

GILBE

The Honourable Commissioners,
Customs and Excise,

Honourable Sirs,

GILBERT HORNBY A.P.O. Fatal accident on board the Liberian
Steamship ANDROS CHAMPION at Bidston Dock B'head.

Officers concerned:-

B'hd Rgs Crew	J.R. Thomas P.O.
..	G.E. Thomson A.P.O.
..	T. Cooper A.P.O.
..	G. Hornby A.B.O.
B'hd Bdg Crew	L. Kent P.O.
	R.K. Curtis A.P.O.

From the reports attached it will be seen that the Rgs Crew arrived on board the vessel at or about 9-45am on the 12th inst December. The Bdg Officers were already on board dealing with the crew declaration.

Whilst this work was proceeding the Rgs A.P.O.'s commenced operations and all three of them examined the steering compartment. Hornby and Thomson examined the nuts securing the cover of the transom space. The majority of these were loose and it was decided that the cover should be removed. It appears that the spanner in the possession of Hornby was not suitable for the job and he went away, presumably to the Engine Room to get one. On his return, all three officers then removed the cover.

The cover removed, Hornby shone his torch inside and the officers were able to see that there was some dirty water in the space. Hornby went down into the space, watched by Thomson who reports that Hornby appeared to have a quick look round and start to come up. His head turned to one side and he slumped down until he was sitting in the water. Thomson called to him and immediately went in to assist. The reports reveal that when Thomson reached Hornby the latter was unconscious and very soon Thomson too was affected. Cooper, when he failed to get satisfactory replies from Thomson, immediately ran for assistance.

In the sequence of events following upon the alarm raised by Cooper I think it was at this point that CRECHAN (See Police report 'A') went into the Transom and had to come out. In turn he was followed by Mr. Kent P.O. and the ship's Jnr 2nd Officer and, similarly, they too had to come out.

Thomas P.O. in charge of the crew, with a rope attached then went down into the transom and managed to get Thomson to within reach of the people above who hauled him out. Thomas then managed to get a hold on Hornby and they were both pulled to within grasp and brought out.

All three officers were taken to B'hd Gen. Hoptl., Thomas and Thomson being released and sent home later the same day.

The news of this accident was received the H.W.Supts Office at about 11-50am and, on the instructions of Mr. Gray, I at once proceeded to B'hd.

With Mr. Whiting C.P.O., I went to the B'hd Gen Hoptl. The Doctor i/s Casualty Ward informed us that G. Hornby was dead and, in his opinion death was due to inhaling carbon dioxide. The other two Officers, Thomson and Thomas, were recovering. We saw these officers. Thomson had only just recovered consciousness and Thomas was in a very distressed condition. We enquired at the hoptl whether any relatives had been informed and we were told that this usually done by the Police.

We returned to the office and arranged with the Police that we would notify the deceased man's wife and the relatives of the other officers.

Mr. Whiting and myself then proceeded to Hornby's home but, on arrival there found no-one at home. One of the neighbours informed us that Mrs Hornby had been observed going out about thirty Mins earlier. Our intention was to return later, but after we had left the neighbour was able to contact one of Hornby's brothers in Lpool. He, in turn, visited Mr. Gray who informed of the death of Hornby and he undertook to convey the news to Mrs. Hornby, who was that day visiting her mother in L'pool.

With Mr. Whiting I visited the scene of the accident of the accident on board the vessel. The Master was informed that we would see him again on the Friday morning.

At 11am, with Mr. Gray and Mr. Whiting, the vessel was again visited. during our enquiries on board, we received assistance from Mr. Pericles Saeco of Messrs E.E. Sharp and Sons Ltd., to act as interpreter.

From the Ship's plan it was confirmed that the transom space is not a tank capable of being used for the storage of any liquids and, there are no pipes leading into it. the water which gets into this space would be sea water, forced upward through

the flange of the rudder post.

The Master stated that he had only been in the vessel a few months and that the only time the cover of this space would be removed was when the rudder post required attention. In Police report 6, the 3rd Engr states that he joined the vessel in July 1955 and had never seen the manhole cover off until now.

The Master stated that no-one should have gone into the transom space before asking one of the ship's officers. He also produced one of four gas-masks which, he stated, were in charge of the Chief Officer. This was the first mention of the availability of any masks, neither our officers nor GRICHAN (See Police reports) were aware of their existence at the time of the incident. The mask produced to us was marked "USA Bureau of Mines" and the following was printed on it, "DO NOT WEAR IN ATMOSPHERE DANGEROUS TO LIFE OR CONTAINING MORE THAN ONE TENTH ORGANIC VAPOURS BY VOLUME."

