

Inquiry into loss of "MILFORD VISCOUNT"

Extracts from "JOURNAL OF COMMERCE"

BAD weather, culminating on April 2 last, was suggested as a possible answer to the riddle of the disappearance of the motor trawler Milford Viscount, when the Ministry of Transport inquiry into the loss of the vessel was opened at Milford Haven yesterday.

Mr. J. V. Naisby, K.C., sat as Wreck Commissioner, with three assessors. Mr. S. E. Pitts appeared for the Ministry of Transport, and Mr. J. B. Hewson for the Milford Steam Trawling Co., Ltd., the owners.

At the outset, the Commissioner explained that the purpose of the inquiry was twofold; first, to try to ascertain the cause of the loss of the ship, and see whether anybody was responsible for the loss; secondly, to see whether information could be obtained which would help to avoid similar losses in future.

Mr. Pitts said the Milford Viscount was a motor trawler, built in 1947. She sailed from Milford Haven on March 29 for the fishing grounds west of Eire, and called at Berehaven for stores, and left on March 31. Later, Skipper Saunders, of the Milford Duke, had a radio conversation with Skipper Alexander Smith, of the Milford Viscount.

STRONG GALES

The weather was bad, and Skipper Smith said he might have to suspend fishing. "He made no actual complaint about the conditions, and his radio was working well," Mr. Pitts said. "That night the weather deteriorated, with strong gales, and by midnight there was a full gale."

During the next few days Skipper Saunders tried, without success, to contact Skipper Smith again, and was very concerned when he could not do so.

Mr. Pitts said that on April 2 Skipper Brown, of the Damito, who had previously seen the Milford Viscount, could no longer do so, but he contacted the vessel by radio.

When Skipper Brown said he was still fishing, Skipper Smith replied: "If you were here with me you would not be able to fish."

The weather later became so bad that Skipper Brown also had to stop fishing. "The Milford Viscount was never seen again," said Mr. Pitts, "and was posted at Lloyd's as a missing ship on May 24."

One of the Milford Viscount's lifebuoys was found near Ballybunion, County Kerry, on April 16, and two more were found later, also near the mouth of the Shannon.

"ALARMING INCIDENT"

Mr. Pitts referred to an incident in November, 1949, when the Milford Viscount met severe weather and had to leave off fishing. "She was severely hit by a tremendous sea with results which were perhaps alarming. Some of the men who were in that ship will be before you, and one will tell you she was heeled over on her side to a degree that water reached the port lights on the engine-room casing."

"The result of this bad time was that the crew as a whole went to the skipper and frankly asked him to take the ship home. He acceded to that request and brought the ship back to Milford Haven."

Nine men who were in the November incident lost their lives in April.

Mr. James Carpenter Ward, managing director of the Milford Steam Trawling Co., Ltd., told Mr. Hewson that the search took No. 1 priority over everything. Aircraft were used, and 25 trawlers were searching.

The inquiry was adjourned until to-day.

29. 11. 50

WHEN the inquiry into the loss of the motor trawler Milford Viscount (314 gross tons) was resumed at Milford Haven yesterday, Mr. Andrew M. Cochrane, managing director of Cochrane and Sons, Ltd., Selby, who built the vessel, said that he could offer no suggestion as to why the vessel should behave in a peculiar manner in rough weather when carrying a full load of fuel oil. "I can see no reason for it except extraordinary stress of weather," he added.

The inquiry was opened at Milford Haven on Monday before Mr. John V. Naisby, K.C., sitting as Wreck Commissioner, with Messrs. G. Darkins, G. H. Nicholson, and H. Lyndsay as assessors. The vessel, with a crew of 13, left Milford Haven on March 29, for the Western Irish fishing grounds. She failed to return when due on April 16, and on April 18 was reported overdue. A prolonged search was made for the vessel owing to various reports of wireless signals purporting to have come from the Milford Viscount being received.

The Ministry, in its statement to the court, suggests that the vessel was probably overwhelmed by bad weather on April 2.

