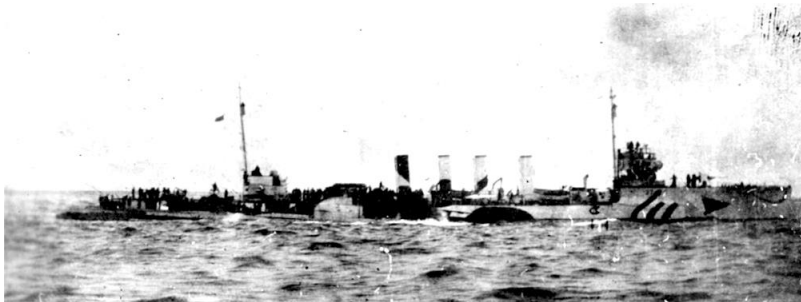


## Crew of U-58 Captured by “Old 37”

*The convoy was as old as war at sea. The convoying of merchantmen protected by men o’war had been repeatedly resorted to from the thirteenth century to, most recently, the Napoleonic wars when, from 1798, it ceased to be a convenience for merchants and their merchantmen and became obligatory. Its efficacy was beyond doubt. Yet by 1914, when commerce was even more essential to the survival of the nation than it had been in 1814, the convoy was discredited in naval policy despite [Winston] Churchill’s recent introduction of a Naval Staff.*

—Richard Hough in *The Great War at Sea 1914-1918*.<sup>1</sup>

Photo 1-1



Destroyer USS *Fanning* (#37) with the depth-charge damaged U-58 alongside her on 17 November 1917—shortly before its crew scuttled the German submarine. Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #NH 54059

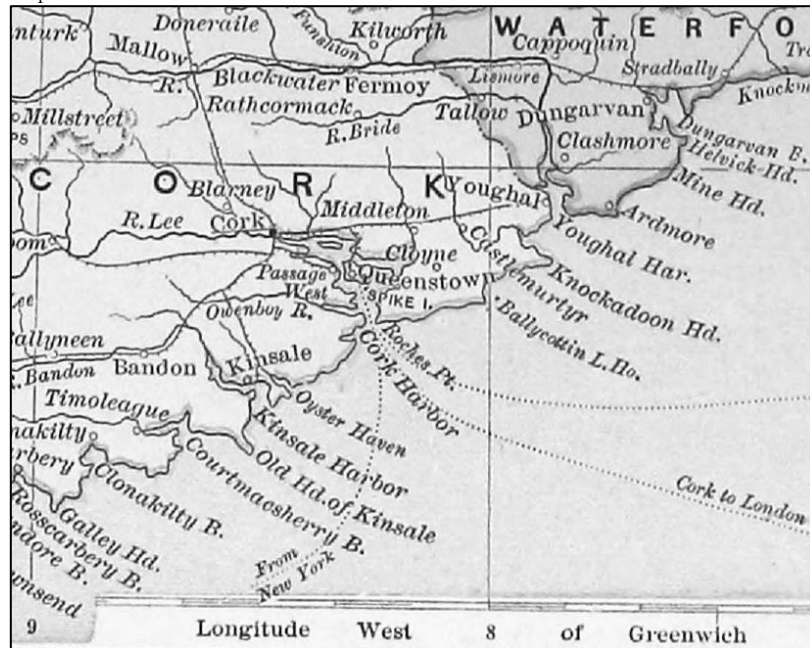
At 1115 on 17 November 1917, eight ships stood out of the harbor at Queenstown (today Cobh), Ireland, as escort for Convoy OQ-20. These were the American destroyers USS *Nicholson* (flagship), *Conyngham*, *Cummings*, *Fanning*, *Jacob Jones*, and *Warrington*; and the British Azalea-class minesweeping sloops HMS *Zinnia* and HMS *Cullist*.<sup>2</sup>

The 1467-ton *Cullist* (built in 1913 as a store carrier, and formerly named *Westphalia* and *Jurassic*) was functioning as a decoy Q-ship, a role involving very dangerous duty. Sadly, she was later torpedoed on 13 February 1918 by the German submarine U-97 and sank within two

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minutes in the Irish Sea, off Drogheda at Dunanet Point. Forty-three members of her crew drowned as a result.<sup>3</sup>

Map 1-1



Queenstown (today Cobh) is on Great Island in Cork Harbor (SE coast of Ireland)  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0a/Map\\_of\\_Ireland.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0a/Map_of_Ireland.jpg)

Map 1-2



Drogheda lies north of Dublin, along the River Boyne about four miles from its mouth  
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0a/Map\\_of\\_Ireland.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0a/Map_of_Ireland.jpg)

