

Subsmash: The Mysterious Disappearance of HM Submarine Affray

Alan Gallop



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Updated new edition. On April 16th, 2011, a group of widows and their families met together at the RN Submarine Museum, Gosport, to remember husbands, fathers, boyfriends and shipmates who died in the last British submarine to be lost at sea 60 years ago. HM Affray, with a crew of 75, sailed from Gosport on April 16th 1951 on a special peacetime training exercise designed to teach inexperienced young officers the wartime skills needed if the country ever went to war again. She dived under the English Channel at 21.15 hours and never resurfaced, triggering off the largest sea-air rescue operation ever mounted in Britain. Two months later the submarine was found on the seabed miles away from where rescue parties had been searching. She remains there today. In April 1951, the disappearance of HM submarine Affray knocked news of the Korean War and Festival of Britain from the front pages. Affray had put to sea on a routine peacetime simulated war patrol in the English Channel. She radioed her last position at 2115hrs on 16 April, 30 miles south of the Isle of Wight - preparing to dive. This was the last signal ever received from the submarine. After months of searching, divers eventually discovered Affray resting upright on the sea bottom with no obvious signs of damage to her hull. Hatches were closed tight and emergency buoys were still in their casings. It was obvious that whatever had caused Affray to sink, and had ended the lives of all those on board, had occurred quickly. Sixty years later, in this compelling maritime investigation, Alan Gallop uses previously top secret documents, interviews with experts and contemporary news sources to explore how and why Affray became the last British submarine lost at sea - and possibly the greatest maritime mystery since the Marie Celeste.

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