

*Encl to Lloyd's Register of Shipping.*

*File with  
Casualty  
rept.*

LOSS OF S.S. VARDULIA

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. Q. What was the original name of the steamship Vardulia?

When and by whom was she built? When was the steamship purchased by the Donaldson Line? What was her purchase price. Who was her registered manager?

A. "Verdun". Built by Russell and Co. Ltd. Port Glasgow in 1917. Purchased by Donaldson Line Ltd. in 1929. Purchase price, £46,311. 4. 4. Her registered manager was William Betts Donaldson of 14 St. Vincent Place, Glasgow.

2. Q. Was an inclining experiment conducted on the Vardulia in August 1930 If so what was her lightweight displacement at that time?

A. Yes, on August 11th 1930 at the request of the owners, Messrs. Donaldson Line Ltd. Lightweight 3,647 tons.

3. Q. What surveys of the S.S. Vardulia were carried out by the Surveyors of Lloyds Register of Shipping between March 1933 and April 1935?

A. Lloyds Register Surveys were carried out as follows :-  
March 3rd to 7th 1933-- At Swansea, part special survey, second No. 1, together with heavy weather damage, also part machinery survey for classification and damage, caused by wire rope fouling propeller.



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May 27th to June 1st -- At Newport, Mon., part special survey, 2nd No. 1 and part machinery survey.

July 15 to 20, at London, part machinery survey.

September 7 to 11th, at Avonmouth, thrust shaft coupling and coupling bolts by request of the owners.

September 20 to 25, at Swansea, part special survey, 2nd No. 1.

December 7, at Montreal, part machinery survey and survey of slight damage due to contact with ice.

January 12 to February 2nd 1934, at Swansea, part special survey, 2nd No. 1, together with heavy weather damage, also part machinery survey.

March 25th, at Swansea, part special survey, 2nd No. 1.

April 22nd at Glasgow, part special survey, 2nd No 1, also survey for loading line.

August 9 to 17, at London, boiler survey for classification.

September 12 to 15, at Montreal, part special survey, 2nd No. 1 and damage to main mast.

October 8 to 9, at Liverpool, further survey of damage to mast.

December 11 to 19, at Glasgow, repairs to main mast and dry docking.

April 11th, 1935, survey for load line.

July 23 to 31, at Manchester, boiler survey.



August 9, at West Hartlepool, completion of boiler survey.

October 10, at West Hartlepool, damage to bulwark.

4. Q. What classification did the ship hold from Lloyds Register of Shipping at the end of these surveys?

A. Star 100 A 1 and star L.M.C.

5. Q. What was the value of the vessel when she left Manchester on 1st October 1935. What was the amount of the insurances then in force on and in connection with the vessel?

A. Value £25,000. Insurance £30,000 on hull and machinery, £2,500 on freight and £550 premium reducing.

6. Q. What cargo was taken on board the vessel at Manchester? Where was it laden. Was it properly and securely stowed. Were the trimming hatches left clear?

A. General cargo consisting of sulphate of alumina, in bags; 202 tons; silicate of soda in drums, 57 tons 9cwts; soda ash in bags, 3 tons 1 cwt; cores for rolls of paper in bundles, 23 tons 17 cwts. Total 286 tons 8 cwts, stowed as follows:- No. 1 'tween deck fore end, sulphate of alumina, 80 tons approximately, No. 1 'tween deck aft end, sulphate of alumina in bags, 80 tons approximately; No. 2 'tween deck fore end, soda ash and sulphate of alumina in bags and silicate of soda in drums, 102 tons approximately; No. 3 'tween deck after end, cores for paper in bundles, 244 tons approximate. The general cargo was properly and securely stowed. The trimming hatches kept clear.



7. Q. When did the vessel reach West Hartlepool after leaving Manchester?

A. The vessel arrived at West Hartlepool at 7.30 p.m. on October 4th 1935.

8. Q. When the vessel loaded her coal cargo at West Hartlepool in October 1935,

(a) by whom was the plan of loading decided and approved?

(b) had the master any instructions as to the trimming of the cargo loaded into the ship?

A. (A) The plan of loading was decided by the master, Capt Patterson, and approved by the owners.

(B) The master had no specific instructions in regard to trimming the cargo loaded on this voyage, but acted under the general instructions issued to the Commanders and Officers of the Donaldson Line Ltd.

9. Q. What amount and description of coal was shipped in each of (a) the 'tween decks.

(b) the holds of the vessel, at West Hartlepool?

