

Notes on the Attempts to Salvage the S.S. *Minnehaha*, April, 1910

The following report is a slightly cleaned up transcription of the notes typed up by George Pottie, Superintending Engineer of the Atlantic Transport Line, following his journey to the Scilly Isles in April 1910 to monitor attempts to salvage *Minnehaha* and her cargo.

The Mr. Torrey referred to in the report was the Atlantic Transport Line's Managing Director Charles F. Torrey, and Captain Tubb was the line's Marine Superintendent. (Kinghorn collection)

S. S. MINNEHAHA.

MONDAY, April 18th, 1910

Received telephone message from Captain Tubb at 5-30 a.m. that the *Minnehaha* was ashore on rocks in the vicinity of Scilly. Made preparations before leaving for the city, to proceed if required. Called at the office 9 a.m. and after discussing the situation with Mr. Torrey, Mr. May, and Captain Tubb, we proceeded to Paddington, en route, for the Scilly Island, via Penzance, by the 10-30 a.m. express. Arrived at Penzance 5-5 p.m., we met Mr. Geo., Fox, agent from Falmouth and others who gave us all the latest information with regard to the steamer and the landing of the passengers, and also that arrangements had been fixed with the Railway Company for their journey to London, the passengers landing from the *Minnehaha* at midnight on Bryer Island, and from there to St. Mary's. They declined to proceed on the Monday and left on the Tuesday for Penzance.

At 6-30 we embarked on the tug *Eagle*, which was engaged by Mr. Fox to take us to St. Mary's, on leaving the sea was moderate with a fresh breeze from the West. In passing the Wolf Rock a slight haze set in and the sea and wind increased after running the distance down, no land or light was visible. The pilot considered it not prudent to approach the land, so kept out during the night, running to Westward and then to the Eastward, tug rolling, and shipping heavy water.

TUESDAY, April 19th,

At 4-30 we sighted St. Agnes's light, then made for St. Mary's arriving there at 5-30 a.m. having spent 12 hours on the tug boat in most disagreeable weather. Mr. Fox secured lodgings, we then left on

A.T.L. Engineering Superintendent's Notes on the Attempts to salvage the S.S. *Minnehaha* in April 1910

the tug Dragon for the *Minnehaha*, experienced very heavy seas on the passage round the rocks and arrived on the scene at 8-30 a.m. The local boatmen were salving the cattle by pushing them overboard and swimming them ashore the Mason Island (Samson). There was considerable difficulty in getting along side with the life boats, after getting on board we had a general look around, Captain Tubb decided, after consulting with the Pilot and other local boatmen, that it would be prudent to take all the men out of the ship until after high-water, as from the evidence of the Chief Officer and others, the vessel had apparently shifted her position and was apparently sliding off the rocky shelf into deep water and it was in their opinion that she would quickly disappear, it was therefore, arranged for all hands to leave the ship at noon. All the working hands were passed on to the S.S. *Omerod* which was standing by to receive cargo, and also to the tug Dragon. The officer's considered that the *Minnehaha* had shifted her position about 50 feet in 24 hours, after high-water had passed all hands went again on board, soundings were taken regularly. Ship list to port about 6 degrees, wind and sea increasing.

Having made suggestions to re-float the vessel by discharging all cattle from hatchways and getting down at low water to the lower deck, and securing the hatches there, with the available wood on board and prevented the water from flowing into lower orlop deck.

