

for the reason that wet fleece wool being packed was possibly owing to the difficulty in drying wool that had been washed or scoured and dried outside; but, of course, that is only surmise.

183. *Captain Blackburne.*] There seems to be a general impression that there is very much more risk in what is called dags and locks?—No doubt there is a lot of foul animal matter about it that would undoubtedly tend to make it heat much more quickly.

184. Are such bales marked differently so that they could be easily distinguished?—Well, I can hardly tell you. My experience with sheep is in the time when there were none of these long-wool sheep in the country; they were all merinos, and there were no dags with merinos in the old days on the tussocks; it is the product of English wool and closer-feeding sheep, so that I cannot offer any opinion upon that subject. Of course, we do not, as far as the fellmongery is concerned, pack any wool in that condition. If it is daggy it is either worth washing, or so bad that it has to be thrown away.

185. *Mr. Foster.*] Has it come under your notice during the past season—in the spring of last year—that the sheep were very much dirtier about the breech than in an ordinary season?—I do not think so. Of course, in the early part of the year the sheep are shorn and they do not show it. I do not remember hearing anything about it, or noticing anything about it.

186. Have you any set rules in your fellmongery to insure that the wool is in a proper condition for packing?—No, there are no written regulations; but with the way in which we dry our wool, where every drying-table is superintended by a man and the wool turned by hand, there is less risk of its being passed as dry when not dry than there is in those machines that take it in at one end and deliver it at the other end dry. The men are continually handling the wool on the drying-table just in the same way that men handle the wool on the ground to dry. The men feel it, and generally as it is dry—they pass it in.

187. *Captain Blackburne.*] You do not consider there is any danger from baling the wool hot that comes straight from the machine?—I do not think any one does bale it straight from the machine—it is always piled in bins. I never saw it baled straight from the drier, but I do not think that if it was properly dried it would make any difference.

188. I noticed that a stevedore wanted to make out that that was one of the likely causes?—Yes, I noticed that; but I do not think that is so—at least, that is not my opinion.

189. I think Mr. Burrige said that it would be rather the reverse—that there would be less risk, and I think he made some experiments. Do you know anything about it?—No; I do not know of any experiments having been tried in that direction.

190. *The Chairman.*] Is there anything else you would like to say?—No, sir; I have really nothing to say. Anything I have to say on the subject would be purely surmise. I am sorry I cannot give you anything more definite.

191. You have, from your knowledge, had no wet wool sent back from the ship except that one bale you mentioned?—No. I have never had any indication in any wool reports which pointed in any way to there having been any wet wool packed. Of course, we get some report on the wool; if it is seedy or limy we get a report, but I have not had any indication that the wool was wet.

192. *Captain Blackburne.*] How many years does that cover?—About sixteen or seventeen years.

193. *Mr. Foster.*] How do your weights come out in London—do you find an increase or shortage?—I think there is very often an increase, but, of course, you cannot tell; something has to be allowed for the inaccuracy of the scales, but I think, on the whole, the tendency is for a better sale weight than weight shipped.

194. Would that indicate, in your opinion, that your wool was put in, if anything, extra dry?—Well, yes. The only way one would suppose it could accumulate heat is by taking in moisture.

195. Then, wool being affected by the condition of the atmosphere, if put in extra dry, would come back to the condition of the atmosphere?—I think so. You find if you put skins enclosed in the hold of a ship they will take in moisture in the tropics. Where the air is heavily laden wool will do the same.

196. *Captain Blackburne.*] Were you affected by the fire on the “Gothic”?—Not that I know of. I do not think we had any wool in the “Gothic”; but I am waiting on the reports, hoping like other people to get more detailed accounts—in fact, to get a copy of the proceedings, but at the present time I know nothing whatever.

ALBERT EDWIN EXLEY sworn and examined. (No. 4.)

197. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Albert Edwin Exley.

198. What are you?—I am one of the directors of the Wellington Woollen Company.

199. We are trying to fathom, as far as three men can fathom, what is the cause of these fires in ships, and it has been suggested to us that you could give us some information on the matter?—I do not know that I have any suggestion to make by way of preventing them. It seems a very difficult thing to devise a preventative.

200. What has been your experience?—I have never had any experience of wool catching fire on the way Home. I have been shipping—

201. How many years have you been shipping wool?—About twenty years before I went out of business.

202. You have never had any case of the wool catching fire?—No.

203. *Mr. Foster.*] Have you ever had any of your wool heated in packing?—Perhaps on three occasions they have sent a bale back from the wharf wet. It has generally been stained by the rain going in. I have not seen any wool in my experience that has come back overheated.

204. Have you ever seen any wool that has been heated on board ship to the extent of almost firing?—Yes, we have had wool scoured and wet-packed quite hot—burning hot.