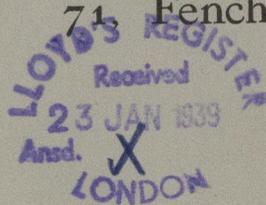




Please address
further communications
on this subject to
THE SECRETARY
and quote the following
initial

Lloyd's Register of Shipping,

71 Fenchurch Street, London, E.C. 3.



23rd January, 1939.

Dear Sir,

In accordance with instructions I left London on the evening of the 19th instant for Antwerp, for the purpose of making an examination of the s.s. "LE PHOQUE", which had sustained extensive damage through being struck by the s.s. "BENNEKOM", while she was lying alongside Quay No. 231, Antwerp, on the 15th December, 1938.

On the 20th instant, accompanied by Mr. Laing and Mr. Letac, the Society's Surveyors, and Mr. Lagasse, the Owners' Superintendent, the vessel was examined while lying afloat.

The port side of the vessel was found to be badly set in from the engine room bulkhead to abreast the after deck house, and the framing in way buckled or broken. On the starboard side, abreast the after deck house, the shell plating was found to be holed and badly set in, the framing in way badly damaged or broken, and the poop deck plating abreast this damage bodily set up for a length of 6 or 7 frame spaces.

Sights were erected at various stations along the weather deck, and it was found that the vessel was bodily out of line between the after end of the midship deck house and the fore end of the after deck house, the maximum deflection

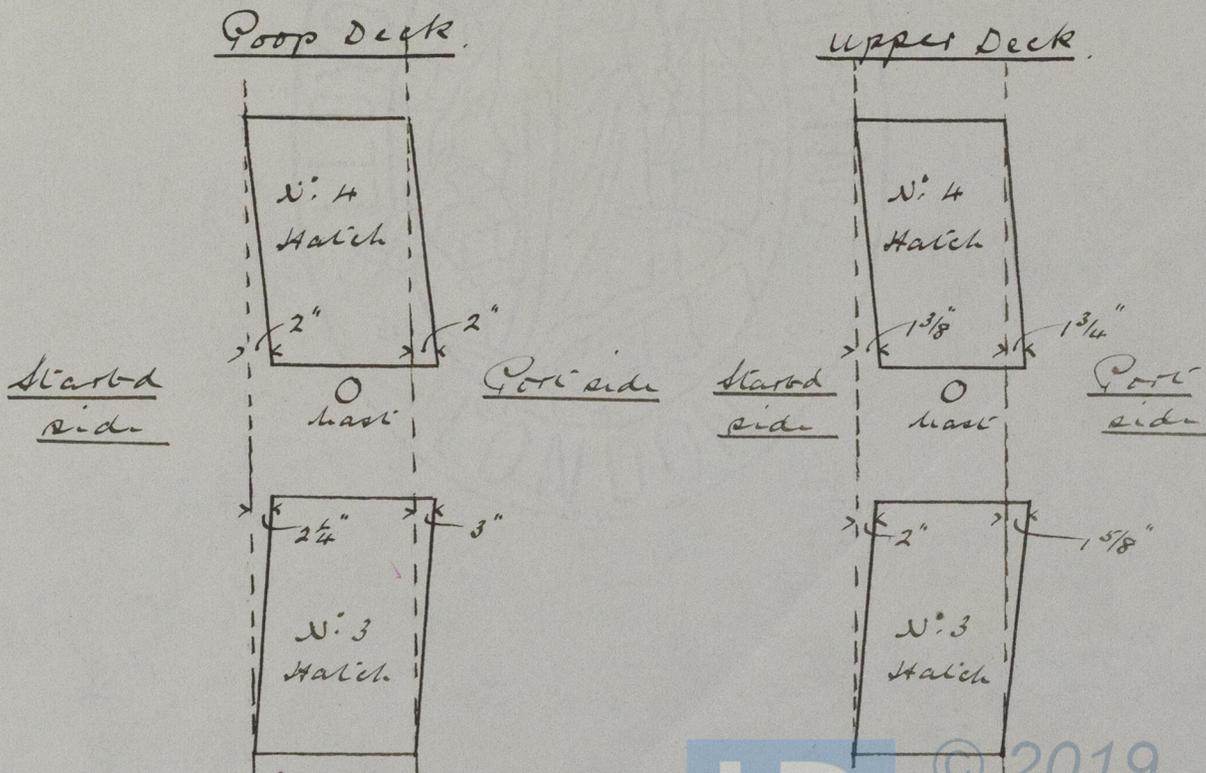
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being about $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches to port in way of the after end of No.3 hatchway.

Water levels were also taken at four stations on each side of the after deck, and it was found that while the level of the deck was normal at the fore end of the midship house, *on the starboard side* the deck at the aft end of the vessel was higher by $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches than the port side.

