

COPY OF
D E C I S I O N
Of

THE COURT OF INQUIRY pursuant to a formal investigation
under Section 235 of "The Shipping and Seaman Act 1908"
and other provisions of the said Act, respecting a
shipping casualty to a certain British ship called
the "ABEL TASMAN", of the Port of Melbourne, Australia,
Official No. 153949, of which William Daniel Archibald
is Master and of which H. C. S. Coasters Proprietary Ltd.
is Owner, on the 18th day of July 1936 at Greymouth.

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We find that the ship was moored to the wharf in accordance with the established practice of the Harbour to meet the prevailing conditions and that she was moored to the satisfaction of the Harbour Master. The evidence shows that both the Harbour master, the ship's Master and Officers had given strict attention to the safe mooring of the ship.

The mooring lines were as follows :-

From the inside bow 3 parts of 6" manila; from the outside bow 3 parts of 7" manila (these mooring lines were purchased last March); the starboard cable from the starboard chain pipe; the port cable; a back spring leading aft from the fore-castle head of 4 parts of 7" coir with a thimble with 3" wire through it. From the after end were five parts altogether of 6" manila; a spring of 4 parts of 7" manila with thimbles in the bight and 3" wire. There was a flood in the river at the time and the current was approximately 8 knots. Without warning the forward moorings and starboard cable carried away. It is not known which mooring carried away first, or whether the moorings parted before or after the starboard cable broke. The ship sheered off from the wharf carrying away all the other moorings except the port cable which veered over the windlass as the ship drifted downstream and eventually broke. Everything possible was done to save the ship after she broke away but drifting downstream she struck an old wreckage outside the navigable channel near the bar and from there drifted on to the North Beach and became a total loss. The ship's equipment had been last surveyed on 28th October, 1935, which was shown by a Certificate of Equipment issued at Sydney and produced. There was no defect apparent in the moorings or cables. The evidence does not disclose that the mooring equipment used was in any way defective or unsatisfactory. It is possible that there was a latent defect in some of the equipment and that the starboard cable had a weakness, and

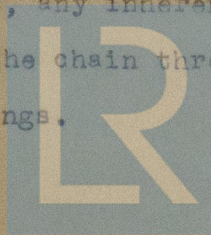
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banking up of debris and logs under the wharf may have been a contributing cause but the evidence, in our opinion, is not conclusive enough for us to find that the casualty was due to a cause other than misadventure.

This casualty following on a case of the breaking away from its moorings in this port last year of the s.s OMANA under somewhat similar circumstances but due apparently directly to a defective shackle calls for consideration of a possible improvement in the method of mooring adopted with a view to eliminating such mishaps or at least to enable a ship in the event of its breaking adrift after all reasonable precautions are taken for its safe mooring, to have a better chance of avoiding disaster. We have accordingly given attention to this matter.

Under the present system, under flood conditions, in addition to the use of mooring lines the starboard cable (inside bow) is used as a mooring and when considered necessary the port cable (off bow) is also used, this acting to some extent as a breast warp. Although the use of the starboard cable is not considered inadvisable the use of the port cable in addition is not considered advisable for the following reasons :-

1. In case of emergency it deprives the ship of an anchor altogether.
2. The port cable being used partially as a breast warp there is a possibility that at low water (at which time the flood water will be running at its maximum) it may be called upon to some extent to carry the weight of the ship in addition to its legitimate mooring strain.
3. Should there be any surge in the river imposing additional strains, any inherent defects would develop and snap the chain throwing breaking strain on the other moorings.



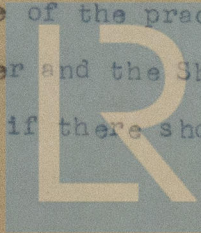
4. If both cables are attached to the windlass they are dependent on that machine to hold them. This is putting a very heavy strain on the windlass for which it was never constructed and such strain may cause damage and put it out of commission altogether. The danger of a break away is therefore always present and if it occurs disaster is almost certain.

It is therefore recommended that the port cable should never be used as a mooring and should never be detached from its anchor but in its place there should be used a suitable heavy wire, say 5" in case of the larger type of ships, or preferably an 18" coir spring, such spring to have a heavy wire tail and be made fast on board to the ship's bitts and should also have wire or manila lanyards to be set up on shore to the mooring post. If a wire is used then it should be of sufficient length to put out a bight. It is considered that with the usual mooring lines the starboard anchor cable and the wire or coir spring a ship should be securely moored to meet any flood conditions but in case of a break away the port anchor would be available to help in staving off disaster.

It is considered that where a wire is used the ship should be equipped with same but to meet cases of ships working the port which are not so equipped the Harbour Board should provide a supply of the 18" coir springs and the use of such springs should be a charge against the ship.

The suggestion that the mooring wire should be used leading through the hawse pipe we consider inadvisable as liable to be dangerous when the hawse pipes were below the wharf level. Also it would be liable to foul the cable.

We approve of the practice of consultation between the Harbour Master and the Ship's Master in respect to mooring generally but if there should be any difference



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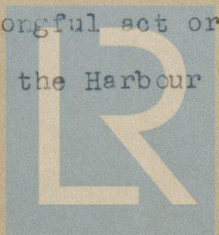
of opinion the Harbour Master's decision must prevail.

We desire to observe that the port appears to have reached its limit as to the size of the bigger class of ships.

With respect to the practice of binding the stern in instead of allowing it to be eased off from the wharf which was the practice when the Assessors traded to the port and which appears to them the better practice, while not being in any way desirous of appearing to advocate anything that might possibly prove detrimental to the port in view of the Harbour Master's reason, viz. a shoaling in the river, on one occasion due in his opinion to the easing off of a ship's stern, which caused him to adopt the present practice, it is thought that that experience must have been an exceptional one and that it might reasonably have been caused by a sunken log or debris caught in the piles of the wharf near the ship. It is considered that easing off of the stern is worthy of a further trial.

The evidence shows that the practice of the port has been for a number of years for the Harbour Master to give instructions to the Masters of vessels to have steam handy when conditions at the port warrant, and we consider that if steam is made ready accordingly that should be sufficient to meet any state of emergency in which steam should be required without the necessity of having the propellor turning over. We can see no reason to think that if the engines had been turning over in this case that fact would have made any material difference to the casualty because steam was available immediately it was called for by the Master.

Viewing the whole of the evidence and circumstances we are unable to find that the Casualty was caused or contributed to by the wrongful act or default of the Master or any of his crew or of the Harbour Board and its officials or any other person.



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5.

The Master's and First Officers'

Certificates which were handed in were returned to them.

We make no order as to payment of the costs and expenses incident to the investigation.

(Sgd.) H. MORGAN.
Stipendiary Magistrate.

(Sgd.) F. W. BARON.
Assessor.

(Sgd.) J. MAWSON.
Assessor.



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