

HERBERT HENRY RUSSELL

was sworn and examined as under:-

- Q. What is your name, please? A. Herbert Henry Russell.
- Q. And your address? A. 'Ivydene' Avisford St. Fairfield.
- Q. You were a passenger on the 'Fitzroy' at the time she was lost? A. Yes.
- Q. The vessel left Coffs Harbour on the 25th June? A. Yes.
- Q. And I have been told that the weather was moderate? A. The water was calm but there was a breeze blowing.
- Q. I presume you were about that afternoon and eventually went to bed? A. Yes, just about after tea. The next thing I heard was 6.30 in the morning.
- Q. Did not you feel the vessel knocking about when the wind increased? A. No. I heard somebody shout everybody to the deck with lifebelts on. I immediately got out of bed. My brother was in the next bunk. I gave him a lifebelt and fixed it on and he got upstairs and then I went upstairs. I immediately joined the crew on the after deck to try to get the boats afloat. She had a terrible list then. We loosened the boats but it was impossible to launch them owing to the list on the vessel. Then I came to the rigging, looked over the side and I saw Johansen supporting a lady. He handed her to me and I carried her to the port side where the lifeboat was. I came back over there and took the other lady which he handed to me, and I did the same with her. Then I came back for the stewardess, but before I could reach her I was thrown into the water. That is all I know. I went down with the ship and I sank. I came up again having the lifejacket on. When I was thrown from the ship the deck was clear. Apparently everybody had gone a second before me, and they were all in the water. I came up the second time, and I got into a water-logged boat. I saw some men standing up, I could not see the boat. We drifted away and then we picked up Jansen about five minutes afterwards and then the dead body of a boy. We tried to bring him round. In the meanwhile we saw Peter Hansen, and we took him on board. Jansen put out an oar and pulled him into the boat. We drifted and came across the Chief Engineer and the 2nd Mate. We called to them but they did not take any notice. We could not row to them. We could not use the paddle, and we drifted right in until we came to the breakers and we had to jump then because the boat turned over and we were washed out.
- Q. That bears out what has already been told us by the crew. When you were called at 6.30 in the morning when the vessel was lost, was there any water in the saloon? A. Yes.
- Q. Would you say there was much when you got out? A. I got into water on the floor.
- Q. Much water? A. About 5 or 6 inches. That did not worry me at all.
- Q. When you rushed on deck what did you think of the weather? A. It was squally and blowing pretty hard.
- Q. Would you say it was really bad weather or a moderate gale or a strong wind? A. There was a strong wind blowing and it was raining.

Q. Would you call it heavy weather? A. Yes. It was heavy in my opinion.

Q. You say those men were standing in a water-logged boat. If the sea had been heavy in the general meaning of the term with a gale of wind blowing, those fellows would not have stood much show. A. You would hardly call it very heavy weather. It was not so very heavy.

Q. It was boisterous, was it? A. Yes, that would meet the condition.

Q. When you got on deck did you see any of the Officers. A. No.

Q. Who was directing operations about the boats? A. I could not make out who it was.

Q. Would you know the Mate if you saw him? A. It was not the Mate because he had a beard.

Q. Did you notice whether everybody had the lifejackets on? A. Everybody I saw had one on. And there were plenty of lifejackets to spare.

Q. The boats looked in good order? A. Yes. One boat was afloat quite all right. As she came over the boat swung out all right and I should think there were from eight to ten persons in her when we saw it.

Q. Keel down? A. Yes, high and dry.

Q. What happened to her? A. That is what has puzzled me. I was surprised to think she did not get ashore.

Q. Would that be the up-turned boat? A. No, it was another boat. I believe it came off the bridge.

Q. What would make you think that? A. Because it was smaller than the one I saw afloat.

Q. You do not think it possible that this boat that you saw with the eight persons in her was the boat you afterwards saw? A. No, I saw them both at the same time, the one was well out drifting away and we passed within 50 yards of the upturned boat at the same period. It surprised me when I got ashore, because I was looking around for my brother.

Q. Do you think there is any chance of your making a mistake about the boat? A. No.

Q. Would that boat be off the starboard side? A. No, the port side.

Q. Which one did you get in? A. One that rolled over the deck. She was water-logged but her air tanks brought her up again and I kept my head and I think it was through that that I got ashore.

Q. You did not see the boat afterwards? A. She was adrift to my knowledge for 10 minutes and then she went out of our sight.

Q. After you eventually got ashore was everything done that you could reasonably expect? A. Far more. We were treated with absolute kindness. The way they worked with the two poor fellows who died right at the end was wonderful.

Q.

Q. Did you hear any water pouring into the vessel? A. No.

Q. There was water in your room? A. Yes. I was not in the fore part of the boat at all.

Q. How did the ship go down? A. To the best of my knowledge and belief she capsized.

Q. How long do you think you were about the ship before the catastrophe occurred? A. About three quarters of an hour, to an hour. She remained with the list for some considerable time and we got the boats loosened so that when she went they would drift into the water.

Q. What list do you think she had when you got on deck? A. you could not walk up the staircase, you had to pull yourself up.

Q. That was at 6.30 in the morning? A. Yes. And she remained like that for some time.

Q. While you were waiting around the decks did you see any timber floating away from her? A. No. The crew were throwing pieces of wreckage over towards the end, seats and everything likely to float.

Q. Could you tell me when the engines stopped? A. No.

Q. Do you think the engines were going when she eventually capsized? A. I think they were stopped.

Q. How do you not remember by the feel of the vessel when the engines stopped? A. No.

Q. Was everyone around the deck? A. To the best of my belief there were no passengers on board when she went.

Q. Where do you think they went? A. I think they had gone over. I was thrown right across the deck.

Q. Do you think there were from 25 to 30 people about when you were standing around? A. Yes.

(Witness retired).