Mr. Cochrane said yesterday that after his firm had supplied the Milford Steam Trawling Company with the Milford Viscount they had received nothing but good reports concerning her. An incident in November 1949, when the vessel had returned to port following complaints of her behaviour by the crew, had not been reported to him, and he knew nothing about it until after the vessel was lost. He was aware now that the men on the ship complained of her behaviour when she was full of oil.

"I can't express any opinion on it," he said. "They were there, and I was not. I can see no theoretical or practical reason that the conditions should be such, but the crew said they were. I can offer no suggestions."

IN FIRST-CLASS ORDER

David Griffiths, ship's husband to the Milford Viscount, said the vessel's gear and tackle were maintained in first-class order. Before the trip previous to the last one he had checked over the life-saving apparatus. The steering gear was satisfactory and he had never received any complaints from the engineers.

Replying to the Commissioner, Griffiths said that he had never seen the Milford Viscount's lifeboats in the water but had seen the lowering gear tested. It was the master's responsibility to see that lifeboat drill was carried out at sea, and an entry should be made at the back of the logbook. He agreed there was only one entry, in a previous Milford Viscount log concerning lifeboat drill, dated December 17, 1949.

The Commissioner.—What did you do about it?—All I can do is request the skipper to carry out lifeboat drill. I am satisfied that the tackle is in good order. It is his responsibility to carry it out.

How often?—Periodically, not every trip.

Witness agreed that a complaint had been received from the Mercantile Marine Office that the Milford Viscount had not been carrying out boat drills.

The Commissioner.—Don't you think it was more incumbent upon you to take steps to see that it was done?—It should have been done, agreed witness.

Evidence that the trawler's wireless was in good order when she left port was given by Iorwerth James Hugh Morgan, technical assistant with the Marconi Company.

returned to port or discharged part of the bunkers. The

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"UNLUCKY SEA HIT HER"

John James Fortune, who was skipper of the Brecon Castle, a Swansea trawler, fishing off the West Coast of Ireland, last March, was asked what he thought happened to the Milford Viscount. He replied: "I would say an unlucky sea hit her. If she was fishing she could have caught fast and this would have caused a serious emergency."

The skipper of the trawler Damito, Norman Brown, said he thought that Skipper Smith (of the Milford Viscount) might have shot his trawl and this caught fast and he was overwhelmed by the sea. Witness had been fishing near where the Milford Viscount was last seen and he was able to get his gear back alright but conditions were getting very bad when they got it aboard.

A deposition made by Ronald Wilson, of Land's End Radio Station, was read. This described the special radio watches which were maintained after the trawler was reported overdue. All information about signals said to have been received from the Milford Viscount by others were checked back but no definite information was received that the signals were actually made by her.

SIGNALS CONFUSION

Throughout the time that signals were purported to have been made by the Milford Viscount, nothing was heard at Land's End Radio Station which could be identified as being made by her. With regard to the confusion which arose concerning signals said to have been heard from the Milford Viscount, witness expressed the view that the confusion arose from mistaken interception of signals made by other vessels.

In order to avoid such mistakes, the owners ceased to use the name of Milford Viscount when calling and used the christian name of the skipper "Alec" instead.

A former Milford Viscount skipper, Albert Stephens Saunders, said he had had confidence in her.

Mr. S. E. Pitts (for the Ministry of Transport).—Was it in confidence because of your skill and knowledge or because of the ship's good qualities?—A combination of both.

A less experienced man might get excited, but Skipper Smith was as equally experienced as me.

Henry George Mason, of Haverfordwest, who was chief engineer in the Milford Viscount for two years, said there were times when he was not very happy in the vessel.

The Commissioner.—Did you ever have the feeling, "I wonder if she is coming back this time"?—I never went as far as that.

Why were you not very happy? Was it because you were uncomfortable or because you feared some casualty might happen to the ship?

—When a ship rolls very heavily anything could happen to it.

