

WRECK SECTION No. 719

WRECK SECTION

Wreck Report No. 15179

REPORT OF TOTAL LOSS, CASUALTY, &c.

No. 24270 in R.B. Wreck Book, p. 80/59 Date of writing this report 30th September, 19 59.

Ship's Name s.s. "OCEAN LAYER" of London Tons { Gross 4534 Net 1547

Built at Flensburg When 1948 1 Casualty notice sent to Owner --- Owner's reply ---

Owners Submarine Cables Ltd.

Managers ---

Address Mercury House, 110-124 Theobald's Road, London, W.C.1.

WRECK SECTION

15719

Classification details

BS*	MBS* 10,55
cable ship	BS M 1,59
12,58	sp 10,55
ss 10,55	
	ts 12,58 CL

Date of Casualty 15th June, 1959.

Details of Casualty

Caught fire in North Atlantic and towed to Falmouth; declared a total loss and sold for breaking up.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

OCEAN LAYER.—Land's End Radio, June 15.—Following received from British cable steamer Ocean Layer, GPRP:
 At 2 a.m., G.M.T.: XXX (urgency signal), on fire, extent of damage not known as yet. Position dead reckoning lat. 48 20 N., long. 19 3 W. We require someone to stand by us soonest.
 At 2 15 a.m., G.M.T.: Abandoning ship at 2 15 a.m., now abandoning ship.
 Following received from United States naval transport Upshur at 2 31 a.m., G.M.T.: We 30 miles from Ocean Layer and proceeding at 20 knots.
 Following received from tanker Athelmonarch at 2 32 a.m., G.M.T.: Now about 25 miles from Ocean Layer, proceeding to her assistance.
 Following received from steamer Pacific Fortune at 2 34 a.m., G.M.T.: Proceeding to assistance, bearing 98 deg., 170 miles, speed 15.5 knots.
 Following received from German motor vessel Flavia at 3 25 a.m., G.M.T.: Now four lifeboats alongside Flavia.
 Following received from Upshur at 4 9 a.m., G.M.T.: Position of Ocean Layer lat. 48 20 N., long. 19 11 W., still burning badly.
 Following received from Flavia:
 At 4 12 a.m., G.M.T.: Now all men on board Flavia in position lat. 48 20 N., long. 19 3 W., but perhaps two men are missing.
 At 4 18 a.m.: Asked master of Ocean Layer, master answered it will be possible that the men will be lost but perhaps they are in a raft. We are searching.
 Following received from Pacific Fortune at 4 41 a.m., G.M.T.: Resumed voyage.
 Following received from Flavia:
 At 4 49 a.m., G.M.T.: Two mariners are sighted on board the British vessel; a lifeboat has gone to take them over.
 At 5 2 a.m., G.M.T.: Now all men of British ship are saved. We will take them on board.
 Following received from Athelmonarch at 5 11 a.m., G.M.T.: Now resuming passage to London.
 Following received from Flavia at 5 14 a.m., G.M.T.: All men of Ocean Layer are in safety on board Flavia. We renew our voyage, bound Hamburg.
 Following received from Upshur at 5 23 a.m., G.M.T.: We will resume our voyage as soon as lifeboat brought up on board.
 —The Hague, June 15.—
 —All 98 men on board were rescued from cable steamer Ocean Layer to-day when she caught fire while engaged in laying the second new transatlantic cable between Newfoundland and France. The German motor vessel Flavia, which picked up the 86 crew and 12 American and French telephone and telegraph executives, radioed that she had left the Ocean Layer blazing and a danger to navigation.—Reuter.
 —London, June 15.—
 The London agents of the owners of tug Loire report that the tug has left Nantes to go to the assistance of cable steamer Ocean Layer.
 —Land's End Radio, June 15.—Tug Wotan, DHIW, signalled to-day: In position 50 miles from Corunna, bound cable steamer Ocean Layer.
 —London, June 15.—
 Following received from the Admiralty: Burning derelict of cable steamer Ocean Layer in approximate position lat. 48 25 N., long. 19 W., anchored by her cable.
 —Bonn, June 15.—
 A spokesman for the owners of the German motor vessel Flavia said that a message received from the Flavia at 12 30 p.m., G.M.T., stated she had returned to the burning British cable steamer Ocean Layer in an attempt to save her.—Reuter.

