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## Harpa and Pinna

### ***Singapore Whirlwind***

December saw the Japanese pour over South-Eastern Asia and the islands of the Pacific. In spectacular manner they swept through Hong Kong, the Philippines, British North Borneo and Malaya. With the enemy established in airfields within striking distance of the Straits, shipping was subject to repeated attack. The small tanker motor vessel *Harpa* (Capt C. A. Howarth) suffered damages on the 22 December at Port Swettenham and lost on 27 January in the Singapore Straits en route to Batavia with a full cargo of aviation spirits. The vessel took fire from stem to stern, and of the ship's company forty one British and Chinese twenty nine were lost. A few days later on 3 February, another Anglo Saxon vessel *SS Pinna* (Capt W. A. Thomas) was attacked by a Japanese formation of high level bombers. One bomb made a direct hit on the fo'sle-head killing twenty Chinese, and fire broke out immediately. Courageous efforts by the officers succeeded in getting this blaze under control, but on the following day the tanker was bombed again and had to be abandoned. A number of survivors from the *Harpa* and the *Pinna*, together with members of the Shell marine staff, voluntarily crewed small craft and succeeded in evacuating many Service men and civilians from Singapore amid the confusion and dangers just before the surrender.

*Extract from Tanker Fleet Stanton Hope 1948*