



**REPORT INTO
THE STRANDING AND
SUBSEQUENT LOSS
OF THE M.V.
"ARKLOW CASTLE"
AT LES SABLES D'OLONNE,
FRANCE ON
30 NOVEMBER 1992.**

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board was established on the 5th, June 2002 under The Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act 2000

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SYNOPSIS

1. SYNOPSIS.

The Arklow Castle sailed from Les Sables D'Olonne, France on the 30th November 1992 and went aground within 15 minutes of leaving the breakwaters resulting in the emergency evacuation of the vessel by helicopter and the subsequent stranding and constructive total loss of the vessel. No injuries were sustained or lives lost.

2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

2.1 Details of the Vessel.

Name	: Arklow Castle
Port of Registry	: Arklow
Year of Build	: 1981
Official Number	: 402163
Call Sign	: E.I.S.L.
G.R.T.	: 1054.14
Length	: 68.17
Crew	: 5

The vessel was loaded with 15,511 tonnes of maize bound for London with a laden draught of 4.50 metres.

Owners: Vale Shipping Ltd., North Quay,
Arklow, Co. Wicklow.

3. EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

- 3.1 The Arklow Castle arrived in Les Sables D'Olonne at 17.43 hours on Saturday 28th November 1992 from Villa Garcia to load a cargo of maize for transport to London.
- 3.2 During Sunday 29th the cargo hold was prepared for loading the cargo. Loading commenced at 06.00 hours on Monday 30th and was completed at 10.25 hours. The vessel shifted berth at 10.50 hours to await the tide. The vessel was prepared for sea.
- 3.3 The Master checked the steering gear, switched on the Radar and checked the other bridge equipment.
- 3.4 All the navigation equipment was operating satisfactorily. The Decca navigator was not used, as Decca coverage does not extend to Les Sables D'Olonne. At 17.50 hours the Pilot boarded, he told the Master that the light on the South Cardinal Mark "Nouch Sud" was not working. The vessel let go at 17.52 hours, was clear of the berth, proceeded outwards and was clear of the breakwaters at 18.00 hours. The pilot disembarked as the vessel was passing between the breakwaters.
- 3.5 The vessel was put on automatic steering under the control of the Master. The pilot pointed out the two buoys "Nouch Nord" and "Nouch Sud" on the radar to the Master, who was now well aware of his position in relation to the buoys. When the Mate arrived on the bridge, he saw the Master in the wheelhouse, midships at the forward end. After a short time the Master asked the Mate what the next course was, as it appears that he mistakenly assumed that they were abeam of the "Fairway Buoy". This buoy was actually the "Nouch Sud" which was a South Cardinal Mark, not a fairway buoy. The Mate said the Master stated that the course was 307° T with which the Mate agreed. The Master then altered course by using the Automatic Pilot in steps of 10° to lead the ships head round to 307° T. The alteration time is given as 18.05 hours in the Deck Logbook. At this point the Master handed over control of the vessel to the Mate and left the wheelhouse to go below for his meal.
- 3.6 The Master said he told the Mate the ship was abeam of the Fairway Buoy before he asked him for the course. The Mate said he understood the vessel was clear of dangers when the Master suggested the course of 307° T to which the Mate agreed.

4. THE INCIDENT

- 4.1 The Mate checked the radar, and as the land looked close he went to put the ship's position on the chart. As he was about to start plotting on the chart the Arklow Castle ran onto the rocks at full speed. The time of the collision is given as 18.13 hours in the Deck Log.

EVENTS FOLLOWING

5. EVENTS FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT

- 5.1 The Master immediately went to the bridge where he tried to manoeuvre the vessel off the rocks. She was being driven up on the rocks on the rising tide by the heavy swell and SW wind. The pilot at Les Sables D'Olonne was contacted and a fishing boat and the pilot boat tried to tow the Arklow Castle off, but she was stuck fast. The engine room was flooded at 19.30 hours and the main engine was stopped. The 5-man crew was evacuated from the Arklow Castle at 20.30 - 20.50 hours.
- 5.2 The weather at the time of the incident was fine with clear visibility and a South-westerly wind with a heavy Westerly swell.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

The Arklow Castle was stranded because basic navigation procedure was not followed:

