

WRECK OF THE COLINA.

INQUEST.

The following is the evidence adduced on the inquest held on the body of John M'Kenzie, alias Clancy, accidentally drowned by the upsetting of the Colina, Schooner: -

Henry Shade, master of the brigantine Colina being sworn, deposed: I am master of the brig Colina; I had a boy named John M'Kenzie acting as cabin-boy on board; on the 28th day of last June, I loaded my vessel from the Vesta, barque, at Point Henry; we left Point Henry at noon on that day to proceed to Geelong; we had calm weather during the greater part of the afternoon, and all sail was set; about six, or after, bearing through the channel, I gave orders to take in the light or top sails; whilst they were endeavoring to do so, a squall caught us and upset the vessel; the men, in number three, were all on deck, and succeeded in reaching the boat which was astern of us; and the boy, being down in the fore-castle shifting his clothes, could not escape in time before the vessel went down, the capsizing of the vessel being so very sudden, that no notice could be given him; we remained half an hour trying to get him, but in vain; our hold was completely filled with cases of what we supposed to be spirits and merchandise; we had also fourteen tons of pig iron ballast; the Colina is registered at fifty-five tons; we had seventy tons down below and about fifteen tons on deck, by measurement; chiefly pianos and cases of hats, and four large crates; I had for the management of the boat on board at the time a mate, two sailors, and a boy, besides myself; I consider my vessel was properly loaded; the heaviest weight being in the hold; I have been twenty three years at sea, and have been five years trading between Geelong and Melbourne, in command of different vessels; the two men were, to the best of my knowledge, experienced sailors; we had also a passenger on board, and the mate was an experienced sailor.

James Tipton, mate, on board the brigantine Colina, being sworn, deposed: I remember the 28th of June: I was on board the Colina, carrying merchandise from Point Henry to Geelong; the hold of the vessel was quite full, besides fourteen tons of pig-iron ballast; the deck was not at all overloaded, nor as much as I should have had; the Captain of the Vesta wanted us to take more goods on the deck; it was a flat calm when we left the Point, late in the afternoon; we had all our sail up, and had got just this side of the black buoy, when a gust of wind took us, giving us no warning at all; we were in the act of taking down sail, when she capsized, and went over to her top-rail: the men were all on deck, and took to the boat; the deceased had gone down to put on a clean shirt just as the squall came on, and the capsizing was so sudden, that he could not escape from the fore-castle ; when the vessel capsized it..... the squall when the boy went down to the fore-castle; I have been now eleven years following a seafaring life; I never saw a vessel go down so suddenly: we were all quite sober; I had only taken a nobbler of spirits that day.

John Taylor Bleasby, passenger on board the Colina, stated: I was a passenger on board the brigantine Colina, on the 28th June last, from Point Henry to Geelong, with trunks, goods, etc.; we left the point about noon to proceed to Geelong; it was very calm; we were drifting about till three o'clock, when we got a little wind; all the sails were up, except the fore and aft foresails; we were towed by the boat towards the western channel; we got a little air, and the master desired them to take in the boat; it was raining a little all day; as we got in the channel, we got more wind, which continued slightly to increase; there was now some appearance of our getting on, and the little boy went down to change himself; shortly after he went down, I heard the ripple on the water on the Point Henry side; one of the sailors asked me, what noise was that? I said it was the ripple of the water from the wind, and we would have it off presently; he said he hoped not, as they had quite enough of it; the vessel was going about four or five miles an hour at this time; the sailor went aft, and in about five minutes we began to feel the wind; the vessel yielded a little to the influence of the wind, and went a little faster; the wind was now about south; it continued to increase, and the vessel to heel over; I was standing near the caboose, when it tumbled over on the deck; the captain and sailors were aft; I was quite close to the caboose; there was a large cask on the windward side of it, and two cases on top; I tried to support them, and called out, saying I was doing so; presently the top case fell into the galley fire; I again called out, saying, the case was in the fire, and would soon be in a blaze; up to this time I did not hear any orders given to take in sail; there was a chain-cable in a pile, about three or four cwt., near the fore-castle; it rolled over to the lee side; about this time I heard an order given to take in the gaff-topsail; I heard another voice say, " No, never mind." I cannot say if any efforts were made to take in sail, as the deck-loading prevented my seeing aft; the deck-loading was higher than the caboose, which was six feet high; I am of opinion there was too much deck-loading; the vessel seemed to be crank and narrow, and was very heavily

