

THE JOHN HARRISON INQUIRY.

VESSEL'S BEHAVIOUR WHEN
STEAMING LIGHT.

A TONNAGE MISCALCULATION

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

MIDDLESBROUGH, Wednesday.

THE Board of Trade inquiry into the loss of the steamer John Harrison was continued at Middlesbrough to-day.

Mr. Griffith Jones, the stipendiary magistrate, presided, and had as assessors Captain P. W. Tait, Leith, and Captain Owen Jones, Amlwch Port, North Wales (Admiralty assessors), and Mr. F. H. Alexander, of Newcastle. Mr. J. Burton appeared for the Board of Trade, while Mr. Corbyn, of Middleton and Co., represented the Furness Shipbuilding Co.; Mr. Muir, of Newcastle, the Harrison Shipping Co., Ltd., London, and Captain E. V. Hugo the Imperial Merchant Service Guild.

MASTER'S REPORTS.

Mr. Harrison was further examined by Mr. Burton regarding the master's previous reports on the ship's conduct.

Witness regarded the coal consumption and speed on the last voyage but one as satisfactory. Being a new ship, her engines needed running in. The master suggested that the ship would benefit by easy trimming when travelling light. They did not act on the suggestion, because witness thought on the subsequent voyages the cargoes were heavy. The master always consulted the loading agents. On one occasion when returning light from Boulogne the ship had to put into Brest for more bunker coal owing to her not having power to steam light in very bad weather. On a subsequent voyage, however, the chief engineer reported that the engines and ship were running smoothly.

Witness was unable to say whether or not two firemen were obtained to replace those reported missing.

Mr. Burton asked:—Is there anything in the master's reports to suggest to you that the vessel had not sufficient reserve buoyancy forward?

Witness.—That is a question I do not feel competent to answer.

Have you drawn any inference as to what happened to the vessel?—I feel bound to assume the captain must have shaped his course for Flamborough instead of taking the shelter of the coast. I have no hypothesis to offer as to place or cause of casualty.

Captain Tait pointed out that the vessel had no rise of floor and water could never be thoroughly drained from the surface.

Captain Tait asked of another witness: Was this vessel a self-trimmer or only an apology for a self-trimmer, she apparently trimmed and then left very dangerous spaces? This witness agreed that an accumulation of ashes would take over half an hour to clear while at sea, but he thought that the watch of firemen could keep a full head of steam while throwing them out.

CARGO TONNAGE ERROR.

Thomas Beech, charter clerk, said the cargo was 2,298 tons of washed small coal. The coal would be damp and therefore binding, and most unlikely to shift in comparison with other coals. In the whole of his experience he had not known of a cargo of coal shifting.

Statistics which were submitted showed that holds must have been almost full, leaving little room for the cargo to shift to any material extent.

William Robson, senior traffic manager for the Cramlington Coal Co., said that a three per cent. allowance was made for water in the coal, and it transpired from evidence of a subsequent witness, John Scorer, staiths master at Howdon Dock, that the 2,298 was the net cargo, and that the gross cargo on the vessel was 2,369 tons, an increase of 71 tons.

Mr. Burton expressed surprise that all calculations should thus have been made on a false basis, but Mr. Butterworth, naval architect, pointed out that it was only 3 per cent. of the whole and did not seriously affect any of the deductions arrived at.

Mr. Burton replied that it meant a difference of 3½ inches in the draft, but Mr. Butterworth adhered to his point.

Mr. Burton asked Mr. James Batty, department dock master, if, having regard to the season of the year, everyone was sober when the ship left dock.

Witness replied that he had no information on the point.

PILOT'S EVIDENCE.

A Tyne pilot said he took the ship out of dock shortly after midnight on Christmas morning, but she did not sail then, being short of two firemen. Two men offered their services on the staiths, but the engineer would not take them as they had no discharges to show that they had been to sea before. He took the ship out at midnight the following night, when he understood that a full crew had been obtained. When he left the ship the weather seemed quite fine, though a southerly wind sprang up afterwards.

The hearing was adjourned.



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