

Some of **The History of SubRon 14** and Scotland



This page is the text history of SubRon 14

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THE HISTORY OF SUBMARINE SQUADRON FOURTEEN

Some of the information is from a book that is in the [Castle House Museum, Dunoon, Scotland](#)

The closure of the U.S. Navy's fleet ballistic missile submarine refit site in Holy Loch, Scotland not only brings to a close an important era in the development and deployment of the undersea nuclear deterrent force, but also concludes a joint effort by the people of the United States and the United Kingdom to maintain world peace.

During the 1950's, the tensions of the Cold War resulted in the adoption of a policy of nuclear deterrence as the ultimate option in the overall concept of flexible response. The United States pursued a program that relied on three elements of strategic deterrence: the manned bombers of the Strategic Air Command, land based intercontinental ballistic missiles and a force of nuclear powered Fleet Ballistic Missile (FBM) submarines.

The successful development of nuclear propulsion and the rapid increase in the sophistication of missile propulsion and technology during the decade gave viability to the submarine missile concept. The atomic submarine, with extensive submerged endurance and self-sufficiency, was virtually undetectable, thus offering much greater stealth and deterrence value than more traditional strategic bomber and static land based systems.

SUBMARINE SQUADRON FOURTEEN IS ESTABLISHED

The first missile system developed to be deployed on the FBM submarine was the Polaris A-1. Powered by a solid propellant, two stage rocket motor, the weapon could be launched within moments of receipt of a presidential order. However, limited in range to 1,200 nautical miles, it was necessary to develop forward deployed bases. By reducing transit times to and from submerged patrol areas, the FBM submarine could achieve greater operational efficiencies.

Submarine Squadron FOURTEEN was established in Washington D.C. on 1 July 1958 to develop operational doctrine and procedures prior to the commissioning of the first fleet ballistic missile submarine, USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (SSBN 598). Under the command of Captain Norvell G. Ward, USN, the Squadron explored methods of enhancing the operational availability of the limited number of FBM hulls, including the development of a two crew (Blue/Gold) concept. At the same time, the United States approached the British government with a request to establish an FBM refit site in the

United Kingdom. An agreement was negotiated for the use of the Holy Loch, on the Firth of Clyde, for the anchorage of a submarine tender, a large dry-dock and supporting craft. The site was a deep, sheltered anchorage which had been a British submarine base during the Second World War with the Submarine Depot Ship H.M.S. FORTH serving as a support unit for submarines training in the Clyde.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOLY LOCH REFIT SITE

On 20 July 1960 USS GEORGE WASHINGTON conducted the first submerged launch of the Polaris A-1 missile. With that major milestone completed, Captain Ward moved his Squadron to New London, Connecticut, to rendezvous with the USS PROTEUS (AS 19), which completed conversion to the first FBM tender on 8 July 1960. On 15 November, USS GEORGE WASHINGTON departed Charleston, South Carolina on the first operational patrol. Following GEORGE WASHINGTON's return from patrol to New London on 21 January 1961 and the completion of her first SSBN refit, USS PROTEUS departed for her new home port in Scotland. Arriving in the Holy Loch on 3 March 1961, FBM Refit Site One was activated with Commodore Ward embarked. The welcome of the townsfolk from the largest town on the Loch, Dunoon, was cordial and the Provost, Ms C. S. McPhail, expressed her hope that the Americans would be treated not as visitors but as part of the fabric of the town. Within five days of the tenders arrival, USS PATRICK HENRY (SSBN 599) became the first Polaris submarine to conduct a refit at the overseas site.

On 1 June 1961 the four sections of the floating dry-dock USS LOS ALAMOS (AFDB 7) were towed into the Loch. A crew of 500 men from Mobile Construction Battalion Four worked for the next five months to assemble the vessel. USS LOS ALAMOS became fully operational in November 1961 and commenced more than 30 years of continuous service on the Firth of Clyde.

The operation of Submarine Squadron FOURTEEN was unique. The submarine tender was anchored in the middle of a loch with access to and from the ship provided only by small boat. Although potable water and telephone service was provided via submerged conduit, electrical power was provided 24 hours per day by the supporting tender. However, to support necessary underway operations of the tender, LOS ALAMOS was outfitted to support one submarine in dock and four submarines alongside with all hotel services, including electrical power.

