

File with
Casualty report
No. 9377

(No. 7917)

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S.S. "TAYLOR"

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, 1894

REPORT OF COURT

In the matter of a Formal Investigation held in the County Court, Sunderland, on the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th days of April, 1938, before K. S. Carpmael, Esq., K.C., assisted by Captain T. W. Hanney, T. A. Pearson, Esq., M.Inst.N.A., F.C.M.S., and R. Buchanan Reith, Esq., M.Inst.N.A., into the circumstances attending the loss of the s.s. "Taylor," of Sunderland, official number 135,680, off Buchan Ness, on the 30th September, 1937.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons stated in the Annex hereto, that the loss was caused by the entry of sea water into the machinery space but there was insufficient evidence to arrive at a definite conclusion as to where and how such water entered.

Dated this 7th day of April, 1938.

K. S. CARPMAEL,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

THOS. W. HANNEY,
T. A. PEARSON,
R. BUCHANAN REITH, } Assessors.

Questions and Answers.

Q. 1. Who were the owners of the s.s. "Taylor" at the time of her loss?

A. The owners of the s.s. "Taylor" were John Taylor & Son, of Sunderland.

Q. 2. When and by whom was the vessel built? When and from whom was she purchased by her last owners? What was the cost of the s.s. "Taylor" to her owners? What was her value when she left on her last voyage? What was the amount of insurance then in force on and in connection with the vessel?

A. The vessel was built by Day Summers & Co., Ltd., in 1914. She was purchased by her last owners in March, 1935, from Llewellyn & Co., Ltd., Jersey, at a cost of £975. Her value when she left on her last voyage was £3,500, and the insurance in force was £2,250 total loss and £2,500 hull freight and disbursements.

Q. 3. What surveys of the vessel were carried out by the Surveyors to Lloyd's Register of Shipping between September, 1935, and the time when she sailed on her last voyage?

A. The following surveys were carried out by Lloyd's Register between September, 1935, and the time when she sailed on her last voyage:—

(1) 3rd September, 1935, No. 92975, at Felling-on-Tyne: Hull.

(2) 3rd September, 1935, No. 92975, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Engines and boilers.

(3) 1st July, 1936, No. 31854, at Sunderland: Hull.

(4) 1st July, 1936, No. 31854, at Sunderland: Engines and boilers.

(5) 6th October, 1936, No. 31933, at Sunderland: Engines and boilers.

(6) 23rd December, 1936, No. 31997, at Sunderland: Hull.

(7) 22nd December, 1936, No. 31997, at Sunderland: Engines and boilers.

(8) 13th April, 1937, No. 32073, at Sunderland: Hull.

(9) 13th April, 1937, No. 32073, at Sunderland: Engines and boilers.

Q. 4. What classification did Lloyd's assign to the vessel as the result of the surveys referred to in Question 3? Did she remain in this class up to the time when she sailed on her last voyage?

A. The vessel was classified by Lloyd's as \star 100 A.1 passing her Second No. 2 Special Survey in September, 1935, and she remained in this class up to the time when she sailed on her last voyage.

Q. 5. Was the vessel in good and seaworthy condition when she left for her last voyage?

A. No.

Q. 6. When and where did the vessel load the cargo which she carried on her last voyage? What amount and description of cargo was loaded into her? Was there any cargo carried on deck? If so, how much and how was it stowed?

A. The vessel loaded the cargo which was carried on her last voyage at Buckie on the 29th to 30th September, 1937. The cargo consisted of approximately 165 tons of Scotch fir sawn and waney edged mining timber. Approximately 34 tons of this cargo was carried on deck and it was stowed up to the underside of the boat deck aft and then stepped down forward to about 4 feet from deck, the hatch not being completely covered as to 6 inches at forward end.

