

(No. 149.)

"HATFIELD" (S.S.)

AND

"GLASGOW" (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

In the matter of an Inquiry before Commander F. C. A. Lyon, R.N.R., Inspector for the Board of Trade, upon the nature and causes of the accident sustained by the British s.s. "HATFIELD," of Cardiff, whilst attempting to render assistance to the British s.s. "GLASGOW," of Glasgow, about fifteen miles off the Galloper Light Vessel, North Sea, on or about October 1st, 1911.

Report.

SIR,

I HAVE the honour to inform you that, in pursuance of my appointment from the Board of Trade, dated 26th October, 1911, I held an Inquiry in the Burgh Court Hall, Municipal Buildings, Glasgow, on the 10th and 11th November, 1911, into the circumstances attending the nature and causes of the accident sustained by the British steamship "Hatfield," of Cardiff, whilst attempting to render assistance to the British steamship "Glasgow," of Glasgow.

Mr. James Morton, writer, Glasgow, conducted the proceedings on behalf of the Solicitor to the Board of Trade (Sir R. Ellis Cunliffe); Mr. A. D. Wyllie, writer, Glasgow, represented the owners of the "Glasgow"; and Mr. Lewis D. Noad, barrister, London, represented the owners of the "Hatfield."

The "Hatfield," Official Number 86937, was a British steamship, built at West Hartlepool, in 1882, by Messrs. Wm. Gray & Co., of that port. She was owned by the Hatfield Steamship Company, Limited, and was registered at Cardiff.

Mr. Edward Jenkins, of Devon Buildings, James Street, Cardiff, was the person designated by the owners to have the management of the vessel.

She was clincher built of iron and rigged as a brigantine. She had one deck, a fore-castle head and poop. Her dimensions were as follows:—Length 364.2 feet, breadth 36 feet, and depth in hold from tonnage deck to ceiling at amidships 19.6 feet. Her gross tonnage was 1,753.40 and registered tonnage 1,085.87.

She had compound surface condensing direct-acting engines of 180 N.H.P., constructed by Messrs. Blair & Company, of Stockton-on-Tees, in 1882. She had four water ballast tanks, their capacity being 349 tons.

Particulars regarding boats and life-saving appliances of both vessels are stated in answer to question 1.

She was on a voyage from Huelva, Spain, to Rotterdam, with a cargo of copper ore. Her draught of water was unobtainable.

She had a crew of eighteen hands all told, no passengers, and was commanded by Mr. Benjamin Cox (aged sixty-one years), who held a certificate of competency as master, No. 03288.

The "Glasgow," Official Number 102662, is a British steamship, built at Dundee, in 1894, by Messrs. W. B. Thompson & Company, of that port. She is owned by the Rankine Line, Limited, and is registered at Glasgow.

Mr. Thomas Macgill, of 130, West Nile Street, Glasgow, is the person designated by the owners to have the management of the vessel.

She is clincher built of steel, schooner rigged, and classed 100 A1 at Lloyd's. Her dimensions are as follows:—Length 240 feet, breadth 32 feet, and depth in hold from tonnage deck to ceiling at amidships 16.1 feet. Her gross tonnage is 1,067.84 and registered tonnage 492.24.

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She had triple compound direct-acting engines of 180 N.H.P. and 1,000 I.H.P., giving a speed of thirteen knots.

Her boilers are two in number, built of steel, the pressure when loaded being 170 lbs. The engines and boilers were constructed by Messrs. W. B. Thompson & Company, of Dundee. She is flush decked, and has two decks. She has five watertight bulkheads and five water ballast tanks, their capacity being 195 tons.

The "Glasgow" left Rotterdam for Dundee at 4.50 p.m., September 30th, 1911.

She carried a crew of twenty-one hands, including the master, Mr. Thomas Millar Turnbull, who held a certificate of competency as master, No. 034574. She was loaded with about 200 tons of general cargo, her draught of water when leaving being 10.6 feet forward, 14.9 feet aft.

On leaving Rotterdam it was blowing a gale from W.N.W., with thick weather and heavy rain.

At 7.30 p.m., as the vessel was proceeding down the River Maas, on the weather becoming worse, the master decided to put back to Rotterdam, but at 8.10 p.m. the wind shifted to the northward, the ship was turned, and again proceeded to sea.

The North Pier was passed at 10.10 p.m., when the "Glasgow" encountered a strong gale from N.N.E., with heavy confused seas, causing the vessel to labour heavily and to take water over fore and aft, the weather being thick with rain at this time.

