



THE MERCHANT SHIPPING ACT, 1894

REPORT OF COURT

(No. S.455)

s.t. "Red Falcon" O.N.164954

In the matter of a Formal Investigation held at the Town Hall, Fleetwood, on the 26th and 27th days of July, 1960, before John Roland Adams Esquire, Q.C., assisted by W. Walker Esquire and Professor L. C. Burrill, Assessors, into the circumstances attending the loss with all hands of the steam trawler "Red Falcon" in the month of December, 1959.

The Court having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty, finds for the reasons stated in the Annex hereto, that it is impossible upon the available evidence to specify any precise cause of the loss save to say that it was due to a marine catastrophe occurring in extreme conditions of wind and sea.

Dated this twenty-fifth day of November, 1960.

J. ROLAND ADAMS, *Judge*

We concur in the above Report.

L. C. BURRILL }
W. WALKER } *Assessors*

ANNEX TO THE REPORT

The steam trawler "Red Falcon" left Fleetwood at 0630 G.M.T. on 25th November, 1959, bound for the Icelandic fishing grounds. She carried a crew of 19 hands all told, but no passengers. Her sailing draughts were 10 feet forward and 18 feet aft. On 10th December, 1959, the "Red Falcon" reported her catch of fish as 500 boxes, and she left the fishing grounds at Kidney Bank at 1530 hours G.M.T. on 11th December upon her return voyage to Fleetwood. "Red Falcon" maintained radiotelephone contact with other trawlers belonging to her owners during the progress of her and their homeward voyages, and the respective skippers asked for and received information about the weather which the others were experiencing from time to time. Between 0710 hours and 0715 hours G.M.T. on 14th December, 1959, the skipper of the "Red Falcon" reported to the skipper of the "Red Knight" that his position by radar was approximately 12 miles off Skerryvore, with that lighthouse abeam, but he did not report seeing the light, and went on to say that the weather was very

bad from west or west-south-west causing a very confused sea and that he proposed to steer for Inishtrahull and get a lee from the Irish coast. He added that the "Red Falcon" would act better closer to the wind than when broadside to the heavy weather. From that moment nothing was heard by any other vessel or shore station from the "Red Falcon", and it must be presumed that she was lost with all hands not long after the passing of her last message. It was the task of the Court to determine if possible the cause of the disappearance of the "Red Falcon", although it was indicated to the Court by learned Counsel who appeared for the Minister of Transport that it was not anticipated that it would be possible for the Court to come to any certain conclusion.

The "Red Falcon" was a single screw coal-burning steam trawler of rivetted construction, built of steel. She had a single deck with a 12 inch high break in the deck extending from 8 feet abaft amidships to the stern. The exposed deck was sheathed with 3 inch wood planking. The vessel was constructed with open floors throughout the bottom. The vessel was originally registered with owners in Hull in August, 1936, and remained in their ownership until November, 1939, when she was taken over by the Admiralty and employed in the Naval Service until February, 1946. From February, 1946, until November of the same year she was owned by other owners in Hull, and from the latter month until 1951 reverted to her original ownership. During the whole of this part of her history she bore the name "Davy". From November, 1951, until September, 1954, the vessel was owned by other interests in Hull under the name "Cape Barfleur". She was purchased by her last owners in September, 1954, and was given the name under which she was sailing at the time of her loss.

The "Red Falcon" was registered at the Port of London, with Official Number 164954, and her registered particulars were: length, 161.3 feet; beam, 27.2 feet; depth in hold from tonnage deck to ceiling amidships, 14.25 feet. Her gross tonnage was 449.48 tons, her underdeck tonnage 393.91 tons, and her Net Register tonnage 170.76 tons. The registered particulars differed slightly from the builders dimensions, but these differences are of no materiality.

The vessel had four watertight bulkheads extending to the deck and separating the following compartments from each other, listed from forward: 1. Fore peak tank; 2. Chain locker, stores and forward crew spaces; 3. Main, middle and spare fishrooms and tunnel; 4. Cross bunkers, wing bunkers, boiler room, engine room, after crew spaces, store room and shaft recess. At the sides of the shaft recess were built-in fresh water tanks; 5. The aft peak tank and the cod liver oil tank in the cruiser stern. A watertight tunnel 6 feet high by 3 feet 3 inches wide giving access between the stokehold and the fishroom was fitted between the forward and after cross bunker bulkheads, with a watertight door at the after end. The after cross bunker bulkhead and wing bunker bulkheads were not watertight.

