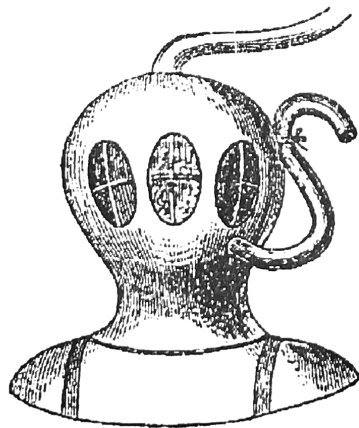


Proceedings
of the
Eleventh Annual Conference
of the
Historical Diving Society



Liverpool, 2001

Cmdr. IAN FRASER, VC, DSC, RNRtd.)

Attack on the *Takao*, Singapore, in 1945

Introduction by Nick Baker:

It is not only a great pleasure to introduce Ian Fraser, but a very great honour as well. He is here today to talk about the attack that he commanded on the Japanese cruiser Takao, in Singapore fifty-seven years ago. Yet there is a great deal more to Ian Fraser's diving history, and to his contribution to diving history, than that.

Shortly after the war he formed Universal Divers, one of the first (if not the first) modern UK diving companies. Using lightweight frogman apparatus, his 'go anywhere, do anything' business developed entirely new areas of underwater contracting. In fact so much so that by the 1970s, when North Sea gas and oil exploration began, the company was well placed to take full advantage. It is a pity in many ways that we don't have time to hear him talk about that aspect of his life as well.

However, we are here today to hear Ian Fraser talk about the attack on the Takao, but before I invite him to speak, I think there are three important points that should be made. Firstly, the difficulties and dangers of the operation were themselves overshadowed by the fact that the Japanese had made it clear that allied servicemen carrying out covert underwater operations against them, if caught, would be executed. The Takao attack was part of a massive effort to defeat a ruthless and unforgiving enemy. We should listen very carefully to Ian Fraser's words today, illustrating, as they will do, the levels of courage, commitment, and above all steadfastness which are required by democracies in the face of violent assault. Secondly, the British have, over the past twenty to thirty years, developed a reluctance to celebrate the victories of World War II. We moan—no, we whinge—that the Americans make films such as 'Saving Private Ryan' or television series such as 'Band of Brothers'. Well, we Brits should stop moaning, and we should start making films about things such as Ian Fraser's attack on the Takao. And finally, there is another aspect of British reluctance which is relevant here. As anyone who has ever researched British wartime history will know, the authorities' reluctance to award medals for gallantry in the field is legendary. However, this means that those who do receive awards are especially deserving of them. The man who is about to speak holds the highest combat honour that it is possible to receive in Her Majesty's Forces. You do not get the Victoria Cross for hanging around at the back. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a special welcome to Ian Fraser.

Good morning, or good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. It's just on 12 o'clock, so I wasn't quite sure which half of the day I'd use for my introduction.

I've been asked by the Society today to talk to you about something that happened the best part of 56 years ago. I mean—it's so long ago that I hardly remember it, so I just hope that I can keep you entertained for the thirty-odd minutes that I've been told to entertain you for.

First of all, about my own private life: I was educated on board the merchant navy training ship, H.M.S. *Conway*, which used to be anchored in the Mersey here, off ~~Rough~~ ^{Rough} I spent two years there and then went to sea in Blue Star Line Limited, Lord Vestey's marine fleet, which carried frozen and chilled meats from Australia and the Argentine back to the U.K. And during that time I was a cadet in the Royal Naval Reserve. In July 1939 I joined the Royal Navy, H.M.S. *Royal Oak*, as it so happened, to do my four months training as a midshipman, with a view to eventually going on and increasing my rank in that branch of the service. As you all know, the war broke out on 3 September 1939, and by that time I had been transferred from H.M.S. *Royal Oak* (thank God!), to a destroyer. The *Royal Oak* was eventually sunk in Scapa Flow by a German U-boat, captained by Captain Von Prien. It was a very wonderful feat that he carried out, but unfortunately we lost a great battleship. I persevered on destroyers on North Atlantic convoys for a long, long time, in fact it was quite boring work. We sort of went to sea, escorted the convoys wherever it was going, and then we came back again, escorting another inward bound convoy. So I volunteered for submarines.

