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MCIB
Marine Casualty Investigation Board

REPORT OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE SINKING OF THE IRISH FISHING VESSEL "WESTERN EXPLORER" 10 MILES NORTH OF KILKEE, CO. CLARE, ON 23RD MARCH 2003.

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board was established on the 23rd, May 2002 under The Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act 2000

CONTENTS

1. SYNOPSIS.

1.1 On 22nd March 2003 at about 1600 hours, the fishing vessel "Western Explorer" sailed from the port of Fenit, Co. Kerry. Whilst engaged in fishing to the North of Kilkee, Co. Clare, the vessel suffered flooding of the fish hold and engine room and subsequently sank at 1045 hours on 23rd March 2003 in position 52° 50.53' North, 9° 47.2' West. The crew of the vessel were evacuated before the vessel sank and there were no injuries or fatalities.

2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

2.1 Principal Particulars of the fishing vessel "Western Explorer"

Length (Registered)	14.9 metres
Breadth	6.2 metres
Moulded Depth	2.75 metres
Gross Tonnage	62
Register Tonnage	18
Port of Registry	Skibbereen
Fishing Number	S 34
Year of Build	1984
Where Built	Arklow. Co. Wicklow
Main Engine	Volvo Penta TMD 120B. Six-cylinder diesel engine
Registered Power	253.6 KW.
Speed	9 knots
Owner.	Mr. Vincent Browne
Address	Castlegregory, Co. Kerry.

2.2 Description of Vessel.

Timber fishing vessel of carvel construction with a raised fore deck and with a transom stern. The engine room was situated towards the forward part of the vessel with the fish hold in the space immediately aft of it. There was a steering compartment in the aft part of the vessel. The superstructure, of steel construction, contained the wheelhouse and accommodation and was situated in the forward part of the vessel above the engine room. The timber fishing deck aft of the superstructure was equipped with the net pounds and machinery etc. At the time of the incident the vessel was rigged to perform gill net fishing.

2.3 Lifesaving Appliances

Liferaft	One 6 man (On hire and last serviced February 2003)
Lifebuoys	Two. (Fitted with smoke and light)
Lifejackets	Six. (Fitted with light)
Pyrotechnics	At least ten rocket parachute flares
Radar Transponder	One
Radio Beacon (EPIRB)	One (406 MHz)
Line throwing Appliance	One
Portable VHF Radio	One (Icom M55)
Personal Flotation Device	Each Crewmember.

2.4 Fire fighting Appliances

Emergency Fire Pump	One. (Manual pump fitted in the steering space and with changeover valves for operation of engine sprinkler system)
Fire Hose, Nozzle.	One, for the above pump.
Fire Extinguishers.	Four. (Also fire blanket for galley and gas leakage detector fitted)

2.5 Other (Relevant to incident)

Belt driven bilge pump powered by diesel generator in engine room.
An electric, Rule 2000 Bilge Pump (2000 US Gallons/hour) in the engine room.
"Skagen" (Lever) type manual bilge pump on deck with suction from fish hold.

2.6 Navigational / Radio Equipment

Radar	One (Furuno RDP 080)
Plotter	Two (Sodena & Shipmate RS 2500)
GPS	Two (Furuno Navigator)
Autopilot	One (Cetrek)
GMDSS	Furuno Area A2 installation
Alarms	Engine alarms and machinery space bilge level alarm.

2.7 Crew of "Western Explorer"

The following persons made up the crew of the vessel on the day of the incident:

Mr. Vincent Browne.	Aged 34 of Castlegregory, Co. Kerry. Mr Browne was both owner and Skipper of the vessel and holds a General Operators Certificate for the Global Maritime Distress Satellite Service. (GMDSS)
Mr. John Finn.	Aged 29 of Castlegregory, Co. Kerry. Mr Finn was employed as a deckhand onboard and holds no formal maritime qualification.
Mr. Brent James.	Aged 25 of Tralee, Co. Kerry. Mr James was employed as a deckhand onboard and holds no formal maritime qualification.
Mr. Eugene Staunton.	Aged 25 of Castlegregory, Co. Kerry. Mr. Staunton was employed as deckhand onboard and holds no formal maritime qualification.
Mr. Colm Sheehy.	Aged 33 of Fenit, Co. Kerry. Mr Sheehy was employed as deckhand and cook onboard and holds no formal maritime qualification.

3. EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

3.1 The vessel manned and equipped as stated in Section 2 of this report, sailed from Fenit, Co. Kerry at about 1600 hours on 22nd March 2003.

3.2 The vessel proceeded towards fishing grounds around the Aran Islands and commenced shooting nets at about 1930 hrs that evening. This operation was complete by about 2100 hours

3.3 The crewmembers, apart from Mr. Sheehy (the cook), maintained watches through the night.

3.4 Mr. Sheehy turned to at around 0700 hours on the 23rd March 2003 in order to prepare the crew breakfast.

4. THE INCIDENT

4.1 On the morning of the 23rd March 2003, at approximately 07.20 hours, Mr. Sheehy the deckhand / cook onboard "Western Explorer" proceeded to the fish hold in order to fetch food for the crew breakfast. Upon entering, Mr. Sheehy noticed that there was water in the hold and that some loose planks were floating.