The course was set N.W. magnetic.

The vessel was not steering well, but the master attributed this to the heavy sea that was running.

Shortly after midnight the Maas Light Vessel was passed, the wind and weather continuing the same.

Between 10.10 p.m., 30th September, and 0.10 a.m., 1st October, the vessel steered very badly, and could not be kept on her course; in fact, she would not come within two points of it, and was heading about W.N.W.

It appears that the master considered this to be due solely to the weather, and it did not occur to him that anything could be wrong with the steering gear or rudder.

It may be mentioned that both these were in good working order on leaving Rotterdam, and he had experienced no trouble with them during the eighteen months in which he had been in command of the "Glasgow." Some slight repairs were done in Rotterdam, as the clutch that connected the hand gear did not fit properly.

As the master had, owing to the thick weather, lost the leading lights at the Hook of Holland, he could not put back. The ship was steering very badly throughout the whole of the night, being practically unmanageable.

At daybreak, the weather having moderated a little, the master left the bridge to take a general look round, but did not go specially for the purpose of seeing if anything was wrong with the steering gear or rudder. Indeed, had anything been found wrong with them during the night nothing could have been done on account of the heavy seas that had been continually breaking over the ship.

The master then saw that the steering rod on the starboard side by the gangway door in the after well was adrift. On going further aft to examine the steering gear, he found that the rudder head was fractured and a piece broken out of it on the starboard side, just below the clutch for connecting the hand gear, or about a foot above the deck. The piece out of the rudder head was about the size of two fists.

The master then sent for the chief engineer for the purpose of examining the damage, and in order that he might consult with him as to the possibility of effecting a temporary repair. They came to the conclusion that nothing could be done at the time.

The speed of the ship at this time was about six knots, and she was heading about W.N.W., and rolling heavily.

At 9 a.m. the ship was stopped, two black balls denoting "Ship not under command" were hoisted, and also the distress signal N.C.

The weather was now clear and blowing a gale from the N.E., with hard squalls.

The reason the master did not stop at 6 a.m. was because at that time he had plenty of sea room, but at 9 a.m., having drifted to the southward and westward,

he was more in the track of steamers and approaching narrow and dangerous waters.

The position of the ship was now about six miles S.E. of the Outer Gabbard Light Vessel. At 9.20 a.m. the "Hatfield" was sighted about three points on the port bow, steering E.N.E., about five miles off. When about two miles away she altered her course towards the "Glasgow." On approaching closer on the port side she asked by signal what was the matter, the reply being given "Steering gear disabled." The master of the "Glasgow" then signalled "Will you take me in tow?" the "Hatfield" replying "Yes." While these signals were being exchanged the "Hatfield" rounded the stern of the "Glasgow," and came up on her starboard side; she then signalled "Have a tow line ready," the reply being given "All right."

At this time the "Hatfield" was about half a mile distant—two points abaft the starboard beam.

Orders were given to the chief officer of the "Glasgow" to get ready the tow line—a 5-inch wire hawser—which was stowed forward on the main deck, under the forecastle head in front of the foremast, and was quite handy, being on a reel. Part of the hawser was got on the forecastle head ready for use. The chief engineer was also ordered to have the engines ready for immediate use. The "Hatfield" now starboarded and came closer; when abeam she straightened up and steered parallel to the "Glasgow," proceeding ahead. She was now about 200 to 300 feet from the "Glasgow."

It may be mentioned here that the master of the "Glasgow" had no idea as to what were the intentions of the master of the "Hatfield" in regard to getting the tow line on board, as no further communication had passed between them either by signal or otherwise. When a little before the beam the "Hatfield" again starboarded. Still proceeding on her starboard helm, she was, in the opinion of the master of the "Glasgow," approaching dangerously close.

The "Glasgow" at this time was rolling heavily in the trough of the sea, with her engines stopped, drifting in a south-westerly direction and heading about W. by N.

Shortly after this, the "Hatfield," still on her starboard helm, was right ahead of the "Glasgow," and as a collision seemed imminent and unavoidable, the engines of the "Glasgow" were put "full astern," but it is difficult to judge if she had sternway on her or not (though it was stated the engines were going astern for about a minute), no records, as regards the times, being in evidence, as it was not the practice of the chief engineer to keep a proper log-book showing details of orders received. Only a scrap log-book (produced) was kept to note times of entering and leaving port, and easing down for fog, to enter on the "Abstract Form" for the owners. In consequence of this there is nothing to prove how long the engines were going astern.

