(No. 7166.)

"PRINCESS ENA" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a formal investigation held at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th days of June, 1908, before JOHN DICKINSON, Esq., assisted by Captain H. G. HIGGINSON and Commander F. C. A. LYON, R.N.R., into the circumstances attending the damage sustained by the British steamship "PRINCESS ENA," of Southampton, through striking on or near the west side of the Paternoster Rocks, off Jersey, on or about the 20th of May, 1908.

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 striking of the "Princess Ena" on a rock was caused by her having been set by an abnormal tide to the eastward of her proper course, and by the master misjudging his distance off Serk, when that island bore N.W. ¼ N., about 7.10 a.m. on the 20th of May last.

Upon the evidence, the Court finds that the casualty was not caused by the default of the master, and that no blame at all attaches to the chief officer.

Dated this 25th day of June, 1908.

JOHN DICKINSON,
Judge.

We concur in the above report.

HENRY HIGGINSON, } Assessors.
F. C. A. LYON, }

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th of June, 1908. Mr. Hedderwick appeared for the Board of Trade, and the master and chief officer were represented by Mr. Bateson.

The "Princess Ena," Official Number 119743, is a British twin-screw steel steamship, schooner-rigged and clincher built. She was built at Dundee in 1906 by Gourlay Bros & Co., Ltd., and is registered at Southampton. Her dimensions are:—Length, 250·6 feet; breadth, 33·3 feet; and depth in hold from tonnage deck to ceiling at amidships, 15·15 feet. Her gross tonnage is 1198·36 and registered tonnage 501·75. She has two tri-compound vertical inverted engines and three steel boilers with a working pressure of 200 lbs., built by the same firm. The nominal horse-power is 174, the indicated horse-power 2700, and speed 16 knots.

The "Princess Ena" was well found in every way, and is classed A1, at Lloyd's. She is owned by the London and South Western Railway Company, of London, and T. M. Williams, of Dock House, Southampton, is the designated manager of the vessel.

The "Princess Ena" was provided with three compasses:—A Lord Kelvin's standard of the latest pattern on the bridge, a steering compass in the wheelhouse, and another aft. They were last adjusted on the 13th of July, 1906, at Dundee by Messrs. Feathers & Son, of that town. The master was satisfied of their correctness, having made true courses on two voyages in the ship, and having checked them by lights in line when going down Southampton water by night.

There were on board Admiralty charts, up to date, the Tidal Streams charts of the Channel Islands, and the Channel Pilot, Part II.

The "Princess Ena" had a sufficient complement of lifeboats and lifebelts.

She had two deep sea leads and lines, and two hand leads and lines, but no patent sounder. In regard to this, the Court is of opinion that it would be desirable for vessels making passages of this kind, and encountering very strong tides and frequent fogs, to be supplied with a patent lead, so that soundings could be obtained without the vessel stopping, thus lessening the chance of getting out of position.

The master, Frederick William Holt, holds certificate of competency No. 029436. He joined the Company's service in 1902. His promotion was rapid, and he became master in 1907. In addition to his master's certificate he holds a pilot's certificate for Southampton, Jersey, and Guernsey. He was for his first year entirely in the St. Malo service, and has made many similar voyages since, but only two in command of this particular vessel. He put in excellent testimonials, and was given a high character by the London & South Western Railway Company.

The "Princess Ena" left Southampton at 7.15 p.m, on the 18th of May last in clear weather, bound for St. Malo. She carried a crew of 36 all told, 48 passengers, and 5 tons of general cargo, her draught being 10 feet 3 inches forward and 13 feet 3 inches aft. She passed the Needles at 9.36 p.m. going full speed, about 14 or 15 knots. At 11 p.m. fog set in, speed was reduced, and kept as required according to the density of the fog. The whistle was kept going. The master was on the bridge in charge of the ship.

At 2.30 a.m. on the 19th, the master stopped the ship to take soundings, and after proceeding again, continued to sound at intervals without satisfactory result up to 7.56 a.m., when a good cast was made in 30 fathoms (gravel bottom), and the master decided to anchor. The ship remained at anchor until 4.40 a.m. on the 20th May, surrounded by fog the whole time. The weather then clearing the master found the ship to be 4 miles N.E. of Cap de la Hague. This position he ascertained by a cross-bearing of the lighthouse on the Cap, and of a signal station at Omonville. The lighthouse bore S.W. and the signal station S. ½ E. magnetic.