4.2 Mr. Sheehy went to the wheelhouse and informed the Skipper, Mr. Browne, of what he had seen and then resumed his normal duties.

4.3 Mr. Browne went down into the fish hold and seeing that the water was up to the floor level proceeded to the engine room in order to start the bilge pumps. He opened the appropriate valves for pumping the fish hold-forward bilge suction, started the diesel generator and engaged the belt drive for this bilge pump. He also started the electric bilge pump. After approximately ten minutes Mr. Browne went back to the fish hold and formed the opinion that the water level was going down. He then returned to the engine room and noticed that the water level in this space was now rising. Mr. Browne changed the valves over in order to pump the engine room bilge and then proceeded back up to the wheelhouse. Upon arriving in the wheelhouse he noticed that the bilge alarm for the engine room had activated.

4.4 As a precaution Mr. Browne then attempted to call Shannon Radio on the VHF to inform them of the vessel's situation. Clifden Coast Guard responded to the call at 0801 hours and Mr. Browne stated to the Coast Guard that he would report back in ten minutes in order to update them on the situation.

4.5 Mr. Browne then returned to the engine room and then to the fish hold and noting that the water level had risen in both spaces, he told Mr. Sheehy to call the remainder of the crew. Mr. Browne returned to the wheelhouse and updated the Coast Guard of the situation at 0827 hours. The Coast Guard had in the meantime already instigated a search and rescue operation, as the "Western Explorer" had not called back by 0811 hours and had requested the Rescue Helicopter from Shannon to be launched at 0814 hours. Other vessels in the area were requested to assist and the fishing vessel "Westbound" was subsequently tasked to attend, together with the Aran Lifeboat.

4.6 The Skipper noted that the engine room now seemed to be flooding rapidly and shortly afterwards the generator (driving the bilge pump) stopped and the main engine stopped after a further five minutes. The crew readied the liferaft and donned their lifejackets.

4.7 At 0841 hours the Rescue helicopter arrived on scene and the winchman was landed on to the "Western Explorer" together with a salvage pump and associated equipment. This pump was started successfully and the suction hose was placed in the engine compartment. However, the pumping operation did not go well. The discharge from the pump was seen to be erratic, varying from a trickle and only occasionally was a good flow observed. Attempts were made by the crew and by the winchman to improve the pumping rate by moving the suction hose and by bleeding the pump but with no success.

4.8 At 0917 hours the fishing vessel "Westbound" arrived on scene. At 0925 hours the decision was made to evacuate the non-essential crew and the "Westbound" was able to go alongside the "Western Explorer" and evacuate four crewmembers. Mr. Browne and the Winchman remained onboard "Western Explorer" and continued the pumping operation.

4.9 At 0946 hours the Aran Islands Lifeboat arrived on scene and by 0952 hours had transferred it's salvage pump onto the "Western Explorer". This pump appeared to function satisfactorily.

4.10 At 0957 hours, a request was made for a further pump as the capacity available onboard did not appear to be sufficient to reduce the water level which was continuing to rise.

4.11 At 1007 hours with the level of water still rising and no other pump immediately available, the skipper, Mr. Browne made the decision to abandon the vessel. All remaining personnel were evacuated by 1012 hours.

4.12 The "Western Explorer" sank in position 52° 50.53' North, 9° 47.2' West at approximately 1045 hours. (See Appendix 8.1.)

4.13 At the time of the incident the weather conditions were fair with an East to Southeast force 2 to 4 wind and a slight sea. (See Met Eireann Sea Area Forecast in Appendix 8.2.)

5. EVENTS FOLLOWING INCIDENT

5.1 The rescue helicopter transferred the skipper and the four crewmembers to Shannon and they were able to return home later in the day.

5.2 The Aran Lifeboat retrieved the "Western Explorers" unopened liferaft canister and cleared the area of as much flotsam as possible before standing down.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

6.1 The "Western Explorer" was lost due to ingress of water into the vessel.

6.2 There was no grounding or collision, nor was there any incident relating to the fishing gear prior to or during the incident. None of the crew could recall any previous flooding incidents onboard in the months leading up to the incident.

6.3 The source of the water ingress appeared to be in the fish hold, which flooded first. It is likely that the flooding was caused by one or more of the following factors: -
a) Water ingress through the hull below the waterline due to structural failure of the planking and / or sealing.
b) Water ingress due to failure of the stern gland.
c) Water ingress due to failure of a "skin" fitting / ship's side valve or pipe. (The vessel had previously been equipped for "razor" fishing and the redundant valves for this system were still in place in the fish hold, though the pipe work had been removed).
d) Water ingress due to some other unexplained act or event.

6.4 The "Western Explorer" had recently undergone a maintenance / repair programme which included a Survey afloat by an independent company, Ballycotton Marine Services Ltd. The vessel was reported to be in good condition in this report and deficiencies / recommendations had been dealt with prior to the incident. (See Appendix 8.3)

6.5 The bilge alarm in the machinery space sounded only after the fish hold had flooded to a level where progressive flooding of the engine room had already begun. The provision of a suitable bilge level alarm for this space would have alerted the crew at a much earlier stage and may have allowed them to identify the source of the water ingress and thus take appropriate measures to restrict or stop such in flow of water. This measure alone may have been sufficient to save the vessel. The presence of redundant large diameter seawater valves in the fish hold created an increased flooding risk, which should have underlined the need for such bilge level alarms to be fitted.

