

(No. 2742.)

"DERWENT" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

IN the matter of the formal Investigation held at West Hartlepool on the 30th day of November 1885, before H. C. ROTHERY, Esquire, Wreck Commissioner, assisted by Captain METHVEN and Vice-Admiral PICKARD, as Assessors, into the circumstances attending the supposed loss of the steamship "DERWENT," of West Hartlepool, with a crew of 12 hands, whilst on a voyage from West Hartlepool to Rochester.

*Report of Court.*

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances of the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds, for the reasons annexed, that when the said vessel left West Hartlepool on her last voyage, she was in every respect in a good and seaworthy condition, and was not overladen, and that there is nothing to show how she was lost.

The Court is not asked to make any order as to costs.

Dated this 30th day of November 1885.

(Signed) H. C. ROTHERY,  
Wreck Commissioner.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) R. METHVEN,  
BENJ. S. PICKARD, } Assessors.

*Annex to the Report.*

This case was heard at West Hartlepool on the 30th day of November ultimo, when Mr. Howard Smith appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Tilly for the owners of the "Derwent." Fourteen witnesses having been produced by the Board of Trade and examined, Mr. Howard Smith handed in a statement of the questions upon which the Board of Trade desired the opinion of the Court. The circumstances of the case are as follow:—

The "Derwent" was an iron screw steamship belonging to the Port of Scarborough, of 417 tons gross and 263 tons net register, and was fitted with engines of 70 horse power. She was built at West Hartlepool in the year 1884, and at the time of her loss was the property of the Scarborough Steam Shipping Company (Limited), Mr. John Stephenson, of No. 8, Belgrave Crescent, Scarborough, being the manager. She left West Hartlepool at about 3 p.m. of the 23rd October last for Chatham, with a crew of 12 hands all told, including a master, chief and second mates, 4 A.B.'s, 1st and 2nd engineers, and 3 firemen, and having on board a cargo of 417 tons of coal, besides 36 tons in her bunkers, and about 6 tons of general goods. The pilot left her outside the harbour, and from that time she has not been seen or heard of; and as it would, in the ordinary course, take only 28 or 29 hours for her to perform her voyage, the fair presumption is that she has been lost. Under these circumstances this inquiry has been ordered.

Now the first question upon which our opinion has been asked is, "Was the 'Derwent' when she left West Hartlepool in all respects in a good and seaworthy condition?" The vessel was built under special survey by the highly respectable firm of Messrs. William Gray & Co., and was classed 100 A 1 at Lloyd's. Mr. Jones, the manager to the Messrs. Gray, under whose supervision she was designed and built, and Mr. Phillips, Lloyd's surveyor, on whose certificate she obtained her class, and who said that he was in the habit of visiting her three or four times a week whilst she was building, have told us that the materials and workmanship which were put into her were very good, and fully up to the requirements of Lloyd's, and that she was a very good vessel for her class. Mr. Chalmers also, the surveyor to the Board of Trade, and the detain-

ing officer at West Hartlepool, said that he had many opportunities of seeing her, and that she was an exceedingly good little vessel and always well kept up. Mark Bulmer, who served on board her as chief mate for the 10 months immediately preceding the last voyage, said that she was as good a sea boat as he ever was in. Matthew Murray also, who served in her as able seaman for three months and a half, said that he was never in a better vessel, and that he had been in large as well as small vessels, having been at sea ever since he was 13 years of age. The only witness who spoke at all disparagingly of her was a man named Alfred Vie, who made one voyage in her in July last as fireman from Hartlepool to London and back again, and all that he could say against her was that in bad weather she would ship a few sprays down the skylight, but nothing at all to endanger the safety of the vessel. On the whole we hardly remember a case in which the evidence has been so uniformly favourable as to her good seagoing qualities, and there seems to be no doubt that when she last left West Hartlepool she was in every respect in a good and seaworthy condition.

