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SCOTT-MONCRIEFF,

Judge.

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Board of Trade on the  
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(No. 6514.)

## "GRAFFOE" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a formal investigation held at the Town Hall, Cardiff, on the 10th, 11th, and 12th days of March, 1903, before THOMAS WILLIAM LEWIS, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captains COSENS and E. M. HUGHES, and Captain BIGGE, R.N., into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British s.s. "GRAFFOE," of Grimsby, on Ramsey Island, St. George's Channel, on the 25th day of January, 1903, whereby loss of life ensued.

### 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 casualty was due, in some measure, to the deflection of the vessel to the eastward of her course by some cause or causes that, in the absence of evidence, the Court is unable to ascertain, and, possibly, in some measure, to a mistake in calculating her distance from her point of departure, and, possibly, a mistake with regard to the deviation of her compasses.

Dated this 12th day of March, 1903.

T. W. LEWIS,  
Judge.

We concur in the above report.

WILLIAM COSENS, } Assessors.  
E. M. HUGHES, }  
HENRY CHS. BIGGE, }  
Captain, R.N. }

### Annex to the Report.

This case was heard at the Town Hall, Cardiff, on the 10th, 11th, and 12th days of March, 1903. Mr. Vachell appeared as solicitor for the Board of Trade, the first and second officers appeared, but were not professionally represented.

The "Graffoe," of the port of Grimsby, official number 99681, was a screw steamship, built of steel, at West Hartlepool, in 1892. Her builders were Messrs. Furness, Withy, & Co., and she was 314 ft. in length, 40.55 ft. in breadth, and 24.66 ft. in depth.

She was fitted with triple-expansion vertical direct-acting engines of 240 horse power. Her gross tonnage was 2996.43 tons, and her registered tonnage 1922.52 tons.

The owner was Mr. Evan Morgan, of 12, St. Mary Axe, London, who was designated managing owner by advice received 28th September, 1900.

The "Graffoe" was supplied with four boats, namely, two lifeboats and two other boats. These boats were in good order. She had three compasses, viz.:—A standard, by Sir William Thompson, on the bridge, a suspended steering compass on the bridge and one in the wheelhouse. The compasses on the bridge were taken ashore and thoroughly repaired by Messrs. McGregor & Co., before the ship left Glasgow. The repairs to the standard compass were as follows:—A new index card was fitted; the needle was re-magnetised; a new aluminium cap and iridium point were fitted. The cup was japped in and out, and the spring suspension was

partly renewed. The repairs to the steering compass were as follows:—A new card was supplied to the old fittings; the needle was re-magnetised and the point dressed; new chrysolites were fitted and the bowl japped. The compasses were all tested and found to be in perfect order before they were returned to the ship. They were not, however, adjusted before the ship proceeded upon her voyage. The ship's magnets, too, were not touched. The master took with him a compass observation book.

The "Graffoe" left Glasgow at 8 p.m. on the 23rd January last, bound for Monte Video, under the command of Mr. A. A. Honeyman, with a cargo of 3,800 tons of coal for Messrs. Cory Brothers. Her draught was 19 ft. forward and 20 ft. aft. The crew numbered 23 all told.

On leaving, the vessel was well found and in good order. Shortly after sailing the first officer became ill and went below. His condition did not improve, and he was unable to resume his duties up to the time of the casualty. Indeed, until the casualty, he had been unable to leave his berth. The condition of the first officer apparently caused the master considerable anxiety, and he frequently visited the patient in his berth. And, further, caused the master to pay very close attention to the navigation of the ship. On leaving Glasgow, bad weather was experienced, a strong S.W. wind, with very rough sea, prevailed, and the atmosphere was "misty." The South Rock Lightship was made, and at 6 p.m. of the 24th January, a four-point bearing of the light was taken. The position of the vessel was ascertained to be 1½ miles to the eastward of the lightship, and a S.W. by S. course by standard was set. From this time on no lights were seen, with the exception of the lights of a passing steamer, and no land observed until immediately before the ship stranded. The weather throughout continued the same, with frequent showers of rain. The weather was so bad that the look-out had to be kept from the bridge.

On the 25th January the first officer, believing himself to be worse, told the steward that he thought he had better be put on shore. The steward informed the master that the mate felt worse, and thought that he had better be put ashore. The master replied, "I think so too. Milford is the handiest place. Anyway, we will see about it later on." There is no evidence that the master gave the matter any further consideration or in anyway acted upon it. Beyond the conversation above given the master spoke to no one on this subject. At 8 p.m. on the 25th the second officer was relieved by the master and went below. The course set off the South Rock had not been altered up to this time. The man at the wheel from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. on this day gave the course as S.S.W. This was by steering compass. The man at the wheel from 10 p.m. until the rocks were seen also gave the course as S.S.W. This too was by steering compass. He stated that when he relieved the wheel, the course S.S.W. was given to him in the master's hearing, and that the master told him to keep the vessel steady on that course.

