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**REPORT OF INVESTIGATION
INTO THE SINKING OF THE
GLEOITEÓG “*McHUGH*”
ON
5th SEPTEMBER 2009**

**REPORT No. MCIB/176
(No. 12 of 2010)**

Report MCIB/176 published by The Marine Casualty Investigation Board
12th November 2010.

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1. SYNOPSIS

- 1.1 On 5th September 2009, the gleoiteóg *'McHugh'* set sail at approximately 09.05 hrs. from Kinvara in Galway Bay bound for Rossaveel in Galway Bay. Having sailed approximately five nautical miles from the mouth of Kinvara Bay, the boat was hit by a strong gust of wind, started taking on water, capsized and sank rapidly. The two crew were taken from the water by the crew of another boat in company with them. The Shannon Coast Guard Helicopter and the Galway Inshore Lifeboat attended. There was one fatality, Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha, from the crew of the *'McHugh'*. No pollution was associated with this incident. All times quoted as local time.

2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

2.1 Vessel description

Class of vessel: Gleoiteóg, traditional class of Galway hooker

LOA: 24' 8"

Builder: Mr. Paraic O’Cathasaigh,
Carna,
Co. Galway

Owner: Mr. Martin Keane,
Carna,
Co. Galway

Helmsman: Mr. Josie Mac Donncha,
Carna,
Co. Galway

Crew: Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha,
Carna.
Co. Galway



Photograph of the ‘McHugh’ under sail (reproduced with the kind permission of the photographer, John Smyth)

2.2 The ‘McHugh’ was a traditional gleoiteóg (a type of Galway hooker) built approximately 100 years ago and restored in 1989. She was stored indoors from October to April (approximately) each year.

3. EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

- 3.1 At approximately 09.05 hrs. on Saturday 5th September 2009, brothers Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha and Mr. Josie Mac Donncha left Kinvara, Co. Galway on board the gleoiteóg '*McHugh*' to sail to Rossaveel, Co. Galway on the other side of Galway Bay to take part in a regatta. Visibility at the time was good and the weather forecast they had received was for southwesterly winds force 4 to 5. Also making the same trip at that time was the leath-bhád '*Blath na hÓige*' with Mr. Aongus Folan, Mr. Martin Jennings, Mr. Martin Connolly and Mr. Gerry Folan on board. Both vessels had reefed mainsails and the jib set.
- 3.2 The '*McHugh*' was ballasted with approximately 14 cwt approx. (710 kg) of stones distributed on the floor and well secured in place. The ballast rocks, some of them 50 lbs approx. (22 kg) or more in weight, were carefully chosen for their shape so that they locked securely in place. The tumblehome of the hull prevented the rocks and stones from moving as the vessel heeled. In this incident, the ballast was further held in place with boards.
- 3.3 Mr. Josie Mac Donncha had not heard a weather forecast; however, Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha had done so. The forecast was for southwesterly winds of force 4 - 5. It is not known if he was aware that a small craft warning was in force (see sea area forecast issued at 06.00 hrs 05/09/09, Appendix 11.1b)
- 3.4 The conditions in Kinvara Bay were calm. Once out of the bay, the wind increased and the seas became rougher, possibly due to the wind against current phenomenon. The '*Blath na hÓige*' was taking on water and one crew member was bailing. On the '*McHugh*', Mr. Josie Mac Donncha was at the helm and trimming the mainsail whilst Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha was trimming the jib. Both boats were on port tack (i.e. the wind was coming over the port side and the sails were out to starboard) and heading across Galway Bay toward the Beach Road.
- 3.5 While Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha was at the helm initially, Mr. Josie Mac Donncha took over about five minutes into the trip.
- 3.6 Both Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha and Mr. Josie Mac Donncha were very experienced Galway hooker sailors and highly regarded amongst their peers and others associated with Galway hookers of all types.
- 3.7 Since the revival of the Galway hookers in the late 1970's and 1980's, they have been largely used for racing at various traditional regattas around the west coast of Ireland. Since the beginning of this revival, a number of hookers, including at least one other gleoiteóg, have been lost due to capsize and sinking in sudden squalls.
- 3.8 Over the years, it appears that the size of sails used on the gleoiteógs has increased and the sail technology has advanced leading to a situation where the

traditionally built vessels are easily becoming over powered in a way that hitherto would not have been the case. Not only has the sail area increased to provide more power and thus greater speed, but battens have been introduced to improve sail shape and further increase power. It can be seen, when comparing photographs of vessels today with those taken during their working days that the spars have increased in length and the sails have a more aerodynamic shape.