6.6 The electric pump was of a submersible type and should have continued to function after it became immersed. However the survey report of January 2003 identified that the wiring and electrical fittings were only in a "fair condition"/poor state throughout the vessel. The submersible operating mode of this type of bilge pump relies to a great extent on the wiring connections being made to a high standard. If water had entered the electrical connections in the wiring to the pump motor, the electrical supply may have failed at an early stage in the incident.

6.7 The progressive flooding into the engine room resulted in the loss of main electrical and propulsive power at an early stage. This also resulted in the vessel's generator driven bilge pump becoming inoperative. The non-watertight status of the bulkhead between the engine room and the fish hold was an important contributory factor in the cause of the vessel's loss.

6.8 The manual bilge pump on the deck was not operated during the incident as the Skipper considered it to be of little use.

6.9 The action of Mr. Browne, the Skipper, in informing the Coast Guard at an early stage and before the situation had deteriorated to a serious nature, allowed the emergency services more time in organising the rescue effort.

6.10 The crew were able to ready the lifesaving appliances in case they needed to abandon ship before help arrived.

6.11 The attempts to pump the water out of the vessel with the salvage pump delivered by the Rescue Helicopter failed. The probable cause is that debris in the engine room kept on being drawn into the pump's hose, restricting the flow of water. This pump was subsequently tested and performed satisfactorily with clean water.

6.12 Non-essential crew were removed from the vessel in good time. The final decision to abandon the vessel was made in good time so that the risk to all concerned was reduced.

6.13 With the possible exception of there being only ten rocket flares instead of the prescribed twelve, the vessel complied with the applicable Life-Saving Rules. [SI No. 100 of 1967 Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances) Rules, 1967 as amended.]

6.14 There were no requirements for the vessel to carry a Certificated Deck Officer as the Registered Length is below 16.5 metres and similarly no Certificated Engineer Officer was required, as the Registered Power was below 750 KW.

6.15 Notwithstanding the fact that the vessel had recently been surveyed afloat at the owner's request, this type of survey could not verify the condition of important structural and watertight integrity details such as hull fastenings, sea inlet connections etc. A detailed "out of the water" survey would have identified any defects in such areas.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That the introduction of relevant survey and inspection regulations be prioritised for fishing vessels of less than 24 metres in length.

7.2 That such new regulations relating to "existing vessels," should prioritise issues relating to hull integrity as the first "building block" in improving the safety of such vessels. Other requirements should be either immediately introduced or phased in, following evaluation utilising an appropriate risk assessment technique.

7.3 That such risk assessment techniques should take in to consideration the fishing methods utilised by such vessels.

7.4 Any changes made to the onboard machinery arrangements of such vessels should be required to be approved by a competent authority so as to ensure that additional safety measures, which are deemed necessary, are put in place before the vessel is put back into service following such changes. (e.g. Vessels converted for use in razor fishing should always be equipped with additional bilge level alarms positioned so as to give appropriate early warning of flooding from the large diameter seawater piping systems onboard.)

7.5 Consideration should be given to amending the Fishing Vessel (Basic Safety Training) Regulations, 2001 (SI No. 587 of 2001), so that the Skipper or other crewmembers serving onboard small fishing vessels which operate without duly certificated officers have received relevant basic training in: -
(i) Operation and maintenance of marine machinery
(ii) Basic damage control techniques
(iii) Basic stability etc.

