(Report to the Chief of Staff from Captain Thomas McKenna on fire damage to LÉ Cliona, 31 May 1962 (Military Archives)

Ceann Foirne Cúnta.

Uasail,

I boarded "Cliona" yesterday 30th May, at anchor in Cobh for the purpose of surveying the fire damage and procuring first hand preliminary reports on the occurance, which information I submit herewith for information of an tAire.

Cliona sailed from Cobh at 0930 on Tuesday 29th for the purpose of carrying out Anti Submarine exercises and to exercise ships crew and training classes from Base in firing of armament including Hedgehog and Depth Charges. Embarked also were Base Commander, School Officers and Press representatives.

During the firing of a ten charge pattern of Depth Charges, in a position approx 12 miles South of Dannt Rock, one charge from the rails having entered the water prematurely exploded severely shaking the ship and putting telemotor steering gear out of action. Almost immediately a fire was reported from No. 2 Boiler Room, the ship was stopped and damage control measures put into action to evacuate Boiler Room and fight the fire. At one stage it appeared the fire was uncontrollable and the International Distress signal S.O.S. was made being picked up by Naval Base, Lands End Radio and a number of other stations. Eventually the fire was got under control, after about 40 minutes, and the process of cooling down the tanks and spaces commenced. Aft about three hours the ship was able to proceed under her own power and with hand steering and made anchorage in Cobh at 1615 without assistance.

In the fire two young stokers Brady and Hennessy who were actually in No. 2 Boiler Room were burnt about the face and arms having to fight their way through the flames to get out. A third Stoker, Leading Stoker Myres shut off all oil fuel connections and was himself slightly burnt on the arms in getting out although he continued thereafter to fight the fire before reportin for first aid.

At Naval Base the Marine Rescue Coordination Centre organised the fire fighting Tug "Clonmel" to proceed on receipt of S.O.S. and sent the John Adams and "Mc Hardy" with all available personnel to assist. The Dutch Salvag Tug "Barentez-Zee" based on Cobh proceeded independently on receipt of "S.O.S. and offered her services to ship but offer was declined. Tug "Clonmel" was recalled on cancellation of "S.O.S." Later a Doctor was sent out by small launch to contact "Cliona" with medical assistance.

The fire appears to have started at Starboard furnace of No. 2 Boiler and spread rapidly to envelope whole Boiler Room and all the main electrical leads and pipes running through it which were destroyed. Luckily the starboard oil fuel tank adjacent was full so that there was no build up of gases. The fire was intense in extreme, buckling the internal plating of the boiler room setting fire to No. 1 Boiler Room by the paint on the hot dividing bulkhead igniting and searing the paintwork in adjacent alleyway which fortunately they were able to prevent from igniting.

It was reported that a fractured oil pipe caused the fire but on inspection yesterday none such could be found. It may be found on testing but it is my personal opinion that the fire arose through a burned in the starboard furnace of No. 2 Boiler being shot out by the depth charge concussi and the oil from the feed pipe spraying on the hot furnace front.

Damage is extensive but not irrepairable. In addition to plate buckling all pipes and electric leads passing through compartment are destroyed. It is not known if there is further concussion damage around ster from the explosion. Apart from telemotor damage there is nothing visible and ship is not making water. She will, however, have to have a drydock survey t

NOTE

ensure no damage.

It is with pleasure that I have to record calm and vetern manner i which the ships company tackled the situation especially the younger members of the crew. Every single one went about his allotted duties on damage control without hesitation and stuck at it till fire was controlled. Special mention must be made of the Executive Officer Lieut O'Mahony who led the fire fighting by his own tenacity finally got it under control. Also of Leading Stoker Myrre who cooly turned off all connections before evacuating and then continued to take his place in fire fighting although injured by burning. In mentioning th I have the independent verbal reports of all those aboard outside the ships crew and reports from the men in hospital.

I visited the three Ratings in Collins Barracks Hospital - Leading Stoker Myres, Stokers Brady and Hennessy - yesterday evening and they are quit comfortable and very well attended. They are in very good spirits though very sore. Their injuries are reported as not serious and to be mainly superficial about the face and neck.

L.E. "Macha" was to take up duty from L.E. "Cliona" tomorrow June 1st. She is already at sea, en route to deal with mine off Rockabill, with portion of "Cliona's" crew aboard.

In view of the damage to "Cliona" and of her inhabitability due to no electrics or services I intend to re activate "Maev" from state of preservation and to transfer remainder of "Cliona's" crew and her Captain to "Maev". This will leave "Cliona" clear for survey, investigation and repairs due course while having a second ship available to relieve "Macha" if necessar

A Court of Inquiry into the fire in "Cliona" has been convened and commenced their investigations this morning. It is expected to take considera time as they will have to adjourn for long periods for survey reports etc.

_____ CAPT (S.C.)
(T. MacChionnaodha)

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31 Bealtaine, 1962.