

"JOHN HARRISON" INQUIRY**Trimming Qualities of the Ship.****From Our Own Correspondent.**

MIDDLESBROUGH, Wednesday.

At to-day's resumed Board of Trade Inquiry at Middlesbrough into the loss of the self-trimming collier *John Harrison*, Mr. MUIR, appearing for the owners, said he wished to call attention to a statement made the previous day by Mr. Burton, who is conducting the case for the Board of Trade. Mr. Burton had stated that the only traces found were a lifeboat and life-buoy picked up on the northern coast of Holland. He (Mr. Muir) now desired to call attention to a paragraph in the "Westminster Gazette" on Jan. 14 announcing that "wreckage" had been found on the Dutch coast.

Mr. BURTON agreed to make inquiries, but added that he thought the Dutch authorities would have notified the Board of Trade had such been the case.

The first witness was Mr. HAROLD HARRISON, of the H. H. Harrison Shipping Company, Ltd. Witness, examined by Mr. Burton, said he regarded the vessel's coal consumption as reported by the master on her last voyage but one as satisfactory. She was a new ship, and the engines needed running in.

TRIMMING SPACE.

The captain had reported that there were spaces left in the wings where coal would not run, and had suggested that by "easy" trimming the ship would benefit. She had 2 ft. more beam than the *Paddington*, the master had proceeded in his report, and consequently more space to trim.

"Did you act on that suggestion?" asked Mr. BURTON.

WITNESS: No; I think that all subsequent cargoes were heavy and the captain always consulted with the agents. On the voyage from Boulogne the master had reported he agreed that the ship seemed not to have the power to steam against bad weather. That was the first homeward voyage "light," and in consequence of the weather she made slow progress. In order to complete her voyage she had to put into Brest for more bunker coal.

A letter to Mr. Purdie, of the building firm, the Furness Shipbuilding Company, Ltd., from her chief engineer (Mr. W. McFarlane) reported that the engines and boilers of the ship were running smoothly and satisfactorily.

But, asked Mr. BURTON, "Did you not think that the vessel had not sufficient power?"—WITNESS: "No."

Then what would the master's report convey to your mind?—Possibly the master was upset.

Yes, pursued Mr. BURTON; but then there is the fact of the vessel having made much leeway?—These are questions difficult for me to answer; ships of this type and power made a lot of leeway when light.

Were any instructions given by you to the master for the loading of this vessel?—No; we give our instructions to the agents.

Can you say whether or not two firemen were shipped to take the places of the two firemen reported missing?—No; we only heard that the ship had been detained on account of a shortage of two firemen. We assumed that the master sailed with a complete crew, as the vessel had been detained on that account.

LIST OF THE CREW.

Where did you get the information from when you supplied the list of a crew of seventeen to the Board of Trade?—We wrote to the Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine at Dock Street, Newcastle, but had difficulty in getting a list. I may say that the Shipping Federation accepted this list as correct.

Witness added that there was nothing in the reports to suggest to him that the vessel had not sufficient reserve buoyancy forward. Regarding the disappearance of the vessel, WITNESS said that the only information he had received came from the master of the *Tynemouth*, who said he thought that he had seen the *John Harrison* off Flamborough, but as that master's vessel left the Tyne twelve hours later than the *John Harrison* it was possible he had mistaken some other steamer for it.

Asked if he had drawn any inference as to the fate of the vessel, WITNESS said: "I feel bound to assume that the captain must have shaped his course from Flamborough instead of taking the shelter of the coast." Inquiries had been made all along the coast stations to Flamborough. He had no hypothesis to offer as to the time or place of the casualty.

ASSESSOR AND DESIGN OF SHIP.

Captain TAIT (Assessor): What induced you to build a ship having no rise of floor—"That," answered WITNESS, "is a difficult question to answer. It is our practice to get the builders to submit designs, and they are accepted."

I suppose you know that the objection to that is that the water can never thoroughly be drained from the surface? Then we have heard this vessel described as a self-trimmer, yet she seems to be a vessel that fails to trim. She needed trimming. I notice that Messrs. Harrisons' instructions to their masters are to consider the safety of their vessels first and not to run any risks. That in case you might have done yourself an injustice.

The next witness was Mr. EYNDER FAIRFOLD, assistant superintendent engineer to Messrs. Harrisons. On the question of the accumulation of ashes referred to before the vessel left, he thought that the clearing-out might take more than half an hour. In regard to the hatch covers, he said that he himself would have been content to go to sea in the vessel with such covers. On being asked if he could explain how she was lost, he answered only by the terrific weather she encountered.

Captain TAIT: I would like to ask you if this vessel is really a self-trimmer or only

an apology for a self-trimmer?—She is called a self-trimmer.

"But she trims with coal," pursued Captain TAIT, "and that leaves dangerous spaces. The after-deck would be continually flooded also, would it not, in your opinion?"—Yes, sir, in my opinion.

Mr. BLACKBOURN, director of Burns & Loudemann, Ltd., Newcastle, who chartered the vessel, stated that she carried Cramlington coal, which was likely to settle.

The inquiry was adjourned.



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