



Major British Warship Losses in World War 2 SUBMARINES, including Midget Submarines & Human Torpedoes

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HM S/M H.49, lost 18 October 1940 (Courtesy NavyPhotos)

SOURCE: <http://www.naval-history.net/WW2aBritishLosses05SS.htm> (towards the end of the article; slightly reformatted)

MIDGET SUBMARINES

82. 'X' CLASSES, X.3-X.10, X.20-X.25, XT.1-XT.6, XE.1-XE.9, XE.11-XE.12, 31 boats - c30/33t, 6/6 knots, 2-2 ton side charges, 4 crew, launched 1942-45, 8 lost.

Miniature submarines with full diving capabilities, equipped with periscope etc. and able to drop side charges beneath the target after being towed to vicinity by ocean-going submarines. XT boats were for training and not equipped with side charges; XE boats were more habitable and designed for Far East operations. XE's also had a diving compartment to allow divers to leave the boat and attach limpet mines. On the 31st July 1945, XE.3 sank Japanese heavy cruiser 'Takao' in the Johore Strait off Singapore.

Six submarines sailed from Scotland on the 11th/12th September 1943, each with an X-craft in tow to attack the heavy German ships lying in Altenfiord. All six midget submarines (X5, X6, X7, X8, X9, X10) were lost:

X.5 (Lt H Henty-Creer+), **X.6** (Lt D Cameron RNR, awarded VC), **X.7** (Lt G Place, awarded VC), 22nd September 1943, Northern Europe, Altenfiord, Norway - Lost in attack on German battleship 'Tirpitz' at anchor in Kaafiord. 'X.6' and 'X.7' laid their charges under or near 'Tirpitz' badly damaging her. Fate of 'X.5' is not known. No survivors from 'X.5', all saved from 'X.6', two saved and two lost from 'X.7'.

X.8 (Lt J Smart RNVR), 18th September 1943, Northern Europe, Norwegian Sea – Sailing to attack pocket battleship 'Lützwow', under tow by 'Sea Nymph'. Tow parted on 15th, but 'found by towing submarine next day. Lt Smart, passage CO forced to jettison both charges on the 17th, and the mission had to be abandoned. 'X.8' scuttled on the 18th.

X.9 (Sub Lt E V Kearon RNVR+), 16th September 1943, Northern Europe, Norwegian Sea – Sailing to attack battlecruiser 'Scharnhorst', dived and under tow by 'Syrtis'. Failed to surface on the 16th, tow rope found parted; passage crew lost.

X.10 (Lt K R Hudspeth RANVR), 3rd October 1943, Northern Europe, Norwegian Sea – Failed in attack on battlecruiser 'Scharnhorst' and withdrew. Taken in tow by submarine 'Stubborn' on 28th, tow broke on 3rd, gale warning received and 'X.10' scuttled.

XE.11, March 1945, Western Europe, Loch Striven, Scotland – exercising, lost in collision with boom defence vessel.

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X.22 (Lt B M MacFarlane RAN), 7th February 1944, Western Europe, Pentland Firth, off N Scotland – towing exercises with submarine 'Syrtis', 'Syrtis' manoeuvred to rescue officer overboard, rammed and sank 'X.22'.

HUMAN TORPEDOES (Chariots)

83. 'CHARIOTS' (losses in date order) – 1.6 tons, length 20ft, 3-4 knots, one bow charge with 590lb of Torpex, 2 crew, built from 1942, 28 lost:

Electrically powered submersible with crew of two equipped with diving suits and breathing apparatus sitting astride the torpedo-shaped hull. Armed with detachable bow charge. Developed by

the Italian Navy and nicknamed 'Maiale' or pig, their greatest triumph was the sinking of 'Queen Elizabeth' and 'Valiant' in Alexandria harbour on the 19th December 1941, although both British battleships were raised and put back into service. Design of the captured craft was developed by the British and named 'Chariots'.

