In November 1914, Britain declared the North Sea a war zone and closed it to maritime traffic entering from the north. Merchant ships were ordered to pass through the Dover Straits, where they could be searched for war contraband that might reach Germany. As well as restricting trade heading north, the defences in the straits were steadily increased in an effort to prevent German U-boats from sailing south and into the English Channel. Throughout the war, the Royal Navy and the U-boats played a game of cat and mouse in the straits, as both sides sought to outdo the other.

**HM Tug Char**

A number of civilian vessels worked for the Admiralty during the war, sometimes with their original crews still on board.

Stop and Search

HMS Char was a civilian steam tug that was hired by the Admiralty in 1914. Her original crew elected to remain with her even at the commencement of hostilities, and were joined on board by a Royal Navy crew. Char was employed as a boarding vessel and spent the early months of the war searching for contraband on merchant vessels passing through the Dover Straits on their way into the North Sea.

Loss

In the early hours of January 14th, and in heavy rain, Char was on course to intercept the British steamer Erivan south west of Ramsgate. On board the merchant vessel the Trinity House pilot ordered the engines to slow as the tug approached on the port side. Suddenly, when the two vessels were only 300 metres apart, Erivan’s pilot desperately ordered the engines into reverse, but a collision was inevitable and Erivan struck straight into its path.

The Wreck Site

Despite an extensive search by the Royal Navy and the Deal lifeboat, Char was last seen, but none were lost. There are a number of wrecks in the area in which Char was never seen or heard of again. The exact reason for the actions of her crew cannot be explained as all 18 men on board by a Royal Navy crew. Char was a civilian steam tug that was hired by the Admiralty in 1914. Her original crew elected to remain with her, even at the commencement of hostilities, and were joined on board by a Royal Navy crew. Char was employed as a boarding vessel and spent the early months of the war searching for contraband on merchant vessels passing through the Dover Straits on their way into the North Sea.

HMS Nubian was a Tribal class destroyer, one of twelve such warships built between 1905 and 1908. All twelve Tribals saw service in the war, but Nubian, part of the Dover Patrol, would see service in more ways than one.

**The Battle of the Dover Straits**

On the night of October 26th 1916, the German Flanders Flotilla despatched a large fleet of torpedo boats to attack the Dover Barrage: an elaborate network of patrol boats, nets and mines that obstructed U-boat access through the Dover Strait.

The Battle of the Dover Straits

Incredibly, the stern section remained afloat and was slowly towed back to Dover as the battle raged nearby. Unfortunately, the tows broke and in the morning 15 miles east of Dover a torpedo struck Nubian in the bow, blowing off the entire front section of the ship. Incendiary早就exhausted forces of the ship and was slowly towed back to Dover at the battle raged nearby. Unfortunately, the tow broke and in the morning 15 miles east of Dover a torpedo struck Nubian in the bow, blowing off the entire front section of the ship.

**The Wreck Site**

Some of the 15 men who died when the torpedo struck went down with Nubian but still lies in the Dover Strait, although it has not been conclusively identified.