

## THE "JOHN HARRISON."

## Posted Missing at Lloyd's.

The self-trimming collier *John Harrison*, which sailed from the Tyne on Dec. 26, 1924, for Amsterdam, and was not heard of again, was yesterday posted as a "missing vessel," by the Committee of Lloyd's.

The *John Harrison* was a steel steamer of 1550 tons gross, built by the Furness Shipbuilding Company, Ltd., in their Haverston Hill shipyard, and owned by Messrs. H. Harrison (Shipping), Ltd., of London. Her first voyage was commenced on Oct. 21. When she left Shields on Dec. 26 for Amsterdam she carried 2300 tons of coal and was manned by a crew of 17, including the master, most of whom belonged to Tyneside. The chief mate, Alfred Pearson, of South Shields, was a brother of the master of the *Hartley* who lost his life when that vessel foundered in the Channel last November. It is believed that the *John Harrison* was overwhelmed in the heavy gale which sprang up on the afternoon of the day she sailed and continued throughout the following day. The only indication of her fate was provided by one of her lifeboats which was washed ashore early this month on the island of Wyk. She did not carry wireless apparatus, her tonnage being 50 tons below the statutory limit above which the carriage of wireless is compulsory.

## SELF-TRIMMING COLLIERIES.

The question of the safety in bad weather of self-trimming colliers is one to which a good deal of public attention has been directed, and it has been the subject of an investigation by an informal Board of Trade Committee. In this connection the losses of the *Rawlinson* and the *Hartley* and the subsequent inquiries will be recalled. The former was a self-trimming vessel of similar type and size to the *John Harrison*, and she left the Tyne on Aug. 28, 1923, with 2330 tons of coal for Hamburg. Rough weather prevailed about that time, and the *Rawlinson* was never heard of again, though during September the bodies of certain members of the crew were washed ashore on Pellworm Island, Schleswig-Holstein, and one of her boats was found empty to the north of Heligoland.

A Board of Trade inquiry into the circumstances of the loss was held at Newcastle the following April, when the question of the design and stability of the ship was thoroughly gone into. One witness described her as being slow in clearing herself in rough weather, and another said that when loaded she had a slow, heavy roll, but was all right when light. The important point in the case was whether the hatchways were well covered and secured.

The Court found that the *Rawlinson* was loaded as was customary in self-trimming vessels. The coal was levelled down under the hatchways so that the hatch covers could be put on, but no trimming was done under the deck, nor were any measures taken to secure the coal from shifting. The vessel was in proper trim and had the freeboard required for a summer voyage, and she appeared to have been sufficiently stable. The Court did not consider the arrangement of pump wells in the holds safe and satisfactory for a mixed cargo of large and small coal. Her loss was considered to have been probably caused by the heavy seas breaking in the covers and tarpaulins of the hatchways. Within a week or two of the *Rawlinson* inquiry the informal committee appointed by the Board of Trade to consider the question of the loading of coal cargoes issued its report, in which recommendations were made as to the closing and securing of hatches and the careful and proper loading of cargoes.

Last week the cause of the loss of the *Hartley*, another self-trimmer, lost in the Channel in November, was investigated at Middlesbrough, and the findings of the Court were very similar to those in the *Rawlinson* case. It was found that the construction and arrangement of the hatchways themselves were good, but that the means provided for covering and protecting them, and for securing the hatch covers were not sufficient to ensure safety of life

at sea with heavy water washing over hatchways of such large area. As in the other case, it was held that the coal was loaded as was customary in that type of vessel, that no trimming was done under deck, nor were any means taken to secure the cargo from shifting. The strong wind and heavy sea sweeping over the vessel damaged the tarpaulin over No. 3 hatchway and caused the dislodgment of the hatch covers. The water thus got into Nos. 3 and 4 holds on the starboard side and was probably followed by part of the cargo slipping to that side, causing a list to starboard. The vessel was abandoned off Point Anvil in a sinking condition, and 18 members of the crew lost their lives. The Court found that in the actual circumstances the loss apparently could not have been prevented, but put forward a number of suggestions with a view to obviating similar disasters. The Court's findings appeared in Lloyd's List of Jan. 22.

## MR. J. E. TULLY AND SELF TRIMMERS

With respect to the loss of the *Hartley* and the *John Harrison*, and the criticisms made on Tyneside of self-trimming colliers. Mr. J. E. Tully, chairman of the British Steamship Short Trades Association, of Newcastle, writes to the "Shields Daily Gazette" stating that it is regrettable that wild and misleading statements should have been made by persons who obviously had little real knowledge of the type of vessel they sought to condemn. The suggestion that self-trimmers were liable to take a list was unfounded. Inquiries made from dozens of masters recently failed to reveal any such tendency. In regard to hatchways, some owners and builders went beyond Lloyd's Register's requirements. The safety of the ship admittedly depended upon the tarpaulin keeping in place and being undamaged, a problem which had been carefully considered before the recent losses occurred. Various methods had been tried, and had proved satisfactory even in the worst of weather. The export trade was one of the most important on the Tyne, and so far as London and near Continental ports were concerned, it had been built up on the basis of the coal being carried in self-trimmers. Hamburg, Rotterdam, Antwerp and Rouen had their discharging berths equipped with expensive plant, with large grabs which necessitated larger hatches. It was not merely a matter of saving trimming charges.

Mr. Tully protests most strongly against what he terms the "foul suggestion" that shipowners are building and running cheap and unseaworthy vessels for "the greed of gold." Faddists and cranks, he comments, are wearisome and dangerous, but if any sound improvement could be found for making life safer at sea, he could assure all that no question of expense would deter the members of the Association from adopting it.

## STEEL HATCHES RECOMMENDED

References to the loss of the *Hartley* were made at yesterday's meeting of the Mercantile Marine Service Association, reported elsewhere in our columns.

Captain OAKLEY thought it was a subject regarding which they ought to move strongly. They had the matter in hand and they hoped to do something with the Board of Trade. He was in favour of the adoption of large steel hatches, which he did not think would be more expensive, and would have a great advantage in the quickness with which they could be secured and ensure safety afterwards. It was absolute security that they were working for as an Association. He was glad that the practical men present were of the same opinion and that the meeting recommended the provision of steel hatches.

Mr. THOMAS SCOTT said the Board of Trade were evidently alive to the dangers which caused the vessel's loss, as they issued a fresh set of instructions to their surveyors which were in the direction of greater safety.

During the discussion which followed, several of the members present spoke from personal knowledge of the advantages of the provision of steel hatches.