

DAILY EXPRESS

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FLOATING INFERNO

The Navy to rescue in sea of blazing oil

Express Staff Reporters

THE British frigate Ulster, after a day of rescue operations, was sailing to Plymouth last night with 22 survivors of two ships that collided in fog and caught fire off Ushant.

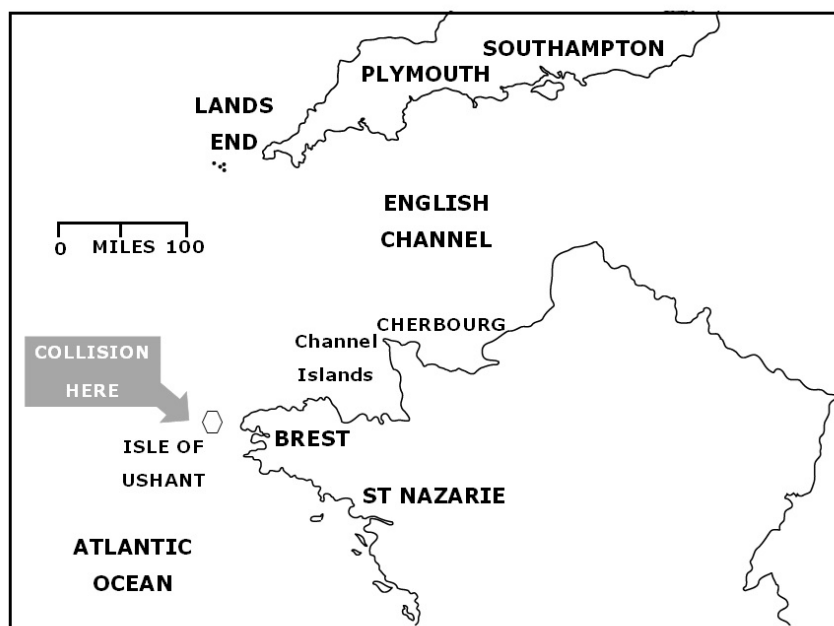
Eight men were killed and 20 injured as the crews dived overboard into heavy seas flecked with blazing oil.

Captain Jurgen Harz, master of 1,300-ton German freighter Eric Reckmann, another rescue ship, said on the radiophone last night:

"This morning about 3.30 I heard a terrific crash. In the darkness and fog we saw a dull light about 200 yards away and headed towards it.

"When we got closer we could see it was a tanker burning."

This was the 10,500-ton American ship Stony Point.



The heat

"Flames were shooting all over," said Captain Harz. "Men were jumping overboard into the oily water.

"Then we saw a Greek ship also burning."

This was the 9,300-ton freighter Ioannis, built only five months.

"But," said Captain Harz. "it was impossible to get near them because of the flames. It was terribly hot despite the damp fog"

"We launched lifeboats and my men began pulling the sailors out of the sea. One man died just as we got him aboard."

The Ioannis had a large hole in her and looked like going down fast.

"We got her captain on board. He was very worried about his men. He was almost exhausted but he still helped direct rescue."

The survivors

Lieutenant Commander Card signalled: "Fire on Ioannis almost under control and awaits towing. I have three survivors from this ship.

"French frigate Chevreuil standing by to collect dead from Ioannis."

The Ulster landed the seriously injured at Brest, then turned for Plymouth.

Last night the Ioannis, which had a crew of 37 Greeks, and Italians, was moving slowly towards Brest on her own.

The Stony Point, which carried a crew of 41, was still blazing. The Dutch tug Thames was trying to get a tow-line aboard.