

LLOYD'S LIST & SHIPPING GAZETTE, Wednesday, Feb. 23, 1949

LOSS OF THE "AARLA"

Questions about Size of Crew

FORMER MASTER'S EVIDENCE

From Our Own Correspondent

GLASGOW, Tuesday

Questions regarding the size of the crew of the motor yacht *Aarla*, which disappeared with all hands in the Firth of Clyde after leaving Ardrossan on June 16, 1947, for Torquay, were raised at the Ministry of Transport inquiry in Glasgow to-day into the loss of the vessel. The previous proceedings were reported in LLOYD'S LIST of Feb. 22.

At yesterday's hearing Mr. D. W. M'GUFFY, a Glasgow marine surveyor, said he inspected the *Aarla* in 1945 and found her in very poor condition. She had nearly 70 patches on her under-water shell plates. His estimate of the cost to bring the yacht back to her pre-war condition was £32,100. She should have been drydocked and examined if she were to be used.

Mr. A. B. McLEITCHIE, for the Park Lane Court Company, Ltd., asked Mr. G. Burden, a Ministry of Transport senior ship's engineer, if he knew that there was a large minefield stretching from Ailsa Craig to Bannane Head. Mr. BURDEN said that he knew that there were minefields during the war.

To-day Captain R. E. WILLIAMS, of Dogmaels, Cardigan, who commanded the *Aarla* on a voyage from Freetown, where she had acted as a pilot and examination vessel, to the United Kingdom in 1945, said she badly needed overhaul. Her maximum speed was about eight knots, but after dry-docking at Dakar she did about 12 knots. The crew numbered about 29 during the voyage home from Africa, and the normal crew generally was over 20. When he was asked by Mr. T. W. DONALD, representing the Minister of Transport, if he considered a crew of eight or nine adequate for a voyage from the Clyde to Torquay, Captain WILLIAMS replied that he would like more himself. When asked by Mr. A. B. McLEITCHIE, representing the owners, the Park Lane Court Company, Ltd., how many men he considered would be necessary to run the ship adequately on a voyage from Ardrossan to Folkestone, he suggested 11 or 12.

Mr. McLEITCHIE: If the ship were running from Ardrossan to the South Coast, where no night sailing was necessary, would you consider two deck officers, two engineers, two A.B.'s, a cook and a cabin boy adequate?—If she were in harbour every night I think you could do it, but I would like an electrician in the crew.

During a series of questions about the condition of the *Aarla*, Captain Williams referred to one occasion when the chain locker was being scraped and the scraper went through the side of the ship. The shell was very thin in places. After he had detailed repairs to the *Aarla* during her voyage to the United Kingdom he was asked by Mr. Donald if he thought these indicated that the ship was in need of a thorough overhaul and he replied: "Yes."

Can you suggest anything that might throw light on the loss of the *Aarla*?—I have no idea.

CONDITION OF YACHT

Evidence that the *Aarla* leaked after the main engines were run, and also when she was straining at her moorings in heavy weather, was given by Captain DONALD TURNER (48), of Tighnabruaich, who had acted as master or mate of a number of yachts for the last 20 years. He said he joined the *Aarla* towards the end of September, 1945, as ship keeper while she was lying off Tighnabruaich.

Mr. DONALD: Do you think if this vessel made water in the amount of sea at Tighnabruaich she would be more likely to make water in the heavier seas out in the open?—Definitely.

What was her general condition?—Very poor.

Captain TURNER agreed that there was no difficulty in pumping the water out after the *Aarla* leaked. Speaking of the life-saving equipment on board, he said that in his opinion the port lifeboat, one of the two carried, was in very bad condition. He agreed that he was speaking of the *Aarla*'s condition only up to Nov. 1, 1946, and did not know what steps were taken later to put things in order. If he had been asked to take her to the South Coast he would not have gone without first going to dry dock and then he would have expected to have at least 12 in a crew.

JOSEPH MILLER, of Ardrossan, an installation operator employed by an oil company which refuelled the *Aarla*, said that after the pump had been working about 30 minutes an engineer on board said he was not receiving any fuel. The pipeline was followed to a levelling valve controlling the flow of oil from one tank to another and had to be cleaned. Miller added that the engineer said that when the ship got to her next port he was going to leave. "He looked around and said, 'This is what we have to sail in.'" Mr. R. KNOX, an Ardrossan pilot, said the *Aarla* manoeuvred in a satisfactory manner, and the response of the engines to the telegraphs was entirely to his satisfaction. The master, Captain Young, seemed to know his business, and he made no complaint about the vessel.

The inquiry will be continued to-morrow.



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Lloyd's Register
Foundation

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Body identified by brother-in-law as chief
engineer, Joseph Jeffers, Castle Street
Morris, Lloyd's Agents.