

(No. 956.)

“JOHN KENDALL.”

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

IN the matter of a formal Investigation held at Greenock, Scotland, on the 16th and 17th days of March 1881, before W. NEILL, J.P., and W. ROSS, J.P., assisted by Admiral PICARD, and Captains MURDOCH and COWIE, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the ship “JOHN KENDALL,” of Penzance, off County Down, on 27th February 1881.

*Report of Court.*

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 casualty arose from the default of George Bowden, the master of said ship.

Dated this 18th day of March 1881.

(Signed) WM. NEILL, J.P.  
WILLIAM ROSS, J.P.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) BENJ. S. PICARD, R.N., } Assessors.  
ALEX. MURDOCH, }  
W. COWIE, R.N.R., }

*Annex to the Report.*

The “John Kendall,” official number 49,957, was a wooden built brig of 239·85 tons register, built at Dartmouth in the year 1866, and was owned in Lithney, Cornwall, by Richard Thomas James, of Lithney, and others. She was commanded on her last voyage by George Bowden, master, certificate of competency, No. 88,604, and a crew of 8 hands all told. She was loaded with a cargo of 300 tons of coals on a draft of 12 feet 10 aft and 11 feet forward, with a freeboard of about 4 feet. She had on board 3 boats; a jolly boat, long boat, and gig, and there were also two life-buoys on board. She was admittedly in good condition, and well found on sailing upon her last voyage. At 2.30 p.m. on the 26th February last, she left Greenock on a voyage to Barbadoes, the wind being then fresh from the east, and there being heavy snow showers. At 8 p.m. of the same day she passed Pladda Light, bearing N.W., and distant about 4 or 5 miles, the course then being S.W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  W. At 10 p.m. of the same day she passed Ailsa Craig, bearing S.E., and distant about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The course continued as before till she laid Corsewall at 10.30, when it was altered to S.W.  $\frac{1}{2}$  S. At 1 a.m. of the 27th, Port Patrick Light, then bearing E., and about 7 miles off, the course was changed to S.  $\frac{1}{2}$  W., the weather being hazy, and the tide being about the last of the ebb, the vessel at this time being under all plain sail. The breeze freshened during the middle watch, and sail was reduced to 2 lower topsails, trysail, and foretopmast staysail. At 5 a.m., the weather being then hazy, with snow showers, a bright light, which seemed a fixed one, was seen right ahead, and this was discovered to be the South Rock light-ship. The master immediately braced the yards up, and altered the course to S.S.E., heading off the land. Up to this time the master had attended to his duties satisfactorily on deck, but after altering his course, as above, he went below, as he said, to consult his chart, leaving the chief officer in charge of the deck. The master remained below for about 10 minutes, when, finding his vessel giving several heavy lurches, he came on deck again, and found the yards had been squared, and that the vessel was running right before the wind, which, at the time, was east. The course now would be S.W. by W. He called out to the mate, asking why he had changed the course, and ran and put the helm hard astarboard, and ordered the yards to be braced up on the port tack, as before. During the absence of the master from the deck, it appears, from the evidence, that the look-out had reported land on the weather bow, and that this was the reason why the course had been altered. The vessel did not answer her

helm at once, and seeing that she did not, the master ordered the foresail, trysail, and jib to be set. She then answered her helm, but was caught aback by a change of wind, and she then filled on the starboard tack. The wind then veered back to the original quarter, and caught the vessel aback again. The master thereupon ordered a cast of the lead and found 8 fathoms of water, and, as the ship was drifting, one of the anchors was let go, but while the cable was running out the vessel struck; this was about 5.30 a.m. The vessel at once began to fill, and in about half an hour afterwards the light gig was launched and moored astern. The jolly boat, which had been stowed inside the long-boat, was next launched, and the crew tried to get into it. Five of them got in, but she immediately filled and capsized, and they were thrown into the water. They then swam to the gig and managed to get into it. The mate and two seamen, one of them being the master's nephew, were left on board.

Immediately on getting into the gig, one of the crew cut the painter, thinking she would be dragged down with the vessel, and she drifted away astern, nothing further being seen of the mate and two seamen left on the wreck. There were only two oars on board of the gig, and those in her steered and paddled with them as well as they could; and about 8.30., they landed at the Old Light-house, on the South Rock, off County Down, Ireland. At this time, all that could be seen of the wreck above water was the topgallant mast. At 1 p.m. they were rescued by the boat of the South Rock Light-ship.

The solicitor of the Board of Trade put the following questions for the opinion of the Court:—

1. What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel?
2. Whether a safe and proper course was set and steered after passing Port Patrick Light; and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
3. Whether the speed of the vessel and the distance run were properly estimated?
4. Whether, when the master discovered his error, prompt and proper measures were taken to prevent the vessel going ashore?
5. Whether proper measures were taken from time to time to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel?
6. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency?
7. Whether the master was on deck at the time when the safety of the vessel required his personal supervision?
8. Whether every possible effort was made that could be made to save life? and
9. Whether the master is in default?

In the opinion of the Board of Trade the certificate of the master, George Bowden, should be dealt with, and the court answered them as follows, viz.:—

- 1 & 2. Assuming that the distance from Port Patrick Light, given in evidence, is correct, a safe and proper course was steered after passing that light, due and proper allowance was not made for tide and currents, and a beam sea setting the ship towards the Irish coast which led to the stranding of the vessel.
3. The speed and distance run seem to have been fairly estimated.
4. The Court are of opinion that proper measures were taken.
5. Proper measures were taken from time to time to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel.
6. The lead does not appear to have been used until the ship was in danger, but the non-use thereof does not appear to have in any way contributed to the casualty.
7. The Court consider that the master should not have left the deck until the ship was at a safe and proper distance from South Rock light-ship.
8. Under the circumstances, the Court consider nothing more could have been done to save the lives which were lost.
9. The Court consider that the master is in default, and the Court therefore adjudges the certificate of George Bowden, the master of the said ship “John Kendall,” to be suspended for the period of three months from this date, and suspends the same accordingly, and decerns.

(Signed) WM. NEILL, J.P.  
WILLIAM ROSS, J.P.