

WRECK SECTION  
 No. 577  
**REPORT OF TOTAL LOSS, CASUALTY, &c.**

13458

No. 03059 in R.B. Wreck Book, p. 14/50 Date of writing this report 18th May 1950

Vessel's Name *S.S. "Benledi"* of *Leith* Tons { Gross 6318 Net 3862

Built at *Glasgow* When *1930 6* Casualty notice sent to Owner  Owner's reply

Owner's Name *Ben Line Steamers, Ltd. (William Thomson & Co. Mgrs.)*

Address *10, North St. David Street, Edinburgh, 2*

Case previously before Classing Committee.	Date Last Minute	Particulars of Classification.	
		<i>100A1</i> <i>150</i> <i>ss. Mib 4,46</i>	<i>LMC</i> <i>MS 446</i> <i>BS 1,50</i> <i>TS 8,48CL</i>

Date of Casualty *24th February, 1950*

particulars of Casualty

This steamer caught fire while in the Mediterranean Sea on the 24th February, 1950.

It is thought that the cause was due to oil overflowing from the settling tanks in the stokehold and spraying on to the centre boiler front.

Vessel was towed back to Malta and it was found she was burnt from the foremast to right aft, bridge and midship accommodation was burnt out and funnels fallen in, etc.

In reply to enquiry, it is understood from Lloyd's that the Underwriters have settled this case as a Constructive Total Loss.

*T.S. 16" Cl*

*842 Corrosion*

SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

**"Benledi" on Fire in the Mediterranean**  
 Early yesterday morning the British steamer *Benledi* (6318 tons gross), Middlesbrough and London for Japan, reported from a position about 135 miles east of Malta that she had an oil fuel fire in the stokehold and that her bunker tanks had burst. She requested immediate assistance. About an hour after the first message she wirelessed that the crew were abandoning ship. A number of vessels proceeded to her aid; the crew were picked up by the tanker *British Liberty* and later transferred to the destroyer H.M.S. *Childers*.

LL 25.2.50

**BENLEDI.** — Niton Radio, Feb. 24. — Following received from British steamer *Benledi* (Middlesbrough and London for Japan):  
 At 3 16 a.m., G.M.T.: SOS, position lat. 35 37 N., long. 17 11 E., require immediate assistance, ship on fire.  
 At 3 30 a.m., G.M.T.: SOS, in lat. 35 37 N., long. 17 11 E., have oil fuel on fire in stokehold, tanks burst, require immediate assistance.  
 — Malta, Feb. 24. — Following received by Malta Radio from steamer *Benledi*: Ship on fire, require immediate assistance, position lat. 35 37 N., long. 17 11 E. Ship being abandoned.  
 A destroyer and hospital ship are proceeding to her assistance.  
 — Niton Radio, Feb. 24. — Following received from Malta Radio at 4 13 a.m., G.M.T.: SOS from steamer *Benledi*: Now abandoning ship. TTT (danger to navigation) ships in vicinity, please look out, position lat. 35 37 N., long. 17 11 E.  
 Following received from British motor vessel *Cannanore* at 4 21 a.m., G.M.T., addressed to Dutch steamer *Groote Beer*: Position lat. 35 17 N., long. 20 26 E.  
 At 4 27 a.m., G.M.T., received from an American ship, call sign NLWS (steamer *General C. C. Ballou*): Position lat. 35 10 N., G.M.T., lat. 33 10 N., long. 17 11 E.  
 Following received from British motor vessel *Cannanore* at 4 35 a.m., G.M.T., addressed to steamer *Groote Beer*: Discovered about 160 miles, speed 14 knots, altered course and proceeding on position lat. 35 37 N., long. 17 11 E.  
 Following received from British motor vessel *Astyanax* at 5 17 a.m., G.M.T., addressed to steamer *Groote Beer*: Estimated time of arrival noon, G.M.T.  
 Following received from an American ship, call sign NLWS (steamer *General C. C. Ballou*), addressed to *Groote Beer*: Heading for distress, doctor on board if needed.  
 — Alexandria, Feb. 24. — Following received from Alexandria Radio: Following received at 5 41 a.m. from steamer *Kedmah*, addressed to steamer *Benledi*: Position lat. 35 25 N., long. 17 2 E., proceeding to you, speed 17 knots.  
 — Malta, Feb. 24. — Following received from Malta Radio: Following received from turbo-electric tanker *Northfield*: Survivors of steamer *Benledi* are on motor tanker *British Liberty*. *Northfield* now proceeding on original course.  
 — London, Feb. 24. — The owners of the steamer *Benledi* have received the following radio from the master, timed 9 45 a.m. to-day: *Benledi* on fire in oil fuel tanks burst, abandoned vessel. All crew, none injured, picked up by motor tanker *British Liberty*. All crew transferred to H.M.S. *Childers*. Intend surveying possibility of boarding *Benledi*.  
 — Valletta, Feb. 24. — The crew of British steamer *Benledi* abandoned ship this morning after an explosion in the oil tanks 125 miles from Malta. The vessel earlier sent out distress signals reporting an oil fire in the stokehold and bunkers and calling for immediate assistance. Twelve vessels are at the scene or on their way, including two British salvage vessels from Malta. Naval authorities in Malta state that there is little hope of saving the *Benledi*. — British United Press.  
 — London, Feb. 24. — British motor tanker *British Liberty* picked up crew of steamer *Benledi*, abandoned on fire, at 9 a.m., and transferred them to H.M.S. *Childers* at noon. Four boats taken on board *British Liberty*, which proceeded for Port Said.

