

(No. 5561.)

“OHIO” (S.S.)

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal investigation, held at the Board-room of the Sunderland School Board Offices, John-street, in the Borough of Sunderland, on the 7th and 8th days of July 1897, before ROBERT APPELBY BARTRAM and Alderman MATTHEW BELL, Esquires, two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace, acting for the said Borough, assisted by Captains KENNETT HORE and SAMUEL BROOKS, Nautical Assessors, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British steam ship “OHIO,” of Sunderland, on or about the 28th day of May last, off Auckengill, Caithness.

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 stranding was caused through the neglect of the master to turn the ship's head off the land when she got into 19 fathoms water at 3 a.m. of 28th May. The Court finds the master, Robert Parkin Ovens, in default for such stranding, and suspends his certificate for the space of three months from the date hereof.

The Court recommends that a chief mate's certificate be granted to him in the meantime.

Dated this 8th day of July 1897.

(Signed) R. A. BARTRAM, } Judges.
M. BELL, }

We concur in the above report.

(Signed) KENNETT HORE, } Assessors.
SAMUEL BROOKS, }

Annex to the Report.

The “Ohio” is a British steamship built of steel at Sunderland, in the County of Durham, in the year 1888. She is registered at the Port of Sunderland, her official number being 95270, and her dimensions as per register: Length, 293 feet, breadth, 38·2·5, depth in hold, 25·8. She is rigged as a schooner, and her registered tonnage after deducting 821·39 tons for propelling and crew space is 1,568·09 tons. She is fitted with triple expansion engines of 260 horses power combined. The cylinders are 22, 36 and 60 inches respectively, with a length of stroke of 39 inches.

This vessel is owned by the “Neptune Steam Navigation Company Limited,” of Sunderland. Mr. Thomas William Pinkney, of 59, John-street, Sunderland, being the appointed manager, and at the time of the casualty was under the command of Mr. Robert Parkin Ovens, who held a certificate of competency as master, No. 021935.

She was fitted with four boats, two of which are life-boats, and was fully equipped with life-belts and buoys in compliance with the Act.

She had three compasses, namely, one on the upper bridge, which was the standard, by which the courses were set and steered, and the vessel navigated; one on the lower bridge, and one in the binnacle aft.

The “Ohio” left Rotterdam on the 25th of May, about 6 a.m., with a general cargo of 1,050 tons and a crew of 24 hands all told, and two passengers (the master's wife and child), bound for Sunderland to coal, and from thence to Baltimore to discharge. She arrived at Sunderland all well at 9 a.m. of the 26th of May, and having taken in her bunker coal, left again at 11 p.m. the same evening, and proceeded to sea in charge of the pilot. Her draught on an even keel being about 17 feet 10 inches. When the pilot left at 11.40 p.m. a course was set N.N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E., being N. by E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. magnetic, until the Tynemouth lights were abeam distant 5 miles (by 4 point bearing) at 0.35 a.m. of the 27th, from which point the departure was taken. The weather fine but hazy, the winds E.N.E. light and variable, and sea smooth.

The vessel was steaming full speed, about 11 knots.

and the course N. by E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. by compass was N.N.E. magnetic.

At noon of the 27th the weather becoming thicker with haze, the engines were stopped and a cast of the lead taken, which gave 30 fathoms sand. At 2 p.m. the weather being still thick with haze, another cast of the lead was taken, which gave 20 fathoms sand, and again at 4 p.m., when 19 fathoms were found, and the log showed 165 miles.

At this time the master decided that he was clear of Ratteray Head, and altered the course to N. by W., which was N. $\frac{1}{2}$ W. magnetic; but it is clear from the course steered from off Tynemouth lights, when the departure was taken, that at 4 p.m. the vessel was in 19 fathoms, and not in latitude 57·38 N., longitude 0·58 W., when she should have been in 55 fathoms, and where the master placed her on the chart, and that up to this point she had made a N. by E. magnetic course instead of a N.N.E. magnetic course, as stated by the master, and this he should have known by the soundings at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m.

