

27. Yes?—As a rule they are sold privately.
 28. But as to exceptions?—We never ship them.
 29. You do not know of any locks and pieces being shipped by your people?—No.
 30. None?—No.
 31. You, I suppose, can only certify as to the wool or the clips that come to you first of all for local sale—I speak of your own store?—That is right.
 32. But there is a very large proportion that does not pass through your store at all, but goes direct to the port of shipment?—Yes, that is so. I am only speaking of our own handling.
 33. So that your remarks only apply to what comes immediately under your own notice?—Yes, to what comes under my own notice.
 34. Did you ever notice any trouble with sheep-skins heating?—Yes; I have noticed that trouble with sheep-skins—they heat very badly, but when they heat they seem to wither right up—they go black. If the wool moves from the skin it seems to wither away; it smoulders away, but I have never found any fire. You find great heat, but no fire.
 35. Do they dump them now and stretch them—spread them out and then dump them?—We do not handle skins for dumping.
 36. Only for sales?—Yes, only local sales.
 37. Have you noticed them heating in your stores?—Coming from the country butchers—green skins.
 38. That is the process of sweating?—Yes, sweating under railway-covers.
 39. That is not what I mean?—Of course, the skins for Home shipment—they give them a thorough drying before baling.
 40. But in the dry skins you have never noticed any heating at all?—No, not in the dry skins.

EDWARD SMITH sworn and examined. (No. 60.)

41. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Edward Smith.
 42. You are Superintendent of the Fire Brigade?—Yes.
 43. You have had considerable experience, I believe, not only with the ordinary run of fires, but also considerable experience with fires on board ships at Lyttelton?—Simply one—the “Bel-tana.”
 44. You are aware of that case personally?—Yes.
 45. Was there an inquiry?—No, I think not—just a report put before the Underwriters’ Association.
 46. What were the particulars of that fire?—About seventeen years ago I was called to a fire in Lyttelton, and got down there with the chemical engine. I found a wool-ship alongside the wharf battened down, and supposed to be on fire. They thought that, having the chemical engine, we might be able to extinguish it without damaging the cargo too much. We put in a good many charges that day—a Sunday—and left again for Christchurch thinking that it would settle it; but we were called back in the evening, and brought more acid and soda down. I stopped down there about four days altogether, and put in a considerable number of charges, and finally the sides of the vessel and decks were getting cooler, and, of course, we considered that the fire was practically out. The captain did not feel inclined to open the hatches for a day or two, but gave it a fair chance, and when they opened the hatches the fire was practically out until they got into the centre of the cargo, which was still on fire.
 47. Was it a general cargo or wool?—All wool. It came from South Australia somewhere. There were two distinct fires found there separate from each other, and forty or fifty bales were altogether pretty well charred up. I was there when they were baling them up, and in the different bales you could see pretty well the centres and sides were gone.
 48. Could you tell us whether that fire originated in the centre of the bales?—I could not tell you that, but there were two distinct fires.
 49. You said the centres just now?—Most of the centre bales were almost like cinder. They had to put some of the wool into baskets to bring it on deck.
 50. Did you notice whether the centre was burning in any case, and it had not got to the sides?—No. There were one or two bales gone in the centre, but it must have caught from the other bales.
 51. Your mean it caught from the exterior to the inside of the bale?—Yes.
 52. *Mr. Foster.*] Did you notice any of that wool that was brought up in the baskets?—Yes.
 53. Did you notice whether there were any lumps of it that could be broken apart to show what it was?—No; it was all in cinders. It was well alight when we brought it up, although we thought we had got it out.
 54. *The Chairman.*] That fire had been burning for some days?—Six days before they reached Port Lyttelton.
 55. And then it was some days before it was put out?—Yes, four days putting it out and two days before taking off the hatches.
 56. The best part of a fortnight?—Yes.
 57. And still some of it was so hot that you could not handle it?—Yes.
 58. So that there must have been a very great amount of heat in the hold of that ship when the fire was at its height?—Yes; after we went away from the ship on the Sunday the captain and the underwriters went round the ship and found it very hot.
 59. *Mr. Foster.*] When breaking out the cargo, did you notice any of it glowing as if on fire?—No.
 60. Any of it smoking?—When we got to the centre of it it smoked.
 61. When the air got to it?—Yes.
 62. Was that smoke or sweat?—It was smoke.