

(No. 6081.)

“ASHLANDS” (S.S.).

FINDING of a Court of Inquiry into the loss of the British steamship “ASHLANDS,” held at Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, on the 14th July, 1900.

Office of the Civil Commissioner,
Port Elizabeth,
18th July, 1900.

We have carefully considered the evidence given in the case of the loss of the S.S. “Ashlands,” of West Hartlepool, official No. 97,398, registered tonnage 1,491, master, John Harold Gourlay.

She left Hull on the 26/5/00 with a cargo of coal bound for Durban. So far as we can find out from the evidence before us the vessel appears to have been well found, supplied with the latest charts, and in every way seaworthy.

The vessel appears to have been carefully navigated until 4 p.m. on the 5th instant.

We find the course, as given in the evidence, should have led the ship clear of the dangers off Bird Island if no indraft had been experienced, but that the fact of sighting Bird Island Light right ahead at 5.25 p.m. on the 5/7/00 proved she had had a heavy indraft from the time of passing Cape Receife; that the alteration of half a point when the light was made right ahead was not sufficient.

We also find the strong indraft confirmed by the evidence of the light-house keeper on Bird Island.

We find that the master throughout the voyage has been strictly sober and attentive to his duties, but that he committed a *bonâ fide* error of judgment in not allowing more than half a point in order to clear the dangers lying south of Bird Island.

We do not feel justified in dealing with his certificate, but we are strongly of opinion that he be, and is hereby, severely censured with a view to his being more careful in future where so many lives and valuable property are at stake.

As regards the officers, engineers, and crew we consider they have done their duty.

J. M. RICHARDS,
Ag. R.M.
C. MACMAHON.
JOHN S. HOGG.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade, on the 14th day of September, 1900.)