



Divers on
the wreck
of the
U-2511

Text and photos by Vic Verlinden

At the end of Second World War, the allied forces were in possession of 120 German U-boats. They decided to let them sink in the deep water of the Atlantic Ocean during a special operation for this purpose. The Grey Wolves was the nickname for the German U-boats that often assaulted the allied convoys in groups and torpedoed numerous ships. When the British battleships became more long-range and sonar was developed, the U-boats were no longer invisible and many of them were sunk. That is the reason why the Germans constructed a new 21-type that they called *Elektroboot*. These were created to stay entirely underwater during an operation and were able to top a speed of 18 knots. Other types had to rise to the surface in order to charge their batteries and aerate the boat.

On the January 30, the U-2511 finished its test trip in the Bay of Dantzig with Adelbert Schnee and his crew who already had a lot of experience with U-boats. He

also commanded successfully the U-201 with which he sunk several ships. On the return to Bergen in Norway, a few dozen survivors from the torpedoed liner *Wilhelm*

Gustloff was taken on board. On April 30, the first type 21 U-boat went on patrol in the Caribbean in order to test the ship in all circumstances. On May 1, the U-2511

had its first contact with the enemy, but three days later, Adelbert Schnee received the order to "cease-fire". The war was officially over at that moment, but



Operation Deadlight



Team member Joeri Vinks (left) coming aboard the dive vessel *Loyal Watcher*



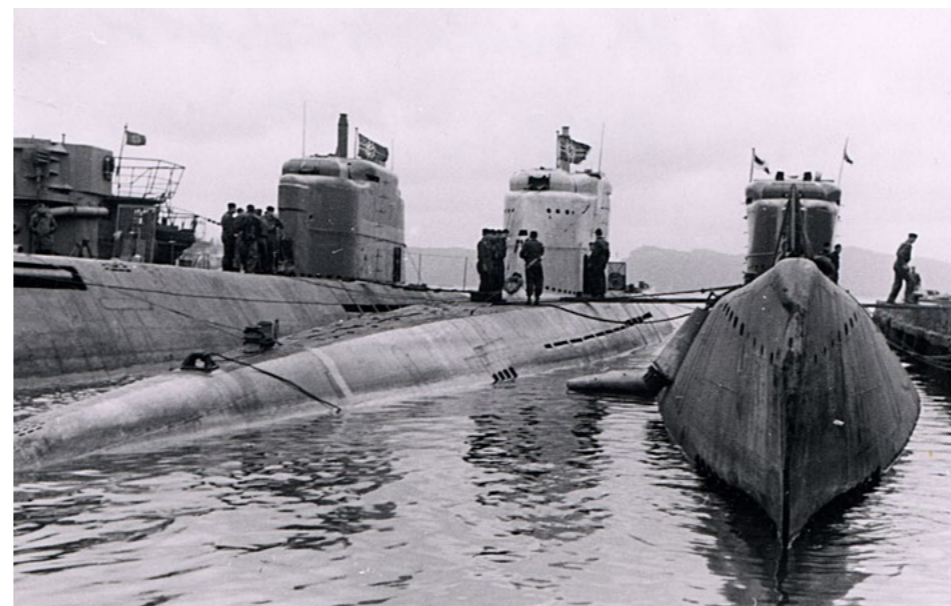
FOURTH ELEMENT TEAM DIVER, Pete Mesley in Truk Lagoon, June 2010
Pete wears: PROTEUS wetsuit.

a few hours later, he caught sight of the British cruiser *Norfolk* and a few other warships that he could approach within 500 metres. Schnee had the possibility to execute a perfect assault, but he changed his mind and ordered the crew to continue the voyage to their home port in Bergen which they reached on May 5. The U-2511 proved its efficacy but it was too late to bet on the powerful weapon with success. No member of the crew was wounded or killed during the patrol, and there were no victims on the enemy side.

