



***RMS EMPRESS OF IRELAND* INQUIRY ANSWERS TO 20 QUESTIONS**

At the beginning of the Inquiry twenty questions were formulated by the Canadian government upon special points arising out of the casualty. Many of these questions have already been answered in the foregoing parts of our report; but it will be convenient here to set out the questions in full, and to answer those which have not been already dealt with.

Question 1. When the *Empress of Ireland* left Québec on or about the 28th May last:

- (a) What was the total number of persons employed in any capacity on board her, and what were their respective ratings?
- (b) What was the total number of her passengers distinguishing sexes and classes, and discriminating between adults and children?

Answer:

(a) The total number of persons employed in any capacity on board the *Empress of Ireland* at the time she left Québec on the 28th May last was 420. 608

| | |
|------------------------|-----|
| Deck department | 59 |
| Engine department | 130 |
| Victualling department | 222 |
| Total | 411 |

Supernumerary engineers, Ex-RMS *Empress of Asia* 4; Musicians 5 Subtotal 420

(b) The total number of passengers was 1,057, made up as follows:

| | Male. | Female. | Total. |
|--------------|-------|---------|--------|
| First Class | 49 | 38 | 87 |
| Second Class | 125 | 128 | 253 |
| Third Class | 500 | 217 | 717 |

Included in the above figures are:

Four female children in First Class, 11 male and 21 female children in Second Class, and 54 male and 48 female children in Third Class; total children, 138.

Question 2. On leaving Québec on or about the 28th day of May last, did the *Empress of Ireland* comply with the requirements of the Merchant Shipping Acts, 1894 to 1906, and the rules and regulations made thereunder, with regard to the safety and otherwise of passenger steamers and of emigrant ships?

Answer: Yes.

Question 3. In the actual design and construction of the *Empress of Ireland*, what special provisions, if any, were made for the safety of the vessel, and the lives of those on board, in the event of collisions and other casualties? **Answer: This has been dealt with in Part I of our report.**

Question 4. Was the *Empress of Ireland* sufficiently and efficiently officered and manned? **Answer: Yes.**

It was suggested to us, however, by counsel on behalf of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland, that more A.B.'s (Able Bodied Seamen) should have been carried on board the *Empress of Ireland*. He raised this point not with special reference to this casualty and this vessel, but as a means of placing before the court the general opinion of his clients, that for the purpose of launching and manning lifeboats all passenger ships should be required by law to carry A.B.'s to the number of two per boat. We do not, however, consider that such a requirement would have been of any avail in saving life on this occasion, and we, therefore, abstain from making any comment on the suggestion.

Question 5. Were the arrangements for manning and launching the boats on board the *Empress of Ireland* in case of emergency, proper and sufficient? Had a boat drill and a bulkhead door drill been held on board, and if so, when? What was the carrying capacity of the respective boats? What number and description of lifebuoys and life jackets were on board this vessel? Where were they carried? Were they in good condition, and adequate for the purpose intended?

Answer: The answer to the first question is in the affirmative. Boat and bulkhead door drills were carried out at Québec on the 23rd May last before the ship sailed. The rest of the information asked for is given in Part V of this report.

Question 6. What installations for receiving and transmitting messages by wireless telegraphy were on board the *Empress of Ireland*? How many operators were employed in working such installations? Were the installations in good and effective working order? Were the number of operators sufficient to enable messages to be received and transmitted continuously by day and night?

Answer: The *Empress of Ireland* was fitted with a Marconi Standard one and a half kilowatt installation of wireless telegraphy with a complete emergency gear. Two operators were on board, and the installations were in good and effective working order, and the number of operators were sufficient to enable messages to be received and transmitted continuously by day and night.

Question 7. At or prior to the sailing of the *Empress of Ireland* from Québec on the 28th day of May last, what, if any, instructions as to navigation, were given to the master, or known by him to apply to her voyage? Were such instructions, if any, safe, proper and adequate, having regard to the time of the year and dangers likely to be encountered during the voyage.

Answer: General and specific rules as to navigation were issued by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company to their masters and officers in book form and were well known to the masters and officers of the *Empress of Ireland*. The instructions contained in such rules were

safe and proper, having regard to the time of the year and dangers likely to be encountered during the voyage.

Question 8. When leaving Québec on or about the 28th of May last, was the vessel in charge of a Québec pilot? If so, when and where was the pilot discharged, and what was the condition of the weather at that time?

Answer: These questions, with the exception of that as to the time at which the pilot was discharged, have been dealt with in the body of our report. As to the time at which the pilot was discharged, the master of the *Empress of Ireland* states that it was at 1.20 a.m. on the 29th May, while the master of the pilot boat states that it was at 1.30 a.m.

Question 9. After the pilot left the *Empress of Ireland* was a double watch kept on deck?

Answer: Yes.

Question 10. At what time on the morning of the 29th May last?

(a) Did the *Empress of Ireland* first sight the light or lights of the Norwegian steamer *Storstad* and in what position was the *Empress of Ireland* then?

(b) Did the Norwegian steamer *Storstad* first sight the light or lights of the *Empress of Ireland* and in what position was the *Storstad* then? At this time were the vessels crossing so as to involve risk of collision within the meaning of Article 19 of the regulations for preventing collisions at sea? If so, did the *Empress of Ireland* comply with the provisions of the said Article and of Articles 22 and 23, and did the *Storstad* comply with Article 21 of the said regulations?