The British Admiralty had implemented the use of submarine decoy vessels as a result of the large loss of shipping to German U-boats in the opening months of the war. Recognizing that the U-boats preferred to attack unescorted, older, and smaller vessels by using surface gunfire, thus preserving their torpedoes for larger vessels or warships and extending their sea cruise durations, it was conceived that a vessel, such as a coaster, if provided with a concealed armament, could meet a surfaced submarine on fairly equal terms.<sup>4</sup>

The vessels chosen for this role—codenamed Q-ships by the Admiralty—were comparatively small, ranging in size from 4,000 tons to small sailing ships. They were intended to look poorly maintained and indistinguishable from ordinary merchantmen. When attacked, the Q-ship would allow the U-boat to come as close as possible before raising the White Ensign (flag of the Royal Navy), a requirement of international law, and opening fire. Much has been written about the courage of the crews of these decoy ships, and the scope of this book doesn't allow for their storied service.<sup>5</sup>

### **MERCHANT SHIP CONVOYING A RECENT INITIATIVE**

At the time, a convoy system for merchant shipping had just been put into use. Even then, it was not universally accepted by some leaders in both the U.S. and British navies as an effective solution to protection against submarine attacks. The idea was initially also not embraced by merchant skippers who disliked operating in controlled formations. Once the system was in use and results demonstrated, these objections disappeared as shipping losses to U-boats began to decline. But Queenstown was short of escort vessels, having only thirteen RN coal-burning sloops really available for extended convoy requirements. After they were augmented by long-legged, oil-burning USN destroyers, the system became feasible and was adopted.<sup>6</sup>

The number of escorts assigned to a convoy generally depended on the number of merchant ships and relative value of their cargoes. The commanders of escort groups were U.S. or British as assigned in the operation orders. The meeting rendezvous and routing of a convoy after formation was determined by the eventual destinations of its members. Some merchantmen left along the way to proceed to their objectives; the remaining escorted ships continued together until the convoy reached its destination and broke up, whereupon the escorts returned to their bases.<sup>7</sup>

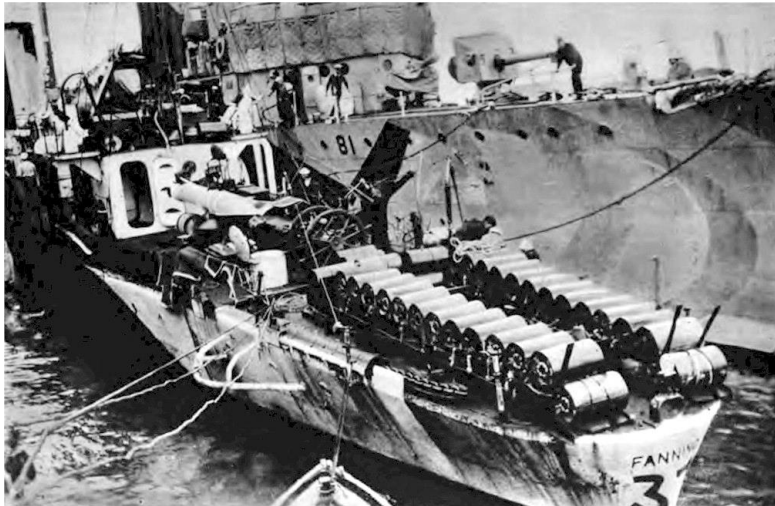
### GERMAN *U-58* LYING IN WAIT OFF HARBOR

Returning to the ships that departed on 17 November 1917, the escort ships, after passing Daunt Light situated south of Cork Head, scouted in force for ten miles from east to west preparatory to the convoy coming out of harbor. The eight merchant vessels that comprised the convoy then headed out of harbor and, when five miles south of Daunt, began to form up in four columns, two ships in each column. The four leading ships and second ships in the three right columns were formed up, and the rear ship of the left column was taking up her position, when at 1610, a sighting was made of a submarine periscope.<sup>8</sup>

Sighted by Coxswain David D. Loomis, USN, renowned for his phenomenal eyesight, who was then the port bridge lookout aboard *Fanning*, the periscope was that of *U-58* under the command of Kptlt. Gustave Amberger. The German submarine had been at sea since 12 November; Ostend and Zeebrugge across the English Channel were the Flanders bases for a majority of the U-boats. From the morning of the 16th, she had lain in wait off Daunt Light in expectation of a convoy sailing, and was then maneuvering to attack SS *Welshman*, the second ship in the second column from the left. It was the submarine's bad luck that Loomis was very alert, considering her periscope was of the finger type and moving very slowly, making it almost indiscernible.<sup>9</sup>