In an interview with Mr Grey and myself, the Chief Officer, Costas ANASTASADIS stated that he was paying the crew when the alarm was raised and he ran immediately to the steering compartment. When he reached there, he saw a number of Customs Officers, some of his crew and others. He stated that he had tried to get a gas mask which was kept aft but the key was kept by the Boatswain. He then ran amidships to get one. It is not clear whether a mask was brought to the steering compartment but, if it was, maybe the rescue operations were being already effective.

The Junior 2nd Officer, S. EPANOU was then interviewed and stated that he went into the transom in an endeavour to assist the two officers already in there but he was pulled out. He stated that there was no smell and the third Customs Officer, who went in brought out first one officer to the opening (Transom) when he was dragged out and then brought the other officer, the man we now know to be dead to the manhole and they were both dragged through.

Enquiry was made regarding the spanner which had been used by Hornby. The Mate stated that he made enquiries from the crew and one of the greasers stated that there had been a spanner on the Engine Room Grating. This spanner was now missing. No crew member has said that he gave it to a Customs Officer.

Later this day (13th) we were informed by the Police that the Inquest would be opened at 4pm that day and, after the medical evidence, there would be an adjournment. Our officers were not required for the opening of the Inquest.

The 3rd Boro Coroner Mr. J. Roberts presided at the inquest and also present were Mrs Dunning, Solicitor of Lindsay and Sons representing the Widow; Mr Vernon Gyther, Solicitor of Messrs Hill Dickinson and Co representing the owners, The St. Raphael Shipping Co Ltd, Ramen City.

Evidence of identity was given by Hornby's brother-in-law.

Medical was given firstly by Dr John Hodder, Casualty Officer B.O.H. who stated that artificial respiration and oxygen treatment was tried after Hornby was received in Hospital but there was no response. In his opinion, Hornby had inhaled a considerable quantity of Carbon Dioxide.

Dr. G.A. St. Hill Home Office pathologist then gave a lengthy description of his examination and finally stated that, in his opinion, death was due to asphyxia, due to drowning following a collapse, ~~asphyxia~~, and, in view of the history it was likely that Hornby had suffered from a lack of oxygen before entering the water.

The 3rd Engineer of the vessel AGNES, was called, the Master acting as interpreter. The following questions were put: - (by shipowners Solicitor)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Q. How long have you served in this vessel? | A. 29th June 1955 and since. |
| Q. For what reasons was it necessary to remove the manhole cover? | A. It would never be taken off |

The Master was then called. He was questioned by shipowners Solicitor.

- | | |
|---|---|
| Q. Did anyone ask your permission to take off the manhole cover? | A. No. |
| Q. Were you on the ship when the Customs Officers came aboard yesterday? (by Coroner) | A. Master stated he went ashore at 9am and returned at 2pm. |

~~Should not be removed until the vessel is ashore~~

~~Should not be removed until the vessel is ashore~~

At this juncture the Coroner said, "The Customs people would not necessarily ask permission to take a manhole cover off. They are there to look for contraband and if they ask permission it would defeat the object of their visit."

Accepting the medical evidence, the Coroner stated that the necessary Certificates would be issued and the inquest adjourned until the following Thursday. He expressed the court's sympathy to the relatives, and this was followed by similar expressions from the owners Solicitor, I then followed and expressed the Department's condolences.

The Coroner then asked me; - "Can we clear up the point raised as to whether permission should have been obtained to inspect the tank?" I replied, "There are certain places on board a ship, such as fuel oil tanks, whether containing liquid or not, when it would be prudent to consult one of the ship's officers." In the case of the dry tank concerned in this case it may well be that the officers considered it to be innocent. In this case we are not aware as to whether Hornby did or did not tell any officer of his intention to open the manhole cover in question.

The Inquest is to be resumed on Thursday next Dec. 19th at 3pm, when I expect that our officers will be questioned on the matter of whether they informed any ship's officer of their intention to examine the transom space.

Rummage Officers all over the country are well aware that quite large seizures have been made in this type of space. For the intending smuggler, it has the advantage of being well away from the accommodation and would not normally be visited by many members of the crew. It is to be regretted that, on this occasion, we have lost an officer and, but for the fact that there were three officers working together we may have lost another.

