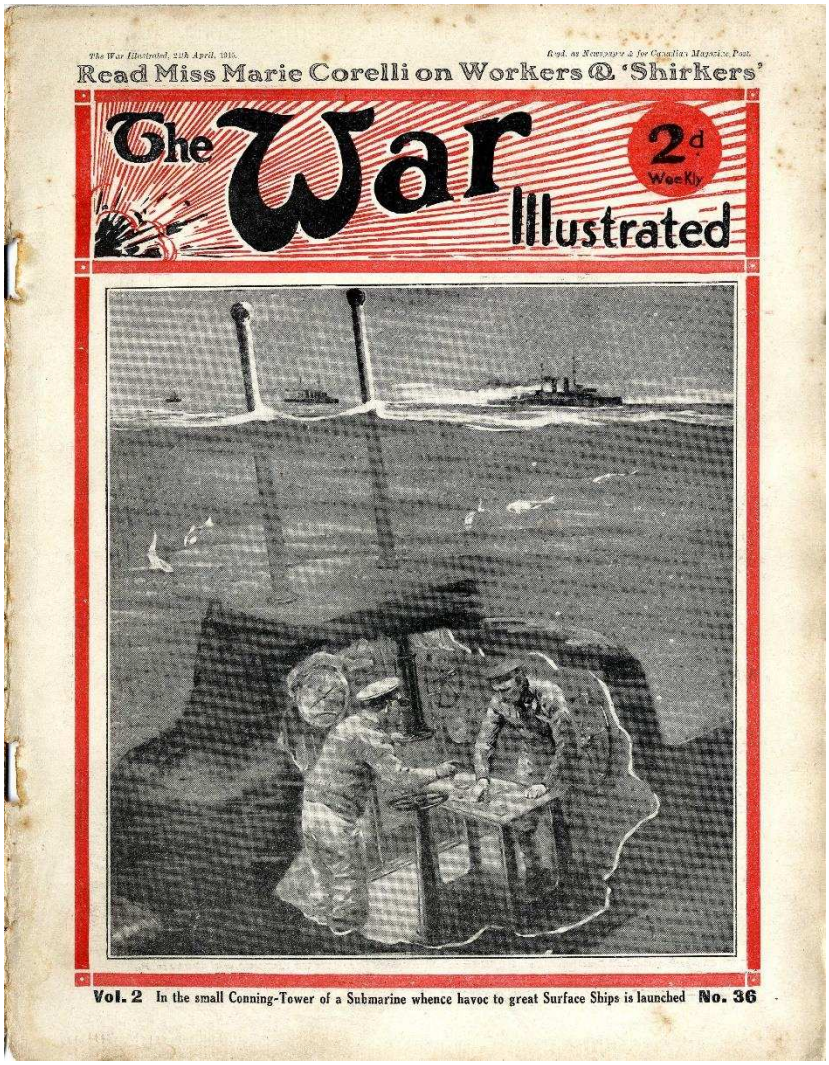

Fig.4 24 April 1915 'In the small Conning-Tower of a Submarine whence havoc to great Surface Ships is launched' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

Despite the fact that, in the event, no modern Allied capital ship was to be lost to direct submarine torpedo attack during the entire war (discounting the sinking of the dreadnought HMS Audacious to a submarine-laid mine in 1914[17]), fear of the erosion of the Grand Fleet's supremacy by submarine attritional tactics, which the reporting of the sinkings of elderly cruisers like Aboukir, Cressy , Hogue, Hawke and Pathfinder revived, maintained not only the status of the U-boat threat in the public mind, but also the supposed strategic value of the dreadnought fleet, despite the danger, real and perceived, which the U-boat posed to commerce.

[16] Arthur Marder, From The Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904-1919 vol. III Jutland and After (May 1916-December 1916) 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.6. See also Sumida (2003), pp.124-5.

[17] Massie (2004), pp.142-3.

Such impactful, visual representation of the real and imagined submarine threat appears all the more remarkable in retrospect, given the magazine's frequent diminution of the problem posed by the U-boats in its reporting and regular columns. In September of the same year as the covered discussed above appeared, Carlyon Bellairs in 'The War At Sea' column had repeated official remarks that the diversion of U-boats from attacks on warships to attacks on merchant ships was 'an absolute gain to the cause of the Allies', and that Winston Churchill had stated that the 'the submarine menace had been fixed within definite limits'.[18] Bellairs' standing, as a former naval officer, the magazine's correspondent for maritime affairs and a member of parliament, made his dismissal of the danger posed by the U-boat appear both informed and official, despite its amplification in War Illustrated's visual materials. The heightened illustrations adopted for the magazine's weekly covers also stood in marked contrast to its frequent use of photographs. Where the magazine's front covers always incorporated impassioned, artistic renditions of symbolic figures or representative scenes rather than of actual, verifiable events, its integration of photographic images can be seen to provide a differing contributory power to its verbal propagandist rhetoric.

