

(No. 5447.)

“ A G N A R ” (S.S.)

FINDING of a Court of Inquiry held into the circumstances attending the wreck of the British steamer “AGNAR” off Cape Recife on or about the 9th October 1896, holden at Cape Town on the 5th day of November 1896, before GEORGE BLACKSTONE WILLIAMS, Esquire, Acting Resident Magistrate for the Cape District, and Commander ARCHIBALD PELLE STODDART, of H.M.S. “Thrush,” duly appointed under the Government letter of the 3rd November 1896.

The s.s. “Agnar” went ashore off Glasson Point about 13 miles from Cape Recife on the night of the 8th October 1896. Neither the master nor any of the officers are in possession of any certificate of the Board of Trade, though the master and first officer have certificates of competency from the Norwegian Government.

The ship was registered at the port of Cape Town on the 7th August 1896.

The log has been put in, but, having regard to the period that elapsed from the time of the ship striking until the entry was made, and to the circumstances under which the entry was made of the occurrences of the night of the 8th, the Court is unable to place much reliance upon it.

If the ship steered the course as laid down in the log, the Court is of opinion that the striking of the ship must be attributed either to an unusually strong current (and no doubt a strong current was experienced, as according to the speed, the ship ought to have been off Cape Recife when she struck on the coast), or to the fact that the compasses were out. It is impossible now to verify the compasses. Under ordinary circumstances the course steered would have taken the ship at least four miles clear of any danger.

The Court regrets that it cannot acquit the master of blame in the matter, as it considers that the navigation of the vessel was conducted in a most haphazard manner. There is a conflict of evidence as to whether the second mate reported the bearing of the light when sighted; in any case the master should either have gone on deck or satisfied himself that the light was on a safe bearing. The deviation of the compasses was excessive, but if known correctly this would not affect the safe navigation of the ship. No steps seem to have been taken for some considerable time to find out the error of compass, and the Court considers that the master is in default in this respect.

It appears, however that all proper steps were taken, and everything was done to save the ship after she struck.

(Signed) G. BLACKSTONE WILLIAMS, A.R.M.
A. P. STODDART, Lieutenant R.N.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
7th day of January 1897.)