My Recent Philatelic Purchase: Q-ships by Harvey Edwards

One of my collecting interests is submarines. I have a 6-frame exhibit titled *Under Pressure* that I haven't updated in several years. With our local show (The Greater Reno Stamp & Cover Show) on hiatus next year it seems like a good time to work on the exhibit again.

One tool the British developed to counter the German submarine threat was the Q-ships. I recently purchased a 1920 letter from Lt. Commander Noakes of the Q-ship HMS Lychnis requesting his crew be allowed to share in the Prize Bounty for the June 1918 sinking of U-64. Reading the letter raised questions for me on Q-ship operations, the Lychnis, and U-64.

Prior to declaring unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1915, U-boat commanders would surface, warning a ship's crew to abandon ship before sinking it. U-boat commanders preferred to use their deck guns on smaller targets to save their torpedoes.

At the beginning of WWI anti-submarine countermeasures such as depth charges were relatively ineffective. Convoying was intensive resource and generally unwelcomed by the merchant ships. The Q-ships were a secret armed decoy merchant ship program intended to present "easy" targets to lure the U-boats to the surface to sink them. Introduced in late 1914, the Q-ships sailed under false names and flags. The ship's crew portrayed themselves as a civilian crew; the gunnery and panic boat crews were "passengers." A Q-ship would straggle from a convoy or travel on its own intending for the U-boat commander to see it as an easy target. The Q-ship ruse included "abandoning" ship to draw the U-

South Railway Jetty, H.M. Dockyard, Portsmouth. 21st December 1980. I have the honour to submit that I may be supplied with official copies of the following reports, in order that difficulties which have arisen in the claim for Prise Bounty for the destruction of the German Submarine U.64 on 17th June 1913, between H.M.S. "Lychnis" and "Partridge II" may be cleared up :-The reports or remarks on the subject by, The Johnander-in-Chief, Meditorranean. The Bear Admiral & Semior Officer, Malta.

The Johnsdore, Escert Base, Malta.

The Johnsdore, Escert Base, Malta.

The Johnsdore, H.M.S. "Lychnis" & "Partridge II".

The Masters of the Transports "Manatou" & "Jandy". Any relevant information obtained from the Prisoners. Information is further requested as to the sum of money awarded to H.M.S. "Partridge II" out of the f1000 granted to ships for the destruction of an Enemy Submaring. Attached is a copy of legal opinion obtained by Ship's Agents, it is remested this may be returned. As the sum involved is comparatively small, I am endeavouring to get the matter settled as an uncontested case. If I cannot be provided with all the documents to be put before the Judge, I would submit that I may be supplied with as many as possible and that the Solicitors or Joursel might be allowed access to the remainder confidentialit. Purther I would submit that I may forward a claim on behalf of the Ship's Joupany of H.M.S. "Lychnis" for the remainder of the £1000 not already awarded to H.M.S. Partridge II for the following The Secretary, of the Admiranty, (three Jartain in Thaces of Ships for Discosal.)

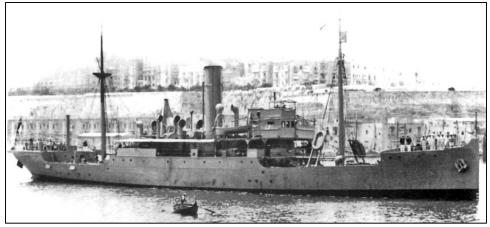
boat in before raising the white ensign, opening their gun ports and commencing fire. U-40 was the first U-boat to be sunk involving a Q-ship (June 1915); UC-29 was the last (June 1917). (Germany blamed unrestricted submarine warfare on the Q-ships, which took advantage of their chivalry to warn the merchant ships before attacking, and considered the Q-ship actions to violate international maritime laws.) Q-ships were responsible for sinking 10-15 German submarines and damaging many more. 44-61 Q-ships were sunk. (Sources vary on the numbers of U-boats and Q-ships sunk as well as the number of Q-ships deployed.) The Liberian stamp below shows the Q-ship HMS Wonganella.

The HMS Lychnis (pictured below) was commissioned as a Q-ship in November 1917. As a Q-ship she sailed under the names Kidner and Wilangil. The Lychnis was reclassified a convoy sloop in April 1918. Lychnis and HMS Partridge II engaged U-64 on June 17, 1918. U-64 forced to surface by depth charges and then sunk by gunfire leaving 38 dead and 5 survivors. Commander Noakes letter speaks of Lynchnis being commissioned a Special Service Vessel [Q-ship], its appearance merchant ship, prize awards for sinking U-boats, secret gun ports, and panic boat crews.



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The U-64 was commissioned in April 1916 under the command of Kapitänleutnant Robert Moraht. Prior to being sunk on her 10th patrol, the U-64 had sunk 46 ships (total of almost 150,000 tons), damaged three (9,420 tons), and taken one as prize (186 tons). Moraht and four others in the conning tower survived U-64's sinking.

Harvey Edwards is a NSSS Director and the former Chair of the Stamp Show Committee. He is an award winning exhibitor and winner of the Chaloner Award in 2015. Harvey's current collecting interests include submarines and Nevada history which varies based on the exhibit he is working on. He also collected St Pierre et Miquelon and pictorial cancellations.