WEDNESDAY, April 20 th.,

Wind and sea moderate, a light haze. Tugs *Victory* and *Dragon* left *St. Mary's* at 6-30 a.m. with ship's officers and laborer's, steamed out and arrived at *Minnehaha* 7-30, there is too heavy a swell for the tug to get alongside, so-the life Boat passed the men on board from tugs, salving the cattle is being carried on, and at 8 a.m. only nine remain on board. Ship in same position, no apparent alteration in bearings, water has leaked through the forward bulk-head into Boiler and Engine-room section, Engine-room staff attending to pump, pumps working satisfactorily. All the engineering staff are standing by assisted by donkey men, store-keeper and two firemen, all other hands discharged or paid off. In addition to officers on deck, there are 22 men engaged. The *Watkins* tug from London has arrived, the S.S. *Omerod* again ordered alongside, all cargo taken from forward holds and put on deck last night before leaving the ship, was thrown overboard, small craft salving the same. At 8-30 a.m. sitting on number 6 hatch felt a shook as if ship had settled down on rocky bottom. As the weather was very unsettled, all hands cleared away from the ship at 6-30 p.m. The tugs in attendance, and the salvage steamer *Belos* also left their anchorage for *St. Mary's*. It was arranged that the donkey men and one

A.T.L. Engineering Superintendent's Notes on the Attempts to salvage the S.S. *Minnehaha* in April 1910

fireman should sleep on board tug *Eagle* and at 5 a.m. and to have steam ready for the discharging of cargo at 7 a.m. On arriving on board, the Engine-room section, on the port side, was flooded, the water rising to the wing furnace. The donkey man up to his waist in water; got the remaining fires under weigh and was running for the use of Wireless Telegraphy and to work cargo and Engine-room pumps. All available pumps were put on and at 10-30 the stoke room was practically clear of water, the two Midship Auxiliary Boilers under steam for all purposes as required, also Starboard Auxiliary.

Captain Tubb ordered the S.S. *Ormerod* to clear out, as no one on board would, make the slightest effort to bring the vessel alongside at 10 a.m. At 11-15 the salvage steamer *Ranger* arrived, weathering moderating. Captain Young of the Liverpool Salvage Association, arrived on board, and after a general view of the situation expressed himself, that the vessel was in a very precarious condition, and that there would be no hope of saving the vessel if the wind shifted into the North West. But he has to take every precaution immediately, and moorings would be got out-on Starboard bow and quarter to prevent the vessel slipping off the rocks into deep water. About 2 p.m. Divers commenced operations on the Port Bow, to examine the condition of the bottom fore and aft, The discharging of cargo stopped until they had passed to the forward holds. Engineers have now succeeded in stopping the leakage from No. 5 Hold into Boiler-room, and also succeeded in pumping out the water so that now, 3 p.m. all in the Engine room is satisfactory. Reports by wireless have been sent by Captain Young to Liverpool, and a copy of the same has been forwarded to Manager's Atlantic Transport Line. London. 3 p.m. Divers cannot proceed with examination, too much swell. They report, no flat ground only boulders that have apparently rolled from the mass above water known as the N & S Cuckoo resumed discharging-cargo overboard, the same being picked up by small craft. 4-30 p.m. *Triton*, arrived alongside with ship's labourers from London, weather still moderating, fog clearing. Arranged to have two under Engineers, and two Fire-men to stay on board tonight to keep steam and to pump after part of ship if necessary. The salvage steamer, *Linnet*, arrives on the scene at 5-30 p.m. The S.S. *Belos* alongside at 5-35. London gang at work consigning-all Kirkland's dead Marines to the mighty deep. Commenced to load *Belos* with general cargo from No. 6 Hold. Captain Berry arrived in connection with cargo, all hands stopped work at 6-30 p.m. Captain Tubb, two Engineers and two Firemen remaining on board.

THURSDAY, April 21st., 8-30 a.m.

A.T.L. Engineering Superintendent's Notes on the Attempts to salvage the S.S. *Minnehaha* in April 1910

Left St. Mary's at 6-30 a.m. weather fine, a grey dawn, wind fresh from west. A heavy swell still running from West. Weather clear, arrived alongside at 7-30 a.m. Conversation with Captain Tubb re his experience on board. Last night high-water, 2-40 a.m. he states there was a considerable movement of the ship and Having ascertained that the Engine room department was satisfactory, fires were banked, he then considered it prudent to leave the ship for two hours as nothing could be gained by staying on board. The junior Engineers and Firemen also went on board the Ranger. Personally examined the condition of Engine-room and Boiler-room bilges. There is still leakage from the water tight doors which have developed, however, the accumulation of water can now be easily kept under by Engine-room staff. 10 a.m. Examined holds from upper deck No. 10 cargo hatch clear to upper orlop deck hatches, no cargo damage in No. 2 hatch, cargo clear to upper orlop hatches.

