



USS Bream (SS-243)

A common European food and game fish of the carp family typically found in lakes and slow rivers. Silver in color with a blue or brown back, the bream is deep bodied with flat sides and a small head. The fish usually reaches a length of 12 to 20 inches and weighs up to 13 pounds.

(SS-243: dp. 1,526 (surf.), 2,424 (subm.); l. 311'9"; b. 27'3"; dr. 19'3"; s. 20.25 k. (surf.), 8.75 k. (subm.); cpl. 60; a. 10 21" tt., 1 4", 2 20mm.; cl. *Gato*)

Bream (SS-243) was laid down on 5 February 1943 at Groton, Conn., by the Electric Boat Co.; launched on 17 October 1943; sponsored by Mrs. Wreford G. Chapple, wife of the submarine's prospective commanding officer; and placed in commission on 24 January 1944, Comdr. Wreford G. Chapple in command.

Following shakedown training in the New London area, *Bream* set out for the Pacific on 10 March and reached the Canal Zone on 20 March. She completed another series of exercises before transiting the Canal on 10 April and continuing on to Brisbane, Australia, where she arrived on 8 May. Two days later, the warship left Australia, bound for New Guinea. She reached Milne Bay on the 14th and underwent voyage repairs alongside *Euryale* (AS-22).

Upon completion of that work, *Bream* sailed for the Admiralty Islands, reached Seeadler Harbor on 29 May, and began preparations for her first war patrol. On 1 June, she got underway for a patrol in the vicinity of Halmahera Island. The submarine made several contacts with enemy vessels in Morotai Strait, but conditions prevented her from taking any offensive action. Her luck changed on 8 June, however, when she spotted a convoy, selected a transport as a target, and unleashed a six-torpedo spread. Members of *Bream's* crew heard one loud explosion before she went deep, and several depth charges detonated nearby the submarine, but she survived unscathed. Postwar study of Japanese records failed to confirm a kill.

Five days later, while *Bream* tracked another convoy, a depth-charge barrage forced her to break off pursuit before she could maneuver into position. Her luck improved again on 16 June when the submarine next encountered a Japanese convoy. She fired torpedoes at two transports, and breaking-up noises reverberated throughout the submarine shortly thereafter as the 5,704-ton Japanese freighter, *Yuki Maru*, disintegrated and went to the bottom. Several days after that attack, damage to a hatch gasket in her conning tower--while the submarine was submerged--let water to flood into her pump

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room and knock out all electrical power in the room. This forced *Bream* to head for Seeadler Harbor where she arrived on 29 June. Work correcting the damage began shortly thereafter.

Following repairs, refitting, and training, *Bream* began her second patrol on 21 July, when she got underway for waters off the southern Philippines. On 29 July, the submarine had almost reached the entrance to the Davao Gulf when flames broke out in the maneuvering room. Centered over the port main motor, the fire ignited cork and auxiliary cable insulation in the overhead. Fifteen minutes after it broke out, the blaze was extinguished. Fortunately, the damage was not serious enough to force the submarine to terminate her patrol, and she sailed on to the coast of Mindanao.

On 7 August, *Bream* moved to an area off Davao Gulf in an attempt to intercept traffic coming from the Palaus. She encountered enemy ships but expended no torpedoes. On the morning of 26 August, as she retired toward Fremantle, Australia, the submarine spotted a Japanese airplane. The enemy plane dropped a bomb which exploded nearby the diving submarine, raised *Bream's* stern about 20 feet, and shook her severely. A second bomb also detonated nearby and inflicted considerable damage. Nevertheless, the submarine put into Brisbane safely on 6 September.

Bream underwent a refit by tender *Euryale* before getting underway for Darwin, Australia, on 2 October. She paused at the latter port on the 9th for minor repairs and refueling before continuing on to her patrol area off the Philippines between the northern end of Palawan Passage and Manila. On 16 October, she sighted a two-masted barge with an escort but decided to let them pass to avoid alerting more worthy targets of her presence.

On 23 October, three large ships—two Japanese light cruisers and one heavy cruiser—appeared on *Bream's* radarscope. One of the enemy warships approached the submarine to within 800 yards on her port quarter before *Bream* fired six torpedoes at the tempting target. Soon thereafter, the submarine's crew heard three loud explosions and believed that they had destroyed an enemy cruiser. A study of Japanese records after the war revealed that *Bream* had damaged the Japanese heavy cruiser *Aoba* severely enough to keep her from participating in the Battle for Leyte Gulf. The submarine endured intermittent depth charging over the next five hours, but she suffered no damage.