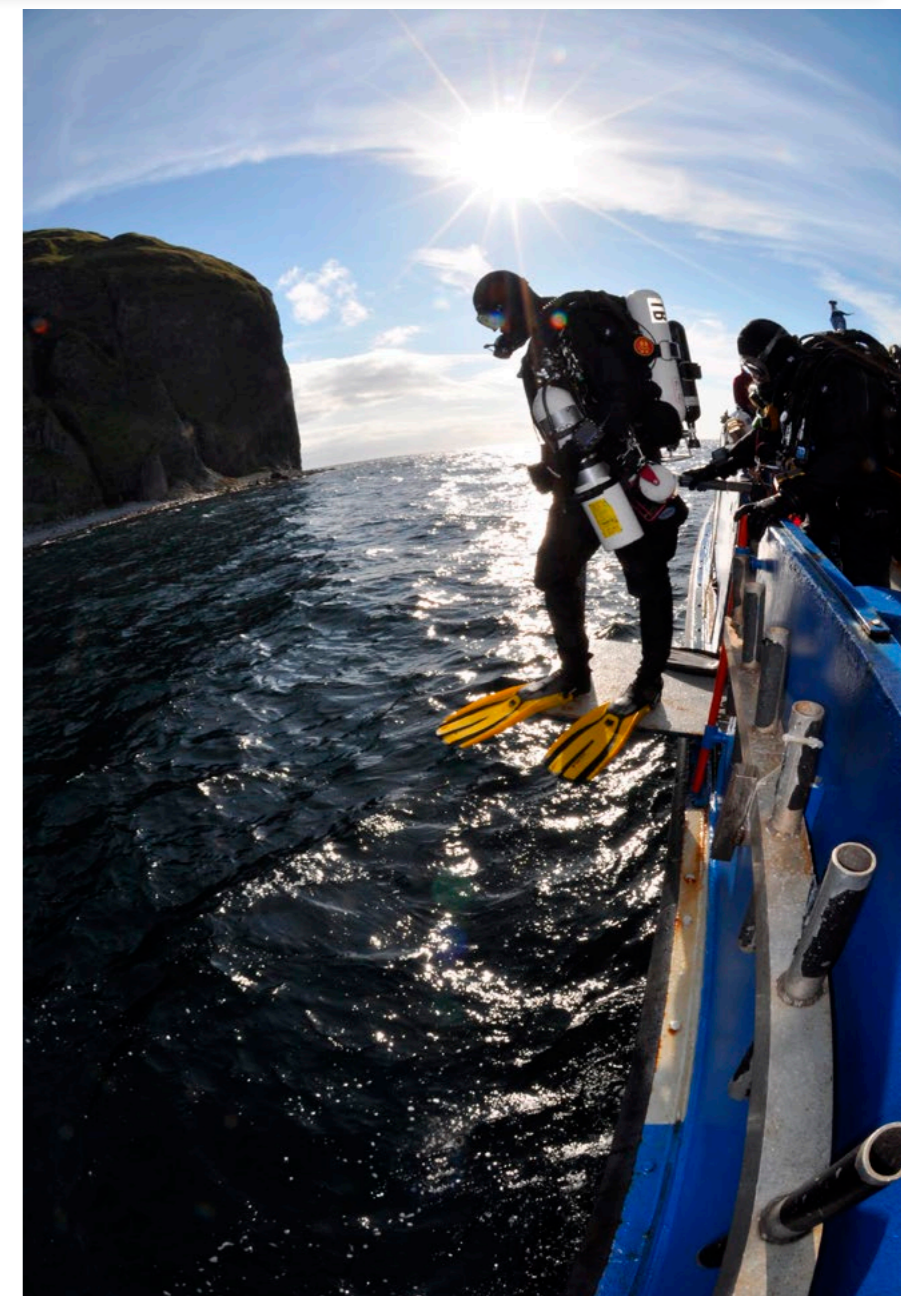
Burying the Wolves in the depths

After the end of the Second World War, the seized U-boats were gathered together in Lishally, Ireland. The Allied forces decided to sink an enormous quantity of U-boats, which they torpedoed to the depths of the Atlantic Ocean off the Irish coastline. Operation Deadlight was created, and they started to sink the 121 U-boats.

