

Encl. to Lloyd's Register

INGLEDEW & CO.

Milburn House,
Dean Street,
NEWCASTLE ON TYNE 1.

24th March 1936.

Messrs. Parker Garrett & Co.,
St. Michael's Rectory,
Cornhill, E.C. 3.

Dear Sirs,

"VARDULIA"

We attended the B.O.T Inquiry into the loss of this ship which was held before Judge Richardson at the Sunderland County Court this morning.

Prior thereto we had a conference with Mr. Watt and the 4 Lloyd's Surveyors and went over matters generally with them.

Judge Richardson sat with three Nautical Assessors and the B.O.T. were represented by Mr. Bateson. The Owners, The Donaldson Line Ltd. were represented by Messrs. Maclay Murray & Spens, and the other parties represented were The Navigators & General Insurance Co; The National Union of Firemen and Seamen; The Wireless Operator and The London & North Eastern Railway Co. in regard to the loading of this cargo at West Hartlepool.

Mr. Bateson opened the case for the B.O.T. and at the start pointed out that "no possible charge of any kind can in

the opinion of the Board of Trade be made against the Owners or Managers. In their opinion the ship was exceedingly well maintained". He indicated that no question arose as to the steering gear and in point of fact they could find no fault with the structure or upkeep of the ship.

He stated that the vessel had loaded a small quantity of General Cargo in part of the tween decks at Manchester amounting to 286 tons and then proceeded to West Hartlepool where she had loaded 7,497 tons of coal of three different descriptions.

The vessel sailed from Hartlepool on the 12th October and on the 19th October at 6.55 a.m. sent out an S.O.S. and stated that she wanted immediate assistance as she had taken a dangerous list. Two minutes later a wireless message was received by vessels in the vicinity that the crew were abandoning the ship.

Eleven vessels searched for twenty four hours in her last position but without seeing any trace of the vessel or her boats.

He also gave particulars from the logs of other vessels that the weather was extraordinarily bad; in fact it was mentioned by one as being one of the severest hurricanes that had ever swept the Atlantic.

He also discussed the freeboard of this vessel at length in conjunction with the Freeboard Certificates and the

Load Line Rules and pointed out that it was quite clear that no suggestion could be made that the vessel was over-loaded.

He concluded his remarks by stating that two main questions arose.

1. Why did this well-found vessel take a dangerous list suddenly as she did? On this question he said that the B.O.T. advanced a theory that there was a great deal more free space in the holds after the vessel was loaded than there should have been, and suggested that the cargo was not properly trimmed or reasonably levelled as it should have been. He mentioned however that this was theory and that the Trimmers themselves would be called.

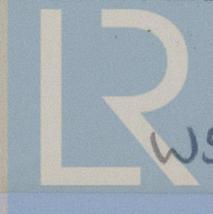
2. The second question was - what preparation was made for seeing that the coal was properly stowed and trimmed and who was responsible - were any further regulations desirable on this point? He made it clear that he was not attacking anyone in particular or imputing blame on anyone. The main purpose of the Inquiry was to bring to the attention of everyone concerned that coal of this nature was a dangerous cargo. Various instructions as to trimming these cargoes were also referred to in detail.

Mr. Bateson then went through the correspondence which showed that the Owners had been most meticulous as to repairs and the vessel's upkeep and that a free hand had been given to those responsible to see that everything was in the best possible order.

Mr. Bateson then proceeded to call the witnesses, as follows:-

1. H.L. Thomas - employed by Messrs. Lithgow of Glasgow who produced the vessel's plans and gave particulars about her. He also dealt with an "inclining" experiment which had been made.
2. W.J. Nutton - B.O.T. Expert Surveyor - who went into further details about the ship giving particulars of her hatches, dimensions, machinery, ventilators, steering gear, pumps, lifeboats etc.
3. W.B. Donaldson - the Managing Owner, was called. He gave particulars of the insured value of this vessel and her Market value; he also dealt with the repairs which had taken place.
4. Captain Findlay - Messrs. Donaldson's Marine Superintendent gave particulars as to the general system of upkeep and maintenance of this vessel; also as to the crew on board and their duties. He dealt in particular with the question of hatches and coamings and the supervision exercised by the officers in loading a coal cargo of this nature.
5. Mr. Isbester - Superintendent Engineer of Messrs. Donaldson who gave particulars as to the tanks and Engine Room department and also dealt with the telemotor steering gear.

After this the four Lloyd's Surveyors were called. Mr. Paton, Mr. Pyle, Mr. Miller and Mr. Sellex. These four gentlemen formally proved their Survey Reports and stated that in their opinion the vessel was maintained in first class order and that when she went to Sea from West Hartlepool there were no repairs outstanding which would affect her safety or seaworthiness.



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After this, application was made that the four Surveyors should be released and they have therefore returned to their homes. Mr. Watt however is of course remaining in case any further questions are raised affecting Lloyd's Surveyors.

6. The next witnesses were five Stevedores from Manchester who dealt with the stowage of a small parcel of General Cargo which was stowed in the tween decks of the vessel but which of course did not by any means fill these up. They gave particulars as to how this General Cargo (Alumina; Soda Ash, Paper Cores, and Drums of Soda) was secured and added that in their opinion it would not shift.

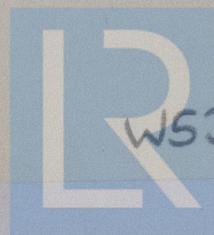
The hearing concluded shortly before 4 and will go on to-morrow again at 10-30 a.m.

We have kept fairly full notes of what took place but you will appreciate from this letter that we do not think there is any serious question likely to arise so far as Lloyd's are concerned.

Mr. Watt however as stated will be there tomorrow and we shall report to you what transpires after our return.

Yours faithfully,

INGLEDEW & CO.



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