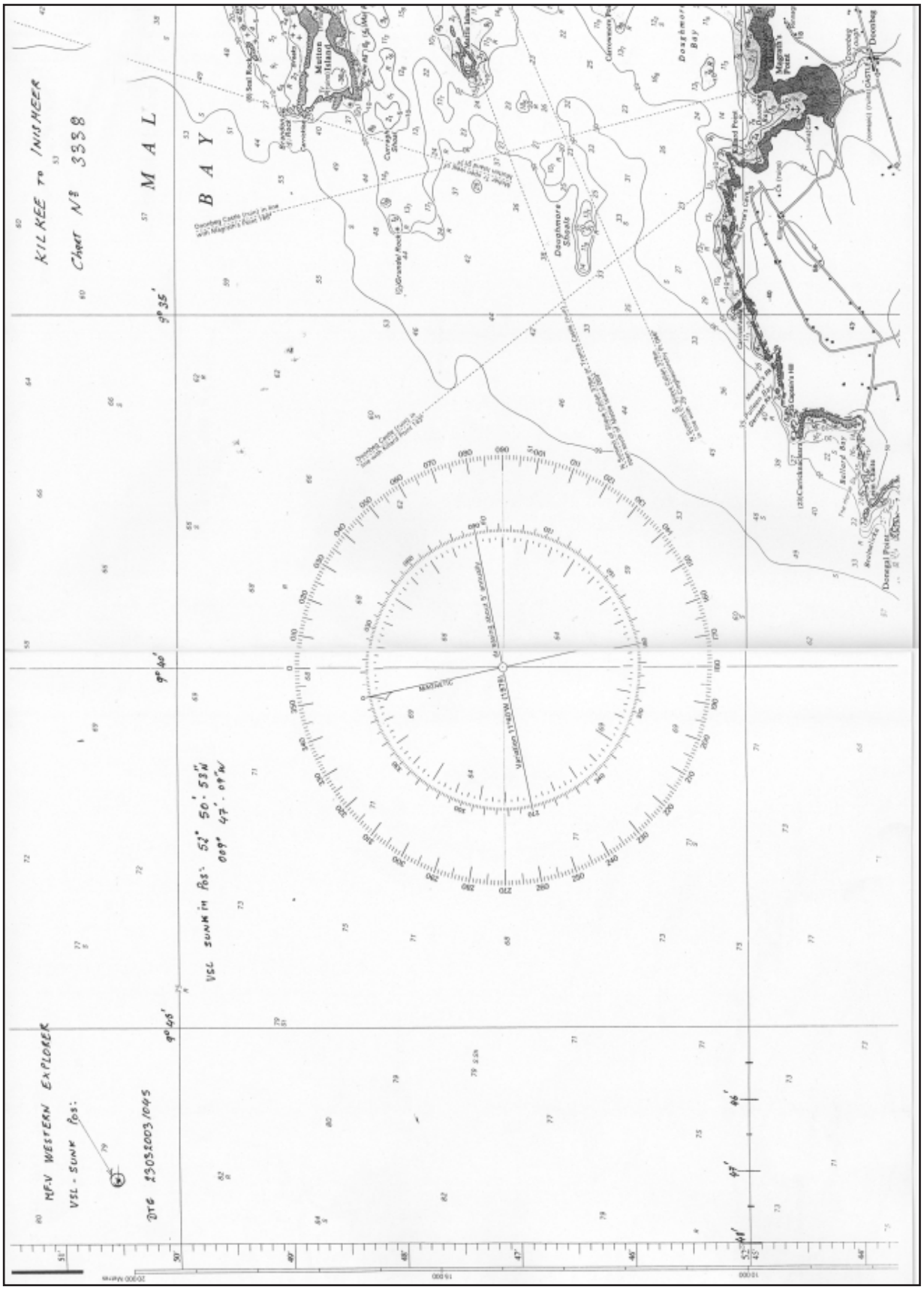
8. APPENDICES

8.1 Chart Extract showing the position of the sinking

8.2 Weather Forecast from Met Eireann

8.3 Ballycotton Marine Services Ltd, Survey Report on "Western Explorer" dated 03/01/03 and follow up notice of 08/03/03.

8.1 Chart Extract showing the position of the sinking



8.2 Weather Forecast from Met Eireann

WeatherDial Fax Product Code 0021

General Forecast Division

Fax : 1570 131 838

Sea Area Forecast

WEATHERDIAL

Sea Area Forecast until : 0600 hours Monday, 24-Mar-2003
Issued at 0600 hours Sunday, 23-Mar-2003

1. Gale warning: NIL

2. Meteorological Situation 0600: A mostly moderate Southeast to East airflow covers Ireland. A showery trough will move Northeastwards across the country tonight.

3. Forecast for coasts from Belfast Lough to Howth Head to Carnsore Point and for the Irish Sea:

Wind : Easterly or variable, force 2 to 4, becoming Southeasterly force 3 or 4 later today, later veering South to Southwest.

Forecast for coasts from Carnsore Point to Roches Point to Valentia:

Wind : East to Northeast, force 4 or 5, possibly force 6 at times today in the South, gradually veering Southeast to South, force 4, by midnight, later veering South to Southwest.

Forecast for coasts from Valentia to Erris Head to Belfast Lough :

Wind : Mainly between East and Southeast today, force 2 to 4, increasing Southeasterly force 3 or 4 this evening, later veering South.

