

(No. 3553.)

“ISLE OF CYPRUS” (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 11th and 12th days of June 1888, before GEORGE CLEUGH and A. H. HILL, Esquires, assisted by Captains FRENCH and GROVES, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the S.S. “ISLE OF CYPRUS,” near St. Ann’s Bay, N. of Cape Corveiro, West Coast of Africa, on the 6th day of May 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. “Isle of Cyprus” was caused by the master’s over confidence in his assumed position, and by neglecting to verify his position from time to time by the use of the lead, and the Court finds the master, James Joseph Hebron, in default, and severely reprimands him for his want of caution, but does not deal with his certificate, trusting that this casualty will be a warning to him in his future career.

Dated this thirteenth day of June 1888.

(Signed) GEORGE CLEUGH, }
ALFRED HENRY HILL, } Justices.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) A. P. FRENCH, }
C. B. GROVES, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

This is an Investigation held at the Town Hall, North Shields, before George Cleugh and Alfred Henry Hill, Esquires, two of Her Majesty’s Justices of the Peace, assisted by Captains French and Groves (Nautical Assessors), into the circumstances attending the stranding of the s.s. “Isle of Cyprus,” of Newcastle, in the vicinity of St. Ann’s Bay, on the West Coast of Africa, on the 6th of May 1888. Mr. F. W. Dendy appeared on behalf of the Board of Trade, Mr. W. O. Forster represented the master and owners, and Mr. Boning acted for the chief officer. The “Isle of Cyprus,” official No. 86,108, is a British screw steamer built of iron in 1883 at Sunderland, by John Priestman & Co., of the following dimensions:—Length 225·2, breadth 33·5, and depth 15·1, of 1,149·26 gross, and 744·35 registered tonnage. She is schooner-rigged, and fitted with two compound surface-condensing engines of 99 horse-power (combined), and is owned by Mr. Thomas Dixon, jun., of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and several others, Mr. Dixon having been appointed managing owner on the 17th of April 1883. The “Isle of Cyprus” left the Island of St. Vincent on the 1st of May 1888 in water ballast, drawing 8 feet forward and 11 feet aft, bound for Pomeroy or Gibraltar, having a crew of 17 hands all told, under the command of James Joseph Hebron, who holds a certificate of competency, No. 06,479, the vessel being in good condition and well found. She was supplied with three boats, a lifeboat, a pinnace, and a smaller one, all on chocks under davits. She had three compasses, a pole compass, a spirit compass in the chart house, and a steering compass on the lower bridge, all in good condition and adjusted in November last by Wilson and Gillie at Hartlepool, and subsequently the errors were from time to time ascertained by the master. At noon of the 1st of May 1888, when the vessel left St. Vincent, the wind was blowing fresh from the N.E. and increasing, accompanied with a strong sea, which prevented the master from keeping her on her course, as she was high out of the water, and the engines were racing. Subsequently the weather moderated, and at 1 a.m. of the 5th of May a N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. magnetic course was set,

