

(No. S. 276.)

"JUPITER" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of a Formal Investigation held at the Town Hall, Great Grimsby, on the 7th, 8th and 9th days of April, 1910, before JOSEPH SMITH, Esquire, Stipendiary Magistrate, assisted by Captain J. THOMAS, Captain C. B. GRAVES, and Mr. WILLIAM JAMES HEAD, into the circumstances attending the steam trawler "JUPITER," of Grimsby not having been heard of since the 3rd day of December, 1909.

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 there is no direct evidence to show the cause of the "Jupiter" not having been heard of since 3rd December, 1909, but is of opinion that she was overwhelmed by heavy seas which caused her to founder in the course of a violent gale which raged during the afternoon and evening of the day on which she was last seen.

Dated this 9th day of April, 1910.

JOSEPH SMITH, Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

J. THOMAS,
C. B. GRAVES, } Assessors.
W. J. HEAD,

Annex to the Report.

This Inquiry was held in the Town Hall, Grimsby, on the 7th, 8th and 9th days of April, 1910, when Mr. H. K. Bloomer, solicitor, of Grimsby, appeared for the Board of Trade. Neither the owners of the vessel nor any relatives of members of the crew were represented.

The "Jupiter," Official Number 110946, was a British steam screw trawler, built of steel, at Govan, in 1900, by Messrs. Mackie & Thomson, and registered at the port of Grimsby.

She was yawl rigged, with two masts, and had her funnel forward of her bridge and steering gear.

The dimensions of the vessel were: length 108.5 feet, breadth 20.75 feet, and depth from top of beam amidships to top of keel 12.3 feet. She was fitted with triple expansion engines, the diameter of cylinders being 11½ inches, 18½ inches, and 30 inches respectively, length of stroke 21 inches, nominal horse-power 45, and speed about 10 knots. She had one steel boiler working up to 180 lbs. pressure. The machinery was constructed by W. V. V. Lidgerwood, of Coatbridge. Her gross tonnage was 182.89 tons, and the net registered tonnage was 56.91 tons. She was constructed with three watertight bulkheads, but had no double bottom.

The "Jupiter" had the usual boat carried by this class of vessel; it was of sufficient size to carry the whole of the crew, and was carried on the deck aft, standing on chocks about 2 feet 6 inches high, and was secured by gripes and covered with a canvas cover. She had four life-buoys on the bridge (in brackets) ready for immediate use, and had also 10 life-belts.

The "Jupiter" was steered by hand gear and had two compasses, both in the wheelhouse on the bridge, one in the binnacle in front of the wheel, and the other fixed in the roof.

She was owned by the Grimsby and North Sea Steam Trawling Company, Limited, of Great Grimsby, and Mr. Charles Jeffs, of Grimsby, was the registered manager.

The vessel was placed in dry dock in Grimsby at the end of August, 1909, and from the 23rd to the 31st of that month underwent a thorough overhaul and refit. According to the evidence she was carefully examined throughout, and everything pertaining to the hull and machinery was put in good sea-going order.

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The vessel had three steam pumps in the engine-room, with connections to each compartment, also a hand pump in the fore peak, and one in the fish room. These pumps were of ample capacity, and were at this time thoroughly tested, and found to be in perfect order. The boat also was properly inspected, and put in good condition.

The "Jupiter" left Grimsby on the 27th November last with a crew of 10 hands, all told, under the command of Mr. Thomas Creese, who held a certificate of competency, No. 3873. The names and ratings of the crew were as follows:—

William Collar	...	Second hand (who also held a certificate of competency).
E. Nettle	...	Third hand.
— Langeren	...	Deck hand.
William Hooker	...	Steward.
William Whatmore	...	Apprentice.
E. Tausley	...	Apprentice.
A. W. Grimwood	...	Apprentice.
William Dean	...	First Engineer.
J. Skinner	...	Second Engineer.

She had on board 70 tons of best South Yorkshire steam coal, which was a sufficient supply for about sixteen days. She also had 10 tons of ice for fish preserving purposes.