The anchor was hove up at 5 a.m. and the "Princess Ena" proceeded to round the cape, being abreast at 5.40 a.m. Cross-bearings were again taken, this time of the lighthouse which bore S.E. by E. ½ E., and of the Nez de Jobourg which bore S.E. by S. ¼ S. magnetic. These bearings were checked by the chief officer. They placed the ship 3½ miles from the lighthouse on Cap de la Hague. The distance then to be run to a position east of Serk on the course set by the master—S.W. ¾ S.—was, then he knew, 22¼ miles. He laid this course on his own chart, which was not able to be produced, S. 38 W. magnetic. The patent log was streamed. The course given to the man at the wheel, at that time able seaman Le Seelleur, was S.W. by S. ¼ S., and nothing to the southward, there being half a point difference between the standard and steering compasses on this course.

Assuming this course to have been made, Serk should have been about 4½ miles off when abeam. The master saw Serk at 6.50 a.m. having proceeded at full speed, about 12½ knots, all the way from the position 3½ miles off Cap de la Hague. At 6.58 a.m. the patent log recorded 17 knots. The master got a bearing of the highest part of the island, on which there are a windmill and some trees, and estimated it

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to be 3½ or 4 miles distant, closer than it should have been had the course laid down been made good. This estimate is supported by the chief officer; but it is probable that their minds were unconsciously influenced by knowing that that was the distance they ought to have been off. It was impossible to get a cross-bearing, the south end of Serk being hidden by fog, and the north end shut in by the higher centre. The island was abeam at 7.10 a.m., bearing N.W. ¼ N. The log showed 19 knots.

When clear of Serk a N.E. tide of two or three knots was to be expected, and at 7.15 a.m. the course was altered to S.W. ½ S. *magnetic.*

As the weather from the time of passing Cap de la Hague was quite clear, no soundings were taken, and full speed was maintained up to 7.20 a.m., when the weather set in hazy. The master states that he could see a good distance ahead. It was bright daylight, and there was a light northerly breeze helping to keep it clear. The speed was reduced at 7.20 to half speed, about seven knots. The whistle was kept going, and a look-out was stationed on the forecastle.

At 7.37 A.B. Glouskafsky took the wheel, and Tozer was on the look-out. At 7.44 the latter reported, "breakers broad on the starboard bow." As they were reported the master himself saw them. He at once had the helm put hard to port, and the engines full speed astern. His orders were promptly carried out, but about 30 seconds afterwards she struck something under the bridge. The engines were at once stopped. The ship gave a slight list to port, and at once floated clear. The anchor was let go, watertight doors were closed, and the boats got out in about six minutes. A cast of the lead showed 14 fathoms. The carpenter sounded the wells, and she was found to be making water in the main hold, but as the leak was not extensive, the passengers were ordered to remain aboard, two children who had already been placed in the first boat being retransferred to the ship.

The master states, and he is corroborated by the chief officer, that the broken water he saw was about a quarter mile off to the westward, and that the water was quite smooth where his ship struck. It was about six hours after high water at Dover, and locally about an hour before high water. The tide (mean springs) rises in this neighbourhood about 31 feet above low water.

The master is satisfied in his own mind that he struck the westerly edge of the Paternoster rocks, and he marked on the chart a rock which stands 12 feet out of the water at low water as the probable place of his striking. That rock is about a quarter mile within the North-West reef of the Paternosters.

At 8.10 a.m. the anchor was hove up, and the ship, with her head to the westward, proceeded slowly, having her boats alongside. After hoisting them up, she went ahead faster, and the engines were used as required to St. Heliers where she arrived at 10.47 a.m. There her passengers were transferred.

She was allowed to take the ground in the harbour. On examination the master found that some plates on the bottom had been buckled, and some rivets started, which caused her to leak to the extent she did.