Suggested Record / *Damaged by fire 2,50*  
 Date of Committee *FRI. 19 MAY 1950*

Committee's Minute *Damaged by fire 2,50*

*Lloyd's* *et Met & Os 20/5*



**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Feb. 24.—Salvage vessel Sea Salvor and H.M. tug Brigand have gone to the British steamer Benledi. The crew are on board destroyer H.M.S. CHILDERS, which is remaining with Benledi and helping to extinguish the fire.—Exchange Telegraph Company. (See issue of Feb. 25.)

LL 27.2.50

Valletta, Feb. 24.—All members of the crew of the steamer Benledi are now said to have been picked up by H.M. destroyer CHILDERS. The destroyer gave up the battle against the fire on the vessel after three hours. The fire is reported to be completely out of control. CHILDERS went alongside and did her utmost to control the fire which was helped by a strong breeze.—British United Press.

London, Feb. 25.—Messrs. W. Thomson & Co., managers for the Ben Line Steamers, Ltd., owners of the steamer Benledi, stated in Edinburgh to-day that salvage vessels have been hosing the vessel during the night. The owners have been in radio communication throughout with the destroyer CHILDERS and their own steamer Benarty. The position to-day has considerably deteriorated, as the Benledi was reported to be on fire from the foremast to the after end of the vessel. The bridge and all midship accommodation had been burned out and the funnels had fallen. An additional salvage vessel was reported to be due at midnight. In view of the worsening position, the destroyer CHILDERS was to-day returning to Malta with the crew of the Benledi on board. Captain Liston, of the Benledi, has boarded the Benarty which continued to stand by. Practice type bombs on board, the owners stated, contained no explosive content and are harmless.

Malta, Feb. 25.—The fire on board British steamer Benledi was still out of control to-day and the flames are spreading. A salvage vessel, destroyer and tug from Malta are standing by but their efforts to put out the fire have so far failed. The destroyer CHILDERS, which arrived in Malta last night with the crew of 60, reported that it had been impossible to board the blazing vessel. It is thought likely that the Benledi will be abandoned to burn herself out. Another salvage vessel, the Dispenser, was sent out to her, but was unable to be of any assistance. The steamer Benarty is also standing by.—British United Press.

Malta, Feb. 25.—Destroyer CHILDERS was damaged when she went alongside the Benledi and those who saw the destroyer steam into Valletta noticed a large gash on the starboard side of the flag deck. The Benledi was carrying a general cargo, including oil for the Far East.—British United Press.

Malta, Feb. 26.—Destroyer CHILDERS landed crew of steamer Benledi last evening. Master and chief engineer standing by on steamer Benarty.

The position of the British steamer Benledi, abandoned on fire east of Malta, has considerably deteriorated. On Saturday the vessel was reported to be on fire from the foremast to the after end. Salvage vessels had been hosing the vessel but the fire was spreading.

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Feb. 27.—Steamer Benarty put in to-day to land master and chief engineer of steamer Benledi. (See issue of Feb. 27.)

" 28/2

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Feb. 28.—It is understood that steamer Benledi is now being towed towards Malta by naval salvage vessel; fire subsiding. (See issue of Feb. 28.)

" 1/3

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Feb. 28.—Steamer Benledi probably arriving, in tow, tomorrow morning. Naval Authorities requesting master, now here, to sign Lloyd's Form of Salvage Agreement.—Lloyd's Agents per Salvage Association. (See issue of Mar. 1.)

