

COMPLEMENT of the M.V.ABOSSO

According to the Agreement and List of the Crew (19th February, 1942):
No. of Seaman and Apprentices for which accomodation is certified: 182
The crew shall be deemed complete with 60 hands all told, of whom no less than 10 shall be sailors.

Exactly this number is on board according to:
LIST C&D (Casualties and Discharges)
LIST OF THE CREW,
AND OTHER PARTICULARS OF A
FOREIGN GOING or HOME TRADE SHIP

Of those 182 one was an apprentice
Among the crew were 20 Gunners, 7 from the Royal Navy and 13 Royal Artillery Maritime regiment.

All 182 names of the members of crew are in the Debt of Honour Register of the Connonweath War Graves Commission (C.W.G.C.).

182	Total Crew
168	Missing, presumed drowned
14	Saved

According to a report of 25th November, 1942:
REPORT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH THE QUARTERMASTER, MR. A. MAY

“The Confidential books went down with the ship. The crew including 13 Army and 7 Naval Gunners was 203, we also had on board 190 passengers, and of this total 1 R.A.M.C. Captain was injured and 362, including all the Gunners, are missing.”

The difference of 21 crew can only be partly explained, assuming that Q.M. A May included the 18 men Permanent Military Staff. They are mentioned as passengers in a document:

CONFIDENTIAL MESSAGE From Navy Charge Capetown, 10th November 1942.

This Confidential Message from the Navy Charge Capetown is the only source available on the passengers on board the Abosso.

The document lists 8 different categories of passengers:

1. Royal Navy, total 4, all named
2. R.A.F, total 40, not named
3. Military Permanent Staff of ship, total 18, not named
4. Internees, total 44, all named
5. Royal Netherlands Navy, total 33, all named
6. Netherlands conscripts, total 51, not named
7. D.B.S, total 3, all named
8. Civilians, total 17, all named

According to this document the total number of passengers was 210,

20 more than mentioned in the Report of Q.M. A. May.

A LIST OF SURVIVORS, with the signature of 31 survivors, made up shortly after their rescue, names 17 survivors among the passengers.

210	Total Passengers
193	Missing, presumed drowned
17	Saved

Based on these numbers the total complement of the Abosso was:

392	Complement
361	Missing, presumed drowned
31	Saved

These numbers are close to those given in the Q.M. A. May report:

393	Complement
362	Missing, presumed drowned
31	Saved

These numbers are different from the numbers given by J. Cowden in his "Elder Dempster Fleet History", p. 222:

182 Crew
189 Passengers
371 Total complement
31 Saved
340 Missing, presumed drowned

According to a letter received from Mr. Cowden (Aug. 2006) his number for the passengers does not include:

17 Military Permanent Staff (he gives 1)
17 Civilians

However, included is a group not mentioned in other sources:

15 Canadians (names not given)

Adding 34 and taking off 15 from the number given by him gives 208 passengers.

Details on the document CONFIDENTIAL MESSAGE From Navy Charge Capetown, 10th November 1942.

Lost And Saved:

1. Royal Navy, total 4; 3 survivors
2. R.A.F, total 40; 4 survivors
3. Military Permanent Staff of ships, total 18; 1 survivor
4. Internees, total 44; 1 survivor; 43 found in Australian records.

5. Royal Netherlands Navy, total 33; 5 survivors
6. Netherlands conscripts, total 51; 50 found
7. D.B.S, total 3; 2 found
8. Civilians, total 17; 3 survivors; 4 not found

Notes:

2. All 40 RAF men are accounted for, they are in the registers of the C.W.G.C.
3. On the Brookwood Memorial 18 men are listed, who according to the C.W.G.C. registers died on 29-10-1942, 12 with (in the hard copy) the addition "at sea", 2 with the addition "in Abosso", two others without any addition are known to have died on the Abosso. Since there was one survivor of this group there appears to be one name too many on the memorial. Most likely one of the two remaining names without the addition "at sea" belongs to a person who died elsewhere.
4. The 44 names of the Internees are listed. From Australian sources we know that only 43 persons were sent. One name on the list has no further details and has not been found elsewhere.
6. In the registers of the Dutch War Graves Commission only 50 names are given. Also on a memorial in Pretoria only 50 names are found.
7. The name of 1 Distressed British Sailor is not in the C.W.G.C registers
8. The names of 4 civilians, 2 probably British and 2 probably Dutch are not in the C.W.G.C. or in the Dutch Registers.

In conclusion:

No further information on 7 passengers.

The name of 1 of the 18 P.M.S. is not certain.

For one crew member the C.W.G.C. gives the wrong date, for one passenger the spelling of the name is different from the one given in the 'Message'.