4-16/6/59

Suggested Record ✓

Date of Committee

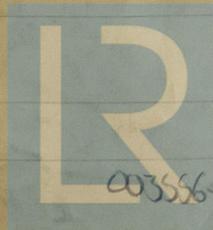
Committee's Minute

"BURNT 6.59"
FRIDAY - 2 OCT 1959

Burnt 6.59

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OCEAN LAYER.—Hamburg, June 15.—A spokesman of the owners of German motor vessel Flavia said to-night that news had been received at 2 45 p.m., G.M.T., that the chief officer and six members of the crew of the Flavia had boarded the British cable steamer Ocean Layer and arranged for a provisional towline. He said that the fire on the Ocean Layer was almost out, but she was not actually in tow. The provisional line would be maintained until a German salvage tug arrived to take over the operation.—Reuter. (See issue of June 16.)

Bonn, June 16.—The following message has been received from Captain Theune, of motor vessel Flavia, dated June 16: Cable steamer Ocean Layer, in tow behind us to-day in the North Atlantic, is still burning. All the 98 rescued men on board my ship are well, though one of them has burns.—Reuter.

London, June 16.—The following message has been received from Bugsier-, Reederei- und Bergungs-A.G., Hamburg, timed 9 30 a.m., June 16: An officer and six men of motor vessel Flavia boarded cable steamer Ocean Layer yesterday evening and established towage connection. Flavia holding Ocean Layer, awaiting arrival of salvage tug Wotan.

London, June 16.—In reply to inquiry, the owners of motor vessel Flavia state that the chief mate and one man of the crew of the Flavia are on board cable steamer Ocean Layer and have connected a towline. The weather is worsening and it is feared that the towline cannot be held for long. The cause of the fire is not yet known.

Bremen, June 16.—The owners of motor vessel Flavia said that tug Wotan was expected to reach the two vessels about 7 a.m., G.M.T., to-morrow, and until then the Flavia would try to keep the cable steamer Ocean Layer at the same position with the help of the towline. They said the Flavia could not tow the Ocean Layer away but could at best try to keep her from drifting.—Reuter.

London, June 16.—In reply to inquiry, the owners of motor vessel Flavia stated at 3 40 p.m., to-day: Cable steamer Ocean Layer: Position unchanged, Flavia standing by awaiting arrival of salvage tug, which due early to-morrow morning.

London, June 16.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer: German motor vessel Flavia reported this afternoon: Unable to reboard so far. Apparently little damage forward of foremast and possibly steering flat, remainder of ship, including entire accommodation, test room, bridge, &c., completely gutted. Ship's side throughout amidships section severely buckled. Two seats of fire apparently still burning, one in way of No. 1 cable tank, the other near mainmast. Hope board for inspection before arrival of tug Wotan to-morrow morning.

Hamburg, June 16.—The owners of motor vessel Flavia said here to-day that the crew of cable steamer Ocean Layer would be taken to Falmouth.—Reuter.

OCEAN LAYER.—Bremen, June 17.—The owners of motor vessel Flavia said to-day that tug Wotan was now expected to reach cable steamer Ocean Layer at about 10 a.m., G.M.T.—Reuter. (See issue of June 17.)

London, June 17.—The London agents of the owners of tug Loire report that the tug arrived alongside cable steamer Ocean Layer at 10 15 a.m. to-day and reports being first tug to arrive. Two German crew from motor vessel Flavia on board Ocean Layer and Flavia has seven-inch line connected, presumably waiting for German tug Wotan to arrive later to-day. Casually appears to be badly burnt aft, but forepart appears in reasonable condition.

London, June 17.—The London agents of tug Loire report: Cable steamer Ocean Layer: Loire reported that German tug Wotan arrived at 1 10 p.m., G.M.T., and is now preparing to connect. Loire lowered her lifeboat and went to motor vessel Flavia to speak to Captain Ross, but he was not on board. All ropes and ladders from the Ocean Layer have been removed and as lowest point was 20 to 30 ft. it would have been impossible to board her. Rudder of Ocean Layer is lying 30 to 35 deg. to port, and if this cannot be corrected it will be an unwieldy tow for one tug. Loire staying on spot for time being to await result of towage efforts.

