

THE JOHN HARRISON DISASTER.

FINDINGS OF THE COURT OF INQUIRY.

WELL BUILT, BUT NOT MANNED TO SCALE.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

MIDDLESBROUGH, Tuesday.

THE findings of the court of inquiry into the loss of the John Harrison were announced to-day. The vessel was presumed to have foundered with all hands on passage from the Tyne to Amsterdam on or about December 27th, 1924. The court's report opens with the following passage:—

It appears to the court that the John Harrison was well built, and complied with all the Board of Trade requirements as regards equipment, but as she was apparently not manned to scale, it appears to the court that an efficient watch, which should include a man on the lookout, was not and could not have been kept, having regard to the number and rating of the crew shipped. In the absence of direct evidence, however, the court is unable to determine the exact cause of the casualty.

MORE SEAWORTHY TRIM.

The court also found that when the vessel left the Tyne early on the morning of December 26th, she was in a good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipment.

Dealing with the question of trimming, the court considered that for the voyage from the Tyne to Amsterdam a more seaworthy trim of the ship could have been obtained by trimming the coal under the deck in the after holds only, and so enabling an additional amount of cargo to be carried there, more than sufficient to pay for the cost of the said trimming.

Although direct evidence was incomplete, the court thought the hatchways were properly covered and adequately protected and secured.

In answer to a question as to whether the vessel was in proper trim and had the freeboard required for a winter voyage, the court was of the opinion that she had at least 2½ inches more freeboard than that required. As to trim, the evidence was conflicting, but it appeared to have been nearly an even keel. The court were also of opinion that a trim more by the stern could and should have been given. The ship was sufficiently stable, and in view of the small weight of water which could lodge in the fore well, the vessel would recover, even if large quantities of water were shipped elsewhere.

SURMISE OF VESSEL'S TRACK.

As the weather at the time of sailing was moderate, it was fair to assume that the vessel kept her usual course as far as Flamborough, and then finding the weather still more or less moderate, there was the probability that she took her departure from that position, and shaped her course across the North Sea, intending to pass clear of the banks lying off the Norfolk coast. She would in that case be passing those banks on the starboard side about the time when she would encounter the full force of the south-west gale. The alternative probability was that the vessel when off Flamborough shaped her course more or less under the shelter of land, with the intention of eventually arriving on the landward side of Haisboro Sands, and taking her departure from Newark Lightship for the Dutch coast. The court could only surmise that she foundered under unknown circumstances in the heavy weather which prevailed.

© 2020

Lloyd's Register
Foundation

W687-0136