Submarine Squadron FOURTEEN grew rapidly during the early 1960s. The number of supported submarines rose and the number of support personnel grew as experience in operating a fleet ballistic missile submarine squadron developed. In May 1962 the Navy arranged for the conversion of the old Ardnadam Hotel into an Enlisted Men's Club, commissary and exchange. However, there would never be a base at Holy Loch; rather, the Navy's facilities would be fully integrated into the community. All tender and Squadron personnel who lived ashore lived in rooms or homes rented from members of the local community. American children received their education at Dunoon, Kirn, Sandbank and St. Mun's primary and Dunoon Grammar schools and

Americans became active participants in many community related events.

The first tender turnover occurred in March 1963 when USS HUNLEY (AS 31) relieved the PROTEUS. By the end of the year, Squadron FOURTEEN had reached its full strength of ten SSBNs. The industrial activities of the Squadron created a number of new jobs in the local community, providing employment to many Scots who had previously been primarily engaged in farming and catering to holiday makers. The number of taxis increased rapidly and construction traffic increased markedly as the communities around the Loch grew to accommodate the expanding work force. Work boats were fitted with improved mufflers to reduce the noise levels and strict procedures were implemented to comply with pollution requirements.

ADDITION OF THE POLARIS A-2 AND A-3 SYSTEMS

But even as the first Polaris A-1 submarines were putting to sea, improvements in the missile range, and accuracy were being aggressively pursued by the Polaris Special Projects Office. The Polaris A-2, with a range of 1500 nautical miles, became operational in 1962 and the A-3 system, with a range of 2500 nautical miles, was deployed in USS ANDREW JACKSON (SSBN 619) in October 1963.

USS GEORGE WASHINGTON departed the Holy Loch on 2 June 1964 for her last patrol prior to undergoing conversion to the Polaris A-3 missile. The tug NATICK (YTB 760) arrived a few weeks later to provide assistance with berthing and ship movements in the Loch. And with the arrival of USS DANIEL WEBSTER (SSBN 626) on 28 September 1964, the A-3 weapons system became operational in Submarine Squadron FOURTEEN.

The introduction of the Polaris A-3 class of submarine in the Holy Loch increased the complexity of maintaining and supplying the Squadron. Not only were there three classes of submarines in the Squadron, there were three different weapons systems. But logistics and material problems had to be resolved quickly since one submarine arrived to commence refit and another departed on patrol every 10 days.

In August 1964, the Ardnadam Pier was extensively damaged by fire, which took hold in the recently creosoted wooden piles and deck planking. Both civilian firemen and special details from USS HUNLEY fought the blaze. During the several months it took to rebuild the structure, boat operations to and from the tender were conducted from the Hunter s Quay pier.

The last Polaris A-1 submarine to operate from Holy Loch, USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (SSBN 602), departed for the United States and conversion to the A-3 weapons system on 14 October 1965. By the end of that year, Refit Site One had completed 100 SSBN refits in the Loch.

A FLAVOR OF SCOTLAND

Life in Scotland was quite different from life in the United States. From lack of central heating to different forms of social relaxation, many of the customs and traditions of the Scots were unfamiliar. However, the Americans took to Scottish cultural and sporting customs with alacrity. There were soon many eager bagpipers and Highland dancers as well as soccer and cricket players. Golf was keenly pursued on many of the original courses of the game and a Site One Golf Tournament was fully subscribed each summer. Likewise, sailing was a favorite pastime, and each summer the Polaris Cup Regatta was fiercely contended between the Dunoon and the U.S. Navy Yacht Clubs.

Christmas walkabouts, the Holy Loch Singers, Burns Suppers and innumerable charity events for the benefit of the needy of the Cowal Peninsula all helped engender a spirit of oneness between the American and Scottish communities. The Independence Day Celebration, held at the Dunoon Stadium each 4th of July, provided an open door for the local community to sample the American way of life with copious quantities of hot-dogs, hamburgers and soft drinks provided amidst a series of American games and sporting events.

