

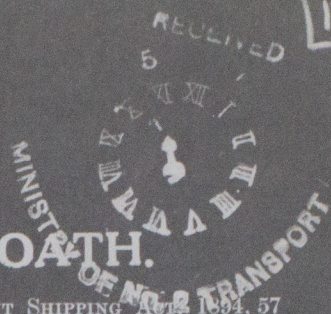
Inq. 1.



ISSUED BY THE
MINISTER OF WAR
TRANSPORT

EXAMINATION ON OATH.

IN PURSUANCE OF THE 465TH SECTION OF THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, 1894, 57
AND 58 VICTORIE, CAP 60.



*Frank Douglas Gardner of 55, Southtown Road,
Great Yarmouth.*

being duly sworn,
deposes as follows; namely,

1. That, he, being the holder of a certificate of *competence*, numbered *009648*
master, Foreign going
was *master* of the *Motor* ship *Lamagusta*,
is of the port of *London* of the gross tonnage of *454.20* tons, her
official number being *181,521*; that the ship was built of *Steel*
at *Artich, Glasgow* in the year *1943*, that she was classed by *Lloyds*,
as *100 A1*, that her engines were of *385 Brake* horse-power,

and that she was rigged as

2. That the ship ^{was} owned by *William Bartram Cecil-Lowe*
is of the *vicarage, Bingham*, in the *County* of *Kent*.
and ^{was} *under charter to*

3. That the ship carried a crew of *12* hands including deponent, and *four*
superannuated
passengers. *The name of the pilot was*

4. That the ship had on board a cargo of *eight lorries and two containers*
of the weight of *29 1/4* tons shipped by *Essex Commercial Enterprises*
of *Dagenham* and consigned to *S. A. C. de Chaulffures Sata, Larnies*,
of *Lamagusta, Cyprus* and that *1 lorry of 3 1/4 tons* ^{was} ~~were~~ carried on deck.

5. That the ship sailed from *Dagenham, Essex* on her intended voyage to
Lamagusta, Cyprus on the *13th* day of *March*
1947, at *2 p.m.*; that the draught of water of the said ship at the time of sailing was

3 feet 6 inches forward and 6 feet inches aft. *from her fleet*
fully bunkered for the voyage.

6. That at the time of sailing as above the said ship was *well found in every respect*.
On 13 March 1947, the vessel was fully bunkered for the voyage. A total of 52 tons of
freshly dist. 12 tons of fresh water and about 10 tons of stores. The water tank was carried
on the port side forward in foremost wing tank. The life saving appliances consisted
on port side aft, in davits, a boat washed for 12 persons, and a boat on the starboard
side for 16 persons or of 16 feet, deponent not being certain of the particulars of the starboard
boat. A boat, unrigged, but about 14 feet, was carried in davits on the deck just
forward of the fore hatch and not carried in davits. The port and starboard

7. That the said ship was proceeding on the intended voyage as above stated
calling at *Southend* for compass adjusting, leaving *that place* on
14 March 1947 at 11.50 am. The weather at the time of leaving *Southend*
was *fresh north easterly wind and a fresh sea.* *The voyage down*
the Channel was without incident and no merchant vessel was sighted

at noon on 16th March 1947, bearing S.E. magnetic about 8 miles. The weather on sighting Mohant was strong south westerly wind with rough sea and freshened throughout the day. The boat was behaving very well and appeared so far as is known was making no water. There was a certain amount of spray and water coming on the weather decks and it was not possible to take sounding. The vessel remained upright. At daybreak on 17th March 1947 the weather was extremely heavy, the wind being about force 7 from the S.W. with heavy seas. It was then observed that the vessel had developed a slight list to port and at the time was pounding heavily, but was answering the helm well. The chief engineer was at once instructed to start the forward engine.

[Continued on page 4 if necessary].

8. That on Wednesday the 19th day of March 1947, at noon, the weather being squally the wind blowing at force 7/8 from the S.W. the tide being with a heavy sea from the

the said ship pounding heavily, the port engine gave out, thought to have been caused through lack of lubrication due to the list. "Empire Floes" had by this time drawn ahead about one mile and contact was found difficult. Contact was eventually made by International code flag signals about 1.30pm and "Empire Floes" was requested to take "Tamagusta" in tow, and a ~~various~~ ^{schism} line was got on board "Tamagusta". This line was bent on to a thicker line but this was lost due to a sudden strain being put on it. Supposedly, the idea of getting a line aboard ^{was} abandoned and it was decided to get the four supernumeraries and surplus personal away in a boat to "Empire Floes". Wireless contact had now failed due to the failure of the batteries caused by shorting. The batteries were carried in the engine room and there was some flooding there. A signal was ^{tried} sent by semaphore to "Empire Floes" that the boat was being sent away to her. This message was not acknowledged. The port boat was got ready. It was intended to send away the four supernumeraries, 2 I. operators, steward, 2 A.B.s and the 2nd mate. The 2 A.B.s and 2nd mate to return with the boat. The boat was successfully swung out and lowered, and was lying alongside and personnel were embarking in it when the wife of the owner refused to embark without her pet dog and insisted upon taking it. In the resultant confusion the 2nd bgr and a greaser (Jones) had boarded the boat and the 2nd mate was not ⁱⁿ there to take charge and someone had cast off the painter before he could get in. The boat got away under oars successfully and made her way toward "Empire Floes" about