Under the circumstances, a good many U-boats never reached the planned area. As there were sometimes problems during the rigging with bad



Historical photo of elektroboats in the harbor



Divers ready to enter the water from the dive boat



Diver Frank Robert near the hull of the U-2511 (left); Historical photo of the elektroboots in harbor (below)

the neighbourhood of Malin Head in Northern Ireland. As I had already experienced something of the sort in the past, so I knew this was easier said than done.

Considering the rounded form of the hull, the grapnel or anchor, glided easily from the wreck, and the *Linda* was able to raise the grapnel several times before it finally clung to the wreck. The teams were dropped one by one, and my dive buddy and I were the fourth pair to go into the water.

Floating to the buoy, I kept an eye on it just to be sure that this time I would not miss it. There was not much current and everything went smoothly going down. The visibility on the wreck was at least

weather, it was possible that a decision was made to sink the U-boat in shallow water.

The U-2511 was rigged on 7 January 1946, but the weather was so bad that the gear broke, and the U-2511 went round in circles without anybody in command of it out in open ocean. They decided then to sink the submarine with gunfire. After a while the boat sank little by little and reached a depth of 72 metres in 20 minutes. Many other submarines

sank that way in the shallows, contrary to prevailing belief at the time, and some of them were discovered when the technical divers came out in the 90's.

Most important U-boat wreck

A local diver, Al Wright, discovered one of the wrecks in 1999. Then in 2001, the English U-boat specialist, Innes McCartney, undertook an expedition in the area and filmed several

wrecks. One of them was the U-2511. The wreck was still in good condition, so the expedition was able to capture magnificent images of the *elektroboot*. The U-2511 is the only type that was well preserved and is therefore an important archaeological find.

Diving a gigantic U-boat

Everything was implemented in order to grab the wreck of the U-2511 with the submarine *Loyal Watcher*, which was in



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THE CARACAS





Diver with scooter at the propeller of U-2511 (left); Rebreather diver Steve Brown inspects the midship section at 70m depth (below)

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Builder: Blohm & Voss, Hamburg
 Date: 7 July 1944
 Tonnage: 1,621 tons
 Length: 76 metres
 Width: 8 metres
 Propulsion: Diesel/electric 2 propellers
 Speed: 16 knots
 Range: 16,000 miles
 Armament: 6 torpedo tubes, 21 torpedoes

that one is not afraid of the cold and the sometimes rainy weather, you will enjoy a memorable dive in this area. □

Having dived over 400 wrecks, Vic Verlinden is an avid and pioneering wreck diver, award-winning underwater photographer and dive guide from Belgium. His work has been published in dive magazines and technical diving publications in the United States, Russia, France, Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom and the Netherlands. He is also the organizer of tekDive-Europe technical dive show. For more information, visit: www.vicverlinden.com

eight metres, and the grapnel was situated near the tower in the middle of the wreck.

I have dived on several wrecks of submarines from the First World War in the North Sea, but they were nothing compared to this giant with a length of 80 metres.