At the fore end of the deck was an open fore-castle 27.5 feet long under which were a steel companion to the forward crew spaces, a steel light and air trunk to the crew spaces, two crew lavatories and a store hatch. 10 feet aft of the break in the deck was the main casing containing the skipper's accommodation at the forward end, the engine and boiler casing and the galley casing at the aft end. On the aft end of the deck was the cod liver oil boiler house. Above the skipper's house were the wheelhouse and wireless room. On top of the machinery casing were the funnel, two 20 inch diameter cowl vents to the stokehold and a steel skylight to the engine room. The top of the galley casing formed the boat deck, which extended aft to the stern. A steel skylight was fitted on the boat deck to the galley. There were six hatches on deck listed from forward as follows:—

1. Forward store hatch: 3 feet 4 inches × 3 feet 4 inches. Coaming 9 inches above wood deck.
2. Fishroom hatch: 3 feet 6 inches × 3 feet 4 inches. Coaming 15 inches above wood deck.
3. Fishroom hatch: 5 feet 1 inch × 3 feet 4 inches. Coaming 15 inches above wood deck.
4. Fishroom hatch: 3 feet 7 inches × 3 feet 4 inches. Coaming 18 inches above wood deck.
5. Fishroom hatch: 4 feet 6 inches × 3 feet 4 inches. Coaming 21 inches above wood deck.
6. Aft store hatch: 3 feet 6 inches × 2 feet 6 inches. Coaming 12 inches above wood deck.

Each hatch was provided with wood covers 2½ inches thick and 3 tarpaulins. There were ten 2 feet diameter cast steel flush bunker scuttles on deck to the wing and cross bunkers, and a further similar one on the port side to the spare fishroom. The "Red Falcon" had steel bulwarks all around, to a height of 4 feet above the wood deck in the fore well and 3 feet above the wood deck aft of the break. Immediately forward of the break, there was a freeing port in each bulwark 2 feet 6 inches × 12 inches high, fitted with a slide which could be hooked in the open position. Aft of the break there were six freeing ports in each bulwark 1 foot 6 inches × 9 inches high, fitted with balanced type flaps. There were also nine 8 inches × 2½ inches scuppers in each bulwark abaft the break. The vessel was fitted with a 9 inch bilge keel on each side for 50 feet of her length. The vessel had a fore mast in the fore well and a mizzen mast on the boat deck. No sail was fitted.

The main engine was of the triple expansion surface condensing type and gave a designed speed of 11½ knots. It was built by Charles D. Holmes &

Company Limited, of Hull, in 1936. The boiler was a coal-fired cylindrical multitubular three furnace marine boiler, and had a working pressure of 210 pounds per square inch. It was built by Charles D. Holmes & Company Limited, of Hull, in 1936. The following appliances were fitted for pumping the bilges:—

- 1 - 3 inch bore × 15 inch stroke ram pump driven off the main engine;
- 1 - steam duplex pump 6 inches × 10 inches stroke;
- 1 - 3 inch steam ejector;
- 1 - 4 inch hand pump in the engine room;
- 3 hand pumps to the fishrooms and forward store space.

The power pumps and ejectors were connected to the following spaces from a manifold valve box in the forward part of the engine room. Each space had a separate 2 inch suction pipe fitted with a strum box.

1. Forward store
2. Main fishroom
3. Forward slush well
4. Spare fishroom
5. Aft slush well.

The two fishroom slush wells were also fitted with 8 inch "Deluge" hand pumps. The engine room was fitted with

(a) a 4 inches diameter bilge injection fitted with a strum box connected to the main circulating pump which was of the centrifugal type driven by a steam engine;

(b) a direct bilge suction from the 3 inches diameter ejector fitted with a strum box;

(c) two 2 inch suctions, one at the aft end of the stokehold and one at the aft end of the engine room, both fitted with mid boxes. The overboard discharges were fitted with non-return valves, and the bilge system was provided with appropriate cocks and non-return valve suction chests. The ship was fitted with a 15 K.W. steam-driven generator. This was a reconditioned set fitted on board in July, 1959. The ship was fitted with a steam windlass on the fore-castle and a steam trawl winch on deck amidships. The steering gear was of the rod and chain type incorporating buffer springs and was driven by a Donkin's type two-cylinder steam engine. Provision was made for hand steering through spur gearing to the chain barrel. Emergency steering tackle was supplied to the ship.

The ground tackle consisted of 1 stockless bower anchor 9 cwts. 2 qrts. 0 lbs., 1 kedge anchor 6 cwts. 0 qrts. 7 lbs., 8 lengths of 1¼ inch stud link cable together with wire warps and manilla hawsers. The vessel had a pole compass forward of the wheelhouse and a roof compass in the wheelhouse, both of the liquid type. The "Red Falcon" was fitted with one 18 foot wood lifeboat stowed on the centre line of the boat deck, capable of being lowered on either side of the ship by a derrick. Also were fitted four 10 persons R.F.D. inflatable life-rafts. Two of these were stowed on the boat deck and two on the wheelhouse top. The life-saving appliances included 20 lifejackets, 6 circular cork lifebuoys, two of which were fitted with self-igniting lights. The "Red

Falcon" had the following main transmitter M... was able to be operated 1 receiving set Marconi 1060A. There was a lead-lined window in the wheelhouse top. The following navigation appliances were fitted: radar set Decca Marconi Seavisa; 1 Marconi Seagraph.

