

**MCIB**

Marine Casualty Investigation Board  
*Bord Imscrúdú Taisní Muirí*



**REPORT OF THE  
INVESTIGATION INTO  
MAN OVERBOARD  
FROM ANGLING BOAT  
'BLUEBIRD II'  
ON  
15th AUGUST 2016**

**REPORT NO. MCIB/263  
(No.6 OF 2017)**

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) examines and investigates all types of marine casualties to, or on board, Irish registered vessels worldwide and other vessels in Irish territorial waters and inland waterways.

The MCIB objective in investigating a marine casualty is to determine its circumstances and its causes with a view to making recommendations for the avoidance of similar marine casualties in the future, thereby improving the safety of life at sea.

The MCIB is a non-prosecutorial body. We do not enforce laws or carry out prosecutions. It is not the purpose of an investigation carried out by the MCIB to apportion blame or fault.

The legislative framework for the operation of the MCIB, the reporting and investigating of marine casualties and the powers of MCIB investigators is set out in The Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act, 2000.

In carrying out its functions the MCIB complies with the provisions of the International Maritime Organisation's Casualty Investigation Code and EU Directive 2009/18/EC governing the investigation of accidents in the maritime transport sector.



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## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 On the morning of the 15th August 2016 a lone angler departed from Rossbrin Cove, near Schull, Co. Cork to go angling between the Calf Islands. He was in contact with his family by mobile phone during the early afternoon, however when he did not arrive home in the early evening as planned, the alarm was raised and a search commenced. Later that evening his vessel the '*Bluebird II*' was found with nobody on board. The search continued until late that night and again from early morning the next day, when his body was recovered.

## 2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 Vessel Details

Name:	<i>'Bluebird II'</i> .
Type:	Open angling vessel with a small wheelhouse.
Length:	5.49 metres (m).
Beam:	1.67 m.
Draught:	0.61 m.
Hull Material:	Glassfibre Reinforced Plastic (GRP).
Motor:	50 hp Four Stroke Mariner Outboard. 15 hp Yamaha Outboard.
Fuel Type:	Petrol.
Year of Build:	Circa 1980.

### 2.2 Vessel description and extra information

2.2.1 The vessel is an inshore pleasure fishing craft and was found to be in good condition. The vessel was constructed in Devon of polyester resin using female mould construction techniques (see Appendix 7.1 Photograph No. 1). The vessel is an open vessel with a tank type floor with effective deck grip. The deck is positioned 75 to 80 cm below the gunwales. It has a small open wheelhouse forward with a small storage area suitable for storing safety equipment and dry items (see Appendix 7.1 Photograph No. 2).

The vessel is propelled by a 50 hp four stroke Mariner outboard engine with a 15 hp four stroke Yamaha outboard as a backup emergency engine. Both engines were found to be in good order with the kill cord working correctly when tested on the main engine (see Appendix 7.1 Photograph No. 3).

2.2.2 Safety equipment found on board included:

1 x PFD, a XM Quickfit, in good order with good gas bottle and firing pin (see Appendix 7.1 Photograph No. 4).

2 x Anchors with effective ground tackle.

1 x Compass.

2 x Paddles.

It was noted that the vessel was not fitted with a VHF radio or an EPIRB.

### 2.2.3 Other equipment noted on board the vessel included:

An assortment of fishing equipment (lines and feathers).

2 x buckets with some catch in them sitting on the deck.

2 x crutches tucked in behind a small bench aft (see Appendix 7.1 Photograph No. 5).

1 x Wallet.

1 x Mobile Phone.

### 2.2.4 The casualty was an experienced angler, who had a hip operation which had reduced his mobility. As a result of the reduced mobility, the casualty used crutches and required assistance embarking and disembarking the vessel.

### 2.2.5 On the morning of the 15th August 2016, as the wind direction was from the south east, the casualty planned to go fishing around the Calf Islands.

## 2.4 Marine Incident Information

Type: This was a man overboard leading to the casualty's loss of life.

Time: The incident occurred on the afternoon of the 15th August 2016.

Position: The vessel was fishing in the vicinity of the Calf Islands (see Appendix 7.2 Charts of the area).

Weather: Wind Force 4 to 5 south easterly decreasing Force 3 by afternoon, the sea state was small wavelets decreasing to slight (see Appendix 7.3 Met Éireann Weather Report).

