

## A WARTIME COINCIDENCE

On 30 July 1943, Sunderland letter "U" of 461 Squadron, RAAF, set out on an anti-submarine patrol in the Bay of Biscay. Manned by a crew of 12 under the command of Flight Lieutenant Dudley Marrows. The navigator was Flight Lieutenant Jock Rolland (my brother).

They received a message from Group to join in an action against a pack of U-boats. On arrival at the scene there were three U-boats on the surface.

What happened next is best described by Dudley Marrows himself.

"As we flew towards the U-boats I developed a plan which paid off. There were five other allied aircraft in the area with a German JU88 observing from above. I took the Sunderland down to 1,000 feet and flew in the face of U-boat cannon and machine gun fire. Our front and mid-upper returned an accurate machine gun fire. I flew just above the waves and decided to drop seven depth charges. Nearing the sub I had to fly "straight and steady" waiting for the sub to go out of sight under the nose of the aircraft, count ten and then press the depth charge release button. I had to pull up violently to avoid hitting the conning tower.

I had no idea of how successful my attack had been until my navigator, Jock Rolland, called out on the intercom, "You got one". Rolland was still leaning out of the Sunderland hatch, photographing the result of the attack, despite the fact of I was putting the aircraft through violent turns to avoid the U-boat fire.

We flew over the scene to find a great oil slick where the submarine had been. Bodies of about 30 survivors, wearing only life jackets, were observed. We made another run over the scene and dropped a life raft."

Thus it was that Sunderland U461 sank U.boat 461. It was one of the coincidences of the war.

The other two submarines were destroyed by a Halifax and an RN sloop.

A painting was made of the action by Robert Taylor. 500 copies were made and signed by 4 of the U-boat survivors and 4 of the Sunderland crew



After the war visits were exchanged between some of the U-Boat survivors and some of the Sunderland crew. They became firm friends. On one occasion the wife of a survivor said to Dudley Marrows "thank you for giving my husband a further 35 years of life".

Jock Rolland (the navigator) attended Geelong College 1937 - 1938.