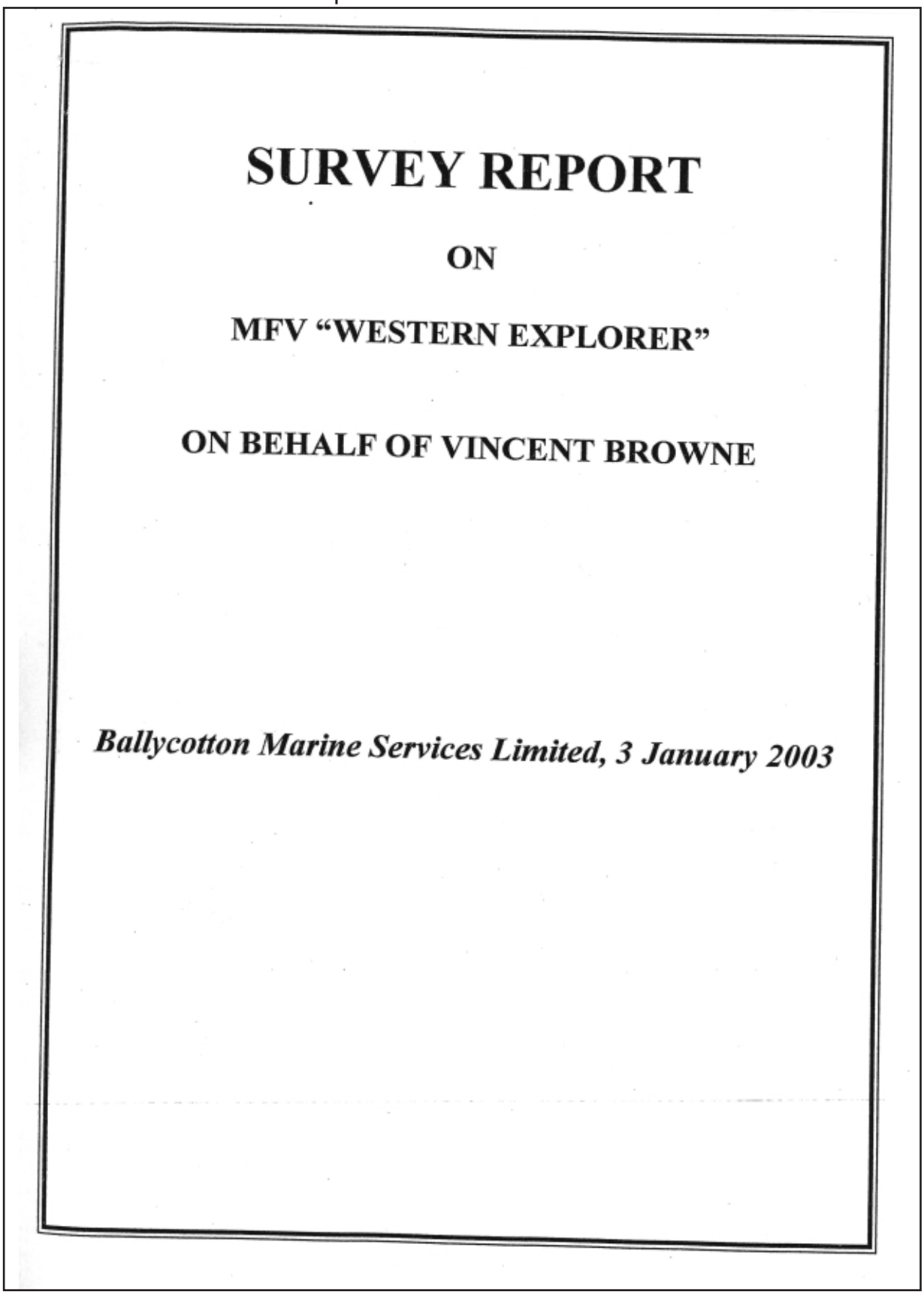
Weather for all sea areas : Fair today, apart from local patches of mist and haze. Showery rain developing in the South later today, extending Northwards tonight.

Visibility for all sea areas : Mostly moderate to good, but poor at times locally, especially tonight.

3a. Warning of Heavy Swell : Nil

4. Outlook for a further 24-hours until 0600 hours, Tuesday, 25-Mar-2003 :
Moderate South to Southwest winds, later backing South to Southeast. Mainly fair weather, but further patches of mist and haze.

8.3 Ballycotton Marine Services Ltd, Survey Report on "Western Explorer" dated 03/01/03 and follow up notice of 08/03/03.



SURVEY REPORT

ON

MFV "WESTERN EXPLORER"

ON BEHALF OF VINCENT BROWNE

Ballycotton Marine Services Limited, 3 January 2003

Ballycotton Marine Services Limited

Marine & Commodity Surveyors
Consulting Engineers
Representing American Bureau of Shipping
Representing ABS IV & ABS MSL

Chapel Road
Ballycotton,
Co. Cork,
Ireland.

Telephone 021 4646839
Facsimile 021 4646873

Our Ref. BMS/132/02

3rd January 2003

SURVEY REPORT

THIS IS TO CERTIFY

that at the request of Mr Vincent Browne and on behalf of Mr Browne and those concerned the undersigned Surveyor did attend survey onboard the timber built, single screw, motor fishing vessel

MFV "WESTERN EXPLORER" - S34

60.88 Gross Registered Tons of the Port of Skibbereen

in order to carry out survey of the vessel for licencing purposes only.

General Description of the Vessel

Traditionally Irish built timber vessel of carvel construction with a raked stem and transom stern. The vessel was fitted with a forward superstructure and machinery space. Below the main deck the vessel was subdivided into engine room compartment, fish hold, and steering gear compartment. On the aft end of the main deck a aluminium net pound was provided. The vessel was powered by a Volvo Penta TMD 120 B, six cylinder, four stroke, diesel engine driving a variable pitch propeller through a reduction gearbox. At time of survey the vessel was in the process of being rigged for gill net fishing.

continued.

Registered in Ireland No. 98790, Directors M. J. Connolly, C.T. Connolly, VAT No. IE 4682481 M

Vessel's Principal Particulars

L.O.A.	16.68 mts.
Registered Length	15.39 mts.
Breadth Moulded	06.25 mts.
Depth	02.90 mts.
Gross Registered Tons	60.88 tons.
Year of Build	1984
Builder	John Tyrrell & Sons, Arklow.
Main Engine	Volvo Penta TMD 120B, six cylinder, four stroke, turbocharged, diesel engine of approximately 240 KW at 1,800 RPM, driving a three bladed, variable pitch propeller through a Pay & Brink, reduction gearbox.

Particulars believed to be correct but not guaranteed.

