

I, Matthew Caldwell, of Rua Candelaria 80, 6th. floor, Rio de Janeiro, hereby depose and say as follows:-

I am employed as Surveyor to Lloyds Register of Shipping at Rio de Janeiro and on April 25th, 1949, at about 7.15am. I received a telephone call from Mr. Gregson, Lloyd's Agent requesting me to proceed as soon as possible to the MAGDALENA which had stranded outside Rio Harbour; this was followed by a similar request from the Royal Mail Lines.

I immediately left home and in company with Captain Ingram, Royal Mail Line Superintendent, and Messrs Brooman and Fletcher of Messrs Wilsons, left the quay in the tug LINOSA at about 9.15am.

We arrived at the MAGDALENA at about 11.30am and boarded via the baggage entrance. The weather at this time was quite bad with a heavy swell running.

A conference was immediately held in the Captain's cabin at which Mr. Wheadon, Captains Lee and Ingram, the Chief Officer and Chief Engineer, all of the Royal Mail Lines, Messrs Brooman and Fletcher and myself attended.

The position was explained to us with information re soundings and that No.3 hold was flooded and open to the sea, No.2 hold was making water but was being kept under control by the vessel's pumps. In the meantime, the second in command of the salvage tug TRIUNFO came on board and being able to speak English, joined in the conference.

I went with Mr. Wheadon, the Chief Officer and the TRIUNFO's Officer to inspect No.3 hold to see if it could be effectively sealed and compressed air introduced to blow out the water. We went down the cooling or insulated hatch to where the water was level with the main deck.

The question of using an electric-welding plant for sealing and then an air compressor was discussed with the TRIUNFO's Officer who thought the TRIUNFO could do the work, but said that as he was not a salvage engineer he could not decide and that we should go aboard the TRIUNFO to discuss the matter with his commanding officer.

We found that the Commanding Officer (C/O) of the TRIUNFO would not come over to the MAGDALENA so arrangements were made for the LINOSA to take us to the TRIUNFO. This was done and we boarded the TRIUNFO some distance away at about 12.30pm.

We conferred with the C/O TRIUNFO who informed us that he was not equipped with an electric-welding plant but that he had an air compressor on board. After a half an hour's questioning, it was discovered that the air compressor referred to was so small as to be totally inadequate for any form of salvage work. The vessel was however equipped with ejectors which might have been of some use providing they could be moored alongside the MAGDALENA. The C/O TRIUNFO was requested to go alongside the MAGDALENA but he replied that he was unable to do so owing to the state of the weather. I formed the impression that whilst the TRIUNFO was equipped as a salvage tug, the C/O was unwilling to take salvage risks. The time was then about 12.30 to 1pm. It was not until several hours later that I learnt that the C/O TRIUNFO had had definite instructions not to endanger his ship except for the purpose of saving life.

*It was then about 12.30 to 1 p.m.*



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In the meantime I had discussed the possibility of running out anchors from the MAGDALENA so that she could pull herself off the rocks, but the weather prevented any such action to be taken.

The tug LINOSA made several attempts at about 1.30pm to close the TRIUNFO for the purpose of picking us up but without success. The TRIUNFO was moving about, approaching the MAGDALENA to within a quarter of a mile.

Signalling by means of a one-way radio telephone and W/T seemed hopeless, the message appeared to be terribly mutilated and in some cases little attempt was made to receive them.

The TRIUNFO stood by, presumably for the purpose of saving life until after dark and as the SATURNO had to return to Rio for bunkers and her Pilot together with the Pilot of the MAGDALENA were on board that vessel, the C/O TRIUNFO volunteered to escort her back to Rio.

It seemed hopeless to try and influence the C/O TRIUNFO and thinking we might obtain the necessary equipment from the Naval Arsenal, we agreed. We had been informed that the equipment was available at the Arsenal.

On returning to Rio I found that the Arsenal either hadn't the equipment or that it could not be supplied; knowing Messrs Wilsons had an electric-welding and air compressor plant I requested Mr. Squiers, Manager of the Royal Mail Lines at Rio de Janeiro to contact Wilsons and also to engage all the largest tugs available.

I wish to say that the Navy was on the spot before I arrived at the MAGDALENA, I was given the information that they would attend to everything, I however found that they were rather difficult to deal with and could not suggest any action without giving the inference that they were not doing all they could.

It was arranged that the SATURNO should bring out the air compressor plant after she had bunkered and we returned to the scene of operations in the TRIUNFO, arriving off the MAGDALENA at about 3am.

The MAGDALENA made signals and I was able to receive one to the effect that she had refloated and wanted the TRIUNFO alongside to pump. This message was understood but apart from the ejectors which would not have proved effective in the weather prevailing, the TRIUNFO had no pumps suitable for the work. The message "We are afloat" caused some doubt in our minds as to whether the vessel was afloat but still over the rocks.

The Chief Officer MAGDALENA had an idea that it would be advantageous if all except a skeleton crew of about 50 men were to leave the MAGDALENA. A message to this effect was sent to the MAGDALENA but it was sent in such a garbled manner that later I discovered that the Captain understood it to have been an invitation to abandon his ship, and this he would not do. It was some time before I realised that the C/O TRIUNFO had no intention of going alongside the MAGDALENA.

At daybreak or shortly after, the CMDTE DORAT took the MAGDALENA in tow and about this time, the SATURNO arrived with an air compressor but no welding plant, this equipment was on another vessel and could not be obtained.



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obtained in time.

The tow commenced with the CMDTE DORAT and it was apparent that she was experiencing difficulties with the tow, the TRIUNFO however made no attempt to assist. Feeling helpless and rather impatient to help, we transferred to the tug SATURNO. About an hour after the tow had commenced, the TRIUNFO manoeuvred to take a towline and after a long time, connected up forward and commenced towing. The MAGDALENA appeared to continue drifting crabwise and it was suggested to the Captain that the SATURNO should connect up aft and help by straightening up the ship. This was done and the vessel was towed straight. Later another tug, of low-power connected up on the port quarter. The wind, sea and swell were from the SW, the latter being very heavy.

The MAGDALENA's forward draught had noticeably increased since the commencement of the tow and I noticed that the water was level about 2 feet below her hawspipes.

The tow slowly approached the bar and then I noticed the MAGDALENA stop and swing beam on to the sea and swell and lie in the trough. The port quarter tug either did not understand or could not pull the stern round and shortly afterwards I saw the ship shudder, then paint scaled off amidships, rivets sheer and fly off and the shell rip open in way of No.3 hold.

I did not take part in any inspection of the vessel other than in way of No.3 hold during the short time I was on board at 11.30am.

Details of this inspection and the soundings as given to me on boarding are set out in the attached report under my signature.

I have read the above statement and the attached report and I hereby make oath and say that they are true accounts of the matters related therein to the best of my knowledge and belief. It is requested that for international reasons, the above statement should be treated as a "privileged document".

(Signed) M. Caldwell.

Sworn at the British Consulate General  
Rio de Janeiro this 29th. day of June 1949  
before me,

A.G. Ponsonby.

H.M. Consul General.



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