At that time there was quite a shortage of officers in submarines and it didn't take much persuasion for the Admiralty to transfer me from a destroyer to the submarine service. I served in submarines in the Mediterranean, working in the 10th Flotilla in Malta for about ten months, during which time I was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. This was because we sank a U-boat. I had a magnificent captain, in fact all my career in the Navy I served with really wonderful captains. They were all very brave men and they knew

exactly what they were doing. This particular U-boat was some 4,000-5,000 yards away on the surface going somewhere when the captain fired five torpedoes and three of them actually hit the submarine. We surfaced and we picked up one member of the crew, who was still alive, a young midshipman, and the first thing that he said to the captain was: "Which side did you attack the submarine?"

And the captain said: "It was your port side".

And he said: "Well, thank goodness for that because I was the starboard lookout."

The submarine life was another chapter of my life which I could talk about for hours, but eventually I was in Algiers. We'd come back from this successful patrol after sinking the U-boat, and we had a rather, I was going to say a gay party, but rather a lively party in the wardroom where we played the discus with rather large ashtray. And I broke a bone in my foot by dropping one, so I missed the next patrol. The *Sabib* was sunk on that patrol—all the crew were taken prisoner of war, as it so happened. So I had had two near misses.

Then I came home, I was in hospital at Seaforth here in Liverpool, and I got married. Whether that was a good thing or not, I don't know. After all these years, it probably was a good thing.

I was made First Lieutenant of an old H-class submarine. These submarines were built at the end of the 1914-1918 War and were used specifically for training submariners, and for training surface ships to detect and to attack submarines. And I was back in Londonderry again. It was all very well being in Londonderry; you lived on chicken almost every day of your life, but there was plenty of food and plenty to do. But the life at sea again was not very interesting, and a signal came from the Admiralty asking for two volunteers for special and hazardous service. It didn't specify what the service was, it just said that. A Sub-Lieutenant, David Carey, who was a great friend of mine, and I both decided to volunteer, and eventually we finished up on Glasgow station, where I met him, and I said: "Do you know what we're doing, David?"

He said: "Yes, Ian, you're going to be the skipper of one of these human torpedoes that go under the water and you sit in it in a diving suit."

I said: "No, that's not true. I'm married, and I'm sure they wouldn't put a married man in that sort of thing."

However, it wasn't so. I was immediately made captain of an X-craft or, as we called them, midget submarines. Now these little vessels, a picture of one is up there on the board, were 53 ft. long and they had a diameter of about 6 ft. I had a crew of four, although

my total crew were twelve. I had four who would be in the submarine during the tow, during the passage from wherever we were based to the operational area. In the case of the *Tirpitz* attack they were towed from the north of Scotland way over to Norway, something over 1,000 miles. In my case, we were towed from Labuan in Borneo a distance of about 800 miles to the Horsburgh Light at the entrance to the Malacca Straits in Singapore.

The submarine itself had a range of about 1200 miles. It had a Gardiner 4LK diesel engine which was connected by a clutch to an electric motor, which was connected again by a clutch to the propeller, so it could run on the engine on the surface at 6.5 knots, for just over 1,000 miles. The distance you went dived didn't really matter, you never tried to go big distances or long distances. Basically the use of the engine was, if we got lost or if we failed to get picked up by our towing submarine, we at least had enough power to get somewhere where we would be reasonably safe. (Slide.) The thing sticking up in middle is the periscope, the thing sticking up forward of that is the induction pipe, down which, when we were on the surface, the air was sucked down so that the engine could run properly. When we dived it was lowered, and the thing sticking up at the back is a magnetic compass. I don't know why in these drawings they always put that into it because nobody ever used it, and I never even saw it raised in any of the X-craft that I worked with. (Slide.) This little thing here is another periscope but it was at the top of the submarine's periscope and covered a much larger area, but could only really be used underwater to watch what the diver was doing. The periscope itself was about 10ft. long (the periscope depth of an X-craft was about 10 ft.), and at the top it was about the diameter of a rather thick pen. So you can see how small it was, and the chances of it being seen when you were going through the water were very small. On the side of the X-craft are two containers (you can see the thing with six little portholes is a container), and they either contained two tons of amatol, a very high explosive, or in my case I had one that was full of amatol and the one on the other side carried six limpet mines. We also had two limpet mines in the casing which runs along the top. All these explosives had a fuse, so that once you'd pulled the pin out of the limpet mines or pushed it off the side in the case of the side cargo, you were then given a period in which to get away before anything happened. The period was anything—you could set the period. In my case we set it for six hours, which was the maximum. I thought that was a safe way to do it. Inside the explosive charges were two needle-like