Above are two photos of the 'McHugh', the top taken in 2009 and the bottom in 1990. Whilst the difference in sail and spar size is not dramatic, although the boom and gaff appear longer - both photos were taken post restoration - the 2009 photo clearly shows the more modern sails displaying considerably better shape with battens in the mainsail leading to significantly increased power

4. THE INCIDENT

- 4.1 A strong gust of wind hit the port side of the *'McHugh'* causing the boat to heel significantly and take on water over the starboard side. Though Mr. Josie Mac Donncha let the mainsail out and Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha let the jib out, the boat continued to capsize. At this point, Mr. Josie Mac Donncha commented to Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha that he thought they had lost her. The boat filled with water and began to sink throwing both Mr. Josie Mac Donncha and Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha into the water.
- 4.2 The lifejacket Mr. Josie Mac Donncha was wearing inflated automatically when he entered the water. He was about a boat length from Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha and could see that he was wearing a rain jacket but no lifejacket and was lying face down in the water.
- 4.3 The *'Blath na hÓige'* was about 50 metres downwind. The crew saw the *'McHugh'* sink very rapidly. The *'Blath na hÓige'* tacked around and returned to where Mr. Josie Mac Donncha and Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha were in the water, taking about 8 minutes to do so. Mr. Josie Mac Donncha was taken aboard and Mr. Gerry Folan from the *'Blath na hÓige'* jumped into the water to help Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha and bring him back to the boat. Both were then taken on board. The crew of the *'Blath na hÓige'* then attempted to resuscitate Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha.

5. EVENTS FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT

- 5.1 At 09.40 hrs, Mr. Martin Connolly on the *'Blath na hÓige'* made a 999 call to the Coast Guard station at Malin Head on his mobile phone to raise the alarm.
- 5.2 At 09.41 hrs, MRSC Malin Head advised MRSC Valentia of the situation. MRSC Valentia then took over co-ordination of the rescue.
- 5.3 At 09.45 hrs, MRSC Valentia tasked the Shannon based rescue helicopter R115 and the Galway inshore lifeboat to attend the scene. They were unable to make direct contact with the *'Blath na hÓige'*.
- 5.4 As the R115 was on exercise in the area, it was on scene at 09.57 hrs, although they had some difficulty locating the *'Blath na hÓige'* due to the sea state and deteriorating weather conditions at the time. They could also not make contact with the vessel via VHF and were therefore, unable to communicate with the crew.
- 5.5 Due to there being no VHF on *'Blath n hÓige'* R115 could not communicate with it to ask for the sails to be kept up in order to allow the winchman to be transferred on board.
- 5.6 The winchman was lowered from the R115 to the deck of the *'Blath n hÓige'* with difficulty due to the motion of the vessel. Once on board, Mr. Josie Mac Donncha was winched up into R115 at 10.06 hrs which then left for Galway docks where he was transferred to ambulance at 10.14 hrs and taken to Galway University Hospital.
- 5.7 The Galway inshore lifeboat *'Dochas'* arrived on scene at 10.10 hrs and the decision was taken to remove Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha to the lifeboat along with the R115 winchman. Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha had shown no signs of life during this and the conditions on the *'Blath na hÓige'* had made it impossible to further attempt resuscitation. The lifeboat then left the scene at 10.14 hrs and took Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha to Galway docks accompanied by the R115 winchman. Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha was then transferred to an ambulance at 10.18 hrs where the ambulance crew checked for signs of life and taken to Galway University Hospital where he was pronounced dead at approximately 12.45 hrs.
- 5.8 At 10.36 hrs, the inshore lifeboat returned to escort the *'Blath na hÓige'* into Galway Docks arriving at 11.04 hrs.

