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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
AND FISHERIES

With the

Compliments of the Secretary

*(Reference meeting of 25/11/54
which Mr. Taylor & Mr. Leach
attended.)*

M. Sullivan.
13.12.54

WHITEHALL PLACE
LONDON, S.W.1

Form 414

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FGB.9516A

13th December, 1934

Dear Mr. Fennington,

I have read with admiration the report of the services you rendered as Skipper of the M.T. VALLA in rescuing survivors from the crew of the M.T. HILDINA which was lost in December last and was the subject of a recent Inquiry.

There is little doubt that but for your prompt action in cutting away your fishing gear and making at full speed for the scene of the tragedy in the face of high seas and almost gale-force winds, more lives would have been lost. The manner in which the rescue was effected and your subsequent endeavours, assisted by your able crew, in succouring the survivors speaks highly of your skill and resourcefulness as skipper. The whole action reflects great credit on your good seamanship and I should like to take this opportunity of offering you my personal congratulations.

The efforts of the radio operator were also most praiseworthy, and I am writing to him separately.

Yours sincerely,

(R.G.R. WALL)
Fisheries Secretary

Under Secy

G. Fennington, Esq.,
47 Romney Avenue,
Fleetwood, Lancs.

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100-95462

15th December, 1954

Dear Mr. Hird,

I have read with great interest the report of the part you played as Wireless Operator of the U.S. Valiant in the rescue of survivors from the crew of the R.S. HILDINA when she was lost in December, 1953.

The perseverance and skill you displayed in tracing the almost unintelligible distress message to the HILDINA does you great credit and it is due to your efforts in the first place that the survivors were located and brought to safety.

Your further efforts and devotion to duty have been highly commended and I should like to add my personal congratulations.

Yours sincerely,

(S. G. W. 1954)
Fisheries Secretary

Mr. Hird, Esq.,
5 Weatherby Avenue,
Harrogate,
West Yorkshire, Leeds.

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2394.

MC.16/1/084.

(MC)

2nd December, 1954.

Dear Miss O'Sullivan,

Paras. 34 and 35 of Report (on MS. 7/9/013). As promised, I enclose extracts from the Report of Court into the loss of "Hildina", together with extracts from the depositions of the Skipper and Wireless Operator of m.t. "Velia".

I have spoken to Mr. Jackson of our Marine Safety Division and asked him if he would let you have a copy of the full Report of Court and he has promised to send you a copy as soon as it comes to hand. He will also let you have copies of any future Reports in which you may be interested.

Yours sincerely,

b. h.

(Miss C. Lawrence)

Miss O'Sullivan,
 Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries,
 Whitehall Place,
 London,
 S.W.1.

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29 November, 1954.

Dear Taylor,

m/t "Hildina"

I enclose a copy of a note I have made of our meeting on 25th February when we discussed the question of possible awards in connection with the loss of the trawler "Hildina". I believe the note correctly sets out the views expressed at the meeting and the conclusions which were reached and, if you agree that this is so, I do not think there is anything further for the Ministry to do in the matter.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) W. J. SHEA

(W. J. Shea).

H. N. Taylor, Esq.,
Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries,
Whitehall,
S.W.1.

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B.S.H.
Note of Meeting in Room 5062 on Thursday,
25th November, 1954.

Present: Mr. Wood)
Mr. Shea) Ministry of Transport
Captain Taylor)
Mr. Colville)

Mr. Leach) Ministry of Agriculture
Mr. Taylor) and Fisheries.

Mr. Wood said that he had invited the Ministry of Agriculture representatives to come to discuss the question of awards in the case of the trawler "Hildina" because the Ministry had experienced considerable difficulty in forming an opinion on the matter. He explained that the report of the Court of Inquiry into the loss of the vessel paid tribute to the devotion to duty of the wireless operator Mr. Robertson, the Chief Engineer, Mr. Herdstra and the greaser Mr. Bond all of "Hildina" for devotion to duty and the Ministry's professional advisers were disposed to support the views expressed in the report. On the administrative side, however, it was felt that the evidence was so meagre, owing to the fact that the vessel was overwhelmed in such a short space of time, that it was impossible to form a firm opinion on which a recommendation could be made. He thought that it was as well that the Ministry of Agriculture should be aware of the difference of opinion since the responsibility for making formal recommendations for awards fell on them in this case.

Mr. Leach said that the Ministry of Agriculture had also given suitable thought to the incident and after consulting their Technical Officers who were in a position to advise on the matter, they had come to the conclusion that it would be difficult to recommend awards in this case. They felt that the individuals concerned had done their duty but that it was not possible to say with any certainty that they had done more than their duty.

Captain Taylor said that he discriminated between the position of the Radio Officer and that of the two members of the engine room staff. He said it was not unusual for a trawler to heel over badly and that probably the two engineers would not have realised that anything serious was happening until the water splashed into their compartment. When that happened they immediately made their escape through a skylight.

In the case of the Radio Officer, however, he would be aware on being given the order to send out an SOS message of the extreme danger of the position, and the fact that he had stuck to his post and got out a message was, he thought, a highly commendable action.

Mr. Colville emphasized the dangerous position of the engine room staff in the circumstances of this case. He thought that both the engine room men had stuck to their posts in a highly commendable way and had only made their escape when it was not possible for them to continue at their posts any longer.

In general discussion it was agreed that the lack of evidence was so pronounced that it would be unwise to put forward any recommendation in the case of the crew of "Hildina".

Mr. Wood stated that the report of the Court of Inquiry paid tribute to the work of the skipper and wireless operator of the "Vellia" and that in the view of the Ministry, letters of commendation should be sent to the two men in question. This was generally agreed, and it was arranged that the letters would issue from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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Reference _____

Posthumous Awards

You may find the attached three files of interest in connection with the "Hildina" case.

Not appropriate

M.5748/42: In 1942 the Master of a Swedish vessel rescued survivors from s.s. "Athelcrown", who had been on board the severely damaged "Diala" for seven days. It was agreed to award a piece of plate to Captain Thunberg.

Captain Thunberg lost his life when his ship was mined in 1943, so the plate was presented to his widow by the British Ambassador in Stockholm in 1947.

M.9322/42: s.s. "Denpark" was torpedoed in 1942. Both the 3rd Mate and the 2nd Engineer estimated that the ship went down three quarters of a minute after being struck, but the Senior Nautical Surveyor estimated that the time was probably about five minutes.

The Radio Officer and 4th Engineer who went down with the ship were awarded posthumous Commendations. Minute 1 states that the Radio Officer "remained at his post sending out signals until the vessel sank, and appears to have been trapped in his cabin and drowned, and is a further example of a self-sacrificing act of courage and devotion to duty".

M.1027/43: s.s. "Ocean Vagabond" was torpedoed and sunk in 1943 and the Radio Officer received a posthumous Commendation. He remained at his post to repair the transmitter in spite of being ordered to leave by the Master, and then got a message through to the destroyer escort which resulted in the survivors being picked up.

The "Hildina" file is at present with Captain Taylor.

[Signature]
22nd November, 1954.

Mr. Shea

*Many thanks of 25/11
from the boys*

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Miss Mac Egan (R5125)

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~~Mr. Shea~~

? $\frac{257}{10}$

I see that the 'Hildina'

enquiry is now concluded with
commendations for the Radio officer +
2 engineers. Havent we a deferred
Roman's examination a then?

[Signature]

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