

Addressed to the Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald

Sydney, N.S.W.  
A.C.H.

THE SUN, TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 1929

# "LIST TO PORT!"

## LOSS OF ANNIE M. MILLER

### CREWS' STATEMENTS

#### ALLEGED THAT SHIP WAS OVERLOADED

That the Annie M. Miller, which foundered off South Head on February 8, with the loss of six lives, was improperly trimmed, that going down to Bulli she had a slight list, and that coming back to Sydney she had a slight list to port, were statements made by members of the crew to-day at the Marine Court, where an inquiry into the loss of the ship was opened.

A seaman said that off the south head of Botany Bay, she had a "big list."

On the bridge, a little before the end came, the master of the collier was discussing plans for leaving the sea-life.



The survivors of the Annie M. Miller.



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Faulty loading and overloading of the ill-fated Annie M. Miller, which foundered off South Head on February 3, was alleged by Mr. Rogers (Crown Solicitor's Office), who appeared for the Superintendent of Navigation at the Marine Court to-day, where an inquiry into the loss of the ship was opened.

When ready to sail, the vessel had a list to port to such an extent that water was three inches above the level of the main deck, and two feet in from the bulwarks, added Mr. Rogers.

Judge Cohen, assisted by Captains William Newton and W. T. Howell, as assessors, presided. Mr. A. E. Manning, K.C., and Mr. Evans (instructed by Messrs. Minter, Simpson) appeared for the owners (Messrs. R. W. Miller and Co.).

"There was a dispute between the mate regarding employing No. 1 tank while the cargo was being loaded," said John Arthur Tracey, second engineer of the vessel, the first witness called.

Neither the chief engineer nor witness was satisfied with the condition of the ship. He went to the captain and asked where the tarpaulins were that should have covered the hatches. He said to the captain: "Had I known the tarpaulins were not going on, the ship would never have left the jetty."

The hatches were put on, but no tarpaulins, added the witness. The vessel sailed at 2.45 p.m.

Mr. Rogers: Were the tarpaulins put on, then?

Tracey: No.

Were you on watch all the time?—From the time we sailed till the ship sank.

Did you notice anything unusual in the behavior of the ship after she left the jetty?—Not for an hour or so.

How was the weather?—Moderate when we left, but, later, the sea came up and that's where the trouble came in. The vessel was lazy in her roll.

Continuing, witness said just before they came to Stanwell Park the chief engineer called him up to see the ship. The water was a foot more from the combing.

"Later, he called me up again, and told me to test the boat for water."

added witness. There was no water in the bilges.

The next time witness came on deck they were coming up by Botany, and the water was three feet from the combing. Nearing Bondi he came on deck again and the water was over the hatches.

"The captain spoke to me on the deck and asked me how the engines were, and I told him I had linked her in a bit," said witness. "He asked me if I had any objection to putting on full speed, and I went down and did so. Next thing the chief engineer called me up on deck again."

"The main deck was awash, and I jumped into the water as the ship turned over on top of us. I remember nothing more until I came to the surface of the water."

Mr. Manning: At the time the vessel foundered you were going at full speed?—Yes, about nine knots.

Were the painters of the boat there?

—Yes, with the boat awash they were carried away by the force of the water.

When you left Bulli did the hatches remain in position until they became awash?—Yes.

Where were the tarpaulins?—I never saw them at all; they were not in the hatches.

Do you think it improper to trim the ship by emptying the tanks instead of trimming the coal?—Yes, the coal would have, in my opinion, been the proper method to trim the ship.

Asked as to the condition of the Annie M. Miller, Otto Petersen, seaman, who had sailed on the vessel from her arrival in Sydney to her foundering, said the gear and equipment were in good order, and there was a surplus of lifebelts in the crew's quarters. He knew of no liquor aboard.