engines going full speed at about 8½ knots. At noon of the 5th of May, from observations taken, the master found the vessel to be in lat. 20° 15' N., long. 18° 17' W., the same course was continued, the weather by this time being very fine and clear. At 11 p.m. the master went below, leaving no special instructions, expecting that if necessary the standing instructions would be acted upon by the officers, the N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. magnetic course being still continued. Between 3 and 4 a.m. of the 6th of May the weather became hazy, and when the chief officer came on deck at 4 a.m. the second mate called his attention to it, and after consultation it was decided to call the master, who came on deck, but in about 10 to 15 minutes went below, again leaving orders to be called if the weather got thicker. At 4.30 a.m. the vessel ran aground in the vicinity of Cape Corveiro and St. Ann’s Bay. The chief mate stopped the engines and starboarded the helm, but seeing that the vessel was still going ahead, he put the telegraph to full speed ahead again. By this time the master came on the bridge and put the telegraph to full speed astern, but the vessel was found to be fast, and remained so, although the tide was then only half flood, and the ballast tanks pumped out, whilst a kedge was carried out aft, the water at that time all round the ship being from 10 to 11 feet. As the vessel did not come off that tide, the tanks were filled again, and during the day two more anchors were laid out aft, and the hawsers hove taut, and at about 5 p.m. the tanks were again pumped out, the engines put full speed astern, and with the assistance from heaving on the anchors, the vessel floated off about 6.15 p.m. and proceeded to the Grand Canary Island for temporary repairs and examination, making very little more water than usual. At Las Palmas, Grand Canary, the vessel’s bottom was examined by divers, and she was found to be seriously damaged under the main tank, but pronounced to be fit to proceed in ballast only to the Tyne, where the ship and crew arrived in safety on the 24th of May, and the vessel was docked for repairs at Messrs. Smith’s dock, the estimated cost of repairs (which were material) amounting to a large sum. The master appears to have entirely relied upon the observations he took, and worked up to noon of the 5th of May, and upon the course he was then steering, which he calculated would give him an offing of 38 miles, and he did not think it necessary to verify his position, subsequently to this, even when he was called at 4 a.m. of the 6th of May, although he admits it was at that time hazy, and that he could not see further than a mile. It is quite possible that the observations he worked up to noon of the previous day were not reliable, and it was no doubt careless navigation on the part of the master to rely so implicitly upon them, and entirely neglect the use of the lead which would have shown him the danger he was running into long before the casualty occurred. The first and last questions asked constituted the gist of what the Court had to base their judgment on, viz. :— What was the cause of the casualty? and, were any of the officers in default? and the Court found that the cause of the casualty was the negligent navigation of the master, and found him alone in default, at the same time the Court taking all the circumstances into consideration did not deal with his certificate, being of opinion that a severe reprimand would meet the justice of the case.

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, and was she materially damaged through such stranding?
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 noon of the 5th May, and so far as practicable thereafter?

6. Whether a safe and proper course was then set and steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

7. Whether, having regard to the hazy state of the weather on the morning of 6th May, the vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed?

8. Whether the master was on deck at a time when the safety of the vessel required his personal supervision?

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 James Joseph Hebron, the master, should be dealt with.

Judgment.

1. The stranding of the s.s. "Isle of Cyprus" was caused by the master's over confidence in his assumed position, and by neglecting to verify his position from time to time by the use of the lead. The vessel was materially damaged.

2. The vessel had three compasses on board, viz.: the pole compass, a spirit compass in the chart house, and a steering compass on the lower bridge, all in good order, and sufficient for the navigation of the ship.

3. There was no evidence as to when or by whom they were made, but they were last adjusted by Messrs. Wilson and Gillie, at Hartlepool, in November 1887.

4. The master stated that he ascertained the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time, and that the errors were correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections applied.

5. Proper measures were taken at noon of the 5th of May 1888 to obtain the latitude and longitude by observations, but no measures were taken subsequently to verify the ship's position.

6. Had the vessel been in the position assigned to her by the observation taken by the master, the course set, N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. magnetic, would have been a safe and proper one. Due allowance was made for tide and current.

7 and 8. According to the evidence of the master and officers as to the state of the weather, the vessel was not navigated at too great a rate of speed, but as the weather was hazy the master should have remained on deck at that time, as he had not verified his position since noon on the previous day.

9. The total neglect of the lead was not justifiable.

10. A proper look-out was placed on the fore-castle head.

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

The Court finds the master in default, and severely reprimands him for his want of caution, but does not deal with his certificate, trusting that this casualty will be a warning to him in his future career.

(Signed) GEORGE CLEUGH, } Justices.
ALFRED HENRY HILL, }

We concur in the above judgment.

(Signed) A. P. FRENCH, } Assessors.
C. B. GROVES, }

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The Merchant

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before WILLIAM
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and ANDREW
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"JAMES MALAM"

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