6. FINDINGS

- 6.1 The *'McHugh'* sank approximately 1.5 nautical miles WSW of Kilcolgan Point in Galway Bay (see location chart, Appendix 11.2).
- 6.2 The post mortem result showed that Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha died from asphyxia due to drowning.
- 6.3 The *'McHugh'* filled with water and sank very rapidly. These traditional types of boat have no inherent buoyancy and rely on rocks and stones placed in the bottom for ballast.
- 6.4 Neither the *'McHugh'* nor the *'Blath na hÓige'* were fitted with VHF radio and neither carried pyrotechnics.
- 6.5 There was no VHF unit on the *'McHugh'* and it is doubtful that the crew would have had the opportunity to use one in this incident. The alarm was raised with the Coast Guard by means of mobile phone from the accompanying vessel *'Blath na hÓige'* rather than by VHF using the emergency channel 16. The unavailability of VHF on the *'Blath na hÓige'*, caused significant problems for the R115 rescue helicopter initially in locating the vessel and then when trying to communicate with the crew to give instructions to enable the winchman to board safely.
- 6.6 In addition to the above finding in relation to the use of a mobile phone to raise the alarm in this incident, it should be noted that mobile phones are not open broadcast devices. A distress call put out by VHF on the emergency channel 16 will be picked up by any vessel within range that may be in a position to render assistance. Channel 16 is also constantly monitored by the coastguard who will instigate rescue procedures immediately upon receiving a distress call.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 If Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha had been wearing the lifejacket that was on board for him when he entered the water, it would, upon inflating, have turned him onto his back and kept his head above the water and increased his chances of survival.
- 7.2 Had a VHF radio been available to the crew of the *'Blath na hÓige'*, the R115 rescue helicopter would have located the casualty faster and with greater ease. The R115 crew would also have been able to communicate directly with them.
- 7.3 It was fortunate that R115 was carrying out exercises in the vicinity and was thus able to respond with great speed. Had this not been the case, the Galway inshore lifeboat would have been the first to respond. Without the aid of VHF and / or EPIRB or pyrotechnic devices (handheld flares, smoke flares, parachute flares) giving a position, the lifeboat crew would have found it extremely difficult to locate the casualty at sea level in the sea state that existed at the time.
- 7.4 This investigation has considered the use of mobile phones and has determined that their use is not recommended for emergency communications. Not only are they not waterproof and have a short battery life, but mobile phones are not open broadcast devices and an emergency call made on a mobile phone will not be heard by other craft in the vicinity that may otherwise be in a position to render assistance. The recently published Code of Practice for The Safe Operation of Recreational Craft recommends the fitting of an approved VHF unit, fixed or portable, capable of transmitting on at least channels 16, 13 and 6 in all recreational craft.
- 7.5 There are a number of factors that contributed to the sinking of the *'McHugh'* including:-
- The large and powerful sail area combined with the increasing wind speed and sudden squalls as the vessel entered open waters.
- 7.6 In compiling this Report, the Board wishes to join with Mr. Josie Mac Donnachadha in paying tribute to the bravery and courage of the crew of *'Blath na hÓige'*, the helicopter and lifeboat crews and the ambulance and hospital teams who took care of him and his brother, Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Whilst it is acknowledged that the 'McHugh', at 24' 8" (7.5 metres), falls just outside the 7 metre overall length cut off point in S.I. No. 921 of 2005, Pleasure Craft (Personal Flotation Devices and Operation) Regulations 2005 and that there were sufficient lifejackets on board at the time of this incident, as an open decked vessel with no inherent ballast it is recommended that lifejackets be worn by all crew at all times whilst aboard similar vessels as the time available in the event of an incident such as the one described in this report may not be sufficient to don such a device in an emergency.
- 8.2 Although it is not a requirement under current legislation, in order to aid rescue services should a vessel find itself in distress, it is recommended that they comply with the Department of Transport Code of Practice for The Safe Operation of Recreational Craft. In particular, the following safety devices should be carried on board when under way:
- Approved VHF with DSC, fixed or portable with spare battery.
 - Sufficient pyrotechnics (flares) appropriate to the voyage being undertaken.
 - An EPIRB mounted in a 'float free' bracket.
- 8.3 It is recommended that an accurate weather forecast including Gale Warnings and Small Craft Warnings should always be obtained prior to setting out on any voyage.
- 8.4 It is recommended that vessel owner/operators should give consideration to the use of delivery sails (sails of smaller size and easier to handle than racing sails) when making passage, especially when shorthanded.
- 8.5 It is recommended the Galway Hooker Association, the body running the hooker regattas, should give consideration to introducing a racing handicap system that is based on factors other than vessel overall length to include maximum sail sizes, minimum crewing, minimum equipment levels and other details perhaps drawing from the experience of other yacht racing handicap systems such as ECHO, IRC etc. This would allow vessels to compete on an even basis without the need to maximise sail area in order to increase speed and power.

