



GERMAN SUBMARINE *U-1195*



Including details on HMS *Watchman* (which sank U-1195), and the requisitioned SS *Cuba* converted to a troopship (which was sunk by U-1195)

German submarine U-1195 was one of 568 of this type commissioned, considered the workhorse of the German U-Boats built between 1938 and 1944. U-1195 was in the last batch of 20 built, and as will be seen below had limited success before being sunk. An image of U-1195 has not been found but the similar U-570 is shown below in Figure 1, being commissioned on 15 May 1941 and captured by British Forces on 27 August 1941 before it sunk or damaged any Allied ships.



Figure 1: German Submarine U-570, similar to U-1195

Source: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/search/global?query=U-570>

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U-1195 was a Type VIIC submarine, laid down on 6 February 1943, launched on 2 September 1943 and commissioned on 4 November 1943. Dimensions were 67.1m/50.5m long with 6.2m/4.7m beam (overall/pressure hull), height 9.6m and draught 4.74m, displacing 769/871 tons (surfaced/submerged) and its steel hull was rated for 220m maximum depth. Propulsion at 17.7kts surfaced and 7.6kts submerged was provided by the two propellers from 2 × supercharged (Germaniawerft or MAN), 6-cylinder, 4-stroke M6V 40/46 diesels (3,200 hp), 2 electric motors (750 hp), and 2 x 62 cell batteries. These gave a range of 8,500 miles at 10kts surfaced, with an endurance of 80 miles at 4kts when submerged. Armament comprised 14 torpedoes fired through four bow and one stern tube and 1x88mmL45 deck gun with 220 rounds, plus 1x37cm M42 anti-aircraft gun and two 2cm anti-aircraft guns. The type's operational complement varied between 44 and 52 crew.

Oberleutnant Karl-Heinz Schröter was in command for three training missions. U-1195's first, and only, operational patrol operating out of 11th Flotille based at Bergen in Norway commenced on 1 January 1945 commanded by Kapitänleutnant Ernst Cordes who had had one previous success, sinking British SS *Glendinning* east of the Isle of Wight on 5 July 1944 when in command of U-763, but he and his crew had also shot down two Allied aircraft. Cordes had been awarded the *Iron Cross (1st and 2nd Class)* which were a prerequisite for him being awarded the *German Cross in Gold* medal, for which the criterion was outstanding achievements and bravery in combat but not quite worthy of the even higher ranked Knight's Cross.

The bronze DF Loop artefact in the Shipwreck Centre and Maritime Museum, Figure 2, is from the U-1195. DF stands for (Radio) **Direction Finding** which was used by both sides in the Second World War because almost every vessel or submarine was radio equipped, and an electromagnetic wave, such as transmitted when radio is used, can be detected. The intention was obviously to detect the enemy's position. On the submarine, the detection loop is fixed vertically to the top of the conning tower, turned by a handle, and wired to a receiver which emits an intercepted wave via a speaker. Rotation of the loop is used to establish direction – full details are too extensive to quote here but can be readily found on the internet, such as at the addresses included below. Sometimes, you will find references to Huff-Duff which is an alternative name, meaning High-frequency Direction Finding, introduced during the Second World War, and an example of a Huff-Duff receiver may be viewed in the museum ship HMS *Belfast* in London.



Figure 2: DF Loop from U-1195
Source: Shipwreck Centre and Maritime Museum

In 1945, the U-Boats had less success but U-1195 sunk two vessels. On 21 March 1945, U-1195 sunk the American Liberty cargo armed steamer *John R. Park*, 7,194 tons at 15.18 hours about nine miles from the Lizard. The *John R. Park*, in sand ballast had been the lead ship in the port line of convoy TBC-102 in a heavy fog. The convoy was en route Southampton to Swansea and was then scheduled for America. All 70 on board survived.

