

INSECURE HATCHWAYS.

Need For More Efficient Protection At Sea.

WHY THE HARTLEY WAS LOST.

COURT OF INQUIRY MAKES PERTINENT SUGGESTIONS.

The findings of the Court of Inquiry into the loss of the s.s. Hartley, which foundered in the English Channel in November, were promulgated to-day.

The Court came to the conclusion that while the construction and arrangement of the hatchways were good the means provided and used for covering and protecting them and for securing the covers were not sufficient to ensure safety.

In the actual circumstances the vessel's loss could not have been prevented, but the Court suggested the adoption of more efficient methods of securing hatches and special measures to effectually prevent the cargo of a self-trimming ship shifting when labouring under a sea way.

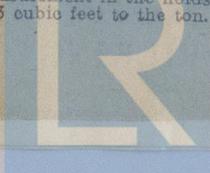
No blame attached to anyone for the capsizing of the life-boat with the loss of seventeen lives.

OFFICIAL FINDINGS.

The questions and answers as set forth officially were as follow:—

QUESTION.	ANSWER.
What was the cost of S.S. Hartlet to her owners?	£41,400.
What was her value when she last left Barry?	£42,000 to £43,000.
What insurances were effected on and in connection with the ship?	Hull and machinery, £36,000; freight and outfit, £9,000—total, £45,000 (all at Lloyd's through London brokers).
Were the construction and arrangement of the hatchways, and the means provided for covering and protecting them, and for securing the hatch covers as to ensure safety at sea if heavy water was shipped on deck.	The construction and arrangement of the hatchways in themselves were good, but the means provided for covering and protecting them and for securing the hatch covers, viz., two tarpaulins battened down at the sides and ends by cleats and wedges, with rope lashings, zig-zag across the top of the tarpaulins and through ringbolts on the coamings, were not sufficient to ensure safety at sea with heavy water washing over hatchways of such large area.
When the vessel left Barry on the 25th November last, was she in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipment?	Yes, subject to foregoing reply to question No. 2.
When the vessel left Barry on 25th Nov. 25th was she properly provided with boats and life-saving appliances?	Yes.
What was the amount and description of cargo carried? Was it properly loaded and stowed? What measures were taken to prevent shifting?	The cargo consisted of 3,325 tons 4 cwt. of coal, all "washed drift" except 195 tons 14 cwt. of larger coal. She had in addition 130 tons 7 cwt. of coal in the bunkers, making a total of 3,465 tons 11 cwt. dead weight. Regarding the loading and stowage of the cargo, the vessel being what is called a self-trimmer, the coal was loaded as is customary in the type of vessel as follows: The holds were run up from the coal tip to above the coamings, after which the coal was levelled down in the hatchways so that the hatch covers could be put on, but no trimming was done under deck, nor were any means taken to secure the cargo from shifting either athwart ship or fore and aft from the angle of repose it had assumed when poured in the vessel. There was an estimated empty space of 326 tons measurement in the holds when loaded at 43 cubic feet to the ton.
When the vessel left Barry on the 25th November last, had the vessel the required freeboard and was she in proper trim for a winter voyage?	Yes.

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When the vessel left Barry on November last, were all the hatchways and all other deck openings adequately protected and secured?

What was the cause of the tarpaulin over No. 3 hatchway being damaged at or about 6.30 a.m. on 27th November last? Were all possible measures taken by the crew to secure the tarpaulins?

Were the means provided for covering, protecting, and securing Nos. 3 and 4 hatchways effective in preventing water getting below? Were they used to the best advantage?

What was the cause of water getting down No. 3 hold on the morning of November 27th last at or about or after 6.30 a.m.?

What was the cause of the vessel taking a heavy list to starboard?

Under the conditions which prevailed after 6.30 a.m. on 27th November last, was it possible for the crew to adequately secure No. 3 hatchway and prevent water getting into the hold?

When and where was the vessel abandoned by her crew? What was her condition at the time?

What were the circumstances in which eighteen members of the crew lost their lives?

When and where did the vessel founder? What was the cause of her loss?

In the opinion of the Court could the cause of the loss of the Hartley have been prevented by any, and if so, what means

No. for the reason given in reply to Question 2.

The cause was the strong wind and heavy sea sweeping over the vessel during the gale prevailing in the English Channel on November 27th last. All possible measures were taken by the master and crew to secure the tarpaulins and wooden hatchcovers under the weather conditions prevailing at the time.

The means provided for protecting and securing Nos. 3 and 4 hatchways, namely the wooden hatchcovers, tarpaulins and rope lashings, were the usual ones employed. They were not effective in preventing water getting below, but, as existing, were used to the best advantage.

The cause was first the tearing or splitting of the tarpaulin on the starboard forward end of the hatchway, followed by the dislodgment of the wooden hatchcovers allowing the water, which was washing across the hatchway, to find its way into the ship, increasing in volume as the ship got deeper and the damage to the hatches increased.

The water coming in first on the starboard side making more weight on that side, probably followed by at least part of the cargo falling on that side was the cause of the list assumed by the vessel. Having regard to the independent evidence from the Machaon it appears that the list was not a heavy one.

In the absence of evidence from the master as to the control he had of manoeuvring his ship at that time, the court is unable to determine if everything possible was done, but from the evidence of the survivors, efforts were made personally by the master and crew to repair the damage done by the sea to No. 3 hatchway to prevent water getting into the holds.

At about 9.40 a.m. on the 27th November, 1924, off Anvil Point, in approximately Latitude 50-26 north Longitude 1-50 west. She was sinking at the time with a list to starboard and Nos. 3 and 4 holds full of water.

Able-Seaman Knight lost his life through falling overboard from the Hartley and presumably being drowned. In getting out the lifeboat to abandon ship, one of the Javit guys was cut or slipped, causing the boat to turn out suddenly and carry Knight overboard. No blame can be attributed to any one. The other seventeen members of the crew who lost their lives did so through the capsizing of the lifeboat of the Hartley when alongside the steamer Machaon and all presumably being drowned. Again no blame can be attributed to anyone.

At about 11.15 a.m. on 27th November, 1924, in approximately the same position as given in reply to Question 3. The cause being the water shipped in No. 3 hold and thence in No. 4 hold.

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 the wind and sea, thus probably relieving No. 3 hatch of the water which was breaking over it.

As regards material, the loss of the s.s. Hartley could, in the opinion of the Court, have been prevented by:—

(1) The substitution of steel water-tight bulkheads for non-water-tight wooden bulkheads which divided No. 1 from No. 2 hold and No. 3 from No. 4 hold. 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, such as "locking" or securing bars fitted across each tier of wooden hatch covers.

(3) 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 the coal at the time when poured into the hold in "self-trimmers" and which always remains empty, should be shut off by steel plates from the rest of the hold to effectually prevent the cargo shifting in an athwartship direction when labouring in a sea way causing the ship to list, and thus expose her hatchways to the sea more than she would do when upright.

S.S. Ransham

one half day

WTB

Better security of hatch covers

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