9. ADDENDUM - INSPECTION OF "McHUGH" FOLLOWING RAISING AND REFLOATING.
- 9.1 Following on from information received, during the Natural Justice Process, that the "McHugh" had been raised from the seabed on 13th September 2009, the vessel was subsequently inspected afloat at anchor off Moyrus, Carna, Co. Galway on 31st August 2010. She was found to be in good general order having suffered no structural damage when she sank. There were no signs of damage indicating that the ballast might have shifted when the vessel became swamped and sank although most of the ballast was physically removed by divers prior to raising the vessel. No repair work was carried out or necessary prior to refloating the vessel.

This addendum in no way alters the outcome of the report.



Ballast wedged in place between stringers in the bottom of the hull.



The "McHugh" at anchor off Moyrus, Carna, Co. Galway.

10. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Battens	Thin laths inserted into the leech of a sail to stiffen the sail and provide shape
Boom	The horizontal spar along the bottom of the mainsail
Bow	The front of a boat
Channel 16	Emergency broadcast and call up channel on VHF radio
EPIRB	Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon
Galway Hooker	The traditional sailing vessel of Galway Bay. The hooker (húicéir in Irish) has one mast with a mainsail and two jibs. It is usually all black (due to its coating of pitch for protection) with red sails. There are four classes of Galway Hookers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bád Mór (Big Boat) Length - 35 to 44ft (10.5-13.5m) with decking forward of the mast. • Leath Bhád (Half Boat) Length - 28ft (10m) with decking forward of the mast. • Gleoiteóg Length - 24 to 28ft (7-9m) open, with no decking. • Púcán Length - 24 to 28ft (7-9m) open, with no decking but rigged with a lugsail.
Helm	To steer a boat
Jib	A triangular sail set forward of the mast
Leech	The trailing edge of a sail
Lugsail	A triangular sail lacking a boom flown from a yard hanging obliquely from the mast
Mainsail	The principal (largest) sail set on the mast
Port	Left hand side of a boat looking forward
Pyrotechnics	Distress flares
Reef	A portion of the lower part of a sail rolled or folded to reduce overall sail area
Sheet	A rope used to control a sail
Starboard	Right hand side of a boat looking forward

Stern	The back of a boat
Tack	To turn a boat, bow through the wind
Tumblehome	A feature of the hookers hull where the topsides curve inwards along each side.
VHF	Very High Frequency radio is installed on most seagoing small craft. It is used for a wide variety of purposes, including summoning rescue services and communicating with harbours, marinas and other vessels. It is 'open broadcast' meaning that any VHF radio in range, set to channel 16 will pick up a distress call from a vessel in trouble. It operates in the Very High Frequency range, between 156 to 174 MHz. A VHF set can be either fixed or portable.

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Appendix 11.1 Weather and Sea Conditions Report.



MET ÉIREANN
The Irish Meteorological Service

Glasnevin Hill,
Dublin 9, Ireland.

Cnoc Ghlas Naíon
Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire.
www.met.ie

Tel: +353-1-806 4200
Fax: +353-1-806 4247
E-mail: met.eireann@met.ie

Specialist field: Marine Meteorology
Reference: WS3018/2B/20090905m.doc

2 Weather and Sea conditions Report for Saturday 5th September 2009 between 04:00 hours and 10:00 hours UTC, Galway Bay Weather & Sea Conditions

Meteorological Situation

A Westerly airflow covered the area, a warm front with rain passed over the area in the early morning.

Winds: West to Southwest Beaufort Force 6 with maximum gusts of 31 knots


Weather: Intermittent rain

Visibility: Moderate to poor in rain, otherwise good

Sea State¹: Moderate to rough

¹ Sea State is for open ocean (see Section 0Wave Heights / State of Sea)

Appendix 11.1(a) Sea Area Forecast





MET ÉIREANN
The Irish Meteorological Service

Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9, Ireland. Cnoc Ghlas Naíon, Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire. Tel: +353-1-806 4200
www.met.ie Fax: +353-1-806 4247
E-mail: met.eireann@met.ie

Specialist field: Marine Meteorology
Reference: WS3018/2B/20090905m.doc

3 Sea Area Forecast

	<p>WeatherDial Fax Product Code 0021 General Forecasting Division Fax: 1870 131 838 Sea Area Forecast</p>	
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Sea Area Forecast until 0600 Sunday 06 September 2009
Issued at 0600 Saturday 05 September 2009

1. Gale warning: NIL
Small craft warning: in force

2. Meteorological situation at 0300: A west to southwest airflow covers Ireland. A warm front is moving eastwards across the northern half of the country.