A page of photographs from 1916 depicting the stages of an actual sinking of a neutral merchant ship, and the rescue of its survivors by a British steamer, epitomised this alternate strand of the magazine's representational strategy. Although the page's headline title ('Germany's Piratical Crimes Exposed by the Camera')[19] was redolent of negative propaganda, the images themselves appeared starkly uninflected. Taken from the deck of the British ship, with its own crew anonymised in silhouette, the photographs blankly record the neutral ship's sinking in factual reportage which, as the accompanying brief captions suggest, 'form a cynical commentary on Germany's professed concessions to America's protests'.[20] The magazine's exploitation of these visual and verbal alternatives in the representation of the U-boat was repeated in its depictions and reporting of the Royal Navy's submarines. Where the technological advances represented by the submarine were both acknowledged and feared in their embodiment in the U-boat's furtiveness and lethality, the same attributes of modernity and innovation were wedded to more traditional and putatively more honourable duties in the case of British submarines.

The British Submarine

In comparison with the submerged and concealed German U-boats present or worryingly implied within War Illustrated's cover illustrations, the first occurrence of an image of a Royal Navy submarine showed it on the surface (fig.5). The intended use of British submarine flotillas for coastal defence (as envisaged by Sir John Fisher) privileged a patrolling and protective role[21] which was indicated in this instance by the strangely paradoxical caption - 'The Deadliest

[18] Carlyon Bellairs, 'The War By Sea', The War Illustrated vol.3 n.57 (18 September 1915), p.116.
[19] Anonymous, 'Germany's Piratical Crimes Exposed by the Camera', The War Illustrated vol.4 n.93 (27 May 1915), p.359.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Sumida, (2003), pp.132-33.

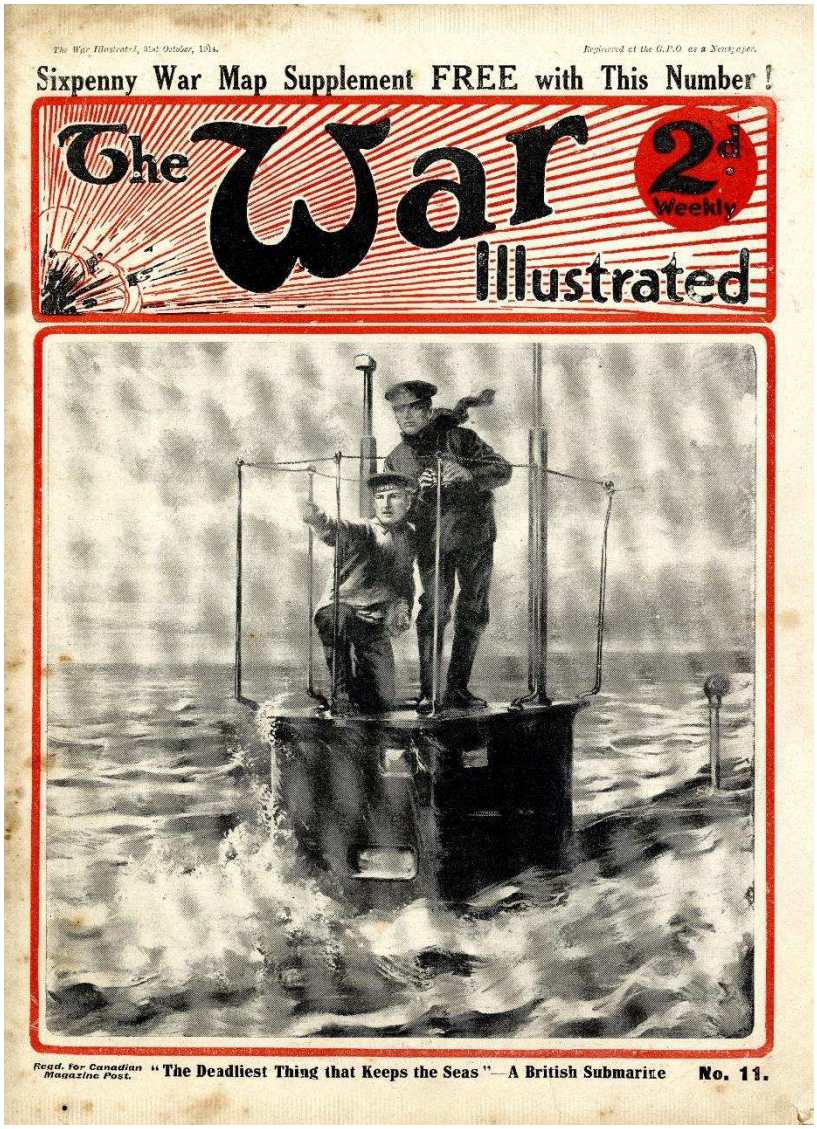

Fig.5 31 October 1914 'The Deadliest Thing That Keeps the Seas' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

Thing That Keeps the Seas – A British Submarine.'[22] The phrase in inverted commas seems to require clarification as the reader may assume in a pejorative sense that the 'deadliest thing' at sea would be a 'German submarine', while the sea would be 'kept' more properly by the Empire's final guarantor, the dreadnought battleships of the Grand Fleet. Here the submarine appears to be domesticated by inhabiting or even usurping the role of conventional and honourable surface ships, not least by being seen on the surface of the sea. This defensive and protective role for the British submarine was also reported and reiterated in other images published by the magazine. A picture of a surfaced British submarine appearing in December 1914 carried the following caption: 'A wartime photograph of a unit in the submarine fleetthat guards our coasts taken from a cross-Channel steamer when German submarines were known to be operating in the area'.[23] The paradoxical, reassuring visibility of the British submarine appears to be presented in this instance as an equal or comparison to surface patrol craft when in reality the submersible craft's military utility lay in its abilities to observe and ambush from

