

NAVY DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
DIVISION OF NAVAL HISTORY (Op-29)  
SHIP'S HISTORIES SECTION

HISTORY OF USS BONEFISH (SS 223)

BONEFISH (SS 223) was built by the Electric Boat Company of Groton, Connecticut. Her keel was laid 25 June 1942 and she was launched on 7 March 1943 under the sponsorship of Mrs. Freeland A. Daubin, wife of Rear Admiral Daubin, Commander Submarines, Atlantic Fleet. The ship was commissioned at New London, Connecticut, on 31 May 1943 under command of Lieutenant Commander Thomas W. Hogan, U. S. Navy.

BONEFISH conducted training operations out of New London and Newport until 23 July 1943 when she departed New London for the Pacific. Transit of the Panama Canal was completed 4 August and she arrived at Brisbane, Australia on 30 August 1943.

On 16 September 1943, BONEFISH departed Darwin, Australia, on her first war patrol. She transited Balabac Strait on 22 September and two days later made an attack on a convoy of eight ships scoring three hits for damage to a cargo vessel before enemy escorts forced her down in an unsuccessful depth charge attack. In the vicinity of Balabac Straits, 27 September, she chose the lead ship in a convoy of five and fired four torpedoes to sink transport KASHIMA MARU of 9,908 tons (10°-14'N; 109°-45'E). On 6 October she scored hits on two heavily loaded cargo vessels but was unable to observe damage inflicted as she went deep to avoid counterattack. On 10 October she made approach on a convoy of five ships off the coast of Indo-China and fired a spread of four torpedoes at two targets. Cargo ISUZUGAWA of 4,212 tons was blown apart and transport TIEBI MARU of 10,086 tons with fires aft, settled rapidly by the stern and also sank (14°-44'N; 110°-19'E). BONEFISH returned to Fremantle, Australia on 21 October 1943.

On 22 November 1943, BONEFISH departed Fremantle for her second war patrol. She entered the Flores Sea on 28 November and the next day intercepted two enemy ships and scored one hit amidships and another under the mainmast to sink cargo SUEZ MARU of 4,646 tons (6°-22'S; 116°-35'E). On 1 December she sighted a convoy of three ships with two escorts hugging the Celebes coast and in two attacks made one hit on a destroyer escort vessel and sank passenger-cargo NICHIRYO MARU of 2,721 tons (1°-31'N; 120°-51'E). From 4 to 6 December BONEFISH conducted periscope patrol of Sandakan Harbor, Borneo then sailed for Tarakan. On 11 December she battle-surfaced to rake a small vessel with gunfire and the following day scored one hit for unconfirmed damage to a vessel before forced down by depth charge attack of escorts. She returned to Fremantle, 19 December 1943.



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BONEFISH sailed from Fremantle to conduct her third war patrol on 12 January 1944. While patrolling in the vicinity of Makassar Strait, 22 January, a large sailing vessel of some sixty tons was sighted. Upon approach the crew of seven on deck came under suspicion when two of their number hid from sight as five remaining natives made friendly gestures. Despite repeated orders and motions commanding them to man their small boat on deck, they refused. When a machine gun was trained to augment the order, they threw their boat over the side but after consultation with someone below decks, they hid from sight. At this point BONEFISH opened fire and the natives leaped over side and swam to their boat as the sailing vessel rapidly settled and Japanese troops began to abandon. Thirty-nine men were counted going over the side.

While off the Isles des Pecheurs on 6 February 1944 BONEFISH gained attack position on a convoy of 17 ships and with an oiler as primary target, fired a spread of four torpedoes, then fired two others at a trailing cargo vessel. As she commenced swinging for a stern tube shot, depth control was lost and she ducked her periscope to evade counterattack by escorts. About nine tons of water had flooded her forward torpedo room owing to the sluggish closing of tube valves. On 9 February 1944 BONEFISH closed a convoy of 13 ships off Cecir-de-Mer, Kamranh Bay. Although detected by a Japanese destroyer as she gained attack position she fired a spread of five torpedoes towards a tanker and crashed dived for evasive maneuvers in shallow waters as the destroyer with the aid of aircraft closed to drop 43 depth charges plus assorted aerial bombs. BONEFISH escaped damage but was unable to observe the results of her torpedo attack. She returned to Fremantle on 15 March 1944.

On 13 April 1944 BONEFISH steamed from Fremantle to conduct her fourth war patrol. On 26 April she intercepted a convoy of four ships along the coast of Mindanao, Philippine Islands, headed towards Davao. Hits were made amidships and aft to sink passenger cargo TOKIWA MARU of 806 tons (6°-12'N; 125°-47'E). BONEFISH evaded the escorts, later observed to pick up survivors of the enemy ship. The next day she made three hits for damage to a cargo ship headed for Davao Gulf but was driven deep by depth charging and aerial bombs before she could finish the enemy. As she closed a convoy on 3 May another plane dropped an aerial depth bomb which exploded close aboard to violently shake BONEFISH who dived at emergency speed as another exploded well above her. When she surfaced to repair the minor damage, two anti-submarine vessels again forced her under. After evading some 25 depth charges, BONEFISH cleared the area. On 5 May she was off the coast of Zamboanga to commence coverage of the northern approach to Basilan Strait. She attacked a convoy in that area on 7 May but was unable to observe the results of torpedoes fired at an escort destroyer as she evaded counterattack.



