

ACTIVITY: Sea disaster

CASE: GSAF 1926.10.23.a

DATE: Saturday October 23, 1926

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Atlantic Ocean 18 miles southwest of Bermuda.

NAMES: Unknown

DESCRIPTION: Two crew from *HMS Valerian*

BACKGROUND

WEATHER: The winds were 95 mph, followed by a dead calm as the eye of the hurricane passed over the sloop, then the second curve of the hurricane struck the sloop and she went over.

NARRATIVE: The British Naval ship *HMS Valerian* was enroute to Bermuda when she foundered in heavy seas during a hurricane. Eighty of the crew of the *Valerian* were aboard rafts when the vessel capsized. Survivors reported that two people were pulled off by sharks and the others were swept into the sea until only 19 remained. They were rescued 24 hours later when the *HMS Capetown* reached the scene. In all, 84 of the *Valerian's* crew perished.

INJURY: Fatal

SPECIES: Not identified

SOURCES: The Glasgow Herald, October 26, 1926, page 10
New York Herald Tribune, October 29, 1926



The 1250-ton Flower Class Sloop, HMS Valerian, was built under the Emergency War Programme and launched in 1916. This Class was specifically built as Minesweepers and were constructed with triple spaced hulls at the bow to give added protection when mine hunting. Those that survived the War served as convoy protection sloops until the late 1920s.



Whaler of HMS Capetown rescuing survivors of HMS Valerian

LOSS OF H.M.S. VALERIAN

Mr AMMON (Camberwell, N.—Soc.) asked the First Lord of the Admiralty whether he was able to make a statement concerning the loss of H.M.S. Valerian.

Mr DAVIDSON (Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty)—It is with the deepest regret, which I am sure the whole House shares, that I make the following statement. H.M.S. Valerian was on her way to Bermuda from Nassau, Bahamas, where she had been employed taking the Governor of the Bahamas to visit the outlying islands, which had suffered much damage from the recent hurricane. The Valerian was close to Bermuda when the hurricane commenced about 7.30 a.m. on Friday, October 22, and she reported at 8.30 a.m. to the Commander-in-Chief, North America and West Indies, that she was hove-to five miles south of Gibbe Hill, which is the southern extremity of Hamilton Island. No further reports were received from her, and she did not answer her wireless call. The Commander-in-Chief thereupon ordered H.M.S. Curlew (cruiser), which was also approaching Bermuda from the same direction as the Valerian, to search for her, and at dawn on Saturday, October 23, the cruiser Cape Town was also sent out from Bermuda to search. The Cape Town reported having picked up 19 survivors, including the commanding officer and the navigating officer, who stated that the Valerian sank at 1 p.m. on Friday, the 22nd. The search by the Curlew and Cape Town was continued till nightfall on October 23, when they returned to Bermuda. The condition of the survivors is reported as satisfactory. The Commander-in-Chief reports that the hurricane was of great violence, reaching a force of 136 miles per hour by 2 p.m. on the 22nd.