



THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, 1894

REPORT OF COURT

(No. 7971)

m.v. "Cameo" o.N. 164109

In the matter of a Formal Investigation held in the Justiciary Buildings, Glasgow, on the 25th and 26th days of July 1951, before James Wellwood Johnston, Esquire, Advocate, Sheriff-Substitute of Lanarkshire, assisted by Commander D. V. Sutton, R.D., R.N.R., and Captain C. A. Hancock, D.S.C., into the circumstances attending the stranding of the m.v. "Cameo" on Arklow Bank, Irish Sea, on 10th September 1950, and her subsequent loss.

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 stranding and subsequent loss of the "Cameo" were due to the default of the master, George Forbes Esson, and of the first officer George Howard Robinson, and that their respective certificates be suspended for 6 months from this date.

Dated this 26th day of July, 1951.

J. Wellwood Johnston, *Judge*.

We concur in the above Report,

D. V. Sutton } *Assessors.*
C. Hancock }

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Court's answers to the questions submitted by the Ministry of Transport are as follows:—

Q. 1. By whom was the said ship owned at the time of her loss?

A. William Robertson, Shipowners, Limited, 45, West Nile Street, Glasgow.

Q. 2. Were the life-saving appliances and light and sound signals' equipment of the "Cameo" satisfactory and in working order when she sailed on her last voyage?

A. Yes.

Q. 3. Was the "Cameo" supplied with proper charts and sailing publications for the voyage undertaken when she left Port Talbot on the 9th September 1950, for Dublin?

A. Yes.

Q. 4. With what compasses was the "Cameo" fitted on her last voyage, where were they positioned on board and when were they last adjusted?

A. Two Kelvin dry card type magnetic compasses, one in wheelhouse and one on wheelhouse top; both adjusted 28th April, 1950.

Q. 5. Was the "Cameo" under the command of Captain George Forbes Esson and did she carry a crew of 11 persons all told?

A. (1) Yes.

(2) Twelve persons all told.

Q. 6. On the last voyage did all go well until 0630 B.S.T. on the 10th September 1950, and at that time did the 2nd mate fix the "Cameo's" position as being 8 miles S $\frac{1}{2}$ W magnetic from the Arklow Bank light vessel?

A. All went well until 0630 B.S.T. on 10th September, 1950. There is no evidence of the fixing of the vessel's position at that time by the 2nd mate as stated.

Q. 7. When "Cameo's" position was fixed at 0630 B.S.T. on the 10th September 1950, what course was set?

A. At 0630 B.S.T. a course of N $\frac{1}{2}$ W was being steered.

Q. 8. When was course next altered, and what was the alteration and why was the alteration made?

A. At 0645 B.S.T. course was altered to N $\frac{1}{2}$ E by the 2nd mate, then on watch, in order to bring the Arklow Light Vessel ahead; at 0710 B.S.T. course was again altered by the 2nd mate to N.N.W. in order to pass the Light Vessel to starboard.

Q. 9. When did the master next come on to the bridge and take over navigation of the "Cameo"?

A. About 0730 B.S.T.

Q. 10. At what time was the Arklow Light Vessel abeam and at what distance off?

A. (1) About 0740 B.S.T.;
(2) A few hundred yards.

Q. 11. On what course was the "Cameo" steaming when Arklow Light Vessel was abeam?

A. N.N.W. magnetic.

Q. 12. When was the next alteration of course and what was the alteration?

A. According to the Captain no alteration was made until about 0755 B.S.T. when course was altered to N by E; in our opinion this change of course must have been made sooner.

Q. 13. Was any buoy or other guide to navigation, other than the Arklow Light Vessel, observed about this time?

A. Yes, according to the Captain.

Q. 14. If the answer to question "13" is "Yes", what was observed, how was it bearing, and at what distance?

A. Again according to the Captain the Glassgorman No. 3 Buoy was abeam to port about 5-6 miles away at 0755 B.S.T. before course was altered from N.N.W. to N $\times$ E.

