

EXTRACT FROM THE ANNEX TO THE REPORT OF COURT

31. Deprived of any orders from the Skipper, and with the mate and bosun at the winch up to a late moment, the other members of the crew were obliged to make their own decisions about leaving the ship. It may be stated here that one member of the crew, with great good sense and considerable pluck, made an attempt to close the door on the starboard side of the main deckhouse into which the seas were already pouring, but he was unable to accomplish this, and eventually managed to get back on to the port side where, by this time, it was easier to walk on the casings than on the deck.
35. The Court desires to pay a tribute to the Skipper and wireless operator of the "Velia" for a smart piece of work in the best traditions of the fishing service. Before leaving the scene the Skipper of the "Velia" assured himself that a search of the waters in which the "Hildina" had sunk would be carried on by two other trawlers, the "Monimia" and the "Margaret Wicks". These vessels remained in the vicinity in increasingly bad weather for some hours, but were unable to find any other survivors, although they sighted wreckage which was presumed to have come from the "Hildina".
43. From the best reconstruction the Court is able to make of the last moments of the "Hildina", it would appear that her wireless operator, Robert McDonald Robertson, who sent out the last signal already referred to in this Report, showed exceptional devotion to duty.
44. The Court also desires to mention the behaviour of the Chief Engineer, Poppe Heldstra, and the greaser, James Bond, who lost his life. These men remained in the engine room until the vessel was virtually on her beam ends and made their escape through the skylight. Bond's devotion to duty was exceptional in that he had been ordered to leave the engine room by the Chief Engineer, but preferred to stay with his Chief. The Chief Engineer's behaviour was commendable in that he was willing to
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stay in the engine room alone until the last. The great strain under which the Chief Engineer was at that time and the exposure which he subsequently suffered were not without effect upon his memory, and although in the Court's opinion he was a witness of truth to a high degree they were unable to accept in every detail his recollection of the serious moments he had lived through.

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