U-1195's next and last success was on 6 April 1945. In early morning, the SS *Cuba*, in ballast and in convoy VWP-116 with six destroyer escorts from Le Havre to Southampton, was struck by a single torpedo from U-1195. The return to Southampton meant that the ship, apart from the master J, Callioce and his 222 crew, was carrying only 42 passengers, being 29 gunners, 10 army staff and three signallers and was not packed with troops that would have been on board

if sailing in the opposite direction. One crew member died in the blast; all others survived, being picked up by HMCS *Nene*, a River-Class frigate launched in December 1942 by Smiths Dock Co, Middlesbrough, temporarily commissioned on 4 June 1944 from the Royal Navy into the Canadian Royal Navy, and returned to the Royal Navy by 11 June 1945.



Figure 3: Geophysical survey image showing the wreck of the U-1195 on the seabed.

Source: Contains public sector information, licenced under the Open Government Licence v2.0, from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

The **SS Cuba** was a steel hulled passenger launched by Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd., at their Neptune Yard at Low Walker, Tyneside on 20 November 1922 and completed five months later for Cie Générale Transatlantique, of St Nazaire. It was a large ship, 145.1m long with 18.99m beam, 10.7m deep, and rated at 11,337grt and 6,326nrt, built for the West Indies and Central America mail and passenger trade, Figure 4. It had four decks besides a promenade deck, a boat deck and navigation deck. There were 280 luxurious staterooms for 1st class passengers on the shade and awning decks. Fitted from the outset with wireless telegraphy, it included a combination of steel and collapsible lifeboats and electrical boat hoists. There was steam steering gear, two steam capstans and 10 electric cargo winches. It was provided with six boilers, four steam turbines by the shipbuilder, and reduction geared driving two screws at up to 15.5 knots.