The instructions given to the skipper on sailing were to fish off the Horns Reef on the German coast, and it appears that these orders were carried out, and that in due course the trawler arrived on these grounds, and proceeded to work. The weather from the 27th November to 2nd December was fine with moderate winds. The trawler "Vampire" was in company with the "Jupiter" on 1st and 2nd December, but no communication was held between the vessels. On the evening of 2nd December the weather, according to the skipper of the "Vampire," who was called as a witness, changed for the worse, and it became evident that a gale of wind from the S.W. was coming on. As the trawlers were on a lee shore fishing operations were suspended about midnight, and both ships got under way for the open sea.

The "Vampire" had the "Jupiter" in sight during the remainder of the night, and at daylight the vessels were about a mile and a half apart. The wind at this time had increased to a fresh gale from the S.S.W., and the trawlers were steaming slowly to windward against a rising sea.

The skipper of the trawler "Tasmania" was also called as a witness. His vessel has been engaged in fishing in the vicinity of the Horns Reef during 2nd December in company with several others, and he corroborated the evidence of the "Vampire's" skipper as to the condition of wind and sea during the early morning of 3rd December. The "Tasmania" left the fishing grounds at 7.30 a.m. on this day, and about an hour later she passed under the stern of the "Jupiter" at a distance of some five or six lengths. The skipper was questioned closely as to how he recognized the "Jupiter," but although he could not distinguish the name, owing to the thick rain and mist prevailing at the time, yet he was quite certain of her identity from certain features of her that he was well acquainted with. At the time the "Tasmania" passed, the "Jupiter" was lying with her fore trysail and mizzen set, heading up to the sea, but occasionally falling off to the southward and eastward. According to the evidence given by the skipper of the "Tasmania," everything appeared in order on board the "Jupiter," and he noticed in particular that the boat was in its proper position on the after deck. The "Jupiter" was lost sight of shortly after, and the weather became worse during the day, with a very high sea running. The "Tasmania" shipped much heavy water in the gale, but sustained no serious damage.

The skipper of the "Vampire" further stated that after daylight on 3rd December the "Vampire" and the "Jupiter" continued to steam slowly to westward, and that nothing of any importance occurred during the forenoon, excepting that the gale gradually increased in force. At about 2 p.m. it was noticed by those on the "Vampire" that the "Jupiter" was still carrying her fore trysail, which was then causing her head to pay off, first on one side and then on the other, and was obviously making it difficult to keep her head to wind, and the skipper of the former vessel said in Court that he had made a remark to his mate, who was in the wheelhouse with him at this time, that if the "Jupiter" weathered the gale with that sail set he would be lucky.

At about 2.30 p.m. a very heavy squall of wind and rain drove down on the trawlers, and after it had passed away the "Jupiter" was not in sight. The gale continued to increase in force, and those on board the "Vampire" were fully occupied in tending their own ship. Nothing more was seen of the "Jupiter." The weather moderated towards midnight, and the next day the "Vampire" resumed her work of fishing some eighty miles to the westward of the Horns Reef, and afterwards arrived at Grimsby in due course.

Henry Rook, who acted as skipper of the "Jupiter" for two trips during August last year, immediately prior to her refit in Grimsby, gave evidence to the effect that the "Jupiter" was an excellent sea boat, and, at the time he had command of her, was well equipped and in good order, both on deck and in the engine-room. He had no experience of very bad weather whilst in charge, but as a practical man he considered her fit to go anywhere.

Evidence was also given by Mr. Alexander Kay, the chief draughtsman of Messrs. Mackie & Thomson, the builders, and upon the whole of the evidence the Court was of opinion that the "Jupiter" was built to a good design, and that there was no reason to doubt her stability. This view was confirmed by a careful examination, which was made by the assessors of the construction of a sister vessel of the "Jupiter."

Further, the Court was of opinion that the "Jupiter" was in a good and seaworthy condition when she left Grimsby for the fishing grounds on 27th November, 1909.