[22] The War Illustrated vol.1 n.11 (31 October 1914).
[23] The War Illustrated vol.1 n.18 (21 December 1914), p.416.

positions of hiding. This contemporary characterisation of the British submarine in a defensive role and in plain sight underlined the problems and ambiguities of the introduction of this innovative weapon to the Royal Navy's fleet, as much as to those of its enemies:

> The submarine's appearance in the Navy's order of battle provoked problems for British concepts of national identity as the submarine threatened the supremacy of the battleship. This made the submarine unpopular as any threat to the Royal Navy undermined important ideas regarding the freedom to use the sea, Britain's global position and the Empire. Yet the submarine in British hands was to play a part in protecting the British Isles and securing Britain from one of the main fears associated with the 'island race' components of national identity – that of invasion.[24]

Remarkably, the taming of the destabilising presence of the submarine in the images published by War Illustrated was necessitated or indeed facilitated by its integration into discourses of imperial identity (via protection of seaborne traffic). However, it also acknowledged simultaneously the Royal Navy's adoption of the submarine, viewed as the weapon of the weaker naval power, for a coastal defensive role inseparable from other tenets of national identity.

In line with these conspicuous early depictions of the reassuringly visible British submarine, other operational activities by Royal Navy submarines were often treated with a heightened pictorialism which also evoked comparisons with the illustrations of U-boats. The rescue by submarine E4 of sailors left behind in a whaler during the Battle of the Heligoland Bight was the subject of a full-page illustration from 1914.[25] In this case the revealed interior of the submarine was shown as a secure, spacious and well-lit haven which, in accordance with the caption's description of the submarine's seemingly miraculous appearance, owed more to romantic fiction than to factual representation:

> One incident in the naval action off Heligoland on August 28th reads more like a Jules Verne romance than cold fact. The Defender, having sunk an enemy, lowered a whaler to pick up her swimming survivors. An enemy's cruiser came up and chased away the Defender, who was forced to abandon her whaler. Imagine the sailors [sic] feelings, alone in an open boat, twenty-five miles from the nearest land, and that an enemy's fortress, with nothing but fog and foes around them! Suddenly, a swirl alongside, and up popped submarine E4, which opened its conning-tower, took them all aboard, dived, and carried then 250 miles home to Britain![26]

Combining and reaffirming these romantic, scientific and novelistic representations of the submarine was a full-page artist's illustration published in 1916. Again the decidedly

[24] Redford, (2015), p.24
[25] Anonymous, 'The Amazing Story of Submarine E4', The War Illustrated vol.1 n.6 (26 September 1914), p.125.
[26] Ibid.

unrealistically large, airy and clean interior of a submarine was revealed in detail by the artist and described by the caption in adulatory terms:

> If science and romance are at variance in land warfare, they seem to be singularly reconciled at sea. Surely the submarine, if the most deadly thing that keeps the sea, is also the most wonderful, a weapon of aggression anticipated only by novelists of unusual imagination.[27]

Similar, further associations of the British submarine with last-minute life-saving and cutting-edge technology characterised another cover image, which referenced the raid on the German Zeppelin base at Cuxhaven on Christmas Day 1914 by Royal Naval Air Service floatplanes.[28] The Cuxhaven Raid, though failing to inflict any significant damage to the target, represented the state-of-the-art of naval warfare in being an exclusively aerial assault, launched entirely from ships at sea.[29] When they failed to reach their parent ships after the attack, the aircrews were rescued by submarines: War Illustrated's cover depicted a pilot being welcomed aboard by a submariner with the caption: 'Our Sailors of the Under-seas Rescue our Sailors of the Skies'.[30]

The further associations of the British submarine with technical innovation and individual daring were documented frequently in the magazine's written and visual reporting. In distinction from the U-boat's associations with surreptitiousness activity and underhanded-ness, the solitary actions of British submarines and submariners were characterised positively by stealth and daring. For example the sinking of a Turkish warship by submarine B11 after the navigation of a mine field and a 'record submersion of nine hours' was described as 'a truly glorious feat, worthy of the greatest traditions of the greatest of sea powers'.[31] However, the celebration of this exploit and the marrying of modern submarine warfare with the traditions of the Navy did not preclude, or perhaps demanded, the diminution of the threat the new technology posed:

> By skilful manoeuvring and a special hull protected by a 4in steel plating, fast battleships can do much to guard against the invisible peril of the torpedo. That our ships have been able successfully to bombard the Belgian coast, exposed all the time to submarine attack, without meeting the fate of the Hogue, Cressy and Aboukir, is unquestionably a great tribute to British seamanship.[32]

Curiously, within only a few months of its occurrence, the debacle of the torpedoing of the three cruisers was being alluded to in order to celebrate traditional naval skill rather than

[27] Anonymous, 'Science and Romance Progress Hand in Hand', The War Illustrated vol.4 n.104 (12 August 1916), p.619.
[28] Paul G. Halpern, A Naval History of World War I (London: UCL Press, 1994), p.43.
[29] Massie (2004), pp.361-374
[30] The War Illustrated vol.1 n.21 (9 January 1915).
[31] Anonymous, 'B11's Exploit: The Most Daring Feat of the War', The War Illustrated vol.1 n.19 (26 December 1914), p.443.
[32] Ibid.

condemn contemporary naval leadership. In retrospect this shift appears all the more marked given the magazine's subsequent reporting of numerous successful attacks by British submarines on German warships, in an inverted parallel with the threat posed by U-boats.

