

(No. 3707.)

"MOGGIE" (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 9th, 10th, and 11th days of January 1889, before CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN, Esquire, Judge, assisted by Captains WILSON and HORE, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "MOGGIE," on a ledge of rocks off Nyhamn, coast of Sweden, in the Kattegat, on 16th November last.

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 stranded by reason of the master passing on the wrong side of the Skarsbaden Beacon, near to which he had been anchored in smooth water for four hours. The Court suspended the certificate of Robert Henry Harrison, master, No. 06,319, for four months from this date.

Dated this 11th day of January 1889.

(Signed) CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) R. WILSON,
KENNETT HORE, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steamship "Moggie" on a ledge of rocks off Nyhamn, coast of Sweden, in the Kattegat, on the 16th day of November 1888, after having been brought up in 7 fathoms of water without an anchor, in a S.W. breeze of wind, and by the chain only; held before C. J. Coleman, Esquire, Judge, at the Post Office Chambers, Middlesbrough. Mr Dendy appearing for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Tilly for the master. The circumstances of the case are as follows:—

The "Moggie," official No. 81,657, was an iron screw steamer, built at Hartlepool, county of Durham, by Messrs. Edward Withy & Co., of the Middleton Ship Yard, and was a two-masted schooner-rigged vessel of 1110·42 tons gross, and 709·71 registered tonnage, allowing 400·71 as the total deductions for propelling power and crew space. She was 236·0 feet long, 31·6 feet broad, and had 13·7 feet depth of hold, and was fitted with two inverted compound surface-condensing direct-acting engines, of 99 horse-power combined, the diameter of the cylinders being 27 and 50 inches, and length of stroke 33 inches, and was owned by Mr. Charles Scotson Todd, of Greatham, and Mr. John Coverdale, of Hartlepool, shipowners, and others whose names are set forth in the register, Mr. John Coverdale, of Victoria Terrace, West Hartlepool, being managing owner, and appointed the 19th of March 1885, and she was commanded by Mr. Robert H. Harrison, who holds a master's certificate of competency, numbered 06,319. The vessel had 4 boats and 4 compasses, and 4 watertight bulkheads, and 4 deck pumps, and the usual engine-room pumps, and was well found and fitted, and properly equipped for the voyage, and was classed 100 A 1 at Lloyd's. There was a pole compass and a steering compass, and the courses were set and steered and the vessel navigated by the pole, the man at the helm being able to see the pole compass to steer by, and it was last adjusted by a professional adjuster, Mr. Ainsley, of South Shields, in June 1886, and the compass was correct magnetic on the S.S.E., S. by E., South, and S. by W. points.

The "Moggie" left West Hartlepool on the 11th of November last, bound to Pillan (in Germany), with a cargo of about 1,200 tons coke and coal, and a crew of 17 hands all told, and no passengers, drawing 13 ft. 8 forward and 14·3½ aft. She proceeded on her voyage,

and on the 15th of November passed the Anholt Light Vessel at 8.50 p.m., at about 2 cables distant from which place a course was set south. The patent log noted and the vessel continued at full speed towards the sound, but as there was a strong breeze from the south-west and a heavy head sea, the vessel was only going through the water about 4 knots an hour, the weather being perfectly clear. At midnight the master came on deck and kept the middle watch, the second mate being laid up and not able to keep it, from some slight injury he had received the day before in letting go the peak halliards. At 1 a.m. the master altered the course to S. half E., and at 2 a.m. to S.S.E., the weather coming in thick, and the engines were slowed down to easy and a cast of the lead was taken in 15 fathoms, and at 2.45 another cast in 14 fathoms, and at 3 a.m., 14 fathoms. By this time the master said the weather had moderated considerably, but a dense fog had set in, and at 3.30 a.m. the engines were going dead slow and the lead showed 7 fathoms only, and he then determined to anchor; and having consulted with the engineer, who said he had a good head of steam on, he decided to turn her round and stand out to the N.N.W. till the steam had run down, and although there is a good deal of conflicting evidence on this point between the statement of the man at the helm and the master, the former saying that he steered S.S.E. right up to 4 a.m., and that the vessel was never turned round till she anchored, the master, on the contrary, declared that the vessel was brought round at about 3.45, and steered out to the N.N.W. However this may be, the vessel was brought up and anchored, it was said, at 4 a.m., and the mate and another hand were left in charge of the deck; the rest of the crew went below. It should be here noted that the evidence now given was not in accordance with the master's statement written in the log book. The master and mate now said it was smooth sea, but moderate S.W. breeze, and thick fog; in the log book it is written that the vessel was brought up at 3.55 in 7 fathoms, a sea watch kept going, and that it was a heavy south-west gale and a dense fog. At about 7.30 a.m. the fog lifted, the water was smooth, and no wind, and a beacon was seen right astern of the vessel and bearing S.S.E. half a mile off.

