

"BIRCHGROVE PARK"Enquiry into Foundering of the S.S. "BIRCHGROVE PARK"

This ship, a raised-quarter decker of 153' in length and 640 tons gross, foundered after shipping water, mainly in the hold, when she met with heavy weather on a voyage from Newcastle to Sydney, N.S.W., in August, 1956.

The Findings of the Court of Enquiry into the loss have now been published:-

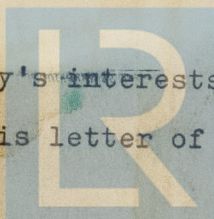
1. The ship left Newcastle with a slight list.
2. The hatch, about 58' long, was covered with two tarpaulins, the forward one overlapping the after, (not, therefore, two tarpaulins as required by the Rules although these were actually on board).
3. Heavy weather developed and water entered the hatch when the covers (tarpaulins ?) were loosened. In spite of efforts to secure them water continued to enter hold.
4. Evidence was given that no plugs were put into the goosenecks.
5. Evidence was considered about wireless aerial not being erected and about other matters not within the scope of the Society's responsibility.

The Court's finding for cause of foundering are:-

1. The continual entry of water into the hold because of ineffective tarpaulin arrangements.
2. The continual entry of water into the D.B. tanks because of the unplugged goosenecks.

They were also of the opinion that water in the tanks could not be properly pumped out because the ship was down by the head; and that one full-size tarpaulin should have been placed over the two short ones.

Nothing prejudicial to the Society's interests has arisen from the enquiry and Mr. Fielden in his letter of 2.10.56 states



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that the Judge added that the ship was a well-found ship classed +100A1.

Mr. Fielden, in that letter, submits for consideration alterations to the Society's Rule so that it is clear that the tarpaulins supplied are big enough in one piece for the hatchway and to make it a requirement that closing appliances be permanently attached to the air pipes or to adjacent ship's structure.

About tarpaulins. No evidence has ever been received in the Freeboard Department, that Owners or Builders take "tarpaulins" in the Rules to mean anything but full-sized tarpaulins covering the hatch in one piece. This ship had two such tarpaulins; an alteration to the Rule would not prevent ships carrying short tarpaulins which would be easier to handle.

The British Ministry once informed us that their circular M 3848/38 required overlaps in tarpaulins to be not less than 5' 0" and to have a lashing or locking bar at the overlap. In my opinion, that is not nearly as good as one-piece tarpaulin; and the overlap in the "BIRCHGROVE PARK" was probably more than 5' 0" because the tarpaulins were about 40' long and the hatch 58'.

The Load Line Rules state "At least two tarpaulins".

Mr. Fielden's other suggestion about airpipe closing appliances is a good one. The Freeboard Department has had discussions with Mr. Phoenix lately, about these appliances, and he stated that, in his experience, closing appliances should be attached and should be automatic. At the enquiry into the loss of the "WANSTEAD", one ship Master threw some doubt on the efficiency of the wood plug as a closing appliance.

X To be considered for
probable submission to T.C.

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23-5-57

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