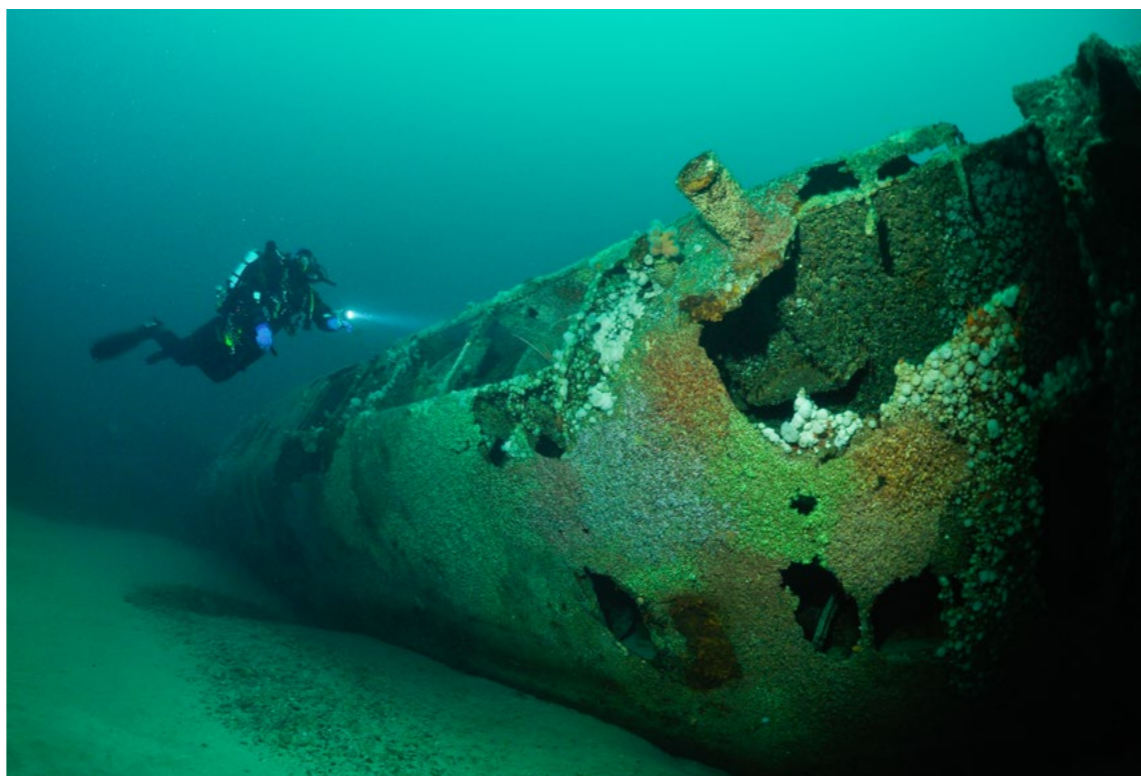
We first went along the imposing tower and then followed the hull to the back of the wreck. A few minutes later we arrived at a gaping hole where the submarine was hit when the Allies sank it. From here we could see a part of the interior and spied several spare parts. A bit later in the dive, we saw the two propellers of the wreck, with the blades still in good condition.

We were already at the halfway point of the dive and had to return to

the centre of the boat where we would find the accent line to follow in order to return to the surface. The hull of the wreck was decorated with sea anemones of all colours, which transformed the wreck into a brilliant scene.

We were now back at the tower with the periscope and several antennas, and we swam once more around in order to have a good view of the wreck. Inevitably, our dive computers indicated that we had to start the climb back to the surface. During the decompression stop of about one hour, I had enough time to review the digital images I took during the dive.

The U-2511 is an absolutely superb wreck to dive, and I recommend it to anyone who intends to dive in the region. Based on the condition, of course,



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Baltic tunnel project uncovers several 17th century wrecks

Archeologists surveying the seabed ahead of the construction of a fixed link between Denmark and Germany across the Fehmarnbelt find untouched wrecks of Dutch and Danish warships from The Battle of Fehmarn, which took place in 1644. The marine archaeology expeditions are the largest ever mounted in Scandinavia.

Working from both sides of the Fehmarn Belt, archaeologists surveying the area of the future Fehmarn Belt Tunnel for important wrecks and prehistoric sites have come up with at least two significant wrecks.

One lies in German waters only 3km north of Puttgarten from where the ferries to Denmark depart. This is probably the Danish warship, *Lindormen*, which sank in October 1644 during the Battle of Fehmarn, which was fought against a Swedish-Dutch fleet. As position of the wreck has been widely known for several years, archaeologists therefore expect that it is partially looted by sports divers.

The wreck is severely damaged by shipworm and will not last long even if it is saved. Therefore, the plan is to bury the wreck under 4,000 tons of sand to protect it from further deterioration during the construction of the tunnel.

Dutch wreck

The discovery of a second wreck located at depth of 24 metres in Dan-

ish waters around 8km south of Rødby has, however, been kept in complete secrecy since it was first located in 2008 while marine archaeologists prepared for further investigations. Whether the second wreck also dates to the same battle has not yet been determined.

