

(No. 5458.)

“ INVERNESS.”

FINDING of a Naval Court held at the British Consulate, Pará, on the 26th day of December 1896, to investigate the circumstances and cause of the stranding and abandonment of the sailing vessel “ INVERNESS,” and to inquire into the conduct of the master, certificated officers, and crew of the said vessel.

The “ Inverness ” was a composite sailing vessel, barque-rigged, of 721 net registered tons, official number 63,519, built at Aberdeen in 1869, and belonging to the port of Swansea.

It appears from the evidence given before this Court that she sailed from London on or about the 16th November 1896, bound for Pará, Brazil, with a cargo of coal and telegraph cable, and a crew of twenty-one hands all told.

All went well until the 19th December 1896, when at noon, an observation being made, the vessel’s position on the chart was placed at lat. 0° 30’ N. long. 45° 51’ W., and the course shaped for Salinas Light. Soundings were taken and fresh observations made, and the vessel was navigated accordingly. Early on the 20th a light was noticed from aloft, which, although it disappeared soon after, was thought, after consulting the chart, to be Salinas Light. The lead was kept going, and the vessel properly handled, when at 4.45 a.m. she took the ground, giving three heavy bumps, masts and rigging shaking violently. The position of the vessel soon became dangerous, and a vessel coming into sight blue lights and rockets were fired. The “ Inverness ” was then finally abandoned, all hands transferring themselves to the sighted vessel, viz. the Norwegian barque “ Victoria,” which landed them at Pará on the 23rd December 1896.

The Court, having regard to the circumstances above stated, finds as follows:—

That after careful examination of the mate’s log-book and the master’s and officers’ statements, it appears that the light seen from aloft when nearing the coast and taken for Salinas might, by the course steered and distance run, have been that light, but in view of the existing uncertainty about it, and small soundings, the master, Matthew John Bunny, committed an error of judgment in not standing out or anchoring till daylight to ascertain the correct position of his vessel.

That with reference to the abandonment of the “ Inverness,” the Court considers that the master and crew were justified under existing circumstances to abandon her.

That the Court, in consideration of the uncertainty of the soundings on this coast, sees no ground to intertere with the certificates of the master, M. J. Bunny, No. 84,508 O.C., and officers William H. Beach, first mate, No. 27,693 O.C., and J. J. Fairweather, second mate, No. 015,516 O.C.

The expenses of this Court, fixed at 8*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.*, are approved.

Dated at Pará this 26th day of December 1896.

(Signed) E. KANTHACK, H.B.M.’s Consul,
President of Naval Court.

E. PONTET,
Master Mariner and Manager
of the Amazon Steam Navigation Co. Ltd.,

F. G. COXON,
Master of the British Merchant
Steamer “ Cearense,”

THOS. WILLIAMS,
Master of the British Merchant
Vessel “ Darwin,”

Members.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 28th day of January 1897.)