

Submarine Building at Vickers-Armstrongs

Barrow Shipyard.

Submarines, although generally regarded as modern types of warships, have been built at Vickers-Armstrongs' Barrow Shipyard for almost seventy years. A "Nordenfeldt" type submarine of 200 tons, the first to be made at Barrow, was launched in 1886 when the Yard was known as the Barrow Shipbuilding Company.

With the turn of the century the Barrow Yard began a busy period that was distinguished chiefly by the building of heavy naval warships for British and foreign governments and concentration in submarine construction.

With World War I there was an increasing emphasis on naval construction. Many submarines were built during the war, particularly of the "H" class. The five-hundredth order on the Yard's Order Book, reached in 1918, was a submarine of this class.

The outbreak of World War II found the Barrow Works in an advanced state of preparedness. Over a long period of years an extensive programme of re-equipment and modernisation had been pursued. After the fall of France the Admiralty were faced with a tremendous programme of repair work to ships' hulls, propelling machinery and gun mountings. The Barrow Yard played an important part in this struggle to keep our ships at sea, at the same time building a vast amount of new tonnage. More submarines were built than any other type of warship during the war years - a total of 89. In addition Barrow built 18 midget submarines. Among the other warships built were 4 aircraft carriers. 2 cruisers and 12 destroyers.

It must also be remembered that the Barrow Works are unique in this country in that they can produce from their

own establishment not only the hulls but also the propelling machinery and gun mountings of warships. They had also the surplus capacity to construct the propelling machinery for most of the warships built at the Naval Yard and, in conjunction with the Elswick Works of the Company, they produced the armament for many warships constructed by other builders.

The war records of Barrow built ships were followed closely by the men who made them. Among the many submarines launched there "Upholder" and "Turbulent" became widely known as both their captains, Lieut. Cdr Wanklyn and Commander Linton received the Victoria Cross for their exploits. Both later lost their lives in the Service. Four Victoria Crosses were won in midget submarines that came from Barrow, by Lieutenants Place, Fraser, Cameron and Leading Seaman Magennis. Other well-known warships were H.M.S. Ajax, which took part in the "Graf Spee" action, H.M.S. "Illustrious" which suffered greatly in protecting convoys to Malta, and the armed merchant cruiser Jervis Bay. The latter captained by Captain E.S. Fogarty Fegen V.C., R.N., fought one of the most gallant actions of the War when defending a convoy from the pocket battleship Admiral Scheer.

Although since the war the emphasis has shifted at Barrow to building passenger liners, tankers, and cargo ships, other submarines have been launched. A notable achievement by one of the ten "A" Class ocean-going submarines built at Barrow - H.M.S. Andrew - was the first underwater crossing of the Atlantic, in June last year. Captained by Lieut. Cdr David Scott the 1385 ton Andrew covered the 2,500 miles from Bermuda to the English Channel in 15 days using a "Snort" breathing device.

H.M.S. Explorer, one of the most modern submarines in the world today, has a performance far in advance of her predecessors, but details of speed, range and equipment are secret.

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NEWS RELEASE

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LAUNCH OF H.M. SUBMARINE EXPLORER

H.M. Submarine EXPLORER is to be launched at the Barrow-in-Furness Yard of Messrs. Vickers-Armstrongs Ltd. on Friday, 5th March.

The naming ceremony is to be performed by Lady Reid Young, wife of the Chairman of Vickers-Armstrongs Ltd.

Of 225 ft. 6 ins. in extreme length (178 ft. between perpendiculars), the EXPLORER, has a beam of 15 ft. 8 ins.

The EXPLORER is being fitted with the latest submarine escape arrangements, including the one-man escape chamber, and is being supplied with the most recent submarine escape breathing apparatus for use by the company in the event of an emergency.

This is the first submarine to be launched for the Royal Navy since the completion of the "A" class submarines in 1948.

Admiralty, S.W.1.
1st March, 1954.

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