

“WARREN GROVE” INQUIRY

Court Concludes Hearing

SENIOR SURVEYOR'S THEORY OF LOSS OF STABILITY

The Ministry of Transport inquiry into the loss of the collier *Warren Grove*, of 351 tons gross, owned by Challis, Stern & Co., Ltd. (Warren Shipping Company, Ltd., managers), was concluded at West Hartlepool yesterday, and the Court's findings will be announced to-day. The theory was put forward that the vessel's stability may have been affected by the presence of slack water in the hull. The *Warren Grove* foundered off the Firth of Forth on Nov. 9 last, while on a voyage from Hartlepool to Buckie with coal, with the loss of seven of her crew of 10. The inquiry has been held before Mr. J. V. Naisby, K.C., sitting as Wreck Commissioner, with Captain J. H. Grimston, Mr. J. Shand and Mr. L. C. Burrill as assessors. The previous proceedings were reported in LLOYD'S LIST of July 26, 27 and 28.

The Ministry of Transport are represented by Mr. Arnold Baker, and Mr. Neil Maclean appears for the National Union of Seamen.

Mr. Edgar Scott, a director of the Warren Shipping Company, Ltd., of London, recalled, was questioned about his method of superintending the ship.

The COMMISSIONER: Do you consider it is your duty to ensure that the Classification Society is notified following repairs to your vessels?

Mr. Scott: I would say I am advised by my consulting marine engineers, Messrs. Barnard & Sedgwick.

Is the position that they have general authority to call in Lloyd's?—Yes.

“EXTREMELY REPREHENSIBLE”

After further cross-examination, the COMMISSIONER told Mr. Scott: “I regard this method of superintending a ship as extremely reprehensible. I am saying this to you now so you may say anything you like, if I may so put it, in your defence.”

Mr. Scott: It is not possible for someone to go down every time to see these small ships. We rely on the masters, chief engineers and chief officers. All the officers know very well if there is anything in which they are in the slightest doubt they can get in touch with me or communicate direct with Messrs. Barnard & Sedgwick.

Later Mr. Scott said he knew the *Warren Grove's* chief officer very well and could not believe that lifeboat drill was not carried out on board. The chief officer had a master's ticket and knew his responsibility.

The COMMISSIONER: Do you consider now it would be a good thing if these coasters were fitted with both-way wireless?—Yes, I do, to such an extent that we are making arrangements to have it fitted on our other vessels.

Mr. W. J. G. HAWKINS, Senior Ship Surveyor of the Ministry of Transport, who gave technical evidence, said that it was possible that the stability of the collier was reduced by the presence of slack water in the hull. “I do feel,” he said, “that a shift of coal, if it did occur, would not have been of the magnitude to have caused a serious list unless there had been a reduction of stability by the presence of slack water.”

Mr. Hawkins said he calculated that about six tons of slack water in light condition and 10 tons in loaded condition would have been sufficient completely to destroy the *Warren Grove's* stability. An opening of one square inch in the bilge could have admitted water at a rate of eight to 10 tons an hour.

In the afternoon, Mr. Scott, asked if there was any statement he would like to make following the criticism levelled against him earlier in the day, addressed the Court as follows: “The method we have of operating our ships was found to be ‘reprehensible,’ but I do feel the method we have adopted is one which, to me at any rate, seems to have worked in that nothing has ever been reported to us which has not been dealt with immediately and expeditiously. We have not spared any money in trying to maintain the ships in the best possible condition, and on no occasion of which I am aware has there ever been any delay at all in carrying out any repairs whatsoever.”

Mr. BAKER said the Ministry asked the Court particularly to consider the case against the director, whose attitude to his duties, it was the Ministry's view, involved a number of sins of omission. It was held, said Mr. Baker, that the director had not apparently ascertained, or tried to ascertain, the history of the ship, and he appeared to have been somewhat lax in his attitude to the various circulars and notices sent out by the shipping community for the benefit of shipowners and the safety of members of the crew. Lastly, it was held that the director, when specifically asked to obtain stability data, had not done so. Mr. Baker emphasised that no accusation was made against the actual owners of the *Warren Grove*, or against her late master.

The hearing was concluded and the inquiry was adjourned until this afternoon, when the Court will present its findings.



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