

M. V. "SEISTAN".

Cable received "LLOYD'S REGISTER BASRAH" at 1325 hours on the 18th February, 1958, requesting surveyor to attend aboard m.v. "SEISTAN" at Sitra Anchorage, Bahrain to issue seaworthy certificate to take vessel up to Basrah. Mr. Mitchell, Lloyd's Surveyor travelled down by air the same day and contacted Lloyd's Agents who gave all available details regarding the fire in No.5 hold.

The information given was that at the time the hatch was battened down and smothering steam was on, but that the following morning ^{Mr. Mitchell} was to accompany Captain Crombie to the vessel where it was expected the fire would be out and an inspection of No.5 hold could be made.

At 2135 hours a violent explosion in No.5 hold wrecked the after end of the vessel, followed by fire. As a result of the explosion the tug "SOHAIL" sunk alongside.

Tugs and small craft were on the scene within half an hour and a number of survivors removed from the vessel ashore. An extensive search of the area was afterward carried out and resulted in the recovery of two members of the tug's crew.

At 0730 Captain Crombie and Mr. Mitchell, Lloyds Surveyor, boarded the vessel which was still burning amidships, and a search for survivors was made resulting in the discovery of one live seaman. At this time the stern portion of the vessel was under water and the forward draught read 11' 6".

Fore Deck Hatch Covers appeared intact with the exception of the after end of No.2, deck cargo appearing only superficially damaged. Various small cases of detonators which had been removed from No.4 hatch and carried forward by the ship's crew were found intact where they had been placed beside the windlass (These cases were afterwards disposed of by Bahrain State Police).

Captain Crombie and the Lloyd's Surveyor, Mr. Mitchell, then joined in the search for possible survivors prior to proceeding to the barge into which 75 tons of explosive had been discharged the previous day. The wooden cases which appeared to be stained ~~by the~~ and smelling of charred timber were examined and it was decided to tow the barge out a further two miles eastward and dispose of the cargo. On the return trip it was noted that the vessel was drawing 12 ft. of water forward. At 2.00 p.m., it was reported that the wooden explosive cases would not sink and it was decided that the barge should be anchored 5 miles from Sitra and the crew removed until expert advice could be obtained. The barge was securely anchored with two anchors later in the afternoon at which time it was noted that the draught of the "SEISTAN" was 14 ft. forward.

On the 21st February, 1958 at 1100 hours Captain Crombie and Lloyd's Surveyor made a further examination of the vessel including the mid-ship accommodation which was found to be completely gutted. The hold bilges were sounded and recorded as follows:- No.1 - 8", No.2 - 6 ft. (Approximately) and No.2A - 15 ft., at after end. No.2 hold was entered and the cargo appeared intact, with the sounding taken at the after end showing approximately 6 ft., of water. It was noted that the Port Bridge space was still burning. The vents were then blanked off and arrangements made for flooding.

On return, the explosive barge was examined and was found to be securely anchored and the cargo in order. At a later time the m.v. "SEISTAN" was again examined by members of the management of the agents and the draught noted as being 16' 3".

SATURDAY - 22nd February:

Vessel boarded in the morning with working party consisting of officers from the s.s. "MURISTAN" and local labours. All the fore deck winch steam pipes examined and found in order and flanges prepared for attachment of air compressors.

No.2 hold forward derrick port side, lifted with the aid of Bapco tug in preparation for lifting pumps, etc., aboard.

The fire in port side bridge space was extinguished with the aid of Bapco tug. Templates were made with a view to blanking off all entrance hatches into No.1 hold with steel plates. Draught was checked at regular intervals and it was found that the vessel was continuing to settle by the head.

SUNDAY - 23RD FEBRUARY:

Vessel boarded early morning with working party consisting of officers from the s.s. "MURISTAN" and local labour. All doors, hatches and vents leading into No.1 hold blanked off as well as possible.

One small duplex pump manhandled down into No.2 hold tween deck and operated with compressed air from a compressor on a barge.

Two petrol pumps positioned also in No.2 tween deck and by the afternoon it was thought that the level of the water in No.2 hold was being held. Arrangements were made for ship's engineers from the s.s. "MURISTAN" and s.s. "KOHISTAN" to work shifts all nights to keep the pumps running. At 2100 hours it was found that the water had risen to within 8" of the top of No.2 hatch coaming and it was decided to stop pumping removed all men and tow the barge with compressor to safty.

MONDAY - 24TH FEBRUARY:

At 8.45 as launches were approaching the m.v. "SEISTAN", water commenced flooding over No.2 hatch coaming at the after end and the vessel quickly settled on the bottom.

Captain A. Brown, Marine Superintendent of Messrs. Frank C. Strick & Co., Ltd., attended on board the m.v. "SEISTAN" on 23rd February, 1958 and examined the vessel, approving of the work which was being undertaken. Mr. Larimer of the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation accompanied Captain Brown. Mr. J.P.S. Delacour of the Associated Ethyl Co., Ltd., also visited the vessel in view of the fact that 1215 drums of Tetra Ethyl Lead was stowed in No.3 tween deck, but as the compartment was flooded no inspection of the cargo was possible.

At noon on the 26th February 1958, the barge with explosives which had been discharged from the M.V. "SEISTAN" prior to the accident was towed to a safe position and blown up by an explosive expert from the U.K.

BAHRAIN:

25TH FEBRUARY, 1958.



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