3. Forecast for coasts from Slyne Head to Rossan Point to Fair Head:
Wind: West to southwest force 5 or 6 - reaching force 7 at times, mainly on the Donegal coast. Decreasing southwest to south force 4 or 5 tonight.

- Forecast for coasts from Fair Head to Carnsore Point to Roche's Point and for the Irish Sea:
Wind: West to southwest force 4 to 6. Decreasing southwest force 4 or 5 tonight.

- Forecast for coasts from Roche's Point to Loop Head to Slyne Head:
Wind: West to southwest force 5 or 6. Decreasing southwest force 4 or 5 later today or early tonight. Backing south to southeast force 4 to 6 later tonight.

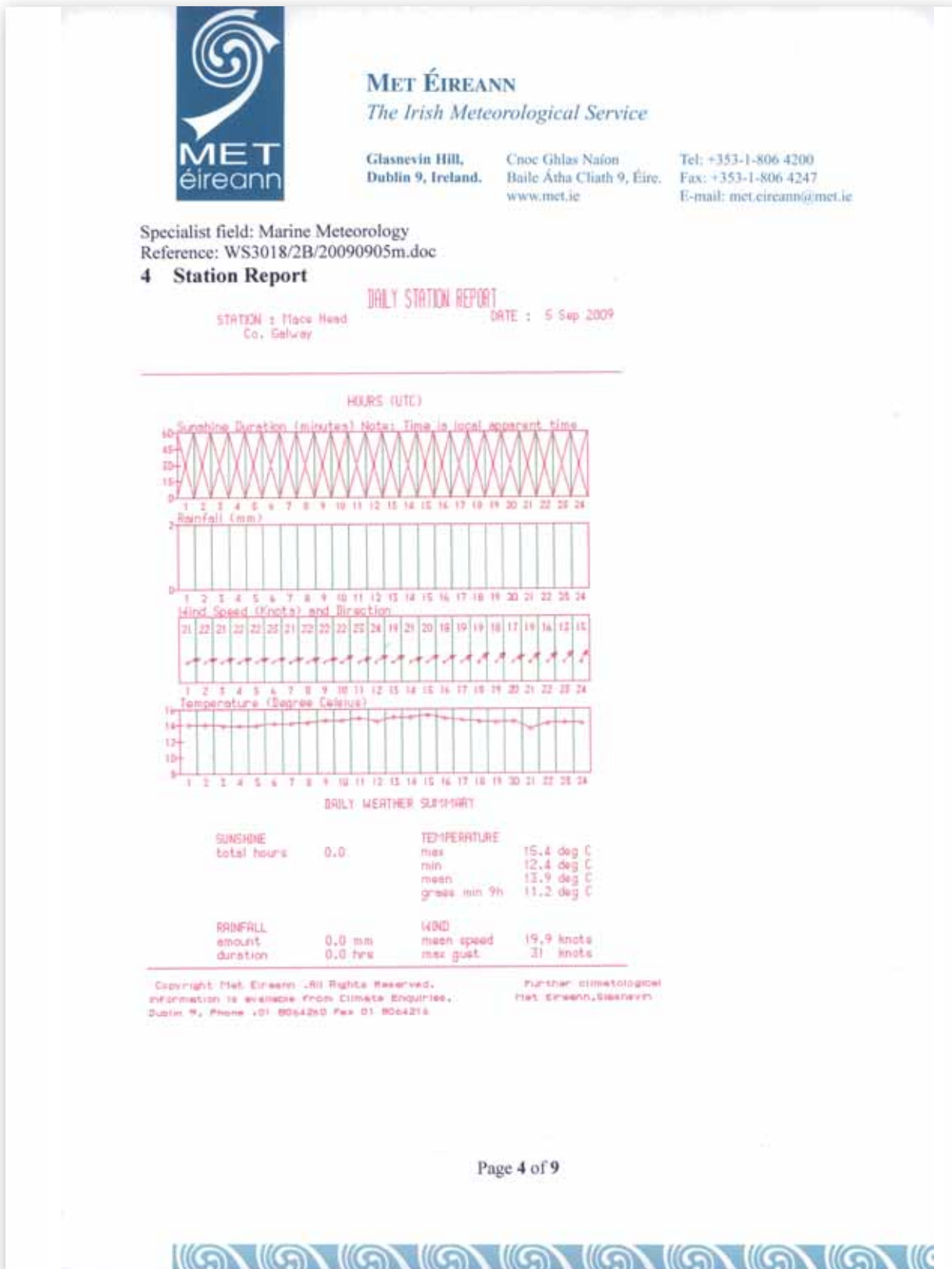
- Weather for all sea areas: Rain in places at first, chiefly on the west, north and northeast coasts and the north Irish Sea. Rain later tonight along the southwest and west coasts. Fair otherwise apart from a few scattered showers.