200 yards away to windward. The boat had shipped some water whilst lying alongside, and deponent noticed that the occupants were using the hand pump which was working properly, and the boat seemed under control. Deponent went forward to get the barley float ready for launching when he heard a shout and on looking round saw that the life-boat had overturned at a distance which was judged to be about 30 yards to windward of "Empire Floes". Some members of the boat seemed to be swimming toward the other ship and others hanging on to the overturned boat. They were all wearing their life jackets and deponent had no fear for their safety. The remainder of the crew were ordered to get away by barley float. It was then seen that the "Empire Floes" was bearing down toward "Tamagusta" and that people were climbing up her side by means of ropes etc. the overturned lifeboat was swept toward "Tamagusta" and almost caught between the two vessels but slid clear, and some of the people still in the water were probably crushed between the

[Continued on page 4 if necessary].

9. That services to the said ship were rendered as follows:

Attempt to tow and successful rescue work by "Empire Floes"

[Continued on page 4 if necessary].

10. That in consequence of the aforementioned casualty - 6 - lives were lost; that the lives of the master ~~and~~ crew and ~~passengers~~ (18 in all) were saved by ~~the survivors subsisting on board that vessel~~ from ~~to~~ when they were landed at

11. That the loss on the said ship is estimated by deponent at unknown pounds sterling, and on the said cargo at unknown pounds sterling and that the ship was insured in the sum of unknown pounds sterling, the cargo in unknown pounds sterling, and the freight in unknown pounds sterling.

12. That in deponent's opinion the cause of the casualty was the water entering the forward store room through the deck causing the initial list which was aggravated by the severe weather.

could not and that it might have been avoided

13. That the above statements are correct and true to the best of deponent's knowledge and belief and they have been read over to the deponent before he signed.

Deponent.

Sworn at London this 26th day of March 1947.

Mr. Longman

Officer of Customs and Excise
Officer of the Coastguard
Person appointed for the purpose
under S. 465 of the M.S.A. 1894.

Strike out the words
that do not apply.

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[Continued from paragraph 6 page 1.]

side after boats were fully equipped. The forward boat was a tanked boat but not equipped. There were 16 standard Kapok type life jackets distributed. All other life saving appliances were in complete order. The pumping arrangements ^{for the forward part of the vessel} were forward and were electrically controlled and were largely inaccessible in bad weather. An objection to this was made by deponent and his objection was partly met by an arrangement being fitted whereby it could be controlled from aft. About the middle of January, the deponent was informed that there would be four people travelling in the vessel in addition to the twelve members of the crew. The four additional people were squeezed into the existing accommodation while ~~two~~ ^{three} members of the crew were accommodated in the steering flat. There was a Carley float on the fore hatch and a small buoyant apparatus on the bridge deck aft.

(Continued from paragraph 7 page 2).

Double Bottom suction pump. A small quantity of discoloured water was pumped out, but this did not counteract the small list the vessel had. The deponent assumed then that the list was caused by the weather being on the starboard side. The list did not develop during the day although the weather was getting worse, but the vessel was pounding heavily and rolling about and chipping water. During the night of 17th March 1947 the weather increased and the list to port increased and by about 6 am 18th March, the list had increased to about 9 degrees. During the night of 17th March, the deponent instructed the Chief Engineer to go forward and start the forward pump. He returned and reported that there was water in the fore store room ~~and over~~ the forward tank and that the forward pump was out of action, owing to the water. The after pump was then connected to the double bottom. A good suction was obtained. The Chief Engineer also reported that water was coming through the weather deck ~~around~~ ^{around} the companion way, hatch way and after bulk head. Throughout the night the weather remained from ahead about 2 points on the starboard bow.

On the morning of the 18th March, when the list of about 9 degrees to port was ~~discovered~~ ^{noted}, the deponent instructed the Chief Officer to go forward and examine the fore ~~store room~~ ^{fore room} and report, but when he reached the companion way he was in such danger of his life that deponent recalled him. The Chief Officer stated he could hear a considerable amount of water swirling about. Throughout the 18th March, all possible pumping power was kept going and the vessel's engine speed maintained. In the forenoon of the 18th March, the deponent discussed with the Chief Engineer the possibility of fitting the starboard after double bottom ^{to empty the tank out}. He decided as this would entail the stopping of the pumping, deponent decided that pumping was more important.

