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(No. 6733.)

“WEST AUSTRALIAN.”

The Court of Marine Inquiry at Sydney.

IN the matter of a formal inquiry held at Sydney before His Honor JUDGE BACKHOUSE, assisted by WILLIAM ARTHUR WORRALL and ROBERT LAURIE BOLDCHILD, Assessors, into the circumstances attending the shipwreck of the British ship “WEST AUSTRALIAN.”

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the abovementioned shipping casualty, comes to the decision following:—

1. The British ship “West Australian” (official number 72455) was stranded on the French Reefs, N.W. of New Caledonia, on the 9th day of August, 1904, while on a voyage from Noumea to Surprise Island, and became a total wreck.

2. The vessel was well-found, and provided with all necessary life-saving apparatus.

3. She was off the west coast of New Caledonia, and heading N. by W. The wind was S.E., weather calm, and sea smooth. Assuming that the position given by the master of his vessel at 6 p.m. on the 7th August is correct, she did not make her course good; and was carried by the current to the N.E. Whether this is so or not, the master, William Barber, is clearly to blame for not remaining on deck after it was reported to him that breakers had been heard to the eastward, and after he must have known that his vessel was not in the position in which she was supposed to be. Although he went below, no doubt he should have been called by the second mate, when the breakers were heard again; but, as has been stated, he should not have left the deck. He was navigating a coast which, at that part, was practically uncharted (? uncharted,) and admittedly he was out of his reckoning. Under these circumstances extra care and caution were required, particularly as his second officer was a very young man.

4. The loss of the vessel was caused by the wrongful act of the master, William Barber, in recklessly navigating his vessel in the way set out in paragraph three.

5. The Court orders that the certificate of competency as master of the said William Barber, issued by the Marine Department of New Zealand, numbered 582, and dated the 11th day of October, 1892, be suspended for a period of nine months, from the 9th day of August, 1904.

Dated this 9th day of September, 1904.

ALF. P. BACKHOUSE,
Judge.

I, John Macvicar Anderson Bonthorne, Registrar of the Court of Marine Inquiry at Sydney, hereby certify the foregoing to be a true copy of the decision of the Court in the matter of the inquiry into the circumstances attending the shipwreck of the “West Australian.”

Dated at Sydney this 13th day of September, 1904.

J. M. A. BONTHORNE,
Registrar of the Court.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 11th day of November, 1904.)