Henry Bachelor, skipper of the trawler Barry Castle, described bad weather he experienced while fishing off Ireland between March 25 and April 2. He thought that if the Milford Viscount had been caught in such weather with its gear down there would have been a big risk.

NO EVIDENCE OF MINES

Capt. Daniel Wynne Jones, senior nautical surveyor to the Board of Trade, said there was no evidence that mines were ever laid in the area of the last known position of the Milford Viscount. It was officially considered that the loss of the Milford Viscount could not be attributed to a moored mine, and the chances of a floating mine were extremely remote.

Referring to green flares, stated to have been seen by members of the crew of the steamer Basilisk, witness said there was no such recognised distress signal as that described, and he did not think it could have been a distress signal.

Reginald George Spurgeon, of Lowestoft, described how on the night of April 26-27 he was on board the vessel Norman Wilson in Milford docks when he switched on the radio and heard a message which he took to be from the Milford Viscount.

At this time he had read in the local newspaper that the search for the Milford Viscount had been abandoned. Asked what exactly the message was, Spurgeon replied: "He started his message calling all ships and went on to all Milford ships. Then he said something about his batteries were low and that he would transmit every 15 minutes of the hour."

Witness said the signal was normal and there was nothing about it which made him suspicious.

Mr. Pitts.—Have you had occasion since to seriously consider whether it was a genuine call or a hoax?—At the time I thought it was genuine, but since then, because of other messages and talks I have had with the skipper and others, they have put a doubt in my mind. Witness said the message was also picked up by the Scottish trawler Inchmickery.

The inquiry was adjourned until to-day.

30-11-50.

CHAIRMAN and assessors at the

Ministry of Transport court of inquiry into the loss of the 314-ton trawler Milford Viscount, inspected the Milford Marquis, a sister-ship to the Milford Viscount, when she docked at Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, yesterday.

The inquiry was opened at Milford Haven on Monday before Mr. John V. Naisby, K.C. sitting as Wreck Commissioner, with Messrs. G. Darwins, G. H. Nicholson, and H. Lyndsay as assessors. The vessel, with a crew of 13, left Milford Haven on March 29, for the Western Irish fishing grounds. She failed to return when due on April 16, and on April 18 was reported overdue. A prolonged search was made for the vessel owing to various reports of wireless signals purporting to have come from the Milford Viscount being received.

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Skipper Saunders, of the Milford Duke, a former skipper of the Milford Viscount, recalled yesterday morning, said he knew Skipper Smith (of the Milford Viscount) very well, and was certain he was a man who would take all precautions at sea. He was not a man to do a foolish thing. Skipper Saunders considered that the Milford Viscount was a little better than the Milford Marquis in a seaway.

He was satisfied with the two ships and would go anywhere in the world in them. When the Milford Viscount left on her last voyage, Skipper Saunders was already at sea. On Saturday, April 1, at 1 30 p.m. he had a conversation with Skipper Smith on the radio-telephone and shortly after 7 30 p.m. he spoke to him again. Smith told him he had finished fishing and was "laying."

WEATHER FULL GALE

The weather was freshening all the time, and became a full gale, with seas very confused. He heard nothing more from Smith although he tried to get him for four or five days.

If the Milford Viscount had been afloat she would definitely have been within calling distance.

Mr. S. E. Pitts (for the Ministry of Transport).—When you tried to get him without success did it make you anxious?

Skipper Saunders.—We were never unduly worried if Alex. (Skipper Smith) was off the air, for he always managed to get into an awful tangle with his wireless set and was hors de combat for a few days. So if the Alex. was off the air we never took much notice.

Skipper Saunders expressed the opinion that the Milford Viscount disappeared between Saturday night and early Sunday morning when the worst of the gale was on. If she had survived the week-end storm there, it was nothing else to account for a no good ship like that going. He was fairly certain that Skipper Smith, of would not try to get his gear down in such weather.

