

(No. S 74.)

“W. F. T.”

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1876.

IN the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Young Men's Christian Association Hall, Lowestoft, in the county of Suffolk, on the twelfth and thirteenth days of September 1893, before WILLIAM MOBBS, Esquire, Mayor of the Borough of Lowestoft, Commander CHARLES REEVE, R.N., and BENJAMIN PRESTON, Esquire, Justices of the Peace for the county of Suffolk, assisted by Captains JOHN BAIN and ALEXANDER WOOD and Mr. SIDNEY HALSEY, Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British sailing ship “W. F. T.” of Lowestoft, at or near the Over Sand, off Norfolk, on or about the 29th day of August 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 stranding and loss of the vessel was caused by the master not watching the change of bearings of the lightship, and the error of judgment he made as to the strength and set of the tide, but in consideration of his exceptional good character they do not think it necessary to suspend his certificate, but they reprimanded him and cautioned him to be more careful in the future.

Dated this thirteenth day of September 1893.

(Signed) WILLIAM MOBBS, C. REEVE, B. PRESTON, } Three of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the county of Suffolk.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) JOHN BAIN, A. WOOD, S. HALSEY, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

The “W. F. T.” was a fishing smack, built of wood, at Lowestoft, in the year 1892, by Messrs. Chambers and Colby.

Her dimensions were as follows:—Length, 71 ft.; breadth, 19 ft.; depth, 9 ft.; and her registered tonnage, 60.61 tons.

She was owned by Mr. John Hellings, of Lowestoft, county of Suffolk, and managed by him.

The “W. F. T.” left Lowestoft on the 25th day of August last on a trawling voyage in the North Sea, under the charge of James Robert Batley, who holds a certificate as skipper number 1,050, with a crew of five hands all told. She had one boat, two compasses, and was well found in charts and otherwise properly equipped, her draught of water being about 5 ft. forward and 10 ft. 6 in. aft.

She proceeded to the fishing ground and engaged in trawling, and all went well until the night of the 28th August.

On that evening, at about 6 o'clock, her trawl was put over, with the Leman and Ower Lightship bearing S.E., distant from eight to ten miles, in fifteen fathoms water.

The weather was described as clear, with moderate breeze from N. to N.N.W., and the tide flood.

All sail was set, and the vessel kept heading to the E.N.E., but drifting in a south easterly direction.

The second hand had charge of the deck until 7.30, when the Leman and Ower Lightship bore S.E. ½ E., distant about seven miles. At this hour the third hand came on watch and kept a look-out along with the master, who had been on deck since the trawl was put over.

At about 8 o'clock the trawl fouled, and all hands were called to clear it.

This operation was finished about 8.30, when the men who had come on deck went below again.

At 10 o'clock the master went below for a little rest, leaving instructions with the third hand to keep the lead going, and not to let the bearing of the Leman and Ower Lightship get more to the southward than S.E. by S.

The third hand kept the lead going about every fifteen minutes, and told the Court that he never got less water than 16 fathoms.

At 11.30, the tide having turned sooner than anticipated, the third hand called the master, who at once ordered all hands on deck to haul the trawl, the lightship being then on a S.E. by S. bearing, distant about two miles.

The master stated to the Court that he had a good look round, but took no other measures to verify his position at this time.

The trawl was lifted by the aid of a steam capstan, and occupied the united efforts of all hands until 11.55.

This operation completed, the master went aft to unlash the tiller. This he did, and while doing so saw what he took to be broken water on the starboard bow. He then hauled the mizen to windward, but finding that she would not come round, he flatened in the head sheets, slacked off the mizen, and endeavoured to wear her round.

It may be here stated that up to this time none of the other witnesses had seen any indications of danger.

In the act of wearing, and when her head payed off to about E.N.E., she struck the ground, at first lightly, but after the third bump heavily, remained fast, and began to make water rapidly.

