

(No. 5825.)

“MERKSWORTH” (S.S.).

*REPORT and Decision of the Local Marine Board of New South Wales, in the matter of the Foundering of the steamship “Merksworth,” of Sydney, Official Number 70,852.*

AN inquiry was held by the Board into the cause of the foundering of this vessel, and they ascertained that she was an iron vessel of 165 tons nett register, built at Paisley, Scotland, in 1874, and owned by Mr. Charles Parbury, of Sydney.

The “Merksworth” was on a voyage from Newcastle to Sydney, coal laden, which port she left about 4.30 p.m. on the 5th inst., and experienced moderate head wind and sea until she passed Redhead at 6 p.m., when a strong southerly gale was encountered, with increasing sea. The engines were slowed down about midnight of the same date, and continued so without doing any damage until 3 p.m. on the 6th instant, when the engine-room skylight was burst in by the sea. This was repeatedly covered and secured with tarpaulins, etc., and washed off again by the seas, the water finding its way into the engine-room and stoke-hole, lifting the stoke-hole plates and washing the coal from the bunkers into the bilges, thereby choking the pumps. The crew then continued to bail the water out with buckets until after the fires were drowned out about midnight of the same date. Finding the water still gaining on the vessel, it was decided to abandon her, which was done at 1 a.m. on the 7th instant, all hands leaving in their life-boat, the vessel eventually foundering about 10 miles north-east of Nobbys at about 11 a.m. on the 7th instant.

Nine lives were lost through the accident—two by the capsizing of the boat, the others dying from exposure in the boat, only three persons being saved.

Evidence goes to show that the vessel was in thorough good order, well found and staunch in every respect, being recently overhauled at considerable expense, and was not overloaded.

From the evidence adduced, the Board find the foundering to have been caused by the engine-room skylight being stove in by the exceptionally heavy seas raging on the coast at that time, and under the circumstances the crew were justified in abandoning the said “Merksworth,” believing her at that time to be in a sinking condition.

The Board is of opinion that every possible precaution was taken by the master and the crew to navigate the vessel with safety.

J. H. VEITCH,

Secretary, Local Marine Board.

Newcastle, 20th May, 1898.

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