### IMMEDIATE ATTACK BY *FANNING*

Photo 1-2

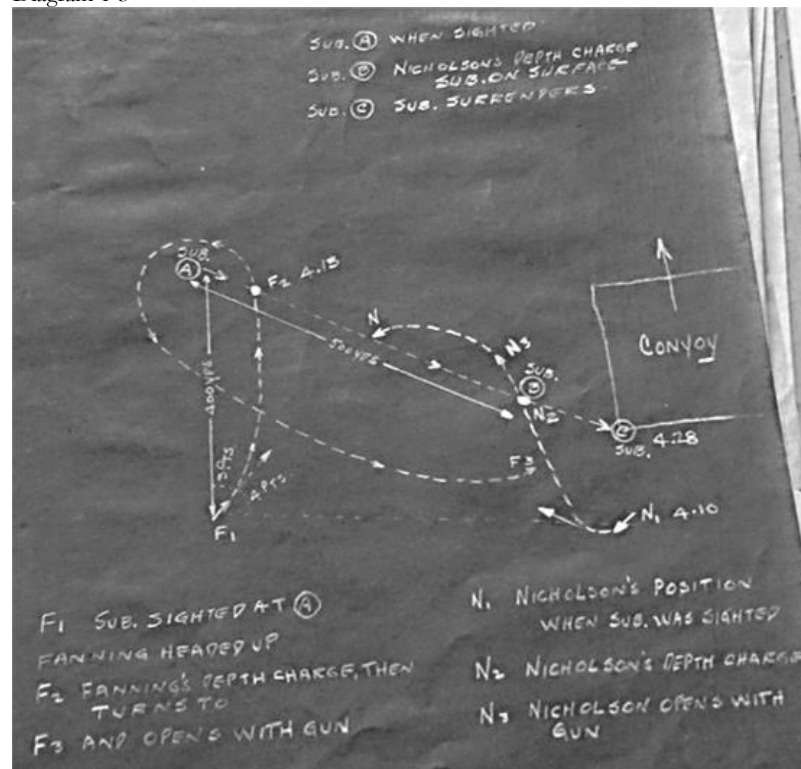


USS *Fanning* (#37) loaded with depth charges, alongside the destroyer *Sigourney* (#81). Photograph is from the book, *United State Navy in World War* (1921).

Lt. Walter O. Henry, USS *Fanning*'s officer of the deck when the submarine was reported fine on her port bow—position (A) on the below diagram—instantly ordered emergency speed. The destroyer was then at position F1, coming left, speed 15 knots, to take up her position 1,000 yards on the rear flank of the convoy.<sup>10</sup>

USS *Nicholson* was broad on *Fanning*'s starboard bow (N1), standing down from ahead to take her position at the rear of the convoy.<sup>11</sup>

Diagram 1-3



USS *Fanning* war diary diagram details U-58 movements relative to that of the convoy, and depth charge attacks made on the enemy submarine by her and the *Nicholson*. Naval History and Heritage Command photograph

Lt. Arthur S. Carpender, *Fanning*'s commanding officer, was quite pleased with his officer of the deck's rapid, and correct actions, noting in an after-action report (see Appendix A):

Lieutenant Henry instantly called for emergency speed, and turned the ship to such heading, that when the Commanding Officer, who was on the Bridge at the time, took over the con [personally began

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giving all engine and rudder orders], the ship was so headed that she was in position to right the rudder, and drop the depth charge in the estimated position desired.<sup>12</sup>

Henry had put the rudder hard left and speed increased to 20 knots, working up to full power. After turning about 30 degrees to port, the rudder was put amidships to position the ship for a depth charge attack. The attack was made at 1613 slightly ahead of the estimated position of the submarine, whose periscope had disappeared while *Fanning* was in the port turn. After dropping a depth charge, Carpenter ordered left full rudder, and kept *Fanning* in a port turn until she was on a nearly parallel course to that of the submarine.<sup>13</sup>

*Nicholson*, under command of the destroyer division senior officer, Comdr. Frank D. Berrien, USN, had come right, then steadied up, heading for the spot where the depth charge was dropped. At about the time the turn was completed, the submarine surfaced between her and the convoy, about 500 yards from the point of *Fanning's* attack and in the direction of the convoy. *Nicholson* charged toward the submarine, and *Fanning* turned into the destroyer's wake in preparation for carrying out a second attack when opportunity presented.<sup>14</sup>