Fig.6 12 February 1916 'Humanity and Heroism of British Submarine Sailors in the North Sea and Baltic' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

Extending the glorification of the achievements and verve of British submariners, a double-page spread (fig.6) from 1916 represented the recent activities of British submarines using a combination of photographs and drawings.[33] Tellingly, the top row of photographs shows British submariners rescuing German survivors from a ship they have sunk in the North Sea: plainly 'humanity' took precedence even to 'heroism' in the conduct of British submarine operations.[34] Operating against warships and merchant traffic in the harsh weather conditions documented by the pictures, British submarines were particularly successful in the Baltic during 1915, conducting a series of isolated but highly disruptive attacks.[35] Prominently identified within these pictures is Lieutenant Commander Max Horton, captain of E.9 and originator of the Jolly Roger in British submarine culture, who had already achieved success in sinking German warships at sea in 1914.[36] The influence of only a very small contingent of Royal Navy submarines was felt upon the operations and composure of the German Navy:

[33] Anonymous, 'Humanity and Heroism of British Submarine Sailors in the North Sea and Baltic', The War Illustrated vol.3 n.78 (12 February 1916), pp.612-613.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Halpern (1994), pp.193-204.
[36] Massie (2004), p.125; Richard Compton-Hall, Submarines at War 1939-45 (Penzance: Periscope Publishing Ltd., 2004), p.62.

> The Germans in the Baltic now had an attack of "submarine-itis" similar to that which plagued the Grand Fleet that autumn. On 19th October [1914] there were positive reports of periscopes and torpedo tracks in Kiel Bay […] The presence of a mere two submarines [E.1 and E.9] complicated – but did not stop – German operations at sea for the remainder of the year.[37]

The positive comparison of British to German submarine operations had already been initiated in the magazine by the reporting of achievements in both daring intelligence gathering and the sinking of German warships during 1915. War Illustrated celebrated the successes of patrols in the Baltic and the Mediterranean with a collection of captioned photographs under the headline: 'British Submarines turn Tables on Von Tirpitz'.[38] Remarkably, this tendency in War Illustrated's representation of British submarines continued onward through the conflict, despite or perhaps because of the increasing seriousness and demonization of the German U-boats' activities. In 1917, with a page of photographs detailing their shore side maintenance duties, British submariners were romanticised as 'mermen'.[39] As late as 1918, during the U-boats' most effective and destructive unrestricted campaign against Allied shipping, the 'adventures' of British submariners were still being described innocuously in terms of nonchalant heroism and easily obtained success.[40] While championing the British submarine for its achievements in the very role (the destruction of enemy warships) which had haunted the imagination of the Royal Navy and its readership, War Illustrated continued to both romanticise and heroically understate the figure of the British submarine, visually and verbally. This approach was juxtaposed against the magazine's mystification, demonization and magnification of the status of the German U-boat.

Submarine/Anti-Submarine Warfare

In comparison with the magazine's often exaggerated use of illustrations, the inclusion of verifying photographic images may suggest a more objective and factual grounding to war reporting. A page from late 1915 formed a striking companion to images from the first year of the war in cataloguing and contextualising U-boat operations through a selection of German photographs (fig.7). These revealed the inside of the submarine's compartments, as well as the munitions factory where the torpedoes were manufactured. Disquietingly, three of these images connected the U-boat commander at the periscope, a reproduction of a ship viewed through the periscope, and an annotated photograph of a torpedo striking its target, thus presenting British readers with a simulation of the sequence of submarine attack, and allowing them to inhabit the enemy's perspective vicariously. The dispassionate verbal description in the accompanying captions added to the disturbing facsimile of this operational process:

[37] Halpern (1994), p.189.
[38] Anonymous, 'British Submarines turn Tables on Von Tirpitz', vol.3 n.65 (13 November 1915), p.306
[39] Anonymous, 'Under-water Homes of Our Modern Mermen', The War Illustrated vol.6 n.153 (21 July 1917), p.480.
[40] John S. Margerison, 'The Doings of "The Trade": Some Thrilling Adventures of British Submarines,' The War Illustrated vol.8 n.183 (16 February 1918), p.16.

