

(No. 4629.)

"CITY OF TRURO" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1887.

IN the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Town Hall, Cardiff, on the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th days of December 1892, before THOMAS WILLIAM LEWIS, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate for the Borough of Cardiff, assisted by Captain THOMAS DAVIES, and Captain C. H. J. BAKER as Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British ship "CITY OF TRURO," on the east end of Nash Sands, in the Bristol Channel, on the 24th November 1892.

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 same was due to the master neglecting to make proper allowance for the deviation of his compasses, the course being much more northerly than he expected, and no allowance being made for a strong ebb tide taking the ship on the starboard bow. The Court finds the master in default, and suspends his certificate for three calendar months.

Dated this 13th day of December 1892.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) THOMAS DAVIES, } Assessors.
C. H. J. BAKER, }*Annex to the Report.*

This case was heard at the Town Hall, Cardiff, on the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th days of December 1892, when Mr. Waldron appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Vachell for the master.

Seven witnesses were called on behalf of the Board of Trade, and the questions hereinafter given were submitted to the Court, and it was stated by Mr. Waldron that in the opinion of the Board of Trade the certificate of the master ought to be dealt with. Two witnesses were called on behalf of the master.

On the 8th December, the Court requiring further evidence with regard to the compasses, two witnesses who were compass adjusters in business at Cardiff, and who had been concerned in the adjustment of these compasses in 1890, were called on behalf of the Board of Trade.

The "City of Truro" is an iron screw steamship of 1,682·47 tons gross, and 1,064·38 tons registered tonnage, built at West Hartlepool in 1883, registered at the Port of Falmouth, and owned by the Cornwall Steamship Company, Limited, Mr. James Chellew, of St. Ives, being the manager. Her official number is 86,129. She was classed A1, for 100 years, at Lloyds.

She is schooner-rigged, and is propelled by two compound surface-condensing engines of 150 horse-power (combined).

She was provided with four boats, two being lifeboats, in good condition, and was supplied with life-belts for every member of the crew. She had, on her last voyage, three compasses—viz., one pole compass and one steering compass on the bridge and one compass aft.

She was navigated and steered by the pole compass.

The whole of the compasses were supplied by the shipbuilders in 1883. The name of the maker was not forthcoming.

They were last adjusted by Blair & Co., of Cardiff, in February 1890, by whom two deviation cards were at that time handed to the then master of the ship. One only of these cards—that relating to the pole compass—was produced, and as to that it was alleged by the master that it was untrustworthy, and was never used, although kept in the chart-room; and the deviation

card which he used was one prepared by a former master of the ship, and which was without date or name. The correctness of this card had been, the master said, tested from time to time by his observations, but the results of these observations—which, he stated, were recorded at the time in a book when taken—he failed to produce.

The persons by whom the compasses were adjusted in 1890, were, at the desire of the Court, called as witnesses, and they deposed that the deviation card, which they had prepared in February 1890, was, at that time to the best of their knowledge, correct.

It appeared from the evidence of these witnesses that the compasses had not been examined or repaired since February 1890.

Altogether the evidence of the master and officers as to the compasses was confused and not at all satisfactory.

The "City of Truro" left Rotterdam bound for Cardiff in water ballast at 4.15 p.m. on the 21st November last, with a crew of 20 hands all told, under the command of Mr. Basil Reed Wood, who held a certificate of competency as master, No. 010,491, and dated 18th February 1887.

Bull Point Light was made about 11 p.m. on the 23rd, bearing S. by W. magnetic, and three miles distant. From Bull Point a course was set of E. by S. magnetic, the tide at the time ebbing.

At 2 a.m. on the 24th the weather was very hazy, it was not possible to see more than a mile. The ship was going at varying speed. At 2.15 the vessel was stopped and a cast of the lead was taken, showing 12 fathoms and rocky bottom.

Not satisfied with this cast, the master took another at 2.25, which also showed 12 fathoms. A reference to the chart shows that these soundings ought to have led the master to understand that he was on the north and not on the south coast.

The Nash Light was not seen.

About ten minutes after the second sounding was taken, i.e., at 2.35, the vessel grounded on the Nash Sands under the Lighthouse, the tide being then dead low water.

The engines were put full speed astern and the ship moved, and at 4.15 p.m. she came off. The starboard anchor was let go when she grounded, and while on the sands the boats were got ready.

She made no water, and, on coming off, proceeded to Cardiff, where it was found that eight plates had been damaged and required to be replaced, and that several frames were also damaged.

No lives were lost.

The following questions were submitted on behalf of the Board of Trade, for the opinion of 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 correction to the courses applied?
4. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 10.30 p.m., of the 23rd ultimo?
5. Whether a safe and proper course was then set and thereafter steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
6. Whether proper measures were taken from time to time after 10.30 p.m. of the 23rd ultimo to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel?
7. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency and care?
8. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?
9. What was the cause of the casualty?
10. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?
11. Whether the master and mate are, or either of them is, in default?

The following answers were given to the foregoing questions:—

1. The "City of Truro" had on board three compasses, placed, one on the pole, by which the ship was steered, one on the bridge, and one aft. The pole com-

pass was, according to the evidence of the master and officers, in good order. The evidence as to the condition of the bridge compass was conflicting, and the Court entertains some doubt as to whether it was in good order.

The compass aft was admittedly not in good order. The compasses were sufficient in number, but not in condition, for the safe navigation of the ship.

2. There is no evidence before the Court as to when or by whom the compasses were made. They were adjusted in February 1890 by Blair & Co., of Cardiff.

3. The master stated that it was his daily practice, when the state of the atmosphere permitted, to take observations to ascertain the deviation of his compasses.

The last voyage of the ship from Rotterdam, however, was made in foggy weather, and the master was unable, for a period of twelve days immediately preceding the stranding, to take observations. The Court is of opinion that the errors of the compasses were not correctly ascertained.

4. A 4-point bearing of the Bull Light was taken to verify the position of the vessel about 10.55 p.m. on the 23rd ultimo, a measure which, in the opinion of the Court, was at that time sufficient and proper.

A safe and proper course was then set and steered, but not made good.

The course as set allowed sufficiently for tide and currents up to the Foreland, but from that point (from which the ship was further distant than the master supposed and consequently more exposed to the force of

the ebb tide on her starboard bow) due and proper allowance was not made for tide and currents.

6. At 2.15 a.m. on the 24th, when, according to the evidence, a cast of the lead showed 12 fathoms and a rocky bottom, the master ought to have immediately hauled his vessel to the southward and kept his lead going. With the exception, however, of two casts of the lead, viz.—one at 2.15 a.m., and one at 2.25 a.m., and hauling a passing pilot boat about 2 a.m.—no measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel.

7. The lead was not used with sufficient frequency.

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

9. The Court is of opinion that the deviation of the pole compass was much less than estimated by the master, and that therefore the vessel being placed too far to the northward, she became exposed to greater force of the ebb tide on her starboard bow than if she had made good the course set. These causes combined placed the vessel on the Nash Sands, where she stranded.

10. Having regard to the foregoing answers, the Court is of opinion that the master did not navigate his vessel with proper and seamanlike care.

11. The Court finds the master alone in default, and suspends his certificate for a period of three months.

(Signed)

T. W. LEWIS.

THOMAS DAVIES.

O. H. J. BAKER.

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