Mr. Pitts.—Can you assist the court with any suggestion as to how this would be likely to happen to a fairly modern ship without her gear down.

were full and the crew refused to carry on unless the skipper

returned to port or discharged part of the bunkers. The

"I have lost a ship down that way myself some years ago," replied Skipper Saunders, who explained that there was a great amount of confused seas in that area. The contours of the sea bed affected the top very badly.

CAUGHT UNAWARES

Mr. Pitts.—Would it be possible to be caught unawares and gone before you know where you are? It would give you no time to do anything?—No time at all.

Witness said he was certain Skipper Smith would know exactly what to do with regard to sending out distress messages. Referring to wireless messages said to have been received after April 2, Skipper Saunders declared: "I told them at the time it was a cruel hoax."

Skipper Saunders told how after the search was resumed, he sent out false messages as bait for those who had purported to have received signals. Nothing resulted.

Describing the search, Skipper Saunders said: "If the Milford Viscount was floating, she was bound to have been located."

He had heard rumours that she had drifted on to the West Irish Coast, but to him that was nonsense. The vessel could not have drifted through the screen of searching ships without having been seen.

Mr. Hewson (for the owners).—Are you satisfied that everything was done by those afloat?

"I am more than satisfied," replied Skipper Saunders. "No seamen ever searched the ocean as ours did."

"A WET SHIP"

Henry Brynmor Beckett, who served on the Milford Viscount for nearly two years, described her as a wet ship with a tendency when she was "laying" to scoop up water on the lee side. The trouble was immediately counteracted by putting her head to wind.

Mr. Pitts.—Have you ever felt any anxiety about her as a trawler?—No, sir.

William James Hawkins, senior ship surveyor at the Ministry of Transport, said his opinion was that the stability of the Milford Viscount on her last voyage was up to good trawler practice and was sufficient to meet all normal conditions.

Capt. Alex. Findlay, senior Ministry of Transport nautical surveyor at Swansea, stated that at his request the skipper of the trawler Inchmickery wrote him giving details of the messages he had picked up on April 27. The skipper's letter said that at about 1 30 a.m. on April 27, he heard a ship calling on the 141 metre waveband, and the message she was transmitting was: "This is the Milford Viscount—Hello,

Milford Duchess, Marquis, or any trawler." This was repeated twice.

The Inchmickery went over to her and asked her to acknowledge the call, but while she was waiting for the reply another ship started calling the trawler that was calling "any trawler."

The ship calling herself the Milford Viscount came back saying she could only transmit for a couple of minutes and would call again at 1 45 a.m. At 1 45 there was no message, but at 2 a.m. a ship was heard again by the vessels William Caldwell, and Madden, Coadjutor and the Inchmickery. The ship said, "this is my position..." but owing to interference from other ships all that was picked up was "5 deg. W."

Both the Inchmickery and the William Caldwell tried to contact the ship but were unable to do so.

"DON'T DO BOAT DRILLS"

Questioned about boat drills, Capt. Findlay said: "I'm afraid they just don't do them, the requirements are that they should do them once every 14 days."

Thomas Arthur Davies, G.P.O., Inspector of Wireless Telegraphy, said that at the time in question no signals had been received at all from the Milford Viscount by any of the G.P.O. stations.

"It is incredible to me," continued Mr. Davies, "that an experienced skipper like Skipper Smith should not have sent out a distress call on the distress waveband of 181 metres, had he been able to do so, and had he used the 181 metre band, I have not the slightest doubt it would have been received at one of our coastal stations at Valencia or Land's End."

"In my 25 years' experience in the G.P.O., I cannot recollect an instance, nor can I find in the records of the G.P.O. over 42 years, any case where a distress message has not been received by a Post Office station when it should have received it by virtue of the ship's position."

At the close of yesterday's hearing the Commissioner indicated that to-day the court will deal with the wireless messages said to have come from the Milford Viscount after April 25. This, he said, was a matter which would have to be investigated very fully.

