

(No. 4750.)

“FREETRADER.”

(Copy) M. 11,775, “Shipping and Seamen's Act, 1877.”
Wrecks and Casualties.

Colony of } REPORT on a shipping casualty to the
New Zealand } to wit. “FREETRADER.”

To the Honourable the Minister having charge of the
Marine Department of New Zealand.

I, the undersigned, resident magistrate, having been on the thirteenth day of May 1893 applied to by Alfred Elliott, Esquire, Collector of Customs at the Port of Wanganui, for a formal investigation, pursuant to section 240 of “The Shipping and Seamen's Act, 1877,” and other provisions of the said Act, respecting a shipping casualty to a certain British ship, called the “Freetrader,” of the Port of Hobart, on the eighth day of May last, at the Wanganui Heads, did duly proceed with the said investigation, to wit, on the 20th, 22nd, and 23rd days of May instant, and had before me, and examined on oath, divers persons and witnesses, to wit, Johan Mikelson, boatswain; Charles Stone, able seaman; Daniel Cookney, able seaman; Arthur Irvine, pilot; Andrew Inkster, assistant-pilot; John Crotty, 1st mate on s.s. “Stormbird”; Alexander Chambers, master mariner; George Gerrie, foreman of works; Philip Jenkins, labourer; Henry Charles Bowden, chief officer on “Freetrader”; Benjamin Edward Hibbard, secretary to Freezing works; and Henry Bowden, master of “Freetrader,” the original depositions of whose evidence are hereunto annexed, signed by me, being assisted therein by Joseph Tyndall Adams, master mariner, holding a certificate of competency, No. 012,755, from the Board of Trade, London, who was duly appointed by me to act as Assessor; and upon such investigation and examination of witnesses as aforesaid, I find and report as follows, that is to say:—

- 1. That the official number of the said ship, called the “Freetrader,” is 31,959, of which Henry Bowden is master, who holds a certificate of service, No. 25, issued by the Marine Board, Tasmania, and which ship belonged to Henry Bowden, of Wanganui, master mariner.
- 2. That the loss or damage herein more particularly mentioned happened on the eighth day of May 1893, at about 2.15 o'clock in the afternoon, at the Wanganui Heads.
- 3. That the loss or damage appears by the evidence to have been caused by the said master not taking particular care to see that the beacons were kept in line as he approached the Bar, and not taking steps to “wear ship” immediately the signal to put to sea was given.

4. That the nature of the loss or damage done was the vessel was stranded on the beach, but eventually got off again.

That the vessel is insured for 600l. in the Northern Queensland Insurance Company.

That the “Freetrader” is barque-rigged. Her port of registry Hobart; her registered tonnage 188.

That no lives were lost through the casualty.

And I, the said resident magistrate, further state my opinion on the matter aforesaid to be as follows:—

- 1. That there is no evidence of any negligence on the part of the pilot or his assistant. I think the pilot gave the signal to put to sea fully ten minutes before the vessel grounded, and if the signal was not observed by the captain and mate, it must have been owing to their want of care in not keeping a proper look-out. If the signal had been observed, there would have been sufficient time to wear the vessel.
- 2. That the captain was guilty of great neglect in not taking particular care to see that the beacons were kept in line as he approached the Bar. The sailing directions, which he says he read over several times during the afternoon, state that “the beacons on the North Head should be kept in line.” It is, in my opinion, very essential that the direction should be strictly obeyed. No doubt particular attention must also be paid to the semaphore arm, but when a captain of a vessel, after the directions given to him by the semaphore, sees that he cannot bring his vessel in line of the beacons, he should either “stay” or “wear” her before coming too close in. Being out of the line of the beacons as he approached broken water, Captain Bowden ought to have known that he was out of his course and going into danger some time before his vessel grounded.
- 3. That the mate was also guilty of neglect in not making himself acquainted with the sailing directions which are fully set out in “The Pilot,” a copy of which was on board, and in not keeping a more careful look-out for the signals. As already stated, I am of opinion that the vessel could have been put to sea if steps had been taken to “wear” her immediately the signal to put to sea was given.
- 4. That the certificate of Captain Henry Bowden should be suspended for six months, and that he should pay the costs of the enquiry, amounting to 7l. 18s. 0d.
- 5. That the certificate of Henry Charles Bowden (mate) should be suspended for two months.

Given under my hand, this Twenty-third day of May, One thousand eight hundred and ninety-three, at Wanganui, New Zealand.

(Signed) CHAS. C. KETTLE, R.M.

I concur in the above report.

(Signed) JOSEPH T. ADAMS, Assessor.