Q. 7. Was the cargo which was loaded into the vessel properly and safely stowed?

A. No.

Q. 8. Who was responsible for the proper and safe stowage of the cargo under the statutory requirements?

A. The master was responsible for the proper and safe stowage of the cargo under the statutory requirements.

Q. 9. Had the master proper and sufficient instructions from the owners concerning the safe stowage of the cargo?

A. The master had no instructions.

Q. 10. Was the vessel so loaded as to ensure safe stability?

A. The vessel was not so loaded as to ensure safe stability.

Q. 11. Before the vessel left on her last voyage was the hatchway properly and safely covered and secured?

A. The hatchway was not properly and safely covered and secured.

Q. 12. Was the vessel in proper trim and upright when she left on her last voyage?

A. The vessel was in proper trim and upright when she left on her last voyage.

Q. 13. When and from what port did the vessel leave for her last voyage?

A. The vessel left Buckie about 2.15 p.m. on the 30th September, 1937.

Q. 14. Was she properly supplied with boats, life-saving appliances and distress signals?

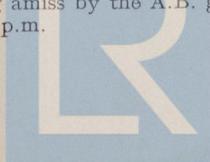
A. The vessel was properly supplied with boats, life-saving appliances and distress signals.

Q. 15. What was the state of (a) the weather; (b) the sea; (c) the wind during her last voyage?

A. (a) Weather fine; (b) sea smooth at first, later choppy; (c) wind mainly from southward and westward, slight.

Q. 16. How and when was it first discovered that there was anything amiss?

A. It was first discovered that there was something amiss by the A.B. going aft at approximately 8.05 p.m.



Lloyd's Register
Foundation

W552-0177 1/2

Q. 17. When was water first found to be entering the vessel?

A. Water was first found entering the vessel from the report of the chief engineer at about 8.12 to 8.15 p.m.

Q. 18. What, if any, orders were then given by the master concerning this?

A. The master gave orders to sound and pump the hold on the A.B.'s report.

Q. 19. Did those on board the vessel discover in what manner water was entering the vessel?

A. Those on board the vessel did not discover in what manner water was entering the vessel.

Q. 20. Did the master give an order to abandon the vessel? If so, when did he give such order? Were either of the lifeboats safely launched? If not, why not?

A. The master did not give an order to abandon the vessel but he gave an order to get the boats out and attempts were made accordingly but were unsuccessful. The order to get the boats out was given shortly after 8.15 p.m. Neither of the lifeboats was safely launched because (a) the starboard boat took charge, swung out and filled, and (b) while the port boat was being cut adrift the master was thrown into the water and the ship sank.

Q. 21. When and where did the vessel sink?

A. The vessel sank between 8.15 and 8.30 p.m. on the 30th September, 1937, about 2 to 2½ miles off Buchan Ness.

Q. 22. How many members of the crew lost their lives as the result of the casualty?

A. Five members of the crew lost their lives.

Q. 23. What was the cause of the casualty?

A. The cause of the casualty was the entry of sea water into the machinery space, but there was insufficient evidence to arrive at a definite conclusion as to where and how such water entered.

Q. 24. Was the loss of the s.s. "Taylor" caused or contributed to by the wrongful act or default of her owner, Mr. F. W. Taylor, and her master, Captain J. Olsen; or either, and, if so, which of them?

A. The loss of the s.s. "Taylor" was not caused or contributed to by the wrongful act or default of her owner, Mr. F. W. Taylor, or her master, Captain J. Olsen.

Annex to the Report.

The "Taylor" was a single screw transversely framed steel cargo steamer with a single deck, registered at the port of Sunderland. She was originally built as a tender for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. The registered dimensions were 110.3 feet length and 21.1 feet beam and gross tonnage of 204.04. There were three steel transverse watertight bulkheads dividing the ship into the following compartments:—

- (1) Fore peak tank and store.
- (2) Cargo hold.
- (3) Machinery space and coal bunkers.
- (4) After peak.

There was no double bottom, ordinary floors being fitted throughout. Both peak tanks were used for carrying water ballast. The only side-to-side erection above the upper deck was a fore-castle 20.5 feet in length by 7 feet high with wings each side 3.3 feet long. A shade deck supported by stanchions at the sides was fitted level with the machinery casing top. This extended from about 2 feet aft of amidships to within 12 feet of the stern and formed the crown of the casings and of the houses immediately forward and aft of the casings.

Steel bulwarks 3 feet 5 inches high above the upper deck were fitted from the after end of the fore-castle to the stern. The usual freeing ports were fitted and were adequate.

The engine and boiler casings were 26 feet long and 6 feet 10 inches high above the upper deck. The only openings in the casing sides were one at each side 59 inches by 24 inches wide with 16-inch sills. These led into the engine room.

