



Exploring U-boats in Ireland

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Underwater pictures by 10barpics
Historical Pictures by www.uboat.net

U89

A long awaited dive trip to Malin at last came and went all too quickly, but with great success. On the dive, visibility was 25-30 meters with sea conditions prime. On board a fast 8 meter rib, we got out to the dive site within an hour. For October, water temperature was good, and the air was fresh and crisp. The targeted wreck for the day was the U-89. The U-89 was a relic from “the war that would end all wars” but at last was not. Now laying 25 miles off Malin Head, time stands still for this very impressive war machine. Rammed and sunk by HMS Roxburgh, all lives were lost on board the U-89.

Crawling with life, the U-89 is now patrolled by large cod, pollock and, of course, conger. Its 60 meters boasts life everywhere.

For the last four years, both my dive buddy and I have been diving with Buddy Inspirations. We agreed that this was our most memorable dive. Using a 19-60 trimix, all was very sober at 60m. Our bottom time was a little under 30 minutes, and our total run-time was 85 minutes. Decompression was carried out with VR3's. Bail out tables were planed with V-Planner.

Loaded

Armed with only a video camera, I was no match for the very impressive arsenal on board the U-89. Deck guns were located both bow and stern. Torpedoes were left in storage never to be used again.

It is quite easy to see why the U-boat packs terrorised the seas. A period named by the U-boat fleet as the happy



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days, it was a time during which they were sinking vessels at their ease. Enemy ships with no radar or sonar were very vulnerable. U-boats would surface in well-known shipping lanes, select a target, shoot and be on their merry way.

Unfortunately for the U-89, the vessel popped up 200 yards in front of the cruiser HMS Roxburgh, which with out hesita-



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ABOVE: Stern gun
LEFT: Natural light at
60 meters



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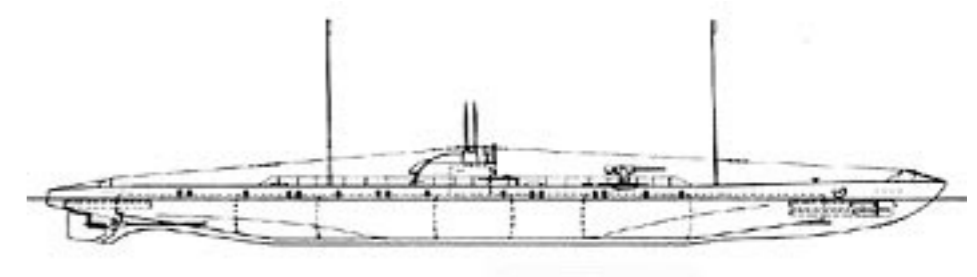
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ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Bow gun with conning tower; Two views of bow torpedo hatches; Hydrofoil stripped from its outer skin

LEFT: U-Boat Crew 1918. Men who trained with and grieved the loss of the U-89
INSET: Mark of U89

RIGHT: Diagram of U89



U89 in action

tion, rammed *U-89's* conning tower. Soon after, explosions were heard. German voices were also heard amongst the waves. *U-89* was sunk with the loss of all their lives. So, out of respect for the dead, the only souvenirs I took were in the format of pictures to share with all. The rest was left to the memory of the many souls lost regardless of personal beliefs about the war – who was right and who was wrong.

Close quarters

Most of us have seen the film *Das Boot* and can picture how claustrophobic and cramped it was on board the vessel. As big and impressive as the *U-89* was, it was still daunting to look inside a hatch and imagine that men used to sleep, work and fight in those conditions and sometimes sur-

vive. They knew their chances for survival were low. Even if you did survive a battle and make it to the surface, it was most likely instant execution for you. One was most likely shot in the water. Such instances have been reported after the sinking of the *Lusitania*. No doubt the action was revenge for the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a comrade U-boat, *U-20*.

Inside history

As I investigated further into the U-boats' history and talked to islanders with memories of the past from the South and West coasts of Ireland, I learned how U-boats and Allied boats would come to the islands to trade for provisions. In doing so, unwritten rules of war were made where momentary cease fires occurred in



Aft torpedo tube with torpedo remains

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U89

TOP RIGHT: Gear-laden diver ascending after an adventurous dive
 CENTER RIGHT: Natural light at 60 m
 BOTTOM RIGHT: Natural light at 60 m

BELOW: Conger on guard duty mid ship. Torpedos were propelled by petrol or alcohol steam generators

