

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*:

Kingsbridge Gazette Articles

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Famous Four-Master Wrecked on Rocks at Sewer Mill. Windjammer Runs Ashore In Early Morning Fog. World's Fastest Sailing Vessel Doomed.

The proudest, the largest, and the fastest of windjammers, the *Herzogin Cecilie*, met her doom on the fogbound rocks at Sewer Mill Cove in the early hours of Saturday morning. It was the most disastrous wreck which has occurred on South Hams coast for many years. With the Channel blanketed with a thick, swirling mist, she struck a reef of rocks between the Ham Stone and the shore at 3:50 AM. Her hull was pierced, water pouring into the hold, and within a few hours her fate was sealed.

Captain Sven Eriksson, the master, and his South African wife, formerly Miss Pamela Bourne, who had just completed their honeymoon trip, steadfastly refused to leave the vessel and remained on board for several days, making only occasional trips ashore by means of the breeches buoy.

It was not until Monday that Captain Erikson reluctantly accepted the opinion of local men, well versed in the perils of the coast, that the ship must be regarded as lost. He and his wife had clung vainly to the hope that their beautiful vessel could be extracted from her difficult position and patched. They bowed to the inevitable, however and entered upon the mournful task of stripping the ship of the lighter gear and salvaging a proportion of the 4500 tons of wheat on board, for which a contract was arranged on Tuesday.

Not the least heroic feature of this tragic mishap was the tireless effort on the part of the lifeboat

crew, coastguards, lifesavers and volunteer helpers. In the blackness of the night the life-saving apparatus was hauled miles over the cliffs and throughout succeeding days and nights a ceaseless vigil was kept on the stricken vessel as she lay a cable length from the shore, waiting and waiting until such time as the master and his wife, and the six members of the crew who remained on board, decided to leave. On Saturday evening fog again descended and pitiless rain fell and the night was spent open eyed by the watchers, huddled for shelter under a tarpaulin.

Sunday witnessed some of the most remarkable scenes ever seen in the South Hams. From all parts of the West of England, thousands of cars brought loads of sightseers to Sewer Mill. As the Plymouth traffic converged on the Salcombe Road, there was one long line of vehicles, until the narrow road from Malborough became choked with cars and other motor conveyances. Parked at the head of the lane to Sewer Mill, there was a sea of cars. Their number was estimated at 4000.

Each carried a party of sightseers, while bicycles, tandems and humble hikers added to the amazing throng. The cliffs held a mass of spectators. Various estimates of the total number of visitors have been given, varying in from 10,000 to 100,000 but it is safe to say that during the weekend 20,000 to 30,000 people visited the cove to gaze upon the spectacle of

the world's finest ship of her class impaled upon the deadly rocks, waiting for her end.

The tale of the wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie* contains the elements of personal tragedy as well as of an irreparable loss to the world of ships. It shattered the home of the captain and his bride and sent to her doom one of the few remaining four-masters sailing the seas.

A Finnish barque of a net tonnage of 3110, she was the principal competitor in the Australian grain race and on Wednesday sailed proudly into Falmouth from Port Lincoln, Australia, having completed the voyage in 86 days, her fastest time since the War and the first among the windjammers engaged in the annual event.

From Falmouth she set out on Friday for Ipswich. It was the last stage of her journey and within a few hours it ended as her last voyage for all time. Going up Channel she ran into thick fog and at times visibility was almost nil. Shortly before 4 AM there was a grinding crash and the *Herzogin Cecilie* came to a dead stop, after hours of comfortable sailing. Immediately the master was called and an endeavour was made to release her from the deadly grip of the rock which held her fast at the bow. It proved of no avail, and it was decided to call for assistance at once.

Flares Give Alarm

The first intimation of distress was seen from the Greystone coastguard lookout when the *Herzogin Cecilie* burned flares. The news was telephoned to Salcombe and the lifeboat set out. In the meantime the life-saving apparatus was brought from Bolt Head and Hope Cove, being drawn over the cliffs by horses and then man hauled for the last half mile.

At first it was so dark that only the tips of the towering masts were visible and no clue as to the identity of the vessel could be obtained. As the light grew, however, the slender form of the ship could be faintly seen and it was then discovered that she was the world-famous barque which had just won the wheat carrying race from Australia.

From the cliffs it was obvious that the bow of the vessel was seriously damaged by the rocks,

but the rest of the keel appeared to be free. The bow of the vessel was pointing inshore, and bumped heavily on the rocks, whilst her stern rolled and wallowed unobstructed in the swelling sea. The crew hastily furled the sails, for she was carrying every available stitch of canvas when she struck, but notwithstanding the lessened wind resistance, the vessel was slowly but surely swung around broadside to the cliffs.

In the meantime, Captain Eriksson had sent an urgent message for tugs and there was an impatient wait for their arrival, for it was realised that as every hour passed the *Herzogin Cecilie* was being driven nearer to her destruction. The Salcombe lifeboat arrived with commendable promptitude under coxswain Eddy Distin, and stood by. At first the crew refused to leave, and the whole of the 29th remained on board as she pitched and tossed in the swell, her bottom grinding on the rocks and towering masts shuddering with every wave which struck her.

As the tide rose, the seas began to sweep over her bows. Huge waves dashed against the forecabin, raising angry clouds of spray and swirling over the other side of the deck. There was a fresh wind blowing and a heavy sea, and this added to the ever increasing danger of the vessel. The crews' cabins were quickly flooded and one of the ship's lifeboats were smashed.

Despite the perilous position of the ship, there was no sign of confusion on board. The men responded to the orders of the captain with ample courage and spirit until it became certain that the vessel could not be refloated by her own efforts.

23 of Crew Leave

In the meantime the life-saving crew had got everything in readiness to shoot a line to the ship, should this become necessary. It was not, however until 9:15 AM that the captain gave orders for a large proportion of the crew to leave. The lifeboat had manoeuvred as close as possible to the ship, and there was even a danger of stays breaking and spars crashing down on top of the lifeboat as the *Herzogin Cecilie* was battered mercilessly by the sea.

On the instructions of the captain, 23 of the crew then clambered into the lifeboat, being preceded by Mrs Diana Firth, of Bradley Manor, Newton Abbot, who is an old friend of Mrs Eriksson and joined the ship at Falmouth as a guest for the final stage of the voyage. The captain was adamant in his refusal to leave his boat and Mrs Eriksson, deeply distressed at the prospect of losing her beloved vessel, also declined to set foot in the lifeboat, preferring to remain with a husband in the hope that favourable circumstances would arise which would enable the ship to be drawn off the fatal rock.

It was on the rising tide that the windjammer struck, and between 7 and 8 o'clock she received a severe buffeting. At this period the arrival of the tugs was most anxiously looked for. It was an opinion generally held that if they had appeared about 8 o'clock and began at once an effort to tow her off, there would have been a good chance of success, for her stern was swinging unobstructed. By 10 o'clock however, she had swung around and was lying parallel with the cliffs and at 10:45 AM, when the tug arrived, it was impossible to approach near enough to lend any affective assistance. The tug stayed but a short time before returning, without having been able to render any assistance whatever.

Coastguard's Prompt Action

The lifeboat, after discharging members of the rescue crew, returned to the ship and stood by until 2.30, when, there being no immediate danger, and the skipper again having declined to leave, she went back to Salcombe, the crew holding themselves in readiness for a further call. At this time the swell had increased to such a degree that it was impossible for the lifeboat to lay alongside.

The arrival of the lifeboat at Salcombe was anxiously awaited by Miss Firth, who watched the progress of the craft up the harbour, endeavouring with the aid of glasses to see whether her friend was on board. As soon as the lifeboat came within hailing distance, an inquiry was shouted, and the Cox motioned a reply in the negative.

The plight of the *Herzogin Cecilie* was first noticed by Station Officer F. J. Bryant, who was on duty at the Greystone lookout. In the chill, early hours Mr Bryant was gazing out over the Channel, then wrapped in an unpleasant, damp mist, which swirled and eddied over the cliff edge. "There was a misty fog," said Mr Bryant to a Gazette representative, "with visibility of about half a mile and the sea was rough. A light attracted my attention from the direction of Sewer Mill, and then there were flares and rockets. That was at 3:50 AM. I replied by rockets and then made arrangements to assemble the Lifesavers and to call the Salcombe lifeboat. The lifeboat was launched at about 4.30 and she came round promptly. The full equipment of the Hope life-saving apparatus was brought out and four horses drew it to Coastguard point. Owing to the nature the ground, the gear could not be transported further, and it had to be hauled by hand for about half a mile."