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EVIDENCE regarding radio messages purporting to have come from the ill-fated trawler Milford Viscount 11 days after she was reported overdue last April, was given before the Ministry of Transport court of inquiry into the loss of the vessel at Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, yesterday, the fourth day of the inquiry.

When the inquiry adjourned on Wednesday, the chairman, Mr. J. V. Naisby, K.C., described the evidence as "by no means negligible," and declared that it must be investigated properly. If signals were heard on April 27, he said that "that disposed of the suggestion that the ship ceased to exist on April 1 or 2."

The vessel, with a crew of 13, left Milford Haven on March 29, for the Western Irish fishing grounds. She failed to return when due on April 16, and on April 18 was reported overdue. A prolonged search was made for the vessel owing to various reports of wireless signals purporting to have come from the Milford Viscount being received.

The Ministry, in its statement to the court, suggests that the vessel was probably overwhelmed by bad weather on April 2.

When the inquiry was resumed yesterday, Capt. Alexander Findlay, Ministry of Transport senior nautical surveyor at Swansea, was recalled to give evidence in respect of rockets on the Milford Viscount. He handed in a letter he had received from the lighthouse-keeper at Tarbetness, Scotland, stating that on May 7, at 4 30, a message was heard: "This might be last call. Calling all stations. Position 72 40 N., 17 W. Battery going flat. Alex."

25 REPORTS

Evidence regarding 25 radio reports received at Plymouth was given by William Williamson, Assistant Inspector of P.O. Telegraphs. He said that at 1 26 a.m., on April 28, it was reported that a Mr. Drury, of Swansea, overheard the trawler Lorraine informing the Milford Prince that they had located the Milford Viscount, and that the Lorraine, Cotswold, and Milford Prince were on their way to her. Witness said this message was not confirmed when checked.

Dealing with a message which Mr. Tucker, of Bideford, reported at 12 34 p.m., on April 29, that he heard twice, "He is the Viscount," Mr. Williamson said there was no confirmation of it. In the early hours of April 29, Mr. Robbins, of Henley-on-Thames, reported hearing the Milford Viscount replying to the Milford Duchess. This message was not received by any official station.



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returned to port on discharge

The Commissioner referred to a report of May 7 that the voice of Skipper Smith (of the Milford Viscount) had been recognised by his brother at Tarbetness Lighthouse. "Have the elementary precautions been taken to ascertain that there is a William Smith at Tarbetness Lighthouse, and that he recognised the voice," asked the Commissioner.

Mr. S. E. Pitts, Treasury Solicitor (appearing for the Ministry of Transport), replied that in transmission of this kind recognition of voices was quite impossible.

The Commissioner.—Is there a William Smith, a lighthouse-keeper, at Tarbetness Lighthouse?

"That it is not suggested," replied Mr. Pitts. "It is suggested that the brother was with the lighthouse-keeper in the lighthouse."

VOICES CAN BE RECOGNISED

The Commissioner.—Have you ascertained if that was the fact or not? I don't care what a P.O. official says, with all due respect to him, about not being able to recognise voices on radio-telephone. There are certain voices which a lot of people can recognise.

Mr. Pitts.—That inquiry has not been made.

A few minutes later Mr. Pitts told the Commissioner that he had been informed that Skipper Smith had a brother who went up to Tarbetness, and he was the brother who recognised the voice of Alex. (Skipper Smith).

A letter was handed to the Commissioner, who said that most of it was personal and private. The letter was from a man living in the Isle of Grimsey, off Iceland, stating that on May 8 a message was received, "Milford Viscount calling." It was very faint, and the only word he made out was "stuck," and that on second thoughts it might have been "struck."

Asked by Mr. Pitts if, after his careful search, it was his belief that anything was ever heard from the Milford Viscount after the week-end April 1-2, Mr. Williamson replied: "It is my opinion that nothing at all was heard after April 2."

Mr. Pitts.—They could have heard things because of mishearing, complications on the air, and the great search that was going on, or they could have heard a lot of things if anybody had wickedly put out things in the nature of a hoax. From your careful study of the position, which way would you go? Do you regard it in the hoax class or the misunderstanding class?

