

In less than two hours after the ship sustained its casualty, and amid air raid alarms, the loading of British evacuees, women and children, began. Upon completion of loading, in the early evening the vessel stole out to sea to bury her dead, and head for Colombo, Ceylon, for temporary repairs and to discharge passengers. While en route the wife of a British pilot gave birth to a son, to whom she gave the middle name "WAKEFIELD." Unable to obtain repairs at Colombo the vessel then sailed for Bombay, India, where temporary repairs were made. Upon completion of the work the transport sailed for New York, via Capetown, South Africa, with 336 American evacuees aboard. She docked in Brooklyn on March 23, 1942. After discharging her passengers she sailed for Philadelphia Navy Yard.

After complete repairs had been made at the Philadelphia Navy Yard the vessel, under a new Commanding Officer, Commander Harold G. Bradbury, U.S.C.G., headed for Wellington, New Zealand, loaded with United States Marines under the command of Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift. Having safely fulfilled her mission she returned to New York, July 11, 1942, with a number of passengers.

The ship's next crossing was to be marred by disaster. Early in August she left New York and sailed via Halifax, as part of a convoy, which landed successfully, in the British Isles, the largest number of troops ever to be transported across the Atlantic, in a single operation up to that time. On her homeward voyage, carrying 840 passengers and a crew of 750 persons, a fire of unknown origin broke out on C Deck, on the evening of September 3, 1942. It was discovered at 1830 and the alarm sounded, but in ten minutes time it had spread throughout the vessel.

When it became apparent that the flames could not be brought under control, escorting ships came alongside and disembarked the passengers. Approximately two hours later the crew were removed.

On the night of September 9th, Commander Bradbury boarded the vessel with a fire-fighting party, but so intense and savage was the fire that it became necessary to abandon ship. The conflagration raged until special fire-fighting equipment reached the vessel. The charred WAKEFIELD was then towed to Halifax. Her stubborn fire still smouldering and bursting into flame, creeping dangerously near the fuel tanks and magazines.