

"JOHN HARRISON" LOSS.**"Unknown Circumstances"
of Sinking.****COURT OF INQUIRY FINDINGS.****From Our Own Correspondent.**

MIDDLESBROUGH, Tuesday.

The Board of Trade inquiry into the loss of the self-trimming collier *John Harrison* was brought to a close to-day, when the Court, which consisted of Mr. Griffith Jones, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captain P. W. Tait and Captain Owen Jones, Nautical Assessors, and Mr. F. H. Alexander, Naval Architect Assessor, delivered judgment. The *John Harrison* presumably foundered with all hands while on a voyage from the Tyne to Amsterdam with a cargo of coal on or about Dec. 27 last.

In giving judgment, Mr. GRIFFITH JONES said the Court found that the *John Harrison* was well built and complied with all Board of Trade requirements as regards equipment, but as she was apparently not manned to scale, it appeared to the Court that an efficient watch, which should include a man on the look-out, 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 was unable to determine the exact cause of the casualty.

BOARD OF TRADE QUESTIONS.

Answering Board of Trade questions in detail, the Court stated that the cost of the vessel to her owners was £31,290, and the owners estimated her value, when she left the Tyne, at about £32,500, having regard to the increased cost of material. The insurance effected upon and in connection with the ship amounted to £3363. The Court found that when the *John Harrison* left the Tyne she was in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipment. As regards stowage, the vessel being what was described as a self-trimming collier, coal was run into each hatch until it stood above the coamings. It was then levelled down by trimmers so that the hatch covers could be put on, but no trimming was done under deck as each hatch was filled when levelled down. The Court considered that for this voyage a more seaworthy trim of the ship should have been obtained by trimming the coal under the deck in the after-hold only and so enabling an additional amount of cargo to be carried—more than sufficient to pay the cost of the said trimming. Although direct evidence was incomplete, the Court considered the hatchways were properly covered and adequately protected and secured. The vessel was provided with adequate means for quickly freeing the decks from any water shipped.

In reply to a question as to whether the vessel was in proper trim and had the freeboard required for a winter voyage, the Court stated that she had at least 2½ in. more freeboard than that required for a winter voyage.

TRIM OF THE SHIP.

As to the trim, the evidence was conflicting, but it appeared to have been nearly on an even keel. The Court was of opinion that a trim more by stern could and should have been given. The vessel 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. As the weather at the time of her sailing from the Tyne was moderate, it was fair to assume that the vessel kept usual course as far as Flamborough Head, and then, finding that weather was still more or less moderate, there was a 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 her starboard side about the time when she would encounter full force of the south-westerly gale.

An alternative probability was that the vessel, when off Flamborough Head, shaped her course, more or less, under the shelter of land with intention eventually of passing on the landward side of Haisborough Sands. The Court could only surmise that she foundered under unknown circumstances in the heavy weather which prevailed.

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