

(No. 3879.)

"GIRONDE" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Town Hall, Cardiff, on the 26th and 27th days of September 1889, before THOMAS WILLIAM LEWIS, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captain A. PARISH and Captain E. BROOKS, as Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "GIRONDE," about 3 miles S.E. of Ile de Sein, France, on the 7th September 1889.

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 said vessel was caused by the master failing to make due allowance for the strong flood tide and northerly currents, and by his putting the vessel upon an unsafe and improper course.

Dated this 28th day of September 1889.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ALFRED PARISH, } Assessors.
EDWARD BROOKS, }

Annex.

The "Gironde" was a British steamship, built of iron at Wallsend-on-Tyne in 1881, official number 83,824. Her gross tonnage was 700'88, and net tonnage 440'51, length 200' 9", breadth 29' 25", depth 15' 1". She was schooner rigged and fitted with two engines of 99 horse power combined, and was owned by the Cardiff Steamship Company, Limited, Mr. Horatio Hooper, of Cardiff, being the manager.

She had three boats, one of which was a lifeboat. They were properly stowed and fit for working use. She had three deck pumps worked by hand, and the usual engine-room pumps, and had three compasses, one pole, by which the ship was navigated, on the upper bridge, one in the wheel-house, and one aft.

The "Gironde" left Bordeaux at midnight 5th—6th September, under the command of Daniel Donovan (who holds a certificate of competency as master, No. 07,918), and with a crew of 16 hands all told, including two mates and six A.B.'s. Her cargo consisted of about 850 tons of pitwood and general cargo. Her draft of water on leaving was 14 ft. 10 in. forward, and 15 ft. aft.

She crossed the Bar at 9 a.m. on the 6th, and at 9.30 a.m. a course was set off Point de la Coubre N.W. by N. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. magnetic, and the patent log was put out.

The weather was fine and wind light from N.E.

At about 4 a.m. of the 7th September Penmarch Light was sighted two to three points on starboard bow, the weather being then fine and clear. At 5.30 a.m. Penmarch Light was abeam N.E. by E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. at a distance by 4-point bearing of 6 miles. The course was then altered to N.N.W. magnetic, the master intending to go through the Chaussee de Sein. At 6.30 a.m. a thick fog set in, and the engines, which had up to that time been going full speed (9 knots), were eased to slow (about 3 knots). The master then decided to go outside the Saints and altered the course to N.W. $\frac{1}{2}$ N. magnetic, equal to N.W. by N., half a point being allowed by him for the set of tide and currents to the northward.

At 7.45 a.m. the vessel was stopped for the purpose of taking a cast of the lead.

At that moment the man on the look-out forward reported that he could see the bottom. The sounding gave ten fathoms, and the engines were then (five to ten minutes before eight) put full steam astern, but finding whilst going astern that the tide was sweeping

the vessel into shallower water, the engines were stopped and then worked ahead and astern with a view of canting the ship's head to starboard. Finding, however, that on account of the very strong tide on the port side the ship would not cant to starboard and the lead only giving 5 fathoms water, the helm was put hard-a-starboard and the engines easy ahead, and then full speed ahead, with the view of getting her head round to the westward. In coming round she struck at 8.30 a.m. on a rock, which, when the fog lifted at 1 p.m., was found to be Le Chat.

The engines were then reversed full speed, but the ship did not move. The pumps were at once set going, but the water rose rapidly in the main hold and fore peak, and at 9 a.m. there was 12 feet water in the main hold. Finding that pumping was of no use the fires were drawn, safety-valve eased, and the men called up from the engine-room, and all hands went into the boats which had been cleared away and put out when the ship struck. As the tide rose, the water flowed over the deck, and filled the engine-room and after part of the ship.

At 1 p.m. when the fog lifted and the position of the ship was made out, the master left with four hands in a boat to telegraph from Isle de Sein for assistance. During his absence some fishermen came alongside. The crew remained alongside in the boats till 9 p.m., when they went to the Isle de Sein, leaving the second mate, one A.B., and two fishermen, to stand by the ship for the night in the fishing boat.

At 5 a.m. on the 8th all hands returned on board, bringing with them two fishing luggers and their crews, and salvaged a portion of the cargo.

At 10 a.m., finding it dangerous to remain on board any longer, the ship was abandoned, and she finally broke up. The crew again landed at Isle de Sein, and ultimately arrived at Brest at 10 a.m., 10th September.

The following questions were submitted to the Court:—

1. 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?

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?

4. Whether a safe and proper course was set and steered, at or about 9.30 a.m. of the 6th September, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

5. Whether proper measures were taken at or about 5.30 a.m. of the 7th September, and from time to time thereafter, to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel?

6. Whether safe and proper alterations were made in the course at or about 5.30 a.m. of the 7th September, and from time to time thereafter, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

7. Whether, having regard to the thick state of the weather, the vessel was navigated at too great a rate of speed?

8. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency?

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

10. What was the cause of the casualty?

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?

The following answers were given to the foregoing questions:—

1. The "Gironde" had three compasses—one pole, on the upper bridge, by which the ship was navigated, one in the wheel-house, and one aft. They were in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the ship.

2. There was no evidence to shew when or by whom they were made. They were last adjusted in February last by Mr. Williams, of Cardiff.

3. The master stated that he had frequently ascertained the deviations of his compasses by the known bearings of two objects when in one, also that the errors were correctly ascertained and the proper corrections applied to the courses.

4. A safe and proper course was set and steered at or about 9.30 a.m. of the 6th September, due and proper allowance being made for tide and currents.

5. Proper measures were taken about 5.30 a.m. on the 7th September to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel, but not thereafter.

6. The alteration made in the course at 5.30 a.m. was a safe and proper one, and was properly continued until 6.30 a.m., when the weather became thick. The alteration made at 6.30 a.m. was not safe and proper, and an utterly insufficient allowance was then made for tide and currents.

7. The vessel was not navigated at too great a rate of speed.

8. Under the circumstances the lead ought to have been used with more frequency.

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

10. The stranding was caused by the master failing to make due allowance for the strong flood tide and northerly currents, and by his putting the vessel upon

a course which a study of the chart would have shewn him, was an unsafe and improper one, even from his assumed position.

11. Up to 6.30 a.m. of the 7th September, the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care, but not afterwards. In a dense fog, steaming slowly with a strong spring flood tide and current on her broadside, setting her down towards the Saints, the master allowed only half a point for set of tide and currents, and the course set with that allowance, even if the position had been as assumed, was heading direct for the Ar-Men Lighthouse and inside the western end of the Saints. When he decided to pass to the westward of the Saints, he should have hauled the vessel broad out and allowed a large margin for tide and currents.

12. The master alone is in default, and his certificate is suspended for a period of three months.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS.
ALFRED PARISH.
EDWARD BROOKS.