

(No. 968.)

“LINDEN.” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

IN the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Board room of the Sunderland School Board offices in John Street, in the borough of Sunderland, in the county of Durham, on the 30th and 31st days of March 1881, before JOSEPH NORMAN WILSON and JOHN SCOTT, Esquires, two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace, acting in and for the said borough, assisted by Captains WARD and COWIE, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship “LINDEN” on the Rosse Spit Sand on the 5th of March 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 stranding of the steamship “Linden” was caused by the extreme severity of the weather, and the Court do not find the master, Mr. Richard Robinson, in default for such stranding.

Dated this 31st day of March, 1881.

(Signed) J. N. WILSON, }
JOHN SCOTT, } Judges.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) W. COWIE, }
GEO. WM. WARD, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

The steamship “Linden” is an iron vessel, built by Messrs. Short Brothers, of Sunderland, in the year 1877, and is of the tonnage of 1,068 tons gross and 687 tons net. Mr. Robert Thorman, of Seaham, in the county of Durham, is the managing owner. She left Sunderland on the 3rd of March 1881, at 4 a.m., loaded with a cargo of 1,290 tons of coal, bound for London, under the command of Mr. Richard Robinson, who holds a certificate of competency as master, No. 84,148, and a crew of 16 hands, all told. Her draft of water was 17 feet 6 inches aft, and 16 feet 4 inches forward. The weather at the time the ship left Sunderland was fine, with a moderate breeze from the south-east, which afterwards freshened into a gale, and during the night blew with very great violence, the captain and mate stating that they never experienced such severe weather on the coast before. At 4 a.m. on the 4th, Flamborough Head bore W.N.W. at a supposed distance of 5 or 6 miles. It appears by the captain's evidence that a departure was taken at that time and a south-east course steered until 9 a.m. of the following morning, 5th March, at which time the captain reckoned he was 15 to 18 miles east of the Humber. It had been blowing hard up to this time, but the weather moderated a little, and the captain stated that he thought of going into the Humber for shelter, or to fix his position if he determined upon proceeding on his voyage. Although given in evidence by the captain that he had steered south-east from 4 a.m. on the 4th, and at 9 a.m. on the 5th he considered that the ship was 15 to 18 miles to the eastward of the Humber, the Court is at a loss to understand how, if he steered those courses, he could have arrived at such a conclusion. At 9 a.m. of the 5th the captain states he set a west course until the land was seen, about 11 a.m., which he considered was from 3 to 4 miles off, but owing to the showers of hail and sleet and the weather continuing very hazy, he was unable to distinguish what land it was. The vessel's head was then put S.E. by S. until about noon, and then a little more easterly until about half-past twelve, when the weather became clearer and the ship's head was put to the W.N.W., and she was kept on that course for about an hour, the engines were going slow,

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the ship making about 3½ knots an hour, and the lead being frequently used; the soundings indicated 8 to 9 fathoms. The land was again seen at 1.30 p.m., and the ship ran to the northward, her course being from about north to north-north-east. Shortly after that a beacon was seen, but it could not be distinguished. The vessel was then hauled out to the north-east and the engines set at full speed until broken water was seen and the ship struck immediately afterwards. The engines were set full speed astern for a short time and then stopped, as the master considered it dangerous to keep them going as the ship was striking heavily. The master then ordered the ballast tanks to be filled to keep the ship quiet. At this time the tide was about ¾ ebb. At 4 p.m. the water was pumped out of the ballast tanks, and all head sail set on the ship, and as the tide made she floated and apparently dragged herself over the eastern edge of the Rosse Spit, that being the place on which she is supposed to have stranded. The vessel was finally anchored off Grimsby the same afternoon between 5 and 6 o'clock. She was taken into the floating dock at Grimsby the next morning, and a survey was held, when it was found that the after peak was full of water. 200 tons of coal was discharged, and the after bulkhead examined, and it being found tight the ship proceeded on her voyage to London, and after unloading she returned to Sunderland in ballast, and upon being placed in dry dock it was found that the stern post was fractured about 18 inches below the boss, and also that several rivets had been started.