Definitions

In this report the following nomenclature is used to describe the condition of items and components:-

Good/Satisfactory	Unimpaired condition without significant wear or deviation from original strength and operating efficiency. No maintenance or repair required.
Fair:	Condition with wear and tear and other deficiencies of minor nature not requiring correction or repair.
Poor:	Condition in which the adequacy of strength and/or operational efficiency is marginally below acceptable limits or is doubt. Remedial action is required.
Unsatisfactory:	Condition of undoubtedly inadequate strength or operational efficiency. Immediate extensive repair or renewal required to reinstate serviceability.

continued./

It is to be clearly understood that the condition/state of items hereafter reported upon are strictly the opinion of the undersigned and that opinion reflects the condition/state found on dates of survey.

If a specific item is not mentioned, it may be considered that each item was during this inspection found to be in such a state that it can be described as fair, under the above mentioned restrictions or could not be inspected and condition ascertained.

30th December 2002

On this date proceeded to the vessel whilst lying afloat at Fenit, Co. Kerry found and noted as follows.

Hull Externally

The hull external planking from the waterline to the bulwark as far as could be seen was generally in a fair to good condition with no evidence of rot or decay apparent.

The hull caulking of the vessel was found to be in a good condition.

Minor abrasive damages were evident on the hull topsides at selected locations but the extent of damages is of no consequence.

Deck and Deck Machinery

The timber main deck of the vessel was noted to be in a fair condition with minor mechanical wear apparent at selected locations. The extent of wear is at present of no consequence.

Deck caulking was generally in a fair condition.

Bulwarks, bulwark stanchions and bulwark rails were generally found to be in a good to fair condition.

The aluminum net pound fitted on the main deck were found to be in a good condition and satisfactorily attached to the structure of the vessel.

The deck machinery mainly consisted of a Spencer Carter NH 10 net hauler and a landing winch, both were noted to be in an apparent satisfactory condition.

Vent plugs were noted to be missing from selected vents around the vessel mainly on the foredeck. We would recommend that the missing wooden plugs be provided.

No flame arrestor bronze gauzes were fitted to the fuel tank vents. We would recommend that flame arrestor gauzes be fitted to the fuel tank vents.

continued./

Selected freeing ports were provided with sliding closing plates, if plates are in position the freeing ports are effectively closed. We would therefore recommend that the sliding plates be removed.

Steering Gear Compartment

The steering gear compartment was structurally found to be in a satisfactory condition, with no evidence of rot or decay apparent in timberwork.

The steel bulkhead between the steering gear compartment and the fish hold was noted to be in a fair/poor condition with corrosion apparent particularly on the lower section. The door between the fish hold and steering gear compartment was missing and requires to be replaced.

The vessel is fitted with a Tenjford rotary vane type steering gear, there was no evidence of any oil leaks from the steering gear.

Fitted in the steering gear compartment, is the hand operated fire pump complete with change over valves for fire hose and sprinkler system. The pump and change over valves were found to be seized and require to be freed out. The hose was found to be missing and requires to be renewed and a nozzle fitted.

The fuel tanks fitted in the steering gear compartment were noted to be in a fair condition externally with some corrosion apparent.

Fish Hold

The fish hold was found to be in a reasonably clean and tidy condition.

No evidence of rot or decay noted in planking. All frames, beams, floors, stringers and hog as far as could be seen in a sound condition, free from rot and decay and with no evidence of corrosion on through fastenings.

The propeller intermediate shaft passing through the fish hold was found to be in an acceptable condition.

The refrigeration system evaporators in the fish hold were found to be in a good condition and adequately secured to the deckhead.

Engine Room

The engine room is at the forward end of the vessel and was found to be in a reasonably clean and tidy condition.

continued./

All frames, beams, floors, stringers, apron and deadwoods as far as could be seen in a sound condition, free from rot and decay with no evidence of corrosion apparent on through fastenings.

The engine room was fitted with a Volvo Penta TMD 120B, six cylinder, four stroke, turbocharged, diesel engine of approximately 240 KW at 1,800 RPM, driving a three bladed, variable pitch propeller through a Pay & Brink, reduction gearbox. At time of survey the main engine was not opened up for inspection or seen running, therefore no opinion can be given as to the external condition of the engine. However, no obvious oil, water or fuel leaks were apparent. We were informed that the engine had a substantial overhaul in 1997.

Driven off the front end of the main engine is a North Sea front end gearbox with a hydraulic clutch driving a Sour squash plate pump for the vessel's main hydraulically driven deck machinery. The main engine also drives a 24 volt Transmotor alternator, power steering pump and a 12 volt alternator.

A three cylinder air cooled Lister auxiliary engine is fitted on the port aft side of the engine room. The engine driving a bilge pump, alternator and washdeck pump.

The fresh water pneupress system fitted in the engine room was noted to be defunct and a complete new system will be required to be fitted if running fresh water is required around the vessel.

The refrigeration machinery was stated to have been fully renewed in 2001 and was in an apparent satisfactory condition.

The engine room ventilation fans had been removed from the vessel. While it is not necessary for the vessel's safety we would consider it prudent to have ventilation fans in the engine room.

The engine room high level bilge alarm was found to be operational.