## 2.5 Emergency Response

The alarm was raised by the Schull Community Inshore Rescue Service at 19.35 hrs with Valentia Coast Guard. The Baltimore Lifeboat, Coast Guard SAR helicopters R115 and R117 and the LE Orla were tasked with the search. At 11.20 hrs the next day the casualty was located and recovered (see Appendix 7.4 Timeline). A post mortem report stated the cause of death was Acute cardiorespiratory failure due to drowning.



### 3. NARRATIVE

- 3.1 The casualty's son reported that his father was an amateur angler who went angling three to four days a week during the summer months in and around Long Island Bay. He also explained that his father had had a hip procedure, which had trapped nerves, with the consequence that he had reduced mobility in the left leg. This was to be remedied in September 2016, however as a result the casualty was quite immobile, using crutches to walk and needing assistance to embark and disembark his vessel.
- 3.2 The casualty and his son arrived at Rossbrin cove at about 11.00 hrs. The two men travelled out to the mooring where the casualty's vessel was tied up so that his son could assist him to get on board the vessel.
- 3.2 At about 11.30 hrs the casualty departed from mooring en route to the Calf Islands with the intention of returning later in the afternoon. He arranged to call his son for assistance in putting the vessel back on the mooring.
- 3.3 The casualty was in contact with his son by mobile phone at 12.30 hrs and with his wife at 14.03 hrs. He did not report any difficulties on either telephone call.
- 3.4 At 14.30 hrs and 15.00 hrs the casualty's vessel was spotted at the Calf Islands by a local fisherman, however there was no confirmation of a person on board.
- 3.5 It is estimated that sometime between 14.03 hrs and 17.00 hrs the casualty entered the water.
- 3.6 At about 17.00 hrs, the casualty's son called his father to make arrangements to collect him from Rossbrin cove but there was no answer. The son tried repeatedly to make contact with his father for the following 30 minutes by mobile phone with no response.
- 3.7 At approximately 17.30 hrs, the casualty's son travelled to a hill near Rossbrin to look out over the area with binoculars, however he could not see the vessel. When the vessel had still not returned by 18.00 hrs, his son went home to ascertain whether his father had been in contact with anyone else.
- 3.8 The casualty's son returned to the hill over Rossbrin at approximately 18.30 hrs. At approximately 19.00 hrs he called Schull Community Inshore Rescue Service to discuss the need to start a search.
- 3.9 At 19.30 hrs crew from the Schull Community Inshore Rescue Service made the decision to go out to search for the vessel and Valentia Coast Guard was called at 19.35 hrs.

3.10 At 20.17 hrs the vessel was found with no one on board. The casualty was recovered at 11.20 hrs the following morning.

## 4. ANALYSIS

- 4.1 There were no witnesses to the incident. The casualty had been in contact with his son and then his wife at 12.30 hrs and 14.03 hrs respectively. The casualty reported no difficulties during these telephone calls. The vessel was seen by a local fisherman at 14.30 hrs and 15.00 hrs, but he could not confirm whether there was anyone on board at those times. The casualty's son was unable to contact him at 17.00 hrs, despite repeated calls.
- 4.2 The casualty was an experienced amateur angler, but he had reduced mobility due to a hip operation. The casualty used crutches and required assistance to embark or disembark the vessel. The casualty's crutches were found stored in a space behind a bench aft.
- 4.3 The vessel was in good condition and the bulwarks were of good height. It is probable that the casualty was using the bulwarks when standing or moving around the vessel. The use of the bulwarks as support would have put his centre of gravity over the bulwark.
- 4.4 The vessel was not fitted with a VHF radio nor did it carry an EPIRB or a PLB. The casualty used his mobile phone for contact with his family during this outing. The casualty's PFD, as shown in photograph 4 of Appendix 7.1, mobile phone and wallet were found aboard the vessel.
- 4.5 Wind Force 4 to 5 south easterly decreasing Force 3 by afternoon, the sea state was small wavelets decreasing to slight (see Appendix 7.3 Met Éireann Weather Report). The weather was not a factor in this incident.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The casualty entered the water sometime between 14.03 hrs and 17.00 hrs, the first alarm was raised at 19.30 hrs meaning the casualty was in the water for a time between 2.5 hrs and 5.5 hrs before the alarm was raised.
- 5.2 When the casualty entered the water he was not wearing his PFD, which would have greatly increased the chances of his survival.
- 5.3 The vessel was not equipped with an EPIRB or a PLB. If the casualty had been wearing a PLB, he could have used it to raise the alarm. It would also have given a location to the shore rescue services.
- 5.4 The bulwarks and deck grip were found to be effective, however it is clear that the casualty was not completely mobile as a result of his hip operation. As the casualty's crutches were stored it is probable that he was using the bulwark for support. If he was using the bulwark as support, his centre of gravity would have been over the bulwark. This would have greatly increased the chances of a man overboard.