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(Continued from paragraph 7 page 4.)

The journey, who was aboard, was a qualified engineer, and ^{most of the} discussions with the Chief Engineer, was carried out through him.

As an alternative to filling the after double bottom the possibility of filling the starboard wing tanks was discussed but the idea was abandoned as not be practical.

It was impossible to sound the tanks owing to the heavy seas coming aboard.

About noon of the 18th March, it was reported to deponent that water was coming aft through the rudder post glands. Deponent's examination disclosed that the glands were loose, and these were tightened down by the ship's engineers.

and altho' this did not entirely stop the leaks, the amount of water which still entered was slight, and could well have been kept down by ^{additional} ~~an~~ pump if available. The list by this time had increased to about 15 degrees.

By about 6 pm, 18th March, the list was about 20 degrees, and a wireless urgent message was sent out requesting any ship in the vicinity to stand by. The message was acknowledged by the "Empire Blossie", who reported she would make for "Lamagusta" position. The deponent feels certain that the cargo had not shifted. The lorry carried on deck was still in her original position.

The course and engine speed was maintained during the night of 18th March. The hatch covers and ventilator covers were still intact and secure.

At 3.30 am 19th March, the "Empire Blossie" came up to "Lamagusta" and stood by. Deponent promised to report the position at daybreak. About 6 am 19th March, the list was about 23 degrees. The weather was very bad, wind S.W. about force 8, with very heavy seas and squally.

Deponent altered course at 6 am to make for Coxenna, course made was SxW magnetic, bringing the weather a little more on the starboard bow.

During the forenoon of the 19th March, the list gradually increased. The pumps were kept working all the time. The vessel was making 2 2/3 knots and deponent had hopes of making Coxenna under his own power.

Deponent
for long time

two vessels. The "Empire Flower" struck the "Tamagusta" with her port bow on "Tamagusta's" starboard beam.

The 2nd mate having boarded "Empire Flower" the two vessels drifted apart. The barley float was launched and chief engineer, Mate and one A.B. boarded it. The deponent with the remaining crew launched the buoyant apparatus. Both the barley float and buoyant apparatus were picked up by a boat launched from "Empire Flower" and, ^{occupants} successfully transferred to that ship.

When deponent got on board "Empire Flower" he discovered that one of the superannuaries had been saved (M^r Robinson), Breasler Jones. 2nd Engineer Leppel ^{and wireless operator} had been saved from the original boat party. The 2nd Engineer was suffering from a ~~crushed~~ crushed leg and other injuries from which he has since died.

The persons lost are M^r & M^{rs} Lowe (owner and his wife) who were last seen clinging to the upturned lifeboat, one at either end with the dog on the upturned boat. M^r Lowe was apparently making efforts to get to the assistance of his wife. Also lost was M^r Hunter, (a superannuary) believed crushed, A.B. Abbott (believed crushed), Cook, Steward Brinest (drowned). Five all told, in addition the 2nd Engineer later in hospital at Porto.

"Empire Flower" made search for the missing people without success.

Deponent would like to place on record the bravery of Able Seaman Kelly of "Empire Flower" who lost his life in repeated gallant attempts to save the lives of personnel of the upturned boat, and generally the whole ship's company of "Empire Flower" for the excellent work done in rescue work.

The abandonment was carried out at 3 pm 19th March, and prior to this the starboard engine had been stopped and the list was increasing rapidly. It was reported to deponent that water was increasing in the engine room rapidly. The engine room was ordered out.

The approximate position of abandonment was. 44.22 N. 8.20 W.

The survivors were landed at Salmouth on Friday 21st March.

During the afternoon of 18th March it was reported to deponent that water was getting in to the crew's quarters on the Port side. He investigated and found that the water was making its way in between the ~~single beam and the deck~~ bottom of the deck house side and the deck. This was baled but the quantity of water could not be kept down. The deck edge was at that time awash.

Prior to the commencement of the voyage it was decided to inspect the rudders and propellers, because of the vessel having been in the ice at Boston, Lines. The forward tanks were flooded to tip the vessel but as she could not be tipped enough the tanks were pumped out and it was decided to put her on the

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(continued from para 8. page 6).

hard for inspection. The morning following the tipping the deponent discovered that the vessel had trimmed a little by the head. Deponent ordered the chief engineer to pump out the double bottom port and starboard under the store-room and a small amount of water was pumped out. The vessel was put on the hard and the propellers changed and rudders lengthened. At low water it ~~was~~ ~~too~~ appeared that a trickle of water was coming from the vessel in the vicinity of the sea suction. On examination of the tank inside the sea suction flange was found to be loose and this was made good by the engineers.

Deponent understands that the owner had made arrangements with Lloyd's surveyors to examine the ship while she was on the hard, but so far as deponent is aware no examination was made when the vessel was high and dry.

D. L. L. L.

W. Longman



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