No.3 Hatch no water on upper deck

No.4 " " " " " "

No. 5 Cargo clear of hatches into lower hold. The bulkhead from lower orlop of No.4 has leaked into No. 5. Arrangements have been made but no attempt has yet been made to secure the ship ahead and astern, The Divers can make no headway in examination of bottom, there is too much ground swell, and the enormous growth of kelp from 6 - 8 feet, prevents them from ascertaining the amount of damage there is, so far apparently no definite plan for salving ships. There appears to me no better plan than to secure and turn down the lower hold hatches and float ship on same, and is necessary to put air pressure in No. 3 & 4 Holds.

11-15.a.m. Still nothing being done, Liverpool Salvage Association have talked with Divers with regard to further examination of bottom, they reply it is impossible with so much swell, they are about to take further soundings. I consider enough cargo has been discharged from forward holds until something is done to secure the ship. The ship can be floated in my opinion, after all the forward hatches have been secured. 3-15 p.m. The tide has reached high water mark, the vessel has moved but nothing alarming. After par moving freely. Water reaching to the upper orlop decks of No. 2, 3, & 4 holds. Worked out the weight of sea water in 1 to 4 upper orlop deck from plans capacity - 3854 Tons. Sent telegram to Lerum, London, to say that the cutting of the vessel impossible under the circumstances. As the tide is reducing, and the water in holds decreasing, and at 5 P.m. was 18" below the upper orlop deck. Left the ship at 6-30 p.m. after making suitable arrangements with the engineers in charge for the night. Captain Tubb and Captain Murray to stay on board the Ranger.

A.T.L. Engineering Superintendent's Notes on the Attempts to salvage the S.S. *Minnehaha* in April 1910

Discussed the proposed arrangements with Captain Murray. He is doubtful of success.

FRIDAY, April 22nd.

Left St. Mary's at 6-30 a.m. arrived alongside and was on board at 7-30. Weather hazy and blowing fresh, wind West by North and overcast. Ship remained throughout the night in the same position. Working hatches No. 4, 5, & 6 in way of lower hold hatches only to clear the way for securing lower hold hatches, no cargo discharged from any other part of vessel. Sea comparatively smooth on the port side. 10-30 a.m. Sunshine, clear, wind fresh, sea moderate. Cargo discharged into Belos from 4 & 5 hatches, and into Red Rose from No. 6 hold. Captain Murray to proceed to Falmouth on Linnet, commenced to lay out anchors with difficulty on rocky bottom on starboard quarter, Captain Murray left for Falmouth by the tug Victor at 11 a.m. Working cargo from No. 1, 7, 2 holds - This in my opinion is not correct only hatchways should be cleared. Noon, April 22nd., All cargo stopped. Divers engaged again on bottom - survey - weather good. Divers report on Port side up to No. 2 hold very satisfactory. At 6-30 local ship workers left. London gang left on board and continued discharging cargo from No. 3 holds until 8-30 p.m. Fresh breeze from the N. West

SATURDAY, April 23.

Chief Engineer and junior Engineer's slept on board, ship being securely moored aft, danger considerably mitigated. Captain Tubb and self also on board, at 4-30 weather fine with light breeze from the N.N.W. and comparatively smooth water, sunshine. Commenced discharging cargo from No. 5 hold lower orlop. Coffee in bags discharged over Starboard side. The salvage steamer, Linnet alongside with pumping gear. No. 6 lower orlop apparently in good order. At 7 a.m. tug Dragon alongside with labourers from St. Mary's Mr. Fox reports, Captain Murray with the Dragon left Falmouth this morning with all the gear necessary for securing hatches. The position is now No. 5 lower hold intact. No. 4 hold (deep tank) making preparations to secure tank top which seals this up. No. 1, 2, 3 only to secure. S.S. Pyrope alongside receiving cargo from No. 7 & 8 Holds.

