
Subject: World's first, and last submersible Aircraftcarrier.
Posted by [KIRBY098](#) on Wed, 10 Mar 2004 20:53:37 GMT
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British M2:

History

The Royal Navy's Monitor class submarines were constructed as WW1 was drawing to a close. With the exception of the M1 class completed in April 1918, they never engaged in military action. The Monitor class was unusual in that in addition to torpedoes, their main armament was a monster gun weighing 60 tons with a 12-inch bore positioned in front of the conning tower. This gun could elevate to 20 degrees, depress to -5 degrees and train left or right by 15 degrees. Their modus operandi was to search for an enemy vessel at a periscope depth of 30 feet and with a suitable target in view, line up on the target with the gun trained at the appropriate angle. With only the last 6 feet of the barrel showing above the surface, the gun was fired and the submarine would dive to a 'safe' depth.

The M2, M3 and M4 were completed during 1919 - 1920 and with the Washington Disarmament Treaty of 1920 stating that no submarine could have a gun larger than an 8 inch; the M2 and M3 had their guns removed. The M3 was converted to a very successful experimental mine layer carrying 100 mines in a free flooding casing bolted to the deck that laid them over the stern by means of a conveyer belt. The M4 had the least illustrious career of the class in that with construction on her cancelled during the Armistice, she found herself surplus to requirements. For some reason she was completed anyway and launched successfully down the slipway; whereupon she immediately did an about turn back to the builders yard to be hoisted out and cut up for scrap.

The M2 was also converted to something experimental as her sister the M3 - the construction of a watertight hanger housing a two-seater biplane made it the worlds first and still the only submersible aircraft carrier. The spotter plane was the brainchild of submarine commander Sir Max Horton who was convinced that future power in offensive maritime strategy would lie in submarines and planes, not ships. He petitioned the top brass to combine the two, which they agreed to by building the hanger on the portion of deck that the gun once lay. The small, single prop Parnall Peto seaplane had specially designed folding wings in order to squeeze into the hanger, and was launched by a compressed air catapult along a short length of track. The theory was that the plane would fly around looking for enemy ships, note their position, and then land (on floats) as near to the submarine as possible. A winch attached to the top of the hanger would haul it back onto its rails where it was then slid back in and two sets of watertight doors closed behind it. The submarine would then dive on a course to meet said ships and finish the job with its 8 torpedoes.

The crew was proud of the speed in which they could surface and launch the plane and were constantly trying to break their 12 minute record. It was during exercises in the English Channel on the morning of January 26th 1932 that she dived and never came up again.

She was found 8 days later sitting upright and intact by Navy hardhat divers who reported that both hanger doors were open as well as the 21-inch hatch that connected the hanger to the

submarine. Entangled in the wreckage of the plane which had crumpled and been pushed to the back of the hanger by tons of incoming water were the bodies of aircraft technician Leslie Gregory and Leading Seaman Albert Jacobs. The rest of the 58 crew had drowned inside where their remains rest to this day.

It is thought that in trying to improve their record, the hanger doors were opened a few seconds too early in anticipation of breaking the surface. If the access hatch had been closed after the two crewmen preparing the plane for launching had entered the hanger, the remaining crew would have survived. A salvage operation immediately commenced but was called off just before Christmas after 11 months of intense effort by 26 divers logging 1500 dives.

Source: deeperblue.net
