

(No. 4775.)

“PRESTO” (S.S.)

AND

“MARY OWENS.”

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1887.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Moot Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on the 25th and 26th days of August 1893, before THOMAS NELSON and HUGH MORTON, Esquires, two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace acting in and for the City and County of Newcastle-on-Tyne, assisted by Captains ROBERT WILSON and JOHN BAIN, into the circumstances attending the loss of the British Sailing Ship “MARY OWENS,” of Carnarvon, through collision with the British Steamship “PRESTO,” of Newcastle, off Beachy Head, on 31st July 1893.

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 collision which resulted in the loss of the “Mary Owens” was caused by her being run into by the s.s. “Presto,” no look-out being kept on the latter vessel. The Court finds the mate, of the “Presto” alone in default, and hereby suspends his certificate as master, No. 33,504, for the period of twelve calendar months from the date hereof.

Dated this 26th day of August 1893.

(Signed) THOS. NELSON, } Judges.
HUGH MORTON, }

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) R. WILSON, } Assessors.
JOHN BAIN, }

Annex to the Report.

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the collision between the British sailing vessel “Mary Owens” and the British steamship “Presto” off Beachy Head, on the 31st July 1893, and was held at the Moot Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne, before Thomas Nelson and Hugh Morton, Esquires, assisted by Captains Wilson and Bain, Nautical Assessors. Mr. Burton appeared for the Board of Trade, Mr. Ingledew represented the owner and master of the “Mary Owens,” Mr. Bramwell the owners and master of the “Presto,” and Mr. Temperley the mate of the latter vessel.

The “Mary Owens,” official number 70,300, was a schooner-rigged vessel, built of wood at Pwllheli, in the county of Carnarvon, in the year 1874, and registered at the port of Carnarvon. She was 87.5 feet long, 22.7 feet broad, and 11.85 feet depth of hold, and 118.56 net registered tonnage. She was owned by Mr. John Owens, of Llanengan, in the county of Carnarvon, her managing owner being Mr. David Morris, of Portmadoc, in the same county. She was properly equipped and fitted with all necessary life-saving appliances in accordance with the requirements of the Board of Trade.

The “Mary Owens” left Halmstad, in Sweden, on the 19th July last, bound for Penarth with a cargo of 1,158 quarters of oats, and a crew of six hands all told, under the command of Mr. Robert Griffith, who held a certificate of competency as master, No. 85,079. Her draught of water on leaving was 12 feet 6 inches forward, and 13 feet aft. All went well, and at about 3.45 p.m. of the 31st of July they were off Beachy Head, which bore N.E., distant some 5½ miles.

The weather was fine and clear, sea smooth, with a fair north-west-by-west breeze. They had all plain sail set with a reef in mainsail and no gaff topsail, and were

heading about N., standing towards the shore, close-hauled on the port tack, making about 3 knots. The master was on deck, as were also two of the crew, including the man at the wheel, who was steering by the wind. About 3.45 p.m., a steamer, which afterwards proved to be the “Presto,” was seen to the westward, steering up Channel about E. by S., and apparently some 2 or 3 miles off, bearing 2 or 3 points on the “Mary Owens” port bow. As the steamer approached, the man at the wheel asked the master what he should do, and was told to keep on his course, which was done. The steamer continued to bear down upon them, and, at about 3.50 or 3.55 p.m., she struck them on the port quarter abaft the main rigging, cutting right into the deck. The two vessels slewed round broadside on, and the master and crew of the “Mary Owens,” with the exception of the mate, succeeded in climbing on board the steamer. The mate failed to do so, but was soon afterwards taken off by one of the steamer's boats. The “Mary Owens” rapidly filled and sank in about twenty minutes; the damages she sustained precluding any efforts being made to keep her afloat. Previously to the collision no one was seen on board the “Presto,” and though she was hailed from the “Mary Owens,” no reply was received or alteration made in the steamer's speed or course.

The “Presto,” official No. 80,549, was a screw steamer, built of iron, at Low Walker on Tyne, by Messrs. Charles Mitchell & Company, in the year 1879, and registered at the port of Newcastle, her length being 215 ft., breadth 31.1 ft., and depth of hold 16.2 ft. She was fitted with two compound surface-condensing engines of 130 h.p. combined, her gross tonnage being 910.21 tons, and net registered tonnage 563.39 tons. The “Presto” was owned by Mr. Robert Bloomfield Fenwick, of Wandlebend Merton, in the county of Surrey, and Mr. Joseph Reay, of Gateshead-on-Tyne, the latter being duly appointed her managing owner. She was properly equipped and provided with the necessary boats and life-saving appliances.

The “Presto” left Cardiff on 29th July, bound for London, with a cargo of 1,200 tons of coal, her draught of water being 15 ft. forward and 15 ft. 6 in. aft. She had a crew of 17 hands all told, and was under the command of Mr. Thomas Jackson Jobbing, who held a certificate of competency as master, No. 27,116.

