

The Dominion.

Thursday, February 7, 1924.

PORT ELLIOT

RY INTO STRANDING

CONDITIONS ON LAND

VISITOR EXPERIENCES EWARD CURRENT

... into the stranding of the between Horoera Point and Point, on the East Coast of the Island, on January 12, yesterday.

... consisted of Mr. W. G. L. (president) and Captain ... late superintendent of the Marine, and Captain W. J. ... of the Blackball Coal ... assessors.

... enderville represented the ... rtment, Mr. G. G. Wat- ... ners of the steamer (the ... th and Dominion Line), ... ndlay, K.C., the master ... T. Fishwick, and Mr. E. ... ie, the first and third

Officer's Evidence.

Wenlock, third officer of the ... ot, and holder of a second ... ficate, stated that at ... n January 12 the course ... er was changed to the ... t 11.41 p.m. she struck ... n. the log showed 124 ... hen she struck 150 miles ... at the time he commenced ... was dull and overcast. ... is watch he saw no land ... ately before the boat ... apprentice (Webb) told ... seemed a bit dark—like ... time, and witness sent ... in at once. The land ... on the starboard side. ... oint of land immediately ... ip struck. There was ... ate swell. The master ... ridge before the vessel

Findlay: He had been ... sea, and had made a ... the East Coast before. ... the apprentice with ... ridge called his attention ... light about three points ... ard bow. He thought ... East Cape light, as did ... was not too sure, and ... the captain immedi- ... Saw the light again ... more than three-quar- ... r before she struck, for ... when it flashed every ... s the East Cape light ... apprentice saw it again ... ere satisfied it was the ... t. The disappearance

of the light might have been caused by a squall or by smoke, which often occurred. The captain was on the bridge several times during witness's watch.

To Mr. Watson: The visibility on the sea was good, but the land was obscured. When they took to the boats the chief officer pointed out a bush fire on the land. They had run sufficient mileage to make witness believe the light they saw was the East Cape light. When the apprentice called his attention to a black loom on the starboard beam he could not make certain what it was, but thought it might be the land three miles away. At that time he thought the ship was absolutely safe, but considered it prudent to send for the captain. The latter's order "full speed astern" was given before the vessel struck, but she took the ground almost immediately after the order was given.

To Mr. Kirkcaldie: It was witness's first voyage as third officer. He had nothing to do with laying down the course.

To Mr. Prenderville: The coastline where the ship was wrecked was high. They were doing 13 knots during his watch.

George L. Webb, apprentice on the Port Elliot, who was on duty on the night of January 12, corroborated the last witness about the weather conditions. He was told to look for a flashing light every ten seconds between 9.30 and 10 p.m. At about 10.30 p.m. he thought he saw the light and reported it about three points on the starboard bow. He counted four flashes at ten seconds intervals, and then lost the light, but called the third officer's attention to it before he lost it. About fifteen minutes afterwards he saw a fixed light which he found by the side-light to be that of a ship. Just before 11 p.m. he saw the East Cape light again, and counted three or four flashes. Next thing he saw was what he surmised to be land on the starboard beam.

To Sir John Findlay: As an approximate distance he could say that the passing steamer seemed about two miles inside their course.

To Mr. Watson: He accounted for the disappearance of the light on account of the fog. It was a white light. Both the third officer and witness used night-glasses to try and pick up the light.

To Mr. Kirkcaldie: When he first saw the loom over the land he took it to be a fog-bank or a squall. It was the third officer who first believed it to be land.

Thomas White, quartermaster, said he was at the helm on the night of January 12. At 9 p.m. the third officer made an alteration in the course. There was no change made up to the time, 10 p.m., witness went off.

G. W. Harrison, an A.B., said he took over from the last witness when the course was S. 74 east. At 10.5 p.m. the course was altered to S. 70 east. It was altered afterwards to S. 59 east. The weather was overcast when he went on duty, but not so on the water.

To Sir John Findlay: Witness had been on deep-water for over two years. R. Wilson, an A.B., who was lookout, said the weather was cloudy and

overcast. He saw lights about 10.30 p.m. and at 11 o'clock about four points to starboard, which appeared to be from a vessel about three miles off. The last time they saw lights they were like shore lights a long way off. He saw no land until just after the crash came.

To Sir John Findlay: The last was a flashing light. There were three or four flashes.

A. L. Traill, fifth engineer, said he was on duty on the night of the accident. He had no special order, but just before the vessel struck he was signalled "full speed astern."

John Dunning, chief engineer, said he was on his way to the engine-room when the vessel struck. The signals recorded were: 11.40 p.m., full-speed astern; 11.51, "stop"; 11.54, "full-speed astern"; 12.1, "stop"; 12.6, full-speed astern; 12.7, "stop." After the vessel struck the engines were out of action. There was 4ft. of water in the engine-room and stokehole at 3.30 a. m. The vessel was helpless, as far as her own power was concerned, after the first few minutes.

R. Furneaux, wireless operator, stated that during his watch on the night of January 12, he received instructions to send a message to the company at Auckland that the ship was ashore at East Cape, and another to Wellington. No S.O.S. was sent out.

R. E. Steele, chief officer, said the steamer averaged 12½ knots practically all the way from Auckland. The weather was dull and overcast, with a slight sea. After the vessel struck he noticed the weather was misty ashore.

To Sir John Findlay: He had been looking for White Island during his watch, but had not seen it at 8 p.m., when they were about 40 miles from the scene of the wreck. Witness had been 18 years at sea, and in New Zealand waters since 1913.

Captain A. West, agent for the owners of the Port Elliot, stated that he arrived on the Port Victor within three miles of the wreck at 5.25 p.m. on the 13th and took the crew of the Port Elliot on board. The weather was clear, with light squalls at intervals. On the trip to the wreck, the Port Victor was set back between Portland Island and the East Cape by the current, which delayed the boat an hour and a half. They were about three miles off the wreck, and an officer was told to watch the bearings in order to see whether the ship showed a set to the land. After the Port Victor had been stopped about half an hour it was found that she was one mile closer to the land. To keep the Port Victor off the beach, her engines had to be kept at "slow" while they were taking the crew aboard. Right through the summer there had been haze and fog over the land, and this was noticeable during the fifteen days he was at the wreck. Bush fires were smouldering on the hills during that time. There was no reference in the Nautical Almanac or any Government publications to any set of the current at the locality referred to.

On the request of Mr. Prenderville, the inquiry was adjourned until Tuesday next, to enable the captain of the Araluna to give evidence before Captain Fishwick.

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