

(No. 2573.)

"CALDERBANK."

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at Greenock, on the Fifteenth and Sixteenth days of June 1885, before HARRY SMITH, Esquire, Advocate, Sheriff Substitute of Renfrew and Bute, assisted by Captain HARLAND and Captain ANDERSON, Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the abandonment of the British sailing ship "CALDERBANK," on or about the 11th day of April 1885.

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 loss and abandonment of this vessel was caused by her suddenly springing a serious leak, which the crew found impossible to keep under. The Court finds that the master and crew were justified in abandoning her when they did.

Dated the Sixteenth day of June 1885.

(Signed) HARRY SMITH, Judge.

We concur in the above report,

(Signed) ABSM. ANDERSON, } Assessors.
ROBERT HARLAND, }

Annex to the Report.

The "Calderbank" was a wooden brigantine, of 194.52 tons gross and 182.32 tons register, built at Ayr, in the county of Ayr, in the year 1866, and at the time of the casualty, which forms the subject of the present inquiry, was the property of Mr. Thomas Steele, of Ayr, shipowner, who was the sole owner, and also her managing owner since 27th March of the present year. She was purchased by him in 1884 for the sum of £350, and underwent a thorough repair at Troon, under the inspection of Lloyd's surveyors, at a cost of £1,050, and was thereupon restored to the A1 class for the term of 5 years. Her dimensions were—length 109.1 feet, breadth 22.2 feet, and depth of hold 12.5 feet, the ratio between her beam and depth being .56, shewing that by construction she had great stability.

On her last voyage she left Greenock in ballast for St. John's, Newfoundland, where she loaded a cargo of fish for Rio de Janeiro, which was delivered in good order. At Rio she loaded a cargo of paving stones weighing 290 tons, and kept on board 9 or 10 tons of ballast, and proceeded for Punta de Lard, in the River Plate. She experienced fine weather all the voyage down, and after the discharge of this cargo she was chartered to load a cargo of salted hides and horns at Gualequay for the U.K., calling for orders. The vessel was surveyed by the proper authorities before she commenced loading, and was found in good condition. She finished loading, and took in 9,500 hides, 26,000 horns, and 18 to 20 tons of salt, the whole weighing about 300 tons, and being so loaded on the 23rd March, her draught was found to be 13 feet 1 inch aft and 12 feet 7 inches forward in fresh water, and her freeboard was 1 foot 11½ inches. By reference to the Board of Trade rules for freeboard, a vessel of her tonnage should have 2 inches for every foot depth of hold. This would give 2 feet 1 inch, but by Lloyd's rules we find that she should have a clear side of 2 feet 3 inches. As the vessel would, however, rise 3 inches in salt water, and also allowing 1 inch for the raised quarter-deck, we are of opinion that this vessel, although carrying a cargo of 65 per cent. over her register tonnage, was not overlaid, and that she had sufficient freeboard.

She left the River Plate on the 30th March with a crew of seven hands all told, under the command of Mr. Richard Smith, who holds a certificate of competency numbered 05,336, and who had commanded her since being repaired and becoming the property of her present owner. They had fine weather on leaving, and

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all went well until the 10th April, when bad weather set in, with a northerly wind and a heavy cross sea, which caused the vessel to labour and pitch heavily. Sail was reduced to ease the ship, and the pumps were duly attended to every four hours. At noon on the 10th they were tried, and there was found to be a spell of about two minutes in the vessel. They were tried again at 4 p.m., and after pumping the usual time and not obtaining a suck, the sounding rod was put down, when it was found the vessel had sprung a serious leak, and had 2 feet 6 inches water in her. All hands were then called, and both pumps set to work. At 5 p.m. the vessel was again sounded, and the same quantity of water was found.