Petersen said he did not think the coal could have been trimmed, as the ship was full. At the south head of Botany Bay he was on the main deck, and there was a big list, and water almost to the top of the rails. At 5.40 p.m. that night he took the wheel. The wash ports were under water. He was not alarmed at the vessel's list; she was a good sea vessel. The master was on the bridge, and displayed no anxiety at the position of the vessel. The master was discussing early retirement, and said he was going home for a trip.

## DONKEYMAN'S GRAPHIC STORY

The mate came on to the bridge and said, "You'd better keep her to windward a bit." There was some conversation I did not hear. The captain then said, "This is the finish of her." Petersen was dumbfounded. The captain then called all hands on deck, and turned the ship round in a circle. The ship was sluggish. After the turn the boat remained steady about four minutes. The captain did not return to the bridge. He could see nothing at the time.

"I heard Captain Pilling ask the cook to give him a hand with a rocket, and the mate call out, 'The boat's gone.' I stood at the wheel until I could not stand. I climbed out of the door, and was half-way down the steps when I was thrown into the sea. I saw Captain Pilling washed off on one side, and the cook on the other side of me."

Judge Cohen: Did the vessel have any list going down to Bulli?

Petersen: If I remember rightly, she had a slight list.

And was there a list on arrival at Bulli?—A list after three or four wagons of coal had been tipped.

"Only at Bulli jetty have I known trouble on the ship," said William Bennett, donkeyman of the Annie M. Miller, but always she had a slight list to port, but nothing to worry about. At the jetty there was a list to starboard. They were pumping No. 1 tank, and she straightened up after the tank was completely empty. When loading she took a slight list to port and stayed like that. The ship was all right when she left Bulli. There was nothing disturbing about her. He had a wash and went to bed, and slept until all hands were called on deck.

"The fireman ran along and sang out, 'Give us a lifebelt, Bill.' We both got lifebelts, and went to the boat, but when it was being launched it swung out and the water caught her and she broke adrift," added Bennett. "I dived after her and got into the wash of the screw. I saw Woodbury swim-

ming near me. I said, 'How are you?' Woodbury said, 'All right.' I said, 'Let's both sing out together, and Mac (Macrea) may hear us.' We shouted, and Mac heard us and we got into the boat, and baled her out, and afterwards got three others in."

"Wedges, hammers, and tarpaulins were available for the hatches, but were not used when we left Bulli," said Dennis McCrae, seaman, who had "first wheel" when the ship sailed. There was nothing unusual about her behavior.

When the vessel turned over McCrae was in the water. He swam to the boat. The painter was in the water.

Judge Cohen expressed a wish to hear evidence regarding the valves in the tanks, and William Douglas, consulting engineer, explained the working of the valves, and stated that the tanks had no outlet to the sea. He knew where the ballast metal was stowed, but had only seen 10 tons there. The ballast was used to raise the stern of the boat to enter Shellharbour, which was shallow.

Henry Osborne, yard foreman, Balmalm Colliery, said there were seven tons of blue metal in the Annie M. Miller.

Mr. Manning: How do you know.

Osborne: Because I put it there.

Mr. Manning said the only evidence to the court was that, owing to the water in the tanks, there was a list to port.

But the evidence is that they shifted the water to the starboard.

Mr. Manning: But they got a list to starboard, and then they got a list to port.

Continuing, Mr. Manning said: "It seems incredible that a list should so from port and to starboard by change of water, and that the trimming of the coal was no longer thought of."

John Arthur Tracey, the second engineer, in an address to the court, said that he may have been mistaken in his estimate of the amount of metal in the ship. He was accustomed to measuring coal and estimating the weight.

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ANNIE MILLER SINKING  
"IMPROPER LOADING"  
COURT'S FINDING  
Judge Cohen, delivering the finding of the Marine Court inquiring into the sinking of the Annie Miller, said that the court held its opinion that the sinking was caused by improper loading; the boat, he said, was overloaded by at least 30 tons dead weight; if it had not been for the overloading and improper loading and the lack of tarpaulins on the hatches, the vessel would have arrived safely at her destination.



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