

LOSS OF THE "RADYR"

B.O.T. Inquiry Opened at Cardiff

The loss of the steamer *Radyr*, which foundered off Hartland Point, North Devon, on Dec. 7 last with the loss of her entire crew of 21, was the subject of a Board of Trade inquiry which opened at Cardiff yesterday. The inquiry, which is expected to last several days, is being presided over by Mr. W. Hugh Jones, K.C., Deputy Stipendiary of Cardiff, with the following assessors: Captain R. William Blacklin, Captain F. J. Thompson, and Mr. T. H. Blaker.

The Board of Trade was represented by Mr. L. H. Allen Pratt, of Messrs. Vachell & Co., while Mr. A. M. Ingledew, of Messrs. Ingledew & Sons, appeared for the owners of the *Radyr*, the Rupert Phillips Steamship Co., Ltd., Cardiff.

Mr. Pratt said that the *Radyr* was lost with all hands in the Bristol Channel on the morning of Dec. 7 last. The *Radyr* was a British steamer owned by the Rupert Phillips Steamship Co., Ltd., and was built in 1918 by Harland & Wolff, Ltd. Originally she was acquired by French owners and was purchased by the Rupert Phillips Steamship Co. in March or April of 1929. The steamship was 285 ft. long, 42 ft. in breadth and had a depth of 22 ft. 1 in. She had a deadweight carrying capacity of 3375 tons on a summer draught of 16 ft. 3½ in.; her winter freeboard was 3½ in. more, so that her winter draught was 19 ft. No question would arise that the vessel was overlaid. As a matter of fact, it would be agreed in evidence that when she left her draught was 18 ft. 11½ in.—half an inch less than her winter draught. She was a self-trimmer and had four cargo hatches, two forward and two aft. When the vessel was acquired by the Rupert Phillips Steamship Co. in 1929 she underwent certain repairs, including the replacing of a number of hatch covers. The vessel was employed by the new owners in carrying coals to French ports. For her last voyage the vessel loaded a cargo of 2799 tons 5-cwt. of coal; she shipped also a quantity of bunkers which, with that already on board, amounted to 156 tons.

The *Radyr* left Cardiff at 7.35 a.m. on Dec. 6, with a crew of 21 hands. The wind was force four to six from south-west and was increasing rapidly. The steamer left in charge of a Channel pilot, who quitted her at 8.15 that morning, and he would say that she was in good trim. The weather continued to be bad, and later in the day a gale warning was issued. About 17 other vessels had left the Bristol Channel that day, but it appeared that only one, the steamer *Headcliffe*, saw the *Radyr*, which passed the *Headcliffe* in Barry Roads about 9 o'clock in the morning. At noon a gale warning was sent out from Fishguard. At 12.43 a wireless message was received at Fishguard from the *Radyr* stating that she was bound for Bordeaux and was then off Hartland Point. At 4 p.m. the *Radyr* was seen by the *Headcliffe* south-east of Lundy. The *Headcliffe* developed engine trouble and had to return to Barry Roads, so saw nothing more of the *Radyr*.

A CALL FOR ASSISTANCE

The next incident reported was that at 7.49 on the morning of Dec. 7 a wireless message was received at Fishguard reading as follows: "*Radyr* off Hartland Point hatches stove in require immediate assistance sinking trying to get lifeboats out." That message was repeated a minute later and acknowledged by the Fishguard Station, but no further communication was received from the *Radyr*. A telegram was sent from Fishguard to the district officer concerned, while efforts were also made to get into touch with other vessels in the vicinity, but unfortunately none of them was able to render any assistance, as they were in difficulties themselves on account of the severe weather. The request for assistance reached the lifeboat stations at Clovelly and Appledore between 9 and 10 o'clock. The Clovelly lifeboat had to be launched in the open sea, and in the weather conditions prevailing it was absolutely impossible to launch the lifeboat. The Appledore lifeboat was launched, but unfortunately owing to the stress of weather she was not able to get over the bar. The weather had broken down telephonic communication along the coast, with the result that the message as to the *Radyr* being in distress did not reach Padstow until a quarter to twelve in the morning. The Padstow lifeboat was launched at 12.30 and proceeded up-channel, cruising off Hartland. About 4.20, seven miles west of Hartland, a quantity of wreckage from the *Radyr* was found. Searchlights were used, but there was no sign of any boats or any bodies. The lifeboat remained cruising for two hours before returning to Padstow. The following morning the body of the wireless operator was washed ashore just south of Hartland Point, and it was a significant fact that his watch had stopped at 8.10. At 8.39 the same morning some hatch covers and three lifeboats were found near North Bude. Further bodies, nine in all, were recovered later in the neighbourhood of Instow. It would be important for the Court to remember that the wireless message from the *Radyr* was received at 7.49, and that the watch of the wireless operator had stopped at 8.10. One of the vital questions which would be submitted was in relation to the hatch covers, and Mr. Pratt said that this matter went to the heart of the inquiry.

The first witness was Mr. D. RUPERT PHILLIPS, registered manager of the *Radyr* and managing director of the Rupert Phillips Steamship Company, Ltd. He said the total purchase price of the *Radyr* to the company, including transfer charges, was £19,525.

Asked what the value of the steamer was at the time of her loss, Witness replied: "The freight market was good at the time and she was a profitable ship. I should not have sold her for less than £24,000. The insurances were £18,000 on hull and machinery, £1000 on freight, and £1800 on disbursements. The total insurances were £21,800, so that the steamer was not insured up to her full market value."

Evidence as to the selection and type of timber used when the hatch covers were either renewed or repaired when the vessel was taken over was then given, and the inquiry adjourned until this afternoon.



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