

(No. 7922)

S.S. "QUARRINGTON COURT"

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, 1894

REPORT OF COURT

In the matter of a Formal Investigation held at Newcastle-on-Tyne on the 27th, 28th and 29th days of September, 1938, before Mr. R. F. Hayward, K.C., assisted by Captain A. E. Dodd, Commander J. R. Williams and Mr. I. J. Gray, into the circumstances attending the loss of the steamship "Quarrington Court" of London on the 7th December, 1937, whilst on a voyage from Calcutta to Charleston, U.S.A., laden with a cargo of manganese ore, gunnies and jute.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons stated in the Annex hereto, that the loss of the vessel was due to the failure of her master to take any adequate steps to deal with a heavy influx of water into the engine room due to the failure of the main injection pipe and the jamming of the main injection valve, and it finds the master in default and suspends his certificate of competency, No. 25269, for a period of three months from this date. The Court recommends that he be granted a chief officer's certificate during this period.

Dated this 29th day of September, 1938.

R. F. HAYWARD,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

A. E. DODD.
J. R. WILLIAMS. } Assessors.
IVOR J. GRAY. }

Annex to the Report.

This Inquiry was held at the County Court, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on the 27th, 28th and 29th September, 1938.

Mr. Owen L. Bateson (instructed by the Solicitor, Board of Trade) appeared for the Board of Trade; Mr. E. E. Addis (instructed by Messrs. Holman, Fenwick and Willan) appeared for the owners of the s.s. "Quarrington Court", the Court Line, Ltd.; Mr. H. L. Holman (instructed by Messrs. Bramwell, Clayton and Clayton) appeared for the master, Captain C. H. Hurst; Mr. K. S. Carpmael, K.C. and Mr. G. V. Naisby (instructed by Messrs. Ince & Co.), appeared for the charterers, the Isthmian Line; Mr. Waldo Porges (instructed by Messrs. Godfrey, Warr & Co.), appeared for the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Inc.

The "Quarrington Court" was a single screw steamship owned by the Court Line, Ltd., of London. She was of 6,900 tons gross, 420 ft. in length and 57 ft. beam, and manned by a crew of 34 hands all told. She sailed from Calcutta on the 16th November, 1937, laden with about 10,000 tons of manganese ore, jute and gunnies.

Shortly before 8 a.m. on the 7th December, when the vessel was about 12 miles to the southward and eastward of Shadwan Light, the main injection inlet pipe was found to be leaking on its lower forward side at about 4.5 ft. distance from the main circulating pump. The second engineer promptly reported the leak to the chief engineer who ordered the second and third engineers to make straps of iron sheeting to close the leak after they had breakfasted. Between about 8.15 a.m. and 8.45 a.m. these engineers commenced to make the straps, but while so engaged the crack in the pipe, which when discovered had been about 6 inches by $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch rapidly developed into a burst of large dimensions, making it impracticable to stop it up from the engine room whilst a heavy inflow of water was coming through it. Attempts were made to close the main injection valve which was full open but the valve jammed after one or two out of 14 possible

turns of its wheel had been taken, and though it was tapped with a hammer it remained jammed. Meanwhile the master had been informed in general terms by the chief engineer that the pipe was fractured and that he was trying to close the valve. Shortly afterwards the master visited the engine room and the watertight doors at either end of it were closed. On a second visit by the master the chief engineer reported that the position was serious, that the valve would not shut, and that he required assistance. At no time was any attempt made temporarily to stop the influx of water by plugging the inlet in the ship's side above the turn of the bilge with canvas, and preparations so to do by means of a tarpaulin were abandoned in order that all available man power could haul in the wire hawser of a French mail and passenger steamer the "President Doumer", which came up at about 10 a.m. in response to an S.O.S. sent out at about 9.27 a.m. ship's time. This vessel's wire towing hawser was secured to the forward bitts of the "Quarrington Court" but after towing for about an hour it carried away a fairlead on the mail-boat and the above mentioned bitts. A lifeboat from the "Quarrington Court" proceeded to the "President Doumer" but apparently her master was reluctant to make a further towage attempt and, when an Italian ship arrived, at about 5 p.m., the same lifeboat proceeded to her to arrange towing, but with darkness coming on and the wind and sea rising, no towage connection was established. During the afternoon as many as possible of the ship's 'tween deck hatches were battened down but cargo prevented the closing of all of them. At about 7 p.m. the vessel was abandoned. Her master and crew were taken aboard the Italian vessel and the steamship "Grangepark", which had come up about 6.45 p.m., and the "Quarrington Court" was seen to founder stern first at about 11 p.m.

According to the evidence the water in the ship's engine room had risen about 5 ft. above the engine room plates by 9.45 a.m. when the engine room was abandoned and during the day the water rising in the engine room found its way through bunker hatches and doors in the machinery casing into the 'tween decks and so into the holds. The Court is unanimously of the opinion that had prompt and effective steps been taken from outboard to stop or check the rapid inrush of water when the pipe burst the pipe itself could have been blanked up from inboard and the vessel could then have proceeded to Suez under her own steam. The Court is unanimously of the further opinion that had a tarpaulin been rigged outboard over the inlet even as late as 4 hours after the accident happened, the vessel would have remained afloat until effective assistance arrived. The master, who during the voyage had been ill with fever, appears to have thought, firstly, that in order to stop the leak it was necessary to secure firmly a tarpaulin by strong ropes passed under the ship's bottom and, secondly, that without steam for motive power for steering and without any spring on a wire towing hawser his heavy helpless vessel could have been towed to shallow water before she sank. He therefore abandoned preparations to stop the leak in favour of the towing attempt which was abortive.