While continuing her patrol the next day, *Bream* picked up six survivors of a Japanese ship sunk several days before by *Bluegill* (SS-242). On the 25th, she moved into position in an attempt to intercept the Japanese fleet retiring from battles in Philippine waters. On 30 October, the submarine spotted a convoy, fired a six-torpedo spread at a large transport, and went deep to avoid depth charges. Her torpedoes damaged the target, but she was able to continue under her own power.

On 4 November, the submarine fired four torpedoes at another enemy transport, but none found the mark. After weathering a total of eight depth charges, she eluded her pursuers and resumed her patrol. Two days later, *Bream* came upon two Japanese cruisers and began closing for an attack on the leading ship. After careful maneuvering to avoid the cruiser's escorts, the submarine fired four torpedoes. Some crewmen reported three explosions, but no damage seems to have resulted. The submarine then shaped a course for Fremantle, where she arrived on 22 November.

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Following refit and training, *Bream* commenced her fourth patrol on 19 December. She entered Exmouth Gulf on the 22d and refueled there that same day. She continued on through Lombok Strait, entered the Java Sea, spotted a sailboat on the 31st, and decided to attack it with her 4-inch gun. During the action, an enemy plane approached, forcing *Bream* to cease fire and dive.

On 9 January 1945, the submarine began patrolling the western approaches to Balabac Strait. After four uneventful days, *Bream* moved to the northern end of the strait but again made no contacts and so shifted to Miri, Borneo, for reconnaissance work. She sighted a large vessel on the 24th, but the contact proved to be a hospital ship. The submarine transited Lombok Strait on 4 February; paused at Onslow, Australia, for refueling two days later; and finally arrived back at Fremantle on 10 February.

Bream left Australia on 7 March for her fifth patrol, made a refueling stop at Exmouth Gulf on the 10th, and proceeded through Lombok Strait to the Balikpapan-Surabaya shipping lanes. On the 13th, she intercepted two sea trucks and dispatched them with her 4-inch gun. The following day, *Bream* came across a convoy of three small freighters and an escort. She fired three bow tubes at the leading freighter, but all of them broached. She then got off one more torpedo, and it seemed to hit the target, which blew up with a tremendous explosion. However, postwar accounting failed to confirm a kill.

On 15 March, *Bream* sighted an enemy destroyer escort and began preparing for an attack. Instead, the Japanese ship picked up the submarine's trail and began raining depth charges on her. Several went off close aboard and drove *Bream* to the bottom in 100 feet of water. The submarine remained on the ocean floor, mired in mud, for five hours and underwent repeated depth-charge barrages. During one attack, her conning tower hatch was lifted, forcing the conning tower to be abandoned and secured by closing the lower hatch. When the Japanese ship gave up the chase later that night, the submarine surfaced and began evaluating the extent of her damages. The destruction proved extensive, and she spent several days making temporary repairs.

Bream later picked up on her radar screen two ships that proved to be enemy freighters. She fired four torpedoes from the bow tubes, but all four promptly sank. Apparently the tubes had been damaged in the earlier encounter with the Japanese destroyer escort. The submarine then set a course through Lombok Strait for Australia and reached Fremantle on 22 March.

During her refit, both of the submarine's periscopes, her starboard shaft, and both of her screws were replaced, and the damage to her torpedo tubes was corrected. On 20 April, the submarine commenced her sixth and final war patrol. She transited Lombok Strait on the 25th and, early the next morning spotted what appeared to be an American submarine. The second submarine quickly turned and headed toward *Bream*, which at this point dived and manned her battle stations. The submarine was shaken by several depth charges dropped by a Japanese escort vessel but managed to clear the area safely. A few hours later, she encountered two small patrol craft, but they were too small to merit a torpedo attack.

On 29 April, while patrolling off southern Borneo, *Bream* picked up the trail of an oiler. After stalking the target for several hours, she fired four torpedoes at the enemy vessel. The first torpedo hit the target, and it disintegrated in a mass of flames. The submarine continued her patrol uneventfully until pulling into port at Subic Bay on 14 May for voyage repairs and fuel. Two days later, she put back out to sea

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and headed for lifeguard duty off the southern tip of Formosa. During her time on station, *Bream* rescued five downed American aviators. On 31 May, she got underway for Saipan, where she arrived on 5 June. She set sail once again the next day and, following a two-day stop at Pearl Harbor, arrived at San Francisco, Calif., on 24 June.

