

COPY.

Lloyd's Register of Shipping.



Port PENANG,

13th APRIL, 1938.

This is to Certify that

I, EDWARD WATT

the undersigned ^{Acting} Surveyor to this Society did at the request of

Messrs. Sandilands Buttery & Co., Lloyd's Agents, Penang, and with the consent of the Owner's Agent, on the 3rd April 1938 and subsequent dates, visit the M.V. "TONGKING" (No. in Reg. Book 35292) for the purpose of ascertaining what steps could be taken to minimise the damage by fire to ship and cargo. The vessel was then anchored on the edge of the Penang North Channel about 7 miles north of the Port.

2. The details of the outbreak of the fire are stated to be as follows :-

3. The "TONGKING" sailed from Penang about 10 a.m. on Saturday the 2nd instant, bound for Colombo with a cargo almost entirely composed of rice, copra cakes and copra, the distribution of this cargo being generally:-

Rice and copra cakes in the lower holds.

Copra in the between decks.

About 500 tons of copra on deck over Nos.2,3,4 & 5 holds.

4. About 4 hours after leaving Penang, the copra on the after

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deck was found to be on fire and, as all efforts by the crew to stop the spread of the fire by hoses failed, the vessel put back towards Penang & wirelessly for assistance. The telemotor gear failed due to the fire and the vessel was then steered with the engines until the engine room became untenable when the anchor was dropped. When the Penang Harbour Board tug "CONDOR" & the S.S. Government launch "SEAGULL" arrived on the scene, passengers & crew were transferred to these vessels, the cable was unshackled and the "TONGKING" was towed towards Penang under the direction of the Harbour Master Penang, only the Master being left on board. After towing for about 7 miles, the vessel took a sudden sheer and the cable had to be cut to save the tug. The other anchor was then dropped, after which the Master had to leave the ship owing to the heat and smoke. The vessel was now about 7 miles north of Penang in about 37 ft. of water at high tide, the draft being approximately 27 ft. for'd and 28 ft. aft.

5. Sunday 3rd April. I was requested at noon to inspect the vessel and arrived at about 2.30 p.m. - 24 hours after the fire was first discovered.

It was found that the copra on deck was burning furiously and the tops of the stacks, about 15 ft. high in places, could be seen through the flames. Flames were issuing from No. I hatch, the hatch covers being burned away, while smoke was issuing from all hold ventilators and flames from several. It was evident that the fire extended fore and aft below deck as well as above, with a break at the engine room which had apparently already burned out. It was impossible to get on board or even alongside the vessel.

The fire had gained such a hold that enormous volumes of

/water

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water would have been required to extinguish it. Moreover hoses could not be directed into Nos. 2, 3, 4 & 5 holds owing to the burning copra over them. The only useful craft available locally was the Penang Harbour Board tug "CONDOR" (pumping capacity estimated at about 250 tons per hour) while it would have taken almost 2 days before tugs from Singapore could arrive on the scene. These would have arrived too late in my estimation to be of any service. Sinking the ship was considered but the starboard side could not be approached, while if approach had been found possible on the port side and holes cut, there appeared to be a danger of the ship turning over. In any case I did not consider this advisable since it would have meant additional damage to the cargo while, as far as could be judged, the ship appeared likely to be a constructive total loss in any case.

I recommend^{ed} however that pumping be tried with a view to cooling down the fore part sufficiently to get on board there. It was hoped also that pumping would submerge the ship sufficiently to protect the sides from overheating & leakage.

The tug "CONDOR" arrived on the scene about 9 p.m. in charge of Captain Evans of the P.H.B. accompanied by Captain Berg of the "TONGKING". Pumping was continued for about 16 hours.

6. Monday 4th April. I arrived at the "TONGKING" about 2.30 p.m. and found that pumping had just been stopped on account of the vessel having assumed a port list of about 25°.

On examining conditions, I recommended that the tug be withdrawn in the meantime, since the water had proved ineffective on the burning copra which exuded large quantities of oil, while further pumping would only result in damage to the rice cargo which did not appear to be burning. It had been possible with the list

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and by use of the hoses to wash all the burning copra on deck into the sea, after which the hoses could be directed into the starboard between decks.

It was hoped that when the copra had nearly burned out, it could be damped down and that the rice could be salvaged, though a considerable amount of it must be in a damaged condition due to water and the oil from the burning copra which must have percolated down through it. The vessel was still afloat fore and aft.

7. Tuesday 5th April. I visited the vessel at low water (about 8.30 p.m.) along with Mr. Anderson of Messrs. Ritchie & Bisset, Engineers & Ship Surveyors, Singapore. It had been reported that the draft had increased aft. It was found possible to board the vessel on the port quarter. Water had gained access to the crew's quarters below deck aft through 3 open port holes on the port side. The ports & deadlights were found to be unserviceable due to the fire, so the 6 port holes were blanked off port & starboard and the crew space left practically dry. Evidently the water which had entered had leaked away through the bulkhead. The after end was now apparently resting on the bottom at low water while the fore end was afloat. The port list was now only about 5°. The copra in No.6 upper between decks could be seen to be well burned out, burning copra in the lower between decks being still up to the top of the hatch. Smoke was issuing from No.5 double bottom vent pipes. The ship's side above water starboard was red hot in several places particularly No.1 & 5 between decks and the space alongside the engine room casing, the frames showing as dark lines through the red hot plates. The vessel had gone down by the head about 2 ft. and hull leakage was suspected

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suspected fore & aft.

8. Wednesday 6th April. I again visited the vessel on the 6th instant about 3.30 p.m. (nearing high water). Before leaving Penang at 2 p.m., I observed smoke still pouring out of the vessel. About 2.30 p.m. the smoke had stopped and, on arriving at the scene, the vessel was found to be resting on the bottom fore & aft practically on an even keel, the after deck being awash, while the fore deck at Nos.I & 2 hatches was above water. The fire was now extinguished except in Nos.I & 2 between decks where it still smouldered slightly. Fuel oil was pouring out of the goose neck vents of Nos.4,5 & 6 double bottoms and spreading over the sea. From this it would appear that either the tank tops had collapsed or that the bottom was leaking. though other causes are possible.

9. Thursday 7th April. The Deputy Harbour Master who visited the vessel on this day reported that the fuel oil over the after deck was alight and the stern enveloped in flames. No useful purpose could be served by my visiting the vessel on this day.

10. Sunday 10th April. I visited the vessel about 3.30 p.m. at low water along with Captain Gabe who had arrived from Denmark to represent the Hull and Cargo Underwriters. The fire was then completely extinguished and the vessel could be boarded. It was found that the decks were very badly buckled being set down about 3 feet in the centre in way of Nos.I & 2 hatches. The after deck was still awash. The engine room was flooded and nothing could be seen there.

II. As a result of my last visit, I consider that if the vessel were to be restored it would be necessary to rebuild her from the waterline upwards, while extensive repairs would undoubtedly

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Received by me,

19.

(per Sec. 20)

Travelling Expenses (if chargeable) 2

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undoubtedly be necessary to the hull below the waterline. In addition the machinery must be so badly damaged by fire and flooding of the engine room that it would require extensive renewals & repairs. A complete examination cannot of course be made under present conditions, but from inspection of the damage which can be seen, I am definitely of the opinion that restoration of the vessel could not be economically carried out. I2. I do not recommend that repairs be undertaken.

Sd. E. Watt.

Ag: Surveyor to Lloyd's Register,
P e n a n g.

FEE: Dollars Three hundred (\$300/-) only.



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