

John Pascoe, one of the Crew of Her Majesty's late ship "Orpheus," and I transmit for your information a copy of the letter which has been received in reply.

I request that you will lose no time in calling the attention of your Responsible Advisers to the arrangements suggested by their Lordships as those which would appear to them, with their present information, to be most urgently required to prevent the recurrence of such a calamity.

I shall not enter upon a consideration of the causes which led to the loss of the "Orpheus," but it is, I am sure, unnecessary for me to impress upon you, and upon your Ministers, that it is the duty of the local Government to take care that no measures are neglected which may tend to ensure the safety of vessels when entering the harbour of the Colony, and I trust that immediate steps will be taken for carrying into effect the recommendations of their Lordships, if no unforeseen objections of a local character exist to their adoption.

You will observe that the Lords Commissioners have offered to instruct a Surveying Officer, who is about to be ordered to New Zealand, to afford your Government all the assistance in his power in devising measures for the security of vessels entering the Manukau Inlet. You will, I am sure, readily avail yourself of this Officer's advice.

I have, &c.,

NEWCASTLE.

Governor Sir George Grey, K.C.B.

Enclosure to No. 18.

LORD C. PAGET TO SIR F. ROGERS.

Admiralty, 1st June, 1863.

SIR,—

I have laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 23rd ult., with copy of a Despatch from the Governor of New Zealand, enclosing copies of Inquisition and Information concerning the death of John Pascoe, one of the Crew of Her Majesty's late Ship "Orpheus."

My Lords having, in addition to the above papers, had under their consideration the various reports received by them from Captain Jenkins, of the "Miranda," relative to the loss of the "Orpheus," and the circumstances detailed in the minutes of the Court Martial held at Portsmouth on the surviving officers and men, do not propose to discuss the causes of the loss of the "Orpheus" further than may be necessary to prevent the recurrence of so fearful a catastrophe. They will rather confine themselves to bringing under the notice of the Duke of Newcastle those measures which, from the evidence before them, they believe to be required to ensure, as far as practicable, the safety of vessels entering the Manukau, in the hope that His Grace will urge their early adoption upon the Colonial Government of New Zealand.

My Lords believe that no written directions and no Chart, however accurate the Survey may have been made, can enable vessels to pass in safety through a narrow channel, in which the banks are liable to continual alteration. The directions given in 1853 were necessarily altered in 1861, and the amended directions are now no longer to be depended upon.

Nothing, therefore, but the constant presence of local pilots, intimately acquainted with the channels and with the ever varying position of the banks, and an efficient code of signals to be made from the Pilot Station, can give the security necessary for the free use of this large inlet.

My Lords regret to find that in the above stated essentials the Pilot Station at Manukau Heads has been lamentably deficient, and they cannot but fear that the loss of the "Orpheus" may, in a great degree, be attributed to that deficiency.

The establishment at Manukau Heads at the time of the wreck of the "Orpheus" consisted of one pilot, Mr. Wing, assisted by his son, Mr. E. Wing.

The Signal-man, Mr. H. Evans, although on the establishment, had not attended at the Station for seventeen months, owing, it is stated, to the insufficiency of his pay; and his place had been supplied by the Pilot's son, mentioned above, a young man of about twenty-one years of age, who does not appear to have held any regular appointment or any certificate as pilot.

On the 7th February the Pilot, Mr. Thomas Wing, had left the station to take the "Wonga Wonga" out by the South Channel, and the sole charge and responsibility of directing vessels approaching the harbour was thus left to his young and inexperienced son. Another son is mentioned as having also been at the station, but his age is not mentioned, and he was not examined at the inquest.

It was further proved that there were no flags at the station, and that even the means of making signals according to the insufficient local code were not complete.

Under these circumstances the "Orpheus" approached the entrance, and about 11.30 the signal was made to her "to take the bar."

It must at this time have been high water, and before the ship entered the narrows the tide must have fallen considerably.

As the "Orpheus" neared the banks the signal was made "to keep more to the northward," and it was proved by the Signal-man at the Court Martial that this signal was instantly answered and obeyed.