Upon her arrival, *Bream* began an overhaul at the Bethlehem Steel Co. shipyard in San Francisco. While the work was in progress, the war in the Pacific ended. The submarine was later transferred to the Mare Island Naval Shipyard at Vallejo, Calif. She was decommissioned there on 31 January 1946 and was placed in reserve.

As a part of the Navy's fleet expansion program in response to the communist invasion of the Republic of Korea, *Bream* was recommissioned on 5 June 1951 and reported to Submarine Squadron 3, Pacific Fleet. From June 1951 until August 1952, she was engaged in type training and provided services to the Fleet Sonar School at San Diego. She was decommissioned once again on 10 September 1952 to undergo conversion to an antisubmarine "killer" submarine at the San Francisco Naval Shipyard. The conversion included the installation of a snorkel, which enabled her to take in air and operate her diesel engines while submerged. In addition, her conning tower was streamlined, the habitability of the crew's living spaces was improved, and special sonar listening equipment was installed. The warship was redesignated SSK-243 in February 1953. *Bream* was placed back in commission on 20 June 1953.

Following her conversion, *Bream* resumed operations with the Fleet Sonar School at San Diego. She also took part in numerous Pacific Fleet operations and exercises and conducted type training. The submarine commenced a cold weather training cruise to Alaska in September 1954 and returned, via Pearl Harbor, to San Diego on 15 November. She continued local operations along the California coast until May of 1955 when she made another voyage to Pearl Harbor. During her stay in Hawaiian waters, the submarine participated in an extensive antisubmarine warfare operation. She returned to San Diego late in May and resumed normal operations until late September. On the 22d, she entered the San Francisco Naval Shipyard for an overhaul.

In February 1956, her home port was moved to Pearl Harbor; and she was assigned to Submarine Squadron 7, Submarine Division 72. *Bream* left Hawaiian waters on 6 March for an extended western Pacific (WestPac) cruise. She reached Yokosuka, Japan, on 11 June and operated in that area during the next two months. In early August, the submarine made a short cruise to Chinhae, Korea, and returned to Yokosuka via Yokohama, Japan. Her duty there was interrupted in early October by a return visit to Chinhae and a liberty call at Hong Kong during the first week of November. The warship began the voyage back to Hawaii on 2 December and arrived at Pearl Harbor on the 9th.

During the first five months of 1957, the submarine carried out local operations from her base at Pearl Harbor. She commenced a trip to the west coast on 4 June and arrived at San Francisco on the 13th. After a week's visit, *Bream* returned to Hawaii and remained at Pearl Harbor until mid-July. At that time, she embarked upon a cruise to Alaska from which she did not return until early September. *Bream* left her home port on the last day of October, bound for the Far East. Following port calls at Pago Pago, American Samoa, and Auckland, New Zealand, she reached Yokohama on Christmas Day and remained there through the holidays. The submarine then sailed for Subic Bay on 7 January 1958.

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Among her later ports of call were Yokosuka, Japan, and Hong Kong. After three more months of providing services in support of 7th Fleet ships, the ship returned to Pearl Harbor early in April 1958.

Shortly after her arrival, the submarine began an overhaul at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. Her yard work was completed on 13 September, and the submarine resumed local operations. She sailed for the Orient on 6 April 1959, reached Yokosuka on the 18th, and remained there for the next 10 days. The warship then proceeded to the Philippines for operations in Manila Bay after which, she visited Hong Kong and Buckner Bay, Okinawa. On 2 June, *Bream* returned to Yokosuka, her base of operations for the remainder of the month. In July, the submarine got underway for special operations. While carrying out that assignment, she was reverted back to SS-243 in August. She touched briefly at Yokosuka again before departing Japanese waters on 21 September on her way to Pearl Harbor.

Bream entered her home port on 2 October and carried out local operations through 26 November 1960, when she sailed again for Japan. After a stop in the Bonin Islands at Chichi Jima on 9 December, the submarine arrived at Yokosuka on the 11th. Among her ports of call during this deployment were Atami, Japan; Buckner Bay; Hong Kong; Manila and Subic Bay, Philippines; and Guam, Mariana Islands. The cruise ended on 24 May 1961, when *Bream* arrived at Oahu. She participated in local operations until 1 September when she entered the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard for an overhaul.

The submarine left the shipyard on 28 January 1962 and got underway for the west coast four days later. She arrived at San Francisco on 10 February and moved to Long Beach, Calif., a few days later. *Bream* left California on 19 February and returned to Pearl Harbor. During the next few months, she alternated between local training and upkeep in her home port. The submarine began another WestPac cruise on 8 August and visited Yokosuka, Japan, and Chinhae, Korea, in the fall and early winter months. The warship also provided services to Task Group (TG) 70.4, a Pacific Fleet hunter/killer group. She also took part in Exercise "Pilot Light" before pulling into port at Yokosuka for the Christmas holidays.

