

Captain Thomas Kippins, Master.

Captain Kippins' ship was torpedoed at night in the North Atlantic. After making a thorough search to see that none was left behind, the Master took command of No. 2 boat with 26 men. During the night two men were seen in the water and were only rescued with great difficulty. In the heavy seas the boat was almost overturned; four men, thrown overboard, were rescued, but the mast, sails and several oars were lost and the boat was filled to the thwarts. She was righted and two more men were picked up. The sea anchor was lost and all through the night the men had to work at the oars.

Next day, as the sea went down, the tired men made a sail from part of a boat cover and hoisted it, using a boat hook as mast. Several ships were sighted as the boat sailed East, but failed to see her signals.

Thereafter for fourteen days, often in heavy seas, exhausted and running short of water, the boat's crew sailed and rowed in spite of weakness, cold and hardship.

At last the boat's crew was sighted by a merchant vessel and rescued. Throughout this heroic voyage Captain Kippins never faltered: his inspiring courage and fine seamanship heartened his men and brought them to safety after facing for many days what seemed to be certain death.

Captain Olaf Paulsen, Master.

Captain Paulsen's ship, torpedoed at night, took a list to port. The Master at once stopped the engines and got his damaged vessel on an even keel. Restarting her engines Captain Paulsen continued the voyage at reduced speed.

Kept afloat by her cargo and by the trimming of her after-tanks and pumping, the vessel was nearing the coast when she was bombed and machine-gunned by an enemy aircraft, which was driven off by her anti-aircraft defence, and the fire of the escort vessel.

The ship reached port and anchored.

The undaunted spirit shown by Captain Paulsen and the good seamanship with which he kept her going saved his vessel and her cargo.

Captain Thomas Oswald Wright, Master.

The vessel had her steering gear damaged by an under-water explosion.

Having no emergency control on deck, the Master, Captain Wright, at once went forward and dropped anchor.

The Master ordered all but seven of his crew into the boats and later decided that four of the party could be dispensed with.

All seven volunteered to stay, so he selected three. With a fire raging there was danger of the magazine exploding.

On the arrival of two tugs, the vessel was towed towards the land and beached and the Captain and his four men were landed.

Captain Wright showed great courage and presence of mind in staying aboard his burning and shattered ship and making every effort to save her, and he was ably seconded by the Chief Officer, the Boatswain and an Able Seaman who refused to leave their vessel until she had been beached.

*To be Additional Officers of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—*

Charles Pollard, Esq., Chief Officer, s.s. San Demetrio.

Arthur Godfrey Naunton Hawkins, Esq., Second Officer, s.s. San Demetrio.

*To be an Additional Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire:—*

George Pears Willey, Esq., Third Engineer, s.s. San Demetrio.

*Awarded the Medal of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for Meritorious Service:—*

Walter Fletcher, Boatswain, s.s. San Demetrio.

Oliver Preston, Sailor, s.s. San Demetrio.

John Davies, Storekeeper, s.s. San Demetrio.

The ship, hit by a raider and abandoned, was seen to burst into flames. One boat was never seen again. The other boat containing 16 men lay to a sea anchor through the night as a heavy gale had sprung up. The next afternoon they came up to the vessel and found her to be still burning furiously, and the Second Officer decided to lay to till the morning in the hope that the fire might by then have abated. At daybreak the ship was out of sight, but they cruised under sail and, seeing her six hours later, boarded her. In doing so they lost their only boat.

The stern of the vessel was still ablaze and they tried to put out the fire. The Chief and Third Engineers, the Storekeeper and one Greaser went below to see if the engines could be started. They found the port boiler useless and at once started to repair it.

She was still smouldering amidships, and all the metal work was red hot. The deck was covered with petrol but although some of the structure was white hot it had not caught fire, and most of the cargo of petrol was intact. The fore part of the crew's quarters was still in flames, but after a hard fight the fire was put out. Some hours later there was enough pressure in the boiler to work the dynamos and pumps. The auxiliary steering gear was repaired and next morning the engines were put ahead.

There was a full gale and heavy seas, in which the vessel rolled badly, being down by the head. At every roll petrol gushed up on deck as the petrol tanks were holed. One tank was empty so the Chief Engineer and the apprentices went down to the pump room, which was full of gas, and petrol was run from another tank. This gave her a starboard list but lifted her head. After that she rode better and shipped less water. During a slight lull four Able Seamen were put to plugging the holes in the petrol tanks. One was Sailor Preston, and although he was up to his neck in water his cheerfulness was catching.

The ship had no compass that would work and was steered by the wake and wind. Land