

(No. 76.)

"PRINCESS OF WALES" (S.S.)

In the matter of an Investigation, before GEORGE CARLISLE, Esquire, C.E., Principal Officer, Board of Trade, for the east of Scotland district, into the nature or causes of the accident or damage sustained by the British steamship "PRINCESS OF WALES," of Dundee, through collision with Earl Grey Pier, Firth of Tay, on or about the 2nd September 1894.

Board of Trade Offices,
Custom House, Leith.
9th November 1894.

SIR,—In accordance with your instructions of the 9th October 1894, I held an inquiry at the Burgh Court-room, Dundee, on the 23rd ultimo, into the causes of the accident or damage sustained by the British steamship "Princess of Wales," of Dundee, on the 2nd September 1894, and have the honour to report as follows:—

The "Princess of Wales," of Dundee, official number 63,748, was built in 1866 by Messrs. Aitken and Mansel, Whiteinch, Glasgow. Her gross tonnage is 117.9 tons, and her net registered tonnage 53.16 tons. Her length is 142.6 ft., breadth, 16.7 ft., and depth, 6.85 ft. She is propelled by paddle wheels, the engines for which are vertical oscillating, having two cylinders, each 30" diameter, and 42" stroke, constructed in 1866 by Messrs. Aitken and Co., Glasgow, their combined nominal horse-power being 60. The vessel belongs to the Dundee Pleasure Boat Co., Limited, of 11 Whitehall Street, Dundee, in the county of Forfar. Mr. David Grieve, of the same address as the Company, being managing owner.

The vessel was employed in the summer passenger traffic on the Tay, above Broughty Castle and Tayport. At the beginning of the season the running was irregular, and the crew were paid off several times, which accounted for the four engineers that had been appointed during the season. Later in the season apparently the vessel was almost constantly under steam.

On Sunday, the 2nd September, about 8 p.m., having landed her passengers at the pier head at the west side of the tidal basin, she was being manoeuvred to get alongside the "Scotia," a vessel belonging to the same Company, near the entrance to the Earl Grey Dock, where she was to lie the night. The orders given by the master to the engineer, immediately previous to the accident happening, were 'astern,' and the engines made about two revolutions; 'stop,' 'ahead,' and the engines made two revolutions; 'stop,' 'astern'; but although this order was repeated three times, the engines could not be made to go astern until about a quarter of a revolution ahead was made, and before that could be done the collision with the pier had taken place. The time that elapsed between receiving the first order to go astern and the engines being made to do so was stated by the engineer to be about half a minute.

The following day, Monday, 3rd September, steam was got up and the vessel steamed into the river, delivered her ashes, and cruised about for two hours, everything working satisfactorily.

Her crew consisted of six persons, including the master, viz., mate, seaman, steward, engineer, and fireman. At the time the accident or damage in question occurred the master was named Alexander Taylor, who had been in the vessel since May 1894, and who held no certificate. The mate was named William Tares, who had been in the vessel about three months, and who held no certificate, and the engineer was named James Craig, who had been in the vessel since July 1894, and who holds a certificate of competency of the second class, No. 17,767.

The registered managing owner of this vessel, Mr. David Grieve, stated that his duties with regard to this vessel were secretarial only, that Mr. Alexander Wilson was the practical man, and that he never heard any complaints as to the inefficiency of the engines.

Mr. Alexander Wilson, managing director, stated that he was a mineral water manufacturer, had no practical skill as an engineer, had never heard any

complaints as to the inefficiency of the engines; had he done so, would probably have consulted with Mr. Alexander, chairman of the Company, and that the master was responsible for everything.

The master, Alexander Taylor, stated that the engineer never complained to him that the engines were inefficient in any way, but he was aware they were sometimes slow in going astern. He stated the particulars of the collision, and accused the engineer of being under the influence of drink at the time.

William Tares, mate of the vessel, gave similar evidence to that of the master.

The engineer, James Craig, stated that he had complained to the master of the engines sticking or refusing to move at certain points a day or two after joining the vessel, and had since brought the matter up several times. He thought his duty ended there. He stated particulars of the orders he received, and denied being under the influence of drink at the time of accident.

Other witnesses testified that the engines in certain positions were difficult to start.

Mr. William Alexander, chairman of the Company, an engineer, stated that he was not aware of any inefficiency in the machinery until after the accident had happened, and the defects in the valve gear that he saw after the accident would not, in his opinion, entirely account for the inefficiency of the engines to the degree stated by the engineer.

Mr. Adam Watt, Board of Trade surveyor, Dundee, stated the damage sustained by the vessel consisted of the stem being bent to one side, and the rail and three bulwark stanchions broken. It was not of such a nature as would affect the seaworthiness of the vessel. He saw the engines about a fortnight later, and from the condition of the valve gear, he was of opinion that the engines would probably act as stated by the engineer and others. There were ten wearing parts between the valve and the eccentric, and these being all more or less worn put the valve out of proper adjustment.

Mr. George Cooper, consulting engineer, stated that he had not inspected the engines before the accident, but after the accident he was called upon to inspect them and found the valve gear slack, the effect of which would probably be that in certain position of the cranks it would be difficult to get the engines to move.

Questions asked by the Board of Trade.

1. In what trade was the vessel employed, and what were the circumstances in which she was daily worked?

Ans.—The vessel was employed as a passenger steamer on the Tay during the summer, her trips being irregular at the beginning of the season, but increasing as the season advanced, depending greatly upon the weather and tides.

2. What arrangements were made by the owners or managing owner with regard to supervision and overhaul of the vessel and her machinery from time to time to ensure that they were kept in good working order?

Ans.—Beyond the survey for a passenger certificate, the owners appear to have made no arrangements in order that the efficiency of the vessel and her machinery might be regularly supervised and kept in good working order by a competent responsible person.

3. Whether the vessel's engines were in good working order when she left Broughty Ferry about 8 p.m. of the 2nd September last?

Ans.—No.

4. What was the cause of the engineer being unable to move the engines astern when the order was given by the master?

Ans.—The engines not being in efficient order.

5. What was the cause of the casualty?

Ans.—The inefficient state of the engines, and the vessel being incautiously handled in a very restricted space.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
(Signed) G. CARLISLE, Inspector.

The Assistant Secretary,
Marine Department,
Board of Trade.