In 1937 a saddleback shoot leading to the side bunkers was fitted within the casings a little forward of the funnel.

There was one main hatchway in the upper deck serving the cargo hold. The dimensions of the hatchway had been increased in 1920 upon her conversion for use as a cargo vessel and the altered dimensions were 26 feet by 12 feet with coamings 2 feet 10 inches high above the wood deck. At the same time the watertight bulkhead at the after end of the hold was moved further aft and the cross bunker at the forward end of the machinery space was abolished. The side bunkers were extended forward to the bulkhead in its new position. The fresh water tank which had a capacity of about 1½ tons was moved from the hold to a position on the after part of the upper deck.

The steering gear was of the rod and chain type and could be operated by steam or hand from the navigating bridge.

She was fitted with two horizontal steam independent pumps, namely, a ballast and a feed donkey, and also a main engine bilge pump. The ballast pump had connections to the fore peak, hold bilges and machinery space bilges and the sea. The feed donkey had connections to both peaks and the hold bilges, the boiler, hotwell, etc. There were wing suction to the hold and to the machinery spaces. There was also a bilge injection to the machinery space. There was one hand pump to the forward compartment and one to the after end of the hold.

The "Taylor" was fitted with reciprocating compound direct-acting engines 15 inches by 30 inches by 24 inches stroke and a single steel cylindrical boiler with a working pressure of 120 lbs. The nominal horse power was 37.5 and the speed was about 8 knots with a coal consumption of about 5 tons per day.

The side bunkers had a total capacity of about 29 tons and the saddleback shoot about 7 tons.

The lifesaving appliances consisted of a square sterned, class 1A lifeboat fitted at the after end of the shade deck on each side under radial davits. Lifejackets and lifebuoys were carried in accordance with the regulations and were last surveyed on the 11th September, 1935.

The "Taylor" was not required by law to be fitted with wireless and was not so fitted, although there were private receiving sets on board.

The crew consisted of master, mate, 2 engineers, 1 able seaman and 1 ordinary seaman. The master held no certificate of any kind.

She was purchased by Messrs. John Taylor and Son in March, 1935, the registered owner being Mr. Frederick William Taylor of Sunderland. She passed her Lloyd's Second No. 2 Special Survey in September, 1935, and was classed \star 100 A.1, which class she continued to keep until her loss, all Lloyd's Surveyors' requirements being complied with. Judging, however, from the survey reports and repair accounts it would appear that the bottom shell plates including the keel plates were thin in places, probably due to age and constant loading and discharging while aground.

In July, 1936, one of the keel plates aft was fractured from the vessel sitting on a stone in berth. This plate was not renewed as owing to its position under the engine renewal involved lifting the engine and considerable expense. Doubling plates were accordingly fitted on the outside of Nos. 2 and 3 keel plates from aft, the attachment being by tap rivets. The doubling did not extend the full breadth of the keel plates.

According to the evidence the fractured keel plate had been worn thin by lying on the ground and scraping. The vessel was not due for her shell

plating to be drill-tested for another 12 months but in the opinion of the Court it would have been advisable upon the plate being found to be thin to drill-test the keel and bottom plating throughout.

Before her last voyage the "Taylor" arrived at Buckie at about 6 a.m. on the 29th September, 1937, in order to load a cargo of timber for Sunderland. She lay port side to the quay and commenced loading at about 8 a.m. and finished the underdeck cargo at 8.45 a.m. on the 30th September when the wooden hatch covers were put in place. The hatch, however, was not battened down by means of tarpaulins secured by wedges. The Court is of opinion that the hatch should have been battened down and that the vessel was unseaworthy for her voyage if this were not done. Moreover, failure to batten down was in breach of the Timber Cargo Regulations dated 17th March, 1932, made by the Board of Trade under the Merchant Shipping (Safety and Load Line Conventions) Act, 1932. Thereafter a deck cargo was loaded extending from side to side of the vessel over the hatchway, uprights being placed touching all along the bulwarks on either side. The deck cargo was not lashed. This again was in breach of the regulations referred to and quite apart from the regulations the Court is of opinion that the absence of lashing rendered the vessel unseaworthy. There was a lifeline led aft from the mast but this was not in accordance with the regulations referred to and was unsatisfactory.