The second question which we are asked is, "Were her holds properly ventilated, and if so were the ventilators so constructed, fitted, and arranged as not to be or become a source of danger in the event of the vessel shipping heavy seas?" It seems that she had four ventilators, the first immediately abaft the fore hatchway, the second abaft the main hatchway on the starboard side, the third abaft the bridge, and the fourth just forward of the storeroom hatchway. They were 7 inches in diameter, with coamings standing about 2 feet 6 inches above the deck, and were all fitted with cowls. They appear to have been properly constructed in every respect, and were not likely to become a source of danger even should the vessel have shipped a heavy sea.

The third question which we are asked is, "Were the engine-room skylight and stokehole gratings properly constructed?" We are told that the engine-room skylight was constructed of iron  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick, supported with angle irons, and having three shutters at the top, made to shut down upon india-rubber washers, and with two ventilators at the top about 10 inches in diameter. The engine-room skylight, as well as the stokehole gratings, seem to have been in all respects properly constructed.

The fourth question which we are asked is, "Were the openings into the engine room and stokehole sufficiently protected; and were the arrangements for closing the after end of the alley ways sufficient to prevent the water getting into the engine room?" It seems that there was a monkey fore-castle forward 10 feet 6 long, and rising 3 feet 6 above the main deck; then there was a well 43 feet long with bulwarks at the sides 4 feet high; and then the bridge covering the engine room and stokehole; and abaft the bridge was a small after well 10 feet 6 long, the centre of which was occupied by the engine-room casing, leaving two little wells, one on each side, capable of containing about 6½ tons of water each. On the fore part of the bridge was a strong substantial iron bulkhead, without any openings, and of a convex form, the better to resist the force of the water; but the after ends of the alley ways opened into the little wells of which I have just spoken, and through these openings access could be obtained to the engine room and stokehole. There were no fixed doors to these openings, but at each side of them were angle irons riveted to the iron casing forming grooves 2½ inches thick, into which shutters or boards could be fitted in case of bad weather, so as effectually to shut out any water.

The fifth question which we are asked is, "Were the hatchways and all other deck openings properly constructed, and were they, when the vessel left West Hartlepool, properly and efficiently secured?" She had four hatchways; the fore hatch was 6 feet by 5 feet 3 inches, with coamings 18 inches high; the main hatchway was 14 feet by 8 feet, with coamings of 15 inches high; the after hatchway was 14 feet by 8 feet, with coamings of 15 inches high; and aft of all was a small hatchway leading to the store room 6 feet by 5 feet 3 inches, with coamings 15 inches high. All of them seem to have been properly constructed, and according to the pilot they were all closed and covered

over with tarpaulins, before the vessel moved away from under the spout.

The sixth question which we are asked is, "Was the cargo properly trimmed and stowed?" We are told that all round the fore hatch the coals did not come to within 3 or 4 feet of the deck, which is not unusual, for, if the fore hold is filled quite full, it has a tendency to put the vessel down too much by the head. Abreast of the after hatch, the starboard side was quite full, but on the port side there was an empty space of 2 or 3 feet between the coals and the deck, it having been found in loading her that she had a list to port, and this brought her upright. It was suggested that this list was due probably to her having had a somewhat greater quantity of coal put into the port than into the starboard bunker; but whether this was so or not, we hardly think that the small empty space on the port side would be likely to endanger the safety of the vessel on her voyage to Chatham, seeing that, when she left, the wind was from the E.S.E., and that it gradually backed round to the east, and would consequently be all the time on her port side.