The master was called, and both he and the mate examined it with the glass, and then consulted the chart, and decided that it was a red staff beacon with a ball on the top of it, and that it was the Soborghoven Grund Beacon, but the weather being hazy, nothing more was done. At 8 a.m. the land was visible over the beacon, being S.S.E., and at 9 the vessel was got under way, and turned round on the port helm to pass the beacon on the east side, but before the vessel had been under way 10 or 15 minutes, and had just passed the beacon, she struck on the rocks inside the Skarsbaden Beacon and remained fast. The engines were put full speed astern, but they failed to move her, and sounding round the vessel they found 13 or 14 feet forward, and about 20 feet aft, but the fore tank filled up, as it was holed, and she was making a little water in the engine-room bilges. The stream anchor was then carried out aft, but it was hove home and would not hold. At 10 a.m. it cleared up, and they found that Nyhamn was bearing E.N.E., and the Skarsbaden Buoy south. At 11 a.m. some fishermen came off and helped to jettison 400 tons of cargo, and a steam salvage boat came down from Copenhagen, and they made an agreement to float her and take her to Copenhagen for 1,900*l*. That night the crew left her, and it came on to blow from the S.W., and for 13 days the salvage boat waited there without being able to do anything. On the 30th of November she was got off with the assistance of the salvage boat and her own steam, and taken to Elsinore, and there discharged and docked, when it was found that 82 plates, 45 floors, and 35 frames were more or less damaged. She left Elsinore for Memel, after being repaired, and there loaded for London, where she arrived safely, and finally came on to Hartlepool, where she now is.

The Court is of opinion that the master is very seriously to blame for bringing his vessel up in a position which he ought to have known was dangerous with a chain only, and without the anchor being shackled to it; and also for getting under way in thick weather without having determined on which side of the channel he was, and the more so as he had the means

of ascertaining for himself what the beacon he had been anchored near to for some hours really was.

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 correction to the courses applied?
4. Whether a safe and proper course was set and steered after passing Anholt Lightship at or about 8.50 p.m. of the 15th November, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
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 and currents?
6. Whether the vessel was properly brought to for the night by using the chain cable only without an anchor attached to it?
7. When, by whom, and why was the ship's log book destroyed?
8. Whether, whilst the vessel was brought to on the morning of the 16th November, the master took proper measures to ascertain and verify his position?
9. Whether, after the chain cable was weighed at or about 9 a.m. of the 16th November, proper measures were taken to keep the vessel off the rocks?
10. Whether the master was justified in mistaking the Skarsbaden Beacon for the Soborghoven Grund Beacon?
11. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency?
12. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
13. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
14. 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 Henry Harrison, the master, should be dealt with.

To which the Court replies as follows:—

1. She had four compasses, two of which were in use, viz.: a pole, by which the courses were set and steered and the vessel navigated, and a steering compass on the bridge; they were in good order, and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel.
2. Three were made by Mr. Berry, of West Hartlepool, where the ship was built in 1881, and the pole compass in present use by Mr. Harris in 1884, and they were last adjusted by Mr. Ainsley, of South Shields, in 1886.
3. The master ascertained the deviation from time to time by observations, and the corrections were properly

applied. There was no deviation on S.S.E., S. by E., south, and S. by W. points, which were said by the master to be correct magnetic.

4. A safe and proper course was set after passing Anholt Light Vessel, and allowance was made for tide and currents.

5. Proper alterations were made had the vessel been in the position that the stated himself to be in.

6. It was a most improper act to bring the vessel up without an anchor and with the chain only, especially as the master knew he was in a dangerous position by having only 7 fathoms of water.

7. The original log book was destroyed by the master himself, the only reason given being that there was an entry of 7 fathoms at 3 a.m. on the 16th November, instead of 14 fathoms. The log book produced was, however, sworn to by the master and mate as a true copy of the original, with this one exception.

8. The master took no practical measures to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel on the morning of the 16th November, which might have easily been done by sending a boat to the shore or to the beacon, which was close at hand, and the sea smooth.

9. After the vessel was got under way proper measures were not taken, because on passing the beacon they must have immediately seen that it was not a ball, and hence they were on the wrong side of it.

10. It is possible the master may have mistaken the Skarsbaden Beacon for the Soborghoven Grund Beacon, but he was certainly not justified in getting the ship under way in thick weather until he had ascertained the fact beyond all doubt, and which he might have done with the means at his command.

11. The lead appears to have been used with sufficient frequency.

12. A good and proper look-out seems to have been kept.

13. The vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care on after being apparently brought up by her chain at 4 a.m. of the 16th.

14. The master alone is in default. The destruction of the log book was, we think, perfectly unjustifiable. Had the error been as trifling as the master would have us believe, where was the necessity to have the log re-copied at all? The destruction of the old log raises an unpleasant notion that it contained something the master desired should not be generally known.

We find the master in default, and suspend his certificate for four months from this date.

The Court makes no order as to costs.

Dated this 11th day of January 1889.

(Signed) CHARLES JAMES COLEMAN, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) R. WILSON,
KENNETT HORE, } Assessors.