No protection guards were fitted over the belt drives at the front end of the engine. We would recommend that protection be fitted over drives at the front end of the engine.

Superstructure

The vessel is fitted with a steel superstructure at the forward end of the vessel, the structure was found to be in a fair condition with no significant corrosion evident.

Fitted in the superstructure is the wheelhouse, galley, W.C. compartment and accommodation.

continued./

The accommodation consists of a two berth cabin on the port side and a four berth cabin on the starboard side. The accommodation was found to be in a reasonably clean and tidy condition. The panelling in accommodation was noted to be in a fair condition. The soft furnishings were generally in a poor condition and majority will require refurbishing or renewal.

The galley was found to be in a reasonably clean and tidy condition. The panelling in the galley was noted to be in a fair condition. The galley is fitted with a gas cooker which was noted to be in a fair condition.

The W.C. compartment was found to be in a reasonably clean and tidy condition and fitted with a marine type toilet.

The wheelhouse was found to be in a reasonably clean and tidy condition.

The following equipment was noted to be fitted in the wheelhouse.

1. Furuno RDP 080 radar.
2. Icom M 55 VHF Radio.
3. Furuno GPS Navigator.
4. Furuno GPS GP 50 Navigator.
5. Cetrek auto pilot.
6. Engine alarms.
7. Sodena Plotter.
8. Shipmate RS 2500 Plotter.
9. Furuno A2 GMDSS radio station and equipment.

Ancillary Equipment.

At the time of survey new deck lights and stern navigation light were in the process of being fitted.

The vessel's bilge pumping was achieved by the auxiliary engine driven bilge pump an electric bilge pump fitted in the engine room and a Skagen type bilge pump situated on the deck.

continued./

Wiring, light and electrical fittings throughout the vessel were in a fair/poor condition, the electrical system requires to be checked out by a competent electrician, generally tidied up and any deficiencies dealt with.

All safety equipment was noted to be in date and in compliance with statutory requirements.

Whilst there was no stability information onboard or any supplied when the vessel was new. The owner has commissioned McCaig Watson Limited to incline the vessel and issue a full stability book. We were given to understand that the inclining experiment will be conducted in February 2003.

Summary of Primary Recommendations

1. To fit door between steering gear compartment and the fish hold.
2. To make hand operated fire and sprinkler pump operational and provide hose and nozzle.
3. To provide missing plugs to vents.
4. To fit flame arrestor gauze to fuel tanks.
5. To fit guard over front end drives on the main engine.
6. To remove sliding blanking plates on freeing ports.
7. To complete fitting of deck lights and stern navigation light.

Conclusion

From our inspection of the vessel we would be of the opinion that the vessel is a staunch well constructed vessel, with no major structural defects or deficiencies apparent.

Once the primary recommendations as embodied in this report have been effected, we would have no hesitation in recommending to anyone concerned the suitability of the vessel for fishing in Irish waters.

continued./

"Western Explorer" -8- 3 January 2003

Limitations to Survey.

1. We have not inspected woodwork/steel or other parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible and we are, therefore, unable to report that any such part of structure is free from defect.
2. No machinery seen opened up at time of survey.
3. No panels or bulkheads other than those which are normally portable removed for survey.
4. No tanks inspected internally.
5. Vessel surveyed afloat.
6. No fastenings removed for survey.

M. J. Connolly.

Michael Connolly C.Eng., F.I.Mar.Eng., A.C.I. Arb., MCMS.
Ballycotton Marine Services Limited.

Ballycotton Marine Services Limited

Marine & Commodity Surveyors
Consulting Engineers
Representing American Bureau of Shipping
Representing ABS IV & ABS MSL

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Co. Cork,
Ireland.

Telephone 021 4646839
Facsimile 021 4646873

Our Ref. BMS/132/02

8 March 2003

To Whom it May Concern

Dear Sirs,

Re: MFV "Western Explorer - S34.

This is to Certify that at the request of Mr Vincent Browne, the undersigned Surveyor did attend survey on board the timber built, single screw, motor fishing vessel **"Western Explorer"** whilst lying afloat at Fenit Co. Kerry on the 8th day of March 2003 in order to ascertain that the following outstanding recommendations as detailed in our report No. BMS/132/02 dated the 3rd January 2003 have been satisfactorily dealt with.

1. *To fit door between steering gear compartment and the fish hold.*
2. *To make hand operated fire and sprinkler pump operational and provide hose and nozzle.*
3. *To provide missing plugs to vents.*
4. *To fit flame arrestor gauze to fuel tanks.*
5. *To fit guard over front end drives on the main engine.*
6. *To remove sliding blanking plates on freeing ports.*
7. *To complete fitting of deck lights and stern navigation light.*

Further to our inspection of the vessel, we would now consider that the outstanding recommendations have been satisfactorily complied with.

Trusting the foregoing will meet with your requirements.

Yours sincerely

M. J. Connolly.

Michael Connolly
Ballycotton Marine Services Limited.

9. INDEX OF CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

Irish Coast Guard
MCIB Response

Irish Coast Guard
GARDA CÓSTA na hÉIREANN

IRELAND
10 DEC 2003
EIRE

Mr Dick Heron
Secretary
Marine Casualty Investigation Board
Department of Communications,
Marine & Natural Resources
Leeson Lane
Dublin 2.

