

(No. 2792.)

"TELESILLA" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Board Room of the Sunderland Union Offices, John Street, in the Borough of Sunderland, on the Twelfth day of January 1886, before JOHN POTTS and GEORGE CLIFTON PECKET, Esquires, two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace acting in and for the Borough of Sunderland, assisted by Captains CASTLE and ANDERSON, Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "TELESILLA," of London, on Whitburn Steel, in the county of Durham, on the 7th day December 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 was caused by steering too fine a course for Souther Point and not making sufficient allowance for tide and sea; the Court considers that the stranding was caused through the default of the master, Robert Milne, but taking into consideration his previous long service, and this being his first casualty, does not deal with his certificate, but severely reprimand him and caution him to be more careful in future. The Court also orders that he be not paid any costs relating to this inquiry.

Dated this Twelfth day of January 1886.

(Signed) JOHN POTTS, } Judges.
GEORGE PECKET, }

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) JOHN S. CASTLE, } Assessors.
ABSM. ANDERSON, }

Annex to the Report.

The "Telesilla" is a screw steamship, built of iron at Hartlepool, in the county of Durham, in the year 1877, her official number being 76,943, and she is registered at the port of London. Her dimensions as per register are, length 230 feet, main breadth 31 feet 6-tenths, and depth of hold 17 feet 3-tenths, gross tonnage 1232.65 tons, and registered 794.166 tons. This vessel is fitted with two compound surface-condensing direct-acting inverted engines, the diameter of the cylinders being 29 and 55 inches respectively with a length of stroke of 33 inches, and of the power of 120 horses combined. This vessel is owned by Frederick Gordon, of Sunderland, and others, Mr. Gordon being the managing owner. She was under the command of Robert Milne, who holds a certificate of competency as master, No. 26,409, granted to him by the Board of Trade on the 30th of January 1866. The vessel was supplied with two compasses, viz., a standard compass on the upper bridge, and the steering compass to steer by. She left London at about 2 p.m. on the 6th of December 1885, in water ballast, bound for the Tyne, with a crew of seventeen hands all told. At about 1 p.m. on the following day the vessel was abreast of Whitby, distant about ten miles, but at that time there were snow showers over the land, and the master was unable to take either cross bearings or two bearings of one object, to enable him to find the exact distance of the vessel from the land. The master then set the course N.W. by N. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. by steering compass, upon which there was a quarter of a point westerly deviation; this gave the magnetic course north-west by

north $\frac{1}{2}$ north, which should have taken the vessel about four miles outside the Souther Point, if made good, but no allowance was made for the flood tide, the north-east swell, and the wind on the starboard bow, all of which would have a tendency to put the vessel nearer the land, and more so on account of her being in ballast and very light.

The weather continued to be very hazy, the ship going at full speed until 5 p.m., when the course was altered to north-west $\frac{3}{4}$ north magnetic. There was nothing in sight until 5.55 p.m., when a light was seen off the port bow, which the master took for a blast furnace near Seaham. The course was then altered to north by east and the speed reduced to dead slow, which was continued for eight or nine minutes, when breakers were reported right ahead. The engines were immediately stopped and reversed, the helm put hard-a-port, but before the way was taken off the vessel she took the ground on Whitburn Still, and as the tide was then falling all attempts to get the vessel off failed, and at low water she was dry. It was then found that she was holed under the after tank and engine room. These holes having been temporarily plugged, on the following day the assistance of two tugs was procured, and she was then towed off and taken to Sunderland, where she was docked and repaired, about thirty plates having to be taken off the bottom.

This stranding can only be attributed to over confidence on the part of the master in steering a fine course in thick foggy weather, without taking the ordinary and seamanlike precaution of using the lead. Had the master taken a cast at 5 p.m., or at any time after, this casualty would not have happened. It has been stated that it is not customary to take these highly necessary precautions in vessels employed in the coasting trade. If this is the case, the Court is very strongly of opinion that the sooner the practice of using the lead in thick or hazy weather is adopted the better.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. de Hamel, on behalf of the Board of Trade, desired the opinion of the Court on the following questions:—

1. What was the cause of the stranding of the steamship "Telesilla" on Whitburn Steel on the 7th December?

Ans. Steering too fine a course, and not making sufficient allowance for tide and leeway.

2. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the assumed position of the vessel when she was off Whitby at 1 p.m., and again when she was off Huntcliffe Foot at 2 p.m., on the 7th December?

Ans. The only measures then available appear to have been taken.

3. Whether a safe and proper course was set and steered after leaving Whitby, and due allowance made therein for wind, sea, and tide?

Ans. A proper course was not set or steered, inasmuch as a sufficient allowance was not made for tide or the set of the sea.

4. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the assumed position of the vessel at 5 p.m., and whether safe and proper alterations were then and thereafter made therein?

Ans. No; the only measures that could be taken at 5 p.m. was by taking a cast of the lead. This was not done. The alteration then made in the course was an improper one.

5. Whether the neglect of the lead was justifiable?

Ans. No.

6. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

Ans. Not after passing Whitby.

(Signed) JOHN POTTS, } Justices.
GEORGE C. PECKET, }

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) JOHN S. CASTLE.
ABSM. ANDERSON.