

S.S. MAIDENHEAD

Chief Officer Robert Russell, London, England.

He was on watch from 4 to 8 P.M. on October 15th. The explosion occurred at 6.30 P.M.

He went to the after end of the bridge and saw smoke issuing from the port after ventilator of No.2 hold. The Captain came on deck immediately and relieved him on the bridge and he went aft and had the ventilators blocked with canvas and rigged the fire hose and had the Chief Engineer commence pumping water at once through the starboard after ventilator. This pumping was continued steadily from then on. The Chief Engineer reported that the bulkhead was getting hot and the ship was turned about for Sydney.

*left about 8.20* The tugs met her off North Sydney at *about* 8.40 P.M. They were not needed and the ship proceeded under her own steam and anchored off the Ore pier of the Dominion Iron & Steel Company. The tugs then made fast, the Cruiser on the port side and the Ascupart on the starboard side.

Two hoses were used from the Cruiser and one from the Ascupart.

The Ascupart continued pumping water through the starboard after ventilator until 7 A.M. October 16th and was then discharged.

The Cruiser continued pumping until 11 A.M. October 16th, when her services were dispensed with.

Apart from this pumping they did nothing whatever.

From 7 P.M. October 15th Mr. Russell took charge of the operation of playing the hose on the ~~starboard~~ *stokehold* bulkhead.

He did this periodically. When he got it cool the firemen would tend their fires. They could not do so when the hot water was spraying off the bulkhead but a good head of steam was maintained. It was feared that the bulkhead was going to give way, but it did not.

At about 11 P.M. October 15th the Chief Engineer made a steam connection about amidships through the stokehold bulkhead and steam was opened up through the bulkhead commencing at about 1 A.M.

The pumping through the ventilators by the ship's hose and 3 hoses from the tugs did not control the fire but after the steam was put in the fire was rapidly got under control.

Cargo in No.2 hold.

Throughout the night Mr. Russell personally sounded the bilges. The water would not come over the tank tops until there was showing 3'6" on the sounding rod. Altogether the water got up to 6' above the tanktops (9'6" showing on the rod). This was the height when the last tug stopped pumping at 11 A.M.

The coal in No.2 hold was not wet and a considerable quantity of dry coal was discharged in order to get at the fire. At least 150 or 200 tons of perfectly dry coal was discharged through No.2 hatch.

In the 6' of coal which was water damaged there was about 450 tons. There had been 2630 tons in that hold altogether; 769 tons was discharged from the cross-bunker hatch as fire damaged.

After it was removed the water damaged coal (the last 6' in the hold) consisted of about 450 tons.

In Mr. Russell's opinion the wet coal could be dried and its value would not be seriously affected.

The coal was discharged from the ship by grabs direct into coal cars and was taken away.

Cause of the fire:-

There is no electric wiring or anything else in No.2 lower hold which could have caused the fire or the explosion.

Question - In your opinion what caused the fire?

Answer - The explosion must have been due to a charge loaded on the ship in the coal.

There is no explanation of its explosion except that the coal surrounding the charge must have been heated.

Montreal November 11th 1927