

(No. 4994.)

“ OXENHOLME ” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Acts, 1854 to 1887.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Magistrates' Room, Liverpool, on the 26th, 27th, and 28th days of September 1894, before W. J. STEWART, Esquire, assisted by Captain PARISH, Captain COSENS, and Mr. ALEXANDER GRAY, C.E., into the circumstances attending the abandonment of the British S.S. “ OXENHOLME,” in lat. 29° 30' S. long. 49° W., on June 4th, 1894.

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 abandonment and subsequent loss of the said vessel were due to insufficient stability as laden.

Dated this 28th day of September 1894.

(Signed) W. J. STEWART, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ALFRED PARISH, } Assessors.
WILLIAM COSENS, }
ALEXANDER GRAY, Engineer.

Annex to the Report.

The “ Oxenholme,” official number 84,105, was a British steam ship of Liverpool. She was built of iron at Southampton in 1865. Her length was 311·7 ft.; her breadth 39·7 ft.; her depth from upper deck 33·25 ft. She was fitted with two vertical inverted direct-acting compound engines, of 350 horse-power combined. Her gross tonnage was 2,720·58 tons, and her registered tonnage was 1,755·57 tons. She was owned by her master, Mr. Albert Chapman, who had bought her in January 1894 from Mr. George Roddick for £9,500. Of this sum he paid £500 in cash, and gave a mortgage for the balance to Mr. Roddick, who was registered as her manager.

On January 10th 1894, the “ Oxenholme ” left Liverpool for Newport to take in a cargo of coal. At that time she had 500 tons of permanent ballast on board, and 200 tons of coal. At Newport the permanent ballast was taken out, and a cargo of 2,000 tons of coal was placed on board. The coal was not intended for sale, but for the use of the vessel in the South American trade. The vessel duly arrived at Buenos Ayres, and subsequently made a voyage to Santos and back. Nothing of importance occurred on either of these voyages.

On May 30th the “ Oxenholme ” left Monte Video for Santos under the command of Mr. Chapman. She had a crew of 29 hands all told, and carried in addition 10 cattlemen, the master's wife, and two stowaways. Her cargo consisted of the balance of the coal which she had taken in at Newport, with the exception of 700 tons which had been landed at Monte Video, flour, maize, and bran in bags, and a number of bales of hay, together with some cases of onions and apples. Upon her spar deck, which was fitted with the usual cattle fittings, she carried 162 horses, 35 cows, 35 calves, and 100 sheep. On the top of the fittings she carried 248 pigs in four pens, together with some hay and apples. The Court was unable to ascertain with any precision the exact weight of the cargo, but the master stated that she had about 800 tons below the water line. When she left Monte Video she drew 20 ft. 9 in. on an even keel, as against rather more than 22 ft. which was her draught on leaving Newport with some 2,200 tons of coal on board. The cargo appears to have been stowed so as to give her as much weight as possible with such a cargo below the water line, but if the figures already given can be relied upon, the vessel, having regard to her dimensions and to the nature and distribution of her cargo, cannot be said to have possessed sufficient stability on leaving Monte Video. This view, while it is strengthened by her subsequent

behaviour in bad weather, is further corroborated by the evidence of the witnesses, who stated that while at anchor off Monte Video she kept listing with the current from one side to the other, and that while proceeding on her voyage, and before she encountered bad weather, she was evidently a tender ship.

