



Black John - the Bogus Pirate



John Phillip Holland Father of the Modern Submarine

By John Joyce

One Irishman who had a profound effect both on naval warfare and our exploration of the seas, but who was largely ignored and humiliated during his own lifetime was John Phillip Holland – the inventor of the modern submarine. Holland was born on February 29th 1841 in Liscannor Co. Clare and inherited his love of the sea from his father, who was a member of the Coast Guard with the duty to watch out for French Invasion attempts.

When the Holland family moved to Limerick in 1853, young John was encouraged by his science teacher Brother Dominic Burke. By his late teens, John had already drawn up plans for a working submarine, but it was not until he emigrated to America that his ideas were taken seriously. In 1888, Holland drew up plans for a working submarine which won a US government competition, only to be frustrated when the money he should have received was diverted into surface ships.

He persisted however and, following his winning of another competition to design a submarine boat, he had enough funds to start The Holland Motor Torpedo Boat Company and began to design submarines for the US Navy.

However, the traditional thinking of those in command and the over-management of his designs frustrated Holland's attempts to fully realise his dreams for the potential of the submarine in military use.

In Germany however, Holland's ideas were taken very seriously with the development of the 'Undersee Boot' or

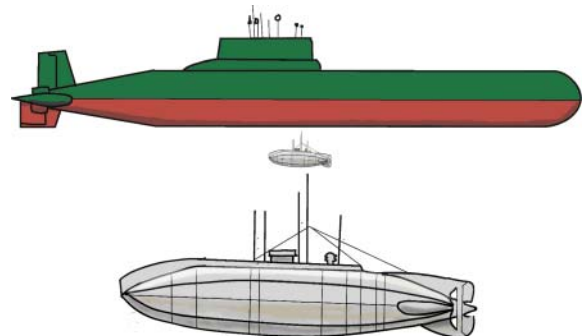
'U-Boat' – submarines that were used to great effect to blockade England and sink any ships carrying food or munitions there from America during both World Wars. Such was the power of submarines to disrupt marine transport that Winston Churchill once said 'the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril'

In more modern times, submarines have thankfully taken on friendlier functions, such as marine research, underwater exploration and salvage missions. However, they are still in military use, having been developed as submerged platforms for transporting and firing intercontinental ballistic missiles armed with nuclear warheads. The largest of these, and indeed the largest submarine ever built, was the Soviet 'Typhoon' Class submarine. It was as big as a World War II aircraft carrier with a total displacement of 48,000 tonnes and armed with twenty missiles - each with ten nuclear warheads.



In spite of his powerful influence on modern naval warfare through the development of the modern submarine, John Phillip Holland died a poor man in August 1914 without proper acknowledgement of his invention.

It was just forty days before a German U-Boat torpedoed and sank the liner Lusitania off the coast of Cork.



The *Typhoon Class* Soviet nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine, seen in comparison to the original *Holland One* submarine below.

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