

7th December, 1953.

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Dear Sirs,

I beg to acquaint you that Mr. Everard's letter to Sir Guy Ropner of the 1st instant was considered at some length at the Meeting of the Classing Committee held on Friday last.

The Chief Ship Surveyor's comments upon your appeal for a greater interval between drydockings of small coasters were made available, and therein it was made clear that whereas the rudder, rudder pintles and propeller sternbush are accessible for examination when the ship is lying on hard ground, it is impossible to examine the bottom plating. The bottom plating of coasters, which frequently take the ground, is subject to excessive wear due to chafing and, therefore these ships require to be carefully examined in drydock at reasonably frequent intervals, and strictly, at shorter intervals than might be considered necessary for deep sea ships which never normally take the ground.

This has been conclusively borne out by the Society's experience, and has also been the subject of comment in the past at Courts of Inquiry into losses of such vessels. It was necessary in 1947 to emphasise to the Surveyors this particular liability to excessive wear and tear of coasting trade ships by a circular, a copy of which is attached.

In the Chief Ship Surveyor's view, therefore, there is no reason why the Society's present Rule as to drydocking should be relaxed, especially in the case of coasting trade ships.

Mr. Everard's statement regarding special strengthening for grounding is correct, in that in many of your ships the bottom plating and side plating has been increased in thickness to the extent of from .10" to .15" above the rule thickness of about .40" to .35",

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and, in some cases, additional solid floors have been fitted above the rule requirements. The technical comment on this point is that while this special stiffening does provide an additional margin against excessive chafing and erosion of the bottom plating, it only tends to lengthen the period before repairs become necessary.

In the light of this opinion, the Classing Committee agreed that this factor, in conjunction with the age of the ship, would be taken into account by them in considering any appeal for limited extension of the period between drydockings for your newer ships. Beyond this, however, they were not prepared to go.

I am also asked to point out that the Society's Rules have always called for drydocking at intervals of approximately 12 months, and in this respect have never greatly differed from the B.C. Rule, which was as follows:-

"Docking Surveys: Ships should be examined in drydock once a year, and the interval between such examinations is not to exceed two years when in service."

Following this decision on general policy, the Committee considered the individual cases mentioned in Mr. Sladden's letter to Mr. Will Everard of the 17th ultimo. They were pleased to learn that, since writing, the "ALLEGRIITY" had come under survey for docking and Special Survey, and also to learn this morning that another of the very badly overdue cases, the "ACUITY" is to be drydocked at Yarmouth when she discharges her oil cargo from the Mersey to London in the very near future. In the case of the third ship, the "ADHERITY", which has not been examined in drydock for over two years, the Committee came to the firm decision that if she is not so inspected by the end of January, they will have no option but to deal with her class.

Of the seven ships quoted in that letter as not having been inspected in drydock between 18 months and 2 years from their last survey, it now transpires that two of them, the "ACRITY" and the "SUMMITTY" are being so dealt with at the present time. In the five other cases, namely, the "AUDACITY", "AUSTERITY", "ABILITY", "SPIRALITY", and "ANNUITY", the Committee must ask you

to make firm proposals for drydocking at the earliest possible date, and to that end, they would like a reply, if possible, in time for the Committee Meetings ~~next~~ ^{this} week.

Emphasis was given to the necessity for annual drydockings by the case of the "AGILITY", which was reported by the Ipswich Surveyor following his inspection of the ship in drydock on the 12th ultimo at Gt. Yarmouth. This ship had not been examined by the Society's Surveyors in drydock for two years, and as you know suffered leakage into No.1 cargo tank. On examination, "C" strake shell plating (port and starboard) in way of this tank was found to be locally wasted and holed, and hammer testing of the bottom shell revealed that "A", "B" and "C" strakes on the port and starboard sides were generally thin throughout. It is understood she is now laid up at Greenhithe pending a decision being made as to her future, and the case will be re-submitted to the Committee on Tuesday next, who, following the precedent, will doubtless qualify her class in the Register Book by a notation of "Laid up pending repairs".

Yours faithfully,

Clerk to the
Classification Committee.

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