

(No. 5018.)

"CAMBUSWALLACE."

MARINE BOARD OF QUEENSLAND.

REPORT and Decision relative to the circumstances attending the total loss of the barque "CAMBUSWALLACE" through stranding on Stradbroke Island on the 3rd September 1894.

Having heard the evidence of the master, first, second, and third officers, and six A.B.'s, the Board find that the "Cambuswallace," a new steel barque of 1,651 tons register, official No. 102,673, registered at Glasgow, owned by R. Russell & Co., William Anderson Leggat, master, with a crew of twenty-seven hands all told, sailed from Glasgow on the 3rd May 1894, bound for Brisbane, with a general cargo consisting principally of salt and pig-iron.

On Saturday, the 1st September, at noon, the master states that good observations were obtained, and he was quite satisfied of his position, and set a course N. 25° W. true, which he expected would bring the vessel within sight of land at daylight the following day.

On Sunday, the 2nd September, at about 6 a.m., land was sighted to the westward, at an estimated distance of thirty-five to forty miles, and, from the position of the ship at noon the previous day, the master took it to be the high land in the vicinity of McPherson Range. A true N. course was then steered until 4.30 p.m., when it was estimated the vessel had travelled about eighty miles. Owing to unfavourable weather, the observations taken at noon on Sunday were considered doubtful; the position ascertained by dead reckoning was twenty miles further to the north; the mean of the difference was then taken, which placed the vessel, according to the master's statement, about thirty-eight miles south of Cape Moreton and thirty-five miles off the land. The wind, which was southerly, commenced to blow fresh after 10 a.m., the weather being thick with rain until sunset, when it temporarily cleared to the westward, but no land could be seen then.

At 4.30 p.m. the ship's course was altered to W. true until 6.25 p.m., when the patent log showed that six to seven miles had been made on that course. The master then supposed Cape Moreton to bear W. true twenty-six to twenty-eight miles distant.

At 6.30 p.m. the weather again became thick with rain, the wind still southerly, when the ship was hove-to on the port tack with the foresail, lower foretopsail, foretopmast staysail, and mizzen staysail full, and the lower maintopsail aback, ship's head coming up and falling off from W. to W.N.W.

After giving instructions to keep a look-out man stationed on the fore-topgallant yard, and that he was to be called if any change took place in the weather or wind or if anything was sighted, the master left the deck in charge of the second mate, and went to sleep in the chart-house on the poop at 9 p.m. Before midnight the wind had veered to the eastward, causing the ship to head from S. to S.S.E., of which, however, the second mate neglected to notify the master, telling him at midnight that there had been no change. At 4 a.m. on the 3rd, when relieved by the second mate, the chief officer called the captain and told him the wind had shifted, and that the ship was heading S.S.E. The master, however, gave no instructions, but remained in the chart-house until about 4.50 a.m., when the second mate, sighting breakers to leeward, at once called the captain; but before anything could be done the ship

struck on Stradbroke Island, about seventeen miles south of Point Lookout.

The deep-sea lead, although stated to have been ready and handy, was not used.

The master states that he had observed no southerly current.

After the ship struck, the crew having been provided with lifebelts, unsuccessful attempts were made to get the boats out. Eighteen of the crew eventually succeeded in reaching the shore by swimming; four were either drowned or killed by the floating wreckage; the steward is supposed to have been drowned in his cabin, as although he was called by the master, who gave him his own lifebelt, he never came on deck after the ship struck. The master with three apprentices remained on the ship until the last, and subsequently got ashore in one of the damaged lifeboats. One of the crew, an A.B. named Archibald Peebles, died the day after reaching the shore. The names of the others who were either drowned or killed by floating wreckage were:—Thomas Smith, carpenter; Robert Birch, steward; Thos. O'Neil, cook; Patterson, A.B.; and Duncan McLaughlin, O.S.

The master and officers cannot recollect the numbers of their certificates, having lost them at the wreck.

The Board, having regard to the above circumstances, find—

The charts, log-books, deviation cards, and time azimuth books were lost; and they are consequently unable to say whether the position of the ship was accurately found on the two days preceding the wreck, and whether the corrections for the compasses had been properly applied.

The position of the "Cambuswallace" should have been verified before she was hove-to with her head in shore at 6.30 p.m. on Sunday, 2nd September. No measures were taken to ascertain her position afterwards. Considering the state of the weather and the proximity of the land, the action of the master was most unseamanlike in allowing the vessel to remain with her mainyard aback until she struck at 4.50 a.m. the following day (ten hours) without taking a cast of the lead, and in paying no attention to the change of wind reported by the chief officer at 4 a.m., or attempting to find the course and distance she was making.

The casualty is attributable to the fore-reaching and leeway made by the vessel when lying-to, the neglect to heave the lead, to the prevailing southerly current (for which no allowance was made), and to the master's absence from the deck at a time when his personal supervision was so essential for the safe navigation of the ship.

The Board therefore find the master and second mate in default, and having called upon them to show cause why their certificates should not be dealt with, and they having appeared and stated that they had nothing further to advance in their defence, the Board suspend William Anderson Leggat's master's certificate of competency for two years from the 3rd September 1894, and Henry Smithwick Martin's second mate's certificate of competency for six months from the same date.

The chief officer, George Paul, having failed to take a proper interest in the navigation of the vessel on the night of the 2nd September 1894, the Board consider he is deserving of censure, and he is hereby censured accordingly.

The Board recommend that a first mate's certificate of competency be granted to William Anderson Leggat during the suspension of his master's certificate.

Mr. Arthur Feez, instructed by Messrs. McPherson and Feez, appeared on behalf of the master.

By direction of the Marine Board at Brisbane, this 25th September 1894.

(Signed) SAM'L. A. PETHEBRIDGE,
Secretary.