

NAVY DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION (OP-09B9)  
SHIPS' HISTORIES SECTION

HISTORY OF SHIPS NAMED GRAYLING

USS GRAYLING (SSN646) is the fifth ship of the fleet to bear the name of a fresh water game fish closely related to the trout.

The first GRAYLING (SS-18) was built by the Fore River Shipbuilding Company, Quincy, Massachusetts. Her keel was laid 16 April 1908 and she was launched 16 June 1909, under the sponsorship of Miss Catherine H. Bowles, daughter of the President of Fore River Shipbuilding Company. The submarine commissioned in the Boston Navy Yard 23 November 1909, Lieutenant Owen Hill, U. S. Navy, commanding.

GRAYLING (SS-18) had a length overall of 134 feet, 10 inches; extreme beam, 13 feet, 11 inches; submerged displacement of 337 tons; normal displacement of 288 tons; mean draft, 11 feet, 8 inches; surfaced speed of 13 knots; submerged speed, 9.5 knots; designed depth 200 feet; and a designed complement of 1 officer and 14 men. Her armament was four 18-inch torpedo tubes and she carried four torpedoes.

GRAYLING joined the Atlantic Torpedo Fleet as Flagboat of Submarine Division 3. Ranging along the Atlantic coast from New London, Norfolk and New York, she joined in diving, torpedo and experimental exercises. Her name was changed to D-2 on 17 November 1911.

During World War I, D-2 served in training and experimental work at New London. She was placed in commission in reserve at the Philadelphia Navy Yard 9 September 1919 and placed in ordinary 15 July 1921. The submarine decommissioned there 18 January 1922 and was sold for scrapping 25 September 1922 to Joseph G. Hitner of Philadelphia.

The second GRAYLING (SP-1259) was a motor boat built in 1915 by Boyden of Amesbury, Massachusetts. She was leased from E. E. Gray 7 May 1917 and commissioned 22 May 1917 for service as a patrol craft of the First Naval District at Boston. She was returned to her owner 30 November 1918,

GRAYLING had a length overall of 33 feet, 6 inches; beam, 7 feet; draft, 2 feet, 10 inches; speed, 14 knots; gross tonnage, 4; and was armed with one machine gun.



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The third GRAYLING (SP-289) was a wooden motor boat built by Peterson, Hudson River. She was leased 22 May 1917 from owner Myer Resenbush and commissioned the same day, Boatswain Robert L Kemp, USNRF, commanding. GRAYLING served the Fifth Naval District as a patrol craft on local and coastal waters around Norfolk, Virginia. She decommissioned there 15 January 1919 and was returned to her owner the same day.

GRAYLING had a length overall of 50 feet; beam, 10 feet, 3 inches; gross tonnage, 14; draft, 3 feet, 10 inches; speed, 10 knots; and was armed with one 1-pounder.

The fourth GRAYLING (SS-209) was built by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, New Hampshire. Her keel was laid 15 December 1939 and she was launched 4 September 1940, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Herbert F. Leary, wife of Rear Admiral Leary, USN. The submarine commissioned in the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard 1 March 1941, Lieutenant Commander Eliot Olson, USN, commanding.

GRAYLING (SS-209) had a length overall of 307 feet, 2 inches; extreme beam, 27 feet, 3 inches; submerged displacement of 2370 tons; standard displacement of 1,475 tons; mean draft, 13 feet, 3 inches; surfaced speed of 20 knots; submerged speed of 8.75 knots; designed depth of 250 feet; and a designed complement of 5 officers and 54 enlisted men. She was armed with ten 21-inch torpedo tubes; one 3-inch .50 caliber gun, two .50 caliber machine guns; and two .30 caliber guns.

After shakedown training cruise to the Virgin Islands, GRAYLING departed New London, Connecticut, 24 November 1941 for patrol duty in the Pacific. She transited the Panama Canal 3 December and called at San Diego before proceeding to Pearl Harbor which she entered 24 December 1941. She reported for duty to Submarine Division 62, Submarine Squadron Six. On 31 December 1941, GRAYLING had the honor of being chosen for the Pacific Fleet change of command ceremony. On that day, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz hoisted the flag aboard the submarine to assume command of the Pacific Fleet and began the Navy's long fighting road back in the Pacific.

