

(No. 7042.)

“HAVERSHAM GRANGE” (S.S.).

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a formal investigation held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the 14th and 21st days of February, 1907, before R. H. B. MARSHAM, Esq., assisted by Captains H. HIGGINSON, L. M. WIBMER, and Mr. HALLETT, into the circumstances attending the fire which broke out on board the s.s. “HAVERSHAM GRANGE” on the 23rd October, 1906, in latitude 24° 15' S., longitude 9° 30' E., the vessel being subsequently abandoned.

Report of Court.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, can express no decided opinion as to the cause of the fire which broke out on board the vessel at about 3 a.m. of the 23rd October, 1906, but, in consequence of the suddenness with which it broke out and the rapidity and fierceness with which it spread, thinks that the fire more probably arose through the cargo than the coal. The cause of the loss of the vessel was the fire which spread so rapidly that it could not be got under, though every effort was made to save her.

Dated this 23rd day of February, 1907.

R. H. B. MARSHAM,  
Judge.

We concur in the above report.

HENRY HIGGINSON,  
L. M. WIBMER,  
J. H. HALLETT, M.I.C.E., Engineer, } Assessors.

Annex to the Report.

This inquiry was held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the 14th and 21st of February, 1907, when Mr. A. Bateson represented the Board of Trade and Mr. D. Miller the owners.

The “Haversham Grange,” official number 106981, steel, schooner-rigged, was built at Hartlepool in 1898 by Messrs. Furness, Withy & Co., of West Hartlepool.

She was owned by the Empire Transport Company, Limited, of 146, Leadenhall Street, London, Mr. Ebenezer Cayford, of the same address, being designated manager under the hand of Mr. John Silvester, public officer of the Empire Transport Company, Limited. Advice received on the 20th May, 1902.

The vessel was of 7,556·69 tons gross and 4,942·16 tons registered tonnage.

The dimensions of the vessel were as follows:—Length, 475·5 feet; breadth, 56 feet; depth, 35·66 feet from top of deck at side amidships to bottom of keel. She was propelled by one set of engines of 500 nominal horse power, indicating 3,200 which gave her a speed of 11½ knots. Her engines were of the triple expansion type, with cylinders of the following dimensions:—28 inches, 46 inches, 75 inches; length of stroke, 54 inches.

She was fitted with four main single-ended boilers and one donkey boiler; the main boilers working to a pressure of 180 lbs. She had two stokeholds. Her pumping arrangements consisted of one ballast donkey, one feed donkey, and one bilge pump, which

was fitted to pump from the sea and supplied the water service pipes on deck. She had also a service pump of large dimensions, and, in addition to these, there was a pump in the refrigerating department which could, if required, be used for general purposes. There were also two deck pumps, worked by hand, one of which was forward, the other aft. She was fitted with water service pipes on each side of the main deck. There was also a pipe on the port side of the shelter deck connected to the lower pipe on the same side. These pipes were fitted to connections to which hoses could be attached at intervals of 30 feet. She was supplied with the usual navigating instruments and life-saving appliances in conformity with the Board of Trade requirements, and was well found and equipped in every respect. Her passenger certificate was dated January, 1906.

The vessel left Liverpool on the 25th January, 1906, bound for Barry, where she took in the necessary amount of coal, and then proceeded on her voyage to Hong Kong, on the 11th February, 1906. She arrived at Hong Kong, without accident, on the 25th March, 1906, and left on the 5th April for Vladivostock.

She left the last-named port on the 14th April for Odessa, where she arrived on the 1st June. While lying at Odessa, it appears that the coal was discovered to be on fire in the 'tweendeck side bunker, but the fire was apparently of no consequence, and was at once put out by the engine room staff. On the 10th June she left Odessa, bound to New York, calling at Malta, where, on the 15th June, she arrived, and remained until the 26th July, when she left for New York. While at Malta she appears to have taken in 530 tons of Welsh coal for bunkers. She arrived at New York on Sunday, the 12th August, and between the 14th and 18th received on board 2,200 tons of semi-bituminous coal. On the 17th September, at 8 p.m., the coal in the cross bunker was found to be heated.

A survey was called, and, on the suggestion of the surveyor, 500 tons were discharged.

This done, the surveyors, Messrs. David Nicholas, Frank Taylor, and Arthur Clark, again visited the vessel, and surveyed the bunkers and the coal that remained, and satisfied themselves that the source of danger had been removed. They gave a certificate to that effect, provided that the coal that remained was used first; and that no coal was put on the top of it.

The vessel left New York on the 23rd September for St. Vincent, where she arrived on the 7th October.

Here, she took on board 1,252 tons bunker coal, which was described as the best Ferndale steam coal. It was stowed in the upper and lower cross bunkers, in the side bunkers, with some in the reserve bunker; the total coal on leaving being 2,240 tons.

The bunkers consisted of the upper and lower cross bunkers, which were on the forward side of the forward stokehold bulkhead, divided from the cargo space in the lower hold, and 'tweendecks by a wooden bulkhead; and these spaces contained respectively 300 and 749 tons. In addition to these, were the usual upper and lower side bunkers, running from the forward bulkhead in the stokehold to the bulkhead on the after side of the engine room, which contained in all 1,039 tons. To further increase the bunker capacity, two wooden bulkheads had been built on the main deck enclosing a space for about 250 tons, the after bulkhead being not far from the iron bulkhead on the after side of the engine room.

