

(No. 5160.)

“JAMES SPEIR” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at Cardiff, on the 22nd and 24th days of June 1895, before THOMAS WILLIAM LEWIS, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captain ERSKINE and Captain BROOKS, as nautical assessors, into the circumstances attending the damage sustained by the British steamship “JAMES SPEIR,” of Cardiff, through striking in Lee Bay, north coast of Devonshire, on the 2nd June 1895.

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 damage was due to the master's carelessness in navigating the vessel too close to the land, and the Court finds the master, George Christie Logan, alone in default, and suspends his certificate, No. 13336, for three months.

Dated this 25th day of June 1895.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) WILLIAM ERSKINE, } Assessors.
SAMUEL BROOKS, }

Annex to Report.

This case was heard at the Town Hall, Cardiff, on the 22nd and 24th days of June 1895.

Mr. Waldron appeared as solicitor for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Ingledeu for the master of the ship.

The following questions were submitted for the opinion of the Court:—

1. What number of compasses had the vessel? Were they in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel, and when and by whom were they last adjusted?
2. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel when off the Morte Stone Buoy and from time to time thereafter?
3. Whether after passing the Morte Stone Buoy safe and proper courses were steered, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?
4. Was the vessel navigated too close to the shore?
5. Was a good and proper look-out kept?
6. What was the cause of the damage the vessel sustained, and where did the casualty happen?
7. Was the vessel navigated with proper and seaman-like care?
8. Whether the master and officer are, or either of them is, in default?

The following are the facts of the case:—

The “James Speir,” official number 95188, is an iron screw steamship, built at Stockton-on-Tees in 1890, of 535·01 tons gross and 332·52 tons register. She has triple expansion, direct-acting, vertical inverted engines of 70 nominal horse-power, and is owned by Mr. George William Lancaster and Mr. James Speir as joint owners, and managed by Mr. John Proctor Eccles, of 4 Dock Chambers, Cardiff.

She is 165 ft. in length, 26·1 ft. in breadth, and 12·2 ft. in depth, with an engine-room 33·3 ft. in length, and is registered at the port of Cardiff. She has two compasses, one on the upper bridge used as a standard, and one steering compass. They were last adjusted by Mr. Williams, of Cardiff, in January 1895.

She has three hand-deck pumps, and the usual steam bilge and hold pumps. She has also two boats, both of them lifeboats, and all other necessary life-saving appliances.

The “James Speir” left Amsterdam on the 30th of May 1895, bound to Plymouth and Bristol with a cargo of 530 tons of sugar and rice. She had a crew of 12 hands all told, and was under the command of Mr. George Christie Logan, who held a certificate of competency, No. 13,336.

On leaving Amsterdam her draught was 10 ft. 10 in. forward, and 12 ft. 4 in. aft.

She arrived at Plymouth on the 1st June, and after discharging about 30 tons of rice left about 4 p.m. the same day for Bristol. The weather was then fine and clear with a light westerly wind. The Longships was passed at 3 a.m. on June 2nd, and upon Cape Cornwall being rounded a N.E. by E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. (magnetic) course was set. The morning was hazy at first, but the weather became clear on the sun getting up. At 9 a.m. Trevoze Head was passed and the course altered to N.E. by E. $\frac{3}{4}$ E. (magnetic). At 1.25 p.m. Hartland Point was passed two or three miles distant. There was now a light easterly air prevailing, and the tide was ebbing. The course was altered to E.N.E. magnetic. At 3.10 p.m. the Morte Stone Buoy was passed about 300 yards distant on the starboard side, and the course altered about one point to the eastward. At 3.15 Bull Point was passed at a distance estimated by the eye of from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile.

Shortly afterwards the vessel was taken close in shore to cheat the strong ebb tide. No compass course was given, the master navigating by the land and estimating his distance from it only by the eye. The vessel all this time was going at full speed, and when in Lee Bay took a heavy sheer inshore. The helm was put hard a-starboard, but without effect; and having run from one to two cables' length towards the shore, struck a rock, which caused her to heel over to port and her head to swing off from the land. The engines were stopped for a few seconds to save the propeller, and then again put at full speed ahead. The vessel was for some time headed off shore.

The wells were sounded, and it was found that she was making water rapidly in the main hold. The bilge injection and all other pumps were put on, and the sluice connecting the main hold with the engine-room was opened to allow the water to run to the bilge injection.

The pumps, which worked well, made no impression upon the water, which was gaining fast, and the ship was consequently run for Ilfracombe Harbour, and beached. The main hold was full of water, the damage to the cargo being very great. At low water the ship's bottom was examined, and it was found that it was materially damaged on the starboard bilge 6 or 8 ft. abaft the collision bulkhead. The vessel was patched, and proceeded on her voyage to Bristol, where she arrived safely.

The following answers were given to the before-mentioned questions submitted by the Board of Trade:—

1. The vessel had two compasses, which were in good order and sufficient for her safe navigation. They were last adjusted in January 1895 by Williams of Cardiff.
2. A few minutes after 3 p.m. on the 2nd June the vessel on an E.N.E. up-channel course passed the Morte Stone Buoy on her starboard side at a distance, estimated by the eye, of about 300 yards. The weather was fine, the sea smooth, and the land clearly visible.

