

"SECURITY" INQUIRY CONCLUDED

Findings to be Announced

TUG'S REPAIRS: NEW SURVEYS COME TO LIGHT

The Ministry of Transport inquiry into the loss of the tug *Security* was concluded in London yesterday, and the Court will announce its findings later. At yesterday's sitting the Court heard evidence in regard to the vessel's off-survey, and also of surveys carried out while the vessel was under requisition and which had not earlier come to light. It was disclosed that two doubling plates were fitted in April, 1944, after leakage had developed. The *Security* was lost off Anvil Point, Dorset, on Dec. 8, 1946, when, with the tugs *Contest* and *Watercock*, she was engaged in towing the Anglo-Saxon tanker *Kelletia*. The inquiry was conducted by Mr. Kenneth Carpmal, K.C., sitting as Wreck Commissioner, with Captain J. P. Thomson, Lieut.-Commander C. V. Groves and Mr. E. F. Spanner as assessors. The previous proceedings were reported in *Lloyd's List* of Jan. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18 and 19.

Mr. J. B. Hewson represented the Ministry of Transport; Mr. R. F. Hayward, K.C., appeared for the owners of the *Kelletia*, the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum Company, Ltd.; Mr. Waldo Porges for the owners of the tug *Watercock*, the Gamecock Steam Towing Company, Ltd.; and Mr. Peter Bucknill for the owners of the *Security*. The owners of the *Security*, the Elliott Steam Tug Company, Ltd., London, applied to become parties to the inquiry, but none of the other interests represented did so.

When the Court resumed, Mr. Hewson said: "Since the last hearing, further evidence has come to light that further surveys were held on this tug during the material time, especially the time with which the Court has been particularly concerned. They relate to the putting on of doubling plates in Sunderland. Mr. Bryden (a principal surveyor, Lloyd's Register), who informed the Court at the last sitting that the reports before the Court were all the reports of which Lloyd's Register had knowledge, would like to tender his apologies to the Court, because other surveys have come to light." He added that the mistake was due to the fact that the tug was renamed the *Stoke* while she was with the Ministry and the reports were filed under that name.

Mr. Sidney Turner Bryden then said that reports on the off-survey and the survey made after doubling plates were put on the vessel at Sunderland were now available.

LEAKAGE IN BOTTOM OF SHELL

Mr. George Gray Young, a Lloyd's Register surveyor, said that in March, 1944, he was called to survey the tug *Stoke* in Sunderland. There was a reported leakage in the bottom of the shell. When he arrived, a diver had been down and found the leakage was underneath the boilers on the port side, and had driven a wooden plug into the hole. He examined the plug, and because they could not get a dry dock they decided between them to fit a

cement box over the wooden plug and allow the vessel to proceed to finish the tow on which she had been engaged, stipulating that she should afterwards return to Sunderland for a permanent repair. Mr. Jackman (of William Watkins, Ltd., managers of the vessel) and a Ministry licensing officer were present at the time.

Mr. Young identified the report he made at the time, and said that repairs he recommended were done. He issued a certificate of seaworthiness to cover the remainder of the voyage on which the vessel was engaged before the temporary repair was done.

To the Commissioner, Mr. Young said the wooden plug was put in "A" strake, next to the bar keel.

Questioned about the condition of the plate, he said the damage appeared to be due to wastage, but added that the plating generally must have looked "respectable," otherwise he would not have allowed the vessel to proceed.

Mr. Hewson said that the next witness, Mr. P. D. Croudace, the Lloyd's Register surveyor who surveyed the vessel after the doubling plates were fitted to the bottom in April, 1944, was ill. He put in Mr. Croudace's report, in which he said the bottom and rudder were cleaned, examined and recoated, and doubling plates were fitted in way of the boiler space. Mr. Croudace considered the vessel fit to remain as previously classed.

THE OFF-SURVEY

Mr. Arthur C. Widgery, Lloyd's Register surveyor at London, was called to give evidence about the off-survey of the vessel in August, 1944, at Gravesend. She was on the hard at the time, in about 18 inches of mud. The object of his survey was to see that such repairs agreed between the owners and the Ministry were sufficient to keep the vessel up to Lloyd's Register requirements. He reported at that time that she was fit to remain as classed.

To the Commissioner, Mr. Widgery said his examination of the hull was largely visual. Because of the mud, he could not examine the bar keel or the "A" strakes.

Asked if he called for the reports of previous surveys before making his survey, Mr. Widgery said he did not normally call for such reports; he would be content to refer to the Register book—which gave the date of each survey—and the Special Reasons List.

The Commissioner: Did you know what had been done to the vessel in the previous April?—I didn't know anything about previous repairs.

You didn't know that anything special had been done to her in April, 1944?—No.

Had you known that doublers were fitted in the "A" strakes, port and starboard, would that have affected your examination?—Not unless it was put down on the Special Reasons List for six-monthly or yearly examination.

Supposing you had known the reason for fitting the doublers was the wasting of a plate, what would your attitude have been?—I think it would have been that the repairs had been satisfactorily made. I would most certainly have seen that the vessel had a seaworthy certificate.

Mr. Widgery could not remember examining the forepeak or the space below the fore cabin.

A HAMMER-TEST

Mr. Aubrey B. Jackman, superintendent to Wm. Watkins, Ltd., who managed the vessel for the Ministry of War Transport, resumed his evidence, which he had begun on Tuesday. He said he saw the vessel when she was repaired by the Shields Engineering Company at Sunderland in 1944. He saw that a wooden plug 2½ in. in diameter had been driven in a plate in A strake on the port side, but the plate, otherwise, appeared to be in good condition. He examined the plate and hammer-tested it, but he could not see it from the outside.

Mr. Jackman put in a report he had made on the arrival of the vessel in a leaking condition at Sunderland, the repairs done to her and the issue of a certificate of seaworthiness.

He next saw the vessel at the off-survey on Aug. 10, 1944. His function was to agree with the owners (Elliott Company) on the repairs that might be necessary before the vessel was handed back to them.

To the Commissioner, Mr. Jackman said that the plates inside the bottom strakes were covered with cement, some of which had been broken away when the wooden plug was driven into the hole at Sunderland.

When the Commissioner pressed Mr. Jackman about his examination, Mr. Jackman said that at the time he had not been able to give a lot of attention to the vessel, but he felt she had been well looked after.

Asked what he would have done about the condition of the vessel had she belonged to Messrs. Watkins, Mr. Jackman said he would have pursued the matter further. He felt he had "no responsibility whatever" to the owners of the tug and was very busy at the time working under war conditions and travelling to various ports in the North-East.

DID NOT INFORM OWNERS

Referring to the off-survey, Mr. Jackman agreed that he knew two doubling plates were fitted to the vessel while she was in the Ministry's service.

The Commissioner: Did you consider you should have told the owners what was done?—I did not give the matter a thought. I took it for granted they would get reports from somebody.

From whom?—I really could not say. Do you think they were entitled to information on such a subject?—I presume they would be.

Who was to inform them?—I presume it would be through Messrs. Watkins' office.

Why was the vessel returned to the owners?—I would prefer Messrs. Watkins to answer that.

Do you know why?—No.

Mr. Max Hamilton, a director of William Watkins, Ltd., said the tug was returned to the owners because of pressure of work on the Thames. He was in charge of towing operations on the Thames for his firm at the time and was constantly urging the Ministry to return some tugs from war service.

To Mr. Hewson, he said he did not consider it was necessary to inform the owners of the *Security* that two doublers had been fitted to the vessel's bottom while she was under requisition.

The findings of the Court will be announced later.