

WRECK
SECTION

No.

REPORT OF TOTAL LOSS, CASUALTY, &c.

Wreck Report No.

13781

No. 58742

In R.B.

Wreck Book, p. 7/53

Date of writing this report

25th February,

19 53

Ship's Name

S.S. "EMPRESS OF CANADA"

of

London

Tons

Gross 20325

Net 11244

Built at

Clydebank

When

1928

12

Casualty notice sent to Owner 24.2.1953

Owner's reply

Owners

Canadian Pacific Railways Co.

Managers

Canadian Pacific Steamships, Ltd.

Address

Royal Liver Building, Liverpool, 3.

Classification details

+100A1	BS12,51	+LMC8,48
with freeboard		
2,52	ts s12,50	
ss Gls.-7,47	pl,52	CL
Fitted for oil fuel 12,28 F.P.above 150°F		

Casualty

25th January, 1953.

of Casualty

This ship was seriously damaged by fire

and afterwards capsized while lying at Gladstone

No. 1. Dock, Liverpool, and will most probably

prove to be a constructive total loss.

No reply has yet been received to the

casualty notice sent to the Owners on the 24th

February.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

EMPRESS OF CANADA.—Liverpool, Jan.

25.—Fire broke out amidships on board the Canadian Pacific liner Empress of Canada, lying in Gladstone No. 1 Dock at 4.30 p.m. to-day. The Bootle Fire Brigade and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board's tender Salvor were rushed to the scene. The fire spread to several decks, and companion ladders and other parts amidships are reported to have been severely damaged. At 6 p.m. water was still being poured on the fire; all efforts are being made to subdue the outbreak. The Empress of Canada moved from Gladstone Dry Dock to Gladstone No. 1 Dock yesterday after overhaul.

EMPRESS OF CANADA.—Liverpool, Jan.

25.—A fire discovered at 4.20 p.m. to-day in steamer Empress of Canada, lying in Gladstone Dock, Liverpool, rapidly spread amidships and late to-night the vessel was ablaze almost from end to end and the chance of saving her was remote. Nearly 200 firemen had been withdrawn to safety as sparks cascaded into the dock and explosion after explosion occurred and there was a danger that the vessel might capsize. Mr. A. G. Greenslade, Chief Officer of Bootle Fire Brigade, directing fire-fighting operations, said: "The chance of saving her is remote. We must regard it as a losing battle. The fire is definitely gaining ground." After 10 p.m. no more water was pumped on board. Mr. Greenslade said: "The superstructure down to D deck is well alight and burning freely. The superstructure is leaning over very near to the dock and she may slip away from us. We are now playing hoses on the side of the ship in a damping-down operation." The fire, believed to have started in the ship's dispensary, spread quickly to three decks amidships, and Deputy Fire Officer R. K. Barlow said that about 100 feet of each of decks A, B and C were alight as well as the engine-room. (See issue of Jan. 26.)

London, Jan. 25.—

At 8.30 p.m. to-day steamer Empress of Canada was still blazing furiously, and more than 40 jets were in action from the shore, while the fire force operated additional jets from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board vessel Salvor. The vessel gradually developed a list of 10 deg. towards the quay. Firemen were fighting the blaze from the roof of a warehouse and through holes cut in the ship's side by means of oxy-acetylene cutters. Firemen got into the ship for short periods and later a decision was taken to flood No. 1 hold, for it appeared that the fire was creeping forward. Liverpool detectives visited the scene and made preliminary inquiries. At 10 p.m. the vessel became a mass of flames from the bridgehead to the stern. A decision was taken to move the steamer Empress of France which was berthed astern. Earlier, the Empress of Canada had canted dangerously and most of the firemen were withdrawn from the decks, while more water was pumped in in an effort to right the vessel. The flames took a strong grip and firemen concentrated on preventing sparks igniting the adjoining warehouse. At 11 p.m. the vessel was still blazing furiously. All firemen had been withdrawn from on board the vessel and were concentrating their fire-fighting from the quayside and from the warehouse roof. — Exchange Telegraph Company.

London, Jan. 26.

—Late last night steamer Empress of Canada, still blazing, had a list of about 23 deg. to port and the superstructure was within a few feet of a three-storey

Continued overpage

Suggested Record

(BURNT & CAPSIZED IN PORT - 1,53.)

Date of Committee

FRI. 27 FEB 1953

Committee's Minute

Burnt & capsized in port 1.53.

lm,8,51.