Miss Diana Firth said to the Gazette representative: "Everything went well after leaving Falmouth and we met a thick fog. I was awakened at ten minutes to four when the ship struck. Mrs Eriksson came into my cabin and told me that we have been wrecked. 'We struck a rock, she said, 'get some clothes on quickly and go on deck. I went on deck and found that there was not the slightest confusion and it did seem as if the crew were carrying on their normal duties and the faint light of the oil lamps.'

Dark Mass – Land

"In front of us I saw a dark mass, which I thought was unfurled sail. I asked the mate, but he told me it was the land. The crew had seen nothing of the coast, and the disaster was completely unexpected. Mrs Eriksson acted wonderfully. She helped with the ropes and stood by her husband all the time. They fired rockets as distress signals, and there was a reply from the cliffs. The trouble was that although we struck lightly at first, we had no engines to reverse the ship. We were literally caught in a trap, forced onto worse reefs by the wind and we could not see where we were. I gather that the compasses were swinging wildly as we

approached this point. The lookout saw the Ham Rock, and we tried to strike away from the shore without success. Then the ship went inside the Ham Rock, hoping to get through and pass the point, but there was not enough water and we struck a rock.

The captain preferred not to leave his ship until she broke up and Mrs Eriksson decided, despite his wish that she should go ashore, to stay with him. I believe the holds are full of water and there are large holes in the hull”

Opinions as to the cause of the wreck differ on shore, men experienced and well versed in the peculiarities of the currents around that part of the coast explained that they thought that the set of the tide in the fog caused the vessel to deviate from its course. On the other hand, the bo'sun, Martin Holmberg? told a representative that they had experienced trouble with the compass. The captain had inspected the compass at Falmouth, because they had had difficulty with it in the Atlantic. He was, however, quite satisfied with it before leaving for Ipswich. During the Friday night the man at the wheel drew his attention to the compass, the needle of which was swinging round. The night was pitch dark and there was a heavy fog lying on the water. With no warning whatsoever, at 3:50 AM they felt a bump. A second later it was repeated and they discovered, to their alarm, that they were aground. All the crew were on watch at the time on account of the fog.

Would Give Life for Ship

The hull was soon firmly fixed on the rocks, said the bo'sun, continuing his story, and the plates on the forecastle began to leak badly. The braces were taken across the deck to try and release the vessel, but their efforts were unavailing. Unfortunately they had no auxiliary engine. A wireless message was sent out for tugs and flares were burnt, which were quickly answered by a rocket from the coastguard. “I have served on the *Herzogin Cecilie* for five years,” said the bo'sun in broken English, “and I would have gladly and sincerely given my life for her.” With an anxious eye on the weather, the life-saving volunteers remained on the exposed cliff all day Saturday, but when

evening came efforts were made to get personal belongings ashore in the breeches buoy.

For five hours they worked pulling a two hundredweight load over 120 yards of broiling sea. Bulky suitcases, bulging kitbags and even a typewriter were safely hauled ashore, but the occupants of the vessel gave no indication of their wish to leave.

The wind rose during the evening and the sea increased. In the face of blinding rain, the workers on the cliff still toiled and when everything was finished, they sat down again to maintain their patient vigil. All night long, sheltered under a tarpaulin, they remained, watching for a blue flare.

It had been arranged that if the sea increased and the danger aboard the vessel became greater, the captain should burn a flare of this colour to indicate his wish to be taken off. The signal was not given, and as dawn broke, with clear skies and calm sea, on Sunday morning, very little change appeared in the vessel's plight.

During this time water had been gaining an increasing hold on the ship, for during Saturday the first two holds were flooded and 17 foot of water was in number 3.

Captain Eriksson was hopeful on Sunday of salvage. He said: “if the water can be pumped out, the 4500 tons of wheat removed and the holes patched, tugs may get her off. She is a fine ship, still strong and fit to win many more ocean races and it would be terrible to think of this being the end of her career.”

Captain Eriksson added that the night passed without incident and they were quite comfortable aboard. The central heating and electric light plant was still in operation and they suffered no discomfort.

Sightseers in Thousands

In the afternoon of Saturday and all day Sunday, from early morning until late evening, a remarkable pilgrimage to the wreck was made by thousands of sightseers. They came from all parts of the West Country to view a scene which will probably never be repeated in a lifetime.

The main roads leading into the South Hams were alive with a steady roar of traffic, or the Kingsbridge to Malborough road and Malborough to Sewer Mill road held a stream of vehicles. From the lordly, chauffeur driven limousines down to the chugging "fivver", cyclists and tandems, down to the humble hiker, the narrow lane, forming the only means of access to the cliff, was crowded. Hundreds of cars lined the road, while at Soar Farm a field was used as a car park. Traffic blocks were frequent and nerve-racking especially as the road became more congested every minute there was a stoppage. Along the difficult path down to the wreck a single line of pedestrians scrambled. A new route over the top of the cliff was then discovered and the skyline was broken by hundreds of people looking like little black dots on the hill.

An estimate is given of the cars which passed along the road to Sewer Mill. It is reckoned that on Sunday 4000 cars lined the narrow lane. That would make no allowance for cyclists and pedestrians, of whom there were hundreds. On the cliffs thousands of people congregated under a blue sky and aeroplanes carrying photographers droned overhead, occasionally swooping down towards the vessel and the making of up Channel towards London. The grass was littered with orange peel and film cartons and many hundreds of people picnicked all day, viewing the scene. Binoculars and cameras of all descriptions were brought into use. The first sight which came to the majority of visitors was the tips of the towering masts showing above a break in the cliffs, with a flag still fluttering proudly from the masts. As they reached the crest the full view of a stately tragedy unveiled itself.

Captain Abandons Hope

A clear dawn broke on Monday and the sea continued calm. There was little change in the appearance of the immobile *Herzogin Cecilie*, but soon the skeleton crew were seen climbing the rigging to the top spars and the "Royals" were brought down to the deck. One by one those great sheets of canvas were lowered by means of ropes and pulleys.

It was a significant act. It interpreted that Captain Eriksson had come to share the opinion that it was impossible to refloat the vessel. This opinion had been held by the cliff watchers for some considerable time. Attention was then paid to the salvaging of the cargo.

The windjammer carried 4500 tons of grain and it was loaded in sacks. Water had penetrated five holds during the weekend and of the total cargo only 500 tons was still dry. Captain Eriksson spent part of Monday morning in Salcombe discussing with the Lloyd's agent the means of taking off the 500 tons and arrangements were also made for a loading the lighter portion of the ships gear in barges. The articles were taken to Salcombe for storage.

About noon a stout hawser was attached to the high spur of rock from the jigger mast of the vessel for the erection of a bo'sun's chair. The experiment, however, was not a success, and it was found that the rope was attached so high up the cliff that the angle from the ship to the land was too steep. Later the rope was firmly fastened around a lower rock almost level with the top of the jigger mast.

The breeches buoy was then dismantled. The coastguards and volunteers had been on duty for 60 hours. During the cold rain on Saturday night, under a tarpaulin, their lot had not been a comfortable one. On Sunday night a tent was lent to them and it was erected on the cliff. Straw palliasses helped the watchers spend the night in some comparative ease.

The heroine of the volunteers was Miss Joan M. Ellison of Hope Cove who, in her car, had been constantly taking helpers and coastguards to and from the cliffs to their homes in Hope Cove, both day and night. During the night she brought hot coffee from the village. Apart from occasional snatches of sleep, she had been busy for 60 hours but, when interviewed, said she merely regarded it as her duty.

The captain's Alsatian dog remained on board for several days. Efforts were made to persuade it to leave in company with one of the crew, but the dog refused to budge from Captain Eriksson's side. "The dog will not obey anyone," said Mrs Eriksson, "except the captain

and myself. We have tried to send him off, but he snaps as anyone making such attempts.”

Miss Diana Firth returned aboard the vessel on Monday to help Mrs Eriksson in the dismantling of the interior of the vessel. As the galley was under water at high tide, the cooking of hot meals by Mrs Erikson had become a matter of some difficulty. Fortunately, there was more than a sufficiency of food aboard. Two apprentices returned from Plymouth and went on board also.

During succeeding days the scene was again viewed by hundreds from the land, sea and air. The cliffs were thronged, while overhead, aeroplanes droned for several hours. A squadron of naval flying boats also passed over on Monday, and on sea, transatlantic liners made a detour to afford their passengers a sight of this unique spectacle. The sea had subsided sufficiently to allow craft to put out from Salcombe with passengers.

The final act of giving up hope of saving the vessel was enacted on Tuesday, when the sails were brought ashore and all the lighter ship's gear removed. The contract was arranged with a firm for the removal of the cargo, and on Wednesday, lighters arrived for this purpose, the unloading continuing with the help of stevedores from Kingsbridge.

