

s.s. "TAYLOR".  
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The enquiry into the loss of this vessel was opened in the County Court at Sunderland on Monday, the 4th instant, and the evidence was concluded and the questions submitted by the Board of Trade to the Court on Thursday, the 7th instant.

The "TAYLOR" was a small coasting steamer belonging to Mr. F. W. Taylor, of Sunderland, and was classed  100A1. She left Buckie at 2.15 p.m. on the 30th September, 1937 with a cargo of sawn Scotch fir for Sunderland. At about 8 p.m. on the same date it was reported that water was entering the engine room at a rapid rate and at 8.30 p.m. she sank by the stern. Attempts to launch the starboard lifeboat had failed and when the vessel sank the port lifeboat floated off but drifted away and the crew of six were left in the water. Two of the crew attempted to swim to the shore, which was only about two miles away, but only the Captain was saved. He was picked up by the Trawler "OCEAN PRINCESS" of Aberdeen after being in the water for nearly five hours.

It was stated that the cargo was closely stowed in the hold, and in addition about 34 tons were stowed on deck. There was one large hatchway 26'-0" x 12'-0". The hatches, which were 12" in width, were in position, but the tarpaulins, battens and wedges were not used. The Captain stated that it was not customary to put the tarpaulins on in Summer when carrying timber on the Coasting Trade. Vertical pieces of timber about 6 ft. long were placed on end along the bulwarks on each side of the ship, and the deck cargo was stowed between these vertical timbers, but no lashings of any description were used.

The vessel was not fully loaded, being about  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " short of her Summer draught.

On the opening day I gave evidence regarding the surveys which had been held by the Society's Surveyors, and in particular regarding the setting up of the bottom in 1933. This set up extended for a length of about 25 ft. and the maximum set up was  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches. This set up had never been repaired and at the Special Survey 2nd No.2, which was held in September 1935 it had been agreed that repairs might be waived provided a note be made in the "Special Reasons List". It has been examined on the occasion of each survey held since that date, the last occasion being in April 1937.

Mr. R. Fleetham and Mr. L. R. Horne, both of the Sunderland Office, gave evidence regarding surveys held by them in December 1936 and April 1937.

At a survey held at Sunderland in July 1936 a doubling plate was fitted in way of Nos.2 and 3 keel plates from aft.

At the survey held at Sunderland in December 1936 Nos.1 and 2 keel plates from forward were found to be badly worn and were renewed and about 200 rivets in bottom renewed, and the port and starboard seams of No.3 keel plate were built up by electric welding.

At the survey in April 1937 the bottom was examined and a number of rivets in fore end keel plate renewed. A number of rivets in port side rubbing strip were renewed and plating in way faired in place.

These three items gave rise to very considerable discussion as bearing on the possibility of leakage into the hold or general weakness of the bottom in view of the fact that the vessel on a number of occasions was loaded on the ground. The Owner, his Superintendent, and the Captain were examined at great length on these matters.

The Court appeared to be alarmed at the fact that such repairs were necessary and I was recalled on Wednesday the 6th instant to give further evidence regarding the nature and extent of damage, and repairs which might be necessary in vessels of this type, and also to explain the Society's recommendations for strengthening the bottoms of vessels which were intended to be loaded aground.

This matter had evidently been discussed by the Commissioner and his Assessors, for on the assembly of the Court on Thursday, the 7th instant, I was invited by the Commissioner to explain the Society's practice further, and in particular to explain if I considered that the Society would have recommended the strengthening of the bottom of the "TAYLOR" if the question had been submitted by the Owners. I stated that the "TAYLOR" was of much finer form than the ordinary type of coasting vessel and there was practically no flat bottom, and therefore I considered that no strengthening would have been recommended.

I was further asked to explain the Society's practice when a survey was held by two Surveyors, it having been observed that Mr. Bartlett signed a report along with Mr. Millar, and that Dr. Pickworth signed a report along with Mr. Fleetham.

Various suggestions were put forward to account for the sudden inrush of water, such as a shell seam giving way, the sea cock to the circulating pump being fractured, or a leak developing in the after peak bulkhead, but it was realised that it would be quite impossible to ascertain the real cause of the disaster.

A report of the questions set to the Court by the Board of Trade is attached hereto, and on this is indicated the answers which are expected to be given judging from the remarks of the Board of Trade Solicitor and the comments thereon by the Commissioner.

Judging further from the remarks of the Commissioner it is probable that the annexe to the report, which will be issued shortly, will contain a recommendation that in the case of small coasting vessels beyond a certain age, surveys in drydock should be held more frequently.

*Notes Jim*

8.4.38

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