Bream departed Yokosuka on 1 January 1963 en route to Okinawa. After briefly pausing there, she sailed on to Hong Kong. The submarine also visited Guam before arriving back at Pearl Harbor on 2 February. She then participated in local operations until 27 August, when she began a special operation. That mission terminated at Adak, Alaska, on 18 October. *Bream* departed Alaskan waters on the 20th and proceeded, via Vancouver, British Columbia, to Seattle, Wash. The submarine arrived back at Pearl Harbor on 13 November and spent the rest of the year in local operations.

On 1 February 1964, the warship's designation changed once again, this time to AGSS-243. She continued to operate from Pearl Harbor through May 1964. On 1 June 1964, she got underway for her new home port, San Diego, and arrived there on the 11th. *Bream* was assigned to Submarine Squadron (SubRon) 3, and operated in the San Diego area for approximately two months. On 31 August, she entered the Mare Island Naval Shipyard for overhaul which was completed on 26 January 1965. *Bream* then began a training cruise which included stops at Port Angeles, Bangor, and Bremerton, Wash. She returned to Mare Island on 27 February for the installation of a new battery and an engine overhaul before finally returning to San Diego on 11 July and resuming local operations.

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The submarine departed the California coast on 12 November for operations in the western Pacific with the 7th Fleet. Upon her arrival in waters off Vietnam, she assumed duty on Yankee Station. She was relieved on 6 January 1966 and headed for Thailand. *Bream* visited Sattahip and Bangkok and held joint operations with the Royal Thai Navy. On 20 January, she headed for Kaohsiung, Taiwan, and arrived there six days later. The submarine operated out of Kaohsiung until 16 February, when she sailed for Yokosuka, where local operations in nearby waters kept her busy until 15 March. *Bream* then departed Japan for the Philippines. After a voyage during which she provided services to aircraft, the submarine finally reached Sangley Point on 29 March. She later made a brief liberty call at Hong Kong before returning to Yokosuka on 16 April.

Bream left Japan on 24 April and headed back to the United States. After a short stop at Pearl Harbor in early May, she arrived in San Diego on the 15th. Following a leave and upkeep period, the submarine carried out local operations from San Diego until midsummer when she made a brief visit to the San Francisco Naval Shipyard for installation of communications equipment. She returned to San Diego on 6 August to resume local operations which continued through the Christmas holidays.

During January and February 1967, *Bream* participated in operations along the southern California coast. On 3 March, she embarked on an extended training cruise which included a port visit at Acapulco, Mexico. She returned to San Diego on 25 March and commenced preparations to deploy to the western Pacific. In April, the submarine entered the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard for drydocking and repairs. She then returned to San Diego to complete her preparations. On 9 June, *Bream* got underway for the Far East. During this cruise, she visited Hong Kong; Songkhla and Bangkok, Thailand; Subic Bay and Cebu City, Philippines; Keelung and Kaohaiung, Taiwan; Chinhae, Korea; and Sasebo and Yokosuka, Japan. The submarine provided services to the Korean and Nationalist Chinese Navies besides carrying out assigned duties with the 7th Fleet.

Bream departed Yokosuka on 3 December and sailed directly to San Diego. She arrived in her home port on 19 December and began a holiday leave and upkeep period. During January 1968, the submarine operated off the southern California coast. On 6 February, she sailed to the Mare Island Naval Shipyard to be drydocked for repairs. She returned to service on 21 March and once again operated along the southern California coast. *Bream* departed San Diego on 16 October to carry out another Far Eastern tour of duty.

In addition to her duties with the 7th Fleet, *Bream* provided services to the Philippine and Nationalist Chinese Navies. During her deployment, the submarine visited Hong Kong; Subic Bay and Manila, Philippines; Kaohainng, Taiwan; and Yokosuka, Japan. The warship left Yokosuka on 21 February 1969 and sailed for San Diego. She arrived back in California waters on 12 March. After leave and upkeep, the submarine took up local operations once more along the southern California coast.

Preparations to deactivate the submarine began in mid-1969. On 28 June 1969, *Bream* was decommissioned at Mare Island, and her name was struck from the Navy list that same day. She was later sunk as a target on 7 November 1969.

Bream earned four battle stars for her World War II service.

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