Caring for Crew

The 23 members of the crew who were rescued by the lifeboat on Saturday walked mournfully through the streets of Salcombe on Saturday, adding a cosmopolitan touch to the streets of the town. Miss Firth stated that there was no confusion on their departure and all dressed in their Sunday best, appearing tidier than she'd ever seen them before!

When they landed they were met by Mr J. W. Vivian, the local agent of the Shipwrecked Mariners Society who took charge of them, and later handed them over to the Finnish Consul. They were accommodated at the Salcombe Hotel for the time being, and during the afternoon evening a number of them made journeys to Sewer Mill to view their ship from the cliffs. They were visibly moved by the sight

and with sad shakings of the head, conveyed to onlookers the degree of their sorrow and also the fear that she will become a total loss.

They left for Plymouth, preparatory to their journeying home. Most of the men were Finns, but there were a few Danish among their number.

There was a certain amount of livestock on board, including chickens. These were killed at the first prospect of danger. Cats were also aboard, as well as the captain's Alsatian dog, his inseparable companion when afloat, and an animal which Miss Firth described as a one-man dog. The canary was among the pets which were slung ashore in the breeches buoy.

Mrs Eriksson

Mrs Eriksson was formerly Miss Pamela Bourne, the daughter of the late Sir Roland Bourne, formerly Minister of Defence of South Africa, and Lady Bourne. She is a BA of Oxford and has a great love for the sea and travel. It was when serving before the mast on the *Herzogin Cecilie* that she first met Captain Erikson and the return trip to Australia with the first voyage they had completed as man and wife. As Miss Bourne, Mrs. Eriksson wrote the book, "Out Of the World" which is an account of her first voyage on the *Herzogin Cecilie*.

To her the ship was her home and she is greatly distressed at its fate. It was for this reason that she so persistently refused to leave the vessel until hope was ended.

The *Herzogin Cecilie* was a German built boat, and for many years was German owned. The object of construction was to train cadets, and she was the second ship used for that purpose, the first having proved an outstanding success. After a number of voyages, she was interned in South America during the war and was taken over by France on the cessation of hostilities. That country found very little use for her and in 1926 she was purchased by Mr Gustav and Mr Sven Eriksson who are famous as owners of sailing ships. She was the fastest sailing vessel in existence and the largest on Lloyd's register and was one of the remaining 12 square riggers in service. She was beautifully appointed, many

of her cabins being ? panelled and she was fitted with central heating and electric light.

Broadcast from Wreck. BBC Officials to Take Sound Records.

Photographers, newspapermen, representing international as well as national agencies, were numerous throughout the South Hams during the early part of the week, covering the wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*. One enterprising journalist went aboard on Monday evening and by some mischance the boat which conveyed him, with others, returned without him! He had to remain all night on the wreck.

Nearly all the film and newspaper photographic agencies sent representatives by aeroplane and the magnificent pictures which appeared in the London provincial press on Monday are striking examples of their skill and enterprise.

Most interesting all, however, was the visit on Wednesday and Thursday of BBC officials. The wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie* aroused widespread interest and the BBC endeavoured to record some of the personal experiences, in order to give their millions of listeners, a vivid first-hand impression of the scenes on that fatal morning when the famous windjammer met her doom on the fogbound coast. It was hoped to be able to arrange an actual broadcast on the ship itself, but it was soon recognised that the accomplishment of this project will be an extremely difficult matter and the alternative of making records for later reproduction was resorted to.

On Thursday morning Mrs Eriksson and the coxswain of the Salcombe lifeboat, Mr Eddy Distin, spoke into the microphone, and it is anticipated that their description of the wreck will be broadcast in the Saturday Magazine feature at 7 o'clock in the National programme.

Magnetic Influence?

There have been several features of this famous wreck which have caught the imagination of the whole country. The first was the suggestion that iron deposits on the rocks exerted a magnetic influence on the ships compasses. This theory was advanced because of the remarks made by the bo'sun that the compass had given trouble

near the Lizard and shortly before striking a rock it had swung wildly. Both scientists and eminent mariners discounted this theory. Sir Bernard Rostron, former captain of the *Berengaria*, stated that he knew of no circumstances to support the bo'sun's story.

In the middle of the week trips were run from Salcombe in motorboat and several passengers commented upon the appearance of a large fish which "piloted" some of the craft when near the wreck. Failing other explanations, it has been suggested that this fish, which was seen on several occasions, was a small shark – and sharks around the ship are considered as a bad omen.

Sightseeing Trips

It is anticipated that the stream of sightseers, which continued throughout the week, will be swollen to considerable proportions again at the weekend. Hundreds of people have viewed the wreck from the sea as well as the land and Plymouth steamer companies, as well as GWR tenders, are expected to bring parties to Sewer Mill, to get as close a view of the vessel as navigation permits.

Good weather has made it possible to make rapid progress with the salvaging of the cargo. About 100 tons of grain were of moved by Thursday night and today the operations continued, a Southampton firm being in charge.

The calm weather during the week has brought little change in the condition or position of the vessel as she still lies broadside to the cliffs. There has been some swell, but not sufficient to work any harm.

As the better weather is approaching, there is naturally much curiosity as to the future of the wreck. Failing a strong gale, there is little likelihood of her breaking up and the possibility is that she will remain in her present position for most of the summer. The spot where the *Herzogin Cecilie* went ashore is only about 100 yards from the grave of the *Halloween*, the famous old tea Clipper which came to grief in 1887.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 2

May 8th 1936

Salvage Offers Failed to Materialise. Still Little Hope of Salving the *Herzogin Cecilie*. Damaged Cargo to be Removed and Sold.

The *Herzogin Cecilie*, as she lies still in the grip of the rocks at Sewer Mill Cove, continues to be the centre of attraction for visitors and residents in the South Hams. Throughout the week, news has been expected daily of the proposals for salving the vessel, following the generous offer of Lady Houston last weekend. The Admiralty declined the offer of the ship, as they could make no use of her, but suggestions arose that it might be acquired, with the help of Lady Houston, for mercantile training purposes. This morning, however, came the announcement that no result had come from the negotiations.

Meanwhile the salvaging of the sound portion of the cargo of wheat has continued, the grain being taken to Plymouth, and now there is every prospect that the remainder of the cargo will be sold, possibly to continental buyers after salvage.

Sewer Mill has been thronged with people over the last fortnight and although the rush of the days immediately subsequent to the wreck has subsided, there is a daily stream of sightseers, with a pilgrimage swelling to considerable proportions on early closing days and during Saturday and Sunday. Last weekend was again utterly unlike the quiet countryside to which local people are accustomed. The narrow roads were once more laden with a tremendous amount of traffic, lines of cars from Torquay and Exeter in one direction, converging with the steady flow from the Plymouth neighbourhood at Langworthy's barn, where there was often serious congestion.

The thoroughfares resembled the roads outside a big city, with half the population a-wheel on

pleasure jaunts. Vehicles of every description and size carried their loads, while from Malborough onwards there was a repetition of the difficulties of the previous week in effectively controlling a volume of traffic which was never conceived for such modest lanes. The wreck, indeed constituted a veritable showpiece and the AA aided in the atmosphere of sightseeing by erecting notices, "to the wreck," at most junctions.

On the cliffs themselves the scenes was unfamiliar, unusual and in many respects far from enjoyable to the many lovers of sailing craft who came with mournful feelings. The slopes were trodden and matted and at times were so slippery as to be dangerous. The bluebell display was ruined by picnickers, many of them making a day of it.

It was on Sunday that it first became known that Lady Houston had offered to have the *Herzogin Cecilie* salvaged and to give it to the Admiralty for training purposes. Her view is that there is much more to be learnt on a sailing ship than in a steamship and that the vessel may be a great acquisition for the Navy. Captain and Mrs Eriksson were naturally delighted at the thought that their ship might once more sail the seas, even if not under their command and they waited eagerly for the reply from the Admiralty.

Admiralty's "No"

This came on Monday evening and brought great disappointment. Lord Moncrieff?, first Lord of the Admiralty conveyed the decision in a letter stating: "I fully appreciate Lady Houston's most generous and patriotic offer. Unfortunately, however, as it is not the present

policy of the Board to provide training in sail for the officers and men of the Royal Navy, we should not be in a position to make any use of her and for this reason I felt compelled to decline.”

When news of the refusal was conveyed to Lady Houston, she said: “I cannot understand the Admiralty’s refusal. I’m disappointed. It is entirely against the general feeling. But something must be done quickly, if at all, as the first storm may break the ship up. If it can be arranged for her to be refloated and used for sail training, I am still prepared to pay the cost of the salvage.”

Captain and Mrs Eriksson left Salcombe the same evening to meet Lady Houston in London, as she wished to talk to them regarding ways and means of salving the vessel and eventually to hand over to the mercantile marine.