- Visibility for all sea areas: Moderate or poor in rain - otherwise, moderate to good - and remaining good throughout on the south and southeast coasts.

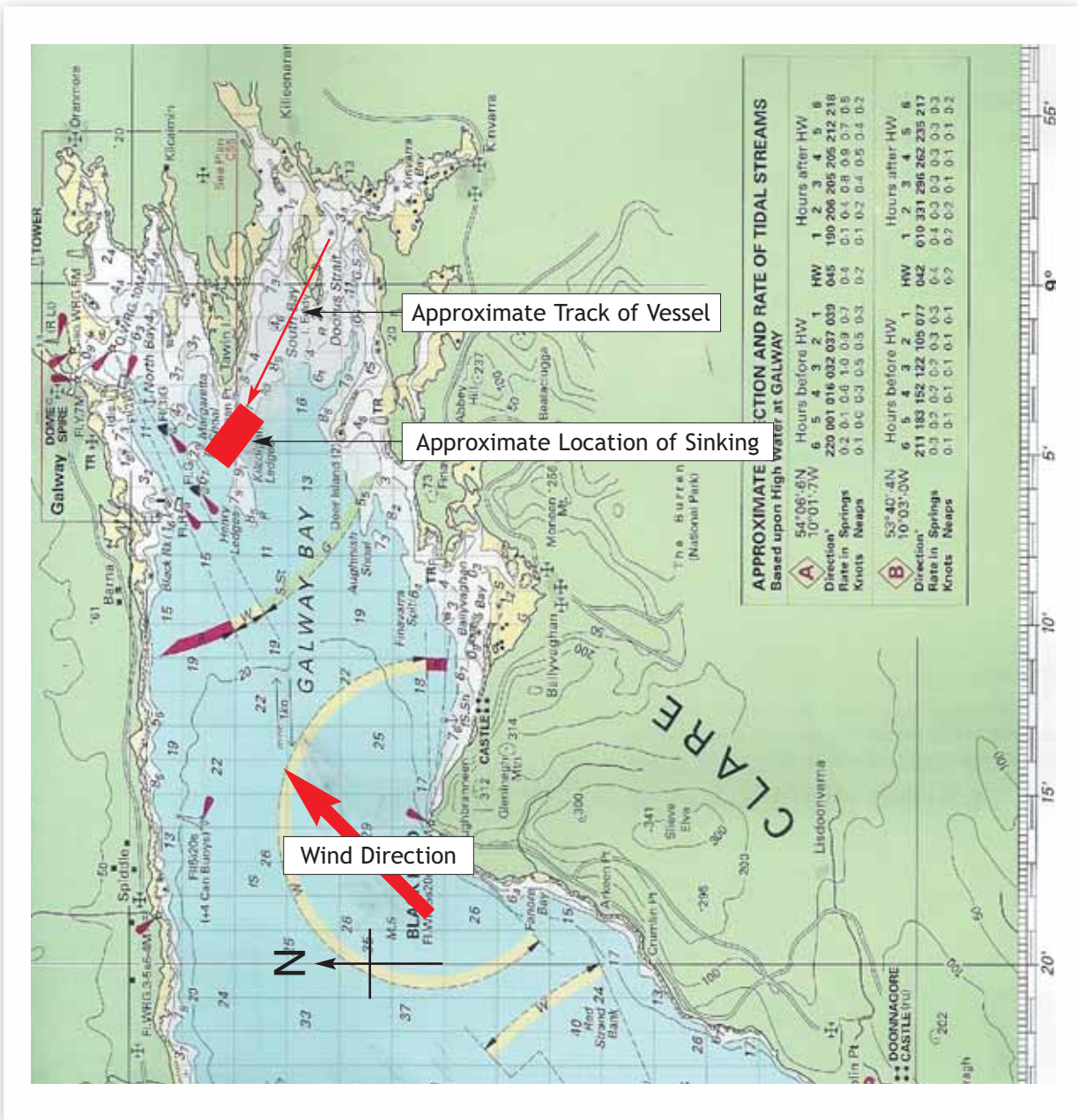
4. Outlook for a further 24 hours until 0600 Monday 07 September 2009: Winds increasing fresh or strong south to southeast, possibly reaching gale force locally - later decreasing moderate or fresh southwest to west.
Rain spreading northeastwards to all parts, with a risk of fog in the south. Clearer weather following to many areas later.