When it was observed that Hornby was in difficulties, Thomsen did not hesitate to go to his assistance and, even when he must have been aware that he himself was passing out, he still tried to assist Hornby. Later when Thomas went into the transom and rescued Thomsen and brought Hornby to hands of the people waiting above, Thomas did not consider his own personal safety. Both officers, Thomas and Thomsen did all that was expected of them in their attempt to save the life of their colleague.

Williams A.W. Supt.

During rummage of the vessel Cooper, Hornby and myself were together in the steering compartment. After a search of the area, Hornby and myself inspected the manhole cover, which we knew to cover the entry to the transom space. With his Mole Wrench, Hornby tried one of the nuts and it answered very easily. The next nut he removed proved to be a dummy (it did not pierce the deckhead). After removing the plate Hornby knelt down on the deck and looked into the space to inspect the layout. He, Hornby, then said, "I'll go down now, Jack." It was a shallow space with a web-plate ladder. He only climbed down about half way and then swung round to have a look for ledge spaces (I presume this was his intention). Somehow he just seemed to continue in a pivot and slumped to the bottom. I shone my torch on his face. His eyes were glazed and lifeless. He was lying in water and in his slumped state, I was afraid that his head would go below the surface, so I descended the ladder, grabbed Hornby and pulled him towards me. He weighed a ton, so I shook him and called to him to cling to me. There was no response. Then I began to float away and all I can remember about that particular time was that I had to keep him to me for fear he would go into the water again. After an interminable time, I heard Greek voices as if through a tunnel but still quite loud. I felt that I was shouting to them to shut up. Then I heard Mr. Thomas's calm, modulated voice say something about a rope. I felt the rope but I was going further and further away. I tried to attach it to Hornby but my limbs seemed to lack co-ordination. At this juncture, I could feel Hornby slip from my grasp. I called to him to hold on to me but there was just no response.

The next thing I can remember is coming to on the open deck feeling dazed and frozen. I was taken to a cabin, dried and then covered with blankets. Some time later I was removed to hospital.

The period of time between the removal of the cover and Mr. Hornby's descent was fairly long. There was no pressure from within on the plate and there was no smell, not even when I entered the tank.

G.E. Thomson, A. O.

At approx 9-45am on 12th Dec. the B'hd Hge Crew, Thomas, Hornby Thomson and myself went aboard the Andros Champion at Eldston Dock.

Some twenty mins later Hornby, Thomson and I commenced the rummage of the steering gear compartment whilst the Bdg Officers completed their duties. Mr. Hornby decided to remove the cover of the transom space abaft the steering gear but he found that his spanner was not big enough and he went to get a bigger one from the engine room. Meanwhile I commenced removing another tank top. When Mr. Hornby returned, Thomson and I assisted him to remove the nuts securing the cover because, although most were reasonably easy, about six were very tight.

The cover, removed, Hornby shone his torch into the space which had about 1 1/2 - 2 ft of dirty looking water in it. There was no smell. A few minutes Hornby descended the out-out footholds in the transom space and had a quick look round. He seemed to be coming out when his head turned to one side and he fell down until he was sitting in the water with his back to the skin of the ship and his head clear of the water. As far as I could tell Hornby's head did not contact the water at that time. Thomson asked Hornby if he was alright and went to his assistance. I asked Thomson if he could manage. He said he could but I thought his voice sounded peculiar. I went for help immediately and returned with Thomas FO, the Boarding crew and several members of the ship's crew. Mr. Hornby's head was under the water and Thomson was trying to raise him.

While Thomas was tying a rope round himself, some other person climbed into the space but had to come out. Thomas then went and ~~tried~~ ^{managed} to lift ~~Thomson~~ Thomson, who was very dazed, until he could be pulled out. Thomas remained in the tank until he had secured a rope to Hornby's arm. Only we were in a position to haul Hornby out did Thomas allow himself to be helped clear.

Mr. Kent FO applied artificial respiration until an ambulance arrived and he accompanied Hornby and Thomas to B'hd Gen. Hoptl. I accompanied Thomson in the second ambulance.

I would like to record that, in my opinion Thomas and Thomson are extremely brave men.

