

(No. 7114.)

“NORMA”

AND

“ARDENCRAIG.”

AT a meeting of the Marine Board, held at the Marine Board Offices, Port Adelaide, on the 1st, and continued on 2nd and 3rd May, 1907, before the President, ARTHUR SEARCY, Esq., J.P., WM. BERRY, Esq., Capt. J. H. GIBBON, ANGUS CAMPBELL, Esq., J.P., F. W. VASEY, Esq., Capt. J. A. RANKIN, and A. S. NEILL, Esq., J.P., Wardens of the Marine Board of South Australia, an inquiry was held into the circumstances connected with the sinking of the British barque “NORMA,” at the Semaphore Anchorage, by the British ship “ARDENCRAIG.”

The “Norma” is a four-masted barque of 1999 tons, Official No. 98433, registered at Cardiff, Wales, built of steel, 14 years old, classed 100 A1 at Lloyds, and owned by Messrs. MacVicar, Marshall & Coy., of 13, Castle Street, Liverpool, England, and was in command of William McLaughlin, holding a certificate of competency No. 010799 issued by the Board of Trade.

The ship, with a crew consisting of 19 hands all told, was, on the evening of the 20th April, 1907, lying at anchor in the Semaphore Roadstead with one anchor down, and burning two riding lights in accordance with the Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea. The riding lights, which were described as exceptionally good ones, were burning brightly, the forward one being 35 feet, and the after one about 20 feet above the deck. The lights were burning brightly all through the night of the 20th, and on the morning of the 21st April, until about two o'clock, when the ship “Ardencraig” collided with and sank her.

The “Ardencraig” is a British ship of 1969 tons, registered at Glasgow, Scotland, Official No. 93,332, built of iron, 21 years old, classed A1 at Lloyds, owned by Messrs. Crawford and Rowell, Glasgow, and commanded by Robert Thomas, holding a certificate of competency No. 07680 issued by the Board of Trade. The vessel, carrying a crew of 26 hands all told (the second mate having been lost on the voyage), was bound from London to Port Adelaide with a general cargo.

Soundings were taken at intervals from just before 11 p.m. when coming up the Gulf St. Vincent on the night of the 20th, and Troubridge Light was lost sight of about 9.30 p.m. From that time the ship was on a wind steering a N.E. by N. course and making from three to five knots per hour under reduced sail.

After midnight there were heavy clouds with squalls and rain at intervals, but not of such a character as to obscure the light on Wonga Shoal. About 1.10 a.m. a light which the master took to be that of a small steamer under weigh was seen on the port bow, and sail was further reduced with the intention of ascertaining whether the light was that of a pilot boat. This light, it is supposed, was the stern light of the “Norma.” The wind was West to N.N. West, and the master, mate, and all hands were on deck, and orders had been given to get the anchors ready to let go. At about 2 a.m. the master and mate allege that they were both forward watching the white light before mentioned, and that about four minutes before the collision it appeared on the starboard bow, when the mate called out that it was a ship at anchor. The master immediately called aft to put the helm hard up, and the mate tried to set the head sails and main top-

mast staysail. It was afterwards found that the helm had been put down instead of up.

The “Ardencraig” almost simultaneously came into collision with the “Norma,” striking her at an angle of about 60 or 90 degrees, cutting her port side open to such an extent that she sank in about 15 or 20 minutes.

One of the crew of the “Norma,” the carpenter failed to leave the vessel in time, and was drowned.

Both ships were well found in all respects.

The Marine Board, after taking exhaustive evidence, and carefully considering the circumstances, came to the following decision:—

That the ship “Norma” was anchored in a safe and proper place; that her riding lights were in proper position and burning brightly; that she was efficiently manned, and that the master and crew were absolved from blame for the collision; that the master of the “Ardencraig” failed to navigate his ship with sufficient care, in view of the weather conditions prevailing at the time, and his proximity to an open roadstead where vessels at anchor were likely to be met with.

The Board therefore referred the case to a Court of Marine Inquiry for investigation, charging the master of the “Ardencraig,” Robert Thomas:—

- A. That he, being then the master of the said ship “Ardencraig,” did, on the 21st day of April, 1907, between the hours of 1 and 2 o'clock a.m., fail to navigate the said ship with sufficient care.
 - (1.) In view of the weather conditions then prevailing and being in the proximity of an open roadstead where vessels at anchor were likely to be met with.
 - (2.) In leaving the poop and going forward, thereby losing or lessening his control of the helm of the said ship when in such open roadstead as aforesaid and in close proximity to another vessel.
 - (3.) In omitting to drop his anchor immediately he saw the lights of the ship “Norma” on the port bow.
 - (4.) In omitting to drop his anchors immediately the first officer informed him, the said Robert Thomas, that the said light was the light of a ship at anchor, and
- B. That the loss of the said ship “Norma,” and the loss of the life of Ferdinand Thomson, were caused by the wrongful acts and defaults of him the said Robert Thomas as aforesaid.

