

SECRET



FROM.....The Commanding Officer, H.M.S. "WHITEHALL".

DATE.....4th May, 1944., Ref No. RP. 26/2.

TO.....The Senior Officer, 8th Escort Group. -  
(Copy to:- The Captain (D), Greenock).

Report on the rescue of Survivors from S.S.  
"WILLIAM.S.THAYER" in Convoy RA 59 on 30th  
April, 1944.,

"WHITEHALL" was in company with "INCONSTANT" in sectors XY and XZ when at 1800Z a ship was torpedoed. At 1808Z orders were received to sweep with "INCONSTANT" up the port side of the convoy. At 1822Z ordered to join "BOADICEA" hunting a contact on the port quarter of the convoy. Carried out "Observant" with "BOADICEA" and "INCONSTANT".

2. At 1907Z ordered by E.G.8 to close wreck of the torpedoed ship and pick up survivors. The wreck was approached at full speed and information was received from the rescue ship S.S. "ROBERT EDEN" that there were many men in the water and some more in the stern half of the wreck. The ~~first~~ <sup>forward</sup> half had sunk.

3. As the wreck did not appear to be in any danger of sinking, it was decided to rescue men from the water first, so proceeded to the windward of a collection of rafts and wreckage, all floating in thick oil. Informed E.G.8 that assistance was required.

4. The whaler was lowered and "WHITEHALL" proceeded alongside the rafts to pick up survivors. 12 men were picked up and the whaler returned with 10 more. A total of 22. No more men were seen in the water and "BOADICEA" and "WALKER" were alongside the wreck.

5. Carried out "Observant" until ordered by E.G.8 at 2250 to screen the rescue ship back to the convoy.

6. When "WHITEHALL" arrived on the scene, the men had been in the water for about 85 minutes and great difficulties were experienced in rescuing them. None could help himself owing to the cold, none had any rope or other attachment round himself that would hold a hook or a rope, all were thickly coated with oil, and those who had consumed quantities of oil struggled hard when rescue ratings endeavoured to bend them on to a life-line. A few sank alongside before they could be hoisted inboard.

7. It is regretted that 6 men died within an hour of recovery. Cause of their death - exposure. They were buried at sea at 2120Z.

8. Great credit is due to Temporary Surgeon Lieutenant G.C.Foster-Smith, RNVR, whose strenuous endeavours undoubtedly saved many more from dying.

9. All the survivors picked up came from the forward half of the ship and the American survivors who were on the bridge when the ship was torpedoed state that two torpedoes hit, one forward and one amidships, both on the starboard side. Just before the torpedoes hit, a periscope was sighted about 400 yards away on the starboard side.

The following appendices are attached :-

10.

- (i) List of survivors.
- (ii) List of men who died onboard after recovery, and were buried at sea.
- (iii) List of effects of U.S. deceased.
- (iv) List of effects of Russian deceased.

11. A list of Russian survivors has been forwarded to H.M.S. "FENCER" for the Russian Admiral, together with a list of American survivors.

*R. Bassett*

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Lieutenant Commander. Royal Navy.



APPENDIX II.

LIST OF MEN WHO DIED ONBOARD AFTER RECOVERY AND WERE BURIED AT SEA.

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APPENDIX I.

LIST OF SURVIVORS.

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AMERICANS.U.S. NAVAL RATINGS.

P. CALDERONE.  
D. CARR.  
W. BARTLETT.  
F. GIBSON.  
M. HOLVITZ.  
G. SCAGLIONE.

SEAMAN.  
GUNNER.  
RADIO OPERATOR.  
SEAMAN.  
G.M. 2ND CLASS.  
SIGNALMAN.

MERCHANT NAVY.

A. TULEIKIS.  
J. MULLIN.  
T. GATELY.  
P. DAVIS.

3RD MATE.  
FIREMAN.  
OILER.  
FIREMAN.

RUSSIAN. (NAVAL RATINGS).

N. DANILELOV.  
J. BELUYGIN.  
A. CHERBIKIN.  
V. GREGORIEV.  
M. VELOCOV.  
M. EMERMAN.

3RD CLASS RADIOMAN.  
3RD CLASS GUNNER.  
3RD CLASS YEOMAN.  
3RD CLASS GUNNER.  
3RD CLASS MACHINIST.  
3RD CLASS MACHINIST.

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APPENDIX II.

RR. 143/2.

LIST OF MEN WHO DIED ONBOARD AFTER RECOVERY AND WERE BURIED AT SEA.

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AMERICAN. (MERCHANT NAVY).

MATTERSON.	FIRST ASST. ENGINEER OFFICER.
MURPHY.	MESS STEWARD.
BLOOM. M. G.	RADIO OPERATOR.
STEEL. D. D.	SEAMAN.

RUSSIAN.

V. A. MARTINOV.	LIEUTENANT. SOVIET NAVY.
R. BERESKO.	SEAMAN. " "

(BOTH BLOOM AND STEEL WERE BROUGHT ONBOARD FROM THE SAME RAFT AS GIBSON, SURVIVOR).

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