The investigation is one of the biggest marine archaeological surveys conducted in Scandinavia for many years. Curator and marine archaeologist, Jørgen Dencker, from the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark, explains:

"On most wrecks in Danish waters, only the bottom is preserved. The wreck of the Fehmarn Belt is truly a gem, a treasure trove. As many as possible of the delicate various artifacts must be salvaged

and protected for the future.

"We were struck by the extent of ship timber and cannons strewn criss-cross on the seabed almost like a Mikado game. Some of the guns are on top of each other and must come from the gun deck that collapsed."

Furthermore, pottery jars, metal vessels, rigging and ammunition has been found.

Full deck preserved

Until the artifacts have been salvaged, it is not possible to estimate the full size and condition of the wreck, but archaeologists believe that at least one full deck is preserved.

However, while relatively well-preserved, centuries beneath the sea have taken their toll, leaving a number of unanswered questions surrounding the wreck. One of the mysteries is the vessel's identity, although Dencker is confident

that it is likely to be a vessel known either as *Zvaarte Arend* or *Zvaarte Adelaar* (or Black Eagle).

In the many naval battles fought in 1644 between Denmark and Sweden in the Baltic Sea, this vessel sided with Sweden. The most famous is the Battle of Colberger Heath between Fehmarn and Kiel Bay on 1 July 1644. The Danish fleet was under the command of King Christian IV, who lost the sight of his right eye in this battle, which was otherwise not decisive for the outcome of the war.

However, on October 13 of

that year, *Zvaarte Arend*, entered the scene, engaging in the naval battle fought in the Fehmarnbelt where the Danes suffered an ignominious defeat. The Danish fleet was devastated—some vessels sunk, others ran aground while the crews tried to escape. Only three of the 17 Danish vessels got away. With this defeat, Denmark lost control of the Baltic Sea for a long time.

Both wrecks are protected by Danish and German law and must therefore be examined more closely to figure out how best to ensure the findings for posterity. □



The first task for the maritime archaeologists is to sort out the chaotic tangle of fallen timbers, cannons, ropes and other artefacts



Battle of Fehmarn (1644)

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Photo courtesy of Jill Heinerth



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If it can be verified that the wreck found off Haiti's coast is the Santa Maria which wrecked over 500 years ago it would rank among the world's most important underwater archaeological discoveries.

Has Columbus' flagship, Santa Maria, been found?

Archaeological investigators think they may have discovered the wreck of Christopher Columbus's flagship, the *Santa Maria*. Haiti asks for international assistance with the investigation.

U.S. underwater investigator Barry Clifford tells BBC evidence "strongly suggests" a wreck off Haiti's north coast is the *Santa Maria*. He said he is working with the Haitian government to protect the site for a more detailed investigation.

The *Santa Maria*, along with the *La Nina* and *La Pinta*, were part of Columbus's expedition in 1492, which explored islands in the Caribbean in an attempt to find a westward passage to Asia. The

flagship, which was the largest of the three ships, was lost during the expedition, shortly before Columbus returned to Spain.

Clifford told CNN he identified the potential location of the *Santa Maria* through earlier archaeological findings that pinpointed a likely location for Columbus's fort—a building that experts always thought was erected near to where the ship ran aground.

He also used information from the explorer's diary, and a recent diving mission near the site further burnished Clifford's belief the wreck was the *Santa Maria*.

The ship was found in the exact area where Columbus said the *Santa Maria* ran aground more than 500 years ago, Clifford said. The wreck is stuck on a reef off Haiti's northern coast, 10 to 15 feet beneath the water's surface. Clifford

said the "smoking gun" was a cannon of 15th century design found at the site.

UNESCO to investigate

In a letter dated June 12, Haitian Culture Minister Monique Rocourt asked for the support of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Body of UNESCO's 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, requesting that a mission of experts be sent to the site. On June 23, UNESCO confirmed it will provide technical assistance requested.

The agency said in a press release that it will send a mission in the coming months to examine the wreck located off the town of Cap-Haïtien, in the north of the country. Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, expressed concern about the risk "of looting of underwater heritage sites off the shores of Haiti".