objects, with a sleeve over them, and once the cargo had been set, the pins pulled out, the sleeve moved slowly backwards until such time as the two pins were just touching each other. Then if anybody had come down and dislodged them or banged them, the pins fell apart, the thing blew up, and all the others followed suit. This was in case, after we'd got away, the Japanese divers had gone down to pull these things off and tried to recover them. So that was the cargo we had.

Then we went and had a wonderful cruise from Glasgow to Borneo. We left Glasgow in January 1945, sailed down to the Canary Islands, across the Atlantic to the Panama Canal, through the Panama Canal and up to an American submarine rest camp. We were not allowed ashore at any of these places; we did go to Los Angeles and all the girls were up in the window saying: "Are you coming ashore tonight, Jack?" You know, the sailors were all down below, biting their fingers because of course nobody was allowed off the boat. And then eventually down to Sydney in Australia.

Now it was getting towards the end of the war, you will appreciate that, and the Americans had no use for midget submarines. They thought they'd got the war virtually tied up, but Captain Fell who was the captain of the depot ship, H.M.S. *Bonaventure*, was determined, to the best of his ability, to get us all killed. So he spent days flying all over the Pacific to different places looking for a job for us to do, and eventually the Americans produced two jobs, needing four X-craft. One was to attack submarine cables (telephone cables), which ran between Hong Kong and Singapore, and Hong Kong and Saigon, and to cut them with a hydraulic cutter. And the other jobs were to attack two Japanese cruisers, they call them heavy cruisers, of the Atago class. They were the *Myoko* and the one I had to attack, the *Takao*. Both these cruisers were of the same size and they were lying on the north side of Singapore Island.

(Slide) That is the interior of the submarine, looking aft. That's the engine room beyond that because it was all a mass of pipes. The only food we carried was cookable in a glue pot. We had an ordinary glue pot where we had hot water underneath it, and we used to put all this mash into it and mash it all up and that was our food, but of course we could make tea and coffee and lemonade and eat our Benzedrine pills and all the other things we had to eat. I never slept in an X-craft, believe it or not, not in the whole time I was in them, which was over a year and a half, I never actually slept on board one. That is the periscope inside the X-craft with the C.O. looking through it. I could stand up in the middle. I was 5ft. 4in., so I could stand up and

work the periscope, but there were people who were 6ft. tall and of course they were down on their knees most of the time. (Slide.) That's the position of the depth keeper, who was in most cases the First Lieutenant. He sat there, and he had one wheel for altering the depth using the hydroplane, and the other wheel for controlling the motor at whatever speed he wanted to control it. This wheel here on the side is the wheel that we used for releasing containers for the magnetic mines or the big side cargo, when we eventually came to release them. (Slide.) That is one of the modern X-craft, the XEs. On the *Tirpitz* operation, they sent six X-craft after the *Tirpitz*, which was lying way up in the Norwegian fjords, and all six of them were lost. None of them came back. Godfrey Place and Donald Cameron both managed to get underneath the *Tirpitz* and they dropped their side cargoes (they didn't carry any limpet mines), but they had to abandon their boats, so that this meant that the 12th Submarine Flotilla suddenly lost all its key personnel. There were only about another three or four training craft available and that's why we were brought in from larger submarines. These were the new XE-craft which were somewhat better. They had an air conditioning plant inside them; they had a slightly greater speed, and they had more room for carrying the charges. (Slide.) That's just the stern of it showing the propeller and the after hydroplane. (These photographs were very kindly sent to me by Reg Vallintine. I've never seen them before, but they have come in very helpful.) That's one of the old X-craft—you can see the break in the casing, and the C.O. standing up by the periscope there. On the X-craft, on either side, we had antennae which were raised hydraulically, you just switched a switch and they came up. They had a spring on the top of them, so when you got underneath the ship, you came up underneath it, put the antennae up and it told you the right distance off for the diver to get out.