GRAYLING stood out of Pearl Harbor on her maiden war patrol 5 January 1942. Pointing her bow to reconnoiter the northern Gilbert Islands, she made landfall on Makin Atoll, 17 January 1942. After a survey of the lagoon and investigation of Tarawa to gather information important to naval forces about to invade the Marshalls, Gilberts, she entered a patrol area off Truk Atoll in the Carolines 27 January 1942. After a fruitless search along the Truk, Saipan, Rabaul shipping routes, she made sonar contact with an aircraft carrier 18 February 1942. The range and speed of the target prevented a successful attack and she terminated her 61-day patrol at Pearl Harbor, 6 March 1942.



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GRAYLING departed Pearl Harbor 26 March 1942 and set course to conduct her second war patrol along the coast of Japan itself. She damaged a 200-ton sampan with gunfire on the Tokyo steamer lane 11 April. Two days later, in the afternoon, she intercepted the 6,243-ton cargo ship RYJIN MARU on the Kii Suido Van Diemen Strait route. A torpedo attack put that enemy under the sea (31° -51' North; 132° -50' East) and the submarine escaped unscathed from a thirty minute depth charge counter attack of a prowling destroyer. GRAYLING headed in for a destroyer off Okino Shima 26 April, was detected in the phosphorescent water and forced to dive without opportunity for firing. Six depth charges exploded in the water about her. Near midnight, nine aerial bombs aimed for her wake or silhouette fell clear of the submarine as she sought deep submergence and rigged for silent running. She departed her patrol area 2 May and returned to Pearl Harbor 16 May 1942.

GRAYLING sailed from Pearl Harbor 21 May 1942 as one of the twenty five Pacific Fleet submarines of Task Force 7 which was divided into three task groups for the defense of Midway Atoll. With eleven other submarines she formed Midway Patrol Group 7.1 which converged west of Midway on stations located like the points of an opening fan, screening that atoll from the expected onslaught of the Japanese Fleet. A second group of three submarines (Task Group 7.2) were deployed on a scouting line east and a little north between Midway and Oahu, while a third group of four submarines (Task Group 7.3) covered a position some 300 miles north of Oahu. Six other submarines, all enroute to Pearl Harbor from patrol stations, were furnished information on the estimated location of Japanese units converging on Midway and ordered to attempt interception.

All submarines were on station by 1 June and GRAYLING was notified the morning of 4 June that the enemy main body was northwest of Midway. She was unable to intercept this force but continued westward in search of variously reported enemy targets. The afternoon of 7 June 1942, she suffered no damage from near misses by 1,000 pound bombs dropped by B-17 "Flying Fortresses" whose pilots reported sinking an enemy cruiser with the remarkable time of 15 seconds. It was time for a crash-diving submarine seeking the depth for safety at the very moment and exact position where the "Japanese cruiser" was reported attacked and "sunk." The "Super Fortresses", flying some 10,000 feet high, had dropped a pattern of twenty 1,000-pound bombs from which GRAYLING had the good fortune to escape. She returned safely to Pearl Harbor 11 July 1942.

GRAYLING spent her third war patrol in blockade of Truk Atoll in the Carolines. She departed Pearl Harbor 14 July and entered her patrol area on the 24th, heading for the Northeast Pass of Truk. She closed a convoy the afternoon of 10 August but patrol craft headed in for the submarine which was leaking a trail of air bubbles from her hull. When about 14 miles from Northeast Pass the morning of 13 August, she



intercepted a submarine tender, crossed over into the sun as aerial escorts flew low and eastward, then fired a salvo from four stern tubes. Two damaging hits were heard as she nimbly avoided the paths of three torpedoes launched by the target, then closed a burning enemy for the final kill. The tell-tale air bubbles marked her well for the aerial scouts and she dived when an aerial bomb explosion was heard, followed in quick succession by two others with increasing accuracy. She escaped by deep submergence but soon found that the persistent wake of air bubbles drew attention from numerous patrol planes. It was apparent that she could no longer conduct a periscope patrol close in under the surveillance of the active air patrol because of the trail left by air leaks. Further complications was a noise in her port shaft that would prove an excellent aid to sound searches of enemy ships. She returned to Pearl Harbor 26 August 1942 to be put in efficient operating condition. Surface radar was installed during this refit period.