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On 14 May 1944, off Tawi Tawi, BONEFISH encountered a convoy of three tankers under escort of three destroyers headed for Sibutu Passage. She closed for attack and fired a spread of five torpedoes. One target was observed to be completely enveloped in smoke and flames after one torpedo hit under the enemy's bridge and another hit the stack area knocking off his stern. BONEFISH went deep at emergency speed and retired from the area as escorting vessels converged to counterattack. In this action she had damaged a tanker and sunk destroyer INAZUMA of 1,950 tons (5°-08'N; 119°-38'E).

BONEFISH headed for Sibutu Passage to reconnoiter and later in the day of 14 May sighted a Japanese task force of 3 battleships, a carrier, and 4 cruisers screened by 8 destroyers. She flashed back a message of this sighting and on 17 May sent another report of the same task force at anchor in Tawi Tawi Bay. She returned to Fremantle on 24 May 1944.

On 13 June 1944, Commander Thomas W. Hogan was relieved by Lieutenant Commander Lawrence L. Edge, USN. For extraordinary heroism as commanding officer of BONEFISH, Commander Hogan was awarded the Navy Cross and two Gold Stars in lieu of a second and third Navy Cross.

On 25 June 1944 BONEFISH departed Fremantle for her fifth war patrol. In the vicinity of Marathea Island, 6 July, she battle surfaced to destroy an auxiliary schooner of about 100 tons with her deck guns. The next day small cargo RYUEI MARU of 270 tons was given the same treatment in the northern approaches to Makassar Strait, near Tarakan Harbor, and a small inter-island steamer was also hit by gunfire which set off a blazing oil fire. On 10 July, in the vicinity of Jolo Island she destroyed a sampan with her deck guns and by 24 July she was off Luzon, Philippine Islands.

On 29 July 1944, in the vicinity of Tubbatha Reefs, BONEFISH commenced tracking a large unloaded tanker and her escorts. The next day she gained a favorable position for attack and scored four hits to sink tanker KOKUYO MARU of 10,026 tons (6°-03'N; 119°-54'E). On 3 August she scored a torpedo hit for damage to a tanker in the Basilan Strait and the next day commenced transit of Sibutu Passage enroute to Fremantle, arriving 13 August 1944.

On 5 September 1944, BONEFISH departed Fremantle for her sixth war patrol. Arriving at Darwin, Australia, on 12 September she refueled and took on torpedoes, sailing this same day for her patrol area. On 21 September she commenced surface patrol on a triangle extending from Bondoc Point which covered focal points of traffic lanes through Burias Pass, Masbate Pass, Mapog Pass and south of Marinduque Island. Finding no targets by 24 September she steamed for patrol west of Luzon. On 28 September she



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fired all her bow torpedoes to sink tanker ANJO MARU of 2068 tons (13°-16'N; 119°-45'E) and evaded the escorting destroyers before they could launch depth charge attacks. On 30 September she made rendezvous in the area off Luzon to form an attack group with FLASHER and LAPON. In the area of Cape Bolinao on 10 October she joined in an attack on a convoy and made three hits for undetermined damage before being forced down by depth charges of the escorts. Four days later she sank cargo FUSHIMI MARU of 2,542 tons (16°-12'N; 119°-45'E). While on lifeguard station patrol 18 October she received report of two Navy aviators down in her area. After several hours of night search, the airmen were rescued from a rubber raft, unhurt but sunburned and hungry. She was ordered to Pearl Harbor the next day and after fueling at Saipan (27-29 October), arrived at Pearl Harbor on 8 November 1944.

From Pearl Harbor BONEFISH steamed to San Francisco where she underwent overhaul from 18 November 1944 to 13 February 1945. She engaged in refresher training and exercises off Monterey, California and in the Hawaiian area until 20 March, then took departure from Pearl Harbor for Guam, Marianas Island, arriving 1 April 1945.

BONEFISH'S seventh war patrol was conducted in the northeastern part of the East China Sea and lower Tsushima Straits. Departing Guam on 6 April 1945 she formed part of a coordinated attack group (Group commander in SEAHORSE). Few contacts were made, all of these being small anti-submarine craft. While off the coast of Southern Korea on 16 April she took aboard two Japanese aviators from an oil slick after watching another deliberately get out of his life jacket, not to reappear. The prisoners disclosed that their plane on anti-submarine search had been shot down by a U. S. Navy plane. BONEFISH returned to Apra Harbor, Guam, on 7 May 1945.