Anxious to ensure the arriving American servicemen and families were not overwhelmed by their arrival in a foreign country, the British Ministry of Defense appointed a Community Relations Advisor to help new arrivals adjust to their new surroundings. In addition, a Scottish/American Community Relations Committee was formed as a means to further mutual understanding and potential problems. This informal body, chaired by Sir Fitzroy . McLean, Bt, included representation from the U.S. Navy, local government and members of the local community.

In April 1966, the tug SAUGUS (YTB 780) arrived from Rota, Spain to assist with the mooring and movement of Squadron FOURTEEN units. Three months later USS SIMON LAKE (AS 33) arrived to serve as the third tender to support Refit Site One. In September of that year, USS GEORGE BANCROFT (SSBN 643) became the first 640 class submarine to refit in Holy Loch.

The demanding submarine refit schedule was complicated in 1969 when it was necessary to send LOS ALAMOS into the shipyard for a much needed Overhaul. Towed across the Clyde to the Scott-Lithgow yard at Port Glasgow, the dry-dock was in overhaul for almost a year in what would be the only period that the dry-dock suspended operations prior to her 1992 inactivation. Upon her return to the Holy Loch, she held a celebration for more than 350 members of the local community. Then, following the celebration, crew members rapidly returned to work and, in the first four months of 1970, conducted ten submarine drydockings to get the docking maintenance schedule back on track -- a record that still stands. In May, USS CANOPUS (AS 34) arrived in the Holy Loch fresh from a conversion overhaul at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, where she became the first tender configured to support the Poseidon C-3 missile.

POSEIDON JOINS THE FLEET

The Poseidon missile system represented a major step forward in technology and deterrence. Designed to be back filled in all but the first ten SSBNs, the weapons system was a response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union's land based SS-9 missile. The Poseidon system, with its Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs), offered a higher level of survivability in the increasingly intense anti-missile environment over potential targets. On 3 August 1970, USS JAMES MADISON (SSBN 627) conducted the first successful submerged test firing of the Poseidon C-3 missile.

John W. Warner, Secretary of the Navy, visited Refit Site One on 24 October 1974 during his tour of U.S. bases in Europe. After inspecting the base, Mr. Warner paid a courtesy call to the Dunoon Council Chambers where he called on the Provost, Mr. John Thomson, and senior members of the local government.

Shortly after the arrival of the Poseidon missile system in Holy Loch, the Ship's System Maintenance and Monitoring program was instituted. Designed to identify and allow repair of components before they failed Holy Loch was used as a testing ground for this new concept. Proven an unqualified success, the program was expanded to encompass all SSBNs and SSNs in the United States Navy.

Constrained by the relatively small number of shipyards that could overhaul nuclear powered submarines and taking advantage of increased life of the new nuclear reactor plants, the Navy instituted the Extended Refit Period (ERP) program in 1974. USS JAMES MADISON was the first of the Squadron submarines to undergo such a refit. With the tremendous success of the program, the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard was called upon to assist the LOS ALAMOS with a self overhaul so that she could better support future ERPs.

LOS ALAMOS completed two more submarine extended refits in 1975. In November 1975, USS HOLLAND (AS 32) relieved the CANOPUS as the fourth tender in the Holy Loch and the festivities were highlighted by a full bagpipe band. This year also saw the arrival of the Squadron's third tug, PIQUA (YTB 793).

As the 1970s faded and the initial 41 fleet ballistic missile submarines aged, the complexity of the maintenance availability and demands on the refit site personnel increased. The first steam generator inspection to be conducted at an advanced refit site was conducted in 1976. During the following years, two steam generator inspections and two ERPs per year became the nominal workload along with three SSBN refits, one resupply ship (TAK) visit and one SSN upkeep per month.

Sailor Mark Mallory achieved a unique honor in January 1980 when he became the first American ever to box for Scotland. In April 1981 he won the Scottish National Light Middleweight championship, the only American ever to win a Scottish title. Mallory, who had spent much of his own time helping train the young men of the Dunoon Amateur Boxing Club, fought more than 50 fights during his tour, becoming a particular favorite among Glasgow spectators.

