

REPORT OF TOTAL LOSS, CASUALTY, &c.

No. 82002 in R. B. Wreck Book, p. 137/110

Date of writing this report 19

Vessel's Name *S.S. Rangitane (4 RMC)*, of *Plymouth*Tons { Gross 16,712
Net 10,239Built at *Clydebank* When *1929* 11 Casualty notice sent to Owner ☒Owner's reply ☒Owner's Name *New Zealand Shipping Co. Ltd.*Address *Rocheester Buildings, 138, Leadenhall St., E.C.3.*Case previously before
Classing Committee. { Date
Last Minute

Particulars of Classification.

+ 100 A.I. + Lloyd's RMC 940
With freeboard 5.40
+ LMC
S.S. Lon. N° 2-38
Oil Engines. T.S. 7,38 CL

Date of Casualty *26th November 1940*Precis of particulars of Casualty *Sunk by a raider in the South Pacific*

on the 26th November, 1940.

WRECK
SECTION
No 86

SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

CL 30/11, 2/12, 26/2 and 28/12

The Rangitane (16,712 tons), a New Zealand shipping company's liner, had 100 passengers aboard when attacked on a November night. The raider's searchlights shone on the liner while the shells burst aboard her. Fire broke out, and there were many casualties.

NEWS CHRONICLE

January 6, 1941

CAPTAIN OF THE RANGITANE TELLS FIRST FULL STORY OF HEROIC BATTLE WITH GERMAN RAIDERS IN THE PACIFIC

Shells Smashed Radio But SOS Was Sent on Emergency Set

From Our Own Correspondent

MELBOURNE, Sunday.

VIVID stories of the sinking of the British liner Rangitane in the Pacific by German raiders were told by survivors who landed here today. They were brought from the island of Emirau, where they had been marooned by the enemy.

The commander, Captain H. L. Upton, said: "When I sighted the raiders at dawn I ordered the wireless officer to send out a message. The enemy fired on us as soon as we wirelessed.

"I then told the chief officer to prepare for action, and when we opened fire to rake one of the raiders on the port quarter, they had their searchlights trained on us from either side. Their first shots put the wireless out of action.

EMERGENCY SET SOS

"Chief Operator N. Hallett and Assistant G. Ward put the emergency set into action and calmly began to send the message: "We are being fired on."

"By this time the ship was badly battered. The telegraph from the bridge had been blown away, and she was on fire below. The behaviour of the crew and passengers was wonderful. At the men were at their posts in the engine room and a doctor, aided by stewards and nurses, was dealing with the wounded.

"In spite of the enemy's concentrated fire, my operators succeeded in sending out our position. Then I ordered the engines to be stopped, but shelling continued for three more minutes.

"The bridge was wrecked and the glare from the searchlights focused on us made range-finding almost hopeless. Then the firing stopped and I gave the order 'Abandon ship.'

HEROIC WOMEN

"The behaviour of everybody was magnificent. They might have been going on church parade. Never in my life have I seen women behave more valiantly.

"As the passengers were getting into the boats a motor-launch from one of the raiders came alongside. The boarding officer was in a hell of a stew, shouting: 'Hurry, hurry, abandon ship before the planes come up.'

"He knew we had got our message away and they were in frantic haste to get away before help came.

PLANES' SEARCH

"While we were in our prison ship 'Action stations' was sounded and I was confined to my quarters. But the New Zealand planes which were looking for us did not see us."

Captain Upton said that during his imprisonment the raider sank the steamers Triona, Vinni and Komata.

Among the survivors were two English nurses Miss Mary Duns-muir and Miss Florence Childs. Both were taking evacuee children to safety.

CABIN WRECKED

Miss Childs said she and Miss Duns-muir occupied the same cabin, which was wrecked by a shell. Other women in adjoining cabins were killed.

"I was in the top bunk and this collapsed on my friend," she said. "The cabin was filled with smoke and flames and water began to pour in."

"No time was lost in getting everybody off the ship. We cannot complain of the way the Germans treated us. As nurses we placed ourselves at their disposal for the treatment of the wounded.

"The officers gave up their bunks to make room for us, and also tore up sheets to provide clothes for women who had escaped in their night clothes.

"We arrived off Emirau Island on the night of December 20 and were landed the next day."

Altogether, 496 survivors of 10 such ships were taken off the island of Emirau.

Suggested Record ☒

Date of Committee

Committee's Minute

TIMES 6/1/1941

THE TIMES

SINKING OF THE RANGITANE

CAPTAIN'S STORY OF RAIDERS' ATTACK

VALIANT WOMEN

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

MELBOURNE, JAN. 5

Captain H. L. Upton, of the Rangitane, describing the effort to give a wireless warning when the raiders were sighted, said that he ordered the operators to signal "sighted suspicious vessels." The raiders fired immediately the message was sent, the first shots putting the wireless out of action.

He then ordered the operators to send a message that the Rangitane was being attacked by a raider, and giving the position. They put



Major-General I. G. Mackay, who is in command of the Australian forces in the attack on Bardia.

the emergency wireless in action and proceeded, in the calmest manner, to send the message while the raiders continued to fire in an effort to prevent them, but the message was dispatched. By this time the ship was badly battered, the bridge and telegraph had been blown away, and she was afire below.

The shelling began at 3.47 a.m., and as soon as the position had been wirelessed at 3.59 a.m. he ordered the engines to be stopped, but the shelling continued for three minutes longer, and it seemed that there was no alternative but to fight to the death, though the glare of the raiders' searchlights made range-finding almost hopeless. Then the shelling ceased, and he gave the order to abandon ship. The passengers and crew might have been going to church parade. He had never seen women behave more valiantly. They did not panic though the ship was burning and it was dark, and they were ordered into open boats.

GERMANS' FRANTIC HASTE

Then a motor-launch raced alongside with an officer "in a hell of a stew," shouting to them to hurry to abandon ship before the aeroplanes came. He knew that the position had been signalled, and was using frantic haste. They destroyed all the code-books and records before leaving. As soon as they had left the raiders began to bombard the Rangitane, but she did not sink so they launched a torpedo, whereupon she capsized and went to the bottom. At about 5 p.m. that day the raiders sighted the aeroplanes which had been dispatched in search of the Rangitane. Accident stations were sounded, and Captain Upton was confined to his quarters immediately, but the aeroplanes did not discover the raiders.

All the Rangitane's passengers were amazed by the raiders' exact knowledge of the sunken ships' routes, and even their cargoes. When the raiders boarded the Holmwood they said: "We could have got you on the last voyage, but left you until now because you have a cargo of live sheep, which is just what we want." They boasted that they would capture the Rangitane the next day, and gave the position where they would intercept her. Actually the Rangitane was about 15 miles from this point. When a member of the Rangitane's crew mentioned that he had been to New Zealand in a munition ship, the Balcanic, he was told that she had not been sunk because she had 400 tons of T.N.T. on board. One raider carried Japanese medical supplies, also a book with a Kobe library label.

NAMES OF VICTIMS

An incomplete list of those killed in the Rangitane when she was attacked by a raider in the Pacific gives names of five evacuee children's escorts returning to the United Kingdom—Mrs. E. Davies, Miss Doris Beeston, Miss Herbert Jones, Miss U. Scott, and Mr. J. Y. Dixon. No addresses are given.

Seven Europeans and one Filipino, so far as is known, were killed, 67 Europeans are missing, believed prisoners, and four Filipinos are missing, believed killed.

At the burial of Miss Herbert Jones the Narvik's commander paid a tribute to her courage in a speech which seemed less impressive when eager efforts were made to distribute copies of it to all the survivors.



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The Survivors are requested to