

Rhododendron sighted a U-boat, probably the U-68,³⁷ on the surface, which was quickly seen to dive. The British corvette then carried out four attacks, in which 30 depth charges were expended, without result. At 01.07 the remaining 12 ships of OG 69 carried out another emergency turn to port altogether, altering the course of the convoy from 250 to 105 degrees.³⁸

At 01.32 HMS *Sunflower*, off the port bow of OG 69, ominously obtained a sonar contact. Two minutes later the wake of a U-boat was sighted. The British corvette, firing star and explosive shells from her main battery, attempted to ram the enemy vessel, which however managed to submerge some 500yds ahead of HMS *Sunflower*. At this point the British warship attempted to gain sonar contact with the U-boat, but failed to do so. HMS *Sunflower* was soon joined by HMS *Pimpernel*; both corvettes then mounted a sonar hunt for the U-boat which was without any results. However, at 02.05 the search for the U-boat had to be abandoned and HMS *Sunflower* and HMS *Pimpernel* steamed to rejoin OG 69.³⁹

Whilst HMS *Sunflower* and HMS *Pimpernel* were proceeding to rejoin the convoy, the U-203, at 02.54, fired two torpedoes at the merchant ships of OG 69.⁴⁰ One of these torpedoes did not hit anything although the other did hit the freighter *Kellwyn*, which was carrying coke to Lisbon, in number three hold. The torpedoing of the *Kellwyn* went almost unnoticed by the escorts for when the German missile hit the ship there was no visible explosion, no flash and no noise, and the crew of the freighter did not fire off rockets or make any other signals. The *Kellwyn* sank almost immediately and only five of her crew were later rescued by HM Armed Trawler *St Nectan*.⁴¹ For reasons that remain unclear, following the rescue operation the armed trawler did not rejoin the escort of OG 69.

At 03.35, as HMS *Pimpernel* was steaming to rejoin OG 69, she sighted a U-boat at a range of 400yds. It was probably the U-561.⁴² The enemy vessel was immediately illuminated with a searchlight. HMS *Pimpernel* then came to full speed and attempted to ram the U-boat which, however, submerged. Ten depth charges were dropped as the corvette passed over the point where the U-boat was seen to have dived. Sonar contact was immediately obtained by HMS *Pimpernel* and two more depth charge attacks were carried out. After the last attack secondary explosions were heard by the crew of HMS *Pimpernel*, the sonar contact was lost, and the men of the British warship wrongly concluded that the U-boat had been 'destroyed'.⁴³

Immediately after HMS *Pimpernel* had sighted the U-boat, HMS *Sunflower* encountered wreckage floating on the sea with a number of men clinging to it. The British corvette stopped, lowered a boat, and rescued 16 men from the freighter *Hawkinge*.⁴⁴ The master of the *Hawkinge*, when rescued, informed HMS *Sunflower* that when the freighter, which was carrying coal to Lisbon, was hit by a torpedo on the starboard side the crew did not have time to take to the boats before the merchant vessel sank.⁴⁵ After rescuing the survivors of the *Hawkinge*, HMS *Sunflower* continued steaming to rejoin OG 69. The last encounter of the night between the U-boats and the British ships occurred in the early morning of 27 July when at 05.30 HMS *Begonia* obtained a sonar contact which was attacked with depth charges and then lost.⁴⁶

Throughout 27 July the U-boats maintained contact with OG 69. After being attacked by HMS *Rhododendron* the U-68 lost contact with the convoy;⁴⁷ however, it was replaced as shadower by the U-126.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the BdU was receiving an increasingly confusing picture of the situation on the ground with the U-371, at