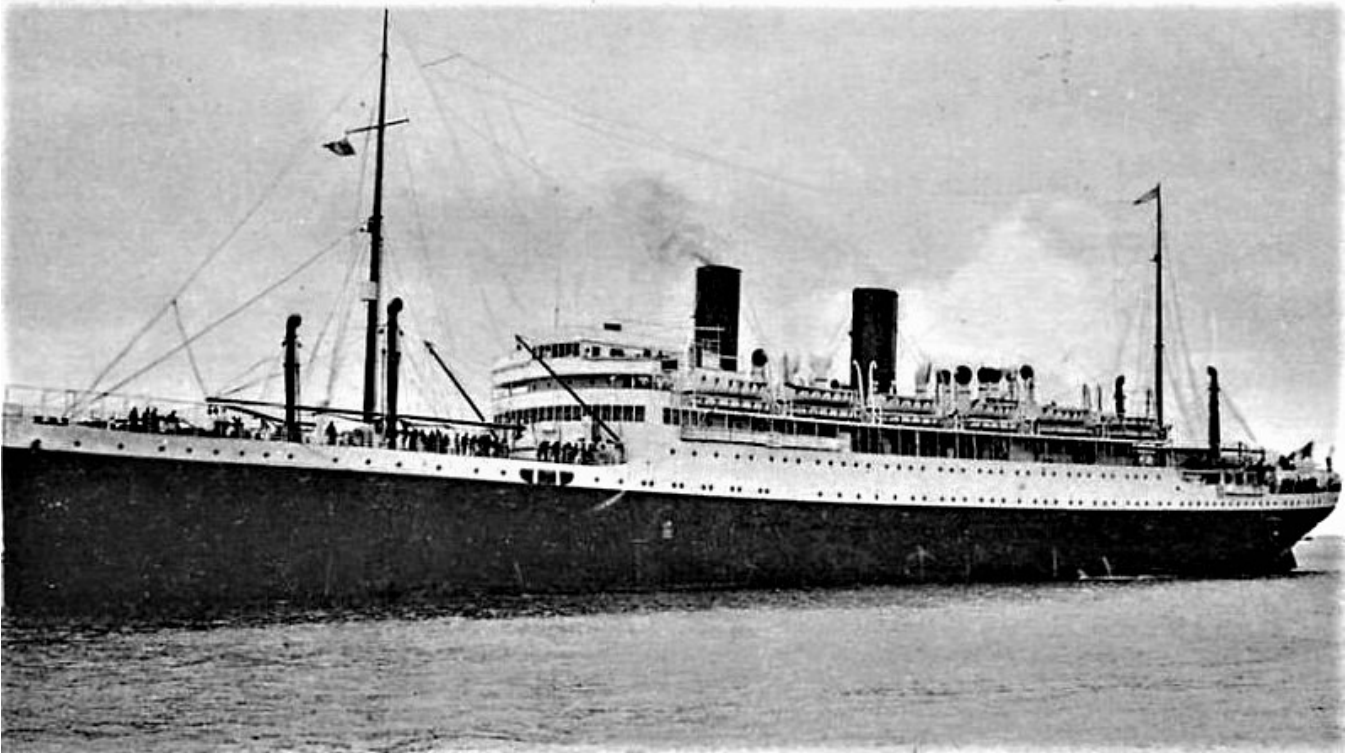


Figure 4: SS Cuba 1923

Source: <http://www.tynebuiltships.co.uk/C-Ships/cuba1923.html>

Leaving Martinique with 1,258 passengers for Casablanca, the *Cuba* was captured on 31 October 1940 by the armed merchant cruiser HMS *Moretown* and transferred to the Ministry of War Transport, managed by the Cunard White Star line. In 1941, it was converted to a troop transport.

SS *Cuba* was sunk by a torpedo from U-1195, about four miles south of the Nab Tower, the wreck is orientated 065/245 degrees at a depth of about 32m on a mud and sand seabed. In 1959, the wreck was dispersed by the Royal Navy. A 1988 survey confirmed that the wreck was well broken up, with twisted girders, steel plates and other wreckage. In 2007, despite salvage and dispersal, the wreck was still standing upright with a 2m scour to the north-east and with

debris spread over a 165m area. Over the years, salvaged artefacts include an anchor, valve wheel, porthole, a lamp and a pump.

The U-1195 was sunk that same day south of Spithead Roads by HMS *Watchman* deploying a "hedgehog" anti-submarine mortar and depth charges, discussed below.

The wreck of U-1195 is a popular dive site lying about 34 metres deep; there are at least five diver videos from the wreck online, (search U-1195 on YouTube). Some of these are rather murky due to the tidal currents, but nevertheless interesting with the damage clearly shown.



Figure 5: Newspaper Article - Martin Woodward

Hanging in the Shipwreck Centre and Maritime Museum is this newspaper article, Figure 5, from the late 1980's by Martin Woodward which covers the loss of SS *Cuba*, the U-1195, and the part played by HMS *Watchman*. But it also relates the return of two survivors from the U-1195 to the area of the wreck and touches on the camaraderie between submariners from different sides.

HMS *Watchman* had been launched by John Brown & Co. Ltd. of Clydebank on 1 December 1917 and completed six weeks later as a "W" Class Royal Navy destroyer, assigned with pennant number G23. It was steel hulled, 95.1m long with 8.99m beam and with a draught of 3.2m, it displaced 1,100 tons. Power was provided by 2 x shaft Brown-Curtis single reduction geared turbines, 3 Yarrow boilers, oil fired, rated at 27,000shp giving 34 knots. With up to 370 tons of oil, its range was 3,500 nautical miles at 15 knots or 900 nautical miles at 32 knots. Based at Scapa Flow for the remainder of the First World War, it was assigned with pennant number G09 in April 1918, then reassigned with D26 between the wars. But in March 1919, it with HMS *Velox*, visited Liverpool participating in its Freedom of the City celebrations in honour of Admiral Sir David Beatty, Commander of the Grand Fleet and then to Preston for five days to acknowledge the work of the Vegetable Products Committee in providing fresh fruit and vegetables to the Royal Navy during the First World War, and during this visit, 50,000 people reportedly visited the ships. The two destroyers then returned to Scapa Flow and *Watchman* later took part in the British campaign against Bolshevik forces in the Baltic Sea during 1919, seeing action against Russian warships. Assignments with the Atlantic Fleet in 1921 were followed by patrols off the Irish coast during the civil war there. *Watchman* was then decommissioned into the Reserve Fleet.