## **6. SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 This investigation does not support any new safety recommendations. However, owners and operators of recreational craft are reminded to be aware of, and comply with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's Code of Practice for the Safe Operation of Recreational Craft.

## 7. APPENDICES

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Appendix 7.1 Photographs.



Photograph No. 1: Overview of the vessel, hull in good condition.



Photograph No. 2: Deck and Bulwarks

Appendix 7.1 Photographs.



Photograph No. 3: Outboard Engine.



Photograph No. 4: PFD.



Appendix 7.1 Photographs.

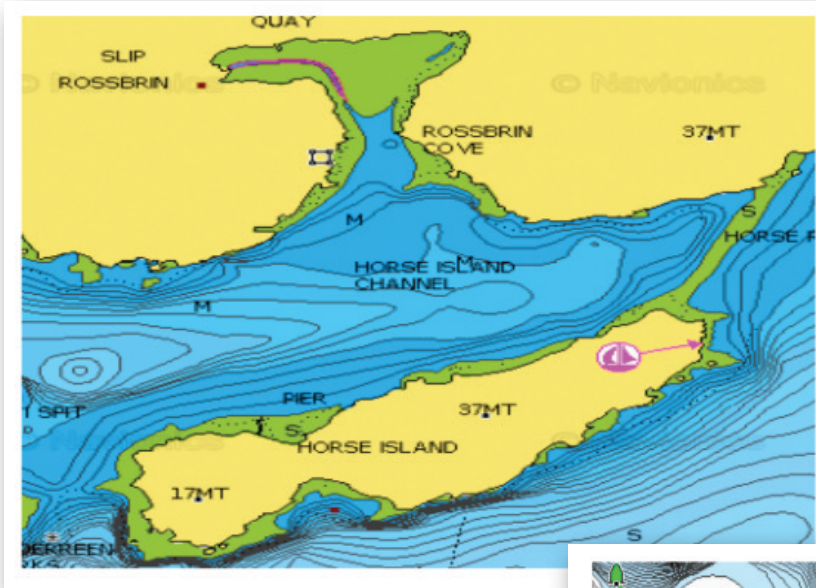


Photograph No. 5: Crutches stored behind aft bench.

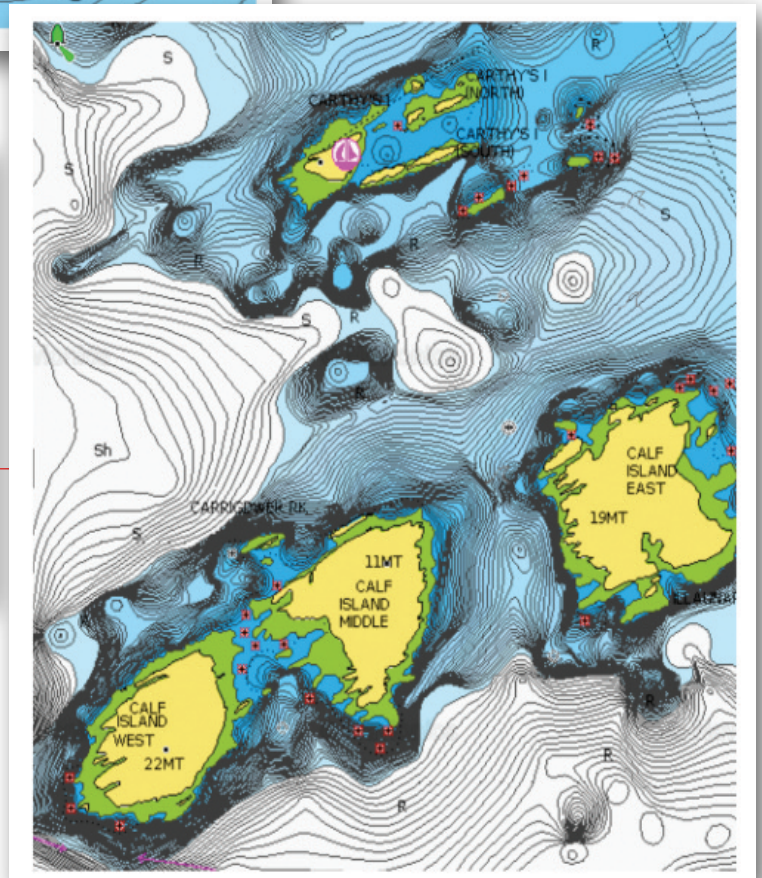
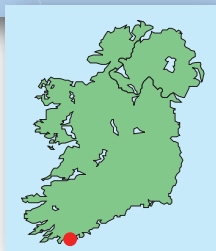
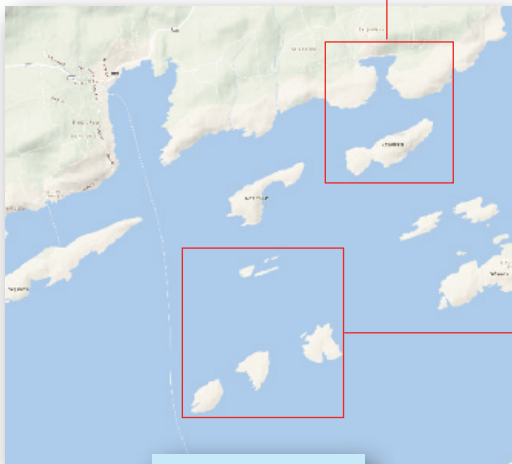
# APPENDIX 7.2

