

LOSS OF THE "RADYR"

Importance of Loading and Trimming

INQUIRY CONCLUDED

The concluding stage of the inquiry into the loss of the Cardiff steamer *Radyr* was reached at the Law Courts, Cardiff, yesterday, when Mr. Hugh Jones, K.C. (Deputy-Stipendiary) presided, assisted by Captain William B. Blackin, Captain F. J. Thompson, and Mr. T. H. Blaker as assessors. Mr. Allen Pratt (Messrs. Vachell & Co.) represented the Board of Trade, and Mr. A. M. Ingledew (Messrs. Ingledew & Sons) represented the owners, the Rupert Phillips Steamship Company, Ltd.

At the outset the Court recalled Mr. HENRY EDWARD STEEL, a ship surveyor, on the staff of the Principal Ship Surveyor to the Board of Trade, who produced Lloyd's Rules and Regulations for the year 1917-18, when the *Radyr* was built. He said there were no regulations for 26 ft.-shifting beams. The longest beam dealt with in the rules was one of twenty feet. The rules regarding hatch covers were precisely the same as now, namely, that they must be solid, and not less than two and a-half inches thick. Referring to the fractures in some of the hatch covers he was of opinion that those fractures were slightly more consistent with having been caused by a blow from the sea than anything else.

Mr. BLAKER: Is an ordinary coal-carrying vessel more immune from the danger of the hatch covers being stove in than a self-trimmer?—WITNESS: Yes.

Captain THOMAS HARRISON, a Board of Trade surveyor at Cardiff, was also recalled, and, in reply to Captain Thompson, said he was unable to say whether a Lloyd's survey took place at the same time as the Board of Trade survey in May, 1929.

LIFE OF HATCH COVERS

Captain THOMPSON: Can you give the average life of hatch covers?—WITNESS: That is hard to say. On self-trimmers of short voyages you will appreciate the number of times they are off and on, and consequently their life would probably not be half as long as that of long-period vessels. There is more wear and tear in a short voyage ship, the hatches being off and on much more frequently.

Replying to the Deputy-Stipendiary, WITNESS said that there were occasions when men complained that a ship was badly loaded, and he had sometimes found these justified.

Mr. ROBERT GREETHAM, principal surveyor to Lloyd's Register of Shipping at the Bristol Channel ports, said the *Radyr* was classed 100 A.1 at Lloyd's, but he could not say the exact date of her last survey. It was, however, in April, 1929, at the time the vessel changed her ownership and her registry.

Mr. PRATT: Can you say that either at that time or prior to the loss of the steamer she went through her survey?

WITNESS: She did not go through a special survey, but a docking survey due to the fact that she was placed in dry dock for examination by the prospective buyers.

Mr. PRATT: And she was passed and retained her class?—Yes, it was recommended that her class be retained.

Mr. J. P. CARREL, marine engineering superintendent to the company, also recalled, said the *Radyr* passed her Lloyd's special survey in 1927.

This concluded the evidence, and Mr. PRATT proceeded to read out the wireless messages sent out from Fishguard after the receipt of an S.O.S. from the *Radyr*. He said that these showed that only two messages were received from the *Radyr* at 7.48 and 7.50 in the morning. The first was to the effect that she required immediate assistance, her hatches being stove in and the second announced that the *Radyr* was sinking and that the crew were trying to launch a lifeboat. The messages sent out and received at Fishguard from other steamers in the vicinity of the *Radyr* showed, he said, perhaps more than he could describe the bad condition of the weather steamers were encountering at that time. They showed also that Fishguard and all vessels in the vicinity were doing their best to get into touch with the *Radyr*.

THE QUESTIONS FOR THE COURT

Coming to the questions to be submitted to the Court, Mr. PRATT remarked that while the inquiry had been more protracted than anticipated, he ventured to say that the time had been well spent in going into all the circumstances surrounding the loss of the vessel. Mr. Pratt then submitted the following questions for the consideration of the Court:—

1.—When and in what circumstances, was the steamer *Radyr* acquired by her Owners? Was she afterwards re-conditioned under survey by Lloyd's and the Board of Trade? What number of hatch covers were renewed at this time; of what description and quality and thickness of wood were the new covers which were fitted constructed?

2.—What was the cost of the steamer *Radyr* to her Owners? What was her value when she last left Cardiff? What insurances were effected upon and in connection with the ship?