Questions and Answers.

The Court's Answers to the Questions submitted by the Board of Trade are as follows:—

Q. 1. Who were the owners of the s.s. "Quarrington Court"?

A. The Court Line, Limited, of London.

Q. 2. When and by whom was the "Quarrington Court" built and by whom were the engines and boilers constructed?

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A. The Northumberland Shipbuilding Company (1927) Ltd.; The Wallsend Slipway & Engineering Company, Ltd.

Q. 3. What surveys of the engines, including the sea connections, and boilers of the s.s. "Quarrington Court" were made by Lloyd's Register between 1932 and the date when she left Calcutta on her last voyage?

A. Lloyd's Register of Shipping Surveys as follows:—

No. 93484 of the 11th February, 1936, for damage and part s.s. No. 2 of hull engines and boilers.

No. 107296 of 6th June, 1936, for completion of s.s. No. 2.

No. 104081 of 19th February, 1937, boiler survey.

No. 51964 of 20th May, 1937, for examination of machinery.

No. 6233 of 15th October, 1937, for examination after grounding.

Q. 4. What classification did Lloyd's Register assign to the vessel? Did the vessel remain in this class up to the time when she sailed on her last voyage?

A. ✕ 100 A.I. Yes.

Q. 5. When did the vessel leave Calcutta on her last voyage? Was she in good and seaworthy condition at this time?

A. 16th November, 1937. Yes.

Q. 6. What was the state of (a) the weather; (b) the wind at this time? Was there any, and if so what, alteration in these conditions between this time and the time when the vessel foundered?

A. (a) Fine, with light winds; (b) on the voyage the weather was fine and on the 7th December the wind was north-westerly, moderate and freshening to strong.

Q. 7. Was the main circulating inlet valve in good and efficient working order and condition at the time when the vessel sailed on her last voyage.

A. Yes.

Q. 8. Did any, and if so what, defect occur in the main inlet pipe to the circulating pump?

A. Yes, it sprung a leak and shortly afterwards burst open.

(a) Where was the vessel at this time?

A. About 12 miles to the southward and eastward of Shadwan Lighthouse.

(b) When was it discovered?

A. Shortly before 8 a.m. on the 7th December, 1937.

(c) What was its nature and effect?

A. It was a longitudinal fracture on the lower forward side of the pipe about 4.5 ft. from the pump. When first discovered its measurements were about 6 inches by $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch.

(d) What efforts were made to rectify it?

A. Whilst sheet iron straps were being made the fracture at about 8.30 a.m. suddenly developed into a burst about 18 inches by 6 inches in size. Steps were immediately taken to close the main inlet valve and to block the hole with wood and canvas serving and the main engines were kept working.

(e) Were such efforts properly and promptly taken, and were they adequate?

A. Yes, but the main injection valve which had been full open would not close more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ out of

14 turns of its wheel and the heavy influx of water rendered the steps above-mentioned quite abortive.

Q. 9. Was an attempt made to close the main circulating inlet valve at any time after leaving Calcutta? If so, why, when and with what result?

A. See Question 8, sub-questions (d) and (e).

Q. 10. What efforts, other than those referred to in Question 8, were taken to save the vessel and her crew? Were they properly and promptly taken?

A. An S.O.S. for assistance was broadcasted at about 9.27 a.m. ship's time. At about 11.45 a.m. the French mail-boat "President Doumer" towed the vessel towards Suez by means of a 6 inch wire hawser. The "Quarrington Court", having no steam, could not steer and the wire hawser carried away the bits or fairleads on both ships at about 12.30 p.m. The suggestion made by the mail-boat that the "Quarrington Court" should attach the wire to two shackles of her cable should have been adopted if and when it became proper to start towage.

Q. 11. What, if any, further efforts should have been taken in order to save the vessel?

A. As soon as it became apparent that the main injection valve could not be closed immediate steps should have been taken to arrest the influx of water from outside the ship by lowering a weighted tarpaulin, awning or boat cover over the injection inlet. If this could not have been done in sufficient time to prevent the water rising in the engine room so high as to put out the fires and to prevent the use of pumps in order to clear the engine room and enable the inlet pipe to be repaired or blanked off, then the tarpaulin or other material over the ship's side could have been covered by another tarpaulin and firmly secured in place until the ship received outside assistance.

Q. 12. Was the engine room abandoned? If so, when and why was it abandoned?

A. Yes. Shortly before 10 a.m. owing to the continued influx of water stopping all work there.

Q. 13. When was the s.s. "Quarrington Court" abandoned, and what was the condition of the vessel at this time?

A. At about 7 p.m. on the 7th December, 1937. By this time the machinery space had filled and water rising through bunker hatches and doors in the machinery space had flooded the 'tween decks and penetrated the holds in large quantities, particularly aft.

Q. 14. When and where did the s.s. "Quarrington Court" founder?

A. 7th December, 1937, at about 11.12 p.m. about 30 miles to the southward and eastward of Shadwan Lighthouse.

Q. 15. What was the cause of the loss of the s.s. "Quarrington Court"?

A. Failure to block the main injection inlet from overside following the bursting of the inlet pipe and the failure of the inlet valve to close.

Q. 16. Was the loss of the s.s. "Quarrington Court" caused or contributed to by the wrongful act or default of her master, Charles Henry Hurst?

A. Yes. The loss of the "Quarrington Court" was caused by the wrongful act or default of her master, Charles Henry Hurst, in failing to carry out any of the steps set out in answer to Question 11.

(Issued by the Board of Trade in London on Thursday, the 27th day of October, 1938.)

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