TRIDENT IS COMMISSIONED

With the advent of the Poseidon C-3 weapons system and the development of the follow-on Trident program, the first of the ten remaining Polaris A-3 submarines commenced inactivation on 1 November 1979. In 1981 LOS ALAMOS marked twenty years of continuous service at Submarine Refit Site One and then on 11 November, the first Trident submarine, USS OHIO (SSBN 726), was commissioned in Groton, Connecticut. Though the Trident program would take many years to complete, it would be the dynamic that would eventually force the retirement of the Poseidon submarines and Squadrons.

USS HUNLEY (AS 31) returned to the Holy Loch on 25 January 1982 for her second tour as the Submarine Squadron FOURTEEN flag ship. The final chapter in the history of the Polaris program was written in February 1982 when the last A-3 missile was offloaded from the USS ROBERT E. LEE (SSBN 601). The first ten SSBNs had not been retrofitted for the Poseidon missile and, with the commissioning of the Trident submarines, were inactivated.

The presence of the United States Navy in the Dunoon area over a 20 year period had resulted in a number of small support facilities being scattered throughout the community. Therefore, in October 1982, the Naval Support Activity, Holy Loch was established as a command reporting to Commander, U.S. Naval Activities, United Kingdom in London. NAVSUPACT incorporated additional assets and focused greater emphasis on the support of military personnel and families attached to Submarine Squadron FOURTEEN ships.

Marine Sergeant Leigh Gibson became somewhat of a celebrity in the Community in December 1983 when he raised one hundred fifty pounds for a local charity. Running in the Glasgow marathon, Gibson completed the course in just over three hours. His sponsorship money was contributed to Benmore and Rashfield Community Association at a special ceremony, just in time for Christmas. The upsurge in marathon races in the United Kingdom in the latter half of the 1980s created a boon for local charities. Runners from Site One were a regular feature, with the funds raised in sponsorship contributed to a number of local charities.

A quarter of a century's presence at the Holy Loch was marked by an anniversary celebration held at Queen's Hall in Dunoon on 8 March 1986. In commemoration of the joint efforts by the strategic submarine forces of the United States and Royal Navies, a memorial cairn and commemorative plaque were dedicated at Castle Gardens in Dunoon. The occasion, attended by numerous members of the U.S. Navy, Royal Navy and local dignitaries, recognized the continuing harmonious relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom.

In 1987 Submarine Squadron FOURTEEN was awarded the Ambassador's award for its strong support of community relations. And on 7 June 1987, the SIMON LAKE returned for her second tour as the Squadron FOURTEEN flagship. Although unknown at the time, the changeover in the Holy Loch between USS HUNLEY and USS SIMON LAKE was destined to be the last.

Following World War II, quarters in Culzean Castle had been given to General Dwight D. Eisenhower for his lifetime use as an expression of Scotland's appreciation for his wartime leadership. In 1990, as the 100th anniversary of Eisenhower's birth approached, the Repair Department of SIMON LAKE cast an impressive memorial bust of the great general and President and presented it to the National Trust for Scotland. The bust is on display at Culzean Castle.

HOLY LOCH CLOSURE ANNOUNCED

The success of the START and INF discussions in the late 1980s, and the dramatic collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union as viable military alliances, triggered a radical re-appraisal of the need for a large nuclear deterrent force. With reductions being made across the board in military forces, the downsizing of the strategic submarine force became an economic necessity. Although it remained a viable deterrent, the C-3 Poseidon weapons system became unaffordable under the pressures of declining budgets and reduced manpower. Therefore, on 05 February 1991, the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom announced the decision to close Refit Site One. The measure of how closely the American servicemen and families were bound into the local community was accentuated when the local press described Dunoon as the "victim of peace". Refit Site One represented fully one third of the economic activity of the Cowal peninsula, employing more than 240 direct hire employees and directly impacting the employment of more than 500 others.

With fewer than fifteen months to plan for and execute the closure of the first SSBN advanced refit site, events moved quickly. The last SSBN to undergo refit at Squadron FOURTEEN, USS WILL ROGERS (SSBN 659), departed the Loch on 09 November 1991 sailing for New London, Connecticut. Coincidentally, the ROGERS was also the last of the original "41 for Freedom" SSBNs to be commissioned. The departure of the U.S. Navy's submarine force from Scotland will entail the moving of more than 1000 families from the Holy Loch as well as making LOS ALAMOS ready for heavy lift transport across the Atlantic during the stormy month of February 1992.