3.—Was the steamer *Radyr* classed for trimming purposes as a "Self-Trimmer" for all or any and if so, which of her four holds?

4.—When the steamer *Radyr* loaded cargo for her last voyage from Cardiff in December, 1929: (a) By whom was the Plan of Loading decided and approved? (b) Had the Master any instructions as to the trimming of the cargo loaded into the four holds of the ship?

5.—What amount and description of coal was shipped in each of the holds on the last voyage? Was the cargo stowed and trimmed in accordance with the existing customary practice at Cardiff in the stowage and trimming of coalters classed as Self-Trimmers?

6.—When the steamer *Radyr* left Cardiff on Dec. 6, 1929: (a) Was she in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipment? (b) Was she properly supplied with boats, life-saving appliances and distress signals? (c) Were the hatchways covered and adequately protected and secured? (d) Were the tarpaulins battening down appliances and hatch lashing wires satisfactory, in good condition and sufficient for their purpose? (e) Was the trimming of the cargo adequately and efficiently supervised and was the cargo shipped in each of the holds of the vessel properly and sufficiently trimmed? (f) Was the vessel in proper trim and had she the freeboard required for a winter voyage? (g) Was the steamer *Radyr* so loaded as to ensure safe stability? (h) Was the vessel so loaded as to be in a safe and seaworthy condition?

7.—After leaving Cardiff on the morning of Dec. 6, 1929, was the *Radyr* sighted at any time or times by any other vessel? If so, when and in what position or positions was

she sighted? When, where and from what vessel, was she last sighted, and what was her condition at that time?

8.—Was a wireless message sent out by the steamer *Radyr* about 7.49 a.m. on Dec. 7, 1929 and received on shore, to the effect that she was off Hartland, that her hatches had been stove in, and that she required immediate assistance?

9.—In the circumstances which prevailed was it possible for assistance to reach the vessel in time to be of any good?

10.—Were bodies of any members of the crew of the steamer *Radyr* recovered? If so, when and where were they found?

11.—Did the lifebuoys marked "S.S. Jura" and a number of hatch covers, parts of hatch covers and other wreckage washed ashore and found at or near Marshland Mouth and Welcombe Mouth, Devon Coast, on or about Dec. 8, 1929, belong to the steamer *Radyr*? If so, how many complete hatch covers or portions of hatch covers were found and what was the thickness of the timber of which they were composed? In what condition were they when found?

12.—Did the hatch covers or parts of hatch covers afford sufficient evidence to determine (a) The position they occupied on board the ship? (b) Whether any and, if so, which of them had been stove in and what was the immediate cause of their being stove in? (c) Whether the fractures in the broken hatch covers or portions of hatch covers had been caused or contributed to by defects in or lack of strength of the timber? (d) Of what description of timber the hatch covers and broken hatch covers were made and whether the latter were old or new hatch covers?

13.—When and where was the steamer *Radyr* lost? What was the cause of the loss of the vessel and all hands on board her?

14.—In the opinion of the Court should definite provisions and stipulations be made in the specification for timber ordered for and used in the construction of hatch covers fitted in large and exposed hatchways on sea-going vessels? If so, what definite provisions and stipulations are desirable or necessary? What, if any, precautions are necessary or desirable in the selection of such timber used for this purpose?

Mr. PRATT then addressed the Court at considerable length, reviewing the whole of the evidence that had been submitted. In the first place, he said, they had had evidence that the vessel was surveyed by the Board of Trade, who issued their certificate, and so far as the Board of Trade was concerned she was thoroughly seaworthy and complied with the whole of their requirements. They were fortunate in having evidence of officers who examined the vessel before she left on her last voyage that the vessel was on the proper side of her winter load line, so that there was no question of overloading. One of the important questions the Court had to consider, however, was whether the steamer was carefully and properly loaded, and it was important, too, for the Court to say whether there was effective supervision of the trimming. It could not be said that there were not sufficient men for purpose of supervision, because they had evidence of the number of supervisors and others who were employed during the loading of the ship. Actually, added Mr. Pratt, it seemed as if there were too many men as supervisors in this case, and what may have happened was that what was everybody's business turned out to be nobody's business. Mr. Pratt also referred to the hatch covers produced, and said that there could be little doubt after the evidence produced that they were from the *Radyr*. In conclusion, he acknowledged the assistance rendered him by the assessors in the investigations.

The President intimated that judgment would be delivered in due course.