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Appendix 11.1(b) Station Report, Mace Head.



Appendix 11.2 Location Chart.



12. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

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Note: The address and contact details of individual respondents have been obscured for privacy reasons.

8-8-10

To
M.C.I.B.
KEESON LANE
Dublin 2.

A bhara,

In reply to your letter dated 13.7-'10 please find enclosed some observations I have made

Obs. 1. Synopsis 1.1. The Mc Hugh set sail from Kinvara. at approx 09.05 hrs. and not 06.00 hrs.

Obs. 2. Events prior to the incident
3.1 again time correction to 09.05 hrs
3.2. The bags of ballast mentioned. was not stowed in the bow but was stowed with the main ballast amidships.

Obs. 3. Findings.

6.1. The Mc Hugh. was recovered. the following Friday and towed to Rossaveil. (13.09.'09) and was brought to Carru by truck.
Hope this is in order.

I am, yours faithfully.

Seosán Mac Donncha.



MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this correspondence and has made the necessary amendments.

An Garda Síochána

An Leas-Choimisinéara
(Oibríochtaí)
An Garda Síochána
Ceanncheathrú na nGardaí
Páirc an Fhionn-Uisce
Baile Atha Cliath 8

Tel. / Teileafón (01) 666 2057/8/9

Fax. / Facs (01) 666 2060

Please quote the following Ref. No.
OPS79.13/09, WR23.89/09



Deputy Commissioner
(Operations)
An Garda Síochána
Garda Headquarters
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Web Site : www.garda.ie

E-mail : commissioner_ops@garda.ie

Your Reference: MCIB/176

Ms. Eve Reddin,
Secretariat,
Marine Casualty Investigation Board,
Leeson Lane,
Dublin 2.

AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER'S
OFFICE

- 4 AUG 2010

OPERATIONS
GARDA HEADQUARTERS

**Re: DRAFT Report of the Investigation into the sinking of the gleoiteóg
"Mc Hugh" on 5th September, 2009.**

Dear Ms. Reddin,

I am directed by Deputy Commissioner, Operations to refer to Mr. John O'Donnell's correspondence to the Commissioner in relation to the above matter dated the 13th July, 2010.

I wish to advise that the draft report in relation to this tragic incident has been reviewed and An Garda Síochána have no observations or submissions to make in respect of same.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Walsh
Superintendent for
Deputy Commissioner

HW AUGUST 10



Ráiteas Misin / Mission Statement :

Ag obair le Pobail chun iad a chosaint agus chun freastal orthu / Working with Communities to Protect and Serve

MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this correspondence.

Ms. Eve Reddin,
Secretariat,
Marine Casualty Investigation Board,
Leeson Lane,
Dublin 2.

R.E- DRAFT Report of the Investigation into the sinking of the 'McHugh'
on 5/09/2009.

Dear Ms. Reddin,

Thank you for forwarding the above report and for giving me the opportunity to offer my responses. I have included a number of corrections/observations which are listed below.

