

# You Won't Believe the Mayhem That Occurred in The Western Approaches in 1940!

Imagine sailing the treacherous waters of the Western Approaches in the spring of 1940. The world was at war, and tensions were high. German U-boats prowled beneath the waves, ready to strike at any moment. British convoys packed with vital supplies were the targets, and the outcome of this battle for control of the Atlantic would shape the course of World War II. This is the story of the mayhem and heroism that unfolded in the Western Approaches in 1940.

The Western Approaches, a stretch of sea between the British Isles and Western Europe, became a critical battleground during the war. The German Kriegsmarine had unleashed its U-boat fleet with the aim of starving Britain into submission. These submarines were armed with torpedoes and determined to destroy the merchant ships that carried supplies to the beleaguered nation.

The Battle of the Atlantic had commenced, and the Western Approaches were the front lines.



## The Wolf Packs Gather: Mayhem in the Western Approaches 1940 by Katie Startzman(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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## **The Battle Begins**

In early 1940, the German U-boats struck with deadly effectiveness. The British convoys were ill-prepared for this onslaught. The Royal Navy was still scrambling to adapt to the changing tactics of submarine warfare. At that time, the technology to track and destroy submarines was insufficient, leaving the convoys vulnerable to attack.

The U-boats had a significant advantage in stealth and surprise. They would dive beneath the surface during daylight and emerge at night to launch their deadly torpedoes. The merchant ships could do little to defend themselves against these stealthy attackers.

The losses mounted quickly. Ship after ship, each carrying vital supplies, sank to the bottom of the Atlantic. The Western Approaches became a graveyard for the brave seamen who sailed these treacherous waters.

## **Turning the Tide**

Realizing the dire situation, the British Admiralty took action. They established the Western Approaches Command under the leadership of Admiral Sir Max Horton. This command would become the center of the battle to regain control of the Atlantic.

Admiral Horton implemented a series of measures to counter the U-boat threat. He organized convoys into larger groups and introduced aggressive tactics to defend them. The use of warships as convoy escorts became the norm, and the

Royal Navy deployed additional destroyers and corvettes to patrol the Western Approaches.

Advanced technology, such as radar and sonar, also played a crucial role. These tools improved the ability to detect and track U-boats, allowing the escorts to intercept and destroy them before they could strike at the convoys.

But it was the of a revolutionary new device that would ultimately turn the tide in favor of the Allies – the depth charge. Depth charges were explosive weapons designed to detonate underwater and inflict damage on submerged submarines. This new weapon allowed escort ships to effectively target and destroy U-boats lurking beneath the waves.

## **The Tide of Mayhem Shifts**

As the British defenses improved, the mayhem in the Western Approaches began to shift. The U-boats no longer had free reign. They found themselves hunted and hounded by the escorts, facing constant threat and retaliation.

One of the key turning points came in 1941 with the infamous Battle of the Atlantic. The German U-boats launched a massive assault on the convoys, aiming to sink as many merchant ships as possible. However, the escort vessels and their new strategies fought back fiercely. After weeks of intense combat, the U-boat offensive was repelled, marking a significant victory for the Allies.

The tide had turned, and the U-boats were now on the defensive. The Western Approaches became a battleground where the escorts and U-boats clashed, with the outcome of individual confrontations often determined by courage, skill, and a bit of luck.

## **Heroism and Sacrifice**

Throughout this intense conflict, heroism and sacrifice were abundant. The bravery of the merchant seamen who sailed these dangerous waters cannot be overstated. They faced the constant threat of torpedo attacks, knowing that survival was far from guaranteed.

The escort crews also displayed tremendous valor. They willingly put themselves in harm's way, fighting to protect the convoys and ensure the survival of their fellow countrymen.

One example of this heroism is the story of HMS Jervis Bay. In November 1940, the Jervis Bay engaged the mighty German battleship Admiral Scheer in a valiant effort to protect an entire convoy. Despite being vastly outnumbered and outgunned, the Jervis Bay bought enough time for most of the merchant ships to escape. This act of sacrifice saved countless lives at the expense of the ship and most of her crew.