Both ships rose on the top of the sea, which, falling away beneath them, brought the bow of the "Glasgow" into collision with the "Hatfield," striking her abreast of No. 1 hatch on the port side. As they rose again it was seen from the "Glasgow" that a large V-shaped hole was cut in the "Hatfield," from the rail on the ship's side down to the water-line, and apparently below it, the spaces between the two legs of the V being very large. Directly after the collision the engines of the "Glasgow" were stopped, and the wells sounded. As she was not making much water it was evident she was not seriously damaged, and it was found that some plates on each bow were dented in, a hole made right in the stem, and a plate lifted on to it well down near the water's edge, and one of the flukes of the port anchor was broken off. The master of the "Glasgow" did not form an opinion that the "Hatfield" was seriously enough damaged to cause her to founder, but when she was clear of the "Glasgow," and he saw the seas breaking over her foredeck, he decided that she would need assistance.

Orders were now given to get the port lifeboat over the side in order to render assistance to the "Hatfield" if possible; but, unfortunately, in consequence of the heavy rolling of the "Glasgow," this boat was stove in whilst trying to get her out. Under these circumstances the master of the "Glasgow" did not think it wise to run the risk of attempting to get another boat out.

About seven minutes after the collision, the "Hatfield," heading about S.E., and her stern being abaft the port beam of the "Glasgow," suddenly foundered, going down bow first, about 200 feet away. The

engines of the "Glasgow" were put slow ahead for about a minute, and then stopped, as the master did not think it advisable to be too close to the wreckage. A good look-out was kept for any of the crew of the "Hatfield" in the water, but it was useless to throw lifebuoys overboard, as they would not have drifted in the direction of the foundered ship. Only wreckage was seen, but no men.

Meanwhile the "Clan MacDonald" (Mr. George Hayward, master) had come up to render assistance, having witnessed the collision, and also having heard the whistles of both steamers. She cruised about for nearly two hours in the hope of saving life, but only succeeded in rescuing one man. He was an A.B. named Chas. M. Hagar, and nobody else was seen.

Charles M. Hagar stated that the night before the accident bad weather had been experienced, and the "Hatfield" had been hove to, the starboard lifeboat was smashed, and other damage done about the decks. He also stated that she was well found and a good sea boat, but that, when going at slow speed, she did not steer well.

At the time of the collision, being his watch below, he was asleep in his bunk, and on feeling the shock he rushed on deck, ran forward, and saw the water pouring in below the water-line in No. 1 hold. Realising there was no hope of saving the ship, he ran to the lifeboat on the port side to assist in hoisting her out of the chocks. The forward end was swung out, but before it was possible to get the after end out the "Hatfield" suddenly foundered. He stated that all the crew had lifebelts on, but he refused to wear one himself, as he considered it would only hamper his movements when in the water.

Soon after the accident the master of the "Glasgow" signalled to the "Clan MacDonald" to stand by her, and also asked for assistance by taking her in tow, the reply given being, "Wait till weather moderates."

The next morning—Monday, 2nd October—the weather having improved, the "Clan MacDonald" had no difficulty in towing the "Glasgow" to Dover, which port was reached at noon on the same day without further incident.

Repairs were effected at Dover, and the "Glasgow" proceeded to Dundee on Friday, 6th October.

Charles M. Hagar, A.B., the sole survivor of the "Hatfield," was landed at Dover and taken to hospital suffering from a dislocated shoulder and other injuries.

The position of the "Hatfield" on foundering was latitude 51° 55' N., longitude 2° 11' E., bearing S. 48 E. from Outer Gabbard Light Vessel, distance six miles.

The following questions are those which I was requested to answer, and my answers are set out hereafter:—

Questions.

1. What boats and life-saving appliances were carried on both vessels? Were these appliances all in good condition and kept so as to be at all times fit and ready for use?
2. What were the circumstances in which the "Hatfield" approached the "Glasgow" on the morning of the 1st October last? What was the state of the wind, weather and sea at the time? In what manner did the vessels collide?
3. What was the cause of the loss of the "Hatfield" and the loss of life?

Answers.

1. The "Glasgow" had two lifeboats fitted with tanks and two other lifeboats without tanks. The lifeboats were carried one on each side of the vessel in davits and resting on chocks, the other two were carried one on each side of the poop in a similar way.

The gear of the boats was complete, in good order and condition, and surveyed by the Board of Trade.

