

"WILLOWDALE"

As instructed, the undersigned attended the court of enquiry into the loss of the above ship, from the 20th September, 1948, to 24th September, 1948, inclusive, at the Law Courts.

The enquiry is fully reported in the attached extracts from Lloyd's List.

Description of Ship

Registered Dimensions = 268 x 38.5 x 17.0

Gross Tonnage = 1777

Owned by Bromage Shipping Co. Ltd.

Built by R. Thompson & Sons, Ltd. in 1909

Class = * 100A1

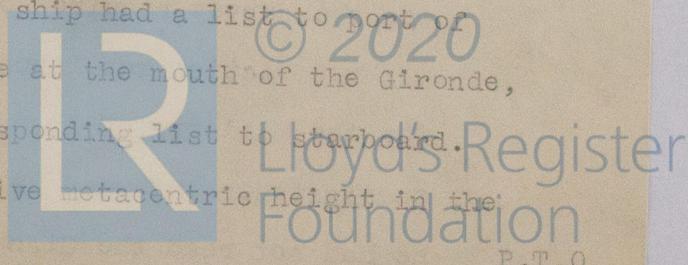
The ship left Bordeaux on the 2nd April, 1947 with a cargo of pitwood, part of this cargo being stowed on deck in the forward and after wells. The cargo was held in position by pitprops erected as uprights around the bulwarks and held in position only by the weight of the deck cargo. The cargo was stowed to a height at least as great as that of the uprights and was lashed in position by bights of wire attached at each end ^{to} bulwark stays, the bight on one side being led over the cargo and lashed by rope to the corresponding bight from the other side. Evidence was conflicting but there were probably two bights on each side in way of each hatchway.

Evidence as to which of the double-bottom tanks were full is also conflicting, but it appears to be certain that No. 4 tank was empty.

On leaving Bordeaux the ship had a list to port of about 5°, and, on changing course at the mouth of the Gironde, she heeled over and took a corresponding list to starboard. This would indicate a small negative metacentric height in the

Mr. Shephard

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upright condition.

On the 3rd April, exceptionally heavy weather was experienced and the deck cargo in way of No. 2 hatchway shifted, the uprights apparently giving way, so that the cargo, still retained by its lashings, hung over the ship's starboard side like a partly-inflated balloon, giving her a dangerous list. The lashings securing the cargo were cut and the pitprops cascaded overboard tearing the tarpaulins of No. 2 hatchway and carrying away the starboard bulwarks as they did so. Vain attempts were made to nail down the torn tarpaulins, and water entered the hold, perhaps through the hatchway, perhaps through holes in the stringer plate where the bulwark stay attachments had been torn away. The list gradually increased and water finally penetrated into the stokehold through the watertight door on the port side, the guides for which are stated to have carried away. The Master gave orders to abandon ship and she foundered shortly afterwards in the early morning of 4th April.

Evidence was given by Messrs. McCallum and Scully, the Society's Surveyors who carried out respectively the General Examination in Newcastle in July, 1946, and survey in connection with margin-plate fractures in Barry in February, 1947.

Reports were produced and proved by the undersigned.

Copies of Circulars Nos. 1772 and 1862, relating to the suspension and resumption of Special Surveys, were required by the Court, and in connection with the latter circular, Mr. Broadhead, counsel for the dependents of the Master and Chief Officer, stated that apparently the older the ship, and the more extensive the repairs required, the less stringent was the survey required by the Society.

Action was taken with the Assessors and with the Solicitor for the Ministry of Transport with the result that the Wreck Commissioner informed Mr. Broadhead that it was apparent that he had not read the Circular before making this statement.

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Calculations of the stability of the ship when carrying deck cargo had been made by the Owners' Superintendent and by Mr. Hawkins, Surveyor to the Ministry of Transport. The former found that the ship had a positive metacentric height and the latter a negative metacentric height. The Superintendent's calculation had been based on a deck cargo height of only 5 feet, whereas Mr. Hawkin's calculation was based on a height of deck cargo similar to that which the ship carried on her last voyage.

The finding of the Court will be pronounced shortly. It is thought that it will be found that, although the ship was not overloaded in the ordinary sense, she was so in actual fact, as, owing to the large mount of cargo carried on deck, it was impossible to fill No. 4 double-bottom tank. If the latter had been filled the vessel would have been stable and the cargo might not have carried away. It is thought that a reflection on the Marine Superintendent will be made as to the lack of correct stability information imparted by him to the Master. It is also thought that some recommendation may be made as to the securing timber uprights. So far as the Society is concerned, the only matter likely to be raised is that of the more frequent examination of watertight doors.

The following original documents were produced and are now in possession of the Court. They will be returned in due course.

Original Load Line Report C.11 dated 1932.

Rpts. C.11(c) and C.12(a) dated 1941.

The Owners' letters in reply to the Secretary's letters of 14th and 21st March, 1947.

Noted
RM *JS* *JS*

M.P.
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27th September, 1948

Lloyd's Register
Foundation

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