T. Cooper APO

With Curtis APO I was dealing with the Crew's Pte Stores in the saloon of the vessel. At about 11.30am Cooper rushed in and informed Thomas FO that Hornby and Thomson were in difficulties in the after tank. Together we rushed aft and, by the light of torches, I could see Thomson and Hornby some seven or eight feet below the deck level of the steering compartment. Entrance to the tank was down through a manhole in the deck. On the way to steering compartment I found some rope which I took with me. Various members of the ship's crew arrived at this time and one other person went down into the tank to assist but was forced out again. I went in then but had to come out some very short while later. My next recollection was holding the torch and seeing Thomson trying to pass a rope round Hornby. After some two or three minutes it was apparent that Thomson was in difficulties. Thomas, with a rope round him, went down into the tank and assisted Thomson in getting Thomson out from below whilst we pulled him out from above. Thomson was then taken up top. Thomas then endeavoured to pass a rope round Hornby. We were then able to pull out Thomas who somehow managed to hold on to Hornby who was pulled out immediately after Thomas.

Hornby was then laid face down on the deck alongside the manhole and I applied artificial respiration until the ambulance men arrived. Thomas and myself accompanied Hornby to B'hd Gen. Hoptl in the ambulance.

In my opinion, the actions of Thomson and Thomas are to be highly commended. They acted in an exemplary manner.

L.H.F. Kent. FO.

At about 11.30am on Thursday, Dec. 12th, I was in the main saloon of the vessel, talking to Mr. Kent FO who was dealing with the Lists G.142. At that time, Cooper who was a member of my rummage crew, came running into the saloon shouting, "Quick- Jock and Gill have fallen into a tank in the steering gear." I ran to the steering gear accompanied by the other officers and various members of the crew. In the steering compartment I saw an open manhole cover. I called out for a rope and then, looking down the space, I saw Thomson supporting Hornby so that his head was above the water that lay in the space. He called out, "Get Gil-Get Gil" referring to Hornby who was known to us as Gil. A civilian in a white coat went into the space and came up almost immediately, saying the space was full of gas. Within a very short space of time a rope was passed down to Thomson who was unable to secure Hornby who was unconscious. It appeared to me that Thomson was dazed by gas and incapable of tying a rope. I tied the rope round myself and entered the compartment supported from above by the other persons. I passed Thomson up to the surface. I held Hornby but found myself unable to tie a rope round him. He managed to hold his arm and wrapped my legs round it. I was drawn to the top of the tank where Hornby was lifted out with me. Kent and myself applied artificial respiration until the arrival of the ambulance. Kent and I accompanied Hornby to B'hd Gen Hoptl. During the journey artificial respiration was applied by the medical attendant. Everything possible was done. On arrival at the hoptl the medical staff took over.

CONTD

I cannot commend too highly the courage of Thomson who went immediately to the aid of Hornby, without regard to his personal safety.

J.R. Thomas PO

Report of Constable 114D Davies. 12.12.57.

I beg to report that, at 11.30am Thursday 12th Dec, I was on duty at Bidston Dock auxiliary stn, when I received a message from Vittoria Dk Stn that an ambulance had gone to the vessel Andros Champion berthed at Bidston Dock. I immediately went to the ship, arriving at the same time as the ambulance.

I went on board the ship and was told that an accident had occurred in the aft peak. When I got there I saw some members of the crew supporting a man whom I later found to be a Customs Officer, Thomson. He was in a shocked condition and his clothing wet and I was told that he had fallen down a bilge tank in the aft peak.

He was then taken to cabin amidships by the crew and given dry clothing. I then went down to the aft peak and found that another member of the Customs Rummage Crew had been taken from the bilge tank, and artificial respiration was being applied. I was told his name was Gil. Hornby. Constable 259D Stewart arrived on the ship and together we gave assistance to get him on deck and he was removed to the B.G.H. by ambulance.

Customs Officer Thomson was also conveyed to hospital.

I then examined the tank where the accident took place and found that it was covered by a manhole cover 23"x15" beneath which is a space (sketch) at the bottom of which is eddy water. The space is wide at the top and tapers with the plates of the ship to a narrow distance at the bottom.

Sgt 28D Decker then came aboard and obtained the statement on form 46 attached from Vassilev Crichton, 34 yrs, who assisted in the rescue attempts.

I obtained a further statement from Spyros Dimitriou.

D. Davies, Constable (114D)

Report of Sgt 28D Decker.

I beg to report that, at 12.10pm 12th inst. I boarded the Andros Champion.

