

S.S. "SANDGATE CASTLE"

The enquiry into the loss of this vessel was held in London from 28th February until 10th March, and was attended by the undersigned on the first three days of the enquiry and intermittantly thereafter.

The vessel left New York on 23rd June, 1937 for Capetown and was abandoned on fire on 26th June. I gave evidence on the opening day but this consisted mainly in the production of reports of surveys held by the Society's Surveyors and answers to a few questions regarding these surveys.

There was evidence of three distinct fires, two within the boiler casing and one in the shelter tween decks adjoining the boiler casing. The evidence of the officers and crew was very fragmentary and it was difficult to say which fire originated first. The Owners' representatives and the Board of Trade, however, inclined to the belief that the fire originated in a coal space in the shelter tween decks, and that the other fires were caused by the ignition of oil which escaped by means of a leaking manhole cover in the top of one of the settling tanks.

Whatever be the cause, the first fire in the boiler casing was observed at 10 am. and the vessel was abandoned by noon. The crew were rescued and brought back to New York by the "PRESIDENT PIERCE", and after their arrival there, reports were being received that the vessel was still afloat and burning. The vessel continued to burn for at least 4 days.

Questions were raised in regard to discipline on board and it appeared that the warning to abandon ship by the ringing of the ship's bell was not given and the members of the crew were "waiting about the deck", for orders. The question was also raised as to whether

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the ship was not prematurely abandoned.

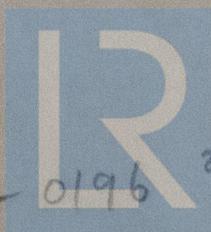
The wreck commissioner is to give his findings on Friday 18th instant.



16. 3. 38.

Noted Jm

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