9-30 a.m. Wind, fresh from west, ship heading south west No. . Lower hold hatches put on and secured and tarpaulin put on. 10-45 At low water working oil casks from No. 3, 7, 4. lower orlop tank visible. 11-30. Endeavoring to clear casks from tank covers. Starboard clear but found cover on starboard tank was the Port tank cover and a few bolts put in to make the joint. Divers at work on Starboard side

A.T.L. Engineering Superintendent's Notes on the Attempts to salvage the S.S. *Minnehaha* in April 1910

making a final examination at noon. Instructions from Captain Young to Captain Tubb, that if it was not too difficult a matter can anchor might be taken out ahead, Captain Tubb replied, difficult or easy an anchor must be put forward - so now all hands are engaged on this which should have been done two days ago. Slingers and labourers ceased work on pumps which are now being put into tween decks for pumping holds to get out anchors - which in my opinion is a serious delay. 2-30 p.m. Wind increasing from the W by N, all hands preparing to get out anchor to the Belos engaged to take out anchor, Ranger and Linnet at anchor at safe distance doing nothing. Approximate weight of Belos anchor 25 cwt. All hands left about 6-40 p.m. except nine all told and eight of the salvage crew. Weather overcast with wind increasing, Belos alongside, Captain has made every arrangement possible for rescue in case of emergency at midnight. Weather threatening Ships starboard anchor let go.

Sunday, April 24th.,

Weather bad, wind and sea increasing. Direction of wind, N.W. by W. The salvage crew of eight men have started about 6-30 to get steam pump fitting connected. A great deal of valuable time has been lost, and there is no energy put in the work in salving ship. Pyrope came to anchor about 7-45 a.m. with ships labourers and crew from St. Mary's. Captain Tubb reports, that Captain Young has ordered Pyrope back to St. Mary's with labourers. Captain Tubb has given per contra instructions to come to anchor, and the men on board the Pyrope to come on board to resume salving operations. The salvage men connecting pumps are absolutely doing nothing to forward work. If we can secure No. 4 deep hold covers it will greatly assist operations. The salvage crew in my opinion at present have done nothing of any consequence. The operations are being directed by signals from the Ranger which is lying off about 250 yds, while the Belos a salvage steamer lies comfortably alongside, and whose Captain gives every assistance. Captain Tubb has signaled to Young to bring his vessel alongside so that the operations can be conducted in a practical manner. 8-40 a.m. Captain Young on board the Ranger has created a scare quite unnecessarily by ordering the Pyrope back to St Mary's with all hands. The wind is blowing fresh and there appears to be a heavy sea outside, but we are well protected by the Cuckoo Rocks. There is no movement in the ship and on the lee side the craft is lying comparative quiet. Captain Young is apparently ashamed of his position and is now hauling the Ranger nearer to the Minnehaha so that he can communicate. The men now being transferred from Pyrope to Minnehaha over the Belos whose Captain is very energetic and obliging and is assisting in every way. Cargo cleared from No. 4 deep tank top principally oil tanks. About

A.T.L. Engineering Superintendent's Notes on the Attempts to salvage the S.S. *Minnehaha* in April 1910

10-30 a.m. the cargo was practically clear of No.4 deep tank. On examination of cover we found the port cover on starboard and the Starboard on Port. The Starboard cover was hoisted on deck and on examination the jointing was found in good condition, there was much difficulty in getting Starboard door clear as the tide was on the turn to flow. This cover was hoisted on deck and the joint of rubber was found partially gone, this was renewed. In the meantime the Starboard door was transferred to the port tank, and the Engineers after considerable difficulty working in oil and water, succeeded in securing the port cover from the deep tank. From this apparently, came the greatest flow of water as the tide was rising, and this agreed with the Diver's report. The wind and sea was increasing, and the instructions signaled from the Ranger was for to leave the ship at once. The Belos also gave us notice that he must leave as the sea was very heavy outside, and it would be impossible to keep alongside. After considerable difficulty all hands left *Minnehaha* at 12-35 p.m. on to Belos, and after encountering very heavy seas which occasionally swept the decks we arrived at St. Mary's at 2-45 p.m.

