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OFFICIAL COPY.

(No. 3573.)

"EDDLETHORPE" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Public Board Room, Post Office Chambers, Middlesbrough, on the 20th and 21st days of July 1888, before CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN, Esquire, Judge, assisted by Captains WILSON and BROOKS, into the circumstances attending the damage sustained by the British steamship "EDDLETHORPE," of Hartlepool, through striking a rock or wreck off Ushant, France, on or about the 26th ultimo.

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 vessel struck some hidden danger on the starboard side, but what that danger was it is difficult to conjecture. She was navigated with proper and seamanlike care, and the Court thinks that no blame is attachable to the captain, or any or either of his officers.

Dated this 21st day of July 1888.

(Signed) CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) R. WILSON, } Assessors.
EDWD. BROOKS, }

Annex to the Report.

The steamship "Eddlethorpe," official number 86,385, belonging to West Hartlepool. She was built there of iron in the latter part of 1882 by Messrs. William Gray & Co. Her dimensions were 259'6 feet by 37'7 feet by 19'5 feet depth of hold. Her gross tonnage was 1735'03 tons, and after deducting for crew space and engine room 616'36 tons, leaves nett register of 1118'67 tons. She was owned by Mr. Robert Hawxwell Coverdale, of Victoria Terrace, West Hartlepool, and others, he being appointed managing owner on 5th January 1887. Her engines were compound cylinder, 32 inches and 60 inches, stroke 39 inches, pressure 80 lbs., horsepower 150. She was classed 100 A1 at Lloyds.

She was provided with four boats, which were fully equipped. She had three compasses, viz.: one pole, one steering compass, and one after compass, supplied by Mr. Harris, of Hartlepool. She also had on board a compass corrector, by Baines & Ainslie.

The "Eddlethorpe" left Sulina on the 11th June 1888, at 9.35 a.m., with a cargo consisting of 2,260 tons wheat in bulk, bound for Rotterdam, with a crew of 20 hands all told, under the command of Mr. Robert Bontflower, who holds a master's certificate, No. 89,406.

Her draught of water at the time of leaving Sulina being 20 ft. 5 in. aft, and 19 ft. 2 in. forward. She was in good order and condition in every respect. All went well until the 25th June. At 4.15 a.m. on that day Cape Finisterre was abeam, and at 7.15 a.m. Cape Villano was abeam, bearing south-east (magnetic),

distant about six miles. From this position a course was set north-east by north a quarter north, by steering compass, which gave a north-east correct magnetic course, the deviation being 1½ points easterly.

This course was calculated to take the ship 20 miles to the north-west of Ushant. The weather was fine throughout, and the ship kept going full speed. At noon of the 26th, the sky being overcast, no reliable observations were obtainable. At 8 p.m. the log showed 326 miles and the ship was stopped for sounding, which gave 65 fathoms, agreeing with the reckoning by account. The weather continued fine, occasionally a little haze with light southerly winds and slight sea. All the witnesses agree that they could see seven to nine miles. Full speed was continued. At about 9.15 p.m. a steamer's lights were observed at a distance of three or four miles on her starboard beam going to the south westward, which gave confidence to the "Eddlethorpe" that their position was correct. A good look-out was kept for land and lights, but nothing was seen. At 10.30 p.m. they felt the ship strike something, and she slightly heeled to port. She was immediately stopped and reversed, but remained fixed three or four minutes. A cast of the lead was taken, and reported as 20 to 24 feet. Before another cast could be taken she had passed clear of the danger, and no bottom could be found with the hand lead which was being used. She was then headed to the north westward. The tanks were sounded and no water was found in them; but shortly after, on sounding again No. 1 tank, water was found coming in, which gained on the pumps until the evening of the 27th when they ceased to pump, and the tank filled up. After midnight on the 26th a channel course was steered. Early on the morning of the 28th she passed St. Catherine's, and at noon on the same day she passed Dungeness, and arrived at Rotterdam on the morning of the 29th without further damage.

She was dry docked on her arrival at Hartlepool after the 6th July, when it was found that some of her bottom plates were bulged in, and on the port side forward there was one plate clean cut upwards. Assuming that the courses given by the captain (and worked out by us) to be correct, and we have every reason to believe that they were so, no obstacle of any kind, either rock or sand, is marked on the chart, and we adhere to our opinion, formed after hearing all the evidence in this case, that the probabilities are in favour of the bottom of the ship having struck upon some submerged wreck.

The course set from Villano was a perfectly safe one, allowing fully for any possible indraught, and for four hours previous to the ship striking the obstacle, she had an ebb-tide setting out from the Bay of Brest.

The fact of a steamer having passed inside the "Eddlethorpe," steering to the north-east after she had cleared the obstacle, leads us to come to the conclusion above stated.

The Board of Trade desired the opinion of the Court on the following questions:—

1. What number of compasses had the vessel on board, where were they placed, and were they in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship?
2. When and by whom were they made, and when and by whom were they last adjusted?
3. 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?

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1888.

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4. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 7.15 a.m. of the 25th of June, and, so far as possible, from time to time thereafter?

5. Whether a safe and proper course was thereafter steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

6. Whether, on the evening of the 26th of June, having regard to the hazy state of the weather, and to the fact that the Ushant Light had not been sighted, the master was justified in neglecting to reduce the speed of the vessel?

7. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency?

8. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?

9. Where did the vessel strike, and what was the cause of the casualty?

10. Whether she was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

11. Whether the master and officers are, or either of them, is in default?

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

To which the Court replied as follows:—

1. There were three compasses; the pole, a steering compass on the bridge, and one aft.

2. They were made by Harris of Hartlepool, and were adjusted on the 17th of March last at Constantinople by one Wood.

3. The master did ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time, and the

errors of his compasses were correctly ascertained, and proper corrections were applied to the courses.

4. Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the ship at or about 7.15 a.m. on the 25th of June, and, as far as possible, from time to time thereafter.

5. A safe and proper course was steered, and proper allowances made for tide and currents.

6. It appears to the Court that there was no necessity for the speed to be reduced.

7. The lead was used with sufficient frequency.

8. A good and proper look-out was kept.

9. The vessel struck some hidden danger on the starboard side. What that danger was it is difficult to conjecture. Had she struck on a rock, or a sandbank, we should have looked for more damage being done to the vessel, remembering that she carried a cargo of grain of about 2,260 tons. We are inclined to the belief that she struck a submerged wreck.

10. She was navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

11. We think no blame is attachable to the captain, or any, or either of his officers.

The Court makes no order as to costs.

Dated this 21st day of July 1888.

(Signed) CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) R. WILSON, } Assessors.
EDWD. BROOKS, }

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