

SURVIVORS HOME: TROOPSHIP ON FIRE

The 14,600-ton Empire Windrush was

blazing and abandoned about 20-miles off the coast of

Algiers. In the early hours an engine room explosion forced

20 ~~made~~ the captain to give that most dramatic of all orders at sea, abandon ship. Fortunately the <sup>sea</sup> was dead calm and 1428 passengers and crew, including

160 women and children, were safely got

40 into the boats and rafts. Several ships answered the S.O.S.

Empire Windrush, homeward bound from Japan, via ~~Hong Kong~~,

Singapore, Ceylon, ~~Aden~~ and Port Said, carried servicemen

and some of their families. The cause of the explosion

60 is unknown. The stricken ship sank later while being towed.

Landing at Blackbushe, Hampshire, from Gibraltar came some of the survivors. All told that there was complete calm on board, from the time they were woken up until the rescue operation was complete. One of them likened it to an orderly cinema queue; women and children first, of ~~course~~ course, the rule. United with his wife and two children was Maj. Kidd....

3 Captain Wilson was praised by everybody for his handling of the situation.

EMPIRE WINDRUSH SURVIVORS

Interview No. 1

THIS IS MAJOR AND MRS... AND.... I THINK, AND PETER.

WOULD YOU TELL US, MAJOR , WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FIRST PLACE WHEN THE ALARM WENT.

WELL, I WAS IN THE CABIN ASLEEP AND THE STEWARD <sup>(ANNIE)</sup> CAME IN AND TOLD US ALL TO GO ON DECK. THERE WAS NO ALARM BECAUSE THE SHIP <sup>electrical system</sup> HAD BROKEN DOWN. WE ALL WENT UP ON DECK AND MY WIFE AND CHILDREN WENT ON THE BOAT DECK AND WERE LOWERED INTO THE SEA. ... WENT DOWN RIGHT INTO LIFEBOAT WHICH WAS MOORED ALONGSIDE.

MRS..... WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU DURING THE TIME YOU WERE WAITING?

WE WENT UP ONTO THE <sup>DECK</sup> / WITH... AND TWO CHILDREN AND WERE TOLD THAT WOMEN AND CHILDREN WOULD GO FIRST INTO THE LIFEBOAT. WE WERE LOWERED INTO ONE AND INTO THE SEA AND WE ~~WERE~~ WERE PULLED AWAY AND THERE WERE TWO SAILORS IN THE LIFEBOAT..... WOMEN AND CHILDREN WENT FIRST.

NATURALLY. WHEN DID YOU MEET UP AGAIN? IN ALGIERS. .. NORWEGIAN SHIP.

Interview 2 ?

OH WELL, I MAKE NO STATEMENT AT ALL. THE ONLY THING I WISH TO SAY IS OF THE GOOD BEHAVIOUR OF EVERYONE ON BOARD THE SHIP.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED.

Interview 3 ?

MAJOR AND MRS... AND THEIR FAMILY. TELL US ABOUT THE TROUBLE IN THE WINDRUSH, MAJOR.

THE ONLY THING WE CAN SAY REALLY IS THAT WE WERE ~~WAKENED~~ WAKENED UP AND I THINK THE STEWARDS CAME ROUND FIRST AND SAID YOU HAD BETTER GET

(2)

UP ON DECK. WE SMELT, WE SMELT BURNING SMOKE AND THEN WE REALISED THAT IT WASN'T JUST A.... BUT IT WAS A....

WELL, WHERE DID YOU MEET UP WITH YOUR WIFE AFTERWARDS? AND WHERE DID YOU MANAGE TO MEET UP WITH YOUR WIFE AND FAMILY?

WE MET AT ALGIERS AND WERE BROUGHT IN ON P & O BOATS AND WHEN WE ARRIVED WE HEARD OUR FAMILY HAD BEEN BROUGHT IN.... UNIVERSITY WHICH HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A HOSTEL, AND THEY HAD FOOD AND BEDDING AND A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CLOTHES, AND THEY DID EXTREMELY WELL CONSIDERING THEY HAD ONLY A FEW HOURS NOTICE OF OUR COMING IN..... 24 HOURS.

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I WAS RATHER SURPRISED.... AND WE WERE.... HIS WIFE AND BABY, AND WE MADE A FIRE AND WE WERE QUITE COMFORTABLE.

THEY LOOKED AFTER YOU WELL.

LOVELY. MUCH BETTER THAN I EXPECTED.

WELL YOU HAD BETTER KIT YOURSELVES UP AGAIN AND GET SOME....

..MR. DARLING ? CHIEF PURSER. CHIEF PURSER.....BUT THE PRINCIPLE THING I SHOULD LIKE TO SAY IS HOW WONDERFUL EVERYBODY'S BEEN SINCE I LEFT THE SHIP, FROM ALGIERS TO EVERYWHERE ELSE. COMING DOWN THIN ROPE, GOT TWO THIRDS WAY DOWN WHEN LOST MY GRIP (NOISE OF PLANE) MAKES ME FEEL SO SCRUFFY BECAUSE I CAN'T DO ANYTHING.....

WELL YOU WERE INVOLVED MR. DARLING ? IN GETTING PEOPLE OFF SHIP.

MY JOB TO GET ALL THE FAMILY, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OFF THE BOAT AND TO ORGANIZE OR HELP ORGANIZE..... OVER THE SIDE OF THE SHIP. EVERYBODY

GOT AWAY PRETTY WELL. WONDERFUL CREW REALLY, WONDERFUL HELP BY PASSENGERS BECAUSE THEY WERE ALL SO CALM, THEY WERE ALL SO CALM.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.