MONDAY, April, 25.,

Went on to pier at 5.45 a.m. *Minnehaha* still visible, wind blowing a gale and heavy sea running outside, went up to Coast Guard station to ascertain the weather conditions. Direction of wind was W by N. Looking to seaward, there was apparently not so much sea, arranged to go off on the tug *Dragon* from the pier to the Belos, which is lying about $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile from pier. Captain Tubb arranged to meet Captain Young to discuss matters. Talkie-Talkie. Left the pier in the *Dragon* and was put on board the Belos, experienced very heavy seas on the way out. Arrived at *Minnehaha* found the stern moorings had parted, after some difficulty got on board. Water was in the Engine-room about 12" up Starboard column and about 4" to 6" in the wings. No. 1 & 2 holds were in the same condition, No. 3 hatchway was full of casks having floated from the lower holds. Hatchway full of casks on Starboard side a stanchion in centre of hatchway doubler up. Hatchway combings slightly twisted. No. 5 hold full of water up to lower orlop. Ship has moved astern about 100 feet and apparently watertight Bulkhead has apparently given way. No salvage steamers alongside except Belos. After hold soundings all dry - no leakage. No. 5 hold 21 ft. portside. Our Chief and Junior Engineers did excellent work and saved the situation by getting fires away in Starboard main boiler and S.B. working to their waists in water, Centrifuge pumps on Starboard side started and at 2-30 p.m. had reduced the water in Engine-room clear of starting platform. At 3-30 p.m. the Engine-room now under control. At 4 p.m. Captain Young ventured on board from the *Ranger* and

A.T.L. Engineering Superintendent's Notes on the Attempts to salvage the S.S. *Minnehaha* in April 1910

again discussed the situation and making all manner of excuses for the dilatoriness of the proceedings. I pointed out quite clearly that that it was not the methods I objected to but the want of application and energy and that most valuable time had been lost when there was excellent opportunities for floating the vessel successfully the first week. It was arranged for the Belos to stay alongside to take off the crew. The engineers again volunteered to stay on as long as possible and keep water out of the Engine-room at 8-45 p.m. Belos signaled to leave the ship all fires were banked before leaving.

TUESDAY, April 26th,

Left St. Mary's 6-15 arriving alongside with Belos at 7-20 a.m., The S.S. Linnet following. The water in Engine-room only up to Stoke room plates steam raised and pumps started. There is so far as I can ascertain no definite plan for floating the ship. 9-30 a.m. The Belos commenced to put salvage hose on board. Captain Young arrived on board and I learn discussed the position of the Belos. A number of hands from the salvage boats equipping pumps and in No.5 hold securing hatches and preparing wood for securing hatches Captain Murray arrived from Falmouth with a stock of timber to be used on securing hatches. At 12-30 p.m. steam pumps started. At 3-30 p.m. for a brief run-in No. 5, hold Engine-room pumps at work draining out water from stoke hold bilges. Examined shell plating along cattle deck and found the same in good order, no fractures developed so far. About 4-30 p.m. Captain Young requested the Engine-room pumps to be stopped to allow water to accumulate in Engine-room bilges! The salvage crew busy with pumps and taking timber on board for securing hatchways. Left by the Dragon at 6-30 p.m. Received telegram to proceed to London.

WEDNESDAY April 27th.,

Carpenters securing upper orlop deck with heavy planks, which form a platform deck. At 2-30 Linnet laying anchor astern on Starboard quarter.