GRAYLING departed Pearl Harbor 19 October 1942 to base at Fremantle, Australia, as a unit of the Southwest Pacific Submarine Force. Incidental to her passage there, she conducted a 28-day patrol off Truk. She passed between Milil and Makin the 28th and was headed for Truk the following morning when a bomber headed in from the southwest. An aerial bomb exploded clear of the diving submarine. That afternoon two tankers came out of a raid squall with a destroyer. GRAYLING fired three torpedoes at the rear tanker which made a sharp change of course and the lethal missiles missed. Four minutes later, her periscope was blinded by the yellow flash of explosions from aerial bombs and soon the hunting destroyer was dropping depth charges which exploded well astern the evasive submarine. She was again the target of aerial bombs 5 November. The following morning a salvo of three torpedoes were sent towards a seaplane tender. Two columns of smoke arose from this target that took a starboard list as the submarine maneuvered into position for another attack. As she gained firing position, depth bombs from the air above gave GRAYLING quite a shaking and caused considerable damage to minor material. She lost contact with her target and spent the remaining day repairing. Near midnight of 10 November, two torpedoes from this submarine broke a small loaded tanker in half and orange flame lit the sky for a brief time before this target of estimated 4,000 tons plunged to the bottom in Latitude 07°-12' North; Longitude 140°-47' East.

The night of 18 November 1942, GRAYLING gained attack position ahead of two ships leaving Truk and was detected by one of the ships, a destroyer which closed at high speed. This enemy flashed recognition signals and opened fire from a forward gunmount to drive the submarine under the surface. The destroyer dropped a single depth charge and cruised about in the vicinity for nearly an hour. In the morning



moonlight of 23 November the submarine encountered another destroyer. She fired three torpedoes at the enemy who threw out two depth charges in quick succession and headed for GRAYLING. The submarine gained no hits but managed a straight stern tube shot before the hunter closed in and gave her a thorough shaking with a barrage of seven more depth charges. Near high noon the same day, eight explosions rocked the sea some 500 yards from the submarine, these apparently from an aircraft. GRAYLING cleared the Truk area 27 November and headed southwest for return to Fremantle. As she patrolled across the entrance to Kupang Bay 7 December, she intercepted a freighter and let go with three torpedoes for no hits. Air craft dropped three depth bombs and held the submarine under until this target escaped. She arrived at Fremantle, 13 December 1942.

GRAYLING's fifth war patrol was largely spent patrolling the entrances of Manila Bay at close range. She sailed from Fremantle 7 January 1943 and entered Verde Island Passage near midnight of 25 January to fire a spread of four torpedoes for no hits on a freighter. She waited submerged at the entrance of the passage the following day as the 749-ton cargo ship USHIO MARU came through. Two hits out of two bow torpedoes fired broke off the bow which disappeared immediately. The stern of the target rose high in the air, propellers spinning, and took the final plunge.

The afternoon of 11 February 1943, GRAYLING intercepted a convoy of five cargo ships standing in single column down the North Channel of Manila Bay. Two torpedoes were sent streaking for the lead target which was ripped amidships by a torpedo explosion which left the enemy sagging in the middle with dense clouds of smoke pouring out. This probably was the 6,032-ton cargo ship HOEIZAN MARU, listed in Japanese records as having been damaged by a submarine about nine miles from Corregidor. When GRAYLING came to periscope depth to prepare for the final kill, her observations were terminated by two depth bombs from a patrolling aircraft. Two days later, the submarine made attack approach on what appeared to be a small coastwise steamer standing towards Corregidor. Three torpedoes were loosed against this target which turned out to be a submarine decoy "Q Ship." A little more than a minute after the first torpedo left GRAYLING this enemy exploded a depth charge, followed ten seconds later by another as the target turned away, made a complete circle, and came back over the firing point to plunge a lethal barrage into the sea. A second ship was heard to join the first and they alternated in stopping to listen. GRAYLING evaded these antagonists and suffered no damage from 39 depth charges that exploded in the sea around her. She returned to Fremantle from her fifth war patrol 24 February 1943.

