

(No. 1115.)

“STRATHEDEN.”

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

IN the matter of a formal Investigation held at Dundee on the 29th and 30th September and 1st October 1881, before J. E. LACON, Esq., of Duntrune, and CHARLES EDWARD, Esq., two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the County of Forfar, assisted by Captains E. Y. WARD and G. W. WARD, Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British sailing ship “STRATHEDEN,” of Dundee, on or about the Middlecross Sand, off the Norfolk Coast, on or about the 25th day of August 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, the master and mate in default, and adjudge and ordain that the certificate of the master be suspended for the period of three calendar months from this date, and that the certificate of the mate be suspended for the like period of three calendar months from this date.

Dated at Dundee this 1st day of October 1881.

(Signed) J. EDMUND LACON, J.P.
CHAS. EDWARD, J.P.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) C. Y. WARD, } Nautical
G. WM. WARD. } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

In the matter of a formal Investigation as to the stranding of the British sailing ship “Stratheden,” of Dundee, on or about the Middlecross Sand, off the Norfolk Coast, on or about the 25th day of August 1881, by John Edmund Lacon, Esquire, of Duntrune, and Charles Edward, Esquire, two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the County of Forfar.

We, the Justices, do report that, having carefully enquired into the circumstances of the above-mentioned shipping casualty, we have found and hereby find that the “Stratheden” was a British composite sailing ship, of the registered tonnage of 408 tons, built at Tayport, County of Fife, in the year 1872, Class A 1 for thirteen years, and barque rigged. That her official number is 68,261, and that her registered owners were William Thomson, of Dundee, in the County of Forfar, merchant and shipowner, and others, the said William Thomson being the managing owner, and was commanded by Captain William Amess, who held a certificate of competency as a master, No. 16548, which was lost with the ship, and he now holds a new certificate, No. 010,586, and that David Lowson, the mate of the ship, holds a certificate of competency as master, No. 27,897.

That the ship was in good and seaworthy condition at the time of sailing from Leith, and that her draught of water was 14 feet 1 inch after and about 14 feet forward. That she was in every respect well found and had three boats on board, one of them a new boat, two patent pumps, and three compasses. That the ship was steered by the compass in the binnacle, and the other two compasses were spare for use in case of necessity. That the ship sailed from Leith for Buenos Ayres on the 20th of August 1881, with a cargo of 612 tons of coal. That she had a crew of 12, but no passengers. That the master intended to go round the North of Scotland on his outward voyage, but when he got to the Bell Rock it fell calm, and the wind changing and the mate telling him that he was familiar with the South Coast, he determined to proceed in that way. That from the time he changed his course at the Bell Rock till he reached off

Flamborough on the afternoon of the 24th, the weather was variable and occasionally squally and dirty; and when opposite the mouth of the Humber he had to reduce his canvas, and some head-gear was carried away. That between 10 and 11 at night the night got worse, and after that rain fell, and subsequently there was a decided improvement. That at 12.30 a.m., on the 25th, the ship being then abreast of Hasborough Light, the Wold Light being upon the lee-bow bearing south south-east four miles off, he went below, leaving the mate, David Lowson, in charge. The tide at this time was about half ebb, and the current was against him. That he did not come on deck again until the ship struck on the Middlecross Sand, where she became a total wreck. That when the captain went below the weather was clear and the wind was from the west north-west. The ship rounded the Newarp Lightship to the east at two o'clock a.m., and was steered south south-west by compass (corrected for deviation south by west) which course was steered for about three quarters of an hour, when it was altered to south by west, as the mate stated he thought the tide was running against her, and this course was kept until the ship struck on the Middlecross Sand about half-past three on the morning of the 25th of August 1881.

The captain states that on going below he told the mate to keep the ship to the eastward of Newarp Lightship, and that south south-west was the course from the lightship, and to run off two or three miles before hauling her up, so that she might get quit of the buoys and everything else to go across to the Kent. The mate denies in his evidence that the captain gave him any such directions, and states that before leaving the captain only told him to run the ship out to the east of Newarp, but he did not say what he was to do after he got there, and that after getting to the eastward the course would be south south-west, or south by west magnetic course. The statement of the captain in his examination in chief is not corroborated by any of the crew, but his statement on cross-examination by the Court that he left the mate to use his own discretion appears to be the fact.

The part where the ship was lost is, according to the evidence, as dangerous as any part of the coast, in consequence of banks running all round, and great skill and care is necessary in navigating a ship through these banks. The captain, from the evidence, appears to have been on deck from eight o'clock in the morning till 12.30 a.m. of the next day, and although his attention during that period is commendable, yet he went below at the very time that danger attended the ship; and the Court think that he was not justified in leaving the deck until the ship had passed the Newarp Light, the more especially as the captain states the mate was a stranger to him, and that he had no knowledge of his abilities beyond what the mate stated to him on the voyage. The mate on the other hand did not, after he was left in charge of the ship, exercise that skill in navigating her that was to be expected of him, more particularly that although the sailing directions relating to that part of the coast and also the chart were lying on the table in the cabin and open to his inspection, he never once thought of looking at either of them, neither did he even think it necessary to use the lead.

The Board of Trade stated the following questions upon which they wished the opinion of the Court, viz:—

- (1.) Whether the vessel was in a good and seaworthy condition when she commenced her voyage?
- (2.) Whether proper courses were set and steered at and after midnight of the 24th of August, taking into consideration the weather, tide, and currents?
- (3.) Whether the captain was justified in remaining below from 12.30 a.m. till the time the ship struck?
- (4.) Whether the captain gave proper directions to the mate before going below?
- (5.) Whether the mate carried out these directions or took proper precautions for the safety of the ship?
- (6.) Whether the lead should have been used or anything done to test the compass?
- (7.) What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel?
- (8.) Whether the master or mate or either of them is in default?

And the Court are of opinion and answer the questions as follows, viz.:—

1. Yes.
 2. No.
 3. No.
 4. No.
 5. No. The mate did not take proper precautions for the safety of the ship.
 6. In the circumstances with clear weather and all the lights in sight it was not necessary to use the lead.
 7. The ship was lost through careless and unskilful navigation.
 8. Both the master and mate are in default.
- The evidence in support of the character of the master and the mate was of a very satisfactory nature.

The Court, having carefully considered the whole evidence adduced, are of opinion that the master and mate did not navigate the ship with the skill and care that they ought to have done, and therefore found and hereby find the master and mate in default, and adjudge and ordain that the certificate of the master be suspended for a period of three calendar months from this date, and that the certificate of the mate be suspended for the like period of three calendar months from this date.

The Court makes no order as to costs.

(Signed) J. EDMUND LACON, J.P.
CHAS. EDWARD, J.P.

We concur.

(Signed) C. G. WARD.
GEO. WM. WARD.