

"HARTLEY" INQUIRY.

Court to Inspect Sister Ship.

From Our Own Correspondent.

MIDDLESBROUGH, Friday.

The Middlesbrough stipendiary magistrate, Mr. Griffiths Jones, presided at the resumed Board of Trade inquiry held today to investigate the foundering in the English Channel on Nov. 27 last of the steamer *Hartley*. The assessors were Captain D. F. Macdonald, O.B.E., Mr. J. Carmichael and Rear-Admiral Booty, C.B., M.V.O.

Mr. C. B. Fenwick represented Messrs. Richley, Halvorsen & Sample, Hull, owners of the vessel; while Captain E. V. Hugo, D.S.C., Middlesbrough, agent to the Merchant Service Guild, watched the inquiry on behalf of the relatives of Captain W. Pearson, who was master of the vessel.

At the outset the President intimated that it was the intention of the Court to visit Messrs. Smith's Dock Company's South Bank Shipyard. At that shipyard, he said, according to the statement of Mr. Cairns, shipyard manager, there was under construction at the present moment a vessel, the *Elterwater*, similarly designed to the *Hartley*, and which the Court had decided, on the invitation of the company, to inspect.

CONSTRUCTION OF HATCHWAYS.

Continuing his evidence, Mr. CAIRNS, who was under examination for six hours altogether, described in detail the construction of the hatchways and coverings of the *Hartley*. Questioned by Mr. Burton, appearing for the Board of Trade, WITNESS said that while his own private opinion was in favour of locking bars for hatch covers rather than rope lashings, there existed a wide divergence of opinion among authorities on the subject. In many instances the owners of colliers insisted upon rope lashings, although in the case of the sister ship to the *Hartley*, the *Hamsterley*, the owners had insisted on locking bars as well as rope lashings. The extra expense involved by the purchase of bars was about £10 per bar.

Mr. BURTON: When was it decided to fix these bars on the *Hamsterley*?—WITNESS: I cannot recall the exact date, but it was at a time subsequent to the loss of the *Hartley*. WITNESS added that so far as he knew the grounds on which owners favoured lashings were because they were deemed efficient, easily handled, and not so liable to damage the tarpaulins.

At this stage Mr. Fenwick, for the owners, intimated his desire to ask questions, and stated that he was prepared, seeing the nature the inquiry had assumed, to become a party to the proceedings.

Mr. REUBEN NIXON, appearing for Mr. Herbert Pearson, of Spennymoor, brother of the late Captain Pearson, of the *Hartley*, also intimated his desire to be made a party and proceeded to put questions to Mr. Cairns. The latter agreed that the essential difference between self-trimming vessels and other types was in the size of the hatchway.

Mr. NIXON: You will agree, too, that the hatchways should be theoretically as strong as any other part of the ship?—Yes, they should be sufficiently strong for their work.

Mr. NIXON: I think there has been a Board of Trade inquiry on the subject of this type of vessel, as a result of which a pamphlet was issued?—Yes.

There has been a terrible number of these vessels lost?—That is true.

Is it not also true that, having regard to the extraordinary size of the hatchways, any disturbance in the coverings assumes a greater significance than in vessels of the ordinary type?—I do not think so.

Do you think that a steel-covered hatchway that must be lifted up would be safer than that used by the *Hartley* and other vessels?—I would prefer to reserve my opinion.

AN OWNER'S EVIDENCE.

Answering Mr. Fenwick, Mr. CAIRNS said that when Lloyd's representative approved of the vessel he would see her with her hatches battened down. It was feasible that following an inrush of water into No. 3 hold No. 4 hold might be ballooned. Witness also calculated by permeability that the list on the *Hartley* at the time she foundered would be 12 degrees and not 20 as estimated by the officers of the *Machaon* when they passed under her stern.

Mr. FENWICK proposed to call Mr. Nesbitt, one of the signatories to the Board of Trade pamphlet, to explain the most favourable methods of hatchway covering.

Mr. BURTON pointed out that that gentleman was not an expert in the matter, and that it was hardly in the province of the present inquiry to find the best method of securing hatchways, he hoped that this Court was not going to get outside its scope.

Mr. HAROLD HALVORSEN, one of the owners of the ship, in answer to Mr. Burton said that the master had never made any reference to the suggestion contained in the circular that there should be a separate lashing for each section of the wooden hatch covers. Their discussion on the occasion when it was mentioned had been a personal one. Captain Pearson had been given full authority to purchase his requirements according to his own discretion through the company. Witness had acted upon the recommendation of the circular and had the master's concurrence in the matter of the lashings which were deemed preferable.

Mr. BURTON: Why was the *Hamsterley* fitted with locking bars?—WITNESS: After we lost the *Hartley* we were naturally anxious to have additional protection so we decided to have bars too. The captain of the new ship has instructions to use his bars each time he leaves port irrespective of the state of the weather.

Then these locking bars are adopted in consequence of the loss of the *Hartley*?—Yes; had that disaster not have occurred, we should have continued to supply the same rope lashings.

The hearing was adjourned until tomorrow.



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