

M Quick
67

(No. 6962.)

"COUNTY OF ROXBURGH."

The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894.

IN the matter of a formal investigation held at the Debts Recovery Court, Glasgow, on the 13th day of July, 1906, before WILLIAM GEORGE SCOTT MONCRIEFF, Esquire, Advocate, Sheriff Substitute of Lanarkshire, assisted by Captains HENRY KNOX, R.N.; WILLIAM ERSKINE, and HENRY HIGGINSON, into the circumstances attending the stranding and loss of the British sailing ship "COUNTY OF ROXBURGH," of Glasgow, on or near Takaroa Island, Paumotu Group, South Pacific, on or about 8th February, 1906, whereby loss of life ensued.

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 stranding and loss of the vessel was due to the tempestuous weather, and also, according to the master, to a current setting to the west. Further, that ten men were lost, six in consequence of the capsizing of a boat, another by being crushed between a boat and the side of the ship, and three others losing their lives, one by jumping and two by being washed overboard. The Court finds that the loss of the ship "County of Roxburgh" and the loss of life were not caused by the wrongful act or default of the master.

Dated this 13th day of July, 1906.

W. G. SCOTT MONCRIEFF,
Judge.

We concur in the above Report.

HENRY KNOX, Captain, R.N. }
WILLIAM ERSKINE, } Assessors.
HENRY HIGGINSON, }
Y.B. Trinity House. }

Annex to the Report.

This was an inquiry into the circumstances attending the stranding and loss of the sailing ship "County of Roxburgh," of Glasgow, and was held at the Debts Recovery Court, County Buildings, Glasgow, on the 13th day of July, 1906, before William George Scott Moncrieff, Esquire, Advocate, Sheriff Substitute of Lanarkshire, assisted by Captain Henry Knox, R.N., Captain William Erskine, and Captain Henry Higginson, Nautical Assessors. Mr. James Morton, solicitor, Glasgow, appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. William Allan, solicitor, Glasgow, for the master.

The "County of Roxburgh" (official number 93277) was an iron sailing ship built at Whiteinch by Glasgow, in the year 1886, by Messrs. Barclay, Curle, & Co., Limited. She was ship rigged and of the following dimensions:—Length 285.6 ft.; breadth 43.5 ft.; and depth 24.05 ft.; and of 2209.26 gross and 2090.72 net registered amended tonnage. The "County of Roxburgh" left Caldera, Chili, on the 16th December, 1905, in ballast, bound for Port Philip Heads (Victoria), for orders. The ballast consisted of 1000 tons sand, stowed fore and aft in the

lower hold. Her draught of water was on an even keel 13 ft. 4 ins. Her crew consisted of 26 hands including the master, Mr. James C. Leslie, whose certificate of competency is numbered 014181. She had three compasses which were fixed on the poop. She had four boats, two of which were lifeboats and carried on skids. She was provided with life saving appliances as required by the Board of Trade regulations. Her owners were Alexander Craig and others. The managing owner being George Craig, of 163, West George Street, Glasgow. After leaving Caldera a north westerly course was made to pick up the south east trades. Very little progress was made owing to light winds and calms, and the vessel had only reached Lat. 11° 51' S., Long. 142° 50' W., on 5th February, on the noon of which day the last observation was taken. The Island of Takaroa (Paumotu Group), bearing S.W. about 180°. On the morning of the 6th when in Lat. 13° 4' S. and Long. 143° 22' W., a moderate gale was encountered with terrific squalls and a heavy sea. This weather continued and increased in force (many sails being blown away) until the 8th. At 7 a.m. on that day all hands were called to wear ship, but the fore lower topsail was carried away and she would not pay off, although two attempts were made. Ship rolling, rails under water, and shipping heavy seas. At 5 p.m. new fore and main topsails were bent, the fore lower topsail, foresail, and foretopmast staysail were set, and an endeavour was made to wear, but she only went off to S.S.E. When heavy breakers were sighted right ahead a short distance away, the lifeboats were got out so as to be available before the ship got into the heavy breakers on the reef which was close to, as it was impossible to know at that time that the ship would be driven over the reef and thrown on to the beach when all hands could be landed safely. Lifebelts were issued to all the crew. The port lifeboat was swung out and eight men got into her, in lowering, the man at the fore tackle let go the fall, and the bow of the boat went down into the water, while the stern hung suspended by the aftertackle, the result being that the eight men in the boat were thrown into the sea, and only two, J. Sterling and A. Richardson, apprentices, managed to reach the beach alive. C. Diestel, A.B., was crushed while lowering the boat, L. Parsons, apprentice, and L. Anderson, A.B., were washed overboard from the poop, and P. Wagner, A.B., jumped overboard and was drowned, making ten men who were lost. At 9 p.m. W. Miller, mate, swam ashore with a line, which he made fast to a tree, and by this means the master and remainder of the crew landed. On the 9th, the weather having moderated, the master and some of the crew were able to get on board as the vessel had been washed further upon the reef and brought ashore provisions and some sails for tents. The ship was lying with a list of 10 degrees to port, parts of the keel gone, bilge plates buckling up, and several large holes in her hull the ballast washing out as the breakers washed through her. On the 27th the 3 mates and 6 seamen were sent to Papeete in a small cutter, and on the 19th of March the master left the wreck with the remaining hands and proceeded to Papeete by a vessel which happened to call at Takaroa.

