

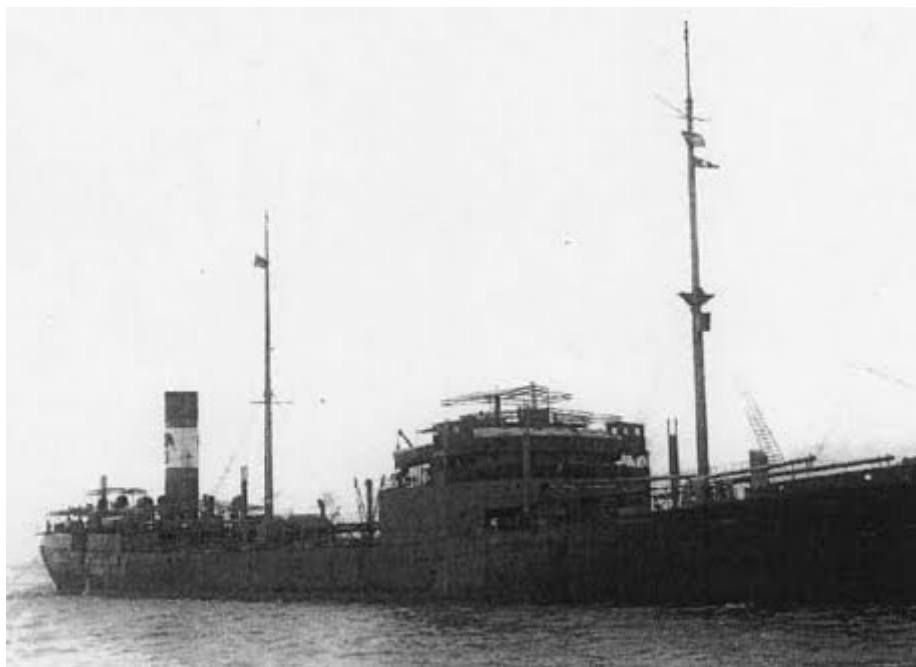


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## San Florentino



20,000 tons deadweight Commanded by Captain R.W.Davis en-route to Curacao from the Clyde in ballast when, proceeding independently was shadowed and attacked by submarines over a period of two days. At 7.45pm 1 October a torpedo crashed into her starboard side, with severe damage, the ship stayed on an even keel, the U-boat was sighted, and brought astern and **San Florentino** opened fire with her 4.7 inch stern gun. The submarine surfaced at intervals but was brought within range of her stern gun, and the enemy was forced to submerge repeatedly. The tanker was torpedoed again on the port side and took a 20degree list, a second sub was sighted and was fired on, a third torpedo struck the vessel damaging lifeboats, davits, aerial and causing extensive damage to the ship.

Despite the fearful punishment taken, on the morning of 2 October and with her gun still blazing at the U-boat dogging her, and with all communication with the engine room gone, and all ammunition expended the vessel began to break in two, when a fourth torpedo came tearing into the ship the shattered hull was dealt the death blow. Now a wreck the remaining survivors took to the only remaining boats and rafts, twenty minutes later the stern section of the ship broke away and drifted apart from the for'ad section. The submarine surfaced, steamed around among the boats and with a final aggressive display shelled the part of San Florentino remaining afloat.

Many casualties were incurred in this disaster, a number of men dying from exposure in the 1000 e boats and on the rafts. Chief Officer Miller and other survivors were rescued by H.M. Canadian Corvette Mayflower she approached the floating forepart still above the waves, and sighted two more survivors straddled astride the the stem of the tanker, who had been unable to get away when she broke in halves, clinging to this precarious perch for a day, without food, drink or shelter. Their rescue was made by a volunteer crew approaching the wreckage, despite heavy seas and floating wreckage. The two seamen making their way hand over hand along the forestay before

dropping into the boat.