

Air Ministry News ServiceAir Ministry Bulletin No. 8110THE "U-BOAT MAGNET"

Flight Lieutenant H.G. Pockley, of Randwick, New South Wales, is the captain of a Sunderland flying boat in a Coastal Command squadron. His job is to hunt enemy U-boats as they cross the Bay of Biscay on their trips to and from the Atlantic.

So far as the story goes there are many like Pockley. Coastal Command now has more aeroplanes than the entire Royal Air Force possessed at the beginning of the war -- and most of them are employed in the war against the submarines.

But where Pockley differs from most pilots is in that he is phenomenally lucky in his patrols. He sights U-boats more often than the others: so much so that his colleagues now call him "the U-boat magnet".

Some weeks ago Pockley in his Sunderland -- "R for Robert" -- caught an Italian U-boat on the surface, and despite the bulk and weight of the giant four-engined flying boat he attacked in a dive so steep that a Stuka would not have been disgraced by its angle.

The stick of bombs exploded and must have damaged the submarine, for the Italians remained on the surface and fought a gun battle with the Sunderland.

They hit the flying boat with their ack-ack fire, but did no serious damage, and in return Pockley's gunners swept the length of the U-boat with a hail of machine-gun bullets. Many hits were scored on the conning tower and deck and the guns ceased firing.

Not long afterwards another Sunderland came along and added to the Italians' discomfort with another well-directed attack.

The submarine was not sunk, but it was forced to remain on the surface, and next day it was found by a Polish-manned Wellington of Coastal Command.

As the bombs fell from the Wellington, a number of Italians wearing only red and yellow bathing trunks, dived overboard and swam rapidly away from the submarine.

The crew who remained on board tried to submerge. But the Poles reported something seriously amiss, because the screws came right out of the water and the U-boat slid under at an angle which clearly showed it was not under control.

A few days later "magnet" Pockley surprised another submarine on the surface. It was a German one this time.

The submarine made a crash dive, but it was not quick enough. "I dropped my bombs," said Pockley, "and there were violent explosions which threw up great spouts of water from the centre of the U-boat. Later there were masses of air bubbles."

These are but two of Pockley's successes. In a few weeks he has made several attacks -- a fine contribution to the never-ending Battle of the Atlantic.

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