" 2/3

Malta, Mar. 1.—Steamer Benledi now being towed to Marsa Xlokk Bay, where final salvage operations expect will be completed, taking about a week. Latest report from salvage vessel Sea Salvor states No. 1 hold still sealed apparently no fire, Nos. 2 and 2A burnt out, Nos. 3, 4 and 5 still smouldering.—Lloyd's Agents per Salvage Association.

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Mar. 1.—Steamer Benledi is now entering Marsa Xlokk Bay.—Lloyd's Agents per Salvage Association. (See issue of Mar. 2.)

LL 3.3.50

Valletta, Mar. 1.—Members of the crew of the British steamer Benledi left Malta by plane for Britain to-day. The remaining members will leave the island by the first available means of transport. The Benledi arrived at Valletta, towed by a tug, to-night with the fire, believed to have been caused by an explosion in the ship's oil tanks, still smouldering in some of the holds. Most of the cargo is understood to have been lost and the vessel appears to be an almost total wreck. A hump has appeared in the hull, believed to be due to the weakening of the keel amidships, and the vessel is also listing to starboard. The vessel was brought into a harbour which is not used often so that the fire can be put out before she enters the main harbour.—British United Press.

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Mar. 2.—Steamer Benledi is now anchored in Marsa Xlokk Bay.—Lloyd's Agents per Salvage Association. (See issue of Mar. 3.)

" 4/3

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Mar. 3.—Steamer Benledi: Navigating bridge with all casing and fittings, upper and lower decks abaft foremast, with hatchways and all usual fittings, entirely destroyed, mainmast and all derricks and gear, except two forward winches, mast and gear badly damaged or destroyed, shell plating and framing abaft foremast between upper and second deck destroyed, engine- and boiler-rooms, including engines, auxiliaries and boilers and structure, badly fouled and damaged; preparing estimate. All holds abaft No. 1 still smouldering. Further survey will be held, probably on Monday, Mar. 6.—Salvage Association's Surveyor. (See issue of Mar. 4.)

" 6/3

Malta, Mar. 4.—Steamer Benledi: Fire still smouldering in Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 holds. No. 1 hold apparently intact but still sealed. Salvage vessel Sea Salvor anticipates extinguishing fire within a few days, after which No. 1 hold will be opened for inspection. Soundings indicate this hold free of water; division bulkheads of Nos. 1 and 2 holds cool. Other holds will also be inspected soonest possible with a view to ascertaining whether any cargo still remaining therein. Marsa Xlokk, where vessel is lying, was formerly named Marsa Scirocco.—Salvage Association's Representative.

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Mar. 6.—Steamer Benledi: No. 1 hold opened to-day and found smoking, temperature 80 deg. Hold closed up and CO<sub>2</sub> being injected. Anticipate further inspection of No. 1 hold on Wednesday (Mar. 8). Remaining holds still smouldering.—Salvage Association's Surveyor and Representative. (See issue of Mar. 6.)

" 8/3

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Mar. 9.—Steamer Benledi: No. 1 hold opened this morning. Slight smoke issuing, temperatures slightly reduced; hold resealed. Other holds still smouldering.—Salvage Association's Surveyor and Representative. (See issue of Mar. 8.)

" 11/3

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Mar. 16.—Steamer Benledi: Master yesterday boarded vessel and reported to owners smouldering fire in No. 3 hold only. No. 1 hold questionable, but charred sugar detected down ventilator shaft.—Lloyd's Agents per Salvage Association. (See issue of Mar. 11.)

" 17/3

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Mar. 17.—Steamer Benledi: Master boarded vessel again to-day and reports fire apparently extinguished. No. 1 hold remains sealed.—Lloyd's Agents per Salvage Association. (See issue of Mar. 17.)

" 20/3

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Mar. 23.—Steamer Benledi: Master boarded vessel yesterday and reported after bulkhead No. 1 lower hold hot. A hole was cut 6 in. square in this bulkhead about 10 ft. high; smoke and charred sugar observed. Water was sprayed, causing steam. Bulkhead sealed again and CO<sub>2</sub> injected.—Lloyd's Agents per Salvage Association. (See issue of Mar. 20.)

" 24/3

**BENLEDI.**—Malta, Apr. 10.—Steamer Benledi has been towed to Grand Harbour to-day.—Lloyd's Agents per Salvage Association. (See issue of Mar. 24.)

" 12/4



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W1023-0132 2/2