The injured persons had been removed to the B.G.H.

I then visited the steering gear compartment at the after end of the vessel. I there saw that a manhole cover on the deck had been unbolted. It was originally secured by twentyfour nuts and bolts. I removed the cover which gave access to a space known as the void or after peak or transom space (sketch). There was access to this space by climbing down foot and handholds in the frame web below the manhole cover.

The space was filled with water to a depth of approx. 2'6". There was no smell. I took a sample of this water which I have since handed to Dr. St. Hill, pathologist.

This space is so small and irregularly shaped that serves no useful purpose with regard to storage.

I made enquiries aboard the vessel but could find no member of the crew who had ever seen it opened.

The 3rd Eng. Theoderen Augerines who was the longest serving member of the crew, having served since July, 1957, stated that far as he was aware, the compartment had never been opened or inspected. See attached Form 46 marked G.

I then saw Kent PO, who assisted at the rescue. He made a statement marked B.

The police photographers were contacted and photographs taken of the scene of the accident.

I then made enquiries at the B.G.H. and learned that three Customs men had been conveyed to the Hospital and received by Dr. Hosker. They were Hornby, Thomson and Thomas (addresses given in report). Hornby died on admission and Thomson and Thomas, after receiving treatment, were allowed to return home. I later visited them and obtained statements mkd E & F.

T. Cooper was seen by me on 13th inst. He is a Customs Officer and made a statement on Form 46 mkd G.

The deceased is a married man. His relatives were informed by the C&I Dept. Enquiries revealed that the wife had left her home in Greasby to stay with relatives in Liverpool. Up to date I have been unable to make contact. The Coroners officer is continuing enquiries in this respect.

At 10am 13th inst., I handed the sample of water taken from the void to Dr. St. Hill, Pathologist who is carrying out a P.M. examination.

J.A. Decker Sgt 28D

Statement of L.H.F. Kent 12.12.57

I, Lionel Kent, residing at 107, Wellington Rd., New Brighton, state as follows:

I am a Preventive Officer in H.M. Customs, Tower Rd., Birkenhead.

At about 11.30am on Thursday 12.12.57, I was in the saloon of the Andros Champion, dealing with the crew, when I was informed by Mr. Cooper, also of the Customs, that two other Customs Officers were in difficulties in the afterpeak tank. I at once went aft down into the steering room and saw, by the light of a torch, that there were two officers in the tank which contained water and oil.

With assistance, I tried to get a rope round them. One of them tried to tie the rope round the other but did not succeed.

One of the Officers & Thomson was eventually dragged out. Mr. Thomas, in charge of the Bunnage Crew, then went down with a rope around him and both Mr. Thomas and the deceased were hauled out.

I placed the deceased on his stomach and applied artificial respiration until the arrival of the ambulance. I continued the treatment assisted by an ambulance man until we reached the hospital.

L.H.F. Kent.

Statement of G.H. Thomson 12.12.57

I, George Elrick Thomson, 26 yrs, residing at 11, Gamfield Rd., Greasy, state as follows:-

I am an Assistant Preventive Officer in H.M. Customs, Birkenhead.

On Thursday 12.12.57, I was one of the Bunnage Crew which went on board The Andros Champion at Eldon Dock. The other two were the deceased and Terence Cooper. We had searched the other parts of the ship and, on going down into the after steering room, Cooper went over to a manhole cover near to the main bulkhead, whilst the deceased and myself went to another manhole cover near to rudder post housing. There were several dummy bolts in the cover. The first bolt tried was not tight. Between us, we undid the bolts and raised the cover. As is the practice, the cover was left open and the deceased knelt on the deck and had a look in as this the normal routine. I cannot say how long it was before the deceased decided to go down into the transom space. He went down feet first. He had a torch in one hand and, with the other hand, he held on to the deck. As he went down he was turning round. I then heard a splash and went to the lip of the hole, looked down and saw that the deceased was lying spreadeagled on his back in the water. There was a glassy stare in his eyes. I immediately went down by using the footholds in the web plating. I grabbed hold of him and pulled him towards me. At this time I seemed to have less control of my limbs and appeared to be floating away. I think I called for a rope and I think I was trying to do something with it. I still tried to hold on to the deceased then everything went black and, when I came to, I was lying on the upper deck.

When the manhole was lifted I did not notice any smell.

G.H. Thomson.