## Appendix 7.2 Charts of area.


### Rossbrin Cove



Calf islands



Appendix 7.3 Met Éireann Weather Report.



**MET ÉIREANN**  
*The Irish Meteorological Service*

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**18-August-2016**  
**18-August-2016**

**Our Ref.** WS3018/2\_16383  
**Your Ref.** MCIB/12/263

**Re:** Estimate of weather conditions in Long Island Bay, Schull, Co Cork on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2016 between 0600 hours and 1200 hours and between 1200 hours and 1800 hours. (At position 51 30.00N 009 30.00W)

**General Meteorological Situation:** An anticyclone of 1027 hPa over the North Sea extended a ridge of high pressure over Ireland. A slack southeast to south airflow covered the country.

**Forecast from 06:00 hours to 12:00 hours**

**Wind:** From between east and southeast Force 3, increased force 4 from 8:00 am; infrequently reached Force 5 (17 to 19 knots) between 9:00 am and Midday.


**Weather:** Fine for most of time; cloud increased after 10:00 am. Dry.

**Temperatures:** The air temperature ranged 15 to 17 degrees Celsius.

**Visibility:** Good (Greater than 10 km).

**Sea States** Small wavelets (less than 0.2 meters until 10:00 am); thereafter increased to 0.4 meters from south with period of 3 seconds by Midday. (Maximum wave height 0.5 meters).

Appendix 7.3 Met Éireann Weather Report.



**MET ÉIREANN**  
*The Irish Meteorological Service*

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**Forecast from 12:00 hours to 18:00 hours**

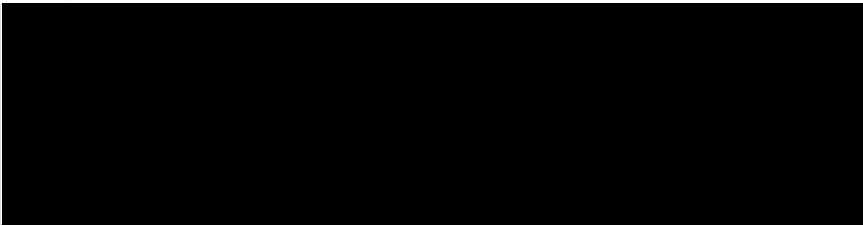
**Wind:** From between east and southeast Force 3 – sometimes Force 4 during early afternoon.