Committee's Minute

LIVERPOOL

W1625-0018

concrete shed with timber doors. Firemen were concentrating on saving the shed. Chief Officer Greenslade said: "The fire was very intense about 10 p.m., when our services were making reasonable progress and were attacking the blaze at all quarters. But such was the tender state of the vessel, owing to the fact that she had been undergoing extensive overhaul and repair, that free water was able to find its way into parts of the ship which would otherwise not have been so accessible. The ship was gaining a list to port rapidly and about this time a dangerous situation presented itself. A conference between all interested parties was held and it was decided that if water continued to be poured into the ship there was the possibility that the list, which at that time was 19 deg., would rapidly accentuate the position. There was the further possibility that the vessel would capsize by sliding away on her port side across Gladstone Docks. With the deepest regret and reluctance therefore we had to withdraw our forces just at a time when success seemed to be coming our way, but the interests at stake made the decision inevitable. Firemen are still manning branches and keeping the Gladstone Dock shed cool from radiated heat from the superstructure of the vessel, which at its uppermost limit is only 10 in. from the shed."

London, Jan. 26.—Early this morning, following a conference between Canadian Pacific Railway Company officials, tug officials and fire officers, Sir Rex Hodges, manager and secretary of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, said: "We have decided there is nothing else we can do except let the steamer Empress of Canada burn herself out." The fire was still going strong in the vessel, with firemen taking what protective measures they could on the quayside. It is thought that the ship may burn for at least two days.—Exchange Telegraph Company.

London, Jan. 26.—Steamer Empress of Canada heeled over on to her side in Gladstone Dock, Liverpool, at 1 38 a.m. to-day. At a midnight conference shipping, dock and fire officials decided that the fire, which apparently broke out in the liner's dispensary soon after 4 p.m. yesterday, would have to burn itself out. When the vessel heeled over she sank in 50 ft. of water. Her derricks and lifting tackle broke loose and dangled over the quayside and flames and smoke belched afresh from the starboard side. There were several explosions inside the liner.—Exchange Telegraph Company.

Liverpool, Jan. 26.—Steamer Empress of Canada: Firemen were compelled to abandon operations on board vessel early to-day owing to vessel listing. The vessel is now lying on the bottom of the dock on her port side, apparently a total loss.

London, Jan. 26.—Shortly after 2 a.m. a Canadian Pacific official announced "Steamer Empress of Canada is a total loss." Liverpool C.I.D. are making investigations into the cause of the fire, and it is possible that Dr. J. B. Firth, Director of the Home Office Forensic Science Laboratory, at Preston, will be called.—Exchange Telegraph Company.

Liverpool, Jan. 26.—Steamer Empress of Canada capsized towards quay and is lying with port side on wet dock bottom, starboard propeller above water, plating on starboard side above waterline buckled, and masts and funnel broken. Amidship accommodation and superstructure gutted; fire still smouldering. Unable to get on board. Vessel will most probably prove to be a constructive total loss.—Salvage Association's Surveyors.

EMPRESS OF CANADA.—Liverpool, Jan. 28.—Salvage men started working on the partly submerged steamer Empress of Canada, in Gladstone Dock, to-day, cutting away some of the superstructure and other obstacles. They are clearing a way for a detailed investigation into the cause of the fire, but a vast amount of work will be necessary before proper access can be obtained.—"The Times" Correspondent. (See issue of Jan. 28.)

Liverpool, Jan. 29.—Steamer Empress of Canada: Fire still smouldering. Vessel lying on port side with starboard side from propeller bossing above water. Eight strakes starboard ship's side plating amidships badly buckled. Decks, bulkheads, casing, &c., so far as can be seen badly buckled, wood decking burnt, masts and funnels broken. Large quantity of oil on surface of water. Unable to sight internal damage but midship accommodation apparently completely burnt out.—Salvage Association's Surveyor.

London, Jan. 29.—Although traces of smoke still came from the capsized liner Empress of Canada, the fire was officially considered to be out to-day. Only one crew of firemen and one pump were standing by. Mr. A. G. Greenslade, chief officer of the Bootle Fire Brigade, said: "There is now little evidence of any heating. It is just a question of standing by and watching points in collaboration with the marine salvage men of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board." The salvage vessel Salvor was waiting to begin preliminary survey work.

L.L. 27/1.

L.L. 30/1.



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Foundation