At 7 a.m. on May 30th she left Monte Video. The weather was then fine, and continued favourable until the morning of June 1st, when it began to freshen, and at noon it blew a gale from the westward. At first the ship went along pretty fairly, with a slight list to starboard, and rolling somewhat. At 2.30 p.m. she was struck by a heavy squall, and thrown almost upon her starboard beam ends. As a result of this the pigs which she carried above the spar-deck were hurled against the pens, which were at once carried away, and a number of the pigs were sent overboard. This lurch also carried away the roofing and other cattle fittings on the after-part of the spar-deck, and precipitated some of the pigs amongst the horses, some of which were also killed or maimed by the collapse of the fittings. The master at once ordered the engines to be slowed, and put the vessel before the wind, at the same time ordering all hands to assist in clearing the wreck. The crew were thus occupied until 7 or 8 p.m., during which time the ship was brought to the wind, the engines going slow. Meanwhile the gale had increased to a hurricane, and about 11 p.m. a second squall struck the vessel on the starboard side, driving her into the trough of the sea, and giving her a list to port, which gradually increased, and from which she never recovered. About noon on June 1st it was noticed that the vessel was making more water than usual, and after the first squall struck her, the water began to lift the plates on the starboard side of the stokehold. At 3.30 p.m. the main pumps, which had been working all the time, were supplemented by the bilge injection pump, and at first all the pumps worked well. But after a time the bilge injection pump ceased to work satisfactorily, as the condenser became heated owing to a deficiency of water. After 11 p.m., when the second squall struck the vessel and gave her a heavy list to port, the water in her increased and the pumps were unable to keep it down. Their inability to do this was further increased about 1 a.m. owing to the plank flooring of the bunkers being washed away, so allowing the coal to fall into the bilges and to choke the pumps. Every effort was made to clear the pump, but the water continued to gain, and one of the port fires was put out. By 5 a.m. on June 2nd the port boilers were disabled, owing to the fires being put out, and the starboard boilers were unable to supply sufficient steam to work the main engines, which were thus disabled from either propelling the ship or working the pumps. The donkey-engine was made use of, but was unable to reduce the water. Where the water came from there is no evidence to show. The third engineer, however, gave it as his opinion that the water did not come into the vessel in the engine-room or stokehold, and stated that he came to the conclusion that it made its way into the ship in some other section and percolated through the bulkheads, which, for reasons which he stated, were not in his opinion watertight. There is no evidence upon which the Court can form any opinion as to the cause of the influx of water, but it was suggested that some of the ports had been damaged and that the water came in through them. Throughout the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of June the bad weather continued, and the crew were occupied in throwing the animals overboard, without however materially affecting the list of the vessel, which remained, after the fires were put out, wallowing in the trough of the sea. On the early morning of the 4th a steamer was sighted, and came close to the “ Oxenholme,” but as the master still had hopes of saving the vessel her assistance was not invited. Shortly afterwards, however, the engineers reported that they could do no more towards saving the vessel, and the master, after consultation with his officers, came to the conclusion that there was nothing left but to abandon her, and between 11 and 12 a.m. signals of distress were hoisted. These were answered by a schooner called the “ Prepotentie,” and the crew of the “ Oxenholme ” ultimately got safely on board of the schooner, the master leaving about 4 p.m., at which time the “ Oxenholme ” had sunk so far that the master was able nearly to step out from the rails on the port side into the boat. The vessel was last seen about mid-

night of the 4th June, when her port side was nearly level with the water. The Court was informed that she was subsequently seen to sink by those on board of a steamer which passed the locality the next day. When the vessel was abandoned she was in latitude 29° 30' S. and longitude 49° W. The crew were subsequently landed at Desterro, in Brazil.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Paxton, for the Board of Trade, submitted the following questions for the opinion of the Court:—

1. Was the vessel, when she left Monte Video, in a good and seaworthy state as regards her hull and equipments?
2. Was she provided with sufficient pumps in good working order?
3. Had she as laden sufficient stability?
4. What was the cause of the cattle fittings collapsing?
5. What was the cause of the vessel making so much water and of the pumps choking?
6. What was the cause of her taking a heavy list to port?
7. Were all proper measures taken to pump out the water and get the vessel upright?
8. Was the vessel prematurely abandoned?
9. Was the master in default in regard to any of the above matters?
10. What was the value of the ship when she sailed, and what insurances were effected upon her?

The Board of Trade state that in their opinion the master's certificate should be dealt with.

Mr. Horridge, of counsel for the officers and owners, having addressed the Court, the Court gave judgment as above, and returned the following answers to the questions of the Board of Trade:

1. When the vessel left Monte Video she was in a good and seaworthy state as regards her hull and equipments.
2. She was provided with sufficient pumps, which were in good working order, but it would have been better if they had been fitted with wing suction pipes.
3. The coefficient of fineness of her relative proportions denotes a very tender ship, and this is corroborated by the evidence of the officers and the fact that

up to the time of Captain Chapman taking command it had been considered advisable to stiffen her with 500 tons of permanent ballast.

Before leaving Newport in January last, this permanent ballast was discharged to make room for a larger coal cargo. The Court is of opinion that as laden on leaving Monte Video she had not sufficient stability.

4. The collapse of the cattle fittings was caused by the heavy list the vessel took at 2.30 p.m. of the 1st June last, when the weight of the pigs and hay placed on the top of the cattle fittings caused the roof to give way, and threw the horses and cattle to leeward.

5. The ship appears to have been tight when upright, and also when she took the heavy list to starboard, making no water until she took the heavy list to port at 11 p.m. on 1st June. The water rapidly increased while she was wallowing in the trough of the sea during the 2nd and 3rd of June, after the fires were put out. There is no evidence before the Court to enable it to say positively what was the cause of the vessel making so much water. The pumps were choked through the flooring of the bunkers giving way, and the coal getting into the limbers.

6. The heavy list to port was caused by the squall striking her on the starboard side when the wind shifted to the N.W., and owing to the want of sufficient stability she was unable to right herself.

7. Proper measures were taken to pump out the water and get the vessel upright.

8. The vessel was not prematurely abandoned.

9. The master was not in default.

10. It was stated by Mr. Roddrick, the manager, that the ship when she sailed was valued for insurance purposes at 10,000L., and that insurances were effected upon her for 5,000L. The disbursements were also insured for 2,600L. The master's interest in the ship was uninsured, but his effects were insured for 500L.

(Signed) W. J. STEWART, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) ALFRED PARISH,
WILLIAM COSENS, } Assessors.
ALEXANDER GRAY, }

Liverpool, 29th September 1894.

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