

THIRLBY

: Br. : MV : 4887 : 230600 : 43-30N 66-10W : : Sunk  
: : : : Jan '42 : : :  
: : : : : : :

ESM

(Name) (Armed) : Nat : Type : Tonnage : Date : Location : Lights : Damage

What happened: Torpedoed

Description of Sub:

Survivors: 3 killed, 42 survivors.

Additional Remarks:

876

US OTH. SF 7 4 2 1 SF 7 4 2 1 U.S. BR. OTH. SF 7 4 2 1 SF 7 4 2 1 0 SF 7 4 TENS SF 7 4 2 UNITS

ARMED OWN DAMAGE OWN ACTION NAT'L OWN SHIP TYPE HUNDREDS TENS NAME UNITS

DAY GCT 0600 DATE 1-23-42 LAT. 43-30 N DIST. LAND 12 AREA 18 E  
NIGHT  LZT 0200 DATE 1-23-42 LON. 66-10 W FATHOMS 35 WIND

WEATHER SEA VISIBILITY MOON CLOUDS  
WSW (240°) Seal Is. - Cape Sable

OWN SHIP: NAME THIRLBY NATL. Br. TYPE CARGO GR. TONNAGE 4887

ENROUTE N.Y. To HALIFAX + LOCH EWE CARGO/MISSION GUN CREW COURSE SPEED

ZIGZAG CONVOY ARMED BY-US OTHER BATTERY

OWN LIGHTS RADIO RADAR SOUND GEAR MAG DET

LOOKOUTS REMARKS

OWN DAMAGE SUNK-TORP. ENEMY DAMAGE

CONTACT MADE BY-SIGHT SOUND D/F RADAR ENEMY ATTACK ENEMY SHIP

ON SURFACE AWASH PERISCOPE SUBMERGED TORPEDO TRACK NOT SEEN

DISTANCE BEARING COURSE SPEED

ENEMY IDENTITY

OWN AND ENEMY MANEUVERS AND ACTION  
BEFORE ATTACK

DURING ATTACK

AFTER ATTACK

COMMENT

GUN. TAC. LTS. MAT. PER. SHP. OTH. ENEMY  
GUN. TAC. LTS. MAT. PER. SHP. OTH. OWN

400 200 100 50 0 50 100 200 400 600 DISTANCE LAND FATHOMS

400 200 100 50 0 50 100 200 400 600 DISTANCE LAND FATHOMS

SF 7 4 2 1 0 SF 7 4 2 1 0 SF 7 4 2 1 0 SF 7 4 2 1 0  
TENS UNITS AREA 18 ENEMY SHIP ENEMY ACTION ENEMY DAMAGE  
REF. FILE

041

COMMENTS ON		OWN	EN
GUNNERY			
TACTICS			
LIGHTS			
MATERIAL			
PERSONNEL			
SHIP			
OTHER			
ADDL. REPORTS IN FILE			
SURVIVORS			
ACTION			
ONI			
OTHER			

## DISPATCHES

Br., THRILBY, torpedoed and sunk, 3 killed, 42  
survivors, (0600) 43-30 N., 66-10 W. COAC 241542.

## REMARKS

CONFIDENTIAL

194

TD/DKMS/139/1245  
10th March, 1942.

SHIPING CASUALTIES SECTION - TRADE DIVISION

REPORT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MASTER, CAPTAIN P.M. BIRCH

s.s. "THILBY"

4,587 gross tons.

TONE: EDGHE.

SUNK BY SUBMARINE on 23rd January, 1942.

CAPTAIN BIRCH:

1. We were bound from New York to Halifax, N.S. with 8,400 tons of corn. We were armed with a 4", 1 Hispano, 2 Hotchkiss, 2 Marlins, 2 Lewis, 1 Holman projector and 2 P.A.C. rockets. The confidential books were all thrown overboard in a tin box. The number of crew, including 2 Army and 7 Naval Gunners, 1 U.S. Pilot and myself, was 15, of whom 2 were injured and 3 are missing.

2. We left New York on 19th January sailing independently to Halifax to join a convoy. Our navigational lights were on and dimmed and we were not zig-zagging.

3. We proceeded without incident until 0050 E.S.T. on 23rd January when in position 050° Seal Island 12 miles, we were struck by a torpedo on the starboard side in the stoke hole. It was very dark at the time, but the visibility was good. The sea was calm with light airs. There was a considerable amount of traffic around at the time, there were 2 ships ahead which had just passed me and also several fishing vessels. There were all showing navigational lights at full brilliance, but immediately my ship was torpedoed they darkened ship and disappeared. We did not see or hear the U-boat, nor was the track of the torpedo seen.

4. I was in my bunk at the time and the explosion sounded fairly loud. I immediately ran out on to the bridge and when I got there debris was still falling. A small amount of water was thrown up. The ship's side plates on the port side were blown out and on the starboard side the plating was dented inwards. I think the torpedo must have exploded inside the bunker as the hatches were all blown away. There was no flame or smoke, but there was a strong smell of cordite.

5. The ship started to settle slowly, but kept an even keel. The Chief Engineer rushed into the engine room which was full of water and managed to rescue the 3rd Engineer who was unable to swim.

6. I looked down into the stoke hold for any survivors, but there was no sign of anyone, and I finally gave the order to abandon ship. The ship settled until the main deck was awash and then appeared to remain in that position for some time.

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D.T.S.D. Files.  
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At .....

7. The starboard life boat was blown away by the explosion and we lowered the port life boat and jolly boat. All the crew got into these boats and at 0120 we abandoned the vessel and remained in the vicinity of the ship.

8. At about 0300 the 2nd Officer and I re-boarded the ship and fired a snow flake rocket in order to attract attention but as the ship appeared to be sinking rapidly, we had to leave almost immediately.

9. About 15 minutes later at 0315 the ship rolled over to port and remained afloat bottom up for about 45 minutes and finally sank just about 0400.

10. There was considerable damage round about the bunker hatch and all accommodation was wrecked. The starboard stoke hold ventilator was missing, and I think this had been blown away by the explosion.

11. The tunnel door was closed immediately after the explosion, and as far as I know the door between the stoke hold and the cross bunker was also closed.

12. We had all the new type of food in the life boats. We had a rotary pump and the sails were coloured, but there was no wireless in the boats.

13. We were in the boats until just before 0900 when we were picked up by the s.s. BELLE ISLE and taken to Halifax, where we arrived at 2130 the same evening.

14. When we arrived in Halifax our Agents arranged for coaches to take the crew away. The D.M.S. Gunners and ratings were taken to the Dockyard, and on arrival there, were arrested for being improperly dressed. This mistake was soon rectified after the position was explained.

15. The position in Halifax is becoming acute and serious on account of the large number of survivors being landed and collected there. The accommodation for men there is very crowded and there are no facilities available for them to return to this country.

16. The accommodation in the ships calling at Halifax appears to be booked up by the Authorities in Ottawa for men who have been collected at other Canadian ports and those collected at Halifax get very little opportunity of securing a passage.

17. The bunker coal we had on board was of very poor quality. We had loaded about 850 tons of it on board at Brooklyne, New York. It was brought alongside in barges and loaded on board by cranes. It was well mixed, good looking coal but it would not burn. The firemen tried to do all they could and voluntarily worked extra hours to try and get more steam. Each watch of firemen did 1½ hours extra time and I had every intention on arrival at Halifax to take this coal out and take in better coal.

18. The whole crew behaved very well indeed and there was no sign of complaint or panic. Nobody attempted to interfere with the boats until they were ordered to do so.