On Tuesday there were conferences in London between Captain and Mrs Eriksson and representatives of Lady Houston and there was further discussion by telephone on Wednesday. Unfortunately Lady Houston does not enjoy good health, and negotiations, therefore, have been prolonged more than might otherwise have been the case. It can now be stated definitely, however, that there is no likelihood of any salvage operations resulting from Lady Houston’s offer.

Costly Project

Yesterday there was another suggestion that other interests, apart from Lady Houston, may enter into discussions with the object of salving the ship, the aim in this case to, being to provide facilities for training in sail. There followed a statement that a third offer had come from a Liverpool firm, but this, too, the Gazette understands has been found to be impracticable.

Whether, of course, salvage is at all possible is a matter for experts and of the resources needed to stand the expenditure of large sums of money. It was the costly nature of any salvage operations that put an end to all thoughts of the owners making themselves responsible for the task. Captain Eriksson, however, is known to hold the view that, with the necessary backing, it is possible to save the ship. The cost, in some

quarters, has been estimated as high as £10,000 to £15,000.

Cargo Salvage

During the week the salvage of the cargo has continued with little hindrance from the weather. Indeed, conditions have been extremely favourable for the efforts of the Southampton firm, Messrs. Rillston and Beasley, who hold the contract. The grain has been transferred to lighters and shipped to Plymouth and the first estimate of about 500 tons, as the quantity remaining undamaged, has proved to be somewhere near the mark. The east winds that have prevailed recently have been ideal for the easy handling of the salvage work, but the coming of westerly breezes would, in all probability, have the effect of suspending the efforts. On Wednesday a spell of unfavourable wind caused some delay.

Generally speaking, the task of actual unloading is a slow one, as the sacks cannot be transferred direct from ship to lighter, but have to be brought to the deck first.

Sodden Wheat Offer

The total cargo was nearly 4500 tons, so that when the salvage of the damaged wheat begins, the work will engage many men for a number of weeks. There is every possibility that the spoiled portion of the cargo will be retrieved. The wheat has a definite commercial value, although spoiled for ordinary purposes for which it is used. Continental firms are principally interested in this latter aspect of the salvage and there is keen competition between various companies for the contract. One offer made has been to salve the wheat on a certain basis and another to purchase the grain as it is now in the ship.

Even that portion of the forepart of the ship, which has been awash ever since she went ashore, is not regarded as absolutely irretrievable. It is a fact, however, that the sodden grain has swollen considerably and has burst the forward holds and cracks have also appeared on the decks.

Negotiations for the damaged cargo proceeded up to late yesterday, and it was understood

today that the damaged grain will be salvaged by the firm who held the contract for the dry wheat. It will, presumably, be landed in the same way and disposed of by tender. As an instance of the competition for the grain, it may be stated that on Thursday there was a telephone message from Copenhagen. It is not possible to say what the grain will be used for, but it is understood there is a process by which it can be washed and dried; but whether it is intended for human or animal consumption is uncertain.

As to the ship herself, there has been little or no change in her condition. She is still hard and fast on the rocks, but the weather had not been such as to cause any alarm. Captain Eriksson has spent as much time on board as possible and Mrs Eriksson to, has remained in the neighbourhood. Most of the ship's gear has been removed, and the cabins, including those available for 19 or 20 passengers, have been stripped. Practically all the spars have gone and not much more than the cargo remains.

The skeleton crew came ashore today and brought damp sails to Salcombe for airing purposes. They returned to the ship to continue the efforts to save as much gear as possible. Special trips are again being run from Plymouth by sea at the weekend, weather permitting.

BBC Broadcast

The BBC broadcast a description of the wreck by Mrs Eriksson in the Saturday magazine feature on Saturday evening. The impression conveyed was that the actual broadcast was from the wreck itself but as mentioned in these columns last week the difficulties were such that records had to be taken on shore.

The announcer prefaced the broadcast by saying that sailors the world over would mourn the loss of the vessel, which was the largest sailing ship on Lloyd's register.

Mrs Eriksson could not be heard very plainly, but she spoke briefly of the night of the wreck and of those alarming moments just before 4 AM when, in a clearing in the fog, "a big black shape" was seen, the ship striking almost at once and taking a bad list within a short time.

Wreck Cause Theory

The theory announced in the Gazette that the set of the tide and the fog were the cause of the disaster is supported by a statement by coxswain of the Plymouth lifeboat, Mr J. S. Roach.

He explained in an interview that according to charts, tides in the vicinity of Bolt Head ran East and West, but that actually after two hours ebb they went southward and caused a big inset. His opinion was that this inset, with allowance made for deviation of the ship's compass, caused the vessel to be off her course.

Correspondence: To the Editor of the Gazette

Sir, thousands of people have been to see the wreck of this famous ship and the owners of private property have naturally made a charge for those who use their land in crowds in order to get to the cliffs.

I should like publicly to thank, through your columns, one such owner, who has handed over to me, as honorary secretary of the Salcombe branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the whole of the money which was collected last Sunday, a sum of £15. This generous recognition of the services of our lifeboat to the *Herzogin Cecilie* is very deeply appreciated. *Yours etc. Charles Shillitoe, Hon. Sec.*

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 3

May 15th 1936

Appeal to Save Stranded Vessel. National Fund May Be Raised for the *Herzogin Cecilie*.

The Gazette understands that a national appeal may be made for sufficient funds to make an effort to salvage the *Herzogin Cecilie*. The possibilities are that the appeal will be launched by a well-known Sunday newspaper, and is also hoped to enlist the support of the BBC. The sum of £2000 or £3000 will be required and if the money is raised and the salvage operation succeeds, some for recognition of the generosity of the British public will be made.

In all probability, this will take the form of an offer by Captain Eriksson, and his brother, Mr Gustav Eriksson, the owner, to take from six to ten British boys for a period of 10 years for training in sail, free of fees.

It is well-known that Captain Eriksson, who, with his wife is still in the district, watching over his vessel, holds the view that it is possible to save the ship and he is confirmed in this opinion by experts, although it is recognised that the task will be a difficult one needing a considerable expenditure of both money and thought. Negotiations are in fact still proceeding in the hope that some arrangements can be made to warrant serious consideration of the project, but, as was pointed out in these columns a fortnight ago, any such venture, if carried out as a purely commercial proposition, would need considerable financial backing and prospect that the reward will be worth the risk.

Equipment Stored

Should the *Herzogin Cecilie* ever again become fully afloat and be able to resume her normal training career, her sails are in readiness for her at Salcombe. They have been saved, dried, and

are now in-store while a good many of the spars are also available and most of the remainder of the valuable equipment of the ship.

Divers inspected the ship during the weekend and made a report of the damage to the hull and it was hinted that she may not be so badly holed as was thought at first. Efforts are being made, as far as possible, to save the ship from further injury. As an instance of Captain Erikson's reluctance to consider the ship as lost, it is stated that salvage contractors wish to cut a hole in the side of the hull to allow some of the water now covering the cargo to drain off, but the Captain has refused to consider it. It was pointed out that when the tide receded, there was no outlet for the water inside the ship to get away, but Captain Eriksson would not entertain the suggestion.

During the week, as much as possible of the damaged portion of the grain has been taken off and the ship *Rosalind* sailed for the continent on Wednesday with a cargo. Quantities have also been landed at Southampton and no doubt that, too, will eventually be transferred to the continent for there seems to be little or no sale for the sodden wheat in England. It is believed that the grain is being utilised for animal food.

Yesterday the Dutch boat *Express* went to the wreck in an endeavour to load some cargo already on deck, but the weather was such that she could not get alongside. She went again this morning in the hope of being able to affect trans-shipment.

Wreck Inquiry

Captain Eriksson attended a preliminary enquiry before the Receiver of Wrecks at Plymouth on Monday. The inquiry was private and only evidence from Captain Eriksson was taken. He gave statements of his course and position at the time of the wreck and of measures taken for summoning aid.

The inquiry which was held under a section of the Merchant Shipping Act, was mainly for the purpose, it is understood, of establishing the name and description of the vessel, names of the master and owners, as well as owners of the cargo and the ports to and from which the ship was bound.

The deposition made by Captain Eriksson will be forwarded to the Board of Trade, within whose power it lies to take any action that may be necessary.

Still Many Spectators

Traffic to Sewer Mill is now a constant diminishing stream, but last weekend there was another large crowd on the cliffs, which reached there by car and other modes of conveyance. Vehicles were very numerous, and it was still necessary to adopt special measures at Sewer to deal with them, while throughout the week there have been a number of visitors daily from all parts of the country.