**Weather:** Mostly cloudy but fair and dry.

**Temperatures:** 17 to 19 degrees.

**Visibility:** Good (Greater than 10 km).

**Sea States** Slight (0.4 gradually decreasing 0.3 meters)/period 2 to 3 seconds



## Appendix 7.4 Timeline.

### Timeline

- 2.5.1 At 19.35 hrs the alarm was raised with Valentia Coast Guard by members of Schull Community Inshore Rescue Service.
- 2.5.2 At 19.41 hrs the Baltimore RNLI was tasked with the search.
- 2.5.3 At 19.48 hrs R115 Shannon Helicopter was tasked with the search
- 2.5.4 At 20.01 hrs Schull Community Inshore Rescue Service arrived on Scene.
- 2.5.5 At 20.02 hrs Baltimore RNLI arrived on Scene.
- 2.5.5 At 20.05 hrs R115 Shannon Helicopter was on route with an ETA of 20.42 hrs
- 2.5.6 At 20.12 hrs Schull Community Inshore Rescue Service completed a search of Horse Island.
- 2.5.7 At 20.15 hrs the Baltimore RNLI completed a search of Long Island and reported spotting a small vessel about a 1.5 miles from the Island.
- 2.5.8 At 20.16 hrs Baltimore RNLI located the missing vessel.
- 2.5.9 At 20.17 hrs the Baltimore RNLI reported that there are no persons aboard the vessel.
- 2.5.10 At 20.19 hrs The LE Orla called to say that they were available to assist with the search and they were proceeding to the search area.
- 2.5.11 At 20.43 hrs The vessel Laure Lena joined the search.
- 2.5.12 At 20.47 hrs R115 Shannon Helicopter arrived on scene and commenced a search.
- 2.5.14 At 21.50 hrs The Fishing vessel ST Claire joined the search.
- 2.5.16 At 21.54 hrs R115 Shannon Helicopter reported a problem with their infra red camera.
- 2.5.17 At 21.56 hrs R115 Shannon Helicopter reported their infra red camera had failed and they needed to return to base to have it assessed.
- 2.5.18 At 22.25 hrs The LE Orla arrived on scene and anchored east of West Calf Island and launched two ribs to assist with the search.

**Appendix 7.4 Timeline.**

- 2.5.19 At 22.26 hrs R117 Waterford Helicopter was tasked with the search.
- 2.5.20 At 23.19 hrs Baltimore RNLI returned to base and the LE Orla assumed on scene coordination.
- 2.5.21 At 23.58 hrs R117 Waterford Helicopter arrived on scene to commence search.
- 2.5.22 At 01.08 hrs R117 Waterford Helicopter was released.
- 2.5.23 At 01.36 hrs the search was stood down until first light.
- 2.5.24 At 05.43 hrs Schull Community Inshore Rescue Service re-commenced search from Long Island.
- 2.5.25 At 05.45 hrs Baltimore RNLI returned to the scene and re-commenced search.
- 2.5.26 At 06.05 hrs R115 Shannon Helicopter proceeded to the scene.
- 2.5.27 At 06.07 hrs LE Orla launched two ribs to assist in the search.
- 2.5.28 At 06.37 hrs Goleen Coast Guard Unit advised that they were launching a RIB and also commenced a shore line search from land.
- 2.5.29 At 06.42 hrs R115 Shannon Helicopter arrived to the scene.
- 2.5.30 At 07.32 hrs Civil Defence launched a rib and proceeded to the scene.
- 2.5.31 At 08.44 hrs R115 Shannon Helicopter returned to base.
- 2.5.32 At 10.38 hrs The Fishing Vessel Mary Collette asked to join the search.
- 2.5.33 At 11.12 hrs The Fishing Vessel Saint Brendan located the casualty in the water.
- 2.5.34 At 11.20 hrs The LE Orla reported that they had recovered the casualty.
- 2.5.35 At 11:40 hrs The search was stood down.

## NATURAL JUSTICE - CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

Section 36 of the Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act, 2000 requires that:

- “36 (1) Before publishing a report, the Board shall send a draft of the report or sections of the draft report to any person who, in its opinion, is likely to be adversely affected by the publishing of the report or sections or, if that person be deceased, then such person as appears to the Board best to represent that person’s interest.
- (2) A person to whom the Board sends a draft in accordance with subsection (1) may, within a period of 28 days commencing on the date on which the draft is sent to the person, or such further period not exceeding 28 days, as the Board in its absolute discretion thinks fit, submit to the Board in writing his or her observations on the draft.
- (3) A person to whom a draft has been sent in accordance with subsection (1) may apply to the Board for an extension, in accordance with subsection (2), of the period in which to submit his or her observations on the draft.
- (4) Observations submitted to the Board in accordance with subsection (2) shall be included in an appendix to the published report, unless the person submitting the observations requests in writing that the observations be not published.
- (5) Where observations are submitted to the Board in accordance with subsection (2), the Board may, at its discretion -
- (a) alter the draft before publication or decide not to do so, or
  - (b) include in the published report such comments on the observations as it thinks fit.”

The Board reviews and considers all observations received whether published or not published in the final report. When the Board considers an observation requires amendments to the report that is stated beside the relevant observation. When the Board is satisfied that the report has adequately addressed the issue in the observation, then the observation is ‘Noted’ without comment or amendment. The Board may make further amendments or observations in light of the responses from the Natural Justice process.

‘Noted’ does not mean that the Board either agrees or disagrees with the observation.

## 8. NATURAL JUSTICE - CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

There was no correspondence received in the Natural Justice process for this investigation.











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