Loading was completed at about 2 p.m. and the vessel sailed about 2.15 p.m. on the 30th.

During the whole of her stay at Buckie the "Taylor" was afloat but it is possible her bilge strake came into contact with the stone quay as there was evidence that listing occurred when slings of timber were taken on board by the ship's gear. The main inlet was on the port side in the bilge strake.

The Court is satisfied that the "Taylor" did not strike the ground either on entering or leaving Buckie.

On leaving Buckie the "Taylor" had, in the opinion of the Court, poor stability for the voyage but it is unnecessary to go fully into this aspect of the matter, as in the opinion of the Court, the loss of the vessel was not caused by any lack of stability. The Court is, however, of opinion that had bad weather been encountered the vessel as loaded on leaving Buckie would have been in danger by reason of her poor stability. The owners appear to have taken no steps to ascertain her stability when loaded with timber including cargo on deck.

At the time the vessel left Buckie the weather was fine and the sea calm but later the wind got up slightly from the southward and westward and the sea got a little choppy.

The mate was on watch until 7 p.m. when he was relieved by the master. At that time the vessel was in the vicinity of Rattray Head at a safe distance from the coast. The able seaman was also on the bridge and turns were taken at the wheel. About 8.5 p.m. the master sent the able seaman aft to look at the galley fire and two or three minutes later the able seaman returned and reported the deck was looking low in the water. The master said, "that's nothing she's always low", but shortly afterwards sent the A.B. to tell the mate to sound the hold and the chief engineer to put the donkey pump on the hold. The vessel was not rolling or pitching at the time and was apparently upright. The A.B. came back and said

that the chief engineer reported no water in the hold and the master turned over the wheel to the A.B. and himself left the bridge. He met the mate who reported no water in the hold. The master went aft and met the chief engineer running up who said, "she's filling down there". By "there" the master understood the "engine room". At the same time the master saw that the after end of the upper deck was awash whereupon he ordered the boats to be got out. All the members of the crew except the second engineer were at that time on deck or the bridge. The second engineer who had the 8 to 12 watch appears to have been in the engine room. Attempts were made to get the starboard boat out but it took charge, swung out and filled. While these attempts were being made the second engineer came up from the engine room and said he could not stop down there as she was filling fast. The master had previously looked down the skylight and seen water at the fore part of the engine room on the starboard side. The engines at the time were stopped.

When the starboard boat filled the master attempted to cut away the port boat but as he was doing so the ship lurched and the master cut his hand and was thrown into the water. Shortly afterwards the vessel sank stern first.

According to the master's evidence the other members of the crew all had lifebelts on.

The master was in the water for about 4 hours and was picked up about 12.15 a.m. on the 1st October by the trawler "Ocean Princess". As the skipper of the trawler thought it unsafe to launch a boat owing to wreckage and the state of the sea, one of the crew of that vessel, namely, James Innes, volunteered to swim to the master's assistance when his presence in the water was discovered. In the opinion of the Court this was an heroic action.

While the master was in the water he heard shouting from some of the other crew but did not see them and, although the trawler made a thorough search, unfortunately no trace of them was found.

The cause of the sinking of the "Taylor" was a sudden big inflow of water into the machinery space but there is no evidence as to why this occurred. A theory was advanced by the surveyor called by the Board of Trade that the main inlet casting may have become fractured. This is a possibility and would agree with the master's evidence. An alternative possibility was put forward of one of the plates giving way either at a seam or by fracture. The Court, however, is unable in the absence of other evidence to say one way or the other.

As stated above, neither the owner nor the master was aware of the applicability of the Timber Cargo Regulations. It also appeared from the evidence that ignorance of these regulations was widespread. One result of this Inquiry may, the Court hopes, be to call the attention of those concerned to the existence of the regulations. The Court is clearly of opinion that it is the duty of owners both to make themselves acquainted with all regulations appertaining to the working of their ships and to see that they are enforced.

K. CARPMAEL, Judge.

We concur in the above.

T. W. HANNEY,
T. A. PEARSON,
R. BUCHANAN REITH, } Assessors.

(Issued by the Board of Trade in London

on Friday, the 17th day of June, 1938.)



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