

(No. 6002.)

“MANCHESTER ENTERPRISE”  
(S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at the City Sessions Court, Manchester, on the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th days of January, 1900, before FRANCIS JOHN HEADLAM, Esq., Stipendiary Magistrate for the City of Manchester, assisted by J. H. HALLETT, Esq., C.E., Captain A. Wood, and Commander CABORNE, C.B., into the circumstances attending the loss of the British steamship “MANCHESTER ENTERPRISE,” on or about the 15th day of November, 1899, in the North Atlantic Ocean.

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 cause of the loss of the vessel was the springing of a leak in the vicinity of the after athwartship bunker, whereby the water found its way into the stokeholds and engine-room, putting the fires out, filling up these compartments, and finally finding its way into No. 4 hold, thus causing the ship to founder in lat. 50° 25' N. and long. 42° 25' W.

Dated this 18th day of January, 1900.

FRANCIS J. HEADLAM, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

J. H. HALLETT, M.I.C.E.,  
Engineer,  
A. WOOD,  
W. F. CABORNE, } Assessor.

Annex to the Report.

The “Manchester Enterprise” (formerly the “Queensmore”), official number 96,394, was a British screw steamship, built of steel by Messrs. Gourley Bros. and Co. at Dundee in 1889, and was of the following dimensions:—Length 360 ft., breadth 46 ft., depth of hold from tonnage deck to ceiling at midships 29.05 ft. She was schooner rigged, and was fitted with triple expansion surface condensing inverted direct-acting engines of 500 nominal horse-power combined. She had three boilers, made of steel at Dundee in 1889, the working pressure when loaded being 160 lbs. Her registered tonnage, after deducting 1364.22 tons for propelling power and crew space, was 2,513.83 tons, and she was constructed with six watertight bulkheads. She was registered at the port of Manchester, and was owned by The Manchester Liners, Limited, of Guardian Buildings, Cross Street, Manchester, Mr. Robert Burdon Stoker, of Guardian Buildings, Cross Street, Manchester, being designated in the transcript of register as ship’s husband. She carried six boats, four of which were lifeboats, and was supplied with all other life-saving appliances according to the statute. On returning from the voyage previous to the one in question, she was placed in dry dock in Manchester, in order to clean and paint her bottom, when it was discovered that two butts in the ship’s bottom under the boilers were leaking, one on each side in the second plate from the keel. It was further observed that the bottom at this part was slightly set up for a distance of 70 ft., the maximum being one and a half inches. There were also some plates forward set in, through the vessel having been among ice. The repairs considered necessary were effected under the supervision of Lloyd’s surveyor, who expressed himself satisfied with the work done, and stated that the vessel was in a perfectly seaworthy condition when she sailed, the slight set-up in the bottom being left as it was. Hands were employed to clean out the bilges in the holds and engine room, and

the Court is satisfied that this was properly done. Considerable repairs were executed to the boilers, 28 new stays being fitted, and the tubes and boilers were cleaned out, except three tubes in the bottom wing of each box, which were left salted up. When the vessel left the Mersey the boilers were in good condition, and they in no way contributed to the casualty.

The “Manchester Enterprise” left the Mersey about 3 p.m. on the 5th November, 1899, bound on a voyage from Manchester to Montreal, under the command of Mr. William John Wright, who holds a certificate of competency as master, No. 001,128, the crew consisting of 44 hands and 9 cattle men. She was laden with about 1,700 tons of general cargo, about 435 tons being stowed on the ’tween decks. She also carried about 1,300 tons of bunker coal and 260 tons of water ballast. All went well until after Inistrahull, on the north coast of Ireland, was passed on the 6th, when bad weather was encountered, with a high cross sea, in which the ship rolled very heavily. On the 8th, while blowing hard from S.S.W. with a high sea, the cargo stowed between decks in No. 3 hold broke adrift, and some of it, consisting of dye extract, fell down into the deep tank on the top of the bunker coal, several of the casks being broken up and the liquid spilt. The hatches were opened in this hold, and the cargo re-stowed, a work which was finally completed on the 10th. After the cargo had broken adrift the vessel had a slight list to starboard. About three or four days after leaving, and owing to the racing of the engines, the stud of the pump ram of the after main bilge pump broke off close to the neck, and it was not considered prudent in the circumstances to stop and repair it, the more so because that she was still otherwise well provided with pumps. On the 9th the chief engineer had an idea that there was more water in the engine-room bilges than there should have been, but the vessel was rolling so heavily that there was difficulty in estimating the quantity of water in the ship. The excess of water in the engine-room bilges continued, the weather the whole time being very bad, and on the 12th the hatches of Nos. 3 and 4 holds were opened, and an examination of the ’tween deck ports was made, when they were found to be perfectly tight. The ship increased her list, and the weather continued in much the same condition until 4.30 p.m. on the 14th, when water came rushing into the stokehold through the starboard door in the after thwartship bunker. The starboard door was immediately closed, when the water came from the midship door. Both it and the port door in that bunker were then closed. Under this after bunker there was a ballast tank, the after side of the said bunker forming a watertight bulkhead. The chief engineer immediately reported this inrush of water to the master, and a further attempt was made to locate the leak. He also closed the sea connections, and opened the bilge connections, all the available pumps being set to work to free the vessel. Notwithstanding this, the water continued to gain, and at 7 p.m., the vessel having a heavy list, the starboard fires were extinguished. The pumps worked well until, the water continuing to gain, the remaining fires were extinguished about 11 p.m. At about 9.30 p.m. a steamer was observed close to, which afterwards proved to be the “Lakonia,” and the master made signals of distress to her, and requested her to stand by during the night. This request was acceded to. On the following morning an attempt was made with a view to passing hawsers, but it was unsuccessful. The master of the “Lakonia” is also stated to have had grave doubts as to the capability of his steamer to tow the disabled vessel.

