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LLOYD'S LIST & SHIPPING GAZETTE, Thursday, Feb. 24, 1949

### LOSS OF THE "AARLA"

#### Evidence of Owners

#### YACHT NOT SURVEYED WHEN PURCHASED

From Our Own Correspondent

GLASGOW, Wednesday

Evidence that he had assumed the motor yacht *Aarla* was in sound condition when she was purchased was given to-day by Lieut.-Colonel F. A. Hamer, chairman of the owning company, Park Lane Court, Ltd., at the resumed Ministry of Transport inquiry at Glasgow into the loss of the vessel. The previous proceedings were reported in LLOYD'S LIST of Feb. 22 and 23. The *Aarla* disappeared with all hands in the Firth of Clyde after leaving Ardrossan, Ayrshire, on June 16, 1947, for Torquay.

Colonel HAMER, of Addison Road, London, said Park Lane Court, Ltd., which was formed about 1943 or 1944, was a private company and there were three other directors consisting of his wife and two sons. Its original object was to deal in property and then they went into the business of day trips. The nominal share capital was £10,000 in shares of £1 each. The company paid £6000 for the *Aarla* and the purchase was financed by a loan to the company by the directors. Their offer to the Director of Small Craft Disposals was accepted on Apr. 24, 1947, and the certificate of purchase was dated June 4. Colonel Hamer said he had had no experience of ship owning, but merely had a general knowledge of the sea.

#### BOUGHT UNCONDITIONALLY

The company thought the *Aarla* would suit the purpose they had in view. She was bought unconditionally and not subject to survey. They had a report from Captain R. D. Young, a certificated master, who examined the *Aarla* along with an engineer, Mr. Joseph Jeffers. Witness described Captain Young as a very sound man but said he did not think Captain Young ever had command of a ship before the *Aarla*. In the report the hull above water was described as in apparently good condition but there was no evidence of the condition below the waterline. It was noted that several plates had been patched by electric welding. Colonel Hamer said Captain Young and Jeffers were on board the ship and he presumed that if they had

found anything they were dissatisfied with they would have informed him.

Mr. T. W. DONALD (representing the Ministry of Transport) asked: "Don't you think the ship should have been investigated under water?" Witness replied that he was not an expert but it struck him that if the *Aarla* had been 100 A1 in 1945 she could not have deteriorated greatly in the intervening period. Asked: "How do you know that 100 A1 was her classification?" witness said he drew that conclusion from a report made after the *Aarla* had been inspected at Dakar and from Lloyd's Register of Yachts.

Referring to a statement in Captain Young's report that two lifeboats were in poor condition and required repair or renewal Colonel Hamer said he made it clear to Captain Young that life-saving appliances should be in first-class condition before sailing, and he assumed Captain Young did so. The report indicated that all machinery faults in the vessel could be rectified while she was opened up during the survey period. Witness had supplied Captain Young with a credit of £100 for incidental expenses.

Cross-examined by Mr. A. B. McLetchie, for the owners, Colonel HAMER said that although yachts did not require certificated masters or certificated engineers, Captain Young and Mr. Jeffers, the engineer, were both certificated. Mr. Fane, the mate, was one of his friends and witness's son only missed sailing in the yacht by a few hours. Witness had thought of taking the passage himself.

Mr. R. G. ALEXANDER HAMER, of Addison Road, London, said that he was a merchant seaman, the master of a small coastal vessel, the director of an engineering company and certain other companies, including the Park Lane Court, Ltd. Stating that he had been responsible for the *Aarla* being bought, he said that at a time when these and many similar vessels were coming into the market he came to the conclusion that their day as private craft was past, but that they might be used commercially for cruises. He realised that to put any such vessel back into full class would cost him about £20,000. The Admiralty had wanted £17,000 for the *Aarla*, but he decided to offer £6000 for the vessel as and where she lay. The question then arose as to whether she was in any way fit to proceed to the port he had in mind for her refit. Plymouth.

The inquiry was adjourned to to-morrow.

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Glasgow, June 23.—Yacht AARLA: Body identified by brother-in-law as chief engineer, Joseph Jeffers, Castle Street, Morpeth. Lloyd's Agent's