London, June 17.—The London agents of tug Wotan reported to-day: Cable steamer Ocean Layer: Wotan alongside on June 17 making towage connection, also transferring pump, as Ocean Layer making slight water. Slight fire still in foreship and aftership, with which intend dealing with fire-fighting foam. Sea smooth.

Falmouth, June 17.—It is understood that motor vessel Flavia is now expected to arrive here in afternoon of Friday (June 19) with the crew from cable steamer Ocean Layer.

Bremen, June 17.—The owners of motor vessel Flavia state that tug Wotan will attempt to tow cable steamer Ocean Layer to Falmouth, where she is not expected until about next Monday (June 22).—Reuter.

OCEAN LAYER.—London, June 18.—The London agents of the owners of tug Wotan have received the following message from Hamburg, dated June 17: Cable steamer Ocean Layer: Tug Wotan commenced towing at 5 p.m. on June 17; proceeding to Falmouth, speed six knots. (See issue of June 18.)

Bremen, June 18.—The owners of tug Wotan stated in Hamburg that two members of the tug's crew were on the cable steamer Ocean Layer and that the steering mechanism of the Ocean Layer was out of action.—Reuter.

Bremen, June 18.—A shipping official at Bremen to-day stated that tug Wotan is making good progress at six knots in calm weather towards Falmouth with cable steamer Ocean Layer in tow. He said the Wotan expected to make Falmouth on Sunday night (June 21).—Reuter.

London, June 18.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer: The London agents of tug Wotan state: Position at 5 a.m. on June 18, lat. 48 14 N., long. 17 55 W.

OCEAN LAYER.—London, June 19.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer: The London agents of the tug Wotan state: Position at 5 a.m. on June 19, lat. 48 43 N., long. 14 35 W., speed 6 knots. (See issue of June 19.)

Falmouth, June 19.—German motor vessel Flavia arrived here at 4 30 p.m. to-day with crew of cable steamer Ocean Layer.

OCEAN LAYER.—London, June 20.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer: The London agents of tug Wotan report: Position at 5 a.m. on June 20 lat. 49 8 N., long 10 5 W., speed six knots, wind south-east, gentle breeze. (See issue of June 20.)

Bonn, June 20.—The master of the German tug Wotan, which has the cable steamer Ocean Layer in tow, reported to-night that the Ocean Layer was listing 10 deg. to port, but he added that this was of no significance. The master said the Ocean Layer had not sprung a leak and he presumed the list was caused by water which had run out from a damaged fresh-water tank. He said the Wotan was still doing a steady six knots, the weather was good, and he expected to reach Falmouth with his tow to-morrow.—Reuter.

Lizard, June 21.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer passed eastwards at 3 5 p.m., June 21, under tow, bound Falmouth.

London, June 21.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer arrived at Falmouth to-day, in tow of tug Wotan.

OCEAN LAYER.—Falmouth, June 22.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer arrived at Falmouth on Sunday evening (June 21) in tow of tug Wotan. (See issue of June 22.)

London, June 21.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer was towed into Carrick Road, the entrance to Falmouth harbour, to-night. When the ship reached Carrick Road, the tug Wotan cast off and the Ocean Layer was taken over by the Falmouth tugs Codicote Scot and Fairmile. The Ocean Layer, which was still smouldering from the fore and aft holds and almost the length of the ship, was not brought into the harbour because of the fire risk. Observers said that the superstructure, bridge and accommodation quarters had been buckled by the fire. When the Ocean Layer arrived, her master, Captain Anthony McPherson Ross, boarded his vessel. Fifteen firemen from Falmouth and Penryn Fire Stations went out in fire tenders with five pumps to deal with the still-smouldering parts of the ship and to keep a night watch on board. Doctor Aldington, chairman of the owners of the cable vessel Ocean Layer, after more than two hours' inspection of the vessel, said that the condition of the ship is far worse than he had remotely conceived. He could not understand how Captain Ross succeeded in bringing his men off safely. Dr. Aldington said that, in view of reports that the fire started in the engine-room, he had to give a statement on this point. "The outbreak," he said, "started in the crew's quarters to the best of our knowledge and belief."

