

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, 1894.REPORT OF COURT.

In the matter of a Formal Investigation held at Middlesbrough on the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 26th days of May 1925 before M.P. Griffith-Jones Esq., O.B.E., Stipendiary Magistrate for Middlesbrough assisted by Capt. P.W. Tait A.I.N.A. and Capt. Owen Jones (Nautical Assessors) and F.H. Alexander Esq., M.Sc. M.Inst. N.A. (Naval Architect Assessor) into the circumstances attending the loss of the British steamship s.s. "JOHN HARRISON" official number 148,495 of London which presumably foundered with all hands on a passage from the Tyne to Amsterdam on or about the 27th December 1924.

The Court having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above mentioned shipping casualty, finds for the reasons stated in the Annex hereto, 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 look-out, was not and could not have been kept, having regard to the number and rating of crew shipped. In the absence of direct evidence however the Court is unable to determine the exact cause of the casualty.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Muir, Mr. Corbyn and Mr. Burton addressed the Court, and Mr. Burton then submitted the following questions on behalf of the Board of Trade:-

(1) What was the cost of the s.s. "JOHN HARRISON" to her Owner?

What was her value when she last left the Tyne?

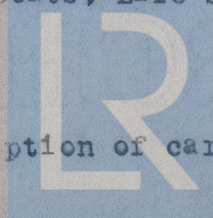
What Insurances were effected upon and in connection with the ship?

(2) When the vessel left the Tyne on the early morning of the 26th December last.

(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) What was the amount and description of cargo carried?



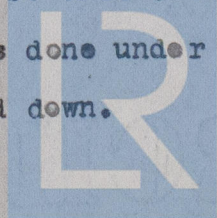
2. (c) Was it properly stowed, trimmed and secured from shifting?
 (d) Were the hatchways properly covered and adequately protected and secured?
 (e) Was the vessel provided with adequate means for quickly freeing the decks from any water shipped thereon?
 (f) Was the vessel in proper trim and had she the freeboard required for a Winter voyage?
 (g) Was the vessel sufficiently stable and would she recover if heavy water was shipped in the fore well which might be prevented from passing across the deck by the trunk?
- 3 What is the cause of the vessel not having been heard of since the Pilot left her at the Tyne Pier Heads at or about 0.45 a.m. of the 26th December last.

To which the Court replied as follows:-

- (1) The cost of the vessel to her Owner was £31, 290. The Owner estimated her value when she last left the Tyne at about £32,500 having regard to the increased cost of material. The insurances effected upon and in connection with the ship were as follows:-

On Hull and Machinery...	£26,000
On Outfit...	£ 2,600
On Freight..	£ 3,900
On Premiums (reducing monthly)	...		<u>£ 1,134.</u>
Total.			<u>£33,634.</u>

2. (a) Yes.
 (b) Yes.
 (c) The gross weight of cargo, including 71 tons of "adhesive water" consisted of 2369 Tons 7 Cwts, of Cramlington Screened and washed small coal. As regards the stowage, the vessel being what is styled a "Self Trimming" collier, the coal was run in to each hatch until it stood above the coamings; it was then levelled down by the trimmers so that the hatch covers could be put on, but no trimming was done under the deck as each hatch was filled when levelled down.



2. (c) The Court considers that for this voyage 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 there carried, more than sufficient to pay the cost of the said trimming.
- (d) Although direct evidence is incomplete the Court considers that the hatchways were properly covered and adequately protected and secured.
- (e) Yes.
- (f) The vessel had at least $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches more freeboard than that required for a winter voyage. As to the trim, the evidence was conflicting, but it appears to have been nearly level keel. The Court is of the opinion that a trim more by the stern could and should have been given.
- (g) 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.
- (3) As the weather at the time of her sailing from the Tyne was moderate, it is fair to assume that the vessel kept the usual course as far as Flamborough Head, and then, finding that the weather was still more or less moderate, there is 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 the full force of the S.W. gale. An alternative probability is that the vessel when off Flamborough Head shaped her course more or less under shelter of the land with the intention eventually of passing on the landward side of Haisborough Sands and taking her departure from the Newark Lightship for the Dutch Coast, which is the course more usually chosen. The Court can only surmise that she foundered under unknown circumstances in the heavy weather which prevailed.

