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Summary of Evidence given at the Board of Trade inquiry, into the loss of the S. S "Hartley", held at the Town Hall Middlesbrough.

Evidence given on Thursday January 15th 1925.

President- Mr Griffith-Jones, Stipendiary Magistrate.

Assessors- Capt. D. F. MacDonald.

Mr J. Carmichael

Rear-Admiral Booty.

Board of Trade representative - Mr Burton.

Also present Owner's representative - Mr C. B. Fenwick

Mr Burton opened the proceedings by reading the notice of the formal investigation, and then made a general statement regarding the case as follows:-

The vessel was finished in September 1924 and was of the self-trimming type, built by Messrs Smith's Dock and classed 100A1 Nloyds.

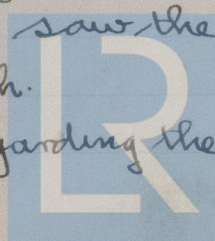
The last voyage commenced from Barry on 25th November this being the vessel's eighth loaded voyage. The vessel left at 3 p.m. loaded with Welsh coal & wet duff for Ghent, she had 3,335 tons on board including bunkers and stores, and no trimming had been done except that men levelled the coal in the hatches to permit the hatches being laid on. Thus in every hold there was a space under the deck not filled.

The vessel was seen by the Board of Trade surveyor before sailing, and the pilot.

The vessel was not down to her marks & winter by about 1½ inches.

The four main hatches were fitted with wood covers and 2 tarpaulins secured by battens and wedges, and when the vessel left witnesses saw the crew putting rope lashings over No 1 hatch.

Coming to the facts regarding the voyage it was



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fortunate that survivors would be able to give evidence.

The vessel was alright up to midnight of the 26th, and steering an Easterly course up the Channel. She encountered a gale, approximately from the East, seas sweeping fore and aft.

On the 27th at 4 a.m. the vessel was shipping water.

At 6 a.m. heavy seas were encountered

at 6.20 a.m. the vessel shipped green sea on No 3 hatch & first abaft the bridge.

The vessel then hove-to.

Shortly after it was found that ^{hatch} No 3 tarpaulin was ripped. Extra rope lashings were first placed over No 3 hatch and then over Nos 1 & 2 hatches.

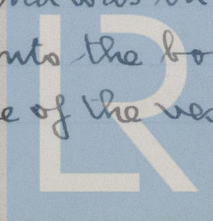
A little later No 3 was found ripped again. Additional rope lashings were fitted and the tarpaulin nailed down in places.

At 9 a.m. a longer rip was found in No 3 hatch tarpaulin and a cover of No 3 hatch at the fore end, starboard side, was lifted by the sea and washed overboard. Other covers followed and in 15 minutes No 3 hatch was full and the vessel listed 20 degrees to Starboard.

Note - See Mr Cairns evidence re size of hatches, also 2nd officers of the Machaon re. list of ship. C.B. J.

At 9.35 a.m. the master sent out an S.O.S. and the Starboard lifeboat, on the boat deck, was got out. One hand fell overboard and was lost, the remaining 19 got into the lifeboat.

The steamer Machaon responded to the S.O.S., manoeuvred close to the lifeboat, threw a rope which was made fast and the lifeboat was drawn alongside. One Jacob's ladder was thrown over and a fireman jumped to the ladder, missed his footing and was in danger of being crushed. He was hauled back into the boat. Just after a heavy sea swept along the side of the vessel, broke the



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W655-0015 37

rope, and the lifeboat drifted away and overturned.

Every member of the crew had lifebelts on.

One man was picked up 20 minutes later, and another rescued from the upturned boat. Three hours later the *Mackaon* resumed her voyage.

The "*Hartley*" was seen to founder sometime after 11 a.m. approximately 13 miles S.W. of the Needles.

Mr. Burton then roughly summarised the points submitted for inquiry and apart from the ordinary questions included:-

Was the construction in way of the hatches good?

Why were the tarpaulins damaged?

Were all possible measures taken by the crew?

What was the cause of water entering No 3 hatch?

Were the protective means adopted for No 3 hatch sufficient

Could the loss have been prevented and by what means?

— " —

Witness: Barry Channel Pilot.

The Captain gave him the extreme draught as 20 ft.:

The Pilot jokingly told the Captain that the ship seemed heavily laden but the latter said that she was actually about $\frac{1}{2}$ in above her proper marks. The Pilot confirmed this by observation when leaving the vessel.

He stated the hatches were all battened down, but could not be certain about rope lashings. The vessel was on an even keel.

— " —

Witness: - Captain Dodd of the S.S. "Mackaon".

Vessel proceeding up Channel.

Re: Weather on day of fatality.

2 a.m. Moderate weather, Wind W.S.W. force 5-6. Vsl off Start light

4 a.m. Wind freshening, sea rising, Wind W.S.W.

8 a.m. Fresh gale. Very rough sea. Vessel hove-to.

Vessel shipped one heavy sea which smashed a sidelight level with navigating bridge & stated about 45 ft above waterline

9.30 a.m. Received S.O.S. from "Hartley"

Picked "Hartley" up about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles abaft Starboard beam heading SW.

When seen close vessel lying WSW, no distress signals flying. Vessel seemed to have a list to starboard. Later saw vessel had big list. At this time the wind force was 8-10, and the sea rough and confused at times.

It was considered impossible to lower a boat.

The 'Hartley' sank at 11.12. Vessel went down stern first the bow rising very little.

Witness:- Chief Officer. S.S. "Machaoon".