The challenge of departing the Holy Loch will be no more demanding than challenges facing the men of the Squadron more than three decades before. In early March 1992 Captain William J. Riffer will prepare the USS SIMON LAKE to depart for her last time from the Scottish landscape. And Captain Ronald D. Gumbert, the last of the 19 Submarine Squadron FOURTEEN Commanders, will prepare to retire the pennant of the last and longest serving Polaris/Poseidon submarine squadron on 1 June 1992. Submarine Squadron Fourteen and permanently assigned units have been awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation for exceptional performance of assigned missions in 1975, 1983 and 1987.

As with the change in any duty station, the departure from the Holy Loch brings memories of goals achieved and missions accomplished, but it also brings feelings of friendships abbreviated and opportunities missed. For the thousands of American servicemen and families who have served in the Cowal Peninsula, the warm memories

of their time in Scotland will never wane and the call to return to the bonnie highlands will remain ever strong.

USS Hunley Statistics Highlights

PERSONNEL OFFICE - Handles an average of 282 transfers, 702 receipts and 130 reenlistments in addition to 210 separations and 32 retirements a year.

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT - Processes approximately 21,600 outgoing and 49,200 incoming messages a year.

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT - Handles 10,800 visits, does an average of 3,240 X-ray's and 8,400 routine laboratory procedures a year.

REPAIR DEPARTMENT - Completes an average of 23 submarine refits expending over 613,408 man-hours on 9,400 jobs yearly.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT - Provides refit submarines with over 3,600,000 gallons of diesel fuel and 10,000 gallons of lube oil annually in addition to chill water, potable water, steam, power, telephone and sewage services and various gas charging services.

WEAPONS REPAIR DEPARTMENT - Provides technical assistance and repair services to an average of 23 refit submarines and visiting units annually.

POST OFFICE - Processes 72,000 pieces of out-going and 27,000 in-coming mail yearly and sells an average of 7,200 money orders yearly.

LEGAL OFFICE - Prepares powers of attorney, bills of sale and serves as notary public an average of 2,400 times a year.

SUPPLY DEPARTMENT - Disburses an annual payroll of over \$12 million dollars, manages an inventory of 50,000 line items valued in excess of \$12 million dollars, in addition to feeding 1,100 patrons daily.

DENTAL DEPARTMENT - Handles over 6,700 patients' visits; doing over 3,000 fillings, 1,400 cleanings and 2,500 miscellaneous dental services annually.

CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - Processes 36,000 pieces of incoming mail and messages and serializes 2,400 out-going letters a year; publishes the ship's newspaper and operates the crew's closed circuit television system.

HUNLEY - Crew members consume 480,000 gallons of milk, 21,600 pounds of coffee, 540,000 pounds of meat and 86,400 dozen eggs annually.

COMMANDERS OF SUBMARINE SQUADRON FOURTEEN

Captain N.G. Ward July 1958 - August 1961
 Captain W.F. Schlech August 1961 - November 1962
 Captain D.B. Bell November 1962 - July 1964
 Captain L.S. Eubanks July 1964 - November 1966
 Captain R.F. Woodall November 1966 - July 1968
 Captain B.F. Sherman July 1968 - July 1970
 Captain F.D. McMullen, Jr. July 1970 - June 1971
 Captain P.J. Early June 1971 - July 1972
 Captain A.L. Kelln July 1972 - January 1974
 Captain J.R. Lewis January 1974 - June 1976
 Captain S.G. Catola June 1976 - October 1978
 Captain W.D. Smith October 1978 - June 1980
 Captain G.H. Curtis, III June 1980 - July 1981
 Captain J. N. Adkins, Jr. July 1981 - May 1983
 Captain G.W. Davis, VI May 1983 - April 1985
 Captain D.M. Goebel April 1985 - August 1987
 Captain E.L. Watkins, III August 1987 - May 1989
 Captain F.P. Gustavson May 1989 - May 1991
 Captain R.D. Gumbert, Jr. May 1991 - June 1992



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