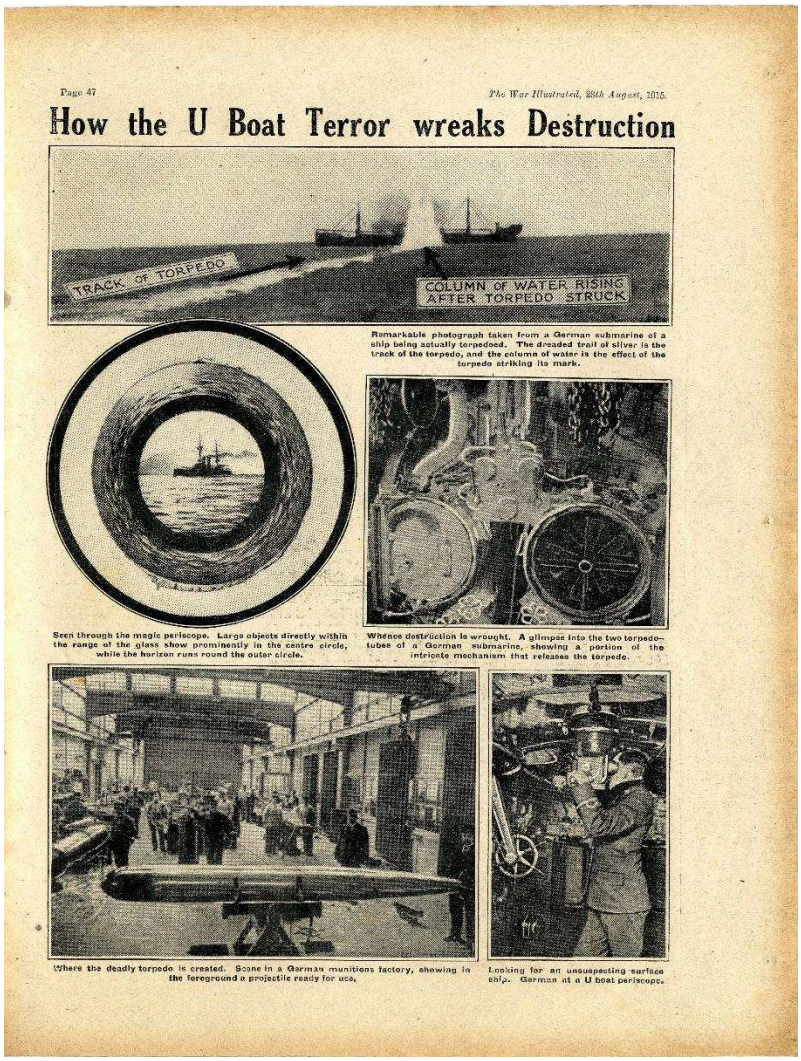

Fig.7 28 August 1915 'How the U Boat Terror wreaks Destruction' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

> Remarkable photograph taken from a German submarine of a ship actually being torpedoed. The dreaded trail of silver is the track of the torpedo, and the column of water is the effect of the torpedo striking its mark.[41]

A far more conventional viewing position for the reader to occupy was exemplified by a dramatic two-page art work, which represented the story of the armed collier Wandle fighting off a surfaced U-boat. A small inset photograph showed the ship's captain carried shoulder high on his return home. Although this vivid illustration was typical of many throughout the entire wartime run of the magazine, this example was remarkable for its valorisation of the ships attacked by and fighting back against the U-boats: not the Royal Navy's first rank warships, but merchant ships and auxiliaries at the sharp end of the antisubmarine war as the conflict entered its third year. The widespread arming of merchant ships which was instituted as the only logical, deterrent response to U-boats attacking merchantmen in accordance with prize rules, was itself an escalatory factor contributing to the declaration of unrestricted

[41] Anonymous, 'How the U Boat Terror wreaks Destruction', The War Illustrated vol.3 n.54 (28 August 1915), p.47.

submarine warfare in 1917.[42] War Illustrated provided a vindicatory visual report of the extension of armament to merchant shipping.[43] Defending the necessity of this measure in the face of the increasing effectiveness of U-boat attacks, Carlyon Bellairs perhaps unwittingly admitted the intractability of the problem, and the relative impotence of the Navy to address it: 'The merchant ships have no other resource but what is contained in their own hulls and what the Navy may provide, international law having proved itself both a snare and a delusion'.[44]

The assertion of these inescapable 'facts' ignored or forcefully obscured others, such as an acknowledgement that very few submarines had been successfully detected, engaged and destroyed to date. Statistics appeared to suggest that armed merchant ships were less vulnerable, but the remedial action of arming them, and attempting to force the U-boat to cease its predations within the procedures of prize rules, in actually prompted the full exploitation of the submarine's unique, and potentially war-winning capabilities, by provoking more submerged, surprise torpedo attacks.[45] Perversely, the impact of the desperation measure of arming of merchant vessels acted to enhance the persuasive potential of a decisive unrestricted U-boat campaign for Germany's wartime leadership.[46] Equally, even before the furore created by the sinking of Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue, there had been proposals for a ruthless submarine campaign intended to terrorise Allied and neutral shipping into immobility.[47] The unleashing of the 1917 unrestricted U-boat campaign allied to the expanded prosecution of submerged torpedo attacks finally brought to light the full, arguably already anticipated, magnitude of the submarine 'peril'. It presented the Royal Navy with a challenge to which, initially at least, its countermeasures, tactics, technological developments and resources proved wholly unequal.[48]

Nonetheless, within the pages of War Illustrated the battle against the U-boats was being carried and won, but by a fleet of underdogs rather than by the regular, first-rate Navy. Two illustrations from 1917, the year in which shipping losses became genuinely critical to the continued pursuit of the war, exemplify this trend. A cover image of a small coastal craft racing to engage a surfaced U-boat (with the title 'A Match for the Pirate: British Motor-Boat Scores') celebrated the heroism of the Navy's dashing patrol forces.[49] Another illustration accompanied by a lengthy caption related a fanciful tale of a trawler which had bravely and vainly fought four submarines singlehandedly (fig.8). After describing this ship's unequal struggle, the accompanying text ended with the following valediction: 'if her crew are not prisoners in Germany, they are at the bottom of the sea with their gallant boat'.[50]