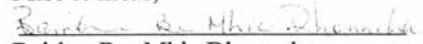
- 1) It is stated in the report (Section 3.1) that the 'Mc Hugh' left Kinvara, Co.Galway for Rossavel, Co.Galway at 06.00 hrs. This is incorrect. The crew of the 'McHugh' and the 'Bláth na hÓige' left Kinvara pier at approximately 09.10hrs and were rowed out in a currach by a local man to the 'Mc Hugh' and the 'Bláth na hÓige' which were anchored in the bay. Therefore the two boats set sail from Kinvara bay at approximately 09.30hrs.
- 2) In Section 3.2 of the report it is stated that the 'Mc Hugh' was ballasted with approximately 14cwt stones, some of which were stowed in the bow. This is incorrect. The correct position of the ballast will be clarified by Mr. Josie Mac Donncha, who was also aboard the 'McHugh', in his written response to your report.
- 3) The report states in Section 6.1 that the 'McHugh' has not since been recovered. This is incorrect. After a number of attempts, the vessel was recovered on September 11th 2009 by a crew of local people. I would like to raise the question as to why the Marine Casualty Investigation Board did not carry out an inspection of the boat after it had been recovered to assess what damage the boat had sustained or even if the MCIB made any attempt to find

out if the vessel had been located in the first place.

4) I would also like to draw your attention to a Section 3.3 relating to the weather forecast. My husband, Mr. Johnny Mac Donncha, had heard the weather forecast the previous night (September 4th) after the 9pm RTE News Bulletin. If a small craft warning had been issued the following morning, my husband was not aware of it. Johnny was a highly experienced seaman and was well aware of the dangers associated with the sea and poor weather conditions. If the weather was in any way unfavourable, Johnny would not have taken to sea.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the crew members onboard 'Bláth na hÓige' that day, the rescue services that assisted in the search and recovery operation as well as the ambulance and hospital staff at University College Hospital Galway.

Mise le meas,


Bairbre Bn. Mhic Dhonncha.



MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes that the investigator was not informed at the time of carrying out the investigation that the vessel had been raised. When so informed the report was amended to reflect this.



Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Admiral the Lord Boyce CCB CBE DL
Trustee: John Coyle MBE
Chief Executive: Paul Bossen

RNI (Trading) Ltd 01018373, RNI (Sales) Ltd 220240 and RNI (Enterprise) Ltd 1794000
are all companies registered at West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 1WZ

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Fax: (01) 8900458
www.lifeboats.ie

Inspector of Lifeboats : Martyn Smith

Mr. John O'Donnell, BL
Chairman
MCIB
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2

28 July 2010

Sir,

DRAFT REPORT INTO THE SINKING OF THE GLEOTEÓG "MCHUGH" ON 5TH SEPTEMBER 2009

Reference: yr letter MCIB/176 dated 13th July 2010

It is tragic that a day sail ended in this way and I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Johnny Mac Donnachdha on their sad loss.

It is clear that those who find themselves in trouble afloat, especially close inshore, are increasingly turning to mobile phones to alert the Search and Rescue authorities of their predicament. Whilst this trend is understandable an approved marine VHF radio can, in certain circumstances, be the surest and most timely means of alerting the Coast Guard of an incident occurring at sea.

It is our experience that mobile phone cover cannot be relied upon even close inshore and the lack of open broadcast restricts the flow of vital information to all those involved in maritime search and rescue both at sea and ashore.

In addition, all RNI All Weather Lifeboats, many inshore lifeboats belonging to both the RNI and other organisations and SAR helicopters have direction finding equipment that can use VHF transmissions to home in on a casualty. Use of such equipment is a simple but effective way of reducing search time and getting help to those finding themselves in peril as fast as possible.

Kindest regards


Martyn Smith
Divisional Inspector of Lifeboats
Ireland



The RNI is the charity that saves lives at sea

Charity number CHY 2678 in the Republic of Ireland and registered in England and Wales (209608) and Scotland (SC037796)

MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this correspondence.

Irish Coast Guard
GARDA CÓSTA na hÉIREANN



26 July 2010

Ms Eve Reddin
Secretariat
Marine Casualty Investigation Board
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2

Draft Report of the Investigation into the sinking of the gleoiteóg 'McHugh' on 5 September 2009

Dear Ms Reddin,

We wish to extend our sympathies to the family of Mr Johnny MacDonnachdha. We have no further comments or observations to make on this Report except to strongly endorse the Board's recommendations at 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3. We do not object to our observations appearing in the final report.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Smith
Irish Coast Guard Admin
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2



MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this correspondence.