*Nicholson* dropped a depth charge alongside the surfaced U-boat, and then turned left, firing three rounds from her stern gun while swinging to port. The bow of the submarine then rose up dramatically, and she was down by the stern about thirty degrees, and making about two knots. She then righted herself by adjusting trim, and increased speed to about five knots, somewhat down by the bow.<sup>15</sup>

Photo 1-4



German submarine *U-58* awash after being forced to surface, having sustained damage from depth charge attacks by destroyers USS *Fanning* and *Nicholson*, 17 October 1917. Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #NH 111035

As *Nicholson* cleared, *Fanning* steered directly toward the submarine, opening fire with her bow gun. The commanding officer of U-58 later indicated that no hits were made. After the third shot, the conning tower of the submarine opened and out came Kptlt. Gustave Amberger, followed by the remaining crew. In all, a total of four officers and thirty-five men came up on deck, lifted their arms overhead as a sign of capitulation, and Amberger surrendered his command at 1628.<sup>16</sup>

*Fanning* and *Nicholson* circled, keeping their guns trained on the submarine. Then on orders from *Nicholson*, *Fanning* went alongside the U-boat at 1632 to take aboard prisoners; *Nicholson* covered her with all 4-inch guns trained on the submarine, and machine guns pointed at the Germans—ready to shoot them into ribbons if the surrender was not a genuine one. A line was put over to the sub, but then two of her crew disappeared through the conning tower hatch, remaining below for about one minute. Under orders to scuttle her, they had apparently opened the seacocks. At 1638, as she began to sink, the line was let go, and her crew jumped into the water and swam to *Fanning*. They were taken on board, heaving lines being used to assist some of them in making their way alongside and up on deck.<sup>17</sup>

After surrendering to Lt. Arthur S. Carpender, Kptlt. Gustave Amberger gave parole for his officers while aboard *Fanning*. Parole was an arrangement whereby captured officers were granted privileges or freedoms in exchange for promising not to attempt to escape or take up arms against their captors. All of the submarine's crew, except one enlisted man survived. Franz Glinder died, apparently from drowning, after being assisted aboard and attempts to resuscitate him failed. The crew was placed under guard on the main deck aft, and searched. The officers, identified below, were likewise searched before they gave their parole.

- Kapitänleutnant Gustave Amberger
- Kapitänleutnant Fridrich Wilhelm Muller
- Oberleutnant zur See Otto Von Ritgen
- Oberleutnant zur See Paul C. Shroter<sup>18</sup>

### INFORMATION GLEANED FROM CAPTIVES

From the commanding officer, other officers and crew of U-58, it was learned that the explosion of *Fanning's* depth charge had wrecked the submarine's motors, diving gear, and oil leads (fuel lines). She then sank to a depth of about 200 feet, and Kptlt. Gustave Amberger blew ballast tanks. The submarine was coming to the surface in a helpless condition, when *Nicholson* dropped a depth charge, resulting in additional damage.<sup>19</sup>

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The *U-58* was painted light grey, with a black waterline about two feet broad and a white band underneath, and with decking of wood. She was armed with one 4.1" gun forward of the conning tower, and two guns aft (one anti-aircraft gun and one 22 pounder). Aft the tower, her deck was lower than the bow and stern, giving a well deck but with no break, the well being formed by an easy curve.<sup>20</sup>

All the officers of the *U-58* commented on *Fanning's* dazzle paint, and probably had not seen it before. Kptlt. Gustave Amberger, when questioned as to the visibility of the destroyer with this camouflage, indicated he could see her as well in daylight, but thought the paint scheme would be effective at night.<sup>21</sup>

Photo 1-5



USS *Fanning* (#37) in port (sporting a camouflage coat of dazzle paint), probably at Queenstown after her 17 November 1917 battle with the German submarine *U-58*. Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #NH 2060

Photo 1-6



Destroyer USS *Fanning* (#37) at Queenstown, Ireland ("Base Six"), circa 1918. Naval History and Heritage Command Photograph #NH 101630



The captive German crew, given hot coffee, sandwiches, and cigarettes, seemed well-contented, and after being on board a short time, began to sing. Lt. Arthur S. Carpender described in his after-action report, the departure of the submarine crew from *Fanning*:

The officers and crew were transferred to [the tender USS] *Melville* in separate boats, and it is interesting to note that when the prisoners (crew) were shoving off, they gave three cheers.<sup>22</sup>

### AN EXHIBIT OF PRIDE AND PERSONAL AWARDS

As shown in the following photograph, the crew of *Fanning* was authorized to paint a star on one of the stacks of their ship, symbolizing an enemy submarine kill.