[42] Philip K. Lundeberg, 'The German Naval Critique of the U-Boat Campaign, 1915-1918', Military Affairs, vol. 27, n.3 (1963), 105-118 (p.110).
[43] Anonymous, 'The Only Argument Against the Pirates' Torpedo', The War Illustrated vol.5 n.116 (4 November 1916), p.285.
[44] Carlyon Bellairs, 'How to Meet the New U-Boat Threat', The War Illustrated vol.4 n.80 (26 February 1916), p.42.
[45] Arthur Marder, From The Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904-1919 vol. IV 1917 Year of Crisis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.91; Marder (1978), pp.325-6.
[46] Dirk Steffen, 'The Holtzendorff Memorandum of 22 December 1916 and Germany's Declaration of Unrestricted U-Boat Warfare', The Journal of Military History, Vol. 68, No. 1 (2004), 215-224 (p.216).
[47] Philip K. Lundeberg, 'The German Naval Critique of the U-Boat Campaign, 1915-1918', Military Affairs, vol. 27, n.3 (1963), 105-118 (p.107).
[48] Marder (1969), pp.99-114.
[49] The War Illustrated vol.7 n.161 (15 September 1917).
[50] Anonymous, 'One Trawler that Tackled Four U boats at Once', The War Illustrated vol.6 n.145 (26 May 1917), p.329.

Page 329 *The War Illustrated, 26th May, 1917.*

One Trawler that Tackled Four U Boats at Once

A trawler, armed with a couple of light guns, came across a German submarine much more heavily armed, which attacked her. The first shot from the submarine went through the deck-house and smashed a great deal of the wheel which was in the hands of the skipper, who, nevertheless, went on steering with the broken spokes. The trawler sent two shots which almost certainly struck the U boat as she went below. That trawler became the terror of the submarines, but at last she was attacked by four simultaneously, and if her crew are not prisoners in Germany they are at the bottom of the sea with their gallant boat.

Fig.8 26 May 1917 'One Trawler that Tackled Four U boats at Once' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

This championing of an unlikely British maritime David pitted against the immoral German submarine Goliath was frequently recapitulated in War Illustrated's artists' work, accompanying morale boosting but unconvincing tales. In another two-page spread, also from the months of the highest merchant ship losses during the unrestricted U-boat campaign, naval auxiliaries, merchant ships and British submarines were pictured engaged in the struggle against the U-boats, and either capturing them, driving them off or sinking them (fig.9). These

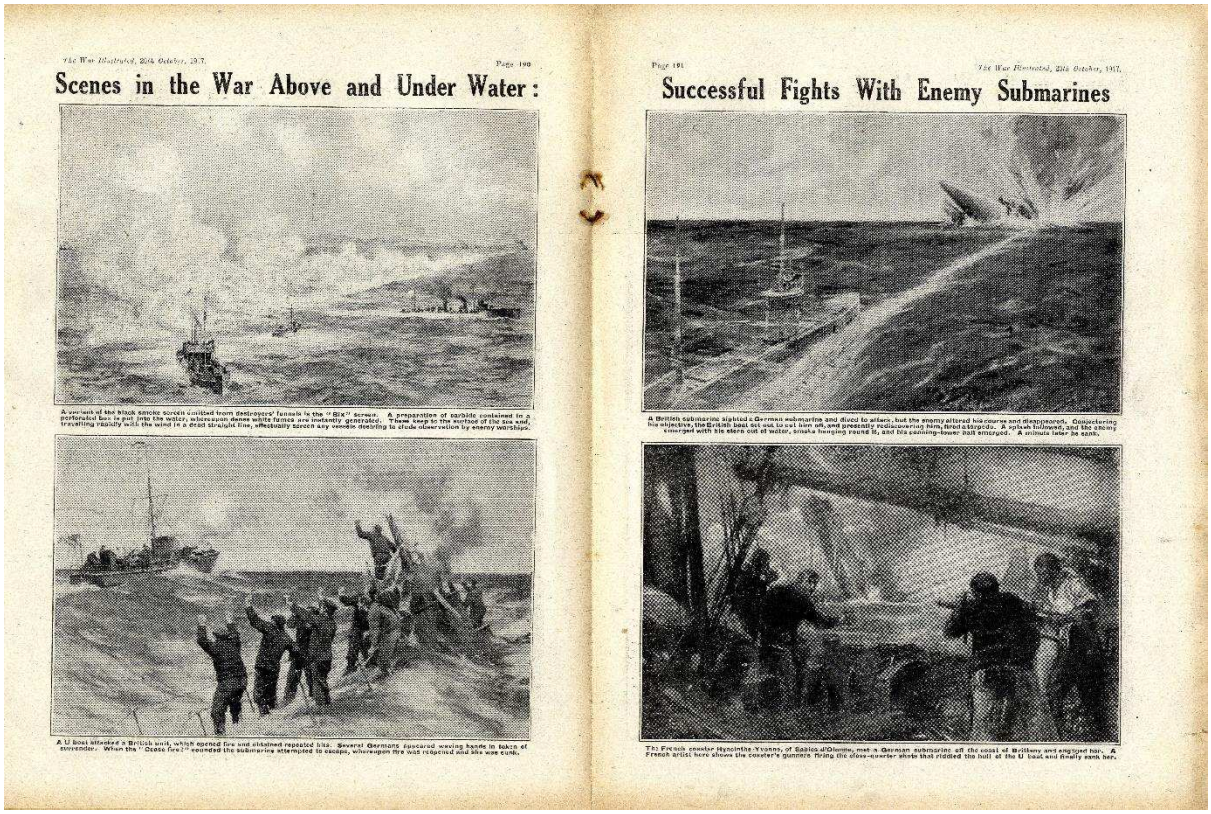

Fig.9 20 October 1917 'Scenes in the War Above and Under Water: Successful Fights With Enemy Submarines' (University of Sheffield Special Collections)

images (all, notably, artists' illustrations rather than photographs) depicted the U boats being opposed, thwarted, destroyed or forced to surrender in a stirring catalogue or material and moral victory. In addition to a French coaster defending herself from attack, a British patrol craft and a British submarine were depicted sinking U boats in surface combat.

