

THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 1936

THE "SHEAF BROOK"

Further Evidence at Board of Trade Inquiry

QUESTION OF VESSEL'S ALLEGED LIST

From Our Own Correspondent

SUNDERLAND, Wednesday

The inquiry into the loss of the Newcastle steamer *Sheaf Brook* with all hands in the North Sea last November was resumed before Judge Richardson at Sunderland to-day. The Judge is sitting as a Wreck Commissioner with three assessors, Lieut.-Commander F. S. Murray, Captain T. W. Hanney and Mr. J. L. Scott.

Mr. GEORGE TURNBULL, Principal Surveyor at Newcastle for Lloyd's Register, said he saw the *Sheaf Brook* in dry dock while repairs were being carried out in November, 1935. He was perfectly satisfied that when the repairs were completed the vessel was in a very good state. She was eligible to remain as classed.

Mr. WILLIAM JAMES CRAIG, who was associated with the previous witness in the survey of the *Sheaf Brook* at Wallsend, said he saw the ship when she was first drydocked.

Answering Mr. Holmes, witness said he did not think the ship was in a bad condition when he first saw her. After the repairs he did not think there was anything else which needed doing.

Mr. MATTHEW S. HARRISON, assistant works manager of Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson, Ltd., at their Wallsend Dry Docks, said that when the *Sheaf Brook* arrived to go into dry dock she had a list of about 5 deg. to port. That had to be corrected by putting weights on deck before she could go into dock. Witness submitted a list of the repairs carried out and added that a jolly boat, painted black, was supplied.

ONLY NORMAL REPAIRS DONE

Mr. ALEXANDER WATT, Senior Engine Surveyor to Lloyd's Register, said that after repairs to the steering gear and safety valves they were tested and found satisfactory. After repair the boilers and machinery were in good safe working condition. The repairs carried out were of the kind one would expect in a vessel of that type and age.

Mr. PILCHER: Would it surprise you to hear that during the voyages immediately preceding the drydocking there had been a certain amount of trouble with leaking tubes?—No, in these coasting vessels the boilers are pretty hard worked and there is not infrequently a leaky tube. There was not an excessive number of leaking tubes in this case.

Mr. THOMAS MACCOY, consulting engineer, of Newcastle, said it was on his recommendation that new furnaces for each boiler were ordered in September, and that it had been decided to renew the boiler tubes. It was not correct to suggest that repairs were carried out on the recommendation of the Board of Trade.

Mr. GORDON DIXON, a director of W. A. Souter & Co., Ltd., in charge of the chartering of the *Sheaf Brook*, said that after the vessel had loaded coal at Dunston the master expressed his opinion that he had not sufficient bunkers. Witness arranged for a further 20 tons of bunkers to be supplied at Jarrow. This bunker coal would be loaded on No. 2 hatch to be worked into the bunkers at Hamburg.

Captain HANNEY: Do you not think it was risky crossing the North Sea with coal on deck in winter?—I don't think so.

Mr. WILLIAM S. JORDAN, coal and shipping agent for the Sheaf Line at Dunston, said that when the loading of Nos. 2 and 3 holds at Dunston was completed the captain complained that he thought he could have taken 10 tons more in No. 3 hold. Witness examined the hold with the captain when it had been levelled off, and there was no discernible space for more coal. When she left Dunston the ship had no list. The trimmers did not go below in a self-trimming collier, they only levelled off.

TRIMMERS' EVIDENCE

Evidence was called as to the shipment of coal in the vessel at Dunston, and three foremen said that the *Sheaf Brook* had a slight list to port while loading, but not more than was quite usual.

Mr. JOSEPH MOOR, foreman teemer, said that when they started loading No. 3 hold there was about a foot of water lying at the starboard side of the tank. He thought it was all rain water, as it had been raining heavily all the morning.

Mr. JOHN DAVID GAGIE, foreman trimmer at Dunston, said he knew the *Sheaf Brook* as a regular trader. She always had a list to port when she arrived at Dunston. On that occasion she had a list of two or three degrees to port. The mate asked him to keep the coal to the starboard side, and he did so until they had taken the list out of her.

Mr. ERNEST W. SOULSBY, foreman coal trimmer at Dunston, said his trimmers trimmed coal in the bunkers of the *Sheaf Brook*, and they were quite full.

Asked by Mr. Holmes if he thought there was any chance of the coal cargo shifting, Witness replied that there was certainly a certain amount of space below, but he did not know about it shifting.

Asked why there was an empty space below, Witness said the vessel had a list to port, and so they left an empty space at the port side of the hold to try to get her upright, but that did not correct the list.

Judge RICHARDSON: Something struck you as being out of the ordinary when she did not come upright?—Yes.

Mr. SOULSBY added that when there was another 50 tons to go into the hold he called the attention of the mate to the fact that the ship was still listing, and said the list would be worse if he finished loading. Witness received no instructions to stop loading, so the coal was put in and the list became slightly worse.

Mr. ALBERT HAMILTON, coal teemer at Dunston, said that when they finished loading No. 3 hatch the vessel was on an even keel, but while she was moving away to take her bunkers she developed her former list to port. When the ship moved off down river she still had a list to port.

Mr. FRANCIS N. CARR, staiths master at Jarrow, said that when the *Sheaf Brook* arrived from Dunston to load at Jarrow she had a list to port, but after loading at the staiths she appeared to be upright.

Mr. JAMES BAMBROUGH, berthing master at Jarrow staiths, said that the *Sheaf Brook* had considerably more list than she should have had when she arrived from Dunston.

Mr. WILLIAM MOORE, a teemer, and Mr. WILLIAM RUTHERFORD, a trimmer, both gave evidence that when the *Sheaf Brook* was being loaded coal was loaded out from the starboard side in an effort to rectify the list to port. Rutherford added that the list was the worst he had seen when starting a ship.

Mr. GEORGE DENT, trimmer at Jarrow, said the coal in No. 4 hold was right up to the hatch coamings on the starboard side and sloped away nearly halfway down the side of the hold at the port side. This was necessary, he said, to get the ship upright.

The inquiry was adjourned until to-morrow.

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