Statement of J.R. Thomas 12.12.57

I, John Rees Thomas, 42 yrs, residing at 73, Prenton Road West, Bhd., state as follows:-

I am a Preventive Officer in H.M. Customs. On Thursday 12.12.57, I was in charge of the Bunnage Crew on board the Andros Champion berthed at Eldon Dock. The duty of this crew is to search the ship for uncustoms goods. They were the deceased, Gilbert Herby, George Elrick Thomson, and Terence Cooper all Assistant Prev. Officers. They work at will.

About 11.30am I was in the saloon with Mr. L. Kent PO attending to the crew, when I was informed by Mr. Cooper that the other two officers had fallen into a tank. I immediately with Mr. Cooper and some members of the crew went down to the after steering compartment and saw that a manhole cover had been removed. On looking down, I saw Thomson supporting the deceased's head above water. I called for a rope and, in the meantime, a civilian climbed down a small ladder but returned to the top, saying it was full of gas.

The rope arrived within a few seconds. I lowered one end to Thomson and told him to tie it round the deceased. He appeared to be too overcome by gas to pass the rope round the deceased. I tied the rope around myself and went down into the tank. I got Thomson to the ladder, where he was pulled out by some of the crew. I found myself unable to tie the rope around the deceased but managed to draw his body to the ladder.

R.

CONF

Contd.

I, wrapped my legs around him and we were both hauled out. Mr. Kent and myself carried out artificial respiration until the arrival of the ambulance. I accompanied the deceased to the hospital in company with Mr. Kent.

There is no set drill in the case where a manhole cover is removed. The practice is for the tank to be left open a short while before anyone enters, and then two must be present.

J. B. Thomas.

Statement of T. Cooper, 12.12.57.

I, Terence Cooper, 23 yrs, residing at 31, Charlton Rd., Emd state as follows:-

I am an Asst. Prev. Officer in H.M. Customs at Emd.

On Thursday, 12.12.57., I was a member of the Ramage Crew which consisted of the deceased and Thomson. We boarded the Andros Champion and had searched other parts of the ship before going down into the steering gear room.

The deceased and Thomson commenced to remove a manhole cover whilst I was removing another one. They were having difficulty removing some of the bolt nuts. I went over to help them. When the cover had been removed, the deceased had a look down and, after a few minutes, went down by putting his feet in the footholds cut in the web plating. He shone his torch round and I thought he was then going to come up. He turned slightly, his feet came out of the footholds and he fell backwards into the water. As far as I could tell, his head did not go under the water.

The deceased was moaning slightly and Mr. Thomson went down to get him out. Mr. Thomson appeared to go queer. I asked him if he was alright and he said he was but, from the sound of his voice, I could tell all was not well.

I then ran for Mr. Thomas the "crew" boss. When we returned a civilian went down but had to come out. Mr. Thomas then put a rope round his waist and went down and first pulled out Mr. Thomson, then put a rope round the deceased and the body was hauled out. When the cover was removed there was no smell.

T. Cooper.

Report of Inquest resumed on 19th December, 1957 at 3pm. (Report by Mr. Williams to Ed)

The Coroner was Mr. Joseph Roberts.

PRESENT.

Mr. Dunning.

Solicitor for Messrs Lindsay & Sons, 81, Dale St., Liverpool, representing the widow.

Mr. V. Gwyther

Solicitor, of Messrs Hill Dickinson & Co. representing the owners now amended to read :-
St. Raphaelia N.Y. S.A. Boston City

Mr. G. Krikorian

Representing the Ship Crew.

At the outset Mr. Krikorian addressed the Coroner and read Sections 19 and 20 of the Customs and Excise Act, 1952

Mr. Thomson APO was then called and the Coroner took him through his statement to the police on the day of the accident.

Questions and answers follow.

Coroner

When Mr. Berry collapsed and fell into the water, what did you do after that?

Thomson

I went down into the space and Mr. Cooper went for help.

Coroner.

Did you get right down?

Thomson.

I got down to him. I was scared he would go into the water. I pulled him towards me and held on to him. The next thing I definitely remember was Greek voices. I then heard Mr. Thomas's voice and heard rope mentioned. I saw the rope and took hold of it and attempted to tie it around Berry. At this juncture, I became totally incapable of physical co-ordination. I knew what I wanted to do but my hands just wouldn't let me.

Coroner

How long were you in the space before you were knocked out?

Thomson

I really do not know. Perhaps the fact that there was a crisis kept me going.