At Guam, BONEFISH joined a "wolf-pack" of eight other submarines equipped with a new mine-detecting device which permitted her to penetrate mined areas. This device enabled her to "hear" an enemy mine in waters ahead. Gear for the clearance of the menace was simultaneously produced. The mission of these submarines was penetration into the Sea of Japan to sever the last of her overseas supply lines. The Nishi Suido (West Channel) of Tsushima Strait was to be the point of entrance. Information on minefields guarding this strait was fairly comprehensive but exact coordinates of the mine lines were unknown. The nine submarines were divided into three task groups, BONEFISH forming with TUNNY and SKATE.

Departing Guam on 28 May 1945, BONEFISH successfully transited the minefields through Tsushima Strait to enter the Sea of Japan for offensive patrol off the west central coast of Honshu. On 13 June she sank cargo OSHIKAYAMA MARU of 6,892 tons (38°-30'N; 136°-58'E), giving report of this sinking during rendezvous with TUNNY on 16 June 1945. In a second



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rendezvous on 18 June, she received permission to conduct a submerged daylight approach in Toyama Wan, a bay further up the Honshu coast.

The submarine pack was to depart the Sea of Japan by transit of La Perouse Strait on the night of 24 June 1945. When BONEFISH did not appear at the assembly point on the evening of 23 June the other submarines made the transit into the Pacific Ocean where TUNNY waited in vain for contact report from BONEFISH. It was hoped that she had availed herself of provisions made to claim a 24-hour haven in Russian water or to make an exit from the Sea of Japan before or after 24 June 1945. But on 30 July 1945 she was presumed lost.

Reports of Japanese anti-submarine forces examined after close of the war revealed that an attack was made on a submarine in Yoyama Wan on 19 June after passenger-cargo KOZAN MARU of 5,488 tons had been torpedoed in that vicinity (37°-13'N; 137°-13'E). Savage depth-charging of the enemy had brought to the surface a swirling pool of oil and pieces of splintered wood. There could be little doubt that BONEFISH was the victim of a severe counterattack.

Commander Lawrence Lott Edge who had previously received the Bronze Star and Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism as commanding officer of BONEFISH during her fifth and sixth war patrol, was posthumously awarded a Gold Star in lieu of a second Navy Cross for heroic service during her seventh war patrol; and, a second gold star in lieu of a third Navy Cross for service as set forth in the following citation:

"For extraordinary heroism as Commanding Officer of the USS BONEFISH during the Eighth War Patrol of that vessel in the Japan Sea off the west coast of Honshu, Japan. Fully aware of the extreme dangers involved, Commander Edge left port in his veteran submarine on 28 May 1945 to conduct one of the first war patrols to be made in this area. Boldly penetrating strong anti-submarine barriers, he entered the supposedly inviolable waters of the Japan Sea and, with superb skill and daring, maneuvered the BONEFISH into shallow, confined waters to launch his devastating torpedo attacks against enemy targets vital to the Japanese war effort. Striking with devastating speed and precision, Commander Edge succeeded in sending two valuable ships to the bottom despite strong hostile countermeasures. While continuing this smashing offensive, overwhelming counterattacks were encountered which caused the loss of this outstanding submarine and her gallant commanding officer. A forceful and inspiring leader, Commander Edge, by his brilliant seamanship, initiative and indomitable perseverance, maintained in the face of tremendous odds, contributed essentially to the infliction of extensive damage and destruction on the enemy during this urgent mission and to the



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success of our sustained drive to force the capitulation of the Japanese Empire. His courage and resolute devotion to duty throughout reflect the highest credit upon himself, his intrepid command and the United States Naval Service."

BONEFISH was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for outstanding heroism in action during her first, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth war patrols. She also earned seven battle stars for operations listed below:

1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 15 Sep - 31 Oct 1943

1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 22 Nov - 19 Dec 1943

1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 12 Jan - 15 Mar 1944

1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 15 Apr - 30 May 1944

1 Star/SUBMARINE WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 25 Jun - 13 Aug 1944

1 Star/WESTERN CAROLINE OPERATION:

Assaults on the Philippine Islands: 9-24 Sep 1944

1 Star/OKINAWA GUNTO OPERATION:

Assault and Occupation of Okinawa Gunto: 16 Apr - 19 Jun 1945

## ORIGINAL STATISTICS

USS BONEFISH (SS 223)

LENGTH OVER-ALL	311'9"
EXTREME BEAM:	27'3"
STANDARD DISPLACEMENT:	
Tons:	1526
Mean Draft:	15'3"
SUBMERGED DISPLACEMENT:	
Tons:	2424
DESIGN SPEED:	
Surface:	20.25
Submerged:	8.75
DESIGN DEPTH:	300'
DESIGN COMPLEMENT:	
Officer:	6
Enlisted:	54
ARMAMENT:	
Torpedo Tubes:	(10) 21"
Secondary:	(1) 3"/50
	(2) .50 caliber
	(2) .30 caliber
TORPEDOES:	24

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