As part of the Reserve Fleet, *Watchman* visited Plymouth during Plymouth Navy Week, and there, visitors were able to watch how depth charges were fired from *Watchman*. In June of 1930, four destroyers including *Watchman* visited Swansea with the public allowed to visit the ships. The *Hampshire Telegraph* of 22 April 1932 reported that the *Watchman* had won the

Home Fleet bread-making competition for ships without bakeries in which the ships' galleys are used, Petty Officer Cook G.E. Leythorne's bread prevailing, and later that year, in October, *Watchman* visited Dundee, the public again being allowed to go onboard. The *Sussex Agricultural Express* of 19 January 1934 reported on an incident whereby HMS *Watchman* rescued Flying Officer A.N. Spottiswood, who had been washed overboard from the Aircraft Carrier *Furious* in heavy seas in the Bay of Biscay.

HMS *Watchman* was recommissioned in May 1939 and a detailed service history through to May 1945 when it was withdrawn from active service is available online at <http://www.naval-history.net/xGM-Chrono-10DD-09VW-Watchman.htm>



Figure 6: HMS Watchman Anchored in Plymouth Sound. c.1939

Source:

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205120880>

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During the Second World War, HMS *Watchman*, Figure 6, won battle honours for service in the Atlantic during 1940-41, at Normandy in 1944, in the Arctic in 1944 and in the English Channel during 1944-45. While at Gibraltar in May 1940, its pennant number for visual signalling purposes was changed to I26 to conform with changes made to all Royal Navy ships. During May to July 1943, *Watchman* underwent a refit when it was fitted with the *Ahead Throwing Anti-submarine weapon* "Hedgehog". A convoy escort since 1939, in August 1943,

the destroyer was converted to a Long-Range Escort with revised armament comprising the Hedgehog, 2x 4" guns, 1x3" gun and 2x2pdrs. The original armament had included guns but also 6 x 21" torpedo tubes arranged in two banks of three.

The Hedgehog, Figure 7, was developed by the Royal Navy. It fired up to 24 spigot mortars ahead of a ship or submarine and was fitted with a contact fuse, so hitting, for example, a submarine's hull caused an immediate explosion, unlike depth charges which were pressure activated. Nick Mead was the 1st Lieutenant on *Watchman* keeping watch when *Cuba* was attacked and he immediately counter-attacked using Hedgehog and reportedly sank U-1195 at the first pass of the attack, supplementing the attack with depth charges. This was one of the last sinkings of U-Boats of the war. Mead was due to go on leave that same day and he travelled to London on the same



Figure 7: Display Mk5 Hedgehog Launcher

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortar_\(weapon\)#/media/File:A_hedgehog_launcher_on_display.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortar_(weapon)#/media/File:A_hedgehog_launcher_on_display.jpg)

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train as the 18 survivors of U-1195, and was later awarded a bar to his DSC. There were 32 fatalities, including Commander Cordes, from U-1195.

The Citizen of 26 January 1945 reported that HMS *Watchman* was "one of the oldest destroyers at sea today and had just completed a fine record of 200,000 miles steamed in this war alone and has several veterans of the last war serving onboard".

HMS *Watchman*, withdrawn from service in May 1945 after VE Day, was sold to T.W. Ward on 23 July 1945 for breaking up.

Direction Finding websites – typically at:

- <https://www.uboa.net/articles/id/51> and
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Direction_finding and
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-frequency_direction_finding