Mr. Williamson.—In the misunderstanding class.

Can you put your finger on any point where you think the misunderstanding began, or crystallised?—It was not unnatural after the Milford Viscount had been given up for lost that some people in Milford Haven were anxious to contact friends or relatives of the crew of that vessel, and inform them as to what had happened. I feel possibly that the mistake arose by someone talking about the Milford Viscount, either from Milford Haven harbour or from a vessel at sea in the early morning of April 27. That might have been misunderstood as being from the Milford Viscount.

AMATEUR OPERATOR'S EVIDENCE

Arthur Manley Tucker, a Bideford amateur radio operator, gave evidence of having heard three messages which he thought came from the Viscount. The first was on April 24 or 25, when he heard, "Hallo Land's End" called three times and "Milford Viscount" called three times on two or three occasions. The messages were not at the usual signal strength for trawlers, but were perfectly readable and could be understood. They were heard on the 181 metre band.

He did not report the messages to any official source because he felt that the scores of people affected by the loss of the ship were beginning to get over their loss, and he did not want their feelings stirred up again.

Continuing, Mr. Tucker said that on April 28 he picked up a foreign voice, which said it was a Spanish ship, and said that a plane had sighted the Milford Viscount and that a rescue ship was on the way. He reported it to the Admiralty, who informed him that there was no plane out.

Later, on April 28, he heard a message, "This is Milford Viscount" twice, and on April 29 heard trawlers calling for "Alex," after which there was a faint voice saying, "Engine trouble only, I hope."

On May 8, he heard the Viscount call three times, between nine and ten o'clock at night. That was the last message he heard.

COULD HAVE BEEN HOAX

Questioned by Mr. Pitts, witness agreed that all the messages picked up could have been due to a hoax. He had more doubts about it now than on April 27.

Addressing the court, Mr. R. D. Saunders (representing the relatives of one of the crew) drew attention to the fact that in its life of three years the Milford Viscount had experienced two incidents, the one in November, 1949, and the final tragedy.

"With regard to the messages received after April 2, there has been considerable comment on the fact that they had not been couched in the appropriate formula, but if Skipper Smith and his second in command had been lost, the wireless would be operated by someone who had no knowledge of the correct procedure," Mr. Saunders said.

Mr. Hewson referred to the November incident, which had "loomed quite darkly at times in the evidence." They had, he said, heard the evidence of two witnesses who had served in the ship that they were perfectly happy when 45 tons of oil were taken off her. There were nine others who were in the ship in November, 1949, who were still in her on the last voyage. It was a striking comment that if this ship behaved in a dangerous, uncomfortable manner, there were members of the crew who were content to remain in her up to her last voyage.

Mr. Hewson submitted that there were times when the seamen's instinct led them on further paths than the naval architect with his slide rule.

GREATEST POSSIBILITY

Mr. Pitts said he was not suggesting that anybody was to blame in any matter that gave rise to this casualty. He put it to the court that in the case of the storm of April 1-2 the ship suddenly turned over and was gone before they were able to send a message. That seemed to be the greatest possibility.

There was no reason to believe that the Milford Viscount was ever heard after her radio telephone talk with the two other trawlers. If anybody perpetrated a hoax, the court might have something stronger to say about it, but the false reports may have come from confusion, for there was a tremendous amount of stuff going over the R.T. in the area.

The findings of the court will be made known this morning.

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FINDINGS OF THE COURT.

2.12.50

AFTER a hearing lasting five days, the Ministry of Transport court of Inquiry, sitting at Milford Haven, yesterday found that the loss of the trawler Milford Viscount last April was most probably due to an exceptional combination of weather and sea conditions. The findings were unanimous.

