

(No. 6544.)

“ASTRONOMER” (S.S.).

FINDING and Order of a Naval Court held at the British Consulate, Bahia, on the 13th and 16th days of June, 1903, for the purpose of investigating the circumstances attending the stranding, in Bahia Harbour, on the 4th June, 1903, of the British steamer “Astronomer,” of Liverpool, official No. 87923, and the cause of such stranding and to enquire into the conduct of the master and crew of the said vessel.

The Court, having heard and carefully considered the evidence given before the Court, in the presence of the accused:

Find that the damage sustained by the British steamer “Astronomer” was not owing to either culpable negligence or any wrongful act on the part of her master, R. Nesbit Marshall, or any of the ship's crew.

The Court is, however, of opinion that the master committed an error of judgment in anchoring too near the shoal marked on his chart and in not verifying his subsequent position on the ebb tide. They do not think it necessary to deal with either his certificate, or that of any of the officers, seeing that it is supposed that the shoal referred to has extended, and that further there is reason to believe that old moorings are sunk near to where the “Astronomer” must have struck and that these in all probability caused the disaster.

The Court is of opinion that no blame attaches to any of the officers, who, together with the master, appear to have all done their duty and employed all possible means to save the ship and her cargo.

The Court considers that Captain R. N. Marshall should, however, be advised to employ more caution when anchoring in a strange port.

The Court adds a rider to the effect that the Captain of the Port of Bahia shall be immediately requested to cause accurate soundings to be taken in the vicinity of the shoal in question, which should further be properly buoyed and the supposed old moorings removed.

The Court finally orders that the expenses of this Court, amounting to £15 10s., shall be defrayed by the Board of Trade.

Given under our hands and seals this 16th day of June, 1903.

A. F. H. MEDHURST,
H.M. Consul.

FREDK. BENN,
British Merchant.

F. STEVENSON,
British Merchant.

O. PENRICE,
Master Mariner.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade, on the 31st day of July, 1903.)