

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14 1931

THE LOSS OF THE CALDER

Theories as to Cause of
CasualtyBOARD OF TRADE INQUIRY
CONTINUED

From Our Own Correspondent

HULL, Friday

The Board of Trade Inquiry into the loss of the steamer *Calder* in April last was continued at Hull to-day before Mr. J. R. Macdonald, who was assisted by Captain R. W. B. Blacklin and Captain E. H. Mitchell as nautical assessors.

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.

Commander W. B. CLEMENTSON, Marine Superintendent of the London Midland & Scottish Railway Company at Goole, said notwithstanding the evidence that had been given, he believed that the dredger *Cyclops* drifted into the track of the *Calder*. In his opinion, the hull drifted much farther south than might be inferred. He suggested that the possibility of the *Calder* striking a mine should also be taken into account.

Mr. SAXELBYE: You don't agree with Commander Jeffreys, the Admiralty mine expert who pooh-poohed any possibility of a mine exploding?

WITNESS: Not in the slightest.

You heard Commander Jeffreys say that if a floating mine were recovered and brought into Court he could hammer it and nothing would happen?—Yes.

Would you follow the President out of the Court while the hammering was being done?

The PRESIDENT: I think Commander Clementson would get to the door before me. (Laughter.)

Replying to Mr. Saxelbye, Commander CLEMENTSON said if he had known before the *Calder* sailed that she was carrying 200 tons of deck cargo he would not have taken any steps to stop her sailing with 700 tons below deck. He would have considered she was quite safe.

Mr. SAXELBYE: Do you eliminate entirely the possibility of an abnormal sea ripping off the hatch covers and getting into the well deck and causing a casualty?

WITNESS: Yes, I do. We have had many years' experience of that type of ship with sheltered well decks.

The PRESIDENT: You eliminate entirely the possibility of the ship being overwhelmed by an exceptionally heavy sea?

WITNESS: Yes. I do not think the sea would have broken the well deck hatches. Witness added that the *Wenning*, a smaller ship than the *Calder*, had carried 208 tons of deck cargo, and the *Blyth*—a sister ship—181 tons on deck.

Mr. JACKSON: You heard Commander Jeffreys say he accepted the authenticity of reports in LLOYD'S LIST?

WITNESS: Yes.

A MINE EXPLOSION

Mr. JACKSON (quoting from LLOYD'S LIST): "London, Sept. 19: While the Dieppe steam trawler *Chevrette* was fishing three miles from the Eddystone to-day a mine was caught in the trawl and brought on deck. While it was being pushed back into the sea the mine exploded and Albert Hamono, of Dieppe, was injured in the chest and arms. The trawler immediately put into Plymouth and the injured man was conveyed to hospital."

Counsel added: So that a mine exploded as recently as Sept. 19, not through being hammered, but while it was being pushed back into the sea.

The PRESIDENT: I should have expected the explosion from a mine to blow up the trawler. It may have been a rocket.

Mr. JACKSON: The materiality is that, in view of the evidence of Commander Jeffreys that mines are now safe, this mine exploded.

QUESTION OF SUBMERGED
WRECKAGE

Commander CLEMENTSON said he thought the fact of certain hatches being recovered indicated that there had been an external force at the bow of the ship. It looked as if the ship had gone down by her head.

In reply to Mr. Jackson, WITNESS said he thought the question of submerged wreckage should be considered by the Court as a probable cause of the casualty. The steamer *Equity* in June, 1930, on a voyage from Hamburg, and the steamer *Irwell*, on a voyage from Rotterdam, in July last, were damaged. The *Irwell* had a blade broken off her propeller. Three lifeboats and a jolly boat were mentioned as having been found. The *Calder* had only two lifeboats, so that it would seem that some other ship had been in trouble in the same locality about the same time as the casualty to the *Calder*. Oil barrels were sighted. The *Calder* had no oil barrels on board. Captain R. H. Sherwood was in charge of the *Calder* up to April 10, when he went on his holidays. He said she was an exceptionally good ship at sea, and he could not have had a better crew. He would not have hesitated to sail with a full deck cargo. He had examined the stowage plans for the last voyage of the *Calder*.

Asked by Mr. Jackson if he would have sailed with the cargo, Witness replied, "So long as I had my main tank full I would have loaded the same cargo."

Mr. SAXELBYE: Did you consider this a heavy deck cargo?

WITNESS: No; I would rather come across the North Sea with a deck cargo than without.

In this class of ship?—Yes. With a deck cargo the weight would be better distributed. Witness added that every man in the *Calder* knew what to do in an emergency. They would have been smart in getting the boats out, if there had been time. The ship must have gone down very suddenly.

The PRESIDENT: Instantly?

WITNESS: If she went down at 5 o'clock in the morning the second mate's watch

would be on deck, and the others, with the exception of the engineers and firemen, would be asleep. They could get to the boats in three or four minutes.

Captain BLACKLIN: Whatever it was that happened, the ship went down quickly?

WITNESS: Yes.

The inquiry was adjourned until Monday, the PRESIDENT remarking that if they finished the evidence at the next sitting it might be possible to give judgment on Thursday.



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