During the forenoon, there then being 24 or 25 ft. of water in the engine room, and 4 ft. 10 ins. in No. 4 hold, it was determined to abandon the vessel. No. 1 and No. 5 holds could not be sounded, the pipe of the former having been damaged after the sailing of the vessel, while that of the latter was disabled during the loading of the cargo at Manchester.

The crew were transferred to the “Lakonia,” that vessel assisting in the operation with one of her boats, the master being the last to leave his vessel, about noon on November 15th. The “Lakonia” still continued to stand by, and at about 3.30 p.m. the “Manchester Enterprise” was seen to founder stern first, the approximate position at the time being in latitude 50° 25' N. and longitude 42° 25' W.

The master, officers, and crew were landed at Baltimore, and afterwards forwarded to England.

Certain allegations were made by two firemen as to the condition of the boilers and bilges when the ship left for her voyage, but these men are proved to have been at the time under the influence of drink and neglecting their work.

Upon the conclusion of the evidence Mr. Galloway, on behalf of the Board of Trade, submitted certain amended questions for the opinion of the Court, and Mr. Crump having addressed the Court on behalf of the owners, and Mr. Galloway having replied, the Court answered the following questions placed before it:—

1. Was the vessel in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipments when she left the Mersey on the 5th November last?

2. Were the pumps sufficient and in good order?

3. Were the bilges properly cleaned?

4. Were the boilers clean and in good condition?

5. Was the cargo properly stowed and secured, and were the weights properly distributed?

6. What was the cause of the after main bilge pump giving way, and should it have been repaired?

7. When did the vessel make an unusual quantity of water in the holds or engine room and stokehold? Did the chief engineer make any report to the master, and were proper measures taken to ascertain the whereabouts of the leak?

8. Was difficulty experienced in keeping sufficient steam to work the engines and pumps, and, if so, what was the cause of it?

9. What was the cause of the vessel making so much water on the 14th November, and were proper measures taken to keep it under?

10. Was every possible effort made to save the vessel, and was she prematurely abandoned?

11. What was the cause of the loss of the vessel?

12. Was the loss of the vessel caused by the wrongful act or default of the master, officers, and engineers, or any of them, and does blame attach to Mr. Robert Burdon Stoker, registered manager, or to Mr. Thomas M. Greenip, marine superintendent.

13. What was the value of the vessel and freight, and for what amount were they respectively insured?

As follows:—

1. The vessel was in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipments when she left the Mersey on the 5th November.

2. The pumps were sufficient and in good order.

3. The bilges were properly cleaned.

4. The boilers were repaired both at Manchester and at Runcorn, and on leaving the Mersey they were clean and in good condition, with the exception of three tubes in the bottom wing of each box, which were salted up. The Court considers that it would have been better to have had these cleaned out.

5. The cargo was properly stowed and secured, but it appears from the vessel's behaviour at sea that it

would have been better if a larger proportion of the cargo had been stowed between decks.

6. Owing to the racing of the engines the stud of the pump ram of the after main bilge pump broke off close to the neck, and under the circumstances it would not have been prudent to stop the engines to disconnect and repair it, the ship having otherwise a sufficiency of pumping power.

7. The vessel made an unusual quantity of water on the 14th November at 4.30 p.m. The engineer at once reported it to the master, and all possible measures were taken under the circumstances to ascertain the whereabouts of the leak. On the 12th November it was thought that water was finding its way into the vessel, and the master was informed of it. It could not be ascertained where it came in, but the increase was not serious, and the pumps kept it down.

8. Difficulty was experienced in keeping sufficient steam to work the engines and pumps in consequence of the excessive rolling of the vessel.

9. The ship appears to have sprung a leak in the vicinity of the after athwartship bunker on the starboard side, and all measures possible were then taken to keep it under.

10. Every possible effort was made to save the vessel, and she was not prematurely abandoned.

11. The cause of the loss of the vessel was the springing of a leak in the vicinity of the after athwartship bunker, whereby the water found its way into the stokeholds and engine room, putting the fires out, filling up these compartments, and finally finding its way into No. 4 hold, this causing the ship to founder in latitude 50° 25' N., longitude 42° 25' W.

12. The loss of the vessel was not caused by the wrongful act or default of the master, officers, and engineers, or any of them, and no blame attaches to Mr. Robert Burdon Stoker, registered manager, or to Mr. Thomas M. Greenip, marine superintendent.

13. The value of the vessel in the books stands at £34,500, but the owners stated that the value of such a ship to-day is £39,000. The value of the freight was £800. The registered manager said that the insurance effected on hull and machinery was £32,500, with £2,000 on disbursements, £4,000 on freight, and £2,000 for premiums, reducing one-twelfth monthly.

Dated this 18th day of January, 1900.

FRANCIS J. HEADLAM, Judge.

We concur in the above report.

J. H. HALLETT, M.I.C.E.,  
Engineer,  
A. WOOD,  
W. F. CABORNE, } Assessor.

Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 16th day of February, 1900.