

(No. 2789.)

“MARSEILLES” (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 1st and 2nd days of January 1886, before JOSEPH SPENCE and JOHN ROBSON, Esquires, assisted by Captains WM. CURLING and GEORGE HYDE into the circumstances attending the stranding of the S.S. “MARSEILLES,” on the Haaks, on the 23rd of October 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 stranding of the S.S. “Marseilles” was caused by the error of the master in estimating his position without verifying it, and the insufficient use of the lead, and the Court finds the master, Abraham Proud Blackburn, in default and suspends his certificate, No. 11,614, for the period of three calendar months from the date hereof.

Dated this 5th day of January 1886.

(Signed) JOSEPH SPENCE, } Justices.
JOHN ROBSON, }

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) WILLM. CURLING, R.N.R., } Assessors.
GEORGE HYDE, R.N.R., }

Annex to the Report.

This is an investigation into the circumstances attending the stranding of the S.S. “Marseilles,” of London, on the Haaks Sand, off the coast of Holland, on the 23rd of October 1885, held at the Town Hall, North Shields, before Joseph Spence and John Robson, Esquires, two of Her Majesty’s Justices of the Peace, assisted by Captains William Curling and George Hyde (Nautical Assessors). Mr. De Hamel appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. W. O. Foster represented the master and owners. The “Marseilles,” official number 65,467, is an iron screw steamer, built at Sunderland in 1872 by W. Pile and Co., of the following dimensions: length, 175’2; breadth, 23’1; and depth, 17’5. She was fitted with two compound engines of 70 horse power (combined), and was owned by Mr. Joseph Brown, of 19, Summerhill Street, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Mr. Brown having been appointed managing owner on the 31st day of August 1883. From the evidence adduced, it appears that the “Marseilles” left the South Pier, off the Tyne, at 1 p.m. of the 21st of October 1885, having loaded a cargo of 400 tons of coal, and 91 tons of general cargo, under the command of Abraham Proud Blackburn, who holds a certificate of competency, No. 11,614, with a crew of 13 hands all told, bound to Harlingen, the vessel drawing 11 feet 5 inches forward, and 12 feet 2 inches aft. She was fitted with four compasses, the pole being used as steering compass as well as for setting the course. On leaving the South Pier a course S.E. was set, and the patent log put over at zero. On the 22nd of October at 10 p.m. the patent log was hauled in, shewing 253 miles, from which the master deducted 10 miles error. A cast of the lead was taken giving 17 fathoms. The course was altered to S. in order to make Texel Lights. At midnight another cast of the lead was taken, shewing 17 fathoms, and a S.S.E. course was set. At 3 a.m. of the 23rd, another cast of the lead was taken, shewing 14 fathoms, and the vessel was put on a N.E.

course. At 3.45 another cast of the lead was taken giving 11½ fathoms, and Keykduin Light was sighted right ahead, estimated distance 10 miles, and at 4 a.m. the course was altered to N. by E. The master then went below, leaving instructions to the chief officer to keep the same course which would keep her well off the Haaks Sand Bank, and whilst so steering, the vessel struck at 5 a.m., on the Haaks Sand. Part of the cargo was jettisoned, and salvage assistance obtained, and she was got off the same day and taken to Nieu Dieppe, where she was temporarily repaired, and from thence to the Tyne, where she was docked, having sustained material damage. The master trusted entirely to his estimated distance from Keykduin Light, and took no measures by soundings or otherwise, after sighting the light at 3.45 a.m., to verify his position, but went below and remained there until the ship stranded.

At the conclusion of the evidence, the following questions were submitted to the Court on behalf of the Board of Trade:—

1. What was the cause of the stranding of the “Marseilles” on the Haaks on the 23rd October?
2. Whether a safe and proper course was set and steered after leaving the Tyne?
3. Whether the master took proper measures to verify his assumed position on sighting the Keykduin light at 3.45 a.m., on the 23rd October, and from time to time thereafter?
4. Whether a safe and proper alteration was made in the course at 3.45 a.m., and whether due allowance was made for tide and currents?
5. Whether the master was on deck at a time when the safety of his vessel required his personal supervision?
6. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency?
7. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

In the opinion of the Board of Trade, the certificate of the master should be dealt with.

Dated this 1st January, 1886.

LANCEL DE HAMEL,
For the Board of Trade.

Judgment.

1. The stranding of the S.S. “Marseilles” was caused by the error of the master in estimating his position without verifying it, and the insufficient use of the lead.
 2. After leaving the Tyne a safe and proper course was set, but not made good.
 3. The master took a cast of the lead at 3.45 a.m. of the 23rd of October 1885, at which time he sighted the Keykduin Light bearing N.E., but he took no measures thereafter to verify or ascertain his position, trusting entirely to his estimated distance.
 4. As the master’s assumed position turned out to be incorrect, the course set at 3.45 a.m. was not a proper one.
 5. The master ought not to have left the deck before he had more correctly ascertained his position and before further casts of the lead had been taken.
 6. Up to 3.45 a.m. of the 23rd of October the lead was used with sufficient frequency, but not afterwards.
 7. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care after 3.45 a.m. of the 23rd of October 1885.
- The Court finds the master, Abraham Proud Blackburn, in default, and suspends his certificate, No. 11,614, for the period of three calendar months from the date hereof.

(Signed) JOSEPH SPENCE, } Justices.
JOHN ROBSON, }

We concur in the above judgment.

(Signed) WILLM. CURLING, R.N.R., } Assessors.
GEORGE HYDE, R.N.R., }