

Notes of evidence at the Board of Trade Enquiry into the loss of the steamer "STANCREST" when on a voyage from the Thames to Bridgwater in February, 1937.

Enquiry held on the 25th, 26th and 27th November, 1937.

The winter draught was $12'-1\frac{1}{2}"$ and the displacement and deadweight were 1035 tons and $605\frac{1}{2}$ tons respectively.

The draught leaving Northfleet was $10'-8\frac{3}{4}"$ forward and $13'-6\frac{3}{4}"$ aft giving a mean draught of $12'-1\frac{1}{2}"$.

The deadweight was made up as follows:-

Cement in paper bags.....	544	tons
Coal in bunkers.....	37	"
Feed water.....	$12\frac{1}{2}$	"
Drinking water.....	4	"
Crew and stores.....	5	"
	<hr/>	
	$602\frac{1}{2}$	tons

The Board of Trade estimated that in this condition the stability was as follows:-

G.M. -	.85	ft.	
Maximum righting arm at 12° -	.15	ft.	
Range of stability ignoring poop, bridge and forecastle			28°

If the superstructure were included the maximum righting arm and range of stability would be increased.

With regard to the question of stability, it was stated that in 1932 when the vessel was on a voyage from Goole to Poole with a cargo of coal, the cargo shifted and the vessel was abandoned, but she was afterwards salvaged.

In consequence of this Inclining Experiments were carried out in the presence of the Board of Trade and as a result of these experiments it was agreed by the Owners and the Board that the double bottom tanks would be kept full, whether the vessel was in the light or loaded condition, and that no cargo would be carried in the poop space.

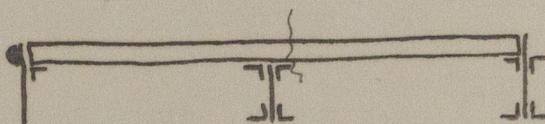
This agreement was departed from at a later date when a certificated Captain was appointed and there was no water in the double bottom on the last voyage.

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A lifeboat and some timber were washed ashore near West Bay, Dorset, and although these could not be clearly identified, it was concluded that they belonged to the "STANCREST", and that the timber consisted of hatch covers, some of them broken.

A plan was handed in by the Board of Trade shewing the disposition of the Cement Cargo, this being based on the evidence of the Stevedores who loaded the vessel. A copy of this plan is attached hereto. From this plan it will be seen that this cargo was concentrated in the middle portion of the hold leaving large empty spaces at each end.

From an examination of the broken pieces of timber washed ashore, the Board of Trade came to the conclusion that as the maximum bending moment on a hatch cover was at the middle of its length, it would break at this point if struck by a sea, and that as the lengths of the pieces of timber washed ashore were equal to the distance between the hatch webs of the ship, they must be portions of hatch covers from the "STANCREST", the length of whose covers was twice the spacing of the hatch webs, thus:-



They also concluded that they had been broken by seasbreaking over the vessel and not by contact with rocks etc.

Samples of the timber found were sent to the Forestry Commissioners who reported that the timber was Baltic White Wood. No decay was found and the material was suitable for the purpose.

From marks on the lifeboat they concluded that it had been launched into the sea before the vessel foundered.

With regard to these conclusions the Board of

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Trade are incorrect in assuming that the maximum bending moment is at the middle of the length of the hatch covers, as this will occur ^{near} ~~at~~ the middle of the span between the beams, and therefore the broken timber found does not bear out their assumption that the covers were broken by seas falling on board and not by contact with rocks etc. nor that the vessel was swamped after the hatches were "stove in" in this manner.

It is well known that a vessel of this type, with machinery aft and fore peak tank empty, will sag when in the loaded condition, and in the case of the "STANCREST" this condition will be accentuated by the concentration of the load amidships. In a seaway this sagging would have a strong tendency to buckle the deck and it is more probable that the hatches were "jumped" out of position by this buckling. It is therefore probable that the disposition of the cargo was at least one cause of the loss of the vessel.

With regard to this Society two points were raised by the Counsel for the Captain, Officers and Crew, (Mr. Hayward).

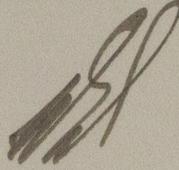
(1) The timber washed ashore was $2\frac{5}{8}$ " thick whereas on the Society's reports the thickness of the hatches was given as $2\frac{1}{2}$ ". In reply to this it was stated that as hatch covers are frequently renewed, some of them might possibly be $2\frac{5}{8}$ " thick but the bulk of them were probably $2\frac{1}{2}$ " thick. In any case the regulation called for only $2\frac{5}{8}$ ".

(2) In the last two survey reports it was indicated in one case that the deck beams had not been examined, and in the other case that only a portion had been examined. In reply it was stated that at a condition survey it was not usual to make a detailed examination of the beams, and that in the case of the "STANCREST", which was a single deck ship, such an examination could not be made except by the erection of

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staging throughout the entire length of the ship.

A copy of the questions to be answered by the
Court is attached hereto.



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