Now we come to the important part. Eventually Captain Fell came up with these various attacks to be carried out, and we developed a hydraulic cutter (the submarine went to the place where the cables were marked—they were all on charts). The diver lowered a grapnel over the side, and the submarine then went ahead very, very slowly until it got caught in something. The diver would then go out, examine it, and in the case of both the submarines that did this job, they found the cable. They put the hydraulic cutter on it, cut it, and got back into the submarine again. And this is only in depths down to about 40ft. We had already lost two divers. I'd lost my First Lieutenant and my great

friend David Carey. We had been practising this work in the Barrier Reef in a depth of 47ft. and of course oxygen is not really breathable at 47ft., in fact it's highly dangerous. In my case, I was inside the boat and David Carey came up on the casing, gave me the thumbs down sign, which meant that things had gone wrong. I immediately surfaced and he jumped over the side and we never saw him again. So I'd lost my First Lieutenant, and I was out of operations, basically. The next day another of the X-craft was doing the same work in 47ft. of water, and the C.O. went down to cut the cable, and exactly the same thing happened to him. The submarine surfaced, he was on the casing, and he jumped over the side and neither of them was found again. Well, this was about one month before we went on this operation. I took the First Lieutenant and the Chief E.R.A. of the other submarine with me to make one more useful submarine that could do a job, and the other XE5 was just shelved.

The contract that I was given was to attack the *Takao* which had six 8in. guns forward and four 8in. guns aft. It was anchored on the north end of the island of Singapore, near the dockyard, with its stern into the beach. In fact the stern was so well into the beach that they had a gangway down onto the shore, and the bow was pointing straight across to the mainland. The suspected idea was that they were going to be used for anti-aircraft purposes, and for the heavy guns to bombard the British forces as they came down through Malaysia. So they decided that they had to be got rid of. Our operational base was Labuan in Borneo, and H.M.S. *Bonaventure*, the depot ship. She was a fairly new cargo liner, from the Clan Line. And the reason she had been taken over, was because she had two 50 ton derricks, one forward and one aft. The X-craft itself weighed about 27 tons, so they could lift them out and put them in the water and take them out for repairs, and all that sort of thing. We sailed from Sydney, we went to the Philippines for a very short time, and then down to Borneo. *Bonaventure* anchored offshore at Labuan, and we were prepared for the operation.

My actual X-craft crew consisted of twelve people, four people in it going, four people in it coming back, and four people who did the operation. In this case, because the tow was only 800 miles, the same crew did the tow there and back. We left Labuan and travelled the 800 miles to the Horsburgh Light. I was towed by a submarine called H.M.S. *Stygian*, which had a Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Clarabut. We'd been together in destroyers some time previously so it was a reunion in a way.

The passage on the tow was completely— well, nothing happened, it was a quiet little tow all the way down, we never saw anything, we never got molested in any way, and eventually we arrived at the Horsburgh Light. It was about 35 miles from the boom, so we had to do the 35 miles on the surface in the dark. We did a crew change; the tow line was 600 feet long and the method of doing it was for the operational crew to get into a rubber dinghy trailed astern of the large submarine, and to change over the crews. Then the passage crew were hauled back and went and got their rest.

It was a quiet, very calm, moonlit night, no problems at all. We changed over and started on our passage all the way on the surface at 6.5 knots. Now, at 6.5 knots, 35 miles, that's 6-8 hours, and eventually we arrived about there [indicating on the slide], and it was just dawn, beginning to get very light, and we dived. For the next 12 miles we had to proceed under water up the Johore Strait, which is that passageway at the top [of Singapore Island]. There was no way of getting out of it. As you can see, at this end of it there was a causeway built across, with a road and a railway line, and various other things. The Johore Strait is about a mile wide and it took a bit of quite clever navigation to get up there, taking our fixes through this little tiny periscope until we got close to the cruiser. Eventually, I saw the cruiser in the distance, and that was quite an exciting sight.

I had been, on a previous occasion, on an attack by an X-craft on a floating dock in Norway. The captain of the X-craft had got underneath the floating dock, or thought he had, dropped his explosive charges, and when he came back it was found that there had been a merchant ship anchored quite close to the floating dock, and he had in fact sunk the merchant ship by mistake. I was determined that this wasn't going to happen, so I let each one of my crew have a look through the periscope to see the *Takao*, and to see the thing that they were going to attack.