The publicity which the wreck has given to this district is enormous. To Plymouth spectators the *Herzogin Cecilie* plight has been a great attraction and only a portion of the many hundreds who wish to make the journey by sea could be accommodated in the G. W. R. Tender on Sunday. The tender was advertised to leave at 3 o'clock. At a quarter of an hour before that time there was a queue which stretched, three deep, from the corner of Radford Road to the dock entrance. Altogether, about 400 people were waiting. When at 3 o'clock, it was announced that no more tickets could be issued and that the boat was full, there was dissatisfaction from the disappointed, who crowded round the solitary constable on duty at the dock gates. In the excitement, a woman fainted. When the tender, crammed to her capacity, left the dockside, the blast of its siren were echoed by derisive hoots from the crowd.

Hope Cliff Mishap

Some alarm was caused on Saturday and Sunday by reports that a young woman had been seriously injured by falling from the cliffs at Sewer Mill. An incident at Hope Cove, however, gave rise to the rumours and a fall which a Plymouth woman sustained there was confused with suggestions of a serious occurrence near the wreck.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 4

May 22nd 1936

Salvage Work Preliminaries. Arrangements Made by Captain Eriksson. Launching Appeal for Funds.

Arrangements are now being made for the preliminary salvage operations of the *Herzogin Cecilie* by Captain S. Eriksson. It is hoped that the cost will be partly met by funds raised from a national appeal. Repayment will be made by affording British boys free training in sail for a number of years.

The appeal will be issued this weekend, and already a substantial amount has been guaranteed. Money from the appeal will be used only if expert opinion shows that the ship is repairable.

The text of the appeal recounts the stranding of the Duchess in the thick fog in the early morning of April 25 and continues:

“The Finnish owner, Mr Gustav Erikson, will be able to spend up to £2000 on the ship when he knows that the vessel can sail again but he is not in a position to take the risks attendant on preliminary salvage operations. The master of the vessel, Captain Sven Eriksson, with the consent of the owner, has arranged for the preliminary salvage operations to be commenced, having secured the aid of a powerful backer who wishes to remain anonymous. While all salvage operations are a gamble, the backer has expressed the opinion that the preliminary work will prove successful unless unlikely circumstances, such as abnormal weather or greater damage done that is at present revealed by the first rough survey, occur. With the arrangements for preliminary survey completed, it is resolved to appeal to the public for funds to help repair the damage done.

British Apprentices Trained

“In consideration of the money which is required being raised by public subscription in this country, Captain Eriksson has further arranged with the owner to undertake to accept six to ten British apprenticeships every year for one year’s voyage, free of all fees, until the whole of the money raised by this appeal has been paid. The basis of repayment will be £50? per cadet which is the actual charge. The owner will take these apprentices as long as he is able to sail his deep water square rigged ship at a profit.

Representatives of British Sea training are being approached to form a committee to deal with the choice of apprentices. The money which is being subscribed would not be used until the vessel has been surveyed by a qualified surveyor and pronounced repairable within the limits of the money available. If the funds do not prove sufficient, the money would return to subscribers and anonymous subscriptions will be given to an appropriate charity. Subscriptions should be sent to the Duchess Cecilie appeal, Lloyds bank, Salcombe, the treasurer being Mr H. O. Young, the manager.”

No Salvage before Expert Opinion

The backer who has offered the financial assistance is not a local man, but he is deeply interested in boys being trained in sail. The sum of £1500 has been mentioned as being available from the source. While confirmation of the actual figure is lacking, it is understood that the sum is within that region. Mrs Eriksson, to the Gazette, emphasised that the public money

would not be used until it is found that the ship can be repaired.

A direct appeal has been addressed to the many hundreds of people who have written to Captain and Mrs Eriksson in sympathy and while only 200 hundred leaflets have been sent out so far, the response from them has been very gratifying.

Great Interest in Sail Training

“We have every hope that a sufficient amount of money we were raised to achieve our object,” stated Mrs Eriksson. “There is tremendous interest in sail training all over the country, which has existed for many years, but which has never been brought to a head. There are many societies who would like to have a sailing ship to train British boys, but their efforts have not been concentrated and they have not succeeded in their aim. I think our appeal will reach everyone who is really interested and that represents a great many people – nearly half of England, judging by the letters we have received!”

Captain and Mrs Eriksson have been living on board for the past week, except for a couple of days, when Capt Eriksson was in London and then Mrs Eriksson slept ashore.

Open to Public

It is now possible for members of the public to visit the ship. A charge of one shilling six pence per head will be made and visitors will be able to see all parts of the ship which are accessible. At full tide it is, of course, impossible to go on the fore-castle, but even so, spectators will be able to get a close view of the waves sweeping over the ship, which in itself is a moving sight. The proceeds will be devoted to the salvage operations.

Visitors will have to make their own arrangements for getting to the ship, but there will be plenty of facilities for making the voyages from Salcombe. During the week many tons of grain have been taken from the *Herzogin Cecilie* and operations have now begun on the fore hold. The persistence of the easterly wind has been a great help to the salvage work.

Herzogin's Sister Ship

The Finnish four-masted barque *Passat*, recently arrived from South Australia to Queenstown, is the property of the same owner as the *Herzogin Cecilie*. The *Passat* has a larger hull capacity, surpassing that of the *Herzogin Cecilie* by several hundred tons. It is claimed for the latter, however, that her more slender lines give her a greater turn of speed.

The *Passat* left Port Victoria on February 15 with a cargo of wheat and made the voyage in 86 days – the same length of time as that occupied by the *Herzogin Cecilie*. Her best day's run was 324 miles when in the Pacific. She was built in Hamburg in 1911.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 5

May 29th 1936

Can the *Herzogin Cecilie* be Saved? Salvage Test to be Made on Monday. Attempt at Spring Tides.

On Monday a test may be made to see if it is possible to release the *Herzogin Cecilie* from the rocks on which she has lain stranded at Sewer Mill Cove for the past five weeks. No attempt was made to pull her off, but if the experiments are successful, an effort will be made at salvage at the spring tides and the following weekend.

“Were going to have a trial test for salvage over the weekend,” said Mrs Eriksson on Thursday. “We shall be working hard for several days and I think the great day will be on Monday. On the result of the test we should know whether it is possible to lift her from her present position and get her away. The experiment will be by pumping. The idea is to see what extent we can reduce the water in her.

“If we should get her off at the spring tides, we may beach the Duchess here in Salcombe in a sheltered place. The great thing is to get her in some protected spot as soon as possible.

To Investigate Damage

“There is a great deal of wheat still left in her and we want to get out as much as possible before pumping begins. Until we get her to Salcombe nobody can say how badly she is damaged. Nor can we estimate the cost of repairs and whether the expense of putting her in a seaworthy condition again will be justified. In any case, we must see the extent of the damage, because until we do that we cannot use any of the fund which has been so generously subscribed towards the cost of repair. An undertaking has been given that the fund will only be used for repairs, and if it is not sufficient to cover the rest, the money will be returned to the subscribers.”

Mrs Eriksson added that the national appeal for funds to save the *Herzogin Cecilie* is growing, but whether it was yet big enough to meet a possible repair bill she did not know. The salvage of the damaged wheat has continued throughout this week and on Thursday the Dutch vessel *Thea* left with a cargo for Rotterdam.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 6

June 5th 1936

The *Herzogin Cecilie*. Preparation for Salvage Effort. Attempt Expected on Sunday

Throughout this week work on the pumps has proceeded on the *Herzogin Cecilie*, in the hope that she will lighten sufficiently by the weekend for a serious attempt to be made at salvage. The possibility of success is said to be hopeful.

Wheat and water are now swirling in the hold. Many of the bags have been burst and others have been slit in order that as much of the cargo as possible can be drawn through the pumps. The pumps have an enormous capacity, and, given favourable conditions, can beat the tides as they roll over the forepart of the ship.

The after part of the vessel has been dealt with as far as the water is concerned, but the fore holds still present great difficulties. Every effort is being made to get out as much of the water and cargo as possible in order to give the ship a lift. This must be done before there can be any hope of dragging her off and towing her to

Salcombe. The idea is to arrange collision mats over the damaged portion of the hull, but to achieve this there will have to be a considerable degree of buoyancy towards the bows.

It is to this end that efforts have been concentrated during the last few days. If opportunity is to be taken of the present spring tides, more water will have to be pumped and more cargo jettisoned. The highest tide are on Sunday evening and Monday evening, and it is on these two days that hopes are concentrated.

Today (Friday) wires have been fixed at different angles, the aim being to keep the ship in position when she becomes buoyant. Eventually it is hoped to adjust other wires underneath her, in order that collision mats can be fixed. The expectation is that a definite attempt will be made on Sunday, if all goes well.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 7

June 12th 1936

Steel Hawser Across Channel. Motor Vessel's Escape at Sewer Mill Cove.