At the conclusion of the evidence Mr. de Hamel submitted the following questions for the consideration of the Court:—

1. What was the cause of the stranding of the steamship “Linden” on the Rosse Spit Sand on the 5th of March?
2. Whether safe and proper courses were set and steered after passing Flambro' Head, and whether every proper measure was thereafter taken to ascertain and verify the position of the said steamship from time to time?
3. Whether, having regard to the fact that the weather was hazy on the 5th of March, and that Richard Robinson, the master, was uncertain as to his position, he was justified in letting the said steamship proceed at full speed?
4. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency, and whether, when the water was found to be shoaling, prompt and proper measures were taken to alter the course of the said steamship?
5. Whether the said steamship was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

Answers to the above Questions.

1. Owing to the master being ignorant of his exact position, and the weather being thick and hazy, with showers of sleet and snow at the time, which prevented his seeing and distinguishing any beacons or landmarks.
2. There is no evidence before the Court, other than that given by the master, to show what courses were steered, nor could he state accurately the speed of the vessel from time to time after passing Flambro' Head, but the Court consider that the courses given by him could not have been steered to bring the ship in the position where she stranded. Proper measures were taken by the master to ascertain and verify his position, but owing to the weather he was unable to do so.
3. There is no evidence before the Court to show that the vessel was going at full speed except just after the beacon had been sighted, and when the vessel's head was turned to the north-east to get her off the land; the Court considers the master was quite justified in this.
4. Yes; but the vessel got into shallow water so suddenly that there was not time to do more than was done.
5. Yes.

(Signed) J. N. WILSON, }
JOHN SCOTT, } Judges.
W. COWIE, }
GEO. WM. WARD, } Assessors.

W. WARD, }
JAS BEASLEY, } Assessors.
Naval Assessor.
Retired Commander, R.N.
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6. What quantity of water was in the vessel at the time of her abandonment?

7. Whether all proper steps were taken to save the said vessel and get her into port after the rudder trunk gave way, or whether she was prematurely abandoned?

8. What was the cause of the fire which subsequently broke out on board the said vessel? and

9. Whether she was navigated with seamanlike care?

If the Court find Michael Rout the Master in default, his certificate should in opinion of the Board of Trade be dealt with.

Dated this 28th of March 1881.

LANCIEL DE HAMEL,
For the Board of Trade.

Judgment.

1 & 2. The evidence before the Court shows that the "Bavelaw" was in a good and seaworthy condition in all respects on leaving New York.

3. Part of the cargo was stowed in the fore part of the poop, and as it consisted of petroleum, the court considers that there was a risk of ignition from the cabin stove which was placed a few feet abaft, notwithstanding the two wooden bulkheads between the petroleum and the stove.

4. The rudder was struck by a sea whilst the vessel was hove to in a heavy gale in the Atlantic, by which the rudder head was broken, and the sternpost was subsequently started in consequence of the rudder flying from side to side. The Court considers that all available means were taken to secure the rudder.

5. The vessel was making little or no water until the rudder head was carried away and stern post damaged at 10 a.m. of the 22nd of February last; after that time the vessel appears to have made a considerable quantity of water. The windmill pump was constantly going and taking into consideration the necessity of securing the rudder, and a number of the crew being laid up, the Court is of opinion that the master did all he could to keep the water under.

6. There appears to have been about 5 ft. 6 in. of water in the vessel when abandoned.

7. According to the evidence, steps seem to have been taken to save the vessel by securing the rudder with chains from each quarter. The Court considers that the master had no opportunity of getting the vessel into any port, and that it was useless for the master and officers to stay by the ship when the crew refused to stand by her after the steamer hove in sight.

8. There is no evidence to show what caused the fire.

9. The vessel appears to have been navigated with seamanlike care.

The Court therefore finds that Michael Rout the master is not in default.

(Signed) JOHN HEDLEY, }
THOMAS JACKSON, } Justices.

We concur in above judgment.

(Signed) E. G. T. G. VISCONTI,
Retired Commander, R.N.,
Naval Assessor.

THOMAS BEASLEY, }
GEO. WM. WARD, } Assessor.

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