

(No. 3544.)

“DOUGLAS” (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 24th day of May 1888, before THOMAS JACKSON and JOSEPH SPENCE, Esquires, assisted by Captains ANDERSON and BAIN, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the s.s. “DOUGLAS,” at or near Hantsholm, Jutland, on the 20th day of April 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 s.s. “Douglas” was caused by the master’s gross carelessness in navigating the vessel, and the Court finds the master, John Franks, in default, and suspends his certificate, No. 06081, for a period of twelve calendar months from the date hereof.

Dated this 29th day of May 1888.

(Signed) THOMAS JACKSON, } Justices.  
JOSEPH SPENCE, }

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ABSM. ANDERSON, } Assessors.  
JOHN BAIN, }

*Annex to the Report.*

This is an investigation held at the Town Hall, North Shields, before Thomas Jackson and Joseph Spence, Esquires, two of her Majesty’s Justices of the Peace, assisted by Captains Anderson and Bain (nautical assessors) into the circumstances attending the stranding of the s.s. “Douglas,” of West Hartlepool, at or near Hantsholm, Jutland, on or about the 20th of April 1888. Mr. R. S. Watson appeared on behalf of the Board of Trade, and Mr. W. O. Forster represented the master. The “Douglas,” official number 67,539, was an iron screw steamer, built at Whitby, in the county of York, in 1873, by Thomas Turnbull and Son, of the following dimensions:—length, 225 ft. 3; breadth, 30 ft. 1; depth, 16 ft. 7; of 1021·90 gross, and 648·37 registered tonnage. She was fitted with two inverted compound direct-acting engines of 99 horse-power (combined), and owned by Mr. Thomas Bell, of 5, Quayside, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and several others, Mr. Bell having been appointed managing owner on the 21st of March 1885. From the evidence adduced before the Court, it appears that the s.s. “Douglas” left Liban on April 17th 1888, at 10 a.m. with a cargo of 9,945 quarters, or about 920 tons of oats in bulk, having a crew of 18 hands all told, under the command of John Franks, who holds a certificate of competency No. 06081, bound for Antwerp, the vessel drawing 13 feet 7 inches forward and 16 feet 2 inches aft, being well found and in good condition. She had three compasses, viz. the pole, the steering compass in the wheelhouse on the lower bridge, and one aft, the compasses having been last adjusted on the 17th January 1888 by Ainsley of South Shields. The Vinga Light was made at 12.20 a.m. of the 20th of April, bearing E. by N., distance found by a four-point bearing to be 7 miles, the patent log on being hauled showing 76 miles from Kùln. The course then set was N.W. by N.  $\frac{1}{4}$  N. magnetic, which was altered at 3 a.m. to N.W.  $\frac{1}{4}$  N., northerly light wind from N.E., weather hazy. At 4 a.m. the course was altered to W.  $\frac{3}{4}$  N., and at 5 a.m. W. by S. At 8 a.m. the course was altered to W.S.W. At noon the log showed 180 miles from Kùln, wind N.E. and N.E. by N., weather having cleared, but not sufficiently for an observation, and the master then altered the course to S.W., thinking he might see the land. At 12.30 p.m. the weather became thick, and got thicker

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and thicker, and the vessel was then hauled off to S.W. by W. and the engines eased to half-speed, about 6 knots. About 2 p.m. the master noticed discoloured water, and immediately afterwards the vessel struck on the mainland near Hantsholm Lighthouse, which, when the weather cleared, was found to bear S.W. by S., distant about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile. Soundings were taken round the vessel, giving 12 feet forward and 17 feet aft, with chalk bottom. An anchor was got out aft, but they were unable to move the vessel, as the hawser parted. On the 21st a salvage boat arrived, but the weather was too bad to discharge any cargo. At 7 a.m. of that day the vessel commenced to make water, and the pumps were set going, but the water gained, and the wind and sea increasing, the crew left her and landed at 8 a.m., the master leaving her at noon in the lifeboat, the engine-room at that time being full of water. On Monday the 23rd the crew went on board and saved their clothes, and with the assistance of some fishermen, about 600 quarters of oats were salvaged; but on the 28th the vessel became a total wreck, no lives being lost. The courses as detailed, which were given by the master, place him about 10 miles nearer the land than where he estimated he was at noon of the 20th of April 1888, and although about half an hour afterwards a dense fog set in, he did not make any attempt to verify his position by a cast of the lead, or take special precautions with regard to the look-out, but on the other hand, permitted the second officer (whose watch it was) and deck hands to do painting work, although he must have had in his mind some idea that precautions should have been adopted, as he had reduced the speed of the vessel to 6 knots, and whilst conducting the navigation of his vessel in this negligent manner, it was not a matter of surprise that he suddenly found himself hard and fast on the ground, the result of which was the total loss of the steamer, fortunately without loss of life. The Court under these circumstances felt that a suspension of his certificate for such a default could not be for a less period than twelve months.

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 vessel?
2. What number of compasses had she on board, where were they placed, and were they in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship?
3. When and by whom were they made, and when and by whom were they last adjusted?
4. Did the master ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time, were the errors of the compasses correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections to the courses applied?
5. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 0·30 a.m. of the 20th of April last, or when Vinga Light was sighted at or about noon of that day, and from time to time thereafter?
6. Whether a safe and proper course was set and steered at or about 0·30 a.m. of the 20th April, and from time to time thereafter, and whether due and proper allowance was made for currents?
7. Whether safe and proper alterations were subsequently made in the course, and whether due and proper allowance was made for currents?
8. Whether having regard to the thick state of the weather the vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed?
9. Whether the total neglect of the lead was justifiable?
10. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
11. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
12. Whether the master and officers are, or either of them is, in default?

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

*Judgment.*

1. The stranding of the s.s. “Douglas” was caused by the master’s gross carelessness in navigating the vessel.

2. There were three compasses on board, viz., the pole compass, the steering compass, in the wheelhouse on the lower bridge, and one aft. The evidence showed they were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship.

3. The master was unable to say by whom the compasses were made.

They were last adjusted on the 17th of January 1888, by Ainsley, of South Shields.

4. The master had up to the 9th of April 1888, ascertained from time to time the errors of the compasses by observation, for the purpose of applying the proper corrections, but subsequent to the 9th of April, he states that he had no opportunity of obtaining any observation.

5. Proper measures were taken at 0.20 a.m. on the 20th of April, when off Vinga Light, to verify the position of the vessel, but not afterwards.

6 and 7. From the evidence it appears that a safe and proper course was set and steered up to noon of the 20th of April, but not afterwards, and no allowance was made for current,

8. The vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed after noon of the 20th of April.

9. The total neglect of of the lead was wholly unjustified.

10. There was not a sufficient look-out considering the very thick weather and the uncertainty of the position of the vessel.

11. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

12. The master is in default, and the Court suspends his certificate, No. 06081, for a period of twelve calendar months from the date hereof.

(Signed) THOMAS JACKSON, } Justices.  
JOSEPH SPENCE, }

We concur in the above judgment.

(Signed) ABSM. ANDERSON, } Assessors.  
JOHN BAIN, }

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