An unusual mishap almost befell the *Flacon*, a small motor vessel, as she was on her way from Plymouth to Kingsbridge on Saturday afternoon. A mist hung over the sea, making visibility poor and causing the skipper, Captain H. F. Hines, to "hug" the land. He is familiar with the coastline having sailed along for many years. As he was passing Sewer Mill Cove about 4 o'clock the lookout sighted a hawser stretched across the vessel's bows, about 100 yards ahead. It was attached to the *Herzogin Cecilie* and made secure to the Hamstone Rock for the salvage operations. The hawser was suspended about three feet from the surface. The *Flacon* was swung hard to starboard and clearing the Ham Stone continued her way to Kingsbridge. Captain Hines interviewed by the Gazette representative, observed that some warning of the obstruction should have been given, because the channel inside the rock was frequently used by small craft during foggy weather. No signal was given until the *Flacon* was going hard to starboard,

when a whistle was blown aboard the windjammer.

Pilgrimage of the Aged

The *Herzogin Cecilie* is still the tragic showpiece of the South Hams. The old and infirm, as well as the young and active, have toiled courageously over the rocks again this week in the hope of seeing this famous ship take to the sea once more. From Southdown Farm there is a long, precipitous descent to Sewer Mill Cove. On Sunday many elderly people, who had probably not climbed a steep hill for years, trod with uncertain steps down the rocky path.

Most of them were assisted by younger folk but on the return journey, even their help was not enough to save "the ancients", from distress. Every few yards they were to be found sitting on the slopes regaining their breath for another assault on the summit!

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 8

June 19th 1936

Unique Adventures for Undergraduates. Cambridge Men Board the *Herzogin Cecilie*. Salcombe Complaint of Salvaged Grain Nuisance.

At the beginning of the week, six Cambridge undergraduates boarded the *Herzogin Cecilie*, lying on the rocks at Sewer Mill Cove, to share an adventure not like to be repeated for many years. They apparently appreciated their unique experience, for when seen by the Gazette representative, declared that they were excited at the prospect of living on the famous windjammer, whose fate and possibilities of salvage become worldwide topics. The expedition was organised in the most casual manner. Mr James Stevens, of Queens College, Cambridge, who is acquainted with the South Hams, has followed with great interest the story of the stranding of the four-master. The failure of the salvage efforts last week gave him the idea of undergraduates assisting in the work.

He telegraphed to Captain Erikson offering help in return for board and lodging. The Master's reply was: "bring as many as you can." A notice inviting any Cambridge men to pack some clothes, take the first train to Kingsbridge and go to work on the *Herzogin Cecilie* was displayed in the colleges. Those who saw the notice made their own decisions and arrangements for travel. No one knew who else was going.

This was evident, because when a student arrived in Kingsbridge on Monday evening, he was introduced by the Gazette reporter to another undergraduate who had also journeyed on the same train! The rendezvous was at the Salcombe hotel and it was there that they discovered the identity of the other Cambridge men who had also been attracted to South

Devon by the exciting prospect of helping to save a world-famous ship.

Five of the undergrads went aboard on Monday evening, while the sixth left Salcombe on Tuesday morning. On Tuesday the students described their first night on the *Duchess*. They had slept in bunks but had risen with the dawn further to explore the ship, before, their curiosity sated, they settled down to work. They climbed the rigging and reached the mainsail.

"Our ambition," said Mr G. C. Weatherhead, looking up into forest of ropes, "is to reach the crow's nest, but it seems to be a breathtaking height from here." The students have their own little galley and do their own cooking. Their mess room consists of a trestle table in an alcove near number three hold. Their work is composed of shovelling the sodden wheat overboard and taking over miscellaneous jobs.

Mr Stevens sent another notice to be displayed at Queens College during the week. It ran: "bring iodine for blisters". It seems to corroborate the undergraduates slogan, "hard work only."

Salcombe Complaint of Salvaged Grain Nuisance.

Strong protest was made at Wednesday's meeting of the Salcombe Urban District Council against the dumping of sodden wheat from the *Herzogin Cecilie* on the Council Quay. The stench was said to be abominable and it was decided that the grain must be removed within seven days.

Mr F. Murch presided at the meeting, and a letter was read from Mr W. Johnson on behalf of ratepayers in Island Street, complaining of the nuisance arising from the wheat and Mr W. Thorning said he considered that the complaint was fully justified.

The chairman mentioned that on the previous Saturday morning several protests were made to him, and, with Mr Shillitoe and the Surveyor, he went to look at the wheat. It was then smelling very badly. Mr Partridge told him, however, that he had a letter from the harbourmaster giving him permission to deposit the wheat and to keep it there for two or three weeks.

“That rather took the wind out of our sails,” added the chairman, “but we said quite definitely that no more wheat must be put there. The trouble arises when it is raked over day by day.

Mr A. M. Boone supported the action of the chairman and Mr Shillitoe in forbidding any more to be place there. He also thought immediate steps should be taken to see that the existing wheat should be removed. Mr E. C. Bevers agreed. Mr Thorning asked if anyone

had any notion what the idea was in placing it there. Was it for drying purposes? He thought the best thing to do was to put the wheat on the dump and burn it. Mr Shillitoe suggested in future the harbourmaster should not have authority to write letters in the manner which he wrote in the present instance.

Mr Byrne said the control of the quays had nothing to do with the harbourmaster at all and Mr Cranch expressed the opinion that despite the letter written, the permission given was not binding on the Council as the harbourmaster had no authority to give it. On the motion Mr Boone seconded by Mr Cranch, it was decided that the wheat must be removed in three days. The Surveyor raised the general question of the control of the Quay, saying that he had never had any application for permission to land material there.

It was agreed that permission to land there should be in the hands of the Surveyor, that storage should not be allowed and that the establishment committee should go into the question of demurrage charges where material was not removed within a reasonable time.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 9

June 26th 1936

Herzogin Cecilie Refloated. Resting Securely in Starehole Bay. Cargo Unloading.

The *Herzogin Cecilie* has again been the sight of the week, but instead of being a spectre of tragedy fast on the rocks and with every prospect of being buffeted to death by the first ill wind, she is now a ship of hope, safely grounded on sand and waiting for the survey which will reveal whether she can be completely repaired or not.

It will be surprising if she does not sail the sea once more, because the fact that her refloating was almost without incident, suggests that she is not badly holed. Captain and Mrs Eriksson are fully confident on this point.

Starehole Bay has been the mecca of countless sightseers, who've reach it by boat and on foot; while on Sunday South Sands was crowded with cars and other vehicles. Latterly, however, traffic has been directed to approach via East Soar.

Possibly, the excessive optimism which had previously attracted so many people to Sewer Mill on fruitless errands accounted for the fact that there were comparatively few people on the cliffs on Friday as the ship silently glided off the ledge on which she had been perched for seven weeks and more. On Thursday of last week it was expected that an attempt would be made, but the breakdown of the largest 12 inch pump caused a postponement. It would have been folly to try to cope with any possible inrush of water on the journey to Salcombe without full activity on all the pumps. The second attempt, therefore, was made the following day. It was shortly before 4 PM that the two tugs, *Alexandra* and *Trevol*, arrived. The water was placid, but there was a

suggestion of thunder in the air, and during the operation several ominous rolls were heard in the distance.

The people on the cliffs were composed almost entirely of holidaymakers and many of these left early, apparently in the belief that once more the tugs would fail. However, the tugs proceeded quietly with their work, with little or no fuss.

The proceedings, as watched from the cliffs, were without any trace of drama. There was nothing in the appearance of spectators or of the workers on board to suggest that the most famous sailing ship in the world was being saved from her grave. The tugs nosed their way to the ship and hawsers were made fast to the bow, one pulling straight forward and the other at an angle. The tide was running strongly, but there were still nearly two hours to go before high water. The screws of the two powerful vessels churned the water for half an hour or more, but there was no movement.

Swimmer Releases Hawser

The first sign of activity on board was when one of the young Cambridge undergraduates dived from amidships and swam ashore to release one of the hawsers which have been attached to steady her and shortly after it was noticed that the stern had swung round and the bows were pointing more out to sea. Time and again the tall masts shuddered under the strain imposed by the tugs. Then there was a lurch and the *Herzogin Cecilie* made a definite move forward. There was no sound of grating and it seemed improbable that there was any

penetrating rock holding her fast. She was riding evenly and the bows were clear of the water after weeks of being awash.

There was a hoot from one of the tugs and a supreme pulling effort was made. The Duchess swayed and slid forward, silently and gracefully. It was then that the watchers realised that success was within reach. Foot by foot the gap between the cliffs and the hull widened and at about 5.40 the ship was free. She swept forward, amid a ripple of applause from the people on shore and the many others in the small craft dotted about, while from the car park at Southdown there was a chorus of hoots from the cars parked there. The tugs gave a loud blast of triumph and several vessels which had stood close in to watch the final operations sounded their sirens in salute of the graceful Duchess who is keen prow was once more cutting through the waves.