Q. 15. When was Wicklow Head Lighthouse first observed and on what bearing?

A. About 0755 B.S.T. the Captain says that the Lighthouse was bearing N by E $\frac{1}{4}$ E.

Q. 16. When did the master leave the bridge, who was left in charge, what were the master's orders?

A. Just before 0800 B.S.T.; the 2nd mate was in charge; no particular orders given.

- Q 17. At what time was the next change of watch, who took over duty and who was relieved, and what orders were passed to the new watch?
- A. At 0800 B.S.T. the 1st mate relieved the 2nd mate and the latter informed the former that the Captain had just left the bridge, having set a course of N $\times$ E.
- Q 18. What was the course at the last change of watch and what were the conditions of sea, wind, weather and visibility?
- A. N $\times$ E. Sea—smooth; wind—light; weather—fine; visibility—good.
- Q 19. At what time and where did the m.v. "Cameo" strand?
- A. About 0830 B.S.T. on Arklow Bank. Latitude 52° 45' 51" North. Longitude 5° 57' 30" West.
- Q 20. Were all proper steps taken to get the "Cameo" off the place of stranding?
- A. Yes.
- Q 21. How long was it after the stranding when the "Cameo" was abandoned?
- A. The ship was abandoned about midnight on 12th September.
- Q 22. Was the navigating chart brought off the "Cameo"? If the answer is "No", why was this?
- A. No; because the final abandoning of the ship took place hurriedly in deteriorating conditions on the arrival of the Wicklow lifeboat.
- Q 23. From the time the Arklow Light Vessel was abeam, in what direction and at what strength was the tide setting?
- A. 025° true; about 2 knots.
- Q 24. In the navigation of the "Cameo" from the time the Arklow Light Vessel was abeam was allowance made for the set of the tide?
- A. Insufficient allowance was made.
- Q 25. Who was in charge of navigation for the last half-hour before the stranding?
- A. The chief officer, George Howard Robinson.
- Q 26. What was the cause of the stranding which resulted in the total loss of the m.v. "Cameo"?
- A. (1) Too early and too great an alteration of course to starboard after passing the Arklow Light Vessel making insufficient allowance for the set of the tide;
(2) Failure to pay attention to No. 5 Buoy at the tail of Arklow Bank;
(3) Failure of the chief officer to check the vessel's position and to notice the change of bearing of Wicklow Head and other navigational marks.
- Q 27. Was the stranding and loss of the m.v. "Cameo" caused or contributed to by the wrongful act or default of the chief officer, Mr. George Howard Robinson?
- A. Yes.
- Q 28. Was the stranding and loss of the m.v. "Cameo" caused or contributed to by the wrongful act or default of the master, Captain George Forbes Esson?
- A. Yes.

ANNEX TO THE REPORT

At this Inquiry Mr. T. W. Donald appeared for the Ministry of Transport; Mr. David Murray (Messrs. MacLay, Murray & Spens) for the owners, Messrs. Wm. Robertson, Limited; Mr. T. G. Wright (Messrs. Wright, Johnston & Mackenzie) for the master, Captain Esson; and Mr. J. D. Urie (Messrs. Montgomery, Flemings, Fyfe, MacLean & Company) for the first officer, Mr. Robinson.

The m.v. "Cameo" was a steel single screw cargo coasting vessel of 945.51 tons gross with the machinery aft, built by Messrs. A. & J. Inglis, Limited, at Glasgow, in 1937. She had direct acting electric steering gear controlled from the bridge. Her classification was + 100 A1 at Lloyd's and the last special survey was completed in March, 1949. On her final voyage the draught according to the scrap log was 13 feet 7 inches forward and 16 feet 3 inches aft and she carried a cargo of some 1,259 tons of coal.

The stranding of this modern well-equipped vessel during daylight in fine weather and in well marked and charted waters seems to call for a clearer explanation than we are able, from the evidence available, to provide.

We must accept that at 0740 B.S.T. on Sunday, 10th September, the "Cameo" on a course of N.N.W. had the Arklow Light Vessel abeam. Whether she passed it at a distance of 150 yards, as the master of the Light Vessel says, or of half-a-mile, as her own master says, does not greatly affect matters, but we think the former estimate more accurate. The master says that he maintained the N.N.W. course for 13–15 minutes, when he altered course to N $\times$ E. In this he is now supported in evidence by the 2nd mate, who was on watch, in spite of the latter's own entry in the scrap log of the change of course having been made at 0740 B.S.T.

If this course was in fact set, the "Cameo" could only have reached the position where she stranded at 0830 through some quite phenomenal set of the tide or some gross deviation in steering from the course set. In our opinion both these factors can be excluded. We are therefore forced to the conclusion that the change of course to N $\times$ E must have been made earlier than the master says and, indeed, very soon after passing the Light Vessel. In this we consider that the master was seriously at fault and that he failed to make allowance for the north-easterly set of the tide.

According to the master, having studied his chart he decided to alter course, and did so, when the Glassgorman No. 3 Buoy came abeam on the N.N.W. course. We are unable to understand the decision to use in this way a small buoy upwards of five miles away and the complete failure of the master to pay any attention at all to the buoy at the south end of Arklow Bank, very close to which he must have passed. Further, the position in which the master puts the ship at 0755 with Glassgorman No. 3 Buoy abeam does not fit in with his evidence as to the bearing of Wicklow Head at the same time. The latter places him appreciably nearer to the Bank, and we are satisfied that the ship never reached the position at which, according to the master, the change of course was made.

The first officer came on watch at 0800 B.S.T. and was in charge of the navigation of the ship until stranding took place about 0830 B.S.T. We appreciate that he had the assurance of knowing that an experienced master had just left the bridge having set a course. He had therefore every reason for confidence that the ship was on a safe and proper course. We think, however, that if he had been keeping a good and intelligent lookout the bearing of various marks, in particular of Wicklow ahead and of the No. 5 Buoy and Arklow Light Vessel astern, would have caused him to check the position carefully during the half-hour before stranding. This, however, he made no attempt to do and he was, therefore, in our opinion also seriously at fault.

J. Wellwood Johnston, Judge.

D. V. Sutton } Assessors.
C. Hancock }

Crown Copyright Reserved

LONDON: HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

1951

THREEPENCE NET