

(No. 3714.)

“LADY KATHERINE” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Board Room of the Sunderland Union Offices, John Street, in the Borough of Sunderland, on the 23rd and 24th days of January 1889, before JAMES HORAN and WILLIAM WILSON, Esquires, two of her Majesty's Justices of the Peace acting in and for the Borough of Sunderland, assisted by Captains ANDERSON and RICHARDSON, Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship “LADY KATHERINE,” of Sunderland, near Newbiggin, Northumberland, on the 9th day of January 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 was caused by want of care and caution, and the non-use of the lead. The Court finds the master, William Humphrys, in default for such stranding, but, taking into consideration his previous good character, suspends his certificate for three calendar months only from this day. The Court recommends that he be granted a chief mate's certificate in the meantime.

Dated this 24th day of January 1889.

(Signed) JAMES HORAN, } Judges.
Wm. WILSON, }

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ABSM. ANDERSON, } Assessors.
GEO. RICHARDSON, }

Annex to the Report.

The “Lady Katherine” was a steamship, built of iron, at Sunderland, in the year 1881. She was registered at the port of Sunderland, her official number being 81,487, and her dimensions, as per register, being—length, 211 feet five-tenths; main breadth, 30 feet; and depth of hold, 16 feet eight-tenths; and her registered tonnage, after deducting 329·82 for propelling power and crew space, was 614·80 tons. She was schooner rigged, and had two inverted direct-acting compound surface condensing engines, with cylinders of 27 and 47 inches respectively, with a length of stroke of 30 inches, and being of 90-horse power combined.

The vessel was owned by the Earl of Durham, Mr. Thomas Jowsey Reay, of Sunderland, being the manager.

She had three boats, all of which were properly equipped and ready for use, and was provided with four compasses, namely, a pole compass, by which the courses were set, one on the upper bridge, one in the wheel-house, by which the vessel was steered, and a spare compass. These compasses were made by Mr. Plumb, of Sunderland, and the vessel was last swung for adjustment in Sunderland Roads by Mr. Wilson, in July of 1888.

At the commencement of the year, the “Lady Katherine” being in Uddevalla (Sweden), loaded a cargo, consisting of about 280 standard of pit props, and left that port on the 5th day of January instant, bound for Sunderland, consigned to Messrs. Rayner and Moller, with a crew of 16 hands all told, and two passengers (seamen), under the command of Mr. William Humphrys, who holds a certificate of competency as master, No. 20,459, and dated the 23rd March 1864.

At the time of leaving, she appears to have been in good order, and well found in every respect, her draught of water being 14 ft. 6 ins. forward, and 15 ft. 6 ins. aft.

The “Lady Katherine” had two wells, and in each of

these she carried a deck load, which was about three feet high, and which appears to have been properly secured.

All appears to have gone well, and at noon of the 6th January they arrived off Marstrand, when the patent log was put over, and at 8 p.m. of that day Hirtshal Light bore south at an estimated distance of eight miles, the log showing that the vessel had run 54 miles up to this point, whereupon a W. by S. course was set, upon which the Court was informed there was no deviation. This W. by S. course was continued till 2 a.m. of the 7th, when it was altered W. by S. $\frac{1}{2}$ S., and this latter course was continued till 3.40 a.m., or until the master judged he was abreast of Hanstholmer Light, when it was altered to W. $\frac{1}{4}$ S. The log at this time shewed a run of 108 miles from Marstrand, or 54 miles from Hirtshal Light. The weather was stated to be clear with a fresh wind from the S.S.W.

The W. $\frac{1}{4}$ S. course was continued from 3.40 a.m. of the 7th till 8 a.m. of the 8th, when it was altered to W. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. on account of the wind and sea, which was on the port beam, having increased.

The fore and aft sails were set, and the engines were kept going full speed. The sun appears to have been obscured while the vessel was crossing the North Sea, and the master and mate both stated that they were unable to inform the Court what their position was by dead reckoning at noon of the 8th.

The W. $\frac{1}{4}$ S. course was continued, and at 11 p.m. the master stated that he went below, leaving the second mate in charge of the deck, without giving any instructions when he was to be called or when he expected to make the land, or made any enquiries as to whether the lead was ready for use or not. At midnight the second mate was relieved by the chief mate, and he describes the weather as being hazy, dark, with occasional showers, and a fresh wind and sea from the S.S.W., the fore and aft sails still being set. At 2 a.m. the mate on his own responsibility gave orders for the lead to be got ready, which was done, and at 3 a.m. he states that he saw two steamers' lights, one of which was steering to the southward and eastward, which appears to have created a suspicion in his mind as to the position of the ship, for he told the Court that he then considered it his duty to call the master, and also to look at the log, which he said registered 30, indicating to him that the ship had run 330 miles from the time that the master thought she was abreast of the Hanstholmer Light. The master on being called came on deck; the weather at this time is described as being densely dark, and particularly so ahead. At 3.15 a.m. the master ordered the engines to be put at easy ahead, and at 3.45 broken water was seen and reported on the starboard bow, whereupon the engines were at once stopped and reversed and the helm put hard a starboard, but before the way could be taken off the vessel she struck the ground heavily and remained. The engines continued going astern for about ten minutes, when, on account of some of the pipes becoming damaged and the engine room in consequence being filled with steam, the chief engineer gave orders to shut the steam off, and the engines were unable to be used again.

The water at this time being up to the platform distress signals were fired and answered.

The ship's boats were got ready, and the vessel was now bumping very heavily and the seas breaking over her. At 5 a.m. a life-boat came alongside, and fortunately by this means the whole of the crew and two passengers were rescued and landed safely at Newbiggin. The vessel has since become a total wreck, the crew losing all their effects.

The master attributed the casualty to the log not having registered correctly the distance run, but the Court are unable to accept this explanation as being a satisfactory one, for had he used the lead at 3 a.m., when the mate considered it his duty to call him, it would have pointed out to him his close proximity to the land, the neglect of which however has resulted in the loss of a valuable ship and cargo.

At the conclusion of the evidence, the solicitor acting for 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?

Ans.—There were four compasses, all in good order and properly placed; they were sufficient for the navigation of the ship.

2. When and by whom were they made, and when and by whom were they last adjusted?

Ans.—They were made by Mr. Plumb, of Sunderland, and adjusted in July last, off Sunderland, by Mr. Wilson, compass adjuster, Sunderland.

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?

Ans.—There was no observation taken by the master to ascertain the deviation of the compasses, except that he verified their correctness from time to time by the courses being made good.

4. Whether a safe and proper course was set and steered from the Hirtshals Light, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents and beam, wind, and sea?

Ans.—A safe and proper course was set and steered from Hirtshals Light to off Hantsholmer.

5. Whether safe and proper alterations were made in the course from time to time thereafter, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide, currents, and beam, wind, and sea?

Ans.—Safe and proper alterations were made in the course from time to time thereafter, but the vessel was allowed to overrun her distance.

6. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel from time to time after passing the Hirtshals Light?

Ans.—No measures were taken after passing Hirtshals Light in order to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel.

7. Whether the total neglect of the lead was justifiable?

Ans.—The total neglect of the lead was not justifiable.

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

Ans.—A good and proper look-out appears to have been kept.

9. What was the cause of the casualty?

Ans.—Absence of care and caution, and the non-use of the lead.

10. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

Ans.—The vessel was not navigated with proper care.

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

Ans.—The master alone is in default.

(Signed) JAMES HORAN, } Justices.
WM. WILSON, }

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ABM. ANDERSON, } Assessors.
GEO. RICHARDSON, }