The seventh question which we are asked is, "Was the vessel overladen?" We are told that when she left, she had in her 417 tons of coal as cargo, 36 tons in her bunkers, and about 6 tons 1 cwt. of general cargo, making a total of 459 tons 1 cwt. It seems that since she was launched in October 1884, she has made 51 voyages from West Hartlepool to the Thames and back again; and from a list, which the manager has brought in, of the cargoes which she has carried, it would appear that she has frequently had on board from 460 to 469 tons of dead weight on these voyages. *Prima facie*, therefore, she would seem, as Mr. Howard Smith has observed, not to have had too large a cargo on board on her last voyage. As regards her freeboard, we are told that the load line was placed at 1 foot 2½ inches below the deck, not indeed that she seems ever to have been loaded down to it, for we are told that in general the whole of the deck was out of water; and the dock master, who saw her as she went out, told us that the water was then about 1 inch above the bottom of the deck, which would have given her a freeboard of 1 foot 7 to 1 foot 8 inches. Now, Mr. Chalmers, the detaining officer, whose duty it is to detain vessels if he thinks them to be too deeply laden, has told us that in his opinion a freeboard of 1 foot 7 to 1 foot 8 inches would be a sufficient allowance for her for a winter voyage to the Thames; and the way in which he arrived at it was this. He said that by the rules which are given to them for their guidance, this vessel should as a flush deck ship have had 1·9 inches for every foot depth of hold, and as the register shows her hold to have been 12·4 feet deep, that would give her a freeboard of about 23½ inches, and deducting 3½ inches for the deck erections, leaves 1 foot 8 as a proper freeboard for her. In this opinion the assessors are disposed to concur, and we shall therefore hold that the vessel, when she left this port, was not overladen and that she had sufficient freeboard.

The eighth question which we are asked is, "What in the opinion of the Court, from the evidence before them, is the cause of the vessel not having been heard of since the pilot left her in Hartlepool Bay?" We were told by the dock master that as she passed out he said to the captain "you have not much of a prospect," meaning that the weather looked bad, adding immediately "but then you have a ship like a lifeboat." He said that during the following night the wind, which was from E.S.E., increased to a force of 9 by Admiral Beaufort's scale, gradually hauling round to the east, and that on the following morning it was blowing a whole gale with a force of 10; and his evidence was fully confirmed by the pilot, Mr. Bulmer, who had served in her for 10 months as chief officer, and had left her just before she started on her last voyage, had such confidence in her seagoing qualities that he thought her loss could only have been due to her having been kept running too long with the wind and sea abeam, and that she may have been overwhelmed by a heavy sea and gone down. Whether this was so or not can only be conjecture, for there is no evidence whatever to shew how she was lost. All that we can say is that there was nothing in either the vessel herself or the cargo which she had on board, which would lead us to think that they in any way contributed to her loss.

I will take the last three questions together; they are as follow:—(9.) What was the cost of the vessel to her owners? (10.) What was her value at the time she left on her last voyage? and (11.) What were the insurances effected, and how were they apportioned?" Mr. Stephenson has told us that she cost them 8,100£, including extras; and that she was insured at the time of her loss for 8,000£, namely, 5,000£ upon the hull and 3,000£ upon the machinery. He added that they were annual policies effected with mutual insurance clubs, and dating from February last, when the vessel was only three months old, and consequently nearly new. It is true that when she left on her last voyage she would not be worth so much as she had been when the policies were entered in; and Mr. Stephenson also told us that probably he could now get her built for some 200£ or 300£ less than they had given for her; but then they have had to pay the calls in the clubs, and they are still liable for further calls, which will tend to reduce considerably the amount which they will have to receive under their policies. We are not, therefore, prepared to say that she was insured beyond her value. The freight, also Mr. Stephenson told us, was insured for 100£ by an annual policy, but they would only be entitled under it to recover the actual amount of freight at risk, which was 90£.

(Signed) H. C. ROTHERY,  
Wreck Commissioner.

We concur.

(Signed) R. METHVEN,  
BENJ. S. PICKARD, } Assessors.

In the  
W  
be  
sic  
an  
cin  
st  
Fr  
of  
re  
of

The  
cumst  
finds,  
was d  
Park,  
secon  
suspe  
respe  
of su  
allow  
and a  
lieu o  
Th  
costs  
Da

TH  
of O  
Boar  
Bad  
first  
but  
No o  
havi  
ami  
ques  
opin  
call  
furt  
add  
and  
hea  
the  
upo  
star

T  
to t  
ton  
pov  
and  
of  
Th  
and  
left  
bal  
abo  
the