GRAYLING's sixth war patrol took her via Lombok and Makassar Straits for a brief patrol off Tarakan and the eastern approaches of Verde Island Passage, thence to Manila. She stood out of Fremantle



18 March, landed two officer passengers at Exmouth Gulf where she refueled, then headed out to search for enemy shipping. As she passed off Borneo Bank the morning of 25 March 1943, her officer of the deck sighted a bomber directly overhead at about 2,500 feet. Radar had given no indication of this plane and fortunately the Japanese were no more alert than GRAYLING's lookouts. She had reached 140 feet when the first bomb dropped, followed by three more in the next three hours as the aircraft made continued but fruitless efforts to destroy the submarine below.

Proceeding north along the Celebes coast, GRAYLING sank a large sailboat with gunfire before midnight of 25 March. Three days later she commenced patrol southeast of Tarakan. That morning she let go with four torpedoes at a tanker of the Nippon Maru class which came out of a rain squall. Explosions were heard on this target but damage or sinking was not confirmed. The early morning darkness of 7 April found the submarine within range of shore guns covering the Verde Island Passage. She fired four torpedoes at a large cargo ship for a hit whose explosion rocked GRAYLING a little. The target opened with gunfire and the submarine submerged, then moved in again. On torpedo passed under the target but a second hit amidships and exploded but apparently caused little damage. By now the target was under the shore guns of Verde Island Passage as was the submarine before the target passed out of range. Near midnight of 7 April, the submarine missed a small merchantman with a torpedo, then surfaced to score several hits with gunfire. A 3-inch projectile jammed in the gun barrel and the merchantmen ran for the beach on the coast of Marinduque where shore batteries opened fire to seaward.

Near daybreak of 9 April 1943, GRAYLING attacked a convoy of six freighters loosing three torpedoes at the lead ship in the port column for two hits that caused the 4,103 ton cargo ship SHANGHAI MARU to settle rapidly. With smoke and steam pouring from the hull, she took the final plunge to the bottom. A second ship was crippled by torpedo attack of the submarine who waited out a depth charge attack of two escorts, then renewed the chase. She caught up with the convoy shortly after high noon to find additional escorts on the scene with aircraft circling overhead. After trailing until nightfall, the submarine made attack approach on the surface and ran dead ahead into a prowling destroyer who opened with gunfire and turned a searchlight upon the submarine. GRAYLING made a hasty exit under the sea to the accompaniment of a salvo of gunfire. Seventeen depth charges rained down as she eluded the destroyer to take up submerged patrol off Manila Bay.

The morning of 12 April 1943, GRAYLING sighted a small freighter standing towards Corregidor from the southwest. Closing at high speed on the surface she fired three torpedoes on the zigzagging target for no hits. The target turned in attempt to ram the submarine who



expended the last of her torpedoes. Gunfire was heard as GRAYLING departed the area for home. The following afternoon she made a deck gun attack on a small two-deck passenger freighter which was left aflame and in a sinking condition. She sank a 120-ton schooner 18 April and terminated her sixth war patrol on Fremantle on the 25th.

GRAYLING departed Fremantle 18 May 1943 and transited Lombok Strait to reach the vicinity of Sakala Island the night of 24 May. A few hours before midnight she fired a single torpedo which missed a radically maneuvering target then went ahead at full speed on four engines for another firing position. A large change in course took the target away from the submarine and contact was lost. The following afternoon three torpedoes fired at a target resulting in a series of six explosions before contact was lost. The submarine entered Sibutu Passage 29 May and passed through Balabac Strait the 31st enroute to the vicinity of Seobi Ketjil Island. She arrived on that station 5 June and made her first contact the night of 7 June. As she headed in for attack, the fast freighter opened with deck guns to drive the submarine away. By daylight of 8 June GRAYLING had gained ahead for a second try. Three torpedoes scored no hits and several shells whizzed overhead of the submariners before contact was lost. To the east of Anamba Islands a few hours later, the submarine found herself between two patrol boats that disappeared to the south without detecting the submarine with their echo ranging equipment. While northwest of Anamba Islands, 17 June, GRAYLING sank a 40-ton sampan with gunfire. She damaged a small ship 22 June but lost contact when the enemy disappeared in a heavy rain squall. A 75-ton junk was sunk with gunfire 25 June and GRAYLING transited Balabac Strait the following day for return home to Fremantle 6 July 1943.

