

# REPORT of SURVEY for REPAIRS, &c.

**Uskmouth**

WRECK BAY

No. 175 Section 3

9731

F

## REPORT OF TOTAL LOSS, CASUALTY, &c.

No. 35828 in R. B.

Wreck Book, p. 97/39

Date of writing this report 28th December, 1939

Vessel's Name *Steel S.S. "Uskmouth"* of *Newport*

Tons { Gross 2483  
Net 1493

Built at *Burntisland* When *1928* *9* Casualty notice sent to Owner *13/12/39* Owner's reply *15/12/39*

Owner's Name *Uskside S.S. Co. Ltd. (R.W. Jones & Co. Mgrs.)*

Address *Newport, Mon.*

Case previously before  
Classing Committee.

Date  
Last Minute

Particulars of Classification.

<del>F</del> 100A1	<del>F</del> LMC
5,39	MS 237 BS 3,39
S.S. No 2-37	TS 11,38CL

Date of Casualty *26th November, 1939*

Précis of particulars of Casualty *This vessel is reported to have sunk after being shelled for 2 1/2 hours by a submarine in the Bay of Biscay on the 26th November, 1939.*

The Owners concur.

*WP No. 175  
Section 3*

**RETAIN**

### SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

#### WAR CASUALTIES

##### British Steamer Sunk

The British steamer *Uskmouth*, of 2483 tons gross, has been sunk, and three of her crew of 25 are missing. The survivors were taken on board another vessel. The *Uskmouth* was owned by Messrs. Richard W. Jones & Co., Newport, and was built in 1928 by the Burntisland Shipbuilding Company, Ltd.

*LL 29/11*

Three of the crew of the Newport steamer *Uskmouth* (2,483 tons), which has been sunk, are missing. The *Uskmouth*, which was owned by the Uskside S.S. Co., Ltd., had 25 men on board and the survivors are safe in another steamer.

*NC 29/11*

Three of the crew of the Newport steamer *Uskmouth* (2,483 tons), which has been sunk, are missing. The *Uskmouth*, which was owned by the Uskside Steam Ship Company, Limited, had 25 men on board, and the survivors are safe in another steamer. The names of the missing are given as J. Robe, third officer, A. D. Dowie, bosun, and D. Davies, ordinary seaman. The *Uskmouth* was built in 1928.

*Times 29/11*

#### SHELLED FOR 2 1/2 HOURS

Twenty-two members of the crew of the Newport steamer *Uskmouth* (2,483 tons) were landed at a South-East Coast port yesterday. They described how a German U-boat, after missing them with torpedoes, shelled the steamer for 2 1/2 hours until she burst into flames and sank off the Spanish coast on Saturday.

*Times 1/12*

Twenty-two of the crew of 25 got away in the ship's lifeboat. As he stood on the boat deck Third Officer J. Robe was mortally wounded, and the bosun was blown into the sea, but it is believed that he has been picked up by another ship.

"Shells were bursting around us as we got away," said the mate. "I think the U-boat commander was mad at having missed us with the torpedoes, and he must have fired 17 rounds into our ship. I doubt whether the ship was worth the amount of money it must have cost to sink her. I don't know why the U-boat commander did not put a bomb in her and blow her up after we had left. The Germans were absolutely merciless and made no attempt to rescue the survivors. We sailed about 170 miles before being picked up by an Italian ship. The crew looked after us very well."

#### SURVIVORS SHELLED

It was reported last night that a U-boat which had sunk a British steamer in the Bay of Biscay vainly fired three torpedoes in a moonlight attack on a French destroyer which had picked up one of the survivors. The submarine then dived and the warship dropped depth charges.

The destroyer appeared on the scene shortly after the Newport ship *Uskmouth*, 2,483 tons, had foundered in flames. Three torpedoes missed the vessel and the U-boat then shelled her for 2 1/2 hours.

The third officer, J. Robe, and a seaman were killed. The boatswain, Alexander Dowie, was blown overboard, but was rescued by the French warship.

Seven officers and 15 of the crew got away with shells bursting round them.

#### DROWNED AFTER RESCUE

One of the survivors, William Hughes, of South Shields, went for a walk shortly after he landed, but fell into the harbour and was drowned.

*D. Tel 1/12*

Suggested Record

**SUNK-WAR LOSS 11/39**

Date of Committee

**FRI. 29 DEC 1939**

Committee's Minute

*Sunk - War Loss 11.39*



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WHS-0135

LL 30/12/39

## GERMAN U-BOAT METHODS

### The Brutal Attack on the "Uskmouth"

If there is one thing the German U-boats dislike it is the loss of torpedoes. This is understandable, for a submarine can carry only a limited number of torpedoes, and the journey back to the bases for supplies is both long and hazardous for the U-boats. There was therefore some excuse for annoyance on the part of the U-boat captain who fired three torpedoes at a British merchant ship without scoring a hit—but there can be no shadow of excuse, either for his attempt to torpedo the merchant ship without warning or for the ruthless man-killing methods which he afterwards adopted.

It was nearly 11 o'clock on a clear night in the Bay of Biscay when the officer on watch on the bridge of the British steamer *Uskmouth* saw a torpedo track passing close ahead of the ship. The *Uskmouth's* helm was at once put over, and as the ship was swinging the track of a second torpedo passed close to the bows. Then, as the *Uskmouth* was still swinging under her helm, the track of a third torpedo was seen. This passed astern of the *Uskmouth*. Prompt use of the helm had enabled the merchant ship to dodge three torpedoes fired without warning, but she was not to escape. The U-boat opened fire with her guns at a range of only about 300 yards. Not only did the U-boat begin shelling while the crew of the *Uskmouth* were getting to the boats, but the Germans fired high and used shrapnel. The U-boat captain was determined to cause as many casualties as possible among the defenceless merchant seamen who had cost him three precious torpedoes.

The port lifeboat was damaged by shell fire. A shell cut one of the falls of the boat. The boatswain, who was in this boat getting it ready for lowering, was thrown into the sea. Another shell, bursting over the upper deck, killed the third officer and one of the seamen. The Chief Officer tried to go to the aid of the fallen men, but another shell burst overhead and wounded him in the head. Meanwhile the remainder of the crew succeeded in lowering the starboard boat and getting into it. Blinded with blood, the wounded Chief Officer just succeeded in reaching this boat.

That lifeboat, with 22 men on board, pulled away from the ship, while the submarine continued her shelling. Not only had the U-boat deliberately set herself to inflict casualties on the *Uskmouth's* crew as they were abandoning ship, but at no time was any attempt made to ensure the safety of those in the lifeboat. They were left to fend for themselves in an open boat 120 miles from land. By magnificent seamanship that lifeboat sailed nearly 120 miles at a speed of nearly six knots and actually sighted land before being picked up by the Italian motorship *Juventus*.

Before abandoning the *Uskmouth*, the wireless operator succeeded in getting out S O S signals. These were picked up by a French warship which was about 65 miles away. She dashed at full speed for the position given in the S O S message and, by a miracle, found the boatswain of the *Uskmouth* alive in the water. The warship did not stop at once to pick him up, for there was a good chance of being able to sink the U-boat. She therefore dropped a raft close to the man and rushed on to attack the U-boat. After doing so the French warship returned and picked him up. There seems every reason to believe that the French warship sank the U-boat, thus claiming rapid vengeance for one of the most brutal attacks ever made—even by German submarines.



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