09th Dec. 2003.

Re **MCIB 66 Draft Report, sinking of IFV Western Explorer 23rd March 03.**

Dear Mr Heron,

The Irish Coast Guard has no comment or observation to make concerning this report.

Yours sincerely,

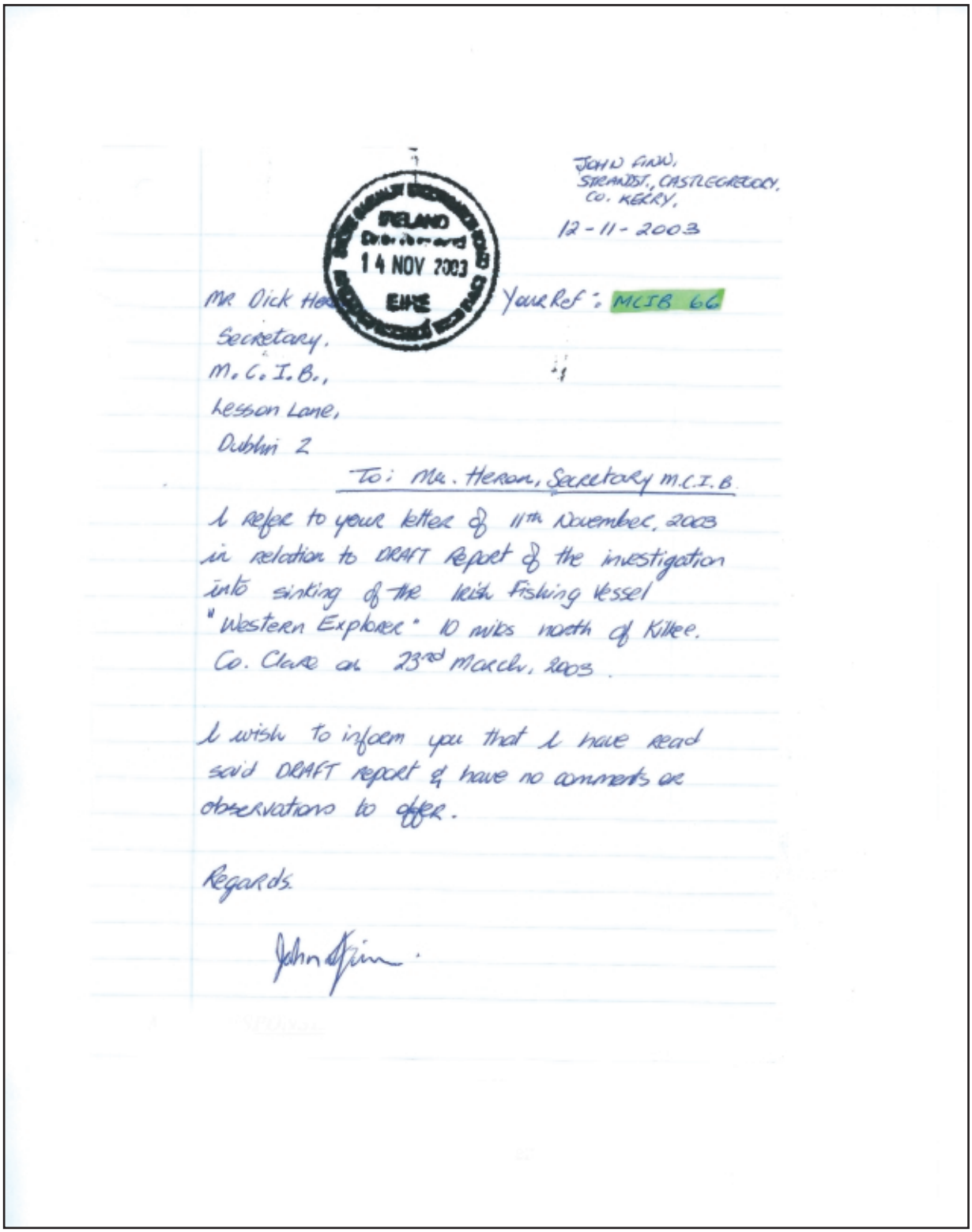
Eamon Torpay
SAR Operations Manager
IRCH HQ.

Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2, Ireland.
An Roinn Cumarsáide, Mara agus Acmhainní Nádúrtha, Lána Chill Mochargán, Baile Átha Cliath 2, Éire.
Tel: +353 1 678 2324, Fax: +353 1 678 2269, Email: admin@irishcoastguard.ie

MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.

Mr. John Finn
MCIB Response



JOHN FINN,
STRANDST., CASTLEGREGORY,
CO. KERRY,

12-11-2003

IRELAND
14 NOV 2003
EIRE

Mr Dick Her... Your Ref: MCIB 66

Secretary,
M.C.I.B.,
Lesson Lane,
Dublin 2

To: Mr. Heron, Secretary M.C.I.B.

I refer to your letter of 11th November, 2003 in relation to DRAFT Report of the investigation into sinking of the Irish fishing vessel "Western Explorer" 10 mls north of Kilkee, Co. Clare on 23rd March, 2003.

I wish to inform you that I have read said DRAFT report & have no comments or observations to offer.

Regards.

John Finn.

MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.

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