

# THE "MILLPOOL" LOSS

## Further Evidence on Vessel's Seaworthiness

### LLOYD'S REGISTER SURVEYORS IN THE BOX

When the Board of Trade Inquiry into the loss of the British steamer *Millpool* was continued before Lord Merrivale yesterday further evidence was given by deck and engineer officers who had previously served in the ship. They all testified to the vessel's seaworthiness and the efficiency of her pumping arrangements. Later in the day a number of Lloyd's Register surveyors were in the box, and they were followed by some former members of the crew. Sitting with Lord Merrivale as assessors are Commodore H. Stockwell, Mr. Edmund Wilson, Mr. E. H. Mitchell and Captain F. S. Murray.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Donald B. Somervell) and Mr. G. St. C. Pilcher (instructed by the Solicitor to the Board of Trade) appeared for the Board of Trade. Mr. Cyril Miller (instructed by Messrs. Sinclair, Roche & Temperley, agents for Messrs. Temperley, Tilley & Hayward, of West Hartlepool) represented the owners of the *Millpool*; Mr. R. F. Hayward and Mr. H. R. B. Griffin (instructed by Messrs. G. F. Hudson, Matthews & Co.) represented the relatives of Captain A. Newton, master of the *Millpool*, the relatives of Mr. C. J. Lowe, third officer, the Officers (Merchant Navy) Federation, Ltd., the Imperial Merchant Service Guild, the Mercantile Marine Service Association, and the Marine Engineers' Association, Ltd.; Mr. R. F. Hayward and Mr. Vere Hunt (instructed by Messrs. Russell, Jones & Co.) represented the National Union of Seamen and the Transport and General Workers' Union.

A statutory declaration by John Gill Falconer, of Nelson Terrace, Stockton-on-Tees, was put in by the Solicitor-General. Falconer stated that he held a first-class Board of Trade certificate of competence as a marine engineer, and for nearly 34 years he had served in vessels of the Pool Shipping Company, Ltd., or the Ropner Shipping Company, Ltd. For 28 years he had acted as chief engineer in their steamers. His requirements for repairs or renewals in the engine-room department, or any supplies he might have needed, were promptly and fully attended to. He served as chief engineer in the *Millpool* from October, 1931, until August, 1932. She was an old steamer, built in 1906, and for a vessel of her age was in fair good condition.

### PUMPS NO TROUBLE

In regard to allegations made by the witness Marlow at the previous day's hearing, Falconer stated that the *Millpool* had two bilge pumps, one ballast pump and a bilge injection. Marlow had said that there was continual trouble with the pumping arrangements, and that the pump lines were continually requiring to be patched with red lead and canvas. "I can only say with regard to this that I was not troubled in this way while I was chief engineer of the *Millpool*," stated Falconer. "I had no more difficulty in this respect than I have with any other steamer." Marlow had stated that the pump had to be used on the bilges for over eight hours daily. If he referred to the hold bilges, this was entirely contrary to Falconer's experience. If he referred to the engine-room bilges, this was a continuous operation on every ship.

There was never occasion to attend to ashes in the bilges. The engine-room skylights were certainly not broken when he joined the ship or during the time he served in her. He could not understand the point which Marlow made that a lot of water came into the engine-room from the service pipes, because all the water used for cooling from the service pipes necessarily discharged into the bilges. During the time he was in the ship the pumping joints and connections were

not in bad condition. The bilge and tank sounding pipes were fitted with iron caps. There was never any difficulty, while he was in the ship, in keeping the bilges clear of water.

ALFRED PAULING, of the Anchorage, Scholes Park Avenue, Scarborough, master mariner, said that he joined the *Millpool* as chief mate in November, 1928. During a voyage from Fowey to Portland they experienced weather of a violently tempestuous character, and the *Millpool* behaved wonderfully. She was a particularly good sea boat. Marlow's statement was the first he had heard of the engine-room deadlights being broken. They may have been cracked during the tempestuous weather, but even that Pauling did not recollect as having been the case, and it certainly would not have allowed copious water to go down into the engine-room. It would be untrue to say that any of the deadlights were absent.

Pauling did not agree with Marlow's complaints that there was an undue amount of water in the hold bilges. Iron caps, not wood plugs, were used on the sounding pipes. During the whole of the time he had been in Messrs. Ropner's steamers he had never had occasion to complain that any of his requirements had not been fully and promptly dealt with.

