

"QUARRINGTON COURT" LOSS

B.O.T. Inquiry Proceedings

EVIDENCE OF THE SHIP'S OFFICERS

From Our Own Correspondent

NEWCASTLE, Wednesday

The Board of Trade Inquiry was resumed 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 previous proceedings were reported in LLOYD'S LIST of Sept. 28.

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. Carpmal 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, on behalf of the Navigators and Engineer Officers' Union, 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.

Captain CHARLES HENRY HIRST, of South Shields, master of the vessel, said that when the chief engineer told him of the pipe accident he described it as not exactly serious, and thought he could repair it. They discussed covering the opening of the inlet, and the chief engineer began to prepare ropes to run under the ship. All hands were called on deck and the general alarm given. He abandoned the idea of the tarpaulin to stop the flow, and decided to get to shallow water as soon as possible.

COUNSEL'S QUESTIONS

In answer to Mr. Bateson, witness replied that he could have got into shallow water and then put the tarpaulin over. To put it over the way he intended would take two to three hours.

Mr. BATESON: Did you consider that the wisest thing was to stop the water coming into the ship?

Captain HIRST: No; I concentrated on getting a tow. An hour after being taken in tow by the French vessel *President Doumer* the fastenings on the *Quarrington Court* were carried away.

Mr. BATESON asked if witness had not thought of stopping the water entering the ship at that time.

WITNESS said he had not considered it. He doubted if the tarpaulin would have stayed in position. At 7 p.m. the ship listed, and there was 3 ft. of water in the 'tween decks.

Mr. CARPMAEL, for the charterers, asked the master whether he knew of eight leaks in the holding-down bolts of the engine room.

Captain HIRST said he had not seen them.

Mr. CARPMAEL said that the only log book saved was the scrap log book, which showed that the S O S was sent out at 9 45.

Re-examined by Mr. H. L. HOLMAN, Captain Hirst said that the first time he knew of the leak was about 9 20, and that it was serious at 9 27.

He sent out a call for assistance. Nothing had been said at breakfast, about 8 a.m., with regard to getting a tow from the French ship. He had hoped to reach shallow water in five or six hours at least. Had he attempted to place the tarpaulin in position he could not have made towage in daylight. He had one experience of placing a tarpaulin when he was torpedoed during the War. As to waiting for a tug, he thought she would have to come from Suez, 170 miles away, and there was not enough time. He could not place a tarpaulin in position and make ready for a tow. It was awkward because of the seaway, and the injection inlet was on the weather side. An attempt was made at 12 45 by the chief officer and crew to resume the tow after the hawser breakage, but it failed. Had the attempt succeeded he would have then had men to try to place the tarpaulin in position.

Mr. HOLMAN: In your view, were there any other measures to take other than those you took?

WITNESS: I could not think of any.

Witness added that with regard to the grounding of the vessel at Yokohama, he relied on the surveyor's report and he received no recommendations from any one to drydock the vessel. Had he received any recommendation he would have remained in port and communicated with his owners.

In answer to Mr. Hayward, Captain Hirst said he did not realise at first that the force of water from the burst inlet pipe was preventing the engineers from stopping up the hole, but he realised it now.

Mr. HAYWARD: At no time did you attempt to put anything over the ship's side to stop the water getting into the pipe? Did not you think that was the first precaution to take?

WITNESS: Now I do.

Witness added that the scrap log book was kept in the chart room and had been written up from time to time. He had not noticed how far it was written up when he took it from the ship, but he thought it was up to date. The writing in the chief officer's hand was done after leaving the ship. Witness was not certain of the times and the chief officer put them in. He had had no experience of being towed.

Mr. HAYWARD: When the ship would not steer, did it not occur to you that if you could stop the influx of water or reduce it, it would give the engineers a chance to repair the pipe?

WITNESS: It did not strike me.

Witness added that the last soundings were taken at 2 p.m.

In answer to Mr. Bateson, Captain Hirst said he was in bed a day at Suez. He thought he had had a touch of fever.

Mr. THOMAS M. TAYLOR, the chief officer, gave evidence that he was in charge of the boat which went to the French vessel to arrange a tow. After the hawser had broken it was lost from the French ship, which declined to make a further attempt as it was delaying passengers and mails. Witness had taken the ship's log books in a case when he went to the Italian ship, but the boat's stern was damaged by the ship swinging and he returned to the *Quarrington Court*. In changing to another lifeboat he picked up the wrong case, and the logs and ship's articles were lost.

Earlier, witness and the master had gone below to get out a tarpaulin to put over the inlet, but when the French ship offered a tow the master said witness was to leave the tarpaulin. The scrap log had been completed at Suez, the master and witness agreeing the times.

Mr. JOHN MARTIN BINMORE, an engineer surveyor to the Board of Trade, said that the nature of the pipe fracture suggested that the cause was pressure from within the pipe. Movement of the engine would not cause a longitudinal fracture, but it might cause nicking at the flange. The pipe was brazed and of the usual type of construction. Pressure from outside could not cause sufficient stress to cause a fracture in sound material, but if the material were not of normal efficiency it might suffer fatigue over a period of years, and then the defect would develop rather rapidly. Mr. Binmore considered that the fracture in the pipe was unique in its class.

SAFETY FACTOR OF PIPE

Continuing his evidence, witness said that the pipe was stouter than was required in the case of a feed pipe. It gave a safety factor of 27, while a brazed feed pipe had a factor of 21. A deformity in the pipe might cause a stress. Mr. Binmore could not agree with Mr. Robert W. Kinghorn, marine superintendent of the managers, when he suggested that the fracture might have been caused by part of the valve or something having broken and having fallen into the pipe. The tarpaulin covering would just about touch all round the opening in the ship's side of the main inlet, and with pressure of water would adhere.

In answer to Mr. Carpmal, Mr. Binmore said that having regard to the nature of the pipe split it was not an original defect, and his only conclusion was that a defect had formed over a number of years by the pipe pulsating under pressure of the pump. It would not be apparent to the engineers. Witness did not think that the grounding of the vessel could set up sufficient deflection to cause a defect in the pipe.

The hearing was adjourned.

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