The coamings of Nos. 3 & 4 hatchways were sighted and found to be out of line as shown below :-



I was informed by Mr. Letac that when the vessel was examined in dry dock on the 24th ultimo, the keel at the aft end was found to be out of line in a fore and aft direction, the deflection being $6\frac{1}{2}$ " to starboard at the sternpost, tapering to nothing at the engine room bulkhead. The keel was also found to be $1\frac{1}{2}$ " off the blocks at the stern post, gradually tapering to nothing about 20 feet forward of the stern post.

With regard to the above, it is thought that these ~~defects~~ deformities can be accounted for by the damage which the vessel sustained in 1918, and the conditions under which she was repaired in 1924. It appears that the vessel was sunk by enemy action in Bruges Harbour during the German retreat from Belgium in 1918. The starboard side was blown in from bilge to upper deck in the vicinity of the engine room and after hold. Repairs were commenced with a view to reclassification in September/October 1924 while she was lying in a sand berth at Bruges, and I have been informed that in the course of repairs the boilers were removed through the ship's side. It is understood that trenches had to be dug in the sand to enable the plating and framing at the bilge to be repaired.

The repairs were not completed until November 1929 at Antwerp, when the vessel's class was reinstated in the Register Book. See photograph showing the vessel in damaged condition after being bombed, and also one showing her under repair.

Mr. Letac, in conjunction with the Underwriters' Surveyor, has prepared a specification of the repairs which

in their opinion are due to the collision, but no account has been taken of the deformation of the hull structure as stated above. The Owners, however, will not accept this specification, contending that the twist at the after end of the vessel is due to the collision, and they threaten to take the matter to Court.

It should be mentioned that if the vessel is to be brought back to her original form it would mean that the whole of the after end would require to be reconstructed, and the cost would undoubtedly make the vessel a Constructive Total Loss.

The Owners' advisers have prepared a report on the circumstances of the collision which fully sets forth their views in the matter. A translation of the report, together with 12 photographs, is attached.

Attention might be drawn to the statement at the bottom of page 2 of this report which reads :-

"two blades of the propeller come in contact with the vertical part of the quay".

"At this point the pushing is at its maximum as no part of the ship can move anymore".

The propeller was examined as far as possible from the quay side, and the only damage that could be seen was in the extreme tip of one of the blades, which had two chips about 2" square. It is thought that if the pressure at that time was sufficient to twist the whole structure of the vessel, the propeller blades would have collapsed before this happened.

During my visit to the vessel the rudder was tried over by hand, and found to be working freely, and I was

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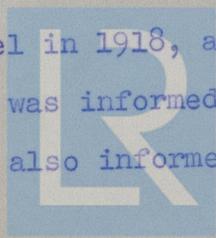
informed by Mr. Valckeneers, the Society's Surveyor who has the machinery survey in hand, that the propeller shafts have been uncoupled and tried with the engine in three positions and found true.

The coamings of Nos. 3 & 4 hatchways, and the surrounding deck plating, were specially examined, and no sign of buckling was found. No started caulking or riveting was observed, and the paint in way of seams, butts, and coaming angles was not even cracked.

From an examination of the reports of the repairs carried out in 1924/1929 it is observed among other items that the bed plate of the engine was renewed, and it is probable that the position of the engine was slightly altered at that time. In this connection it might be pointed out that each plummer block is fastened to the shaft stool by four bolts, but it was noted that in the foremost shaft stool, although there were four bolts, there were eight holes, and the bolts passed through those nearest to the portside. It would therefore appear that the shafting had been relined on some previous occasion to suit the deflected position of the sternframe, which, as previously stated, is $6\frac{1}{2}$ " off the centre line to starboard.

In all the circumstances it is considered that the deformations in the hull at the after end must be attributed to the bombing of the vessel in 1918, and not to the recent casualty, and Mr. Lagasse was informed accordingly.

Mr. Lagasse was also informed that provided the



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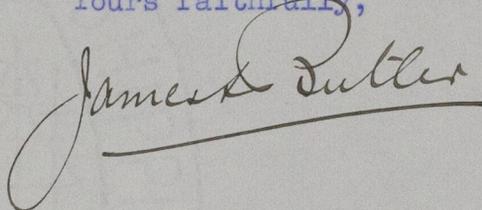
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repairs were carried out in accordance with the specification, and to the Surveyors' satisfaction, there would be no restriction on the vessel's class with regard to the deformations as stated above, subject, of course, to the Committee's confirmation.

A copy of the specification of the collision damage repairs is attached.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,


James D. Butler

The Secretary,
LONDON.



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Referred to the Chief Surveyors

W.H.S.

23.1.39

for Mr. ~~Staden~~ to write.

W.H.S.
Brund



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