### VESSEL'S BEHAVIOUR IN BAD WEATHER

Declarations were also put in from George Charles Taylor, master mariner, of Granville Avenue, West Hartlepool, and Walter O'Dair, of Park Road, West Hartlepool. Taylor stated that he joined the *Millpool* as master in September, 1931. He went on to describe passages when the weather conditions were unfavourable and the *Millpool* behaved very well. The only occasion on which he had trouble with the steering gear was when the shaft broke after the vessel had left the River Plate. Many of the hatch covers were renewed when the vessel underwent her second No. 3 survey in the Tyne, and during the time he remained in the ship the hatch covers were in good condition. There hatch beam ends were cropped and renewed at the survey, and when he left the ship in July, 1932, the hatch covers were in good condition. There were sufficient tarpaulins, and they were in good condition. The owners always promptly attended to his requests.

"During heavy weather as a loaded ship the *Millpool* took very little water over her upper deck," concluded the statement. "During the whole time I was master of the *Millpool* she never took any water in No. 1 hold, or, indeed, in any of the holds save on one instance, when I flooded the after main hold on a passage from Waterford to Barry Dock."

O'Dair stated that new tarpaulins were supplied to the *Millpool* in September, 1934.

ERNEST ALFRED RICHARDSON, of Weymouth, described voyages as chief engineer in the *Millpool* in 1927.

The SOLICITOR-GENERAL pointed out that a witness had described the pipe lines as practically perforated. RICHARDSON said that that was "totally untrue."

Was there anything abnormal in the state of the piping?—Nothing whatever.

LORD MERRIVALE: Was there anything improper or defective?—Nothing.

The SOLICITOR-GENERAL: Can you recollect coal and ashes getting washed into the bilges in the stokehold?—One or two cases.

Was that the result of anything improper?—No, just the result perhaps of men throwing water over the ashes to cool off the fires.

The stokehold was in quite good condition, he said. On one voyage, when the weather was the worst he had ever experienced, the vessel behaved splendidly. He could not remember whether the skylights were broken. Skylights sometimes did get

broken. In the majority of cases it was neglect, the skylight not being secured and when the vessel rolled it fell back. The bilge sounding pipes had metal caps.

### REASON FOR WOODEN PLUGS

"We also carried wooden plugs," said Richardson. "It is the practice in every steamer, and these are used in some ports where the natives have a habit of stealing these metal caps."

ERNEST McWILLIAM stated that he obtained his master's certificate in November, 1929. He joined the *Millpool* as chief officer in January, 1930, and remained in her until February, 1931. He always found the *Millpool* a good sea boat.

The SOLICITOR-GENERAL: Did you have difficulty with the ports in the firemen's forecabin on one voyage?—We had heavy weather and the ports and deadlights on the starboard side were smashed in.

Plugs were put in the ports only in bad weather. They were taken out as soon as the vessel ran into good weather.

LORD MERRIVALE: What was the state of her pumps?—As far as I can recollect they were always in good working order.

Nothing special about them in respect to antiquity?—Nothing, my Lord. They were good working pumps suitable for the ship at that time. I never found any difficulty in getting any water jumped out when necessary.

### SURVEYORS' EVIDENCE

CHARLES A. MILLER, a Lloyd's Register surveyor, said he conducted a survey in respect of damage sustained by the vessel striking a submerged object, and also as a commencement of the second No. 3 special survey.

MR. HAYWARD: In your report with regard to present condition of various points you put "good"?—That is right.

The condition of the mast and yards in this case would be ascertained from the deck?—Yes.

And the standing and running gear?—Yes.

ALEXANDER STEPHENSON, a Lloyd's Register surveyor, said he surveyed the *Millpool* for the completion of her second No. 3 special survey. On June 23 he signed the report in connection with the continuance of her loadline certificate.

MR. HAYWARD asked whether he knew that three days after the completion of the survey the steering gear had to be repaired at sea. Mr. STEPHENSON said he did not know until he heard at the inquiry. He pointed out that the repairs might be of a minor kind such as might have to be carried out at any time.

Other Lloyd's Register surveyors, ALEXANDER UNWIN and WILLIAM HECTOR FRAZER, then put in documents as to surveys carried out by them.

WILLIAM WATT, principal surveyor on the staff of the chief ship surveyor, Lloyd's Register, said that he had considered the report made by Mr. Stephenson with regard to what loadline the vessel should have under the 1932 Act. "We considered Mr. Stephenson's report was very satisfactory," he said. "The particulars he supplied were such as we could accept under the provisions of the 1932 Act." Mr. Watt added that important features of this survey were height and strength of hatch covers.

JOHN TAYLOR FINDLAY, a Lloyd's Register surveyor, submitted documents in connection with a survey carried out in June, 1934.

LORD MERRIVALE: When a vessel has been laid up for two years what do you do to satisfy yourself about the machinery?

MR. FINDLAY: I don't ask for any machinery to be opened up.

What do you do—inspect it from the outside?—Yes.

Do you see any of it at work?—Yes. Worked from the main engine?—Yes.