No. VI and VIII, 31st October 1942, Western Europe, off Trondheimfiord, Norway - broke away in rough weather. Being towed below Norwegian fishing boat 'Arthur' on final approach for attack on German battleship 'Tirpitz' (Operation 'Title') in Fottenfiord well inside Trondheimfiord. Tow broke in bad weather; Charioteers on board 'Arthur' at the time.

No. X and XVIII, December 1942/January 1943, Central Mediterranean, Maddalena, Sardinia area - lost with submarine 'P.311'. Being carried in watertight deck containers mounted on 'T' class submarine 'P.311' for attack on Italian cruisers at Maddalena, NE Sardinia (Operation 'Principal'). See loss of 'P.311' above; all Charioteers lost.

No. XV, XVI, XIX, XXII and XXIII, 2nd/3rd January 1943, Central Mediterranean, Palermo, northwest coast of Sicily - scuttled. Launched from watertight deck containers on submarines 'Thunderbolt' (two Chariots) and 'Trooper' (three Chariots) for attack on Palermo Harbour - also part of Operation 'Principal'. After two Chariots successfully penetrated the defences, charges were laid which severely damaged Italian light cruiser 'Ulpio Traiano' then being fitted out before completion and transport 'Viminale' early on the 3rd. The Palermo attack was part of the same operation, which led to the loss of 'P.311' and Chariots No.X and XVIII above.

No. XII and XIII, 19th January 1943, Central Mediterranean, Tripoli, Libya - scuttled. Two weeks after the Palermo attack, submarine 'Thunderbolt' carried two Chariots for an attack on Tripoli Harbour (Operation 'Welcome'). The operation failed.

No. LII and LVII, 22nd November 1943, Western Europe, Norway - scuttled in heavy weather. Taking part in attack on German shipping in Norwegian fiords.

No. LVIII and LX, 21st/22nd June 1944, Central Mediterranean, La Spezia, NW Italy - scuttled. A joint British-Italian operation mounted from Italian destroyer 'Grecale' and MTB 'MAS.74', the Chariots were launched for an attack on Italian warships under German control in La Spezia harbour on the NW coast of Italy (Operation 'QWZ'). Heavy cruiser 'Bolzano' had been torpedoed and damaged by submarine 'Unbroken' in 1942 and taken to La Spezia for repairs. Later plans to convert her to a cruiser-aircraft carrier came to nothing and she was captured when Italy surrendered. In the attack 'Bolzano' was sunk.

No. LXXIX and LXXX, 28th October 1944, South East Asia, Phuket, SW coast of Thailand in Andaman Sea - scuttled. Transported to Phuket by submarine 'Trenchant', penetrated harbour and sank transport 'Sumatra Maru', badly damaged another ship.

No. V, XXIX, XXXI and XXXIV, 1945, Western Europe, west Scotland. Loss reported in June 1945

No. XI, XIV, XVII, XX, XXI, XXIV and XXV, 1945, Central Mediterranean, Malta. Loss reported in June 1945

ONE MAN MIDGET SUBMARINES

84. WELMAN CRAFT, approximately 100 craft - weight 5,750lb with charge, length 20ft, 3 knots, 1 bow charge with 425lb of Torpex, 1 crew, built 1943, 5 lost.

Small one-man operated submarines with limited range and no periscope. Navigated on the surface through window in small conning tower. Declared unsuitable for operations in late 1943 and scrapped 1944.

No.10 (Lt B Perderson, Norwegian Army), 9th September 1943, Western Europe in Loch Cairnbawn (Locha Chairn Bhain) NW Scotland - by accident. Sank alongside depot ship [Bonaventure](#).

No. 45, 46, 47 and 48, 22nd November 1943, Western Europe, Bergen, SW Norway - captured/scuttled by their crews. Carried by MTB's across the North Sea for attack on Bergen Harbour. Failed to reach target area with Welman 46 (Lt B Perderson, Norwegian Army) captured by the Germans and the other three scuttled.

For a full account of the Isle of Bute during World War II click here: www.bute-at-war.org