GRAYLING was lost on her eighth war patrol. She departed Fremantle 30 July 1943 with a ton of supplies and equipment delivered the following day to local guerillas at Puncio Point, Pandan Bay, Panay, Philippine Islands. On 19 August the submarine reported that she had damaged a 6,000-ton freighter near Balikpapan. The following day she sank a small tanker and took one survivor prisoner after destroying the tanker with gunfire. She again put into Pandan Bay 23 August with two more tons of cargo for the guerillas, then put to sea to search in Talbas Strait and intercept traffic off Manila. GRAYLING was not heard from again. However, Japanese records report a submarine torpedo attack in the Talbas Strait on 27 August 1943 which sank the 5,480-ton passenger cargo ship, MEIZAN MARU (13°-13' North; -121°-23' East). This was undoubtedly the work of GRAYLING whose orders called for her to depart Talbas Strait 2 September for Manila. On 9 September 1943, a surfaced submarine was seen inside Lingayen Gulf. This would have been the likely cruising grounds of GRAYLING as she followed orders to patrol the approaches to Manila. It is said that the passenger cargo



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ship, HOKUAN MARU, was engaged in action with a submarine that same day in the Philippine area but no additional data has been uncovered. Known enemy attacks could not have sunk GRAYLING. Her loss may have been operational or by an unrecorded enemy attack. It is certain that she was lost between 9 and 12 September 1943, either in Lingayen Gulf or along the approaches to Manila. She failed to acknowledge orders to transmit on 12 September and was reported as presumed lost 30 September 1943. GRAYLING's war patrols 2 through 8 were designated "successful" for award of the Submarine Combat Insignia. She received six battle stars for the operations listed below:

- 1 Star/SECOND WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 25 March 1942 - 12 May 1942
- 1 Star/BATTLE OF MIDWAY: 3-6 June 1942
- 1 Star/THIRD WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 14 July 1942 - 26 August 1942
- 1 Star/CAPTURE AND DEFENSE OF GUADALCANAL: 19 October 1942 - 13 December 1942
- 1 Star/FIFTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 7 January 1943 - 24 February 1943
- 1 Star/SIXTH WAR PATROL-PACIFIC: 18 March 1943 - 25 April 1943

LIST OF COMMANDING OFFICERS

Lieutenant Commander Eliot Olsen, USN	1 Mar 1941-1 Sep 1942
Lieutenant Commander John E Lee, USN	1 Sep 1942-15 Jul 1943
Lieutenant Commander Robert Marion Brinker, USN	15 Jul 1943- Sep 1943

The name GRAYLING was assigned to (SS-492) on 29 August 1944. This authorized submarine was to have been built by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, New Hampshire, but the contract for construction was terminated 11 August 1945 upon the curtailment of the Navy shipbuilding program.

The fifth GRAYLING (SSN646) is named in commemoration of GRAYLING (SS209) who was lost while conducting her eighth war patrol in the Pacific under command of Lieutenant Commander Robert Marion Brinker, USN. The keel of the fifth GRAYLING (SSN646) was laid 12 May 1964. Striking the first symbolic arc at the keel laying ceremony was Rear Admiral Eliot Olsen, USN, Retired, of York Harbor, Maine. Rear Admiral Olsen was the first commanding officer of GRAYLING (SS-209) who conducted three of her eight war patrols in the Pacific during World War II.

The keel laying of GRAYLING was part of a triple ceremony at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard which also featured the launching of the POLARIS submarine, NATHANAEL GREENE (SSBN636), and the commissioning of the POLARIS submarine, JOHN ADAMS (SSBN620).