Photo 1-7



Crew of USS *Fanning* on 17 November 1917, posing with star on the ship's stack.  
Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels Collection

Photo 1-8



Officers of USS *Fanning* (#37) at the time of the capture of *U-58*;  
from left to right: Lt. Robert B. Carney, Lt. George H. Fort,  
Lt. Arthur S. Carpender, Lt. John A. Vincent, Lt. Walter O. Henry.  
Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #NH 54062

Three members of *Fanning*'s wardroom, pictured above, would later reach flag rank during their careers. Robert Bostwick Carney rose to the rank of admiral, and served from 17 August 1953 to 17 August 1955 as the Navy's 14th Chief of Naval Operations. George Hudson Fort retired as a vice admiral, and Arthur Schuyler Carpender as an admiral.

Walter Owen Henry, who retired as a lieutenant commander, was awarded the Navy Cross "for distinguished service in the line of his profession as Officer of the Deck on the U.S.S. *FANNING* in initiating prompt and efficient offensive action on the occasion of the engagement with, and the capture of the German submarine *U-58* on 17 November 1917."

Promoted to Lieutenant Commander, Arthur S. Carpender, *Fanning*'s commanding officer, was later awarded the Distinguished Service Medal (which out ranked the Navy Cross until 1942):

For exceptionally meritorious service in a duty of great responsibility as commanding officer of the U.S.S. *Fanning*, engaged in the important, exacting, and hazardous duty of patrolling the waters infested with enemy submarines and mines, in escorting and protecting vitally important convoys of troops and supplies through these waters, and in offensive and defensive action, vigorously and unremittingly prosecuted against all forms of enemy naval activity;

and especially for an engagement on November 17, 1917, with the German submarine *U-58*, as a result of which the submarine was forced to come to the surface and surrender.

Additionally, for the action with *U-58*, Lieutenant Commander Carpenter, USN, was recommended by the Admiralty for the DSO (Distinguished Service Order), which was subsequently conferred upon him by King George V at Buckingham Palace.<sup>23</sup>

### **COMMANDING OFFICER OF *NICHOLAS* LAUDED**

Frank Dunn Berrien, commanding officer of *Nicholas* and senior officer of the escort group during the action with the enemy submarine, was also awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. His citation reads:

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Distinguished Service Medal to Captain (then Commander) Frank Dunn Berrien, United States Navy, for exceptionally meritorious service in a duty of great responsibility as Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. *NICHOLSON*, engaged in the important, exacting, and hazardous duty of patrolling the waters infested with enemy submarines and mines, in escorting and protecting vitally important convoys of troops and supplies through these waters, and in offensive and defensive action, vigorously and unremittingly prosecuted against all forms of enemy naval activity; and especially for an engagement on 17 November 1917, in association with the U.S.S. *Fanning*, with the German Submarine *U-58*, as a result of which the submarine was forced to come to the surface and surrender.

Berrien retired as a U.S. Navy Rear Admiral.<sup>24</sup>

### ***FANNING'S* CONTINUED WAR SERVICE**

Known as the "Old 37" to her crew, based at Queenstown, Ireland, *Fanning* and her sister destroyers patrolled the eastern Atlantic, escorting convoys and rescuing survivors of sunken merchantmen. *Fanning* continued such duty for the duration of the war. Though she made numerous attacks on submarines, driving them under the surface, all were inconclusive. On several occasions she went to the aid of torpedoed ships, rescuing survivors and landing them ashore. On 8 October 1918, she retrieved 103 survivors, 25 from a merchant vessel and 78 from the French cruiser *Dupetit Thouars*. The merchant vessel was likely the Norwegian cargo ship SS *Lorna* which, along with the French warship, had fallen victim to *U-62* the previous day.<sup>25</sup>

Photo 1-9



Ships in full dress in Brest Harbor awaiting the arrival of President Woodrow Wilson. Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #UA 80.02

*Fanning* passed in review before President Woodrow Wilson on board the transport USS *George Washington* (#3018) in Brest Harbor on 13 December 1918, then remained at Brest until March of the following year. After a quick voyage to Plymouth, England, *Fanning* departed Brest for return to the United States, by way of Lisbon, Portugal, and Ponta Delgada on São Miguel Island in the Azores, in company with several other destroyers, and escorting a large group of submarine chasers. *Fanning* was placed out of commission, and “mothballed” at Philadelphia on 24 November 1919.<sup>26</sup>

Photo 1-10



Panoramic view of the Reserve Fleet Basin, Philadelphia Navy Yard, PA, circa 1920-1921. The ships in “Red Lead Row” include vast numbers of laid-up destroyers. Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #S-574-N