

REPORT OF TOTAL LOSS, CASUALTY, &c.

No. 78037 in R. B. Wreck Book p. 95/40

Date of writing this report

19

Vessel's Name *Sel. Inv. Sc. S. S. Lancastria (4996)* of *Liverpool*

Tons { Gross 16,243
Net 9,509

Built at *Glasgow* When *1922* Casualty notice sent to Owner

Owner's reply

Owner's Name *Cunard White Star, Ltd.*

Address *Cunard Building, Liverpool, 3.*

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

CL 22/6 and 24/6

Case previously before
Classing Committee. { Date
Last Minute

Particulars of Classification.

+ 100 A.I. + L.M.C.
Shelter 44. Lloyd R.M.C. 1, 40
with freeboard B.S. 1, 40
S.S. No. 339 M.S. 2, 38
S.S. No. 1-34 T.S. 3, 37
Fixed for 62 6, 22 P. 2, 34
F.P. above 150° F

Date of Casualty *about 21st June, 1940*

17th June, 1940

Précis of particulars of Casualty

Sunk by aircraft lying at anchor at

St. Nazaire on the 17th June 1940.

were ferrying other personnel from the docks to troopships.

Some, however, managed to swim and wade ashore in the shallow water.

Survivors all paid tribute to the magnificent courage displayed by the ship's crew and all tanks.

SUBALTERN SAVED 16

A Bren gunner kept up continuous fire at enemy planes till the ship sank. He hung on to his gun whilst deep in water, despite shouts of men clinging to the Lancastria's propellers, and went down with the ship.

A subaltern named Gilbert Smith repeatedly dived to rescue men and saved 16.

One corporal, who lost his life, was due for a medal for saving 40 lives when the field of Orleans was taken.

A civilian swam 200 yards through oil with a woman. When he got her to a lifeboat he collapsed and was drowned.

SISTERS' STORY

Church Army sisters Troot and Chamley, who were survivors, told a reporter: "We saw through the open porthole a black cloud in the sky moving very fast. It turned out to be five or six aeroplanes. As soon as they were over the ship they released bombs. We rushed on deck and got into a lifeboat while men were sliding into the sea by ropes and others leapt overboard.

"As our boat moved away from the ship soldiers watching through a porthole saw we were wearing our lifebelts. They shouted, 'Give us a chance,' and we took off the belts and flung them into the sea. The soldiers jumped in after them.

"Two old Belgians and a little boy were in the water. The child was saying his prayers while the adults encouraged him to keep afloat. They were saved.

"We threw our oars overboard and saw R.A.F. planes arrive and drop a number of lifebelts. We ourselves were finally picked up by a French trawler."

R.A.F. MEN LOST

A member of the crew who reached the deck from below, said: "Beneath where I had been sitting I know there were at least 200 R.A.F. men and they must have been lost.

One of the planes whose bombs made the direct hits which sank the Lancastria is believed to have been shot down later by another British vessel. The pilot, uninjured, was taken prisoner.

An officer of the Royal Engineers, waiting on the quay when the Lancastria sank, persuaded a French tug to go out into the harbour.

"We made three trips," he said, "and I reckon we saved roughly 300 people, including some women."

LANCASTRIA.—London, July 25.—The steamer Lancastria, it is learned to-day, was sunk at anchor at St. Nazaire, having just completed unloading personnel for evacuation. After half an hour of ineffectual attacks by aircraft the vessel was hit by a salvo of bombs and immediately took a heavy list, which severely hampered the launching of the ship's lifeboats. She capsized and finally sank within half an hour of being struck. The majority of survivors were picked up by small craft which were engaged in ferrying other personnel from docks to troopships. Some, however, managed to swim and wade ashore in the shallow water. It is estimated that some 2,500 persons, including women and child refugees, were on board at the time she sank. Two thousand four hundred and seventy-seven survivors are known to have been picked up. It is possible that the actual number may have been larger and that others may have made their way ashore and have fallen into enemy hands. There is great difficulty in estimating what are the exact figures in view of the difficult circumstances under which evacuation was taking place.

2,500 Were Saved When Lancastria Was Sunk

NEARLY 2,500 are known to have been saved (more may be in enemy hands) from a total of 5,300 aboard the transport Lancastria which was bombed and sunk during evacuation of the B.E.F. from France.

The Lancastria, a Cunard-White Star liner which helped to evacuate soldiers from Narvik, was lying at St. Nazaire on June 17 and was about to weigh anchor when Nazi bombers attacked.

After half an hour's ineffectual bombing she was hit by a salvo, took on a heavy list, capsized and sank.

As the ship went down Tommies clustered on the bows and sang in the water "Roll Out the Barrel" and "There'll Always Be An England."

WOMEN WERE GUNNED

Women and child evacuees in the ship jumped overboard—the heavy list hampering the launching of the lifeboats—only to be machine-gunned by the raiders. It is believed all but three of the women and children were saved.

The sea was thick with oil. Most of the survivors were picked up by small craft which

Suggested Record X

Date of Committee

Committee's Minute

OMITTED FROM R.B.

TUE. 27 AUG 1940

OMITTED FROM R.B.