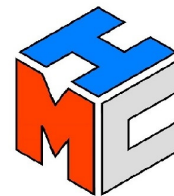




# Sticky Fingers



The Hornchurch Model Club Newsletter

Issue 194 July 2020

**Next month – August 2020 – Another Say At Home Night???**



**A view from the Hill...**

## **Too Many Damn Holes, or “I Was a Stoker on a Submarine”**

**The Time: 1915... The Place: United Kingdom**



**John Arbuthnot Fisher, 1st Baron Fisher, GCB, OM, GCVO (1841–1920)** former First Sea Lord, 1913. “The most fatal error imaginable would be to put steam engines in a submarine”<sup>(1)</sup>

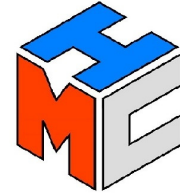
During the First World War we saw the widespread use of submarines for the first time. The convention at the time was to have them powered by Diesel engines (when on the surface) and Electric motors (when submerged). The problem facing the Admiralty however was that these early submarines were very slow and as one of their main jobs was to scout ahead of the main fleet this lack of speed was a real problem. German submarines of the time (known as **U-Boats**), however were sinking so many Allied ships that they almost brought Great Britain to her knees.

By 1915 it was clear that the **J class** submarines would not meet RN expectations as the diesel powered subs could only reach 19 knots on the surface, but HMS *Dreadnought* could reach 21 knots and a new faster class of submarine would be required to accompany the fleet.

It was judged that the only way to give these new submarines enough surface speed to keep up with the fleet was to power them by **steam turbines** and so the stunning idea of putting a steam into a submarine was born. These new K class vessels as they would be known were loathed by their unfortunate crews, one officer said that there “were too many damn holes”<sup>(2)</sup>



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Submarines by their very nature are designed to be submerged and are most vulnerable if caught on the surface by over flying aircraft or by other warships and so need to be able to crash dive or submerge in a hurry. You can imagine the fun and games of trying to crash dive a steam powered K Boat.



On average it took five minutes to shut off the boilers, retract the funnels, close the ventilators and hatches, evacuate the boiler room and fill the ballast tanks. Now think about trying to do all this while the enemy is blasting shells and bullets at you.

Although 21 were planned only 17 of these wonder weapons were ever built and their war record was not exactly stunning as this brief list shows:

- K2** suffered an explosion and caught fire on its first test dive.
- K3** was fired on by a British patrol vessel during her sea trials and on one occasion she plunged inexplicably to the seabed with the Prince of Wales on board.
- K4** ran aground during her trials
- K5** was lost on exercise off the Bay of Biscay
- K6** refused to surface after her first test dive
- K11** during a crash dive, she flooded oil into the boiler room, caught fire and forced the vessel back to the surface
- K13** sank on her acceptance trials. She was later raised and renumbered as **K22**
- K15** sunk in Portsmouth harbour

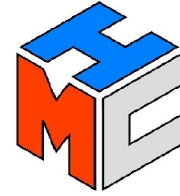
The K Boats most infamous hour came on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1917 during an exercise with the fleet in the Firth of Forth, Scotland. This appalling series of disasters came to be known as the battle of May Island. During the exercise:

- K4** sank after colliding with **K6**
- K7** ran over the sinking bows of **K4**
- K14** sank after she was rammed by **K22**
- K17** sank when she was rammed by HMS Fearless
- K22** (formerly K13) was itself hit by HMS Inflexible and badly damaged

There were **104** casualties from this 'battle' without an enemy. If you would like some more information type in [the battle of May Island](#) on YouTube for a short clip on this "Battle"



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**K7** was the only one of the disastrous K class to engage with an enemy vessel when on 16 June 1917 she fired a salvo of 6 torpedoes at the U-boat **U-95**. Even this however did not break the K Boats run of bad luck. Five of the torpedoes missed their target and the only one to score a direct hit... was a dud. The remaining K Class submarines were scrapped soon after the war ended and the last word on these terrible vessels belongs to Commander Bradshaw R.N:

*"I never met anybody who had the least affection for the K Class and they were looked on with fear a loathing. After all they murdered many of their officers and crews." (3)*

## Notes

The last four K class submarines ordered were **K18 - K21** these became the new M Class, minus steam engines and funnels of course. But these didn't fare much better.

**M1** sank after colliding with a Swedish collier SS Vidar in the English Channel while on exercise on November 12<sup>th</sup> 1925

**M2** was converted to a seaplane carrier and sank off Chesil beach in shallow water. Apparently, the seaplane door was opened prematurely.

**M3** was converted to a mine layer and scrapped in 1932

**M4** was broken up before being completed.

(1) *The K Boats* Don Everitt Harrap & Co 1963 page 9

(2) *Ibid* page 29

(3) *Ibid* page 69

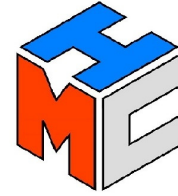
PS..... If this story has inspired you then you too can own your very own K Class submarine!



**Graham Hill**



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## Johns Jottings

I am afraid that this month's newsletter is a little bit sparse... It is now mid-July and we have had no meetings now since March and with no model shows to attend there is nothing to report. Even the initial rush of building (for me at least) has slowed down... the Garda Range Rover is progressing nicely, but I detoured to finish a couple of Airfix Fouga's (1/72) yes one Irish but the other is Belgian to go with an old Patrouille de France. I have another two one not started and one built but not painted which will be German and Finish examples... I have bought some new kits while in lockdown... Another Revell Series III Land Rover, the new ICM 1/48 Cessna O-2A (a mad looking aircraft) and a Trumpeter 1/144 Me 262 A2-A, these 1/144 kits are addictive.

I also have had some of the new Tamiya Lacquer paints (LP) to try out and had a clear out of my hobby shed.

## Provisional Meeting Schedule for 2020 - 2021

March 16 <sup>th</sup>	<del>Pre Southern Expo</del>
April 20 <sup>h</sup>	<del>Show What You Bought</del> Modelling Night
May 18 <sup>th</sup>	<del>Competition Night - TBC</del>
June 15 <sup>th</sup>	<del>Video Night hosted by John Bennet</del>
July 20 <sup>th</sup>	<del>Competition Night - The Covid Builds???</del>
August 15 <sup>th</sup>	RFC Talk
September 21 <sup>st</sup>	Competition Night
October 21 <sup>st</sup>	Open Night / Lucky Dip Starter Kits
November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Competition Night
December 14 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz and Nibbles
January 18 <sup>th</sup>	Competition: Modeller of the Year
February 15 <sup>th</sup>	AGM + Lucky Dip Competition