Immediately after passing the buoy the course was altered a little to the eastward to diminish the effect of the ebb tide, running end on, and the vessel proceeded, navigated by the land, without any special courses. A few minutes later the vessel, proceeding at full speed, passed Bull Point at a distance—according to the evidence of the master—estimated by the eye, of from a quarter to half mile. In order to avoid the full force of the ebb tide, the master continued—he states in evidence—to navigate as close to the land as he considered consistent with safety; but about five minutes after passing Bull Point the vessel took—according to the master's evidence—a heavy sheer inshore, and before she recovered her position under a hard-a-starboard helm, struck some object, which, without stopping her, caused, as subsequently appeared, considerable damage.

Now, inasmuch as the precise proximity of the vessel to the land, consistent with safety, could not be ascertained merely by an eye estimate, it is obvious that the master, to attain his object of navigating as close to the land as was consistent with safety, should have taken a four-point bearing of Bull Point. He, however, although admittedly not knowing to within a quarter of a mile his distance from the land, continued to navigate his vessel at full speed without taking the measure to verify his position that in the circumstances prudence demanded.

3. If the vessel had been at her assumed distance from the land after passing Morte Stone Buoy, the courses steered by the land would have been safe and proper; but she was, in the opinion of the Court, about a quarter mile nearer than her estimated distance, and, being thus less than a quarter mile from the land, she was navigated in dangerous proximity thereto.

No allowance was made for tide, nor was any allowance necessary if the vessel had been in her assumed position. A good and proper look-out appears to have been kept.

6. The cause of the damage to the vessel can be ascertained only by inference from the circumstances under which it was sustained, particularly by the position of the vessel at the time of sustaining damage, the nature of the damage, and the measures taken and omitted in her navigation, prior to and subsequent to the striking. The position of the vessel at the time of striking is not deposed to as a matter of fact. The boatswain and an A.B. respectively judged the land to be $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles and $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile distant. The master judged the land to be from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mile distant before the vessel took a sheer, and was of opinion that she got about 300 yards nearer before she recovered. The tide was half ebb, and a few moments before the striking the bosun, who was at the wheel, starboarded a bit without orders, because, he stated, the vessel was

nearing the land. Immediately afterwards the master ordered the helm hard-a-starboard, and under a hard-a-starboard helm she struck an object, a glancing blow which caused her to heel over to port, and her head to swing off from the land. The master then stopped the engines for a few seconds and ordered the wells to be sounded. It was found that the vessel was making water fast, and (if the master's estimate of the distance from the land was correct) had sustained damage by striking an object not marked on the chart.

Nevertheless, the master, with curious forgetfulness, omitted to sound round the vessel, and so be prepared to demonstrate he was not too near the land. After sounding the wells, the vessel's head being still directed off the land, she proceeded in this direction for about five minutes at full speed. About an hour later the vessel arrived at Ilfracombe, and was beached. On examination, it was then found that she had six plates fractured on the starboard bilge, three frames bent inwards about four inches, and the upper bilge keelson also bent in about four inches.

From the foregoing circumstances, the Court infers that the vessel at the time of striking was close to the land, and that it struck a rock on the shore in the vicinity of Lee Bay, about $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ mile eastward of Bull Point.

The Court is of opinion that in navigating his vessel too close to the land, the master was wanting in proper and seamanlike care, and accordingly finds him in default and suspends his certificate for three months.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS.

We concur.

(Signed) WILLIAM ERSKINE.
SAMUEL BROOKS.

Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 4th day of July 1895.

“ MARK

The Merch

In the matter of a for
on the 19th, 20th
fore THOMAS WIL
Magistrate, assist
tain SAMUEL BROO
ing the stranding
LANE,” off Kile,
1895.

The Court, having
circumstances attending
casualty, finds, for th
hereto, that the stran
allowance made by th
current; but this initi
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caution been taken of
the master, William
pends his certificate,
Dated this twenty-f

We concur in the

(Signed)

This case was heard
the 19th, 20th, and 21
Mr. Waldron appear
Trade, and Mr. Vache

The following que
opinion of the Court :-

1. What number of
they in good order and
of the vessel, and wh
adjusted?
2. Did the master as
passes by observation
errors correctly ascerta
to the courses applied?
3. Whether safe an
from the time of leavi
of the 27th of March
allowance was made fo
4. Whether proper
to time, and especially
March, to ascertain
vessel?
5. Whether, having
weather, the vessel wa
speed?
6. Whether the to
justifiable?
7. Whether a good a
8. What was the cau
9. Whether the vess
seamanlike care?
10. Whether the ma
them is, in default?

The following are th

The “ Mark Lane,”
screw steamship, built
tons gross and 1,354.48
Trade survey of the 28
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She had inverted d
condensing engines of
is owned by Mr. James
Cory, of Mount Stuar
nated the manager.