

(No. 5517.)

## "JESSIE" (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal Investigation held at the Town Hall, Cardiff, on the 9th, 10th, and 12th days of April 1897, before THOMAS WILLIAM LEWIS, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captain E. M. HUGHES and Captain T. TOLSON EDWARDS, into the circumstances attending the stranding and total loss of the British steamship "JESSIE," of Cardiff, on the Fundale Rock, Carnsore Point, S.E. coast of Ireland, on the 21st day of March 1897.

*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 loss of the vessel was due to the master navigating her from unascertained positions at excessive speed in thick fog and neglecting to use the lead, which would have warned him that he was running into danger.

The Court finds the master, John James, alone in default, and suspends his certificate for eighteen months.

Dated this 12th day of April 1897.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) E. M. HUGHES,  
T. TOLSON EDWARDS, } Assessors.

*Annex to the Report.*

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the stranding and subsequent total loss of the British steamship "Jessie," of the port of Cardiff, on the Fundale Rock, Carnsore Point, S.E. coast of Ireland, held on the 9th, 10th, and 12th days of April 1897, before Thomas William Lewis, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captains E. M. Hughes and T. Tolson Edwards, Nautical Assessors. Mr. Roe, of Messrs. Vachell & Co., appeared for the Board of Trade, the master and chief officer appeared in person, but were not represented by counsel, nor were the owners of the vessel represented.

The "Jessie," official No. 76,255, was a screw steamer, built at Grangemouth, by the Grangemouth Dockyard Company, in 1890, and was of the following dimensions, viz.: Length 150 ft., breadth 23.15 ft., depth 10.88 ft., gross tonnage 370.18, and net register tonnage 163.75 tons.

She was schooner rigged, and fitted with two compound surface-condensing engines of 75 nominal horsepower combined, and was managed by Mr. John Gillett, of Penarth, county of Glamorgan, consulting engineer, who held  $\frac{1}{4}$  shares, as set forth in the register.

The "Jessie" carried two boats, which were life-boats, and was properly fitted with life-saving appliances, in accordance with the Statute.

She had two compasses, one placed on the bridge, by which the courses were set, and the other in the wheelhouse below the bridge, by which the courses were steered. The Court was told in evidence that these compasses were adjusted in May 1896 by Mr. Blair, of Cardiff, and they were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. The master stated in evidence that on a previous voyage the patent log had broken down; it was not repaired, he had no time to make a hand log, and on the voyage in question there was no log used to record the distance.

The "Jessie" left Cowes on the 18th of March last with a cargo of 320 tons of cement bound for Dublin, her draught being 11 ft. 6 ins. aft and 8 ft. 6 ins. forward. She afterwards anchored in Lymington Roads through stress of weather, and left there at 8 a.m. on the 19th March for Portland to coal, where she arrived

at 1 p.m. on the same day, and after taking in 21 tons of coal sailed at 4.45 p.m. for Dublin.

After leaving Portland the "Jessie" encountered strong westerly winds down Channel, and arrived off the Longships at noon on the 20th; at this time the lighthouse bore E. by S., distant  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, wind W.S.W., fresh breeze and foggy.

The master's evidence was that a course was then set by standard compass N.N.E. magnetic, being N. by E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  E. by steering compass in the wheelhouse, that compass showing  $\frac{1}{2}$  point easterly deviation; the fore and aft sails were then set, the engines going full speed. The chief officer, Mr. R. Roskringe, who came on watch when passing the Longships, states that he also took the bearing of the lighthouse, which agreed as above with the master, and emphatically stated in evidence that the course set and steered by the standard compass during the whole of his watch was N. by E., and to the best of his belief was continued up to midnight. The seamen who were at the wheel at different times up to midnight and up to the time of stranding, also corroborated the chief officer's statement, and taking the evidence as a whole the Court is of the opinion that his statement is correct.

At 4 p.m. on the 20th of March the weather was thick with fog, which occasionally lifted; the fog came up in dense banks from the westward, and when in those banks it was possible, according to the evidence, to see about two cables' length around the vessel, and in the intervals between the banks to see from two to three miles.

The speed of the vessel was not reduced between 4 p.m. and midnight, but she continued at full speed with all fore and aft sail set. At midnight the vessel was hauled out N.W. up to 0.30 a.m., the fog had then much increased in density.

At 0.30 a.m. the course was again altered to N. by E., and shortly afterwards to N. by E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  E. The engines had been placed at half-speed at 0.20 a.m., and so continued until 2.30 a.m. on the 21st, afterwards slow for a few minutes, and then dead slow for a few minutes. About 2.50 a.m. the vessel stranded on the Fundale Rock, north of Carnsore Point, co. Wexford. The engines were immediately placed full speed astern for half an hour, and orders were given to run up the fore ballast tank, so as to bring the vessel more on an even keel. The propeller at this time caught the rocks and was carried away. The engines were immediately stopped; she commenced to fill with water, but afterwards drifted with the tide on the Collough Rocks. The crew now took to the boats and landed at 9 a.m. at Greenow Point, having drifted with the tide some distance to the northward from the vessel, which subsequently became a total wreck.