Elsewhere the high-technology narrative associated with the submarine was revived in the description of the innovations introduced to oppose it. In illustrations published in 1917, the application of airpower, and the invention of underwater detection devices were portrayed in detail. These innovations were described with optimism as 'important aids in mastering the submarine trouble'.[51] However, the seaplane was depicted flying over ships which were still not in convoy, and the annotated drawing of the hydrophone-equipped search ship did not show any depth-charges, or any other way to attack a submarine unless it surfaced. While in retrospect such examples readily suggest the intended propaganda value of portraying inferior or inadequate forces valiantly combatting the ruthlessness of the enemy's submarines, and the propaganda need to portray the submarine peril being brought under control, the incidents depicted here bear little relationship to actual U boat losses. While aircraft proved effective in the anti-submarine war in reconnaissance and deterrence effect, they did not contribute significantly to U boat sinkings.[52]

[51] Anonymous, 'Seaplane Safeguard Against Enemy Submarines', The War Illustrated vol.6 n.151 (7 July 1917), p.455.
[52] Marder (1969), pp.72-85.

Such optimistic descriptions of possible countermeasures and indeed the downplaying of the threat posed by the submarine in the first place could not detract from the growing awareness of the dire threat posed by the high level of shipping losses during 1917. At the height of the U-boat campaign and the nadir of the war in Britain, the appearance of an article by the Daily Mail's naval correspondent Herbert Wilson displayed desperation at the apparent absence of any remedy to the submarine-inflicted losses, and expressed grave, heretical doubt in the strategy and image of the British Navy:

> Our first and most pressing necessity is to defeat the submarine campaign […] if it be not defeated then all our sea power is in vain. The forty-four British Dreadnoughts might as well be at the bottom of the sea; the war will be lost; and the British Empire will be shattered and sundered into fragments. Is there any sign whatever that our methods are getting the better of the submarines?[53]

The reality and insolubility of the U-boat offensive was captured in this montage of photographs detailing the destruction of French transport ship in the Mediterranean in September 1917. In bleakly neutral language the 'remarkable rapidity' of her sinking, the loss of 250 lives, and the ship's vulnerability in carrying munitions were recorded: 'Imagination is hardly equal to the task of visualising the horror added by fire to a sinking vessel which has explosives on board.'[54] If in 1915 War Illustrated had provided its readers with a disconcerting connection with the U boat's perspective in its diagrammatic treatment of a submarine attack, in this example from 1918 it required them to view and envisage a sinking ship shown with photographic authenticity, but from a temporal and spatial distance redolent of horror, pity and powerlessness. The submarine, visible only through the aftermath of its attack, arguably achieved a more significant impact in photographic evidence rather than in artistic exaggeration.

As well as openly fearing the loss of the entire war on the basis of failure to tackle the U-boats, Wilson's commentary mimicked several others in seeking an antidote to the effectiveness of the submarine in a recourse to 'offensive action' (for example by dreadnought) rather than apparently futile defensive antisubmarine measures. Perceptions of the submarine's innovative and distinctive difference did not prevent and perhaps arguably inspired a regressive concentration on the conventional, depreciated means of sea power closer to norms of both warfare and identity. Equally retrograde in this respect were the images and words which characterised the submarine war in the last months of the conflict. German submarines continued to be demonised and euphemised as pirates, jackals and 'Hun highwaymen', and their targets were re-imagined as innocent and vulnerable civilians depicted in images reminiscent of alleged atrocities in Europe in the first year of the war, and of the Lusitania sinking.[55] The defeat and surrender of the U-boats in 1918 was reported in War Illustrated with conclusive moral righteousness, but the arrival and internment of the surrendered battleships of the High Seas Fleet, described unapologetically as a victory as significant and historic as

[53] H.W. Wilson, 'Wanted: a Naval Offensive!', The War Illustrated vol.7 n.162 (22 September 1917), p.109.
[54] Anonymous, 'Last Moments of the Torpedoed Transport Medie', The War Illustrated vol.7 n.179 (19 January 1918), p.457.
[55] Anonymous, 'Stealthy Hun Highwaymen of the High Seas', The War Illustrated vol.8 n.196 (18 May 1918), p.248; Anonymous, 'Courage and Faith Confront the U Boat Peril', The War Illustrated deluxe album vol.8, ed. by J.A. Hammerton (London: Amalgamated Press, 1918), p.2819.

Trafalgar, received substantially greater coverage.[56] Even a bloodless victory vested in the superiority of Britain's battle fleet appeared preferable to a reminder of a very near-defeat at the hands of the German submarine.

Conclusion

The peculiarities and consistencies of War Illustrated's representation of the submarine on both sides of the First World War reflect the magazine's definitions and depictions of war technology, as inflected by crucial constructions and characterisations of national identity and morality. By turns its aggrandizement and dismissal of the danger embodied in the U-boat, via emotive and striking visual illustration and verbal address, are indicative of the mystique of the submarine and its captivation of the British readership, in rivalry with the pride and patriotic investment in the surface ships of the Royal Navy. The extensive coverage and exaggerated interpretations of the submarine were also used to differentiate and dynamise other wartime discourses incorporated by War Illustrated in its undeniable propaganda role.