Falmouth, June 21.—Dr. Aldington, chairman of Submarine Cables, Ltd., owners of cable steamer Ocean Layer, said here to-night: "She is more than a write-off; I cannot conceive that it would be possible to repair a ship in that condition." He was speaking after coming off the ship, which anchored in the Middle Road here to-night. "Nothing is left at all inside," he said. "Six inches of debris, chiefly white ash from burnt glass fibre, cover the decks. She is taking in water, but not leaking oil; the cable was totally destroyed." He added that it was impossible to discover how much other apparatus had been destroyed.—"The Times" Correspondent.

London, June 22.—Cornwall's chief fire officer, Mr. B. A. Christmas, said to-day that the master of the German tug Wotan objected late last night to Falmouth firemen boarding the British cable steamer Ocean Layer, which is still burning at anchorage two miles out of Falmouth harbour. The consequence, he said, was that he had to withdraw the crew of 16 firemen equipped with portable pumps just before midnight. Mr. Christmas said that there was six feet of water inside the ship and they could not fight the fires until the ship was stabilised. The master of the German salvage tug claimed that, under maritime law, it was his responsibility to complete the salvage pumping and put the fires out. A few fires were still smouldering on the Ocean Layer this morning. They will have to be extinguished and her list righted before she is allowed to enter harbour.

Falmouth, June 22.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer arrived p.m., June 21, now anchored in Carrick Roads. Vessel has 12 deg. list to port.

and put the fires out." He estimated that this would take two or three days. Asked if he would then surrender the Ocean Layer to Falmouth tugs, still standing by, and return to Germany, Captain Todd said: "When I have completed my tasks I will report to my company in Hamburg and await further orders." Captain Todd said the 6 ft. of water inside the Ocean Layer came from ship's tanks burst by the intensive heat of the fire.

OCEAN CLIPPER.—Bahrein, June 23.—It is understood that Swedish motor tanker Ocean Clipper (Bahrein for London) grounded Shah Allum Shoal, lat. 26 26 N., long. 52 31 E., around midnight on June 23. Believed firmly aground, 3 ft. all round. Intention to lighten by 3500 tons to enable refloat.

OCEAN LAYER.—London, June 24.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer is expected to be brought into berthing quarters at Falmouth to-morrow. A large quantity of oil has collected on top of water running loose in the engine-room. This cannot be pumped direct into the sea because it would cause pollution. It is proposed to transfer the oily water to tanks on the other side of the ship to help to correct list. The heat in the vessel has subsided steadily. (See issue of June 24.)

OCEAN LAYER.—London, June 25.—Tug Wotan has handed over cable steamer Ocean Layer to Falmouth port authorities. Tug Arusha has taken over pumping and the ship's list of 10 deg. has been almost eliminated. Falmouth docks officials were consulted to-day and arrangements made for the Ocean Layer to be berthed at one of the wharves. Local tugs may bring her in from the outer harbour this afternoon. (See issue of June 25.)

Falmouth, June 25.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer: Fire extinguished and list corrected. Subject to second set of soundings being satisfactory later to-day, owners will, with our approval, accept delivery.—Salvage Association's Surveyors.

OCEAN LAYER.—London, June 25.—Lack of suitable wharf space delayed the berthing of cable steamer Ocean Layer to-day at Falmouth. She is to be towed into the shipyard to-morrow. Falmouth tug Arusha is remaining alongside her to-night. (See issue of June 26.)

Falmouth, June 25.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer: Owners accepted vessel at 7 30 p.m., June 25.—Salvage Association's Surveyor.

OCEAN LAYER.—London, Sept. 11.—Cable steamer Ocean Layer has been sold to Dutch shipbreakers. (See issue of June 27.)

OCEAN LAYER.—Falmouth, Sept. 15.—Tug Gele Zee, towing cable steamer Ocean Layer, left here on Sept. 15 for Hendrik Ido Ambacht. (See issue of Sept. 11.)

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