It will be noticed that the "Jessie" had her three fore and aft trysails set.

The Court would here like to take the opportunity of calling attention to the serious danger existing when vessels constructed of iron or steel are being navigated in the Northern hemisphere on northerly or southerly courses, and are heeled over either by pressure of canvas, the working out of bunker coals, or from other causes. In such cases the north end of the compass needle will be drawn to the high side of the vessel, and the result in disregarding heeling error would be that a vessel steering on northerly courses would be found to windward of her supposed position, and to leeward on southerly courses.

On the opening of the inquiry, Mr. Roe put in, and on the conclusion of the evidence submitted for the opinion of the Court, the following questions:—

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. Did the master ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time, were the errors correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections to the courses applied?
3. Whether at and after 4 p.m. on the 20th March, the weather was thick with fog, and, if so, whether the speed of the vessel was reduced?
4. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at midnight on the 20th-21st March, and from time to time thereafter?

5. Whether safe and proper courses were set and steered after passing the Longships, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

6. Whether a good and proper look-out was kept?

7. Whether the lead was used at any time after midnight on the 20th-21st March, and, if not, whether the neglect to use it was justifiable?

8. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

9. What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel?

10. Whether the loss of or serious damage to the "Jessie" was caused by the wrongful act or default of the master and chief officer, or of either of them?

The Court then considered the questions and answers as follows:—

1. The vessel had two compasses. They were in good order and sufficient for her safe navigation. They were last adjusted in April 1896 by Mr. Blair of Cardiff.

2. The master did not ascertain the deviation of the compasses by observation, but states that on the voyage in question, he took bearings of headlands in the English Channel, and so ascertained that his standard compass was true magnetic.

3. From 4 p.m. until midnight on the 20th of March the weather was thick with fog, which occasionally lifted. The fog came up in dense banks from the westward, and when in these banks it was possible, according to the evidence, to see about two cables' lengths around the vessel, and in the intervals between the banks to see from two to three miles. The speed of the vessel was not reduced between 4 p.m. and midnight, but she was continued at full speed with fore and aft sails set until 0.20 a.m. on the 21st, although at midnight the fog had much increased in density, being, according to the chief officer's evidence, very thick. At 0.20 a.m. the speed was reduced to half speed, and so continued until 2.30 a.m. on the 21st. The engines were then slowed for a few minutes, for a few minutes put at dead slow, and then, at about 2.50 a.m., the vessel stranded on the Fundale Rock on the S.E. coast of Ireland. She had been abreast of the Longships at noon on the 20th. The distance from the Longships to the Fundale Rock is about 130 miles. There was no log used, but her full speed alone was stated to be about eight knots. Hence taking the time at 15 hours, she covered the distance at an average speed in excess of her full speed under steam alone, viz., at a speed of about 8½ knots an hour.

4. The master knew that between midnight and 3 a.m. on the 21st his vessel, if she had made good the courses laid down, would pass within range of the Smalls Light if clear, and the Taskar Fog-signal if foggy. The light being invisible, and (presumably owing to the density of the fog) the fog-horn being inaudible, prudence and

duty urgently demanded that some measure should be taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel. Had he used the lead, his position, far to the westward of his course, and the fact that he was running into danger, would have been revealed to him. He, however, took no measures to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel.

5. Until midnight on the 20th—if proper alterations had subsequently been made—the courses set and steered from the Longships were safe and proper, but the courses set and steered after midnight directed her to the rocks where she stranded. Having regard to the circumstances no allowance was necessary for tide, and no allowance was made.

6. The only look-out from midnight until the stranding was the chief officer, who was stationed on the upper bridge. The vessel passed within two miles to the eastward of the Barrel's Light-vessel, with fog-gong, the wind being westerly, and for upwards of an hour before the stranding the vessel would have smoothed her water. The gong was not heard, neither was the smooth water observed, hence the Court is not prepared to say that the look-out was good and proper.

7. The lead was not used at any time after midnight on the 20th-21st March, and its neglect was in the circumstances very culpable.

8, 9, and 10. The stranding and loss of the "Jessie" were caused by the master's wrongful acts in navigating the vessel in thick fog at excessive speed from an unascertained position, on courses directed to the place where she stranded, viz., a place about ten miles to the westward of her assumed position. The master displayed a want of proper and seamanlike care for the safety of his own vessel and the lives of his own crew. He also imperilled the lives and property of others by proceeding through dense fog at full speed in the crowded waters of the entrances to the Bristol and St. George's Channels. And the Court, having regard to the prevalence of the practice of navigating vessels at high speed in thick fog, and to the appalling disasters that have resulted therefrom, feel it a duty to treat with severity the infringement of Article 13 of the Regulations for the Prevention of Collision at Sea, committed by the master of the "Jessie." For this and the above-mentioned reasons the master's certificate is suspended for eighteen months.

(Signed) T. W. LEWIS, Judge.

We concur.

(Signed) E. M. HUGHES,  
T. TOLSON EDWARDS, } Assessors.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 29th day of April 1897.)

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