

42. There you have an entry of the state of the weather during the time this cargo was taken in?—Yes.

43. *Mr. Foster.*] Did you take in much wool in Wellington on that trip?—I could ascertain that for you.

44. You could produce that in Christchurch?—Yes, I will do that.

45. *Captain Blackburne.*] How many bales were damaged?—The damage was merely done by the fire getting to the deck above and making it red hot, and the wool on the top of the deck caught fire and ignited when the hatches were taken off.

46. You found that wool would burn all right?—Oh, it burned all right. When you see the bales charred and blackened you can make up your mind that there is no doubt about it.

47. *Mr. Foster.*] Do you think you could say the particular bale that was the cause of the fire?—I could say either a particular one or two.

48. You would be able to locate the commencement?—Yes, and know exactly where it commenced.

49. Did you notice if any of the bales were charred on the inside yet the pack be intact outside?—I could not say that. Where the wool was charred the pack was also burnt.

50. We have had it in evidence that a bale from the "Gothic" was consumed inside so much as to cause the bale to collapse, yet the woolpack or covering was intact?—I have never seen any like that.

51. *Captain Blackburne.*] What made you suppose the fire started in the centre of the bale, then?—Because the whole business was burnt from the centre to the sides. Part was not burnt, yet it was burnt from the centre to the sides, and that shows that it must have started in the centre of the bale. The other bales that were burning were just charred on the outside.

52. How long had you been in London when the fire occurred?—We arrived on the Friday morning early, and the fire occurred three days after. It was 6 o'clock on the third day that I was called to the ship.

53. *The Chairman.*] We understood it occurred on the Saturday night?—Yes, that is correct. We arrived at 4 o'clock on the Friday morning, and the fire started at 6 o'clock on the Saturday night. We had discharged a certain amount of cargo at the time.

54. *Captain Blackburne.*] Would it have been possible to originate through men smoking in the hold?—That would be impossible, because they were working in the 'tween-decks at the time, and this bale was away underneath the deck.

55. *Mr. Foster.*] The hatches to that hold had not been opened?—No, not yet. This was in the top tier of the lower hold. There were the 'tween-deck hatches between it and the men.

56. *Captain Blackburne.*] And you had not reached that cargo?—No.

57. *Mr. Foster.*] You had to get away the cargo to get down to where the seat of the fire was?—Yes.

58. Yet a certain amount of air could get to the bales?—Yes.

59. Can you tell me if an inquiry was held into the cause of that fire?—They were speaking about it, but I think it must have taken place after I left.

60. There was merely an inquiry by the company, or did the insurance people meet the average-staters?—I think it was taking the form of a law-case, or whatever they call it. The Clayton-machine people, assisted by the underwriters, were going to prosecute the fire brigade, for they contend that had they not taken off the hatches the Clayton machine would have subdued the fire without any damage to the balance of the cargo. I, myself, think that is so, too.

61. *The Chairman.*] Do you know if these inquiries, as a rule, are held by the underwriters, or do they take the form of a magisterial inquiry?—I could not say for certain. I have an idea they are held by the Board of Trade.

62. You have never been called to give evidence in such cases?—No.

63. And you have no idea as to the course that may have been taken in respect of your own ship?—If an inquiry has been held it must have been since we left London. Our marine superintendent was present at the fire, and could give the company all the information they would require.

64. *Captain Blackburne.*] There would not be likely to be any leakage through the deck where this wool was stowed?—No.

65. Or ventilators?—It was stowed away from ventilators, and when the top bales were taken off there was no sign of any leakage.

66. Do you know if any of the wool which was discharged before the fire was discovered was warm?—No. But when I went into No. 4 hold on the Sunday night I felt some of the bands, and they were very hot.

67. That was probably some of the same stuff taken in at the same time in Wellington?—Yes.

68. *Mr. Foster.*] But water had been poured down?—No, not into No. 4 hold, only into No. 5. There was a watertight bulkhead between each hold.

69. *Captain Blackburne.*] You did not hear if any of the wool in your shipment had been found charred inside?—No; I do not think any special damage was discovered. As soon as the wool is landed the bands are cut as it goes out. I think the compression has a lot to do with the heating.

70. If there was heat I think it would be discovered?—As soon as the bales are out of the hold they cut the bands—mostly on the ship's deck; if not on the deck, on the wharf alongside. So that before it is out of sight it is into two separate bales. That is done with every bale in the ship.

71. Have you had any experience of other ships?—Not so far as heating in wool is concerned. That is all I have noticed since I have been in the trade.

72. Have you never before found it hot?—I may have noticed it a little bit warm, but that may have been owing to its being in the sun.

73. Was there no other cargo damaged on this occasion?—No, only the wool.