Answer: The two vessels sighted one another shortly after the *Empress of Ireland* left Father Point and before she changed her course to N 73 E Magnetic. The vessels were not at this time crossing so as to involve risk of a collision within the meaning of Article 19 of the Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

Question 11. After the vessels had sighted each other's lights did the atmosphere between them become foggy or misty, so that lights could no longer be seen? If so, did both vessels comply with Articles 15 and 16, and did they respectively indicate on their steam whistles or sirens, the course or courses they were taking by the signals set out?

Answer: The answer to the first question is in the affirmative. We are of the opinion that both vessels complied with Article 15 of the Regulations, for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea. We are further of opinion that the *Empress of Ireland* complied with Article 16; but on the evidence before us we are not prepared to express an opinion as to whether the provisions of this Article were complied with by the *Storstad*.

Question 12. Were the circumstances of this case such as- to bring into operation the provisions of Articles 27 or 29 of the said Regulations? If so, did the Masters of both vessels take prompt and proper means or measures to comply with the requirements of the said Articles?

Answer: The circumstances of the collision and the causes which brought it about are described in our report.

Question 13. In what position in the River St. Lawrence and at what time on the morning of the 29th, of May last did the collision occur between the *Empress of Ireland* and the *Storstad*? At what time did the *Empress of Ireland* founder, and how was it that she sank so quickly after the collision had occurred?

Answer: These questions were dealt with in our report.

Question 14. Was proper discipline maintained on board the *Empress of Ireland* after the casualty occurred? **Answer: Yes.**

Question 15. What messages for assistance were sent by the *Empress of Ireland* after the casualty, and at what times respectively? Were the messages sent out received at the wireless station at Father Point? Were prompt measures taken by those on shore to render assistance? What assistance was rendered by the Government steamers *Eurika* and *Lady Evelyn*?

Answer: A wireless message S.O.S. was sent off by the Senior Marconi operator shortly after the collision had occurred, the message was received at the wireless station at Father Point, and no time was lost in sending the Government steamers *Lady Evelyn* and *Eurika* to the rescue. The vessels proceeded at once to the scene of the disaster and picked up many of the survivors, landing them at Rimouski.

Question 16. Was the apparatus for lowering the boats on the *Empress of Ireland* at the time of the casualty in good working order? How many boats were got away before the vessel sank? Did the boats, whether those under davits or otherwise, prove to be serviceable for the purpose of saving life? If not, why not? What steps were taken immediately on the happening of the casualty? How long after the casualty was its seriousness realized by those in charge of the vessel? What steps were then taken? Were all watertight doors in bulkheads immediately closed? What endeavours were made to save the lives of those on board, and to prevent the vessel from sinking?

Answer: At the time of the casualty the apparatus for lowering the boats on board the *Empress of Ireland* was in good working order. The second part of this question has already been answered in the body of the report.

Question 17. Were any of the persons on board the *Empress of Ireland* who lost their lives, killed or injured by the collision? What number of passengers and crew left the ship in the boats which got away? How many persons were ultimately rescued, and by what means? What was the number of passengers, distinguishing between men and women, and adults and children, of the First, Second and Third Classes respectively, who were saved? What was the number of the crew, discriminating their ratings and sex, who were saved?

Answer: We have not before us sufficient evidence to enable us to answer the first question.

Of the total number of 1,417 persons on board the *Empress of Ireland* 465 were saved (1) in the vessel's own boats, (2) boats belonging to the *Storstad* and (3) the Government steamers *Eurika* and *Lady Evelyn*. The number of passengers saved, distinguishing between men and women, and adults and children were as follows:-

First Class.

Total number males 49
Saved 24

Total number of females 34
Saved 11
Children, males 3 0 saved
Children females 4 1 saved

Total 87 of which number 36 were saved.

Second Class.

Total number males 114
Saved 33
Total number of Females 107
Saved 13
Children, males 11 0 saved
Children females 21 2 saved

Total 253 of which 48 were saved

Third Class.

Total number males 446
Saved 115
Total number of Females 169
Saved 17
Children, males 54 1 saved
Children females 48 0 saved

Total 717 of which 48 were saved 133

From 609 adult male passengers 172 survived
From 310 adult female passengers 41 survived
From 65 male children passengers 1 survived
From 73 female children passengers 3 survived

From a total of 1057 passengers 217 survived (20.5%)
From 420 crew 248 survived (59.05%)

Question 18. Did the Master of the *Storstad* comply with Article 422 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894?

Answer: Yes.

Question 19. Was a good and proper lookout kept on board of both vessels?

Answer: A good and proper lookout was kept on board the *Empress of Ireland*. We are not prepared on the evidence before us to say whether the mistake made by those in charge of

the *Storstad* in thinking that the *Empress of Ireland*, was passing port to port was or was not due to an insufficient lookout being kept.

Question 20. Was the loss of the *Empress of Ireland*, etc., or the loss of life caused by the wrongful act or default of the Master and First Officer of that vessel, and the Master, First, Second and Third Officers of the *Storstad*, or any of them? **Answer: This question has already been answered in our report.**

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