rigged, especially on the foremast; I heard the master of the Vesta say, she (the Colina) had a heavy deck-load, and complained of such heavy loading being put on board the craft; the captain replied, that he was master of the Vesta and not of the Colina; soon after the order about the gaff-topsail was given I heard the master say, " Let go an anchor;" at this time and for five minutes previously, the vessel was heeling over, as the wind increased, this could not be done, at the vessel heeled over and over and she went over on her side; from the time the wind got up, or rather this fresh breeze, to the capsizing of the vessel, five or six minutes may have elapsed; I do not consider there was a squall, but a continued increasing breeze; I attribute the loss of the vessel to the height and weight of the deck load, considering the light nature of the cargo she had in the hold, the small quantity of ballast, and the heavy rig of the vessel, and the quantity of sail she carried, especially the top sails; the captain and sailors were quite sober; I have been at sea for some years, as far as yachting and boating, but not in the merchant service; I consider the heavy deck-loading interfered with the proper management of the vessel; I did not call to the boy, although I saw the vessel heeling over; in fact, I did not think of it; I do not think any effort could be made for the boy; as soon as we got clear of the mainsail, we rowed away to Geelong; I believe no human effort could have saved the boy; I was present at part of the loading of the Colina; I consider when the sailor made the observation that he hoped there would be no more wind, that he meant that there was wind enough to take us in to Geelong; it was nearly dark when the Colina went over.

John Gant, seaman, deposed; I was seaman on board the Colina; on the 28th of June, we had been taking cargo from the Vesta, lying at Point Henry; we left the Point late in the afternoon on that day to proceed to Geelong; our vessel was pretty heavily loaded; the deck was pretty well loaded; there were casks and crates and several other things; there was a galley or cook house on deck; the loading was all aft the galley, and none before it; the loading on the deck was rather awkward, rather in the way; still we could let go the ropes in case of a squall, had there been time; I do not think from the moment the squall got hold of us till the Colina went over, ten minutes could have passed ; the deceased wanted to go down and shift himself as he was all wet; I desired him not, as it was dark, and he could not take a light, as it would prevent us seeing; he, however, went down; during the time he was down the wind caught us: I called him, but suppose he did not hear; I was afterwards at the lee-side; the caboose went over to leeward on its side; shortly before the breeze came I was speaking to the last witness (Bleasby): he asked me if I heard a ripple on the water ; I said, "No, I hope we shall have no more"; I did not hear him call out; he was standing forward, and I was at the wheel; the captain came and relieved me, and ordered me to take in sail; I had not time to do it before she was over; we remained about the vessel for some time, it was dark and raining; we then proceeded to Geelong; the squall was so sudden that we had no time to do anything; the sails were ordered to be taken in and the anchor let down, but they could not.

Daniel James M'Pherson, harbor-master, Geelong, stated: I am harbor-master of the Port of Geelong; I, in company with Captain Ogilvie, investigated the manner in which the Colina was loaded at Port Henry for Geelong, on the day which led to the accident which terminated in the death of John M'Kenzie; I visited the Colina the day after the accident; all sails were set, with the exception of the gaff-topsail, which was lowered down; she appeared to me to have capsized suddenly in a squall of wind; as far as I could see, no blame attached to the captain for the manner in which she was loaded; lighters in general in this port carry too much deck loading for the safety of the vessel; I am of opinion no vessel should be loaded above her rail, particularly with heavy goods, so as to have access at all times to the belaying pins; I am of opinion an Act of Council should be passed to prevent deck loading being taken beyond a certain extent, as the frequent squalls in this bay endangers shipping, especially if overloaded.

Thomas Ogilvie, auctioneer, stated: I have been brought up a seafaring man; I have been eight years master of vessels trading between Geelong and Hobart Town, and other places; the system of lighterage has been under my constant observation; I have been on board the Colina, and made inquiries as to the loading of this vessel from the Vesta, barque, Point Henry to Geelong, on the occasion of the accident which has led to the death of John M'Kenzie; from what I can learn, the Colina was not loaded in an unusual manner on deck; I am of opinion that the manner in which lighters are loaded on deck does interfere with the proper management of the vessel in the event of squally weather; I understand this was the first trip of Captain Shade in this vessel as lighter from Point Henry; he might, therefore, not be thoroughly acquainted with the capabilities of the vessel; he had previously the management of the William, a vessel of quite different build, and capable of carrying much more deck loading, being broader in the beam. - *Geelong Advertiser*.

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