Now to carry out the attack, what we did: looking through the periscope there are angled measures, little lines across to give the angles in degrees, and we knew the height of the funnel above the waterline, so I would just tell Leading Seaman Magennis, who was my diver, the angle is 5 degrees, for argument's sake, and he would then put it onto a slide rule, and say we were 2,000 yards away, and so on until we were close enough. Then when we were about 300 or 400 yards away we went deep—lowered the periscope, went deep, and we started the attack. Unfortunately the Johore Strait is not very deep anyway, at its deepest I think it is something like 60ft., but the *Takao* being anchored so close

to the shore, the stern of the *Takao* was almost aground—I mean it must have been, because they had this gangway. Under the bow was about 10ft. of water, so there was no way that in my midget submarine I could get under the bow or under the stern. But there was, according to the Admiralty chart, a depression in the bed of the Johore Strait giving me 30ft. underneath it, which I had to get into. So we started the first run in, on the first attack, as we call it, and we finished up with an almighty bang right on the bow of the *Takao*, because we hadn't been able to go deep enough. So I had to go astern, do a big circle, come in, and start again. And of course the steering,—Chief E.R.A. Charlie Reid was the helmsman, and he had to be very, very accurate—a half a degree off course and we'd have missed again. But the second time, we ended up on the bottom, underneath the cruiser. There was hardly any water there at all, in fact there was so little water that when Magennis tried to get out to place his limpet mines he couldn't open the hatch properly, he could only open it about three-quarters of the way. We got under it eventually, congratulated ourselves, and the water was as clear as a bell. I could see everything, see the bottom in both directions, not right to the bow, right to the stern, but I could see about 40-50ft. in both directions. We got Magennis dressed in his diving suit and this was one of the old frogman suits that we had, with oxygen breathing apparatus, and out he got through the hatch. In the middle of the submarine is what we call a wet and dry compartment, which is also the toilet, but it was the place where the diver got in (it was surrounded by No. 2 main ballast tank), opened the necessary valves, started to pump and the water was pumped from No.2 main ballast tank into the wet and dry compartment so that the submarine didn't suddenly get heavy or suddenly get light. He got in there, flooded it up, climbed out (because I was watching him through this night periscope that I showed you), and off he went, coming back to pick up a limpet mine. Now limpet mines were about 3.5 feet long, 2.5 feet wide and about 18in. deep, so they were quite hefty things, but they weren't heavy of course, they'd got buoyancy tanks in them. He carried these forward for a distance, and then he had reach into them, pull up the magnet, turn it over, and stick it on. But unfortunately the bottom of the *Takao*, which had been there for some months, was covered in barnacles, seaweed, all sorts of marine growth, and he spent ages scrubbing it all off so that these magnets would stick. But even when they did, the shape of the hull of the *Takao* was such that they started to move up—the magnets wouldn't hold. So he had to put one limpet mine on

one side of the keel and another limpet mine on the other side of the keel and anchor them together with about six foot of rope as well. He placed four limpet mines up towards the bow and two limpet mines towards the stern.

All this time his breathing apparatus was leaking, there was a little steady stream of bubbles coming from his valve. Now, that little stream of bubbles was in 30 feet of water—they were little tiny things—but by the time they got to the surface, of course, they had expanded. I hope there was nobody looking over the side and seeing all those bubbles coming out. They will think there's some sort of a queer fish down there. Nevertheless he did his job, he stuck on all his limpet mines and he got back in.

Magennis was a Leading Seaman. In my estimation he was a wonderful chap, certainly one of the most marvellous and certainly one of the bravest people I've ever come across over the whole operation. With a submarine crew of that size, it's not one man that does the job, there are four of you, and unless you all do your job to perfection, and unless you all like each other and get on well together, you never make a success of any of it. We got on very well indeed, in fact I was very grateful that Leading Seaman Magennis got a VC for his operation. My Chief E.R.A., Charlie Reid, got a medal which I think is one of the most wonderful medals for the Royal Navy, which was the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, and "Kiwi" Smith, who was a New Zealander who eventually became Hydrographer to the New Zealand Navy, got a DSO. So we were all well and truly rewarded. I say that because my wife says I never mention the other people, so I'm glad I have.