Explorers, including Bill Clifford's team, already visited the wreck in 2003 and identified a cannon believed to date from the 15th century. It has since disappeared. □



Painting (ca.1624) of the *Santa Maria* ship by the Flemish Baroque painter Andries van Eertvelt

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Greater protection for ships lost in First World War

Many of the wrecks from WW1 have for a long time been threatened by salvage operations, deliberate destruction and looting. With the centenary of the conflict coming up these will now begin to fall under the protection of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage which applies

to ships sunk at least 100 years ago. The locations of many of the wrecks of these ships are known and have proved popular with recreational divers but also with commercial salvage companies. For example in 2011 salvagers dismantled the

remains of three British cruisers sunk in 1914 in the North Sea. HMS Aboukir, HMS Hogue and HMS Cressy went down with the loss of 1,500 lives but the remains of the ships were destroyed for the copper and bronze they contained.

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News edited
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VERNON SMITH, NOAA

James Delgado honoured by the Spanish King

Dr James Delgado, Director of the Maritime Heritage Program, has been decorated by His Majesty King Juan Carlos of Spain for his role in protecting Spain's underwater cultural patrimony.

The King has named Dr Delgado an Officer in the Order of Civil Merit, and decorated him with the Cruz de Oficial, or the Officer's Cross. Usually awarded to Spanish officials for exceptional service to their communities, provinces or the state, and for extraordinary services performed by Spanish citizens for

the good of the nation, it is occasionally awarded to foreign nations for extraordinary services and to foreign heads of state. Delgado's services on behalf of Spain are separate from and were not part of his duties with NOAA.

As President and CEO of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Delgado provided detailed and extensive pro bono services as the archaeologist for Spain in its lengthy and successful litigation to recover artifacts including more than 500,000 in silver coins taken without authorization from the Spanish Navy's frigate *Nuestra Senora De Las Mercedes*, lost in combat in 1804 off the coast of Portugal in international waters nearly a mile

deep. Delgado's identification of the wreck as *Mercedes* played a key role in Spain being able to recover its property and patrimony. Based on his work, Spain requested his pro bono assistance in another case before the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea in Hamburg, Germany, over excavations in the Bay of Cadiz by a foreign vessel ostensibly searching for oil and gas but found to have artifacts on-board that had been clandestinely removed from the seabed without authorization. Spain's seizure of the foreign vessel and its crew for these violations was being contested; Delgado's testimony was also key in Spain's ability to prevail in that case. □

Malaysia Minister of Science invites Kids Scuba to celebrate World Oceans Day

Every year on June 8, the international community celebrates World Oceans Day, designated by the United Nations as a day to raise awareness of the importance of the seas to humanity and the fragile balance of our threatened ocean ecosystems.

This year, Kids Scuba Malaysia, the largest organization of its kind in the world which won the PADI Outstanding Contribution to Diver Education Award in 2014, took part in the national event, as the head of the organization, Syed Abd Rahman, was invited by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) to help with preparations for the celebration in Kuala Lumpur.

On June 8, YB Datuk Dr. Ewon Ebin, head of MOSTI, the government agency that manages the nation's marine parks as well as all marine-related government organizations, joined Kids Scuba along with other dignitaries for the opening ceremony at the National Science Center in

Damansara, Kuala Lumpur.

This year's theme and slogan was "Together we have the power to protect the ocean". Holding a World Oceans Day banner, three PADI Junior Open Water Scuba students from Kids Scuba—Hanani, Danial Hafiz and Najwa Amni, ages 16, 12 and 11 years old respectively—scuba dived in the waters of the aquarium, posing underwater for the press during the opening ceremony. Marine awareness talks for kids and teens and an underwater image gallery were also presented by Kids Scuba during the event.

Other leaders in the region's diving community who attended included PADI Course Director Clement Lee from Sabah, Regional Manager of PADI Asia Pacific Johnny Chew, and Tim Hunt from PADI Asia Pacific Sydney office. □

For more information on Kids Scuba, visit: www.kidsscuba.com



Kids Scuba Malaysia submerged in Kuala Lumpur's aquarium for World Oceans Day

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