At 10.30 p.m. the steward went to the master on the bridge, and the master asked him if he could see anything. The steward replied that he could not, but that he could hear the water breaking. The vessel was at this time in a storm of rain. The steward ran off the bridge and looked over the side of the ship, when he saw a dark object on the starboard side and another right ahead. He informed the master, and was then directed by the master to call the second officer. The second officer came on deck and found the master on the bridge, who ordered him to take a cast of the lead—the master stating that he thought he had sighted land—the second officer, however, could not at this time see any land. The master left the bridge to look at the chart, and shortly afterwards the mist cleared. The man on the look out reported high land, rocks, and breaker's right ahead. The second officer could now see land a very short distance away on the port bow and shouted, "land on the port bow." The master who had returned to the bridge ordered the helm hard a port and rang the telegraphs full speed astern. The starboard lifeboat was ordered to be got out. According to the evidence of the

man at the wheel the ship came round lively under the port helm, and the master ordered her to be steadied at N.N.W. The ship, however, went away to S.E. refusing to answer a starboard helm. He then, he stated, received an order to hard-a-port the helm. The ship refused to obey and the helm was ordered amidships. Almost immediately afterwards she struck. Then she cleared herself, but struck again and remained fast. Fourteen men got into the starboard lifeboat and were ordered to go under the lee of the land and stand by. (They were unable to do this and were taken out to sea, where late in the afternoon of the following day they were picked up by the s.s. "Gatesgarth," some 30 miles from the scene of the disaster, and landed at Penarth.) The seas rendered the launching of the port lifeboat impossible. Three rockets were fired and blue lights burned, but apparently went unobserved, except by those who had just left the ship in the boat. These members of the crew who remained on the ship went on to the bridge and, with the exception of the master and chief engineer, subsequently took to the rigging. The ship settled down almost immediately after becoming fast on the rock, the bridge and forepart only remaining above water. The master and chief engineer were washed away and presumably drowned where the ship settled down. Seven men in all took to the rigging, where they remained until midday of the 27th. The third engineer in the meantime died from exposure. The masts of the wreck and the men in the rigging were not seen from the mainland until about 10 a.m. of the 27th. The weather on the 26th was rough and misty, seas were breaking into airholes in the rocks which caused the spray to fly high into the air, and this formed a mist around the ship. The ship herself lay between the mainland and the cliffs of the Island of Ramsey, which formed a dark background. The above causes combined with the condition of the atmosphere obscured the vision of persons on the mainland. The men in the rigging could see the mainland and objects moving upon it, but the causes which operated to obscure the vision of those ashore, did not operate in the same manner with regard to those on the wreck. It was stated that the starboard light burned until 2 a.m. and the masthead light until 4 a.m. of the 26th, but these probably were not seen for the same reason which caused the wreck to be unobserved on the following day.

On the 26th the condition of the weather was such that the coastguard on watch was unable to penetrate the mist with his glass. On the 27th the weather cleared, and about 10 a.m., as above stated, the wreck was sighted. The person who saw her was a farmer, and he at once sent his son on horseback to carry a report to the coxswain of the lifeboat, and he also fired the gun to summon the lifeboat crew. Half an hour later the St. David's lifeboat was launched, and about 12.30 p.m. rescued the men from the rigging. The body of the third engineer was first passed into the boat, and was taken ashore at the lifeboat station with the rescued men.

The condition of the weather as described by the coast guard was fully confirmed by the coxswain of the lifeboat who had been a fisherman in the neighbourhood for more than 40 years.

On the opening of the inquiry, Mr. Vachell put in, and on the conclusion of the evidence submitted for the opinion of the Court, 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?
- (2) Was the deviation on the compasses ascertained by observation from time to time after leaving Glasgow on the 23rd January last? Were the errors correctly ascertained and the proper corrections to the courses applied?
- (3) Were proper measures taken at or about 6 p.m. of the 24th January last to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel? Was a safe and proper course thereafter steered, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?
- (4) Were safe and proper alterations made in the course after 6 p.m. of the 24th January? Was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents? Were the courses set made good?
- (5) What was the cause of the vessel being so much out of her proper course at or about 11 p.m. of the 25th January last?

(6) Was the lead used on the 25th, and if not should it not have been so used?

(7) What was the cause of the loss of the vessel?

(8) What were the circumstances in which the master, chief and third engineers lost their lives?

(9) At what time did the vessel strand? At what time did assistance reach her from the shore? What were the circumstances in which assistance was not rendered before the afternoon of the 27th January?