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In your judgment as an experienced man is that an examination that can give you the necessary knowledge as to whether or not the machinery is in good order?—Yes.

At this stage Mr. Hayward put in a document showing a valuation of the *Millpool* by a firm of valuers. As on Oct. 2-3 they would consider her value £6500, provided she was in good seaworthy condition and fully equipped.

Mr. HAYWARD then made a protest to the Court that certain documents for which he had called on the previous day had not yet been produced. "If it is to be the sort of discovery one is to get I must consider and ask your Lordship what steps I should take," said Mr. Hayward. "In the last case I had great difficulty, and not until about the tenth day of the inquiry were the voyage reports produced."

Mr. MILLER said, "It was not until last Friday that we were asked for any documents. If Mr. Hayward will specify more particularly the documents he requires I will see that every effort will be made to give them to him."

At a later stage Mr. HAYWARD said he had been given explanations in regard to the matter and he was satisfied that every effort would be made.

Mr. Hayward then called witnesses on behalf of the trade unions which he represented.

#### THE FIREMEN'S QUARTERS

FREDERIK JANSEN said he had been going to sea since 1894. He was in the *Millpool* as carpenter from January, 1932, until May, 1932, and made two voyages. His quarters and those of the boatswain were not so bad, but there were very bad conditions in the sleeping quarters of the firemen. There was glass in every port, but some of the glasses were cracked. When the ship was loaded they had to put wooden plugs in. These plugs were put in before they left port. The firemen had only an oil lamp burning night and day. In regard to the wooden hatch covers, some of them were not exactly in a bad condition, but they were not good either.

FREDERICK CHARLES LEWIS said he signed as fireman in the *Millpool* in January, 1932. The stokehold was in a bad condition—plates all broken up. The scrub boxes got full from time to time owing to coal and ashes getting down there. The firemen's quarters were very bad. Every port-hole was deadlighted when she was a loaded ship, with the result that they had to use an oil lamp. The chain pipe went through their quarters and mud and rust were deposited.

Mr. MILLER suggested that ashes often got into bilges, and LEWIS replied, "In port, yes, but I don't remember it happening at sea before."

JOHN HANSON said that he served in the *Millpool* as a seaman in June, 1934. After the voyage he could have gone back in the *Millpool* if he had wished.

Mr. HAYWARD: Why did you not go back?—I did not wish to go back. She was just an old wreck, that was all.

The angle irons of the trunk deck were rusty, he said. They could not use chipping hammers, just scrapers. When they got the rust off they were "just like bits of tin."

"An A.B. was sweeping the deck with a broom," said Hanson. "There was a big piece of scale on the side. He tried to knock this off with the broom, and the broom made a hole in the side of the ship."

LORD MERRIVALE: In the hull of the ship?—Yes, in the hull of the ship.

The hole would be about two square inches in size, he added. It was patched with two pieces of iron and rubber washers.

Mr. MILLER pointed out that such a patch would be easy to see. The incident was said to have happened in

August, but the list of repairs to the vessel at West Hartlepool in September made no mention of it.

JOHN RAYMOND SWANSON said he served in the *Millpool* as an A.B. from June, 1934, until August, 1934. The forepeak was very rusty, he said. They were not allowed to use chipping hammers on it. The deck above his quarters was very leaky. He then described the occasion on which he holed the side of the ship with a broom. He did not sign again in the *Millpool*. He "did not like her," he said.

Mr. MILLER: Thirteen of your shipmates signed again. They must have had a different idea of the condition of the ship?—I suppose they must.

#### CONDITION OF THE STOKEHOLD

ALEXANDER STARK said he signed as fireman in the *Millpool* in June, 1934. The stokehold plates were all bent, he said.

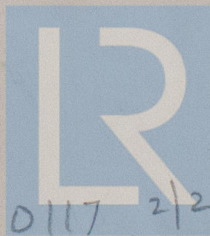
Mr. HAYWARD: Did any coal go through these plates?—Coal and everything went through them.

"The bilge pumps were continually going," he said. "Everything in the stokehold was a mass of rust. When we left the Tyne you could not stand in the stokehold because lumps of rust were falling down." On one occasion, he said, he was going to use a heavier hammer for chipping a part of the ship, but the second engineer said, "You had better put that down. You will knock a hole through there." He once dropped some tackle on to the deck, and it knocked a hole through. The hole was eight or nine inches square.

Asked why he left the ship, he said, "Because I thought it was a coffin for men."

Mr. MILLER pointed out that it was not unusual for bilge pumps to be working continuously. In regard to the hole said by Stark to have been made in the deck by tackle, there was no mention of such a matter in the list of repairs carried out.

The inquiry was adjourned until to-day.



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