As she was built in 1900, and had not met with any casualty, she could not, as a structure, have deteriorated to any great extent, and in addition she had undergone, only three months previously, a thorough overhaul in dry dock. The outdoor manager and the superintendent engineer were called as witnesses and gave full particulars of the repairs and renewals which were then effected. The machinery and boiler were thoroughly examined and overhauled, as well as all the fittings and life-saving appliances, including the boat, which was painted inside and out. The four life-buoys with which the vessel was supplied were carried in brackets, two on the fore part of the bridge rail and one on each side of it. The letters "S. T. C." (Steam Trawling Company) were painted on these buoys, and the Court recommend that the name of the vessel carrying a life-buoy should in all cases be painted upon it. In addition to the matters already mentioned, the whole of the pumps of the "Jupiter" were overhauled during the refit, and were afterwards thoroughly tested. Upon the whole of the evidence, the Court was of opinion that the "Jupiter" was, when she left port, well found in every respect.

With regard to the cause of the loss of the "Jupiter," it was suggested that the loss might have been caused by collision, but, having regard to the locality of the loss, and the vessels which were proved in evidence to be and were likely to be in the vicinity, the Court are unable to find any evidence in support of the suggestion.

Upon the whole the Court have come to the conclusion that the "Jupiter" was overwhelmed by heavy seas, which caused her to founder, in the course of the gale which prevailed during the afternoon and evening of 3rd December. When the "Tasmania" passed close to the "Jupiter" at 8.30 a.m. of that day, the "Jupiter" had her trysail and her mizzen set, in which there was nothing remarkable considering the state of the weather at that time. The "Jupiter" made no signals, and appeared to be in a safe position, and free from danger, except from heavy weather. Before 2 p.m. the gale had considerably increased in force, and the master of the "Vampire" stated that when last he saw the "Jupiter" she still had her trysail up, but the mizzen had disappeared. He stated that he was surprised to see the trysail up in a storm of that sort, and that it appeared to make her unmanageable, as instead of the vessel keeping

her head to the wind, as soon as she was brought up with her head to wind she paid off under the influence of the the trysail first on one tack and then on the other. He further stated that he felt uneasy about the "Jupiter," as this sail was up. The gale was one of extraordinary violence, in which it is a matter of notoriety that other casualties occurred, and the Court think it probable that the "Jupiter" was overwhelmed by heavy seas as stated above, and consider that if those in charge of the "Jupiter" continued to keep the trysail set after she was last seen by the "Vampire," it is possible that this may to some extent have contributed to the casualty.

At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. H. K. Bloomer, on behalf of the Board of Trade, submitted the following questions for the opinion of the Court:—

Questions.

(1) What was the cost of the vessel to her owners? What was her value at the time she sailed on her last voyage? What insurances, if any, were effected upon and in connection with her?

(2) When the vessel left Grimsby on or about the 27th November last, was she in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipments?

(3) What is the cause of the vessel not having been heard of since she was lost sight of by the skipper of the "Vampire" about 2.30 p.m. on the 3rd December last?

The Court gave judgment as above, and returned the following answers to the questions of the Board of Trade:—

Answers.

(1) The cost of the "Jupiter" to her owners was £5,858 2s. 1d. Her value at the time she sailed upon her last voyage was £3,345. No insurances were effected upon or in connection with her.

(2) When the "Jupiter" left Grimsby on or about 27th November, 1909, she was in good and seaworthy condition as regard hull and equipments.

(3) There is no direct evidence to show the cause of the "Jupiter" not having been heard of since she was lost sight of by the skipper of the "Vampire" about 2.30 p.m. on 3rd December last, but she was at that time about 30 miles S.S.W. from the Horns Reef light vessel, on the coast of Germany, and was working out from the land with her engines going slow against a very severe gale from the S.S.W. This gale increased in violence after 2.30 p.m., and the Court is of opinion that the "Jupiter" was probably overwhelmed by heavy seas which caused her to founder. The "Jupiter" when last seen was still carrying the fore trysail which she had had set during her fishing operations, which was then causing her head to pay off, rendering it difficult to keep her head to wind. If those in charge of the "Jupiter" continued to keep this sail set in face of the violent gale which ensued, this may have contributed to the loss of the vessel.

JOSEPH SMITH,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

J. THOMAS,
C. B. GRAVES, } Assessors.
W. J. HEAD, }

Grimsby, 11th April, 1910.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 26th day of April, 1910.)