

(No. 965.)

“GARDENIA.” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at the Town Hall, North Shields, on the 17th, 18th, and 19th days of March 1881, before THOMAS JACKSON and RICHARD SWAN, Esquires, assisted by Captains WHITE, R.N., HARRIS, and WARD, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the screw steamer “GARDENIA,” on the 24th of January 1881, and subsequent stranding on the 26th of January 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 Court finds that it has no legal jurisdiction to deal with the master's certificate, as no satisfactory evidence was produced by the Board of Trade to shew that either serious or material damage was done to the s.s. “Gardenia,” or to what extent she was repaired after arriving in the Tyne, although she had been twice stranded; firstly, on the 24th of January 1881, off Terschelling, and secondly, on the 26th of January 1881, off Amrum Island; and therefore the Court do not feel called upon to answer the questions submitted, but a full report of the facts will be forwarded to the Board of Trade, as usual.

Dated this th day of March 1881.

(Signed) THOMAS JACKSON, }
RICHARD SWAN, } Justices.

We concur in the above Report.

(Signed) HY. HARRIS, }
E. A. WHITE, R.N. } Assessors.
GEO. WM. WARD, }

Annex to the Report.

The “Gardenia,” official number 79,224, is an iron screw steamer, built at Willington Quay, on Tyne, in 1879, and is owned by Mr. Joseph Robinson, of North Shields, and others, Mr. Robinson being appointed managing owner on the 22nd of September 1879. She was fitted with two surface condensing engines of 180 nominal horse-power (combined), her gross tonnage being 1,966·73, and 1,275·52 registered.

From the evidence adduced it appears that the “Gardenia” left Savannah on the 30th of December 1880, with a cargo of 1,272 tons of cotton, and a crew of 23 hands all told, and well found in all respects, under the command of Charles Iliff, who holds a certificate of competency as master, No. 06,394, bound to Bremerhaven, her draught of water being 17 feet forward and about 19 feet aft, being rather less than two feet lighter than she would have drawn with a full cargo. She had three compasses on board, a standard compass on the top of the chart room, about 17 or 18 feet from the main deck, a steering compass on the bridge and one aft. The courses were set by the steering compass and corrected by the standard. All went well till they arrived at Dartmouth, on the 21st of January 1881, and they sailed from there on the 22nd, and at 5.30 p.m. of the 23rd the North Sand Head light-ship bore W.N.W., distant 5 miles. From here a course was set N.E. by N. by bridge compass, wind S.E., light breeze, weather hazy, and half a point to northward allowed for tide and current. Full speed was kept up from this time until 10 a.m. of the 24th, stopping occasionally to take casts of the lead, and at 10 a.m. the engines were eased down to half speed on account of the fog. Towards noon of the 24th the soundings varied from 13 to 16 fathoms, about 1 p.m. of the 24th a cast of the lead was taken and 16 fathoms got with sandy bottom. The course was then altered to E.N.E., which gave E. by N. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. magnetic, and that course was continued until 2 p.m. when it was altered to E., which course was

nearly true. At 2 p.m. soundings were again taken, and either 13 or 14 fathoms were obtained with sandy bottom; at 2.30 another cast of the lead was taken, which proved to be less than before, with the same bottom; a little before 3 p.m. the course was altered to E. by S. being E. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. magnetic. The captain then went below for about ten minutes, and when below he felt the vessel touch to the N. of Terschelling Light, the tide being about half flood, weather very hazy. On the captain's return to the deck he noticed two buoys, a red one slightly on the port bow, and a black one two points on the starboard bow, distant about $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mile. The engines were reversed, and kept reversed, until the vessel floated the following day, at 2.30 a.m. of the 25th. The vessel made no water, and after getting off they steered off the land about N.N.W. by the bridge compass, until they got into deeper water, when they anchored on account of the thick weather. At about 3 a.m. they brought up in about 12 fathoms and remained there until 10.30 a.m., when they proceeded steering E. which gave about E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. magnetic. At noon the course was altered to E. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. by the steering compass, being E. magnetic. About 3.30 p.m. the captain saw what he thought to be land on the starboard side of the ship, and the vessel was kept more to the northward, about E.N.E. by the bridge compass, being about E. by N. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. magnetic, the master stating that the compasses at this time differed from what they had been previously. The speed being generally slow, stopping at times to take a cast of the lead. When the vessel was considered far enough off the land, at 6 p.m., the course was altered to E. by S. by the bridge compass. At midnight the course was again altered to E. by S. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. magnetic. At about 4 a.m. of the 26th a light was seen bearing about N.E., but the distance could not be judged owing to the fog. The light could not be verified, according to the master's statement, owing to its revolving unsteadily. The engines were stopped, and the vessel's head was put to the northward, and at daylight they went easy ahead, steering about E., and in about 20 minutes the captain saw what he took to be land bearing N., and the vessel was kept more to the southward, and shortly afterwards the vessel came again to the ground, at 8.25 a.m. No buoys or land were seen, and the light was not seen again until the night after the stranding, when it bore E. by N. According to the evidence of the captain, what he had taken for land proved to be ice, as it floated down upon them and surrounded the vessel. After she grounded the engines were put ahead and astern alternately, which ever way she moved easiest, and about 600 bales of cotton were jettisoned on the following morning; and on the 28th a boat, with the chief officer and four hands, was sent on shore, the mate communicating with Bremerhaven, from which port a steam tug was sent to their assistance, and the vessel was got off on the morning of the 30th of January, and towed towards Bremerhaven, steaming part of the way herself, arriving there at noon of the 31st. After she got off soundings of the wells and holds were taken by the carpenter, when it was found she had made no water. After arriving at Bremerhaven the vessel was examined but no repairs were executed, and she was afterwards brought to the Tyne in ballast. She was docked on her arrival in the Tyne, and the stern frame was said to have been found damaged. The strandings of the “Gardenia” are to be attributed to unskillful navigation. No reliance can be placed upon the courses said to have been steered, given from memory after a lapse of nearly two months, and not confirmed by reference to the log book, which is nearly a blank in respect to courses. That the master lost his position is obvious, for the courses steered by him should have placed the vessel very far off the land; but at the same time the soundings ought to have warned him that he was much nearer the land than he wished the Court to believe. After the first stranding, although the sea was quite smooth, the master took no steps whatever to ascertain his position by examining the buoys already referred to. No evidence was laid before the Court to shew that any other effort than simply reversing the engines was made to get the vessel off, although she was on the ground for about twelve hours. After the vessel floated the master appears to have used the lead sufficiently frequent, but does not seem to have profited by the results, as he shoaled his water right up to the second

