Robert Whitehead Encyclopedia Article

Robert Whitehead

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Robert Whitehead

1823-1905

British engineer and inventor who developed the first self-propelled torpedo in 1866. Whitehead's torpedo was driven by a compressed-air engine and carried a 15kg explosive charge. It also featured a self-regulating device for maintaining a constant preset depth. In 1872 Whitehead established a firm in the Adriatic port of Fiume (also called Rijeka) to manufacture his torpedoes. By 1881 he had customers worldwide, from Britain to Russia to Argentina.