Flag Signal of Success

After moving 200 or 300 yards there was a grating rattle and the spectators held their breath. The *Herzogin Cecilie* stopped, the tugs whipped the water into a white foam. Then the vessel came forward again and the flag was run up the masthead, fluttering in the breeze as a token that the final obstacle had been overcome. The hawser fixed to the stern of the vessel had remained taut to the last. When the strain was too great, it parted with a crack and its coils flashed violently through the air.

Then began a procession of triumph to Starehole Bay. Escorted by numerous motorboats, the *Herzogin Cecilie* was towed slowly round Bolt Head, the tugs being dwarfed into insignificance by the rearing masts of the stately vessel. Approaching Starehole Bay, the tugs cast off their hawsers and the salvage ship ran slowly aground under her own momentum. This time she was on a sandy bottom in a natural Bay, sheltered by Bolt Head on one side and the jagged rocks of Sharptor on the other.

Weeks of Interminable Anxiety

“It has been the most anxious time in my husband’s experience of this fine vessel and he, more than anybody, is glad that she will once

again sail,” said Mrs Eriksson in an interview on Friday evening. “She began to get restless about three or four 4 o’clock today. Nothing happened, however, for a time. Then she began to move up about to a much greater extent and actually floated. It was fine to feel the motion beneath our feet once again after these weeks of interminable anxiety and the feeling that the Duchess would not sail the seas again.

“We could not tell whether she was moving by looking at the shore, but we had lines attached to her stern. They began to run out slowly and we realised the ship was taking leave of the rocks. She travelled a short distance, then she suddenly stopped and we thought “this is the end.” Then to our great joy, the ship began to move more quickly after the tugs. She went out so speedily that the rusty anchor chain on the starboard quarter snapped.

“The pumps were going all the time. They managed to keep the water down and that makes us think that the damage cannot be as bad as we once thought.”

‘Duchess’ Prepared for Sea

Discussing the ship’s future, Mrs Eriksson said she hoped it would not be long before the damage would be repaired and preparations made for getting to sea again. Possibly at that time the fund for salvaging the ship and for refitting her would be adequate. A donation of £500 was received from Canada on the day of the refloating.

Cargo Discharging

During the week tons of cargo have been discharged. On Thursday the Dutch ship *Appellinaris IV* was being loaded for Rotterdam and will be followed by another Dutch ship, *Delta*, which will take a consignment for Copenhagen.

The task of unloading is now much easier than when the vessel was at Sewer Mill. There is very little swell in Starehole Bay other than when there is a southerly or south-easterly breeze and even when there is a hard blow from the South, it does not often last long.

When the holds are practically empty of grain, it would then be possible to see internally what damage has been done and whether the use of concrete and packing materials can effectively stop the holes for a voyage to a dry dock at Falmouth or Plymouth.

Workers Difficulties

The difficulties of discharging the cargo are accentuated by the fumes which arise from the wheat and workers on board suffer considerable discomfort. Goggles and masks have been worn. The Cambridge undergraduates continue their work on board.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 10

July 3rd 1936

Fumes from *Herzogin Cecilie*. Port Sanitary Authority's Problem. Gases Said to be Inflammable.

Official notice has been taken this week of the fumes which emanate from the sodden wheat on board the *Herzogin Cecilie*. The gases, which are generated by the action of the water on the grain, are alleged to be not only injurious to men working on board, but to be of an inflammable and explosive nature.

It is well-known that during the last few weeks workers have suffered considerable discomfort from the fumes and their eyes, in particular, have been affected. Gas masks and goggles have been worn and these have mitigated the danger to some extent. The complaint from which the men are said to suffer is conjunctivitis, and infection of the eyes.

On Monday a special meeting of the Kingsbridge and Salcombe Port Sanitary Authority was held to consider the matter. They were, however, faced with many difficulties. A report was received from the Medical Officer and this, it is understood, stated that carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and hydrogen gases were being created and constituted the danger. If in a concentrated form, the fumes are inflammable and liable to explode.

Cattle Food Danger

Another aspect of the question was the export of the wheat itself. The point here was that it may be made into cattle food on the continent and eventually re-exported to England, with possible harmful results on the cattle consuming the food. Consideration was given to the possibility of steps being taken to prohibit further export. In this connection, both the

Board of Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture have been approached.

Considerable legal difficulties, however, confront the port authority. There is no doubt that the ship lies within its jurisdiction, which extends on the Salcombe side of a line drawn from Prawle Point to Bolt Head. Therefore a responsibility rests upon their shoulders. The vessel, however, is not docked and cannot be dealt with by ordinary means.

The Board of Trade were asked to look into the matter, but their reply was that they had no legal standing, as the ship was not at a dock or a wharf. The Inspector of Factories was also communicated with, but he too, was doubtful of his ability to take any action, for his authority extends only to ships in docks or at wharves.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 11

July 17th 1936

Fears for *Herzogin Cecilie*. Increasing Danger of Break-up. Captain Says Keel is Broken.

“The keel of the *Herzogin Cecilie* is broken and the state of the vessel is worse now than when she was at Sewer Mill Cove,” declared captain Eriksson in an interview with a Gazette representative in his cabin on Wednesday.

“Although the damage is not irreparable it would mean patching her up and going to Plymouth to have a new keel fitted. But that would cost money. I am awaiting orders from Finland from the owners as to what to do. The lower decks of the *Duchess* have risen two feet with the strain and the water has gained so much on the pumps that the salvage company has dismantled them and taken them away. The contractor who has purchased the wheat has given up and the two Dutch grain vessels, *Duurwold* and the *Prima*, have left for their home ports in ballast.

“The sea has gained so rapidly over the pumps on Thursday that the further discharge of grain has been made impossible. The salvage men have left and the undergraduates left on Monday and Tuesday.”

Rock at Starehole

It was generally thought in Salcombe that Starehole had a sandy beach and that the four-master would be safe there from further damage. It would now appear that the tide around the vessel has caused the sand to sweep away, revealing hard rock. The bows and stern have sunk seven or eight feet and the rock is thought to be about midships. The terrific strain imposed on the rivets fore and aft are said to be causing them to fly off.

“The wind turned south-east on Thursday,” said Captain Eriksson, “and that did the damage. There was a heavy swell running at the time and I’m afraid the boat is more damaged now than she was when she was at the Ham Stone. Only one person said there was rock in the bay. All the rest of the fishermen were definite that the bay had a sandy bed. I brought the *Duchess* here to save her but---“. Here captain Eriksson paused and shrugged his shoulders. Asked if it was true that her “back” was broken he replied, “I do not know. The keel is definitely broken, but I’m going to find out whether her ‘back’ is still sound.” The future of the vessel appears to lie in the message expected from the Finnish owners. The skipper’s suggestion is that if the famous boat proved to be beyond all hope of salvage, the masts could be fitted to another hull. The new vessel could then be called the *Duchess* he added.

Overcome by Fumes

On Tuesday Captain Eriksson received complaints that three men had been affected by the gas fumes rising from the wheat. He went below to where the suction pipes were bubbling in the water-filled hold and bent down to smell the fumes. He stayed too long, however, and was himself overcome.

The hull of the vessel has now lost its white paint and the fumes have turned the sides to a dirty grey. There is between 20 and 30 feet of water in the fore holds and except for the living quarters aft, water has penetrated right through the vessel.

Captain and Mrs Erikson continued to sleep aboard and only infrequent journeys are made to Salcombe by boat. In the cabin comfortably furnished with easy chairs, brightly decorated with red roses, Captain Eriksson was still hopeful of the ultimate safety of the Duchess. He endeavoured to maintain the conversation on a cheerful note.

The repair fund now amounted to £800, but, as Captain Eriksson pointed out, the fund was originally launched only for repairs to the vessel after she had been salvaged. The cost of the salvage had to be borne by the owners. Now that the fresh danger has arisen, with increased financial call, it looked as if, should investigations confirm reports, ... (*Last line not readable*)

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 12

July 24th 1936

Herzogin Cecilie is Doomed. Knell Tolloed By Ringing Hammers. Gear being Dismantled.

The position of the *Herzogin Cecilie* is now considered to be hopeless. She will be stripped of all fittings which might prove useful to other ships owned by Mr Gustav Erikson and the gear will be taken to Finland. A boat is on its way to Salcombe for this purpose.

When these preparations have been completed, the probability is that the Duchess will be sold where she is at Starehole, presumably to be broken up. Thus ends the career of the fastest and proudest of sailing ships afloat.

