

LOST HARTLEY.

FINDINGS OF COURT OF INQUIRY.

WOODEN BULKHEADS AND TARPAULIN COVERS INADEQUATE.

[FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.]

MIDDLESBROUGH, Wednesday.

THE finding of the Court of Inquiry into the loss of the Hartley was promulgated here to-day. In categorical answers to the Board of Trade questions, the Court found:—

That the construction and arrangement of the hatchways was good, but that the means provided for covering and protecting them, and for securing the hatch covers, viz., two tarpaulins with rope lashings, was not sufficient to ensure safety with heavy water washing over hatchways of such large area.

Otherwise the vessel was in good and seaworthy condition, and properly provided with boats and life-saving appliances.

When she left Barry she had the required freeboard, and was in a proper trim for the winter voyage.

The tarpaulin of No. 3 hatchway was damaged through the strong wind and heavy sea swelling over the vessel. Though all possible measures were taken by the master and crew to secure the tarpaulins and wooden hatch covers, under the weather conditions prevailing at the time water got into No. 3 hold through the tearing or splitting of the tarpaulin hatch covers.

PRIMARY CAUSE.

In the absence of evidence from the master, the Court could not determine if everything possible was done to prevent water getting into the hold. The primary cause of the loss of the Hartley was shipping water in No. 3 hold, and thence into No. 4.

The Court added that under the actual circumstances which prevailed at the time, the loss apparently could not have been prevented, but theories might be suggested. For example, as the attempt to heave to seems to have been more or less unsuccessful, the master might have put his helm up, and at full speed have tried to run before wind and sea, thus probably relieving No. 3 hatch of water which was breaking over it.

STEEL BULKHEADS BEST.

As regards the material loss of the Hartley, it could, in the opinion of the Court, have been prevented by (1) the substitution of steel watertight bulkheads for non-watertight wooden bulkheads which divided No. 1 from No. 2 hold, and No. 3 from No. 4. By this means water would have been confined to the hold immediately under a possibly defective hatchway.

(2) A more efficient method of securing hatches against wind and sea to prevent water getting below would be such as locking or securing bars fitted across each tier of the wooden hatch covers.

It was also suggested that the wedge-shaped portion of the hold formed by the under side of the deck, the ship's side, and the natural position assumed by coal at a time when it was poured into the hold in "self-trimmers," and which always remain empty, should be shut off by steel plates from the rest of the hold to effectually prevent the lee cargo shifting in an athwartship direction when labouring in seaway, causing the ship to list, and thus expose her hatchways to the sea more than she would do when upright.



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