These stories of bravery and sacrifice were repeated countless times during the mayhem in the Western Approaches. Men fought and died to ensure the survival of the convoys and the Allied cause.

## **A Lasting Legacy**

The battle for control of the Western Approaches raged on throughout World War II. The mayhem eventually subsided as Allied forces gained the upper hand. The U-boat threat was neutralized, and the convoys could sail with a greater sense of security.

The lessons learned and the technological advancements made during this prolonged conflict had a lasting impact on naval warfare. The Battle of the Atlantic became a pivotal moment that shaped the tactics and strategies of future conflicts.

Today, the Western Approaches Museum in Liverpool stands as a testament to this historic battle. Visitors can learn about the mayhem and heroism that unfolded in these waters and pay tribute to the brave men who fought to secure victory.

So, next time you sail across the Atlantic or hear about naval warfare, remember the mayhem and sacrifice that occurred in the Western Approaches in 1940. It is a story that deserves to be told and remembered.



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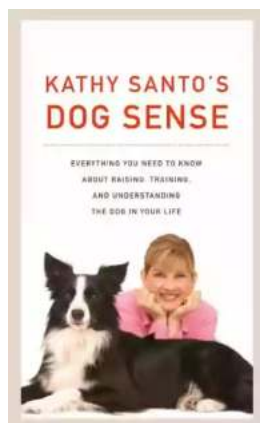
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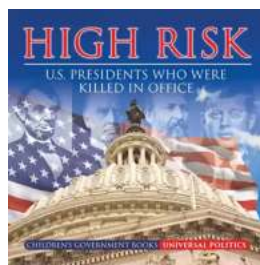
The capture by the German surface raider Atlantis of the British steamer City of Baghdads secret code books in July 1940 enabled the Nazis to de-cypher Admiralty convoy plans with deadly effect. This book describes the resulting appalling Allied losses suffered by four convoys during the Autumn of 1940. Admiral Donetz, aware of the movements of the Allied convoys, marshaled as many of his U-boats as possible. The first convoy, SC2, consisting of 53 merchant men was attacked in early September by four U-boats. Due to poor weather only five ships were lost. Shortly after HX72, with 41 ships, sailing from Nova Scotia,

lost eleven ships to five Type VIIC U-boats. Top Aces Otto Kretschmer and Joachim Schepke, who penetrated inside the columns, accounted for nine. No less than nine U-boats attacked SC7 in October 1940. Of 35 merchant men a staggering 20 were lost. HX79 also fared terribly despite being a fast convoy with ten escorts, losing twelve ships. In total forty-eight merchant men were sunk and seven more damaged without any U-boat losses at all. The Wolf Packs Gather is an authoritative account of the darkest hours of the War in the Atlantic. It describes not only the German tactics but the inadequacies of what few escorts there were and the heartbreaking loss of defenseless life.



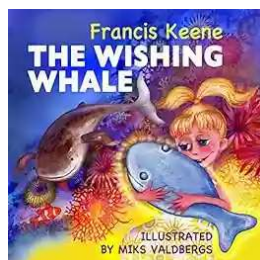
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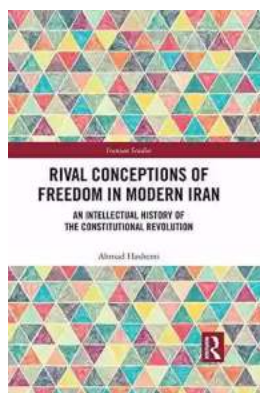
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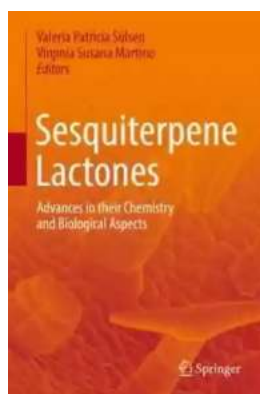
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