A deep clang echoed and re-echoed as steel met steel in the holds of the *Herzogin Cecilie* lying in Starehole, Salcombe, this week. It rose through the yards and sent the gulls screaming from their lofty perches. After a while, silence broken only by the uneasy cries of returning birds.

All day the scene was repeated. The regular slow ring of the hammer resembled the tolling of a bell – mournfully appropriate for a vessel which is being dismantled prior to its abandonment. The Duchess will never sail the seas again.

The story of her stranding at Sewer Mill Cove during the early hours of a foggy April morning has now become history. The vain attempt to refloat and then the subsequent success, have been of primary interest to all dwellers in the South Hams. Thousands of people from all parts of the country have walked the craggy cliffs to view the famous barque.

The news of the breaking of the keel during the early part of the month was received with the utmost dismay. All the high hopes entertained

for the future, the strenuous labour in making the refloating possible and the constant anxiety behind the venture, have ended in bitter disappointment. Fate's latest blow at the four-master could not have been worse.

No Evidence of Back Broken

Although a thorough examination has failed to establish definite evidence that her back is broken, the Duchess is undoubtedly doomed. Starehole, a bay scarcely more than 100 yards in width, with the towering heights of Bolt Head and Sharptor sheltering it, will, in all probability be the last resting place of the ship that was once "the pride of the seas." For so stately a vessel, a more suitable grave could not have been chosen. In the surroundings is reflected much of the grandeur of the Duchess. The bold prominence of Sharptor appears to pay a majestic tribute as it looms hundreds of feet above the waves which lap at the sides of the *Herzogin Cecilie*.

On board only five persons remain. Captain and Mrs Erikson continue to live in the ship accompanied by the first and second mates and one Cambridge undergraduate who volunteered to stay and assist when the rest of the party left.

Last Anchor Weighed

The decks, now beginning to reveal ominous bulges, are littered with a motley conglomeration of hawsers, boards, storm lamps, fittings and grain baskets. The fore hold is almost full to the brim of dark grey water, rotting wheat bags float around the sides, while in the centre, a constant stream of bubbles break the surface as the fumes from the decaying

grain rise. A ladder has been substituted for the old iron steps leading to midship. The metal steps were torn away during the salvage efforts, as were many other fittings, now sacrificed in vain.

The boiler house, from which, formerly, the water for the central heating apparatus was obtained, is covered with pieces of wood thrown in by the waves as they break over the bulwarks. A layer of fine grey mud covers the floor with a smooth, unbroken surface.

Plight of Duchess Betrayed

Between decks the real state of the Duchess is betrayed. From the shore the vessel may appear to be in good order. A glance at the inside, however, soon puts to flight any such suggestion. The stanchions are badly bent and the floor has risen considerably, cracking the boards with the great strain. Along the promenade, timber lies strewn at random. The never ceasing bubbling of the gas in the water-filled holds is the only noise that can be heard after the hammer is silent. A board on trestles with a single cup and saucer, bears evidence of hasty meals snatched during the long hours of toil in stripping the ship.

Somewhere along the coast, another of Gustav Eriksson's (the owner of the *Herzogin Cecilie*) ships is making for Salcombe to take away the salvage gear, which will be installed in another vessel. Many tons of fittings have already been removed and the pumps have also been taken into Salcombe. Salvage men are packing the latter for transport and will afterwards returned to help dismantle the ship's movable fittings.

Bridge Drama at Dawn

On Saturday an exciting and dangerous position arose. The wind rose on Friday, and during the hours of darkness reached gale force. The waves lashed the bows and swept furiously along almost the whole length of the vessel. She shook and shuddered every time the sea struck and this wakened the ten occupants.

No one knew what was going to happen to the vessel. It seemed that final disaster might follow the intense straining of the boards. Captain Eriksson ordered the five salvage men

and the undergraduate to go ashore. The only way was by means of the rope bridge which stretches for 40 yards from the stern rail to a low rock. Terrific seas broke over the slender bridge and through the mountains of foam, in the first awakenings of dawn, six men struggled and fought, waist deep in the powerful waves, inch by inch across the tossing rope walk. It was about 5 o'clock when they reached the shore safely and hurried into Salcombe for a change of clothing and a hot meal.

In the meantime the fear of what would happen when the tide turned, shortly after 6 AM was uppermost in the mind of the master. He suggested to his wife that she should go ashore, but she preferred to remain as on the morning of the first stranding. The two mates also determined not to leave and four people, who have sailed many thousands of miles in the vessel and grown to feel for the Duchess a personal and human affection, stood waiting for what all thought to be the end. The miracle happened, and when the tide receded, the Duchess still remained intact, although the timbers protested loudly.

That drama has contributed largely to the decision to dismantle the vessel at once. It is certain that the hull of the craft will not stand the terrific pressure exerted by strong tides much longer.

Position Hopeless

Another factor which has led to this decision is that when the four-master was first beached at Starehole, one 6 inch pump was sufficient to remove two thirds of the water in the holds. After being bumped by the south-easterly winds, it took one 6 and one 12 inch pumps to clear out only a third of the water. From this it appeared that the plates have either started or that the Hull has been pierced. At any rate the flow has proved too much for the pumps to cope with and the vessel is now completely waterlogged.

Visitors still continue to find the *Herzogin Cecilie* one of the main centres attraction at Salcombe. People, arriving from different parts of the country, have followed the tragedy of the barque with interest. Now that repairs are out of

the question, the repair fund is useless. No charge is made to visitors going aboard. Many motor boats have arrived with their loads, and decks, not yet under water, have been explored. The mere fact that no charge is made to augment the repair fund is a further indication that the *Herzogin Cecilie* is deemed a wreck.

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 13

August 14th 1936

Herzogin Cecilie to be Sold. Statement by Master.

A statement issued this week by Captain S. Eriksson, the master of the doomed four master *Herzogin Cecilie*, lying at Starehole, Salcombe, states that the Duchess is being dismantled previous to being sold to the breakers. This fact was foreshadowed in the Gazette several weeks ago.

An appeal was made for funds in May and to this captain Eriksson also refers in his statement, which reads: "The two last storms greatly damaged the *Herzogin Cecilie*. Repairs would now prove so costly that all hope of raising the sum required must be abandoned. She is being stripped to her masts, after which the ship will be sold. The Duchess Cecilie Repair Fund Lodged at Lloyds Bank, Salcombe, is being returned to subscribers, and all anonymous and collective donations will be given to the National Lifeboat Institution.

"As master and on behalf the owner, Sjöfaroerodet Gustav Eriksson, I wish to thank all those who have given their help and sympathy in the effort to save the *Herzogin Cecilie*. That her destiny was written otherwise must be the regret of everyone who has known her and served in her."

The Wreck of the *Herzogin Cecilie*: Kingsbridge Gazette

Article 14

August 21st 1936

Herzogin Up For Sale. Trans-shipment of Gear to Begin Soon. Capt. and Mrs. Eriksson Leaving Shortly.

At the end of the month, final arrangements are expected to be completed for the disposal of the *Herzogin Cecilie*. Captain and Mrs Eriksson were then depart, after a four-month stay in the area, crowded with hopes and disappointments for the fate of their once beautiful vessel.

During recent weeks the process of dismantling the ship has proceeded, except when weather conditions have prevented any serious work being done. Men have taken down the masthead fittings and everything that it is possible to move, to await the arrival of the ship chartered to convey the material to Finland. The boat was expected to arrive before the end of this week.

For the whole of the long and weary wait, while the proud Duchess was being reduced to a hopeless wreck, captain and Mrs Eriksson have lived on board. Their quarters have been comparatively free from the water which has flooded the other parts of the vessel. The time has been fully occupied in making arrangements for the trans-shipment of the gear and in conducting negotiations for the sale of the vessel.

Tide's Effect

Weeks ago any prospect of repair disappeared, and this being the case, Captain and Mrs Eriksson had to devote themselves to the task of refunding the hundreds of pounds contributed

from all over the globe towards the cost of making the ship seaworthy. Quite a large proportion of the money sent was from anonymous donors and, as announced by Captain Eriksson, has been reserved for the benefit of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

This finely disposes of any possibility of the ship having a future other than in the hands of the ship breakers. Externally she is much the same as she appeared weeks ago, when the heavy fumes from the wheat stained the white hull to a dark and dirty brown. She "works" with the tide and there is no doubt now that her back is broken.

Captain Eriksson informed our representative this week that while the ship has not actually been sold, she is definitely on the market. He said it was not yet possible to say when Mrs Erikson and himself will be leaving, but it would not be until the end of this month at the earliest.

Overtures have been made by a London film studio to acquire some of the gear for use in the building of a small replica ship off for making up sets, but the film company had to be informed that the material was not for sale, Captain Eriksson having decided that the valuable sails, yards, electric lighting plant, heating apparatus, and other fixtures can be usefully transferred to other ships.