Coroner Did you smell anything ?
Thomson No sir.

Mr. Dunning
Mr. Dunning then said that there were no questions he wished to ask, but, on behalf of Mr. Hornby's widow, he wished to express her very best thanks for the gallant effort Mr. Thomson made to rescue the deceased.

The Coroner said that the court appreciated the effort made and no doubt Mr. Krikorian will convey this to the Commissioners.

Krikorian How was the cover taken off ? Were any Belts loose ?
Thomson We released belts, first one here and one there. There was no pressure. The first nuts that Mr. Hornby tried were easy.

Coroner When you took the cover off the nuts were not very tight ?
Thomson The last four or six were tight.

The Home Office Pathologist, Dr. C.A. St Hill was then called and asked:-

Coroner When we met last week, the question arose as to how the carbon dioxide came to be present in this space.

St. Hill Following enquiries, the probable answer is that, when iron rusts, from the effect of sea water, it would absorb every vestige of oxygen in an enclosed space.

Coroner This was a confined space, so, as you reduce the oxygen, you leave carbon dioxide ?

St. Hill Yes, Sir. The pressure would not be changed.

Dunning Would this account for the symptoms described by the last witness ?

St. Hill More likely that the symptoms were caused by lack of oxygen rather than by carbon dioxide poisoning.

Mr. Thomas was then called and the Coroner took him through his statement made to the police. He was questioned as follows :-

Coroner You saw that Mr. Hornby and Mr. Thomson were in the space. What happened after that ?

Thomas I called for a rope and called to the people to shut up.

Coroner I rather gather that the crew were making a lot of noise ?

Thomas Yes sir. I spoke to Thomson and asked him to pass the rope around Hornby.

Coroner Did you get a reply from him ?

Thomas Yes. Thomson appeared to be unable to do anything with it. I then asked for another rope. When I got it, I fastened it around myself and went down. I brought Thomson to the ladder.

Coroner How was the deceased brought up ?

Thomas I can hardly remember the details. I took hold of Hornby's arm and was dragged up.

The Coroner then said. "I am quite sure the Commissioners will be informed of your action in this matter."

Mr. Krikorian said, "The Commissioners already knew of the courage shown by the present witness and Mr. Thomson and your comments will be conveyed to them."

Krikorian Have you any experience of these transom spaces ?

Thomas Yes sir, very many of them.

Krikorian Are you aware that, in the Port of Liverpool, seizures have been made in these spaces ?

Thomas Yes sir.

Coroner Can I take it, Mr. Thomas, that you consider you would be failing in your duty if you did not look in such spaces and everywhere in the search for contraband ?

Thomas Yes sir.

Mr. Crichton was then called and taken through his statement to the police. He was questioned as follows:-

Coroner When you got into the space, what happened ?

Crichton As soon as I got in, I was not exactly knocked out and then I managed to get out. I then went to collect a gas-mask from amidships.

Coroner Did you find a gas-mask ?

Crichton No sir.

Mr. Dindrieux was then called and confirmed the statement he had made to the police. Mr

Sergeant Becker was then taken through his report and was questioned:-

Coroner

If anyone wanted to hide something from the Customs, would this be a good place?

Deeks

Yes sir. It would be an ideal place.

No further witness were called and the Coroner gave his findings thus:-

"In this case, I find that death was caused by asphyxia due to drowning following a collapse caused by innesia as a result of an accident in the course of his official duties."

The Coroner then said it was a tragic case for his family that the deceased met his death in this manner and again expressed appreciation of the efforts of Messrs Thomas, Thomas and Gribban.

The Inquest closed at 4-10pm.

J.P. Williams.

APPENDIX

Details of Recent Seizures in Transom Spaces.

2.10.57.	ss Hubert	1075 Cigs 1/2 lb Tobacco
20.11.57.	mv Gribban	1275 Cigs 1/2 lb Tobacco

VOID

Airspace bounded by shell plating aloft level of steering gear house and bulkhead at forward end. Overall length is 11ft approx. Widest point, at forward bulkhead, is 13 ft approx., tapering aft with the shell of the vessel to nil at after end. Tapering down from the steering house deck to nil at profile line.

The "Void" is spread over five frame spaces, each frame stiffened with plating webs in which are lightening holes giving access between frame spaces. There are handholes cut in the web plating below the manhole. The lower level of the Void was filled with water to a depth of about two feet.

