

OFFICIAL COPY.

(No. 3611.)

## "CLANSMAN" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Sheriff Court, Glasgow, on the thirty-first day of August 1888, before JOHN M<sup>c</sup>KIE LEES, Esquire, Advocate, Sheriff-Substitute of Lanarkshire, assisted by Captains WILLIAM COSENS, London, and Z. B. DRAGE, Bath, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "CLANSMAN," about three quarters of a mile from Palay Perch, Kyleakin, Skye, on the 14th August 1888.

*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 vessel was caused by the mis-judgment of the mate in over estimating her distance from the Skye shore. The Court does not deal with the certificates.

Dated this 31st day of August 1888.

(Signed) J. M. LEES, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) WILLIAM COSENS, }  
Z. B. DRAGE, } Assessors.*Annex to the Report.*

The "Clansman," official number 63,775, is an iron-screw steamer, built by Messrs. G. & T. Thomson in 1870, and registered at the port of Glasgow, of 476.61 tons gross, and 336.25 tons registered. She is fitted with two engines of 150 horse power combined, is rigged as a schooner, and is of the following dimensions:—length 211 ft. 3 in., breadth 27 ft. 3 in., depth 13 ft. 4½ in. Her present owner is Mr. David M<sup>c</sup>Brayne, of Hope-street, Glasgow, and at the time of the casualty Mr. Archibald M<sup>c</sup>Callum was her master. She had a crew of 30 men, and in addition had on board from 95 to 100 passengers. She has a passenger certificate and carries five boats, four of which are life-boats, also life-buoys and belts, to Board of Trade requirements. She is fitted with three compasses on deck, which the captain stated were adjusted by White, of Glasgow, in May 1888. There is also a tell-tale compass in the cabin, and she has, in addition to her steam pumps, two hand pumps on deck, all in good working order. She was supplied with Admiralty charts. The vessel left Glasgow at 3.30 p.m. on the 13th August 1888, bound to Stornoway, calling at different ports on the way, her draught being 10 feet forward, and 13 feet aft. At 10.30 p.m. on the 14th, having called at Balmacara, the master, who had been on deck off and on for 18 hours, handed over charge to John Aitchison, the mate, and went below. It would appear that in this steamer it is customary for the master and mate to

take alternate watches. The latter, when in charge, only calling up the master when it comes on thick, or in the event of any emergency. Aitchison holds a master's certificate, has been accustomed to this particular voyage, and has been in Mr. M<sup>c</sup>Brayne's employment for 24 years. He has also regularly taken the vessel through the channel when the master is below. Having discharged her cargo and passengers at Kyleakin, the vessel proceeded through the channel on her way to Broadfort, and, after rounding Bow buoy, she was steered on various courses from N.W. to W. by S. ½ S., and whilst on the latter course, and nearer to the Skye shore than the mate estimated, she struck on the Seal rock, which was covered, as it was about high water. The captain rushed on deck, the engines were stopped, the boats lowered, and the passengers landed with promptitude and safety. At first the vessel made very little water, but soon afterwards the mate found water coming in at the starboard bilge. This was stopped in some measure by old bags and canvas being shored down. At daylight attempts were made to get the ship off with the assistance of other vessels, and ultimately on the 19th August she was towed off by the steam-tug "Conqueror," and brought to the Clyde.

In conclusion it appears proper to point out (1) that although the absence of a look-out on the fore-castle in no way contributed to the stranding of the vessel, the apparent custom of neglecting such a proper precaution is reprehensible. (2) As already said, the stranding of the vessel was due to the mistake of the mate in over estimating her distance from the Skye shore. He does not appear to have taken any bearing from the Kyleakin light, but simply to have trusted to his long experience in guiding the vessel by the contour of the land, which was clear in view. Had he taken pains to verify his position by the bearings of the lighthouse, it is not likely that the mistake he made would have occurred, and having regard to the large number of passengers in the vessel, the absence of such a precaution on his part is much to be regretted.

The Board of Trade desire the opinion of the Court upon the following questions:—

1. Whether, when the "Clansman" left Glasgow on 13th August 1888, she was in good and seaworthy condition?
2. Were the boats carried by the vessel sufficient, and were they in good and seaworthy condition and ready for use?
3. Whether, when the master went below, about 10.30 p.m. on 14th August 1888, he gave proper and sufficient instructions to the chief officer as to the courses to be steered and the navigation of the vessel?
4. Whether proper courses were set and steered after leaving Kyle Akin, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
5. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
6. Whether the master was off the deck at a time when the safety of the vessel required his personal supervision?
7. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
8. What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel?
9. Whether the master and mate are, or either of them is, in default?

In the opinion of the Board of Trade the certificates of the master and chief officer should be dealt with.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE,  
BY EYRE AND SPOTTISWOODE,  
PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

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1888.

*Price Two pence.*

*Answers to the foregoing Questions.*

1. According to the evidence placed before the Court, the vessel was in good and seaworthy condition.

2. The boats appear to have been in good and seaworthy condition, and ready for use. They were of sufficient size, and sufficed to take the passengers safely to shore.

3. It does not appear that any special instructions were needed. The mate was sufficiently aware of what was proper.

4. According to the evidence, after the vessel left Kyleakin she was steered under orders of the mate on her usual courses. Thereafter, and as the vessel was stranded at about the time of high water and neap tide, and as there was no wind, no special allowance required to be made for tide and current.

5. Although no look-out was stationed on the fore-castle (as there should have been), the stranding of the vessel was not due to any want of a proper look-out. The chief officer was stationed on the upper bridge from which he had better opportunity of judging what were proper courses for the vessel than could have been obtained in any other way.

6. There was no impropriety in the captain not being on deck at the time when the accident occurred.

7 & 8. The vessel was stranded from mis-judgment of the mate (as after explained), in over-estimating the distance of the vessel from the Skye shore. As already said no look-out was stationed in the fore-castle, but otherwise the vessel appears to have been navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

9. In the opinion of the Court the master was in no way whatever in default, but the mate was so far in default that he over estimated the distance of the vessel from the Skye shore, and that this mistake might probably have been avoided had he carefully noted the bearings of the Kyleakin light. Having regard to his long and excellent service and to the character of the mistake made on the present occasion the Court thinks there is no reason for dealing with his certificate.

Dated this thirty-first day of August, eighteen hundred and eighty-eight.

(Signed) J. M. LEES.  
WILLIAM COSENS.  
Z. B. DRAGE.

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