

THE "CALDER" LOSS

Further Evidence at Board of Trade Inquiry

From Our Own Correspondent

HULL, Thursday

The Board of Trade inquiry into the loss of the Goole steamer *Calder* with 18 hands in the North Sea in April was resumed at Hull to-day before Mr. J. R. Macdonald (Stipendiary Magistrate), who was assisted by Captain R. W. B. Blacklin and Captain E. H. Mitchell as Nautical Assessors. The *Calder*, which sailed from Hamburg on Apr. 17 last, was posted missing on May 20. The vessel, which was built last year, had a tonnage of 1107 gross.

Mr. H. L. Saxelbye represented the Board of Trade; Mr. T. C. Jackson appeared for the owners, the London Midland & Scottish Railway Company, and several of their officers who were parties to the inquiry; Mr. G. Bilham (instructed by the Navigators & General Insurance Company, Ltd.) represented the relatives of the late Captain Sutherby, and Mr. Gordon Harman, second officer; Mr. J. Hearfield appeared for a witness who is not a party to the inquiry; and Mr. Tarbitten represented the National Union of Seamen.

Mr. G. W. Morgan, ship surveyor to the Board of Trade at Hull, said every assistance was given him by the owners of the *Calder* during his investigations at Hamburg. He had examined a diagram of the loading of the *Calder* on her last voyage, and the loading had been reconstructed as far as possible in a sister ship. He came to the conclusion that the weight of the cargo was well distributed in the holds, and that the cargo was well stowed.

Mr. H. L. SAXELBYE: We have heard that her deck cargo was about 200 tons. What is your view as to that, having regard to her size and other cargo?

WITNESS: I think it was more than enough, considering how she was loaded elsewhere.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES

Replying to Mr. T. C. Jackson, WITNESS said the *Calder* was a well-constructed ship and was specially designed to carry deck cargo. He agreed that from what he had heard reasonable protective measures were taken to fit her for her voyage from Hamburg.

Mr. JACKSON: Sufficient for the perils she might expect to encounter in April?

WITNESS: Yes. No one could do more than that.

One man's idea of what is right may be quite different from another man's idea. You have spoken of well deck covers. Do you agree that unless the vessel was overwhelmed any quantity of water that would get through would be absolutely negligible?

—I would not say that.

The President asked witness if he thought the water would get away through the freeing ports, and he replied that it would if they were clear.

Mr. JACKSON: From your reconstruction of the loading, you came to the conclusion that the cargo was properly stowed and secured for a voyage at that time of the year?

WITNESS: Yes.

Why do you suggest that her 200 tons of deck cargo was rather more than enough? —A rough calculation I made to my mind pointed that there was more than enough deck cargo.

WITNESS agreed that certain corrections in his calculation benefited the stability of the ship. He agreed that the cargo was not unduly high and that timber ships usually carried one-third of their cargo on deck.

Mr. JACKSON: Do you know that the steamer *Hodder* has carried 300 tons on deck and 600 tons below on several occasions?

WITNESS: No, I do not know that. The *Hodder* may be an entirely different ship from a stability point of view.

I am told she is a similar ship to the *Calder*. According to your calculations, the *Calder* was two inches light of her summer marks. Would not that benefit her reserve of buoyance? —Yes, she would be more buoyant than if she had been loaded down to her marks.

ENTRANCE OF WATER

Captain BLACKLIN suggested that if the ship were rolling, the water that witness had said might get in through the well deck covers would not get away through the free imports as there would be no outlet.

WITNESS agreed.

Captain W. M. HUNTER, senior nautical surveyor to the Board of Trade at Hull, said he identified wreckage which he examined on the Lincolnshire coast as belonging to the *Calder*. Local fishermen told him that when they first saw the lifeboat which was washed up it was floating upright and seemed normal. There was no one in the boat. It was afterwards driven on to a groyne and smashed.

Mr. SAXELBYE: When they first saw the boat it was not damaged.

WITNESS: No.