A.	(a)	No. 1 'tween deck (small coal)	241 tons.
		No. 2 'tween deck (large coal)	60 tons.
		No. 3 'tween deck (large coal)	333 tons.
		No. 4 'tween deck (small coal)	456 tons.
		No. 5 'tween deck (small coal)	277 tons.



(b) No. 1 hold	(small coal)	1,365 tons.
No. 2 hold	(large coal)	1,541 tons.
No. 3 hold	(large coal)	662 tons.
Deep tank	(small coal)	751 tons.
No. 4 hold	(small coal)	908 tons.
No. 5 hold	(small coal)	903 tons.

10. Q. Were any, and if so what, spaces left in any, and if so which, of (a) the 'tween decks, (b) the holds of the vessel, at West Hartlepool ?

A. Empty spaces were left as follows :

(a) No. 1 'tween deck 2,000 cubic feet, Nos. 2 and 3 'tween decks 18,820 cubic feet, Nos. 4 and 5 'tween deck 13,230 cubic feet.

(b) each of the lower holds was loaded with coal trimmed and stowed in accordance with the usual practice of the port and therefore there were no abnormal spaces.

11. Q. Was the coal cargo stowed and trimmed properly and safely in each of (a) the 'tween decks (b) the holds, at West Hartlepool?

A. The coal cargo was stowed and trimmed in accordance with normal practice in both (a) the 'tween deck (b) the holds.

12. Q. Was any, and if so which, portion of the cargo of a nature which rendered it liable to shift unless it was properly and safely stowed and trimmed? If so where was that portion of the cargo stowed. Was it safely stowed and trimmed?



- A. The small coal was of a nature liable to shift. This coal was stowed in Nos. 1, 4 and 5 holds and between decks, and in the deep tank.

Note: The answers to Questions 9 to 12 inclusive are open to qualification and comment; considerations underlying the answers will be discussed in the annex.

13. Q. Who was responsible for the proper and safe stowage and trimming of the coal cargo?

- A. There was no one authority responsible for the safe stowage and trimming of the coal cargo other than the master whose responsibility could only be born in a general manner.

14. Q. What supervision of the stowage and trimming of the coal cargo was carried out, and by whom? If such supervision was carried out was it proper and sufficient?

- A. Although the court is aware that one provision of the National Coal Trimming Tariff is that all trimming shall be done under the control and to the satisfaction of the officer in charge of the ship, it appears that in this case the foremen trimmers, who should reasonably assist that officer, were more concerned with allocating gangs of men to their work than with supervision of the trimming, and that these foremen become concerned with the trimming only on occasions of complaints made by officers. It appears indeed that real supervision of the trimming was carried out only by the charge hands of the various gangs of trimmers; each charge hand is responsible only for a limited region in the ship and for the period of his shift. Such supervision is not proper and sufficient and



the Court is of opinion that the foremen should, towards the completion of loading of each compartment, be present to exercise responsibility under the officer in charge of the ship.

15. Q. Was the vessel in collision with the m.v. Silverpine whilst she was at West Hartlepool? If so, was any structural damage done to the Vardulia by the collision. Did the damage suffered by the Vardulia by the collision have any effect in causing the accident?

A. The Vardulia was struck by the m.v. Silverpine. The bulwark on the starboard abreast the foremast was slightly set in, some bulwark staunchions slightly buckled and some rigging carried away. The damage did not have any effect in causing the loss of the ship.

16. Q. When the vessel left West Hartlepool on 12th October 1935

(a) was she in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipment?

(b) was she properly supplied with boats, life-saving appliances and distress signals.

(c) were the hatchways covered and adequately protected and secured?

(d) were the hatch covers sufficient and in good condition?

(e) were the tarpaulins and batening down appliances in good condition and sufficient for the purpose of the intended voyage?



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A. (a) The ship was in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipment.

(b) Yes, and her certificates were up to date. She was supplied with four Class A1 boats.

(c) Yes.

(d) Yes.

(e) Yes. Provision was made in excess of ordinary requirements.

Note: Considerations raised by Questions 15 c, d and e are discussed in the annex.

17. Q. Was the vessel upright when she left West Hartlepool. If not what list had she and in which direction? Had the list any, and if so, what effect in causing the casualty?

A. The ship had a list of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  degrees to starboard. In the opinion of the Court the list had no effect in causing the casualty. It could easily have been rectified.

18. Q. What were the draughts of the vessel fore and aft when she left West Hartlepool?

A. Forward 25 ft aft 25 ft 3 in, mean 25 ft  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in.

19. Q. When the vessel left West Hartlepool was due consideration to what her mean draught would be when she entered the North Atlantic seasonal winter zone on 15th October?

