

MEMORANDUM.

DEPARTMENT OF NAVIGATION, SYDNEY,

24th February, 1927.

Subject: Steam Collier 'Galava' foundering off Tuggerah Reef on the 9th February, 1927.

Papers: Navigation 27/337

The Steam Collier 'Galava' whilst on a voyage from Catherine Hill Bay to Sydney, Coal laden, suddenly capsized and foundered at about 12.45 a.m. on the 9th February, 1927, in an approximate position 4 miles south of Tuggerah Reef resulting in the death by drowning of seven of the crew of twelve.

A Preliminary Inquiry was held by me into the circumstances attending the casualty. The Witnesses examined included the Surveyors and the Superintendent Engineer of the Adelaide S.S. Co. who supervised the thorough overhaul of the vessel for reclassification, and on the 1st February, 1927, Lloyds issued their Certificate - Special Survey Second No.2.

The following evidence was adduced:-

James Charles Pearson stated that he was and had been Master of the 'Galava' for 2-years and 3-months. The vessel was in a thoroughly seaworthy condition. After completing loading 430 tons of coal including bunkers at Catherine Hill Bay jetty, the vessel's draft was 12'4" forward and 10' aft, giving her a freeboard of 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " her statutory freeboard being 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The coal was well trimmed before leaving the jetty and the hatches put on and closely battened down. The vessel loaded with her starboard side to the jetty and there was no range alongside while loading. At 9.40 p.m. on the 8th instant her lines were cast off, the anchor hove up and the vessel proceeded out of the Bay until Morah Head light was opened out. Various courses from S.E. to S. were then followed for about 20 minutes, when a course was shaped S. X W. mag. for Sydney. The wind at the time was from the direction of South to S.E. accompanied by a moderate southerly swell. - After satisfying himself that everything was in order, the Master left the bridge in charge of the Mate (Charles Norton Lancaster). Just before 1 a.m. on the 9th he alleges he was called by the Mate who said the ship had a nasty list to port and the fore deck rail was under water. He immediately told the Mate to prepare the lifeboat which was fully equipped. In less than half a minute he went on deck and it was apparent at once that the ship was doomed as it was too late to attempt to put out the lifeboat. He therefore instructed the Mate to get a rocket and he went to see about issuing lifejackets which were in a box on the bridge. He threw the lifejackets down on to the deck and called out for everyone to get one. He then blew the steam whistle and went forward to see if there were any men in the fore-castle. He observed the hatches were on and battened down at that time. Within two minutes after being called he found himself in the water near the Chief Engineer and an A.B. named Brown. He could not assign any cause for the vessel's loss. He had found the Mate a careful and trustworthy

See page 3
10' forward
12-4" aft.

to Judge's decision
4-3-27
10-4 forward.
12-0" aft.

6"
A.G. Heron

Figures evidently
transposed.

navigator. He was unable to say what distance the vessel passed off Mrah Head. - At break of day the land was distinctly visible. He reached the shore at about 10 a.m. on the 9th instant near Point Upright.

All log books and ships documents, together with the personal effects of the whole of the crew were lost with the ship.

John Montgomery Flak, Chief Engineer of the 'Galava' stated that he had served as Engineer of that vessel for some years. He was on board during the vessel's extensive overhaul in Sydney and considered the work done to her was well and faithfully carried out, and after completion he was of opinion that the vessel was thoroughly seaworthy in every respect.

He was on duty at Catherine Hill Bay while the 'Galava' was loading and before leaving, sounded the bilges which were found to be dry. At 9.30 p.m. he got the stand-by order, 10 minutes afterwards he got the order slow ahead and shortly subsequent full speed ahead. At about 12.45 a.m. on the 9th instant a Fireman Dondero ran into the engineroom and inquired whether there was any water in the engineroom bilges, he said the vessel had a bad list and that it was getting worse. The Fireman then went up the ladder and he followed him and spoke to the Mate who said he did not like the list she had. He inquired of the Mate whether he would slow down who replied, yes. He then returned to the engineroom and he followed her down and then called Mr. Campbell, the 2nd Engineer.

The list increased very rapidly and looking forward he saw water pouring over the bulwarks. He got a lifejacket and then found himself in the water. The whole occurrence happened in about 2-3 minutes. At 5 o'clock in the morning he estimated he was about a mile off the shore. He was picked up by the tug 'St. Olaves' at about 11.30 a.m.

