

"QUARRINGTON COURT" LOSS

B.O.T. Inquiry Opened

THE CHIEF ENGINEER'S STATEMENT

From Our Own Correspondent

NEWCASTLE, Tuesday

A Board of Trade Inquiry was opened in Newcastle to-day into the loss of the steamer *Quarrington Court* on Dec. 7 last while on her way through the Red Sea to the Suez Canal. There was no loss of life.

The Board of Trade was represented by Mr. O. L. Bateson; the Court Line, the owners, by Mr. E. E. Addis (instructed by Messrs. Holman, Fenwick & Willan, of London); the master, Captain Charles Henry Hirst, of Holly Avenue, South Shields, by Mr. H. L. Holman (instructed by Messrs. Bramwell, Clayton & Clayton, of Newcastle, on behalf of the Mercantile Marine Service Association); the second engineer, Mr. J. O. Orr, by Mr. E. G. Sykes; the Isthmian Line, the charterers, by Mr. K. S. Carpnael and Mr. J. V. Naisby (instructed by Messrs. Ince & Co., of London); the Fulton Bag & Cotton Mills, Incorporated, by Mr. Waldo Porges (instructed by Mr. Godfrey Warr, of London). Messrs. Ingledew & Co. have instructed Mr. Muir to watch the interests of Mr. T. M. Taylor, Mr. N. Coulthard, Mr. G. W. Coffey and Mr. R. G. Bell.

The Court comprised Mr. R. F. Hayward, K.C. (Chairman), Captain A. E. Dodd, Commander J. R. Williams and Mr. I. J. Grey.

An objection by Mr. Addis that the charterers could not be a party to the Inquiry, as no question touched on them, was overruled by the Court.

The CHAIRMAN said he could not see how the owners of the cargo could not be interested, and there was not sufficient ground for opposing the application.

Mr. BATESON said that the vessel was on a voyage from Calcutta to Baltimore. She was 420 ft. long and was a shelter-deck single-screw steamer. She was lost about 20 miles south-east of Shadwan Island. There were seven watertight bulkheads, and she carried a cargo of about 7760 tons of manganese ore and 2380 tons of gunnies. There was a crew of 34, including the master, three deck officers, four engineers and a donkeyman. Her draught was 27 ft. 11½ in.

FRACTURED INJECTION PIPE

On the morning of Dec. 7 the main injection pipe was found to be fractured between the valve and pump along its underside. Efforts were made to close the valve to prevent water coming in, but the valve jammed in some way and the pipe could not be closed. The result was that the engine-room was flooded and water got into the 'tween decks, and was able to flow from end to end of the ship. Ultimately she sank, the crew being taken off by the Italian vessel *Capitano A. Cecchi* and the British steamer *Grange-mark*.

Counsel said he believed it had been stated that the *Quarrington Court* was slightly hogged, but there was no suggestion that she was overloaded. The second engineer had reported to the chief engineer that there was a slight leak in the main inlet pipe, but he did not think it was serious. The chief engineer instructed the second engineer to prepare clips to put round the pipe immediately after breakfast. At 8.30 work was begun and the chief engineer inspected the trouble. The crack in the pipe had begun to extend longitudinally to about 2 ft., and it opened by 6 to 10 in. Efforts were at once made to shut the inlet valve. The pipe was a built-up one with a brazed joint, and the crack was close to the joint.

It took 14 turns to close the valve from its full open position, but it only turned three times and jammed, and the pipe could not be closed on the inside at all. The pumps were put into operation and the engines kept running apparently with the idea of easing pressure on the pipe. The trouble was reported to the master and efforts were made both by the engine-room staff and, on the master's orders, by the chief officer and some deck hands to wrap the pipe with canvas and wood, but that was impossible. By 9.30 the pumps were unable to keep up with the water and the chief engineer suggested to the master putting a tarpaulin over the ship's side to stop the water inrush to the pipe.

A signal for assistance was sent out and the French mail ship *President Doumer* arrived. The main engines had been stopped and shortly afterwards the engine-room was abandoned. The vessel was steered by steam gear, but there was no hand gear and she would not steer. The French ship suggested that the *Quarrington Court* might await a tug from Suez. About 11 the French master asked if the ship would like a tow, and by 11.45 a hawser had been rigged up and the tow began.

The vessel did not tow well because of the lack of steering, and later the rope parted. A further attempt at towing was made in the afternoon, but without success. An Italian ship arrived about 5 p.m. and another attempt was made at towing, but the wind freshened and it was decided to await morning. The vessel got lower in the water and about 7.30 she was abandoned. The chief officer and boats' crew went to the Italian ship and the remainder of the company to the British ship which had arrived. The vessel sank about 11 p.m.

Mr. Bateson added that there was nothing at which one could point a

finger to account for the failure of the pipe or of the valve to close, and that must be speculative. Counsel put in records of the vessel's special survey in February, 1936, and other engine-room examinations.

Mr. Bateson put in a statement by Mr. George Robertson Buchan, chief engineer of the *Quarrington Court*, who is now at sea between Java and Australia. Mr. Buchan said that the fracture was first reported by the second engineer, and he gave orders to bind it. He got the shock of his life when later he tried to close the valve and it would not do so. He had been working the valve before and it had been fully open a number of times on that voyage. He suggested a tarpaulin over the side to stop the flow, but that was not acted upon, as all the men were busy on the tow rope from the French ship.

Concluding, Mr. Bateson said that the cause of the disaster was probably clear, but the question of the master's responsibility once the accident was known was much more acute. To prevent water getting into the ship the chief engineer had suggested a tarpaulin over the inlet opening, and pressure would have held it against the ship's side, but during the whole of the time nothing was done or attempted.

Mr. ROBERT WATSON KINGHORN, marine superintendent of Haldin & Philipps, Ltd., managers of the Court Line, said he thought that part of the valve had somehow become broken and had fallen into the pipe and that or the water hammer had caused the slit.

Mr. J. O. ORR, the second engineer, said he had never seen a tarpaulin used over a ship's side, but had heard of cases.

The hearing was adjourned.



© 2020

Lloyd's Register
Foundation

WS07-0144