A. Yes.

20. Q. Was the mean draught which the vessel had when she left West Hartlepool on October 12th 1935 safe and proper having regard to all the circumstances of the voyage on which she was starting?

A. Yes, under existing regulations.



21. Q. When the vessel left West Hartlepool on October 12th had she safe stability assuming that her cargo had been properly stowed and trimmed?

A. Yes

22. Q. When the vessel left West Hartlepool on October 12th 1935 was she so loaded as to be in a safe and seaworthy condition from the point of view of stability?

A. Yes, subject to discussion of trimming in the annex.

23. Q. Were any, and if so what, wireless messages relating to the state of the weather sent out or received by the s.s. Vardulia between 15th and 18th October 1935?

A. The following messages were transmitted between 15th and 18th October inclusive:

15th October, from Capt. Patterson, S.S. Vardulia, - Noon 58.40 N, 8.59 W, wind Sly 5, rough high sea, Bar 29.58 falling. Had strong S. Wly gale last 24 hours. Kindest regards and best of luck.

15 October, from Capt. Rankine, S.S. Saluria. - Thanks for yours. Noon position 56.08 N, 12.16 W. Wind S.W. and rough sea. Clear cloudy weather. Bar. 29.66 falling. Left Glasgow 9 a.m. yesterday. Regards and good wishes.

16 October, from Capt. Rankine, Noon position 55.49 N, 18.32 W. Fresh Westerly gale, high sea. Clear cloudy weather. Bar 29.86 rising. Regards. Hope for better weather.

16 October, from Capt. Patterson Noon 58.26 N



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13.8 W. Wind westerly, strong high sea and swell, cloudy, clear. Bar 29.96 rising. Progress slow. Hope you are having better weather. Regards.

17 October, Capt. Patterson. Noon position 58.17 N, 16.9 W. Whole gale westerly, mountainous sea, squally, cloudy and clear. Bar 29.80, falling. Wish you all the best. Regards.

17 October, from Capt. Rankine. Noon position 56.30 N 34.35 W. Wind westerly, 6, moderating, high head sea. Clear, cloudy weather. Bar 30.06 rising. Cheerio and better luck.

At 16.19 G.M.T. on Friday October 18th Vardulia sent out a general urgent message "Position 58.00 N, 18.30 W. Whole gale. Ships in vicinity please indicate position".

24. Q. What was the state of (a) the weather, (b) the sea, (c) the wind in the vicinity of the S.S. Vardulia on the early morning of 19th October 1935?

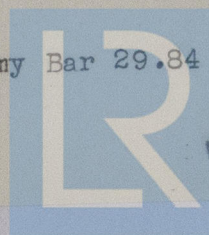
A. According to the Blair Angus, the nearest ship for which records are available, at midnight October 18-19 (a) the weather was whole gale, fierce squalls, Bar 29.75.

(b) high sea (9)

(c) wind N.W. force 9

At 4 am on October 19

(a) the weather was stormy Bar 29.84



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(b) high sea (9)

(c) wind N.W. force A.

At 8 am October 19th

(a) weather squally. Bar 29.97

(b) rough seas (6), with heavy swell

(c) wind N N W, force 7 to 6

25. Q. Were any, and if so what, wireless messages sent out by the S.S. Vardulia on the morning of 19th October 1935?

A. At 06.48 G.M.T S.S. Vardulia sent out an S.O.S. message "58.00 N, 18,30 W, steering S.22. E. Wanting immediate assistance. Have taken dangerous list". This was followed at 06.55 G.M.T by the message "Now abandoning ship".

26. Q. What was the last wireless message from the Vardulia which was recorded by any other station in the morning of 19th October 1935, or afterwards?

A. The last message recorded was received by S.S. Newfoundland at 06.57 G.M.T. "Now abandoning ship".

27. Q. What was the position of the Vardulia when she sent out her wireless messages on early morning of 19th October 1935?

A. The position was reported as being 58,00 N, 18.30 W, as noted in answer to Question 25, but since this position is the same as given at 16.19 G.M.T. on Friday 18th October it can only be approximate.

28. Q. When and where was the S.S. Vardulia lost?



Answers

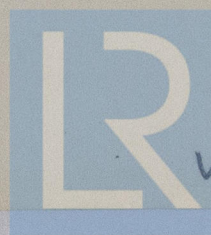
A. On Saturday 19th October 1935, probably somewhere to the S and E of the position given in answer to Question 27.

29. Q. What was the cause of the loss of the S.S. Vardulia?

A. The cause of the loss is necessarily a matter for conjecture. An examination of possible causes is embodied in annex.

30. Q. How many members of the crew of the vessel lost their lives as a result of the casualty to her?

A. 37.



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