The crew continued at the pumps throughout the night, until at 3 a.m. of the 11th a heavy squall was encountered, when a portion of the crew had to attend to the sails, leaving two hands at the pumps. On the squall passing over they returned, and on again sounding found three feet and a half in her. The master now concluded it prudent to alter his course towards the land, which was estimated about 130 miles distant, and at 6 a.m. made all sail in that direction. But at noon the wind fell light and veered more ahead. On their now sounding four feet water was found, and at 3 p.m., the crew becoming exhausted, refused to pump any longer. After holding a consultation with his chief mate, and having made a fruitless attempt to discover the leak, the master consented to the request of his crew to abandon the vessel, and gave orders for the boats to be got out and provisioned with bread and water. The long boat was stove in the first attempt and had to be repaired, but she was safely placed in the water alongside at 5.30 p.m. The water had now increased to five feet six inches, and as there appeared no hope of saving the ship they determined to abandon her at once. The crew were ordered into the boats, taking a portion of their clothes with them, five in the large boat and two in the small boat. The land was seen before leaving, bearing north by west distant about 30 miles, and they pulled towards it, and at 6 a.m. on the 12th they had reached a place near Laguna Bar. A coasting vessel was then seen, towards which they pulled, and were taken on board and conveyed to Santa Catherina, where they were all safely landed, and ultimately sent on to this country, no lives being lost. These being the facts of the case, the first question upon which our opinion has been asked is:—

1. Whether, when the vessel last left the United Kingdom, she was in good and seaworthy condition?

Ans.—The Court are of opinion that the "Calderbank" was in a good and seaworthy condition when she last left the United Kingdom.

2. Whether, having regard to the age and size of the vessel, a cargo of 290 tons stone was too much for her?

Ans.—From the evidence of Lloyd's surveyor, and all the other witnesses, it appears that the "Calderbank" was a strong built vessel, and appears to have been well kept up from this, together with the fact that she had been reclassified only last year, we think that a cargo of 290 tons stone was certainly not too much for her.

3. Whether she strained or was otherwise damaged through carrying this cargo?

Ans.—There is nothing whatever to lead us to suppose that she strained or was otherwise damaged through carrying the stone; on the contrary, we think that if she had done either one or the other it would have shewn itself directly the vessel was again loaded and got into a seaway.

4. Whether, when she left Gualequay she was in good and seaworthy condition?

Ans.—We are of opinion that when the "Calderbank" left Gualequay she was, so far as her hull and equipments are concerned, in a good and seaworthy condition.

5. Whether the pumps were sufficient and in good order?

Ans.—The pumps appear to have been in good working order, but we think, for reasons given in our next answer, that they should have been fitted either with fly-wheels, or the cross-head so arranged that it could be worked as a weejee.

6. Whether she was properly and sufficiently manned?

Ans.—This vessel, in our opinion, was insufficiently manned.

7. Whether she was overladen, especially having regard to the age and structural strength of the vessel?

Ans.—Considering all the circumstances of the case, we are of the opinion that she was not overladen, but at the same time we think that she was fully laden.

8. What was the cause of the vessel making so much water on the 10th April, and whether every possible effort was then and thereafter made to ascertain the whereabouts of the leak and to keep the water under?

Ans.—The Court are unable to point out the cause of the vessel so suddenly making such a large quantity of water as she appears to have done, feeling that any cause we might assign would be a mere matter of conjecture; but we have no hesitation in saying that the structural strength of the vessel was all that could be desired, and therefore, in our opinion, cannot be attributed to that. Every effort appears to have been made to ascertain the whereabouts of the leak and to keep the water under.

9. Whether she was prematurely abandoned?

Ans.—This vessel was not prematurely abandoned.

10. Whether she was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

Ans.—She appears to have been navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

11. Whether the master and the mate are, or either of them is, in default?

Ans.—Neither the master nor the mate are in default.

12. What was the cost of the vessel to her owner?

Ans.—The owner, Mr. Thomas Steele, told us that he bought the vessel in 1883 in a dismantled and otherwise damaged condition for 350*l*. That he then placed her in dry dock, and spent altogether another 1,050*l*. upon her in outfit and repairs, and thereupon received a classification from Lloyd's A.I. for 5 years in April of last year.

13. What was her value when she left Gualequay?

Ans.—The only evidence we have upon this point is that of the owner, who told us that he valued her at 1,400*l*., whether she was worth this to the owner or not we have no means of judging; but the Court are of opinion that 1,000*l*. was her outside marketable value.

14. What were the insurances effected, and how were they apportioned?

Ans.—Mr. Steele told us that the vessel was insured for 840*l*., and the freight for 370*l*., which was spread over several policies; the premiums for some being at the rate of 12 guineas per cent.

(Signed) HARRY SMITH,
Judge.

We concur.

(Signed) ABSM. ANDERSON, } Assessors.
ROBERT HARLAND, }

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