The inquiry was opened on Monday before Mr. John V. Naisby, K.C., sitting as Wreck Commissioner, with Messrs. G. Darkins, G. H. Nicholson, and H. Lyndsay as assessors. The vessel, with a crew of 13, left Milford Haven on March 29 for the Western Irish fishing grounds. She failed to return when due on April 16, and on April 18 was reported overdue. A prolonged search was made for the vessel owing to various reports of wireless signals purporting to have come from the Milford Viscount being received.

Delivering the findings of the court yesterday, the Commissioner said that the Milford Viscount was seaworthy when she left Milford Haven on her last voyage, and was properly manned and equipped to meet the normal perils of a fishing voyage at that time of the year.

On April 2 the vessel was in communication on the radio/telephone with the trawlers Damito and Milford Duke at 7 30 p.m. This was the last reliable information of the Milford Viscount having been heard. The radio conversations were substantially to the same effect, which was that the trawler, after fishing in a westerly direction, had been compelled to cease fishing by the weather and was "laid"—that is, with engines stopped waiting for the weather to moderate.

EXCEPTIONAL SEVERITY

"It is now known," added the Commissioner, "that about this time a weather ship about 250 miles further west was experiencing weather conditions of exceptional severity, with waves up to 32ft. in height and wind speeds of 37 knots. This disturbance was moving easterly and might well have reached the position of the Milford Viscount on the night of April 2, when she was most probably in an area in which, due to the rapid shoaling, very confused sea conditions are liable to occur.

"These conditions are normally accentuated by a quick change of the wind. On the night of April 2 the wind did shift rapidly from west-south-west to north-west, and the weather conditions became very severe."

The court found that the Milford Viscount was a well-found vessel in charge of a competent master and crew. Her life-saving equipment and boats were in good order and condition, although boat drills had not been regularly carried out, nor had her rockets, which were overdue for renewal, been replaced.

The stability of the vessel was normal and adequate. The main engines and auxiliaries, which had just been surveyed, were in good order.

The court was satisfied that all messages received were adequately examined and, where possible, suitable action initiated, and the court considered it desirable that the valuable assistance of the officials of the Telecommunications Section of the Post Office, including the B.B.C., and the work of the many unofficial wireless operators both afloat and ashore, should be placed on record.

The court was also satisfied, after examination of all the messages brought before it, that there was no reliable record of any message from the ship after 19 30 hours on April 2.

QUESTIONS TO COURT

The following were among the questions submitted to the court by the Ministry of Transport, and the answers given by the Commissioner:

On Sunday, April 2, was the Damito fishing in approximately the same position, and was the Milford Viscount still in sight?—The Damito was in approximately the same position, but the Milford Viscount was not seen.

On April 2, after dinner, did Skipper Brown of the Damito have a conversation on radio/telephone with Skipper Smith?—Yes.

What did Skipper Smith tell Skipper Brown in the Damito about the conditions obtaining where the Milford Viscount then was?—Skipper Smith said he was "laying" and had ceased fishing, that there was a strong breeze, and that if the Damito were in the same position as the Milford Viscount she would not be able to fish.

At the time of the conversation, was the Milford Viscount able to fish, and was the Damito able to fish?—The Milford Viscount was not able to fish.

Did the weather still further deteriorate, and at what time on what day did the Damito have to cease fishing?—Yes, at 11 p.m. on April 2 the Damito ceased fishing.

When did the weather moderate in the vicinity of the trawler Damito?—Probably within 36 hours.

After Skipper Saunders, of the Milford Duke, spoke to the skipper of the Milford Viscount on April 1, did he try on a number of occasions during the next few days to contact the Milford Viscount again by radio/telephone, and was he at any time successful?—Yes, but he was not successful.

Was one of the Milford Viscount's lifebuoys found near Black Rocks, Menstrand, Ballybunnion, Co. Kerry, at 8 30 a.m. on April 16, and were two of the Milford Viscount's lifebuoys found at Meenoghane Causeway, Co. Kerry, at 5 p.m. on April 22?—Yes.

Apart from the lifebuoys referred to, has any wreckage or equipment from the Milford Viscount been found and identified?—Not so far as is known.

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