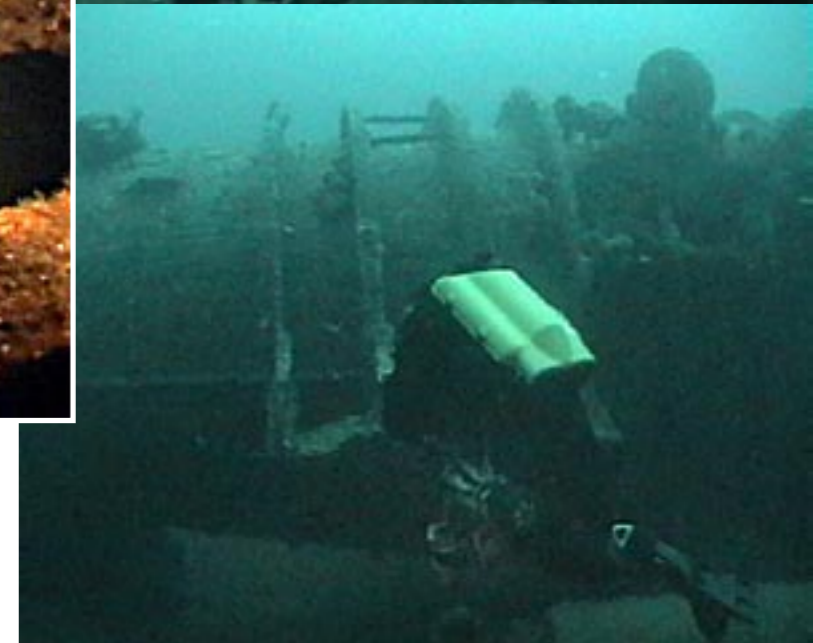
INSET: Torpedoes in storage room



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Natural light at 60 meters

order for both sides to gain supplies.

Sir Roger David Casement (1864-1916), the British traitor and Irish nationalist hero who was hanged by the British in mid-1916 for his part in working with Germany and Irish nationalists in planning the Dublin Easter Rising of 1916 came back from Germany in a U-boat after arranging armaments for the 1916 Rising. There is no doubt that U-boats played a part in Irish history.

These wrecks are our underwater

museums and should be treated with respect. *U-89* offers layers of U-boat history to view. Open in some areas. Intact and in good condition in other areas. Don't forget that this is a vessel that has been in the open sea for nearly a century. Peering at the wreck's cross-section, it is as if you can see different levels of construction. (Take notes and build your own).

There were plenty more U-boats operating around Malin and all the

coastal waters of Ireland at this time. The vessels, *U-30*, *U-43*, *U-44*, *U-57*, *U-60* and the *U-64*, helped sink the *Justicia*. The vessels, *U-68*, *U-70*, *U-73*, *U-79* and the *U-80*, laid mines in Lough Swilly and caused the sinking of the *Laurentic*.

The vessels, *U-94*, *U-95*, *U-107* and the *U-45*, lie offshore near Donegal. *UB-82* lies off Rathlin Island. *UB-85* lies in Belfast Lough. *U-110* lies off Malin

Head. *U-124*, which also helped sink the *Justicia*, lies off the north coast of Donegal. *UC-42* and *UC-44* were sunk offshore at Cobh Co Cork. *UB-65* lies





ABOVE LEFT: Torpedo
ABOVE RIGHT: Gun
CENTER: Torpedo



ABOVE: Good-bye natural light

near the Fastnet Rock. *U-68* and *UC-29* are located off the Coast of Kerry. *U-83* lies offshore at Bullrock, Co Cork.

And that's just the list for WWI. There are many more U-boats off the coast of Ireland from WWII with the highest number of wrecks off the coast of Malin identified by Operation Deadlight (www.operationdeadlight.co.uk), an expedition which was the first attempt by technical divers to survey and identify the wrecks of German U-Boats scuttled by the Allied forces



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after WWII in the waters north of Ireland. It was a scuttling of 42 plus U-boats. So, the next time you get in the water, it might not be a shark stalking you but a U-boat instead.

Malin matters

Malin offers excellent visibility. Relaxed atmosphere. Diving for all

occasions, not just deep wrecks. There are shallow wrecks and all the scenic diving you could want.

The dive operator we choose with 100% satisfaction was Dive North (www.divenorth.com). Thanks to our host and guide, Geoff, we will be back for more.

But this was not the first time I have been to Donegal. I have

had the pleasure of diving the *Laurentic* as part of the crew of Teilifis na Gaeilge (TnaG), Ireland's Irish language TV channel, and I dived the *Audacious*, through the courtesy of the Inishowen and Derry Sub Aqua Clubs. I shall be back for more.

Malin also seems to be becoming a very popular destination for technical diving courses of all disciplines under the guidance of

Gary Fox who comes to Malin to get good diving and pass on his experience through training and courses (www.diveaction.co.uk). ■

For more information, visit: www.10barpics.com www.uboat.net