(10) Was the loss of the s.s. "Graffoe" caused by the wrongful act or default of the chief and second officers or of either of them?

The Court then considered the questions, and answers, as follows:—

(1) The vessel had three compasses, namely, a standard and a steering compass on the bridge, and a compass in the wheel house. They were repaired by Messrs. McGregor, of Glasgow, in January last, and were in good order for her safe navigation. There is no evidence to show when or by whom they were last adjusted. Hence the Court hesitates to pronounce them sufficient for her safe navigation.

(2) There was no opportunity after leaving Glasgow on the 23rd January last to ascertain the deviation of the compasses. The corrections applied to the courses were those obtained on previous voyages.

(3, 4, 5, and 7) About 6 p.m. on the 24th January a four point bearing of the South Rock Lightship was taken which placed the vessel about 1½ miles to the eastward of the lightship. This was a proper measure to ascertain and verify her position.

Assuming the position of the vessel to have been accurately determined by the four point bearing, and assuming that the deviation of half a point westerly—deposed to by the chief officer—was correct, the course set about 6 p.m. on the 24th January—S.W. by S. by standard compass—was safe and proper if made good. There is no clear evidence before the Court as to when that course was altered, but it is clear that at 8 p.m. on the 25th and thereafter until about 10.30 p.m. the vessel was being steered on a S.S.W. course by steering compass. About 10.30 p.m. land was sighted on the starboard bow and breakers were heard ahead; the helm was put hard-a-port but the vessel was among the rocks, and about 10.50 p.m. she stranded on a rock at the southern end of Ramsey Island on the coast of Pembrokeshire and became a total wreck. The Court is of opinion that the course set about 6 p.m. on the 24th was not made good but is unable to pronounce an opinion—it can but conjecture—as to other causes that may have been in operation to place the vessel so far to the eastward of the course set.

There is no evidence as to any allowance or the necessity for any allowance for tide and currents.

(6) The lead was not used on the 25th. It should have been used.

(8) The master and chief engineer were washed from the wreck, and presumably drowned, shortly after the vessel stranded. The third engineer died from exposure whilst taking refuge in the rigging after the wreck.

(9) The vessel stranded about 10.50 p.m. on the 25th January. Assistance reached the survivors of the crew, who had taken refuge in the rigging, about noon of the 27th. The condition of the weather prevented persons on the mainland seeing the masts of the wreck. Although it was possible for the men on the wreck to see objects on the mainland, the mist caused by the seas breaking into the caverns in the rocks at the base of which the vessel stranded, and the dark background of the cliffs obscured the masts of the wreck from the vision of persons on the mainland.

(10). No blame attaches to the chief or second officer.

T. W. LEWIS,  
Judge.

We concur,

WILLIAM COSENS,  
E. M. HUGHES,  
HENRY CHS. BIGGE,  
Capt. R.N. } Assessors.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 14th day of April, 1903.)

(No. S. 194.)

## "SPRING FLOWER"

The Merchant Shipping Act

In the matter of a formal investigation into the loss of the steam trawler "Spring Flower," of Hull, on the 26th, of February, and the 2nd and 1903, before J. G. HAY HALKETT, Esq., by Captain A. ANDERSON, Capt. Mr. T. R. CALLARD, into attending the stranding of the "Spring Flower" on or about January, 1903, on the Skagi Rocks.

Report of Court.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned loss, finds, for the reasons stated in the report, that the causes of the said stranding and loss were as follows:—

- (i) The negligence of the skipper in not ascertaining his exact position, when he set the vessel on a course leading towards the Skagi rocks without taking any steps to verify his position, although more than an hour within range of the rocks, without, according to his own statement, taking any steps to verify his position.
- (ii) the neglect of the second hand, in not giving notice of the skipper's error to the captain, and in not reporting to him, about 4.30 p.m. by the court's order. The Court finds the skipper, Forester, and the second hand, Netherton in default, and suspends the former, number 1100 for nine months, and the latter, number 3725 (as suspended) for six months.

Dated this 3rd day of March, 1903.

J. G. H.

We concur in the above Report.

ABSM. ANDERSON,  
WM. BARNETT,  
T. R. CALLARD,

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held at the Town Hall, Hull, on the 26th, of February, and the 2nd and 1903, before J. G. HAY HALKETT, Esq., by Captain A. ANDERSON, Capt. Mr. T. R. CALLARD, into attending the stranding of the "Spring Flower" on or about January, 1903, on the Skagi Rocks. The "Spring Flower," official number 1100, a steam trawler built of iron at B. & C. Messrs. Cochrane & Cooper, and her particulars were:—length 112 ft.; breadth 21 ft.; depth 11.5 ft.; her tonnage being 73.22 tons. She was fitted with triple expansion engines, and nominal to make a speed of eleven knots.

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