The hull of the vessel was entered in the Lloyd's Register of Shipping for continuation of Survey for continuation between January and February 1959 when the external survey was completed on the slipway back to the Survey were:— 29th 7th July, 1959; 8th of the vessel was chartered of Shipping. The vessel was surveyed in January, 1958, for machinery. The following appliances were surveyed to Transport surveyors in 1959. The certificate of fitness for 1959. The two compasses were surveyed in 1959, and a deviating transmitter, two repeater finder were serviced on 23rd November, 1959. A direction finder was surveyed by a Post Master General in January, 1959, and echo-sounders were surveyed in November, 1959. The Decca technician...

The introductory paragraph together with the exclusive, set out all the last three days of the extensive narrative. The hearing was conducted in public all that this sad occurrence. The mission was made suggested that an from a close study of the casualty. It is difficult to determine what matters this Annex.

There was ample evidence that the "Red Falcon" was maintained and well-manned directed against the matters. The Court witnesses who had earlier voyages and find with the ship assisted by details a senior ship surveyor the Chief Ship Surveyor port, which was of the "Red Falcon" officer had investigated the vessel and he work in diagrams of stability and

"Red Falcon" had the following wireless equipment: 1 main transmitter Marconi Oceanspan III M which was able to be operated on telegraph or telephone; 1 receiving set Marconi CR 300/2; 1 receiving set Marconi 1060A. The wireless batteries were fitted in a lead-lined wooden box with canvas cover on the wheelhouse top. The vessel was fitted with the following navigational aids: 1 direction finder; 1 radar set Decca 45; 1 sounding device (visual) Marconi Seavisa; 1 sounding device (recording type) Marconi Seagraph.

The hull of the vessel was classed +100A1 with Lloyds Register of Shipping. The last Special Survey for continuance of class was carried out between January and September, 1958. The dates when the external hull of the vessel were surveyed on the slipway back to and including the last Special Survey were:— 29th March, 1958, Special Survey; 7th July, 1959; 8th October, 1959. The machinery of the vessel was classed +LMC with Lloyds Register of Shipping. The last Special Survey dates were January, 1958, for the boiler and May, 1958, for the machinery. The life-saving appliances, fire extinguishing appliances and lights and sound signals were surveyed to the satisfaction of a Ministry of Transport surveyor on the 12th and 13th March, 1959. The certificate was endorsed for that survey. The two compasses were adjusted on the 8th June, 1959, and a deviation card was issued. The wireless transmitter, two receivers, the battery and direction finder were serviced by a Marconi technician on the 23rd November, 1959. The wireless installation and direction finder were inspected to the satisfaction of a Post Master General wireless surveyor on the 23rd January, 1959, and a certificate was issued. Both echo-sounders were last serviced on the 23rd November, 1959. The radar set was last serviced by a Decca technician on 23rd November, 1959.

The introductory paragraph of this Annex, together with the answers to Questions 7 to 14 inclusive, set out almost all that is known about the last three days of the "Red Falcon" and no more extensive narrative can usefully be attempted. The hearing was conducted in such a way as to ventilate in public all that is known, or can be known, about this sad occurrence; but at the end of it all no submission was made to the Court by any party which suggested that any useful lesson is to be derived from a close study of the circumstances of this casualty. It is difficult, therefore, for the Court to determine what matters deserve special treatment in this Annex.

There was ample evidence before the Court that the "Red Falcon" was a well-manned, well-maintained and well-managed trawler. No criticism was directed against anyone in respect of these three matters. The Court had the advantage of seeing witnesses who had sailed in the "Red Falcon" on earlier voyages and none of them had any fault to find with the ship or her equipment. The Court was assisted by detailed and authoritative evidence from a senior ship surveyor on the Headquarters Staff of the Chief Ship Surveyor of the Ministry of Transport, which was directed principally to the question of the "Red Falcon's" stability. This experienced officer had investigated exhaustively the history of the vessel and he produced the results of his careful work in diagrammatic form covering the whole field of stability and the statical and dynamical effects

which have to be considered in cases of this kind. At the end of it all, however, this witness gave as the first and most likely explanation of the casualty "that she was simply overwhelmed".

Witnesses with a lifetime of experience in trawlers of this type seemed to be in general agreement that there may be occasions when a trawler of sound design and in good structural condition and with reliable engines and steering gear may – in what may almost be called a freak condition of sea – receive from the seas a succession of heavy buffetings which may overcome her natural ability to right herself and so produce a condition in which water may find its way into the vessel owing to what amounts to a smothering of the vessel by the sheer volume of successive waves or by some rupture of the integrity of the vessel brought about by a succession of blows. This sort of experience, which has led to the use of the word "overwhelmed" to describe what may happen to a vessel in such extreme circumstances, can properly be regarded as a pure accident against which no degree of forethought or perfection of design can insure.

The way in which the "Red Falcon" was stowed as regards bunkers, ice, fish, water and stores cannot be ascertained exactly; but the Court had the benefit of the evidence of others who had sailed in her as well as from those responsible for her management, from which it was possible to obtain a fairly accurate picture of the probabilities of that loading and stowage. A study of that