The steam pump was set agoing, but failed to keep the water under. Flares were then shown, and answered by the lightship.

In less than an hour the water had increased to such an extent that they were obliged to abandon the vessel, and left in their own boat, and they remained in the vicinity until daylight, when it was observed that the hull and half the mainsail—which was left set—had disappeared under water.

They were eventually picked up by the fishing smack “Jane,” and landed at Lowestoft.

At the conclusion of the evidence, the following questions were submitted for the opinion of the Court, to which they replied as follows:—

1. Were proper measures taken by the master of the “W. F. T.” to ascertain the position of his vessel before commencing to haul the gear at about 11.30 p.m. on the 28th of August, and from time to time thereafter?

Ans.—Proper measures were taken and given by the skipper up to about 11.30 p.m., after which time no measures appear to have been taken.

2. Was a safe and proper course then set, and was due and proper allowance made for the set of the tide?

Ans.—The direction in which the vessel was drifting while the trawl was over was safe and proper, but insufficient allowance was made for the set of the tide while the trawl was being hauled.

3. Was a good and proper look-out kept?

Ans.—A sufficient look-out was kept until the time of commencing to haul, but as all hands were on deck at that time the Court is unable to say whether a good look-out was kept afterwards.

4. Was the lead used after 11.30 p.m. on the 28th August, and if not was the neglect to use it justifiable?

Ans.—The lead was not used after 11.30 p.m., and the omission to use it was not justifiable.

5. Was the vessel navigated with proper and seaman-like care?

Ans.—The Court considers the vessel was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

5a. Would it have been practicable and more prudent to have let go the anchor between the time of the gear being hauled up and the vessel striking?

Ans.—It would have been both practicable and prudent to have let go the anchor between the gear being hauled and the vessel striking, but the Court gathered that it is not customary to have the

anchor ready for use when trawling, and according to the evidence no one knew the immediate danger the vessel was in but the skipper until she struck.

6. Were proper attempts made to save the "W. F. T." after she struck the sand, and was the master justified in abandoning her when he did?

Ans.—Yes, the vessel filled so quickly there was no time to take any further steps to save the vessel, and the master was justified in abandoning her when he did.

7. What was the cause of the stranding of the "W. F. T."?

Ans.—Not watching the change of the bearings of the lightship and the master's error of judgment as to the strength of the tide.

8. Is the master of the "W. F. T." in default?

Ans.—The Court considers the master is in default, inasmuch as he did not act on his knowledge of the close proximity to the sand and watch the change of bearings of the lightship, but considering the unusual change and set of the tide on the night in question and his exceptional good character, they do not think it necessary to suspend his certificate, but they reprimand him accordingly, and caution him to be more careful in future.

(Signed) WILLIAM MOBBS, } Justices of
C. REEVE, } the Peace for
BENJN. PRESTON, } the county of
Suffolk.

We concur.

(Signed) JOHN BAIN, } Assessors.
A. WOOD, }
S. HALSEY, }

The Mo

In the matt
St. George
10th day
Esq., ass
into the
the British
20 miles s
15th July

The Court,
cumstances a
casualty, find
hereto, that t
said vessel we
master, Mr. T
02,781, the Co
from the date
Dated this t

We concur
(Sign

The "Acme"
screw-steamer
steel, in 1887,
Jarrow. Her
feet, and her d
triple-expansio
power combine
and her net reg
was owned by
Limited, Mess
of Newcastle
managers.

The "Acme"
bound for Port
coal, coke, and
drawing 18 feet
aft. She had
was commande
certificate of c
June 11th she
to her air-pum
All went well
were obtained
Canary Islands
ing his chronom
July 14th, good
exact position o
record had bee
that they had
which they rem
tained placed t
land on the W
vessel was alter
the standard cor
viation. This o
view of picking
pass at a distanc
to coast along to
distant. This d
have been unwi
suggested why t
a direct course f
course no allowa
although, as the
contained in the