The master stated he had boat drill once a month, and he satisfied himself from time to time that everything connected with the boats was in good working order. She carried six lifebuoys and 138 lifebelts all in good order; each man had a lifebelt in his berth, and the remainder were stowed in the saloon and in a store-room on the main deck.

The "Hatfield" had four boats—two lifeboats and two cutters—when she last left port, but one was stove in on the night before the accident. The sole survivor

stated they were in good order and condition. She carried six lifebuoys on the bridge and six about the decks, and had sufficient lifebelts for each member of the crew, all in good order and condition.

2. The "Glasgow" was in a position about six miles S.E. of Outer Gabbard Light Vessel, lying disabled in consequence of her steering gear being rendered useless by the rudder head being fractured. Her engines were stopped. She was showing the International Code Signal of distress N.C., and had two black balls hoisted to indicate that she was not under command. The wind was a strong gale from N.N.E. with violent squalls, the weather was clear, and the sea very high and confused.

In these circumstances, the "Hatfield" was sighted, signals were exchanged, and the "Hatfield" agreed to tow the "Glasgow." The "Hatfield" approached the "Glasgow" on her port side, passed close under her stern, came up on her starboard side, and apparently attempted to pass across her bow. The effect of the wind and sea was to force the "Hatfield" towards the "Glasgow." She got very close to the latter, and the master of the "Glasgow," seeing collision imminent, rang his engines "full astern." The "Hatfield" coming towards her bow, the actual impact took place after both ships had risen upon a sea which, falling away from beneath them, allowed them to come together. The bows of the "Glasgow" caught the "Hatfield" on her port side abreast No. 1 hatch, making a V-shaped hole down to and below the water-line, and damaging the bows of the "Glasgow."

There are two possible explanations of the close proximity of the "Hatfield" to the bows of the "Glasgow." The first is that the master intended to have a line thrown to the latter—a manœuvre so difficult and dangerous in the circumstances that it is inconceivable, in the absence of evidence from the "Hatfield," that this was intended. The second possibility is that the master of the "Hatfield" intended getting ahead of the "Glasgow" for the purpose of floating a buoy down to her with a line attached, that he misjudged his distance (which might occur to any ship-master in similar circumstances), that bad steering of the "Hatfield" when going "slow" and the heavy sea running at the time assisted the miscalculation, and that finding himself getting too close for his purpose, he intended to go round again to repeat his attempt.

3. The "Hatfield" was lost through colliding with the "Glasgow." The collision was the result of the master of the "Hatfield" approaching the "Glasgow" too close with the object of taking her in tow. Nothing was done by the master of the "Glasgow" which contributed to the collision, but, on the contrary, he did the only thing open to him in attempting

to avoid it by putting his engines "full astern." The loss of life was due to the suddenness with which the "Hatfield" foundered, rendering assistance impossible,

There was considerable discussion as to the propriety of towage being attempted when it was, and the latter being dealt with at some length by counsel, I have thought it well to emphasise it in the foregoing answers to the questions, and I desire to add that, although, in my opinion, it was not improper for the master of the "Glasgow" to ask to be towed, yet it would have been more satisfactory had he merely signalled the "Hatfield" to "stand by." The responsibility, however, of deciding whether towage was immediately practicable was upon the master of the "Hatfield," and the materials for forming a judgment were before him, the signals having told exactly what was wrong with the "Glasgow."

In all the circumstances, it would have undoubtedly been wiser for Captain Cox of the "Hatfield" to have decided to stand by until the weather moderated, but without (the possibility of) hearing his account of the matter, it would be (obviously) unfair in any way to bear hardly upon him for what he did.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

F. C. A. LYON,

Inspector.

24th November, 1911.

The Assistant Secretary,
Marine Department,
Board of Trade.

The following is a list of the crew who were lost:—

Benjamin Cox	...	...	Master.
Jacob Pillies...	...	...	Chief mate.
Duncan Black	...	...	Second mate.
Henry Browne	...	...	A.B.
Thomas Gawne	...	...	"
G. Funnel	...	...	"
G. Ross	...	...	"
J. Corse	...	...	Sailor.
F. R. Berry...	...	...	Chief engineer.
Thomas Griffith Morgan	...	...	Second engineer.
W. Watson	...	...	Donkeyman.
A. Sainsbury	...	...	Fireman and trimmer.
W. Verker	...	...	"
A. Lee	...	...	"
Thomas Steen	...	...	"
Thomas Jackson	...	...	Steward.
W. Gully	...	...	Mess-room steward.