stranding, the last sounding being nine fathoms. The master expected to pick up Borkum lightship, but failed to do so; but he subsequently stated that from information subsequently obtained the lightship was not in its position. Neither did he make Heligoland; and, therefore, the Court considers that he should have brought up until he could have verified his position. At 4 a.m. of the 26th a light was made right ahead, the helm was put a-starboard, and the ship hove too until daylight. At 8.15 the engines were set ahead slow, with her head due E. The soundings decreasing at 8.20, the engines were stopped, and at 8.25 a.m. the vessel grounded, having over run her distance by between 20 and 30 miles; and, although he was ignorant of his position, he nevertheless steered right down on to the coast. The master does not appear to have been sufficiently careful with regard to the look out previous to both strandings. The mate, on the 27th, under the direction of the master, attempted to land, but did not succeed; but on the 28th he landed with four men and communicated with the Consul, and then, with his men, went into lodgings, and remained on shore until after the vessel was got off, and, in fact, never rejoined the ship, although three other boats belonging to the locality went off to the vessel's assistance, and reached her in safety before she was got off. Whilst on shore during the second stranding, over three days, the water was stated to be perfectly smooth, but the vessel rolled very much, which caused the boilers to be lifted about one inch, and the steam pipe was stated to be burst, but was repaired by the chief engineer. All the witnesses, upon cross-examination, stated that the vessel, in their belief, was not damaged by either of the strandings, which, to a certain extent, was supported by the fact that the vessel proceeded on her voyage and returned to the Tyne without assistance, making no water; and no evidence whatever was adduced to shew what the nature and costs of the repairs (if any) were, thus placing the Court in a position which prevented them from dealing with the certificates of any of the officers.

The Board of Trade desire the opinion of the Court on the following questions:—

1. What was the cause of the stranding of the steamship "Gardenia" off the Texel, on the 24th of January last?
2. Whether safe and proper courses were set and steered after passing the North Sand Head light-vessel; and whether due allowance was made therein for tide and currents?
3. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain

and verify the position of the said steamship from time to time?

4. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
5. What was the cause of the subsequent stranding of the said steamship off Amrum Island, on the 26th of January?
6. Whether safe and proper courses were set and steered after 10.30 a.m. on the 25th of January, and whether due allowance was made therein for tide and currents?
7. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain what the light was which was sighted at about 4 a.m. of the said 26th of January, and whether proper measures were thereafter taken to verify the position of the said steamship?
8. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency?
9. Whether a good and proper look out was kept?
10. Whether the said steamship was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

If the Court find Charles Iliff, the master, in default his certificate should, in the opinion of the Board of Trade, be dealt with.

Dated this 18th of March 1881.

LANCEL DE HAMEL,
For the Board of Trade

Judgment.

The Court finds that it has no legal jurisdiction to deal with the master's certificate, as no satisfactory evidence was produced by the Board of Trade to shew that either serious or material damage was done to the steamship "Gardenia," or to what extent she was repaired after arriving in the Tyne, although she had been twice stranded, firstly, on the 24th of January 1881, off Terschelling, and secondly, on the 26th of January 1881, off Amrum Island; and therefore the Court does not feel called upon to answer the questions submitted, but a full report of the facts will be forwarded to the Board of Trade as usual.

(Signed) THOMAS JACKSON, } Justice
RICH. SWAN, }

We concur in the above judgment.

(Signed) HY. HARRIS, } Assessor
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