The crew effected repairs, and she was brought to Southampton. She was there docked and surveyed. The damage was found to be slight. On the starboard side of the bottom B and C strakes were set up for about 50 feet, plates, frames, and floors slightly buckled. The stern-post was broken at the bottom; the plates were bent, and rivets started. No plates were broken. She was satisfactorily repaired in four days.

The only explanation of the accident that the master can suggest is that the tide was much stronger than that shown on the chart. He admits that he was 2½ to 3 miles east of his true course. Whether the tides were stronger than usual or not, there can be no doubt that Captain Holt failed to make sufficient allowance for easterly drift. He further made insufficient allowance for the tide when estimating the distance run, from the patent log. These errors of judgment, and the inaccurate estimate of the distance from Serk led to the ship's striking the rocks. Taking into consideration the weather conditions, the extreme difficulty of the navigation in these narrow and dangerous waters, and the general care shown by him throughout the voyage, the Court, while exonerating him from blame, considers that it would have been prudent for him to have taken further measures to verify his position at 7.10 a.m. when Serk was abeam. He was on the bridge personally in charge of the ship from leaving Cap de la Hague until she reached St. Heliers, except from 6.58 to 7.10, when consulting the patent log.

At the conclusion of the evidence Mr. Hedderwick submitted the following questions for the Court's opinion:—

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) Did the master ascertain the deviation of his compasses by observation from time to time, were the errors correctly ascertained and the proper corrections to the courses applied?

(3) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at or about 5.40 a.m. of the 20th of May last; was a safe and proper course then set and thereafter steered, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?

(4) Having regard to the state of the weather after 7 a.m. of the 20th May last—

(*a*) Was the vessel navigated at too great a speed?

(*b*) Was the lead used; if not, should it have been used?

(5) Was a safe and proper alteration made in the course at or about 7.15 a.m. of the 20th May last, and was due and proper allowance made for tide and currents?

(6) Was a good and proper look-out kept?

(7) Where and upon what did the vessel strike? What was the cause of the casualty, and was the vessel seriously damaged thereby?

(8) Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?

(9) Was serious damage to the s.s. "Princess Ena" caused by the wrongful act or default of the master and chief officer or of either of them?

Mr. Bateson then addressed the Court on behalf of the master and chief officer; Mr. Hedderwick replied for the Board of Trade; and the Court gave judgment and returned the following answers to the questions.

Answers.

(1) The vessel had three compasses, namely, a standard compass (Lord Kelvin's patent), a steering compass in the wheelhouse, and a compass aft. They were all in good order, and sufficient for the navigation of the ship. They were last adjusted on the 13th of July, 1906, by Messrs. Feathers & Sons, of Dundee.

(2) The master did ascertain the deviation of his compasses from time to time. The errors were correctly ascertained, and the proper corrections applied to the courses.

(3) Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel at 5.40 a.m. on the 20th May last. A safe and proper course was then set and thereafter steered. Due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents, according to the force indicated on the charts.

(4)—

(*a*) The vessel was not navigated at too great a rate of speed after 7 a.m. on the 20th of May.

(*b*) The lead was not used; and in the opinion of the Court its use in this case would not have assisted the master.

(5) Had the vessel been in the position assumed by the master, the alteration made in the course at or about 7.15 a.m. would have been safe and proper; upon the same assumption due and proper allowance was made for tide and currents.

(6) A good and proper look-out was kept.

(7) There is no positive evidence as to where the vessel actually struck, but it would appear to have been upon a rock at the western edge of the Paternoster group.

The Court is of opinion that the primary cause of the casualty was the abnormal strength of the tide, which set the vessel more to the southward and eastward than the master allowed for. She was in consequence further from the island of Serk than she should have been. As all but the highest part of that island was enveloped in fog the master could obtain no cross-bearing, and he consequently misjudged his distance off the island.

The vessel was not seriously damaged.

(8) Subject to what has been said in the foregoing answers, the vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

(9) Serious damage to the "Princess Ena" was not caused by the wrongful act or default of either the master or the chief officer.

JOHN DICKINSON,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

HENRY HIGGINSON, } Assessors.
F. C. A. LYON, }

London, 25th June, 1908.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 14th day of July, 1908.)