William Campbell, 2nd Engineer, stated that while the vessel was loading at Catherine Hill Bay, he was off duty, and was subsequently awakened by the Chief Engineer calling out to him that the vessel had a heavy list and he had better come out at once. He got partially clothed and made for the engineroom. While doing so, he noticed two of the men deavouring to get the boat out. He then procured a lifejacket and got over the rail on the starboard side and slid into the water just before the vessel sank. During the night he saw many steamers to the eastward passing north and south. When daylight broke he estimated he was about 2-miles from the shore. During the forenoon he was picked up by the tug 'St. Olaves'. He considered that the 'Galava' was staunch and seaworthy.

Antonio Dondero stated that he was a Fireman on the 'Galava'. He was called at 11.40 p.m. on the 8th instant to relieve the Fireman from midnight. He passed along from the fo'castle on the starboard side and did not notice whether the decks were wet or not. Getting up the ashes he went into the stokehold. Up to that time the ship was upright. He carried out his ordinary duties for about half an hour when he noticed the vessel had taken a list. He called out to the Chief Engineer and asked whether there was any water in the bilges. Seeing the vessel listing more, he went into the engineroom and looked at the bilges and found them dry. He did not feel the vessel touch anything. On calling the attention of the Chief Engineer to the increasing list, he followed that Officer on deck. On reaching there, his mate called him to help clear the boat. They had less than two minutes from the time he came up from the engineroom. The vessel had not at any time during the passage shipped any heavy seas to. When daylight broke he distinctly saw the 'Duckenfield' on the 9th instant. He eventually reached the shore at about 11.30 a.m. on the 9th instant.

George Fireman, stated that he was awakened by water touching his feet. He jumped out of bed and called out to the men in the other three bunks. Just then he heard the whistle blow. He went on deck and met the Captain going forward.

lifejacket and saw the Mate and two Firemen trying to get the boat out. He just had time to throw the lifejacket over his head when the 'Galava' went over and he dived off the keel. When daylight broke he swam ashore with Antonio Dondero. He saw the 'Duckenfield' and fully expected to be picked up by that vessel.

Mr. R.J. Skidmore, Engineer Surveyor, Department of Navigation, Mr. Cartwright, ~~Ship and~~ Engineer Surveyor for Lloyds and Mr. Oswald, Superintendent Engineer for the Adelaide S.S. Co. were examined as to the supervision which had been exercised in the carrying out of the survey for the re-classification of the 'Galava' during the months of December and January. A detailed list of the work carried out during such survey is attached. Each Surveyor testified that the vessel was in a sound and seaworthy condition and fit for the service required of her.

From the evidence I find as follows:-

1. The steel screw steam collier 'Galava' official No. 70362 Register tonnage 413 Gross 163 Net owned by Jones Bros. Sydney, James Charles Pearson, Master, left Catherine Hill Bay at 9.40 p.m. on the 8th February 1927 on a voyage to Sydney, when she suddenly took a heavy list to port, capsized and foundered, in an approximate position 4-miles south of Tuggerah reef, resulting in the death by drowning of seven members of the crew of 12. - Names and ratings are attached.
2. The vessel was well-found, efficiently manned and in a seaworthy condition when she left Catherine Hill Bay Jetty. Her draft was 10' forward and 12'4" aft with a freeboard of 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " being 2" in excess of her statutory freeboard which was 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".
3. After an extensive overhaul the 'Galava' received Lloyds re-classification Special Survey Second No.2 on the 1st February 1927.
4. The night was dark but clear, the wind being from S. to S.E. fresh breeze, with a moderate southerly swell. The course S. X W. mag. was shaped when Wabung Head was distant about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles.
5. There is no evidence to show the cause of the vessel foundering, but if the statements are correct that the seaworthiness of the ship was unimpaired at midnight on the 8th instant, there is a strong suspicion that the ship must have struck some submerged object which holed her below the waterline on the port side permitting the ingress of a volume of water and resulting in the vessel foundering.
6. It is regretted that the Master and others on board the 'Duckenfield' were unable to observe any of the crew of the 'Galava' when in the water, but in justice to Captain Pickard and his crew it must be stated that they had no reason to anticipate that anything of a disastrous nature had occurred.

I recommend that a Court of Marine Inquiry be moved to inquire further into the circumstances surrounding the loss of the 'Galava' and that a copy of the evidence together with my finding be forwarded to the Crown Solicitor for the necessary action.

J. E. Morris,

Superintendent.

Lloyd's Register
Foundations 3
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