But to get back to the attack. The only thing I had to do now was to release the two tons of explosives. So we turned the first wheel, which opened up a Kingston valve to let water into it and makes it heavy, and then we worked the middle wheel which pushed it off, and that fell away nicely. Then we did it to the other one on the other side which held the limpet mine but that unfortunately didn't fall off. It stayed there, which made food for thought, you know—how do we get rid of the thing? The struggle was to get out from underneath the *Takao*—the tide was going down incidentally, because we were on a ebb tide. The rise and fall is not very much in the Johore Strait, probably 3 or 4ft., but nevertheless this damn battleship had sunk down a bit and we were absolutely stuck, we could neither—I could see the hull up here, and I could see we weren't moving. It took about a half an hour or so full ahead,

full astern, flood keel, blow tubes (you could blow air out of the bottom of the tubes) before we eventually started to move, and we came up the slope, physically up the slope to the other side and onto the sea bed with this limpet mine carrier still stuck on our side. Well, you can imagine we could never have got back to the boom being lopsided with this heavy weight on our right hand side and nothing on our left hand side. So I was going to go out and do it myself, and then thought better of it, and suggested to Mick he might like to go out again. So Magennis, without any trouble at all, said: "It's my job, Sir, I'll do it." And out he went. At this time we must have been lying about 40 or 50 ft. away from the side of the *Takao*, in clear water with a couple of submarines about 15ft. below the surface. He got out, and got a big spanner and levered away at the thing, and eventually it fell off, but it fell on top of him. Anyway he was of course in his frog suit and he swam over the top of it and came back in. When he was back in, that was the end as far as we were concerned—there was nothing else we could do.

There was no point in trying to go for the other cruiser which was lying further up, because Jack Smart was supposed to be doing that, so we eventually started on our way back, and again it was a question of navigation down the Johore Strait. I put the periscope up on one occasion to take a sight, and swung around, and there alongside us practically, in fact it can't have been more than 20ft. away, was a Japanese liberty boat full of sailors going ashore. It was so close I could see one of them with his hand dangling over the side. You have never seen a periscope come down so quickly. I helped it down by pushing on the handles.

The tour down the Straits was quite uneventful. At the entrance to the Johore Strait, of course, there is the submarine boom, which is the old British boom, which is a big wire net hanging down from buoys, and in which they can open the gate and close the gate. If it hadn't been open, Magennis would have had to go out again, and with his hydraulic cutter he would have had to cut a section out of it and let the X-craft through. However, he didn't have to go out—the gate was open on the way out. Round about seven or eight o'clock, when it was dark, we surfaced, and made our way back on main engine.

On the way in and on the way out in the Johore Strait there were minefields, and we were told to be very careful about these mines. I don't quite know how you are careful about a minefield, you don't exactly see it and you don't know it's there, but I took the point of view that the X-craft only drew about 6 ft. of water on the surface, and therefore these mines would be set at about