- 6.1 After disembarking the pilot it appears the courses were not plotted on the chart prior to departure. This would have shown the Mate the correct course to give the Master when he asked, when the vessel was abeam of the "Nouch Sud" buoy.
- 6.2 The Master was mistaken as to where the vessel was when he set the course. After settling on the new course, the Master, who was in charge of the navigational watch did not check the radar to see if the vessel was heading in the correct direction, nor did he check the chart to see if the new course would put the vessel in danger.
- 6.3 There appears to have been a misunderstanding between the Master and Mate due to the lack of a proper reporting procedure. The Master said he asked the Mate for the course, whereas the Mate said the Master suggested the course. The Mate did not have time to check his position on the chart before the vessel grounded. The Master did not inform him that the "Nouch Sud" buoy was unlit, so he was not looking for it. The Red flashing light on "Les Barges" rocks was unlit but neither the Master nor the Mate were aware of this at the time of the incident. This red light would have shown up quite clearly as it has a range of 17 miles and the vessel was less than 2.5 miles away from "Les Barges" as it came round the "Nouch Sud" buoy. As a result of this light not being operational, the Mate did not become aware of the problem immediately.
- 6.4 The Master did not:
 - ensure that Passage Planning had been carried out prior to sailing.
 - ensure courses were laid off for departure from Les Sables D'Olonne.
 - check his position by radar with relation to the course of 307° T after altering course and before handing over the control of the watch to the Mate.
 - plot his position on the chart prior to handing over the watch.
 - comply with Regulation 4 of the Merchant Shipping (Certification and Watchkeeping) Regulations 1984 S.I. 187 of 1984 in that he did not fulfil the "Duty of Master" as laid out in schedule 1 of the S.I. 187 of 1984.
- 6.5 It is the sole responsibility of the Master of a vessel to ensure that the vessel is navigated in a safe manner. The Master should have ensured that the vessel was kept to the approach channel until it was well past and clear of any obstructions or hazards. He failed to do so.

The Mate should have made sure that he knew the position, course and speed of the vessel and agreed it with the Master before taking over the watch.

APPENDICES

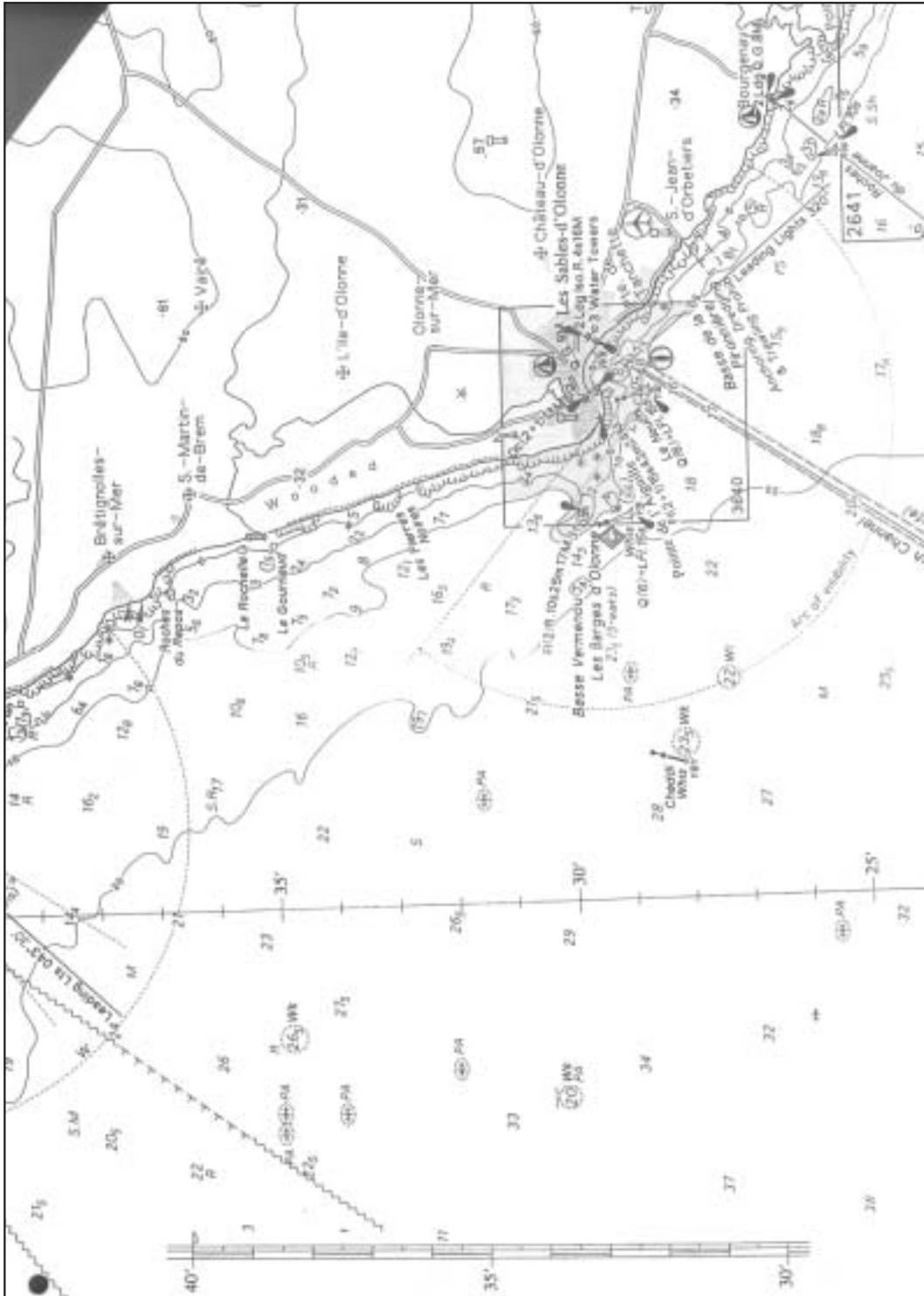
7. Appendices

7.1: Map of area where incident occurred.