List of men drowned.

A. Herd	...	...	Carpenter.
C. Wagner	...	...	Steward.
M. Olderog	...	...	A.B.
R. Anderson	...	...	A.B.
P. P. Koch	...	...	A.B.
H. Cordes	...	...	O.S.
P. Wagner	...	...	A.B.
C. Diestel	...	...	A.B.
L. Parsons	...	...	Apprentice.
L. Anderson	...	...	A.B.

At the conclusion of the evidence Mr. Morton on behalf of the Board of Trade submitted the following questions for the opinion of the Court:—

(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?—The "County of Roxburgh" had three compasses on the poop for the purpose of navigation, they were in good order and sufficient for the safe navigation of the vessel; they were last adjusted in Cardiff in 1901 by the agent of Duncan McGregor & Co. of Glasgow.

(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?—The master ascertained the deviation of the compasses by observation from time to time and the errors were correctly ascertained and the proper corrections to the course applied.

(3) When the vessel left Caldera, Chili, on or about the 16th December last, was she properly and sufficiently ballasted and in proper trim for a voyage to Port Philip Heads, Victoria?—The ballast in the vessel when she left Caldera, Chili, although meagre was sufficient for her safety and properly trimmed for a voyage to Port Philip Heads, Victoria.

(4) Were proper measures taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel and were safe and proper courses steered, and made good from time to time after leaving Caldera, Chili, on or about 16th December last?—Proper measures were taken to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel as long as it was possible to take them, and safe and proper courses steered up to the 7th of February, after which owing to the stormy weather and loss of sails she was not under control.

(5) When land was reported at or about 5.30 p.m. on the 8th February last, were prompt and proper measures taken for the safety of the ship?—Prompt and proper measures were taken for the safety of the ship after land was reported on or about 8th February last.

(6) What was the cause of the stranding and loss of the vessel and what were the circumstances in which so many lives were lost?—The stranding and loss of the vessel was due to the tempestuous weather which caused the sails to be blown away and also according to the master to a current setting to the westward. Six lives were lost in consequence of the fall of the forward tackle of the port boat having been let go when attempting to lower her, her crew of eight men being thrown into the sea and two only saved. Another man was crushed between one of the boats and the side of the ship, while three others lost their lives one by jumping, and two by being washed overboard.

(7) Was the vessel navigated with proper and seamanlike care?—The vessel was navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

(8) Was the loss of the s. "County of Roxburgh" and the loss of life caused by the wrongful act or default of the master?—The loss of the ship "County of Roxburgh" and the loss of life were not caused by the wrongful act or default of the master.

W. G. SCOTT MONCRIEFF,

Judge.

We concur.

HENRY KNOX,
Captain, R.N. } Assessors.
WILLIAM ERSKINE, }
HENRY HIGGINSON, }

(Issued in London by the Board of Trade on the 21st day of August, 1906.)