However, from 4 p.m. the ship was going at a reduced speed, and he laid a course to clear Duncansby Head, N. $\frac{1}{2}$ W. magnetic, and although at 4 p.m. he was within three miles of the land, instead of being about 28 miles, as marked on the chart, this course would have cleared him of all danger, and was safe and proper. At 7 p.m. he steered N. $\frac{3}{4}$ W. magnetic, and continued that course till 0.30 a.m. of 28th May, when the patent log showed 240 miles. A cast of the lead had been taken at midnight, which gave 35 fathoms, with hard bottom, and as the master then considered he was close up to Duncansby Head, the ship was turned round on the starboard helm and put S. by E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. magnetic, to head the tide. The reason she was turned on the starboard helm was that the master stated he heard a whistle on the starboard bow. This S. by E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. course was continued till 2 a.m., the ship still going dead slow, about 3 knots, through the water. At 2 a.m. she was turned round again and put on a N. $\frac{3}{4}$ W. magnetic course. At 2.50 a.m. another cast of the lead was taken, which gave 19 fathoms hard bottom, the weather still being thick. No notice was taken of the dangerous position the ship was found to be in by this cast, but her course was continued, the engines still going dead slow. At 3.10 a.m. breakers suddenly appeared right ahead. The helm was put hard a port and the engines were stopped and reversed full speed, but before the way could be stopped she struck the ground and remained fast.

A kedge was run out on the starboard quarter and hove taut, and the holds sounded, when it was found that the water was coming into number 3 hold. At 5 o'clock the master sent on shore for assistance. At 9 a.m. the kedge warp carried away and the ship swung broadside on to the shore and commenced to make water badly. At noon the crew commenced to jettison the bunker coals, and about 3 p.m. two tugs came to assist, but in consequence of the state of the weather, could do nothing.

At 10.30 p.m. a fresh south-east breeze sprang up, and the ship bumping heavily on the rocks, the tow lines were taken on board again. At this time the seas were breaking over her, and at midnight she was full of water. Bad weather continued on the 29th and 30th of May, but on the 31st the weather became fine, and by the efforts of the salvors, assisted by the crew, the vessel was eventually got off on the 12th of June, and taken into Sinclair bay in charge of three tugs, and thence to Wick, Peterhead and Aberdeen, and finally arrived at Sunderland on Tuesday the 29th June, at 5 p.m.

From the foregoing statement it is clear that had the helm been put hard-a-port, and the ship's head put off the shore when the dangerous sounding of 19 fathoms was obtained at 2.50 a.m. on the 28th May, instead of the N. $\frac{3}{4}$ W. course being continued, this casualty would in all probability have been avoided, as the master had then ample opportunity of putting the ship about and thus preventing the stranding.

At the conclusion of the evidence the Solicitor for the Board desired the opinion of the Court on 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?

1. The vessel had three compasses; they appear to have been in good order, and were sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel. There is no

evidence before the Court to show when or by whom they were 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?

2. The master stated to the Court that he did ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time, and that he applied the proper corrections to the courses, but no deviation cards were produced or anything to show what the deviation really was, or that the corrections were properly applied.

3. Whether safe and proper courses were steered after 11.40 p.m. of the 26th May last, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents?

3. The courses set after 11.40 p.m. of 26th May were safe and proper if made good. Due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents.

4. Whether proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel from time to time after 11.40 p.m. of the 26th May?

4. Proper measures appear to have been taken, by the use of the lead, to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel from time to time after 11.40 p.m. of the 26th May, but the Court finds that the courses steered do not agree with the soundings.

5. What was the result of the cast of the lead taken at or about 3 a.m. of the 28th May, and in the opinion of the Court should the vessel's course have been altered off the land at that time?

5. The result of the cast of the lead taken at or about 3 a.m. of the 28th May was that 19 fathoms water was obtained. In the opinion of the Court

the vessel's course should have been immediately altered off the land.

6. Whether the lead was used with sufficient frequency?

6. The lead was not used with sufficient frequency after 0.30 a.m. of 28th May.

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

7. A good and proper look-out appears to have been kept.

8. What was the cause of the casualty?

8. Considering the state of the weather, the neglect to turn the ship off the land when she got into 19 fathoms water at 3 a.m. on 28th May.

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

9. The vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care up to 2 a.m. of 28th May, but not afterwards.

10. Whether the serious damage to the s.s. "Ohio" was caused by the wrongful act or default of the master, chief and second officers, or any of them?

10. The damage to the "Ohio" was caused by the default of the master alone, and for which the chief and second officers are not in default.

R. A. BARTRAM, } Justices.
M. BELL, }

We concur in the above report.

KENNETT HORE, } Assessors.
SAMUEL BROOKS, }

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 22nd day of July 1897.)

"ISABELLA"

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