What do you infer from that? —Whatever happened was fairly sudden, but that there was time to release the grips that held the boat, but not to man her.

Did you form any idea as to where the casualty may have occurred? —Yes, from inquiries from fishermen and others, I think whatever happened was on this side of the Outer Dowsing, otherwise, having regard to the north-east gale and tides, the wreckage would have been driven on to the south side of the Wash.

Asked if he formed any conclusion from the finding of certain hatch covers, WITNESS said the only thing he could think of was that if the ship capsized, the cargo would shift, tearing the tarpaulin and breaking the ropes that secured it, and release the covers.

Replying to Mr. Jackson, WITNESS said he did not accept his view that the finding of certain wreckage indicated that it had been wrenched from the ship by considerable external force.

Mr. JACKSON: Do you not think the casualty must have been sudden and overwhelming?

WITNESS: Fairly sudden, but not so sudden as not to give an opportunity to release the lifeboat.

No bodies and no lifejackets were found?

—No.

And only one lifeboat? —Two, I think.

Mr. JOSEPH THOMAS AWTY, master of the

tug *Norman*, said the dredger *Cyclops*, which he was towing from the Tyne to Havre, sank on the night of Apr. 18-19 last. Some of the wreckage was picked up four miles north-east of Spurn. He was convinced that the dredger was never in the track of steamers coming from Hamburg.

THE FLOATING MINE QUESTION

Commander MIDDLETON BEAZLEY, late chief marine superintendent of the L.M.S. Railway Company, and who is retained by the company in a consultative capacity, said the *Calder* was one of three ships, the average cost of which was £50,303. That sum was more than the company had paid for previous ships, and allowed of the best material and equipment being used. He did not consider 200 tons too big a deck cargo, when it was considered what weight the *Calder* had in her bottom. The precautions taken seemed to him ample, and he had no fault whatever to find with the disposition of the cargo. He did not think that the *Calder* was overwhelmed. He thought that she met with some external force. What that force was was a matter of conjecture. He considered that the question of potential collision or damage from a floating mine could not be ruled out.

Commander W. B. CLEMINSON, Marine Superintendent of the L. M. S. Railway Company at Goole, said the responsibility for the loading of the company's ships was entirely with the captains, who could say how much cargo went into the ships. There was no monetary or other benefit to the captains and officers by bringing extra big cargoes. He had never known one of the company's ships to be overlaid. When the *Calder* left Hamburg on Apr. 17, the company were advised by cablegram that she was carrying 971 tons of cargo, 645 tons of which were for Hull. He did not consider 200 tons of deck cargo was too big, taking into consideration how the cargo was stowed below. A deck cargo did not impede navigation. The *Calder* was a new ship and had only made eight voyages from Hamburg. That was the heaviest cargo she had carried, but the *Hodder*—a similar ship—had carried heavier cargo with over 300 tons on deck.

Replying to Mr. Saxelbye, WITNESS said he had formed the opinion that the *Calder* went down approximately seven miles to the eastward of the Humber Lightship at roughly 5 o'clock on Apr. 19. If all had gone well, the ship could have reached Hull about 8 a.m. on that date. He regarded the *Calder* as an exceptionally fine sea vessel, and one of the best crossing the North Sea.

Mr. SAXELBYE: Had her sister ships carried as much as 200 tons deck cargo?

WITNESS: Not up to that time. I have not the returns with me for later voyages.

The President said the Court would like to have the information.

Asked if he still thought there was any probability of the *Calder* having collided with the dredger *Cyclops*, Commander CLEMINSON said, after hearing the evidence of the master of the tug, he believed the dredger was further south than had been indicated, and that on his own calculation she might arrive submerged on the track of the *Calder* at about 5 o'clock. He believed that the dredger continued to drift after the deckhouse was washed overboard. "I still think," he added, "that some external force—a collision or something of that kind—caused the *Calder* to disappear."

The inquiry was adjourned until to-morrow.



© 2020

Lloyd's Register
Foundation

W615-0230