When this space was filled with coal, three hatches connecting it with the lower bunkers allowed the coal to run down as coal was taken out from below, any trimming that was necessary being performed by members of the deck crew, told off for that purpose. At the time of the casualty, this space was being emptied of the coal received at St. Vincent, and men were working up to 5 p.m. the previous day, when, it appears, only a small quantity remained, and that the after wooden bulkhead was practically clear. On the other side of this partition and close to it, cargo was stowed which consisted of cases, the contents or marks of which do not seem to be known. On the after side of these cases, it is stated that crates containing

carriage wheels and agricultural instruments had been placed, which were carried to the forepart of No. 4 hatchway.

A quantity of rosin in casks appears in the plan to have been stowed in the fore part of the tweendecks and lower hold. The remainder of the cargo consisted of general cargo, machinery, wire, and agricultural implements.

No. 5, or the after hold, appears to have been filled with cargo of a highly inflammable nature consisting of cases of oil and turpentine.

All went well up to the 23rd October, at 3.20 a.m., when the fourth engineer, who was on watch, discovered smoke in the engine room and reported to the 2nd officer, who had charge of the ship, at the time, that there was smoke in the engine room, and also a smell of burning. The master was at once called, and, assisted by the chief officer and the chief engineer, made an investigation.

He found the cement on the deck of the stowage accommodation blistering with heat, the smoke very dense, and other signs showing that the fire was of a very serious nature.

Steps were at once taken to get all the fire extinguishing appliances to bear on the seat of the fire, and seven hoses were connected and used to the best advantage. From the evidence laid before the Court, it would seem clear that the fire did not originate in the bunkers, but apparently at a point on the main deck, close to the after side of the wooden bulkhead that divided the reserve coal bunker from the cargo.

In spite of all the efforts made to control the conflagration, it spread with great rapidity and fierceness.

The hatches of No. 4 hold were taken off, and some of the cargo hoisted out, with the object of cutting the fire off, and preventing it from spreading aft. Holes had been cut in the hatches and deck, through which hoses were continually playing; but, the fire still increasing, the hatches were taken off for the purpose as stated above. The fire at this time had reached the cases of oil, which were in the after part of No. 4 hold; the decks had become red hot and buckled.

The boats next took fire, and were at once lowered down into the water to save them; they were made fast under the bow, with a hand in each.

At 5.30 a.m., the steamer "Elax" hove in sight and, in answer to the signals of distress, bore down to within hailing distance, and consented to stand by. At 7.30 a.m., the steamer "Matatua" came close, and sent a boat in charge of her chief officer, offering assistance, and promising to stand by. The "Elax" (which was an oil steamer), thereupon proceeded on her voyage. At 4 p.m., the fire still burning fiercely and having greatly extended, the master sent a boat in charge of the second officer to the "Matatua" to ask permission to send a part of his crew on board of her for the night. This was acceded to, and all left except the master, chief officer, chief engineer and five of the crew, who remained on board to make further efforts to subdue the fire; but, from the nature of the cargo, and from the fire having now obtained such a hold and extending forward, all their efforts were unsuccessful.

At 5.30 a.m. of the 24th, the master, having consulted with the chief officer and the chief engineer, decided to abandon the vessel.

This was done, and, leaving the "Haversham Grange" in a mass of flame, they went on board the "Matatua," which, after remaining some time, proceeded on her voyage.

These were the facts of the case, and on the conclusion of the evidence, the following questions were submitted to the Court:—

(1) When the vessel left New York, was she in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipments? Was the cargo properly stowed and secured? Was the bunker coal on board properly stowed and in safe condition?

(2) What description and amount of coal was shipped for bunkers at St. Vincent? Where was it stowed?

(3) What was the cause of the fire which broke out on board the vessel at or about 3 a.m. of the 23rd October last?

(4) Was every possible effort made to extinguish the fire and save the ship?

(5) What was the cause of the loss of the vessel?

(6) What were the insurances effected upon and in connection with the vessel?

Mr. Miller then addressed the Court on behalf of the owners, and the Court gave judgment in the following terms:—

(1) When the vessel left New York, she was in good and seaworthy condition as regards hull and equipments. The cargo appears to have been properly stowed and secured. The bunker coal appears to have been properly stowed and in safe condition.

(2) 1,252 tons of best Ferndale steam coal were shipped for bunkers at St. Vincent. The coal was stowed in the upper and lower cross bunkers, in the side bunkers, and some in the reserve bunker.

(3) The Court can express no decided opinion as to the cause of the fire which broke out on board the vessel at about 3 a.m. of the 23rd October last, but, in consequence of the suddenness with which the fire broke out and the rapidity and fierceness with which it spread, thinks that the fire more probably arose through the cargo than the coal.

(4) Every possible effort was made to extinguish the fire and save the ship. The Court thinks that the master, the officers, the engineers, and the other members of the crew, deserve credit for their strenuous exertions with that object.

(5) The cause of the loss of the vessel was the fire which spread so rapidly that it could not be got under, though every effort was made to save her.

(6) The insurances of the vessel were £105,000 on hull and machinery, the owners taking a risk of a further sum of £5,000; £13,000 for contingent liability in the event of total loss only; the insurances on premiums were £4,500, diminishing monthly, of which £1,500 was outstanding; on freight, £3,000, in case of loss through the ship not keeping her engagements, and a further sum of £435 also payable on freight, payable in the Colonies; and on stores £1,000.

R. H. B. MARSHAM,  
Judge.

We concur.

HENRY HIGGINSON,  
L. M. WIBMER,  
J. H. HALLETT, M.I.C.E., Engineer. } Assessors.

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the  
22nd day of March, 1907.)

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