

William Thomas Odell and William Penn Odell

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday, April 25, 1885

NEWPORT

LOSS OF A COLLIER AND FIVE LIVES. – On Thursday a telegram was received here announcing that about midnight on Wednesday, the collier, Charles George, on her way to the north for coal, was run down off Beachy Head, by one of the Peninsular Company's ships. The Master, Wm. Odell and his son, two of the crew, and a passenger, John E. Kerley, of this town, were drowned, and two of the crew saved.

++++++

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday, May 2, 1885

THE TERRIBLE DISASTER OFF BEACHY HEAD.

LOSS OF FIVE NEWPORT SEAMEN

A terrible disaster occurred off Beachy Head early on Thursday morning, when the brigantine Charles George, 193 tons register, belonging to Mr C. Odell of Newport, I.W., was run into by the Peninsular and Oriental ss. Cathay, 3,800 tons, and sank within four minutes, with the loss of five lives. Short as was the interval between the collision and the sinking of the brigantine, three men were saved, one of whom Fred Churchill, of Ford-place, Sandown, managed to reach the Cathay by his own exertions, from the rigging of the Charles George, into which he had sprung, and two others – James Wallace, of Brunswick-road, Point, Cowes, and Henry Jennings, of Newport, - were rescued by boats from the Cathay, after they had been in the water nearly half an hour. It seems that the Charles George left Cowes on Wednesday last with a crew of eight hands all told, consisting in addition to themselves, of the captain, William Thomas Odell (brother of the owner) the mate, William Odell (the captain's son), both of whom held Board of Trade certificates, Henry Woodford, of Newport, Ernest Adams, boy of Crocker-street, Newport, and John Kearley, of Newport, who was working his passage, all of whom were drowned. It was the captain's watch from 8 to 12 that night, when they were relieved by the mate, William Odell, in whose watch were Woodford and Wallace. They found all well. The night was fairly clear, but at times a little hazy. There was a fresh breeze from the S.W. or W.S.W. The ship was under all plain sail except the gaff top-sail and main top-gallant, and was steering E. by S. on the compass. At 2 o'clock Wallace left the wheel, his place being taken by Henry Woodford, and the former took his station forward on the look-out. At 2.40 he saw a white light about a point on the port bow, which he at once reported to the mate. He believed the same course was being steered as when he left the wheel, and he heard no order given for any alteration in the course after he made the report. This was the proper course to pursue, as the other, being a steamer, was bound to keep out of the way. He however, looked to their own lights, as was his duty on seeing lights ahead, and noticed they were in their proper positions and burning brightly. The steamer's light kept very much in the same relative position, except that it got nearer, but was sometimes as much on the starboard bow, which would be accounted for by one or the other vessel sheering a little. He could not see the other ship's side lights at all. When after 10 minutes the stranger showed no signs of altering her course, he heard the mate give the order to put the helm hard up. Their vessel, however, had

hardly begun to answer her helm when the other ship crashed into them, striking them somewhat obliquely, just abaft the foremast on the starboard side, and cutting through their craft almost to the combings of the hatchways on the port or opposite side, in front of the main mast. He either then called up the watch below, or had already done so when he saw the collision could not be avoided. The latter is probably the case, for Jennings asserts that he was roused by the alarm of "All hands on deck," and springing from his hammock just as he was, rushed up, and thinks he had time to reach the main rigging before they were struck. Churchill, however, who is a more experienced seaman, asserts that the vessel was struck before he got on deck, and he was the first man up from below. He heard the cry, "Take to the rigging," and he and Jennings went together into the main rigging, so close to which was the Cathay that he got on board without great difficulty, the Charles George sinking under him as he was leaving her, and going under almost as soon as he reached the steamer, which he then found was the Cathay. He immediately went on the bridge, where a pilot was in charge, and asked the officers to lower boats to pick up the men struggling in the water. This was presently done, doubtless as quickly as possible, and the two other survivors, who were clinging to the wreckage, were picked up. Not so easily, however, did Jennings escape, although close to Churchill, his hand being jammed in the swiftness of the riggings, and he was dragged down deep under water with the sinking ship. Making a last desperate effort, he succeeded in wrenching himself free, severely lacerating the palm and back of his hand, and reached the surface of the water, where he clung to wreckage by one hand for nearly half an hour, when he was rescued. Wallace was also carried under, and succeeded in regaining the surface; he and Jennings while in the water saw each other, and though they tried to converse together, they failed to recognise each other's voices. The Cathay stood by until daybreak, but no trace of any others, could be found. It is not known whether the captain, Adams, and Kearley, who were below, reached the deck; the survivors never saw them there, and one of them states that Kearley had little chance of escaping, as he had closed his bunk. The rescued men were kindly treated on board the Cathay, the captain giving each of them a suit of clothes and half a sovereign. They were taken off in the pilot's boat and landed at Bembridge about half past 8 in the morning, whence they proceeded to Churchill's home at Sandown. The Cathay, which had on board a number of railway employees in the uniform of the Royal Engineers, for Suakin, appeared to be very little damaged, and is believed to have proceeded on her way to Calcutta. This is the fifth time that Churchill has been wrecked. The receipt of the sad intelligence caused great consternation in Newport. The captain was very much respected, and the deepest sympathy is expressed for his and other bereaved families.

The body of William Odell, captain of the Charles George, which was sunk in the collision with the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer Cathay, off Beachy Head on Thursday week, was found on Sunday morning on the beach in the parish of Piddinghoe, about a mile and a half from the Coastguard Station. The body was naked except for a striped cotton shirt. The face was much discoloured with blood, and there were tattoo marks upon the left arm. At Newhaven a policeman made enquiries, and found a young man of the name of McArthur, who had been present at the sailing of the unfortunate ship from Cowes, and asked him to come over and see if he could identify the body. He did so, and identified the body as that of William Odell, captain of the wrecked vessel, and also landlord of the Dolphin Inn, at Newport, I.W. – At the inquest on Monday, R.W. Horrocks, retired ship-owner, of Shoreham, deposed that he had been requested by the friends of the deceased to attend the inquest. He identified the body as before stated. The deceased was, he thought, about 50 years of age.- The jury returned a verdict that the deceased was found drowned, through a collision between the brigantine Charles George, of which he was captain, and the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer Cathay.

++++++

ISLE OF WIGHT OBSERVER Saturday, May 9, 1885

Newport

THE ILL-FATED CHARLES GEORGE. – On Saturday afternoon the body of a sailor was discovered on the sands near Newhaven east pier. It has since been identified as that of the son of Captain William Odell, mate of the brigantine Charles George (a resident of the town), on whose body an inquest was held at Portobello on Monday. Before commencing his discourse at St Thomas's Church on Sunday evening the Vicar (the Rev. Canon Haigh) briefly alluded to the terrible disaster, which, he said, had evoked feelings of sympathy with the bereaved families throughout the town. He also mentioned that a fund was about to be started for the relief of the sufferers. The funeral took place on Wednesday, exactly a week after that of the captain. The Earl of Yarborough Lodge of Odd Fellows was influentially represented, as on the previous occasion.

Transcribed by Tony Barton for the Friends of Newport & Carisbrooke Cemeteries © 2017