7.2: Close up map of area where incident occurred.

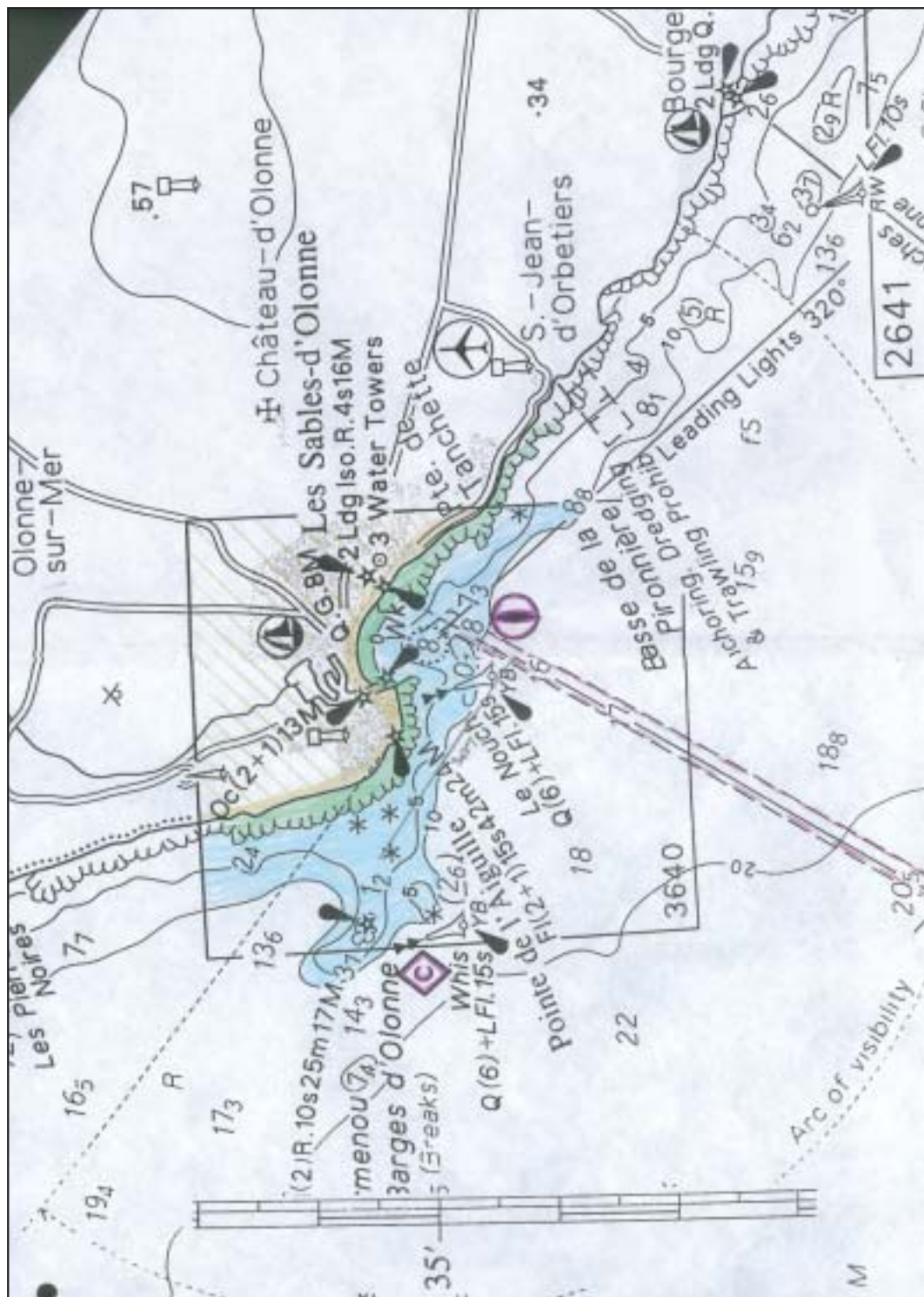
7.3: Chart of Sea Area.

7.1 Map of area where incident occurred.



APPENDIX 7.2

7.2: Close up map of area where incident occurred.



7.3: Chart of Sea Area.