A Court of Marine Inquiry, consisting of the President, Mr. Justice Homburg, a Judge of the Supreme Court of South Australia, Julian James Augustus Smith, and Thomas Williams, Esquires, Master Mariners, Nautical Assessors, sat on the 24th, 29th, and 31st May, and June 1st and 4th, and judgment given was as follows:—

We find that the master of the “Ardencraig” alone is to blame for the collision. That the loss of the “Norma” has been caused by his wrongful acts and defaults, but there is not sufficient evidence to establish that Ferdinand Thomson lost his life by the wrongful act or default of the said master.

We suspend Captain Thomas' certificate for a period of nine months, and order him to pay to the Marine Board the sum of Fifty Pounds for costs of this inquiry. We award no costs to the owners of the “Norma” in respect of this inquiry.

JOHN DARBY,

Clerk of the Court of Marine Inquiry, and
Secretary to the Marine Board.

September 4th, 1907.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
29th day of October, 1907.)

(No. 7088.)

“AWARUA” (S.S.).

The Shipping and Seamen Act, 1903.

Wrecks and Casualties.

Colony of }
New Zealand, } Report on the loss of the s.s.
to wit. } “Awarua.”

To the Honourable the Minister of Marine,
New Zealand.

I, the undersigned, Stipendiary Magistrate, having been on the 13th day of February, 1907, applied to by John Mills, Esquire, Collector of Customs at the Port of Auckland, for a formal investigation pursuant to section 235 of “The Shipping and Seamen Act, 1903,” and other provisions of the said Act, respecting the loss of a certain British ship called the “Awarua,” of the Port of Auckland, on the 6th day of February last, at or near Kauri Mount, north of Bream Head, did duly proceed with the said investigation, to wit, on the 15th day of February instant, and had before me, and examined on oath, divers persons and witnesses, to wit:—

Charles Fleming, Superintendent of Mercantile Marine,
Lauchlin Alexander McLean, Master Mariner,
George William Leaity, Able Seaman,
John Whittingham, Master Mariner,
Alexander Alison, Manager Ferry Company,

the original depositions of whose evidence are hereunto annexed, signed by me, being assisted therein by Alexander Campbell, Master Mariner, holding a Certificate of Competency, No. 2550, from the Marine Department, New Zealand, and George McKenzie, Master Mariner, holding a Certificate of Competency, No. 397, from the Marine Department, New Zealand, who were duly appointed by me to act as assessors; and upon such investigation and examination of witnesses as aforesaid, I find and report as follows, that is to say:—

1. That the official number of the said ship, called the “Awarua,” is 57650, of which Lauchlin Alexander McLean is Master, who holds a Certificate of Competency H. T., No. 5222, issued by the Marine Department, New Zealand, and which ship belonged to The Devonport Steam Ferry Company, Limited, of Auckland.

2. That the loss or damage herein more particularly mentioned happened on the 6th day of February, 1907, at about 1 o'clock in the afternoon, at 4 or 5 miles N.E. of Bream Island.

3. That the loss or damage appears by the evidence to have been caused by striking an uncharted rock.

4. That the nature of the loss was total. That the vessel was not insured. That the “Awarua” is steamer rigged. Her port of registry Auckland, her registered tonnage 53⁶/₁₀₀. That no lives were lost through the casualty.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at Auckland on the 15th day of February, 1907, before me, assisted by Alexander Campbell and George McKenzie into the circumstances attending the loss of the s.s. “Awarua,” 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 “Awarua” struck a sunken uncharted rock off Kauri Mountain (4 or 5 miles North East of Bream Island) on the 6th February instant, at about 1 p.m. (full tide), and shortly afterwards became a total wreck. That the circumstances under which she was so wrecked are fully, and we believe, truthfully set forth in the evidence * forwarded herewith. That the loss of the vessel was not due to unskilful or negligent navigation on the part of the master or seaman Leaity, who was at the wheel directing the course and speed &c. of the vessel when she was wrecked.

We desire to draw the Hon. Minister's special attention to the terms and conditions, stated in the evidence, upon which the master of the vessel and seaman Leaity were employed by the owners and to the admitted fact that when the vessel struck, the master had, in accordance with the terms and conditions of his employment, surrendered his command of the vessel to seaman Leaity, who was at the wheel on the bridge steering the vessel to her anchorage. See section 21, s.-s. 2, and section 190 of the “The Shipping and Seamen Act, 1903.”

Dated this 16th day of February, 1907.

(Signed) CHAS. C. KETTLE,
Stipendiary Magistrate.

I concur in the above Report.

(Signed) ALEX. CAMPBELL,
Assessor.

I concur in the above Report.

(Signed) GEO. MCKENZIE,
Assessor.

A true copy.

GEORGE ALLPORT,
Secretary, Marine.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the
23rd day of July, 1907.)