Verified Captain's report re: weather. Stated that at 9.30 a.m. the squalls were very fierce.

Gave further details concerning attempts to save the crew and advanced the opinion that the gunwale of the lifeboat caught under a shell plate landing, and this combined with a heavy sea caused the lifeboat to upset.

Note:- This Officer was in the afterwell of the vessel superintending lifesaving operations and was in a good position to judge.

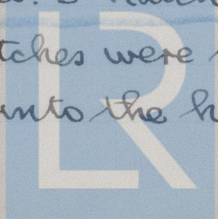
To launch a boat would have been too dangerous as she would almost certainly have been crushed against the ship's side whilst the falls were being unhooked. None of their boats were fitted with patent releasing gear.

Witness:- 2nd Officer S.S. "Machaoon"

Confirmed previous weather reports.

Stated that the "Hartley" appeared to have a list of 20 degrees, but also stated that the bulwarks were clear of the water.

When his vessel arrived alongside the "Hartley" nearly all the hatch boards were off No. 3 hatch and some were off No. 4. No. 1 and 2 hatches were intact. He saw the water washing into the holds.



The "Hartley" went down by the stern gradually, then the bows sank a little and she finally appeared to slide down stern first, the bows not rising appreciably and the masts remaining upright, except for the list,

Witness:- Captain Smith of the "Alberta".

Stated vessel due to leave Southampton at midnight on the 26th, but did not sail until 7 a.m. Arrived off Needles at 9.45 and picked up S.O.S:- Hartley, hatches burst, sinking.

Confirmed weather reports and agreed too bad to launch a boat although the vessel's boats were fitted with releasing gear.

The Chief Officer and the 2nd Officer of the "Alberta" confirmed their Captain's statements.

Witness:- Mr Cairns, Shipyard Manager Messrs Smiths Dock

Stated vessel built under special survey and classed 100 A1 by Lloyd's.

One vessel built to the same specification as the "Hartley", namely, the "Hamsterley"; and another nearing completion, namely, the "Elterwater".

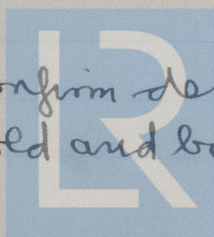
Witness handed in plans, specification and d.w and capacity plan.

Deadweight capacity including bunkers, fresh water and stores:- 3,575 Tons on 19'5" summer draught.

and 3,505 " " 19'2" winter " "

The vessel was built for a given capacity, at 50 cubic ft. to the ton, for light coal and this weight could have been carried on 18'6" draught, but to get the necessary capacity the depth had to be increased, and a draught of 19'5" was thus obtained.

Mr Cairns proceeded to confirm details of design as per plans, including hold and bunker ventilators.



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The majority of the ventilators were on the starboard side. When ventilator cowls were removed, wood plugs and canvas covers were supplied. Canvas to be lashed down. Plugs of Pitch Pine.

There were no shifting boards in the vessels. The wood ^{hold} partition between Nos 1 & 2 hatches, and 3 and 4 was bolted, and could be removed.

Hatch web shoes were of $5\frac{1}{2}$ in Bull Angles whereas Lloyd's Rules only required $3\frac{1}{2}$ in.

The slope of the wedge cleats was about 1 inch in 6 inches length.

A long discussion took place concerning the slope of the battening down cleats. Mr Cairns stated that he had known short cleats fitted without slope, and he knew of no special angle at which they should be set.

Each hatch was provided with 20 ring bolts, riveted to the deck or bull angle, six each side, 4 each end.

The hatch covers were of white wood 11 inches by 3 in. length varying from 10 ft to 10 ft 6 in. There were about 96 covers per hatch and each piece was a unit itself.

Through bolts were fitted at each end of each cover to prevent splitting.

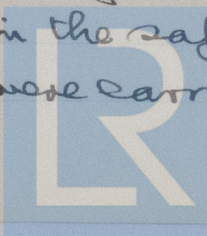
Seven inch hatches were fitted because they were easier to handle, and preferred by owners.

Two tarpaulins were supplied to each hatch made of Jute web ^{and} mixed ~~with~~ hemp warp. The tarpaulins supplied were of medium quality, and Messrs Smiths Dock fixed the quality.

Mr Cairns did not consider that a larger hatch called for a better quality tarpaulin, besides the weight of a tarpaulin is a serious matter for handling.

He agreed that the question of the tarpaulin was an important factor in the safety of the ship.

150 spare cleat wedges were carried.



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An argument ensued as to whether tarpaulins were tarr'd on one or both sides, — without result.

No special ropes were supplied by the builders for hatch lashings, this being the Owner's duty.

No locking bars were fitted, but the S.S. "Hamsterley" is being so fitted, namely one $5" \times \frac{1}{2}"$ bar to each set of covers.

The risk of the bar cutting the tarpaulins was discussed.

Discussion:—

Mr Burton - Rope lashings appear insufficient. Do you consider steel bars superior to rope lashing

Mr Cairns Yes.

Mr Burton - In this case the rope lashing was in one length

Mr Cairns - That is not usual.

Mr B. - Is it a fact that a locking bar operates over a whole section of hatch covers?

Mr C. It should do.

Mr B. Did you find the Metacentric Height of a sister ship in the light condition to be $7' 6"$, and calculated the metacentric height ^{fully} loaded to be $1' 5"$.

Mr C. That is so.

— " —

Mr Carmichael:— Are Lloyds a party to these proceedings

Mr Burton :- They are not, but I do not know if they are represented here.

No answer.

Meeting adjourned



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