In his retrospective account of the U-boat campaign against British shipping and the countermeasures eventually taken to defeat it, John Jellicoe noted the comparative lack of impact which German submarines made in the first half of the conflict and, crucially, drew distinctions between the tactics they employed:

> Whilst the enemy's campaign against merchant shipping always gave rise to anxiety, there were certain periods of greatly increased activity. During the summer months of 1916 the losses from submarine attack and from submarine-laid mines were comparatively slight, and, in fact, less than during the latter half of 1915, but in the autumn of 1916 they assumed very serious proportions.[57]

In analysing the period before the acceleration of the rate of sinkings in autumn 1916, which anticipated the full-blown 'crisis' of 1917 occasioned by the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare, Jellicoe pointed out that not only were the U-boats' predations not substantial enough to cause alarm, their attacks were mostly effected from the surface, rather than submerged. These factors in turn provoked only piecemeal, palliative measures rather than curative ones from the British side:

> In the years 1915 and 1916, however, only 21 and 29 per cent, respectively of the British merchant ships sunk by enemy submarines were destroyed without warning, whilst during the first four months of the unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 the figure rose to 64 per cent., and went higher and higher as the months progressed. Prior to February, 1917, the more general method of attack on ships was to 'bring them to' by means of gun-fire; they were then sunk by gun-fire, torpedo, or bomb. This practice necessitated the submarine being on the surface,

[56] Anonymous, 'Some Arrivals at "U Boat Avenue", Harwich'; 'Britain's Most Glorious Hour Since Trafalgar', War Illustrated album de luxe vol.10, ed. by J.A. Hammerton (London: Amalgamated Press, 1919), pp.3453-4.
[57] John Jellicoe, The Crisis of the Naval War (London: Cassell, 1920), p.4.

> and so gave a merchant ship defensively armed a chance of replying to the gun-fire and of escaping, and it also gave armed decoy ships a good opportunity of successful action if the submarine could be induced to close to very short range.[58]

The desire to cure the submarine menace by resort to a surface battle epitomised a conventional and aggressive response to an unconventional, defensive challenge: in some ways the arming of merchant ships compounded rather than cured the problem of the submarine, and provoked the full exploitation of its technological advantages in stealth and weaponry. Ironically, in answer to the contemporary and retrospective views of the virtues of offensive action to win the war at sea through battleship action, Arthur Marder suggested that a victory at Jutland might well have been decisive for the anti-submarine war: without the need to screen the dreadnoughts for fleet action, the Royal Navy's destroyers could have been released to convoy duty much sooner.[59]

Reflecting on the submarine menace after the war, John Jellicoe observed that 'It is perhaps as well that the nation generally remained to a great extent unconscious of the extreme gravity of the situation'.[60] The evolution of War Illustrated's reporting of the submarine (from dismissal of its danger, to condemnation of its 'cowardly' and 'piratical' deployment, to celebration of its embodiment of technological advancement, and eventual acknowledgement of its disproportionate and potentially decisive impact) reflects the divisive characteristics and perceptions of submarine warfare, and also the troubled reputation of the Royal Navy in the contemporary public imagination. The difficulty of placing the (British) submarine within the hierarchy of military and national discourses afflicted the Royal Navy itself as much as publications such as War Illustrated attempting to represent it:

> The effort by the Royal Navy to develop a fleet submarine ceases to be an operational and technical matter and instead becomes one of how the Royal Navy imagined the conduct of maritime warfare and attempted to shape the submarine to fit this ideal.[61]

Set against its careful handling of the perceived inactivity of the battle fleets of both sides, the submarine is represented in War Illustrated as an embryonic, exotic and ultimately influential factor in the naval war. Within the first eighteen months of the conflict, several connected and occasionally interdependent submarine discourses emerge discernibly within War Illustrated's reporting: the elevation of the submarine as an unprecedented military technology; the keen moral dilemmas of rationalising and accommodating its key attributes of stealth and surprise; and integration of the new weapon system into positive and negative propaganda narratives, both in its use by Britain and her allies and in the delineation of countermeasures to its effects. This extensive, prominent and cumulative coverage clearly conveys the fascination with and importance of the submarine, and would appear to entirely acknowledge and broadcast the 'gravity' of the U-boat threat of which Jellicoe was so conscious. The magazine's textual

[58] Ibid., p.38.
[59] Marder (1978), p.257.
[60] Ibid., p.1.
[61] Redford (2015), pp.xv-xvi.

properties and individual topical choices (between text and image, illustration and photography) in relation to specific subjects, can be seen to be crucial to palpable tonal variations in the representation of the submarine. Submarines are embodiments of war effort and war ethos (symbolising mobilised technology and unified tactics) as well as embodiments of national character (representing moral or immoral, noble or despicable, heroic or cowardly activities). They are also totems in a conflict marked by rapid, transformational, passionate and intimidating applications, exploitations and interpretations of technology. Within the context of the failure of the respective battle fleets to intervene decisively in the naval war, it would appear to be have been preferable to think of the submarine as capable and respectable enough to 'keep the sea', rather than as deadly and dishonourable enough to take it away.