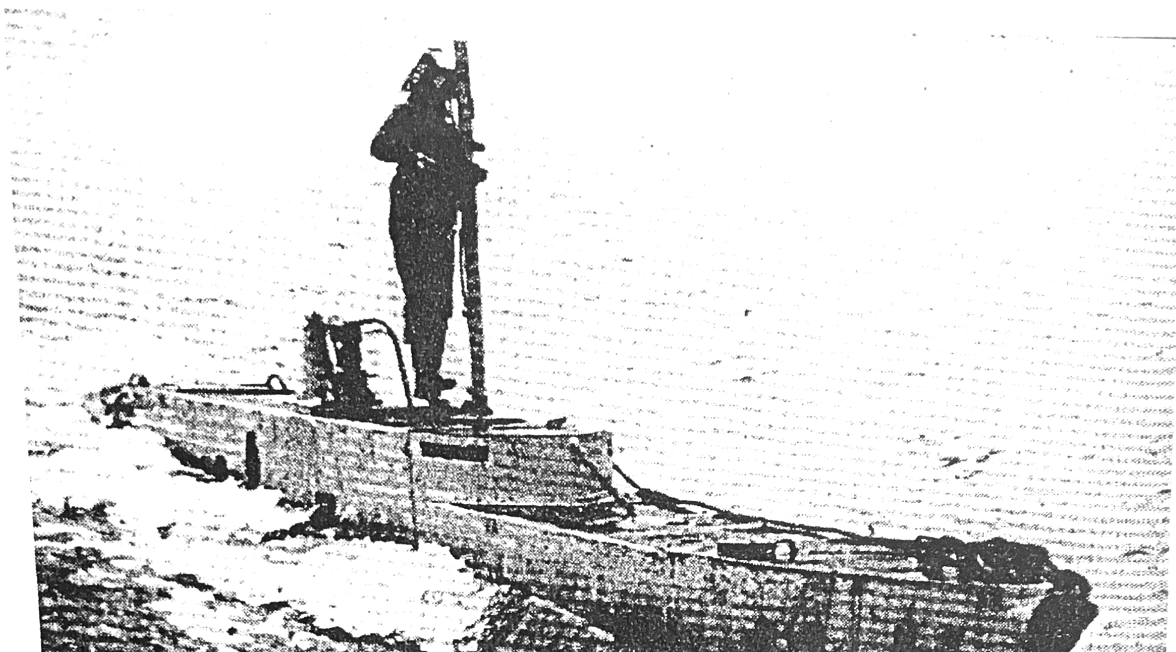
18-20ft. down and we would go over the top of them. However, we didn't have anything to do with them.

The limpet mines were due to go off at 9.30 that night—we had started our attack at three o'clock and finished it by about 4.30. At about 9.15 I stopped the engine, got all of us on the casing with a cup of tea, and we all looked back to Singapore to see the almighty explosion that was about to happen. At 9.30 almost exactly there were some very big explosions over Singapore Island, very big explosions, and we were all very, very happy. The Benzadrine was beginning to wear off and we were all beginning to feel a bit tired, but that gave us new life, and on we went.

Eventually we got to the Horsburgh Light where the big submarine was due to pick us up for the tow back. Now, we had infra-red lights—I had a pair of binoculars of which one side was a binocular, the other side was a special glass that you could see this infra-red light through. These things were various sizes, and they only had one big one and two small ones, and I in my wisdom had pinched the big one for our submarine. So I saw it, we went alongside it, we didn't bother doing the normal type of crew change. We put in the towing rod, connected up the tow, and the four passage crew jumped on to the X-craft from the casing and we jumped on to the casing of the large submarine. And that was that. We set the tow again and we went back to Labuan.

We arrived about four days later on board the depot ship *Bonaventure*. Captain Fell got me up into his cabin, he got all the charts and aerial photographs that had been taken and he said: "Well done, Ian, that was a marvellous job, but it hasn't sunk. I am afraid you'll have to go back again." You know, you get a funny sort of attitude towards senior officers sometimes in the Navy. I felt like saying to him "Well, Captain Fell, with due deference, this ship was lying in about 10 feet of water and there is no way it ever would sink. It might sit on the bottom, and that's the end of it." However, there it was, we had to go back again. So we immediately started fuelling up again and getting everything ready, and four days later we got on board the submarine, we connected the tow and we were just on our way when the whole operation was cancelled, and we were called back on board the depot ship.

We were sitting on board the depot ship watching a film that last night, when all of a sudden the lights went on, the film stopped, and the captain came out on the bridge and he said: "Gentlemen, I am pleased to tell you that the war is over. The Americans have dropped a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima." Now some people don't like nuclear bombs, but, by God, I love them.



An X.20/25 boat on the surface. From Cdr. Fraser's book *Frogman V.C.* (London, 1957).

And that was that. They'd dropped the nuclear bomb, the war had finished, and we were all due to come home. The *Bonaventure* then went down to Sydney and joined the fleet, training, carrying people and cargoes and things here and there, and the rest of us were put ashore. I had a marvellous job. I was Senior Submarine Officer, Sydney. There were no submarines there, and there were no other officers there, just me, four Wrens and two Petty Officers, two cars,

four motorbikes and a beautiful house with its own private swimming pool. I was there for a couple of months until I was sent for, and I had to be back in England before December 11th to go to the Palace to collect my medal. That really is the end of my story, but I would be very pleased to answer any questions on anything I've left out.

© Ian Fraser 2001