At 2 p.m. of the 31st July, the master, who had been on deck since 5 a.m., went below, leaving in charge the first mate, with instructions to keep the course they were then on, viz. E. by S. ½ S. magnetic, until they sighted the “Royal Sovereign” Light-vessel.

The weather was fine and clear, with light W.N.W. wind and sea smooth. The vessel proceeded at full speed, making some 8½ knots, with fore trysail and fore staysail set, an A.B. (Mark Olley) being at the wheel, steering by hand in the wheelhouse on the lower bridge. The mate, who was on the starboard side of the upper bridge, first observed the schooner about 3.15 p.m., about 3½ points on the starboard bow, distant, as he estimated, about 5 miles. She was on the port tack and the mate stated that, at the time, he expected to go well ahead of her, and so continued on his course. The carpenter and an A.B. (Derk Eekhof) were on deck forward at work, no one being on the look-out. The mate sent Eekhof to the forepeak for some tar, and, as he did not return, the former left the bridge at about 3.30 p.m. to ascertain what detained him, leaving no instructions with the man at the wheel. The sails prevented the helmsman seeing anything on the starboard bow, and the carpenter was busily engaged at the time making stanchions. The mate having gone below, found that Eekhof was unable to get the tar to run, and, after spending about a quarter of an hour in endeavouring to assist him, he returned on deck to procure from the carpenter some tools. While the mate was talking to the carpenter the man at the wheel sighted the schooner under the trysail, close under the bow. He immediately sang out to the mate, “Look out forward,” and put the helm hard-a-port, but the collision occurred almost immediately. The mate ran on to the bridge and telegraphed to the engineman, “Stop! Full speed astern!” which orders were carried out. The master was called by the steward and came up just as the mate was giving his orders to the engineer. Five of the crew of the schooner were seen coming over the steamer's side, and a boat was at once lowered to bring off the sixth

man, which, as has been already stated, was successfully done. The "Presto" stood by till the schooner sank, and proceeded on her voyage, having sustained some damage to her stem.

The crew of the "Mary Owens" were eventually landed at Gravesend, having received every attention on board the "Presto."

At the conclusion of the evidence, the following questions were submitted on behalf of the Board of Trade. Mr. Temperley addressed the Court for the mate, and Mr. Burton replied:—

1. Whether both vessels complied with the Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea?

2. Whether the vessels were proceeding in such directions as to involve risk of collision, and did the "Presto" comply with the requirements of Article 17?

3. Whether the "Presto," when approaching the "Mary Owens," slackened her speed, or stopped and reversed, in accordance with the requirements of Article 18?

4. Whether the "Mary Owens" kept her course in accordance with the requirements of Article 22?

5. Whether the chief officer of the "Presto" was justified in leaving the bridge at or about 3.30 p.m. of the 31st July, and remaining absent therefrom until about 3.50 p.m.?

6. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept on board both vessels?

7. What was the cause of the collision?

8. Whether both vessels were navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

9. Whether the master of the "Mary Owens" and the master and chief officer of the "Presto" are, or either of them is, in default?

In the opinion of the Board of Trade the certificates of Robert Griffith, the master of the "Mary Owens," and of Henry Ord, the mate of the "Presto," should be dealt with.

To which the Court replied as follows:—

1. The "Mary Owens" did comply with the Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea; the "Presto" did not.

2. The vessels were proceeding in such directions as to involve risk of collision, and the "Presto" did not comply with Article 17 of the said Regulations.

3. The "Presto," when approaching the "Mary Owens," did not slacken her speed, or stop and reverse, in accordance with the requirements of Article 18.

4. The "Mary Owens" did keep her course in accordance with the requirements of Article 22.

5. The chief officer of the "Presto" was not justified in leaving the bridge at or about 3.30 p.m. of the 31st July, and remaining absent therefrom until about 3.50 p.m., when the collision occurred.

6. A good and proper look-out was kept on board the "Mary Owens," but no look-out was kept on the "Presto."

7. The casualty was caused through no look-out being kept on board the "Presto," the chief officer, who was in charge, having left the bridge, and the helmsman being prevented from seeing anything on the starboard bow owing to the sails set.

8. The "Mary Owens" was navigated with proper and seamanlike care; the "Presto" was not.

9. The chief officer of the "Presto," Henry Ord, is alone in default, and the Court hereby suspends his certificate as master, No. 33,504, for the period of 12 months from the date hereof.

On the application of his solicitor, the Court recommended that the chief officer should be granted a second mate's certificate in the meantime.

(Signed) THOS. NELSON, }
HUGH MORTON, } Justices.

We concur.

(Signed) R. WILSON, }
JOHN BAIN, } Assessors.

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