

# Her Name Was “Trevesa”

## Part One

Extract from “Disasters at sea. 1824 – 1962”

Lloyds’ Registry of Shipping, 1969

### Trevesa

*Hain Steamship Co.; 1909; **Flensburg**; 5,004 tons; 401 x 52-5x28-2; 2,400 i.h.p.; 11-5 knots; triple-expansion engines.*

The steamship *Trevesa*, Capt. C. Foster, had been built at Flensburg as the *Imkenturm*, and was taken over from Germany at the close of the First World War. On June 4th, 1923, when eleven days out from Fremantle, Australia, loaded with a cargo of zinc concentrates for Antwerp she foundered in a heavy S.S.W. gale.

The first news of her plight came in wireless messages picked up by the **s.s. *Tregenna***, another Hain steamship, 350 miles E., and the **s.s. *Trevean***, also of the Hain Line, 272 miles S. Both steamships proceeded to the spot given in the messages as lat, 28 45' S., long. 85 42' E. Before they reached the area the *Trevesa* had foundered and all that could be ascertained regarding her fate was an empty boat, the discovery of which two days later gave reason to believe that she had been lost with all hands.

Meanwhile the crew of the *Trevesa* had abandoned ship at the orders of Capt, Foster. The crew numbered 43 all told, of whom the captain and 16 crew went into one boat and the first officer and 25 others in the second boat. Despite the violence of the gale the boats managed to remain together until the 10th, when it was decided that the captain's boat, which was less deeply loaded and could proceed faster, should make for the nearest land and send on assistance to the first officer's boat

The spot where the *Trevesa* had foundered was roughly 1,728 miles from Mauritius. Before parting the officers decided to make for the island of Rodriguez, which was somewhat nearer, being 344 miles W. of Mauritius. On June 26th, after a voyage of twenty-two days in an open boat, Capt. Foster sighted Rodriguez. Of those who left the *Trevesa* on the 4th two had died on the voyage,

The remainder, who had subsisted on a ration of a third of a cigarette tin of water and one biscuit per day, and a tablespoonful of condensed milk twice a day, although very weak from their privations managed to recover.

The second boat under Mr. J. C. Stewart Smith, performed an equally brilliant feat of navigation and arrived at Mauritius on the 29th. Her voyage had, however, been accompanied by greater tragedy, for nine of the occupants had either died or been drowned. Of this number several Indian members of the crew, unable to endure the agonies of thirst, had given way to drinking sea water, as a result of which they died. The second engineer, Mr. David Mordecai, fell overboard in rough weather and was drowned. The ship's cook died shortly after reaching the island.

The Board of Trade made presentations to the captain and officers. The Hain Steamship Co, presented pieces of plate to Capt. Foster, Mr. Stewart Smith and Mr. N. V. Robson, chief engineer. Lloyd's awarded the Silver Medal for saving life at sea to the captain and first officer.

### **Mauritius "*Trevesa Day*" now "The Seafarers Day"**

**On 3 June 1923, the Hain Line steamer "*Trevesa*", sank very quickly in the Indian Ocean during a violent storm. The 44-crew members scrambled into two lifeboats, some with very little clothes on, and the Captain, Cecil Foster, decided to endeavor to make for Mauritius. With no compass and only enough water for 7 pints per man, 550 biscuits and two cases of condensed milk, they were immediately put on strict rations.**

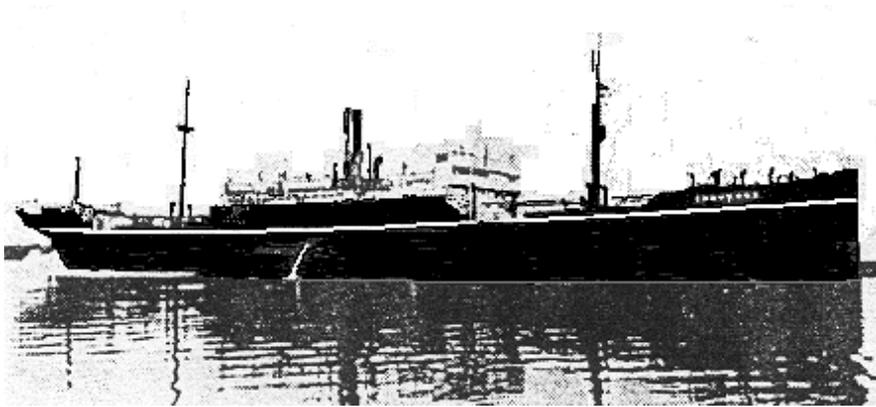
**With no wind the men had to row, which aggravated not only their swollen hands and feet but also their bodies, which were suffering from extensive salt-water boils. It was only by perfect discipline and obedience to the Captain's orders that on the 23rd day one boat landed on the island of Rodriguez and three days later the second boat landed at Bel-Ombre, Mauritius and a total of 34 men survived.**

**On the second boat the engineer had fallen overboard during rough weather and another crewman died two hours before land was sighted. The survivors in this boat were so exhausted they had to be carried ashore, and the chief cook died soon after arrival. In Lelant church near the font is a stained glass window of St Christopher dedicated to the memory of Harry Sparks, who perished on 23rd June, 1923, after the wreck of the S.S. *Trevesa* in the Indian Ocean.**

**A monument to the crew of "*Trevesa*" was erected on Bel-Ombre and on the anniversary of their landing on Mauritius "*Trevesa Day*" was celebrated which is now become "The Seafarers Day"**

Her Name Was "Trevessa".

Sunk on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1923 Indian Ocean



**S.S. TREVESSA – 1923**

Whilst on voyage from port Pirie with a cargo of zinc concentrates, the S.S. Trevessa of the Hain Steamship Company sprang a leak and floundered half way between the west coast of Australia and Mauritius. An S.O.S was sent out before the crew abandoned ship. The crew of forty four was cast adrift in two lifeboats with the nearest land over 1300 miles away. In lifeboat No. 1 there was twenty crew, and in lifeboat No. 3 twenty four crew. They had little provisions, mainly biscuits, condensed milk and a small supply of water. After twenty four days lifeboat No. 1 landed at Rodriguez Island, and later lifeboat No. 2 landed at Mauritius over 340 miles away. Source the St. Ives Times and Echo , July 5<sup>th</sup> 1996.

In 1923, when the merchant freighter SS *Trevessa* sank, its resourceful seamen crossed 1,700 miles of the Indian Ocean in two standard 26-foot British "Board of Trade" lifeboats and arrived safely on Rodrigues Island, northwest of Mauritius. We hope to follow up this report as more information is found. In particular we attempt to find the story of one of the younger members of the crew, it has been reported to us that he rescued the Red Ensign from the ship and clutched it to his chest until rescued. The ensign we are told remains to this day at or near the alter of St. Pauls Church, in Barry, South Wales, the youngsters home town.

This and any more will be recorded in part two, apparently a museum in Mauritius displays an interesting newspaper cutting of Charles Seabourne, who with survivors from the ship *Trevessa*, landed at Bel Ombre in 1923 after spending 25 days at sea. On display are the ship's biscuits, a razor and the lid of a cigarette tin which they used to measure water rations. In a separate showcase is a Roll of Honour dedicated to Mauritians who died in World War II.

# News from Mauritius

*Capt Yves Goilot* (1962) in his capacity of Secretary to the Merchant Navy Club of Port Louis, Mauritius had the honour a while ago of scattering the ashes of his friend Charles Seaborne who one of the survivors and a cadet of the s.s. "*Trevessa*" and who revisited the island each year on the anniversary of his landing by lifeboat in order to lay a wreath on his friend Alchin's grave .

## **The story of the survivors of the shipwreck of the S.S. *Trevessa*.**

**On June 3, 1923**, the *Trevessa* sank in the middle of the southern Indian Ocean, having left Fremantle, Australia for Britain and Europe. Two boats were launched leaving the crew of forty-four hoping for assistance. They eventually set a course for Rodriguez Island. One boat made it after twenty-six days. The other boat however experienced a tragic passage. Water ran short and despite repeated warnings, four Indian members of the crew drank seawater and died. The second engineer fell overboard during rough weather and another crewman died two hours before land was sighted. This boat missed Rodriguez Island and sighted Mauritius on 28 June. The survivors were so exhausted by this time they had to be carried ashore, and the chief cook died soon after arrival. An interesting tale!

A monument to the crew of "*Trevessa*" was erected on Bel-Ombre and on the anniversary of their landing on Mauritius "*Trevessa Day*" was celebrated which is now become "The Seafarers Day" so that the islanders can ponder the fact that they are indebted to seafarers of many nations.

**Re: The first news of the plight of *Trevessa*, came in a wireless messages picked up by the S.S. *Tregenna*, another Hain steamship. There were FIVE *Tregenna*'s, the mention in the reports is that of *Tregenna 4* and an important piece of *Tregenna* history in our "*Trevessa*" remembrance and memorial.**

**TREGENNA(4) 1919-1940 ex-WAR BULLDOG 17/09/1940-War loss. Torpedoed/sunk NW of Rockall on voyage from Philadelphia to Newport in HX71 with steel, thirty three crew lost. 17/09/1940**

**We remember Captain C. Foster and his crew of the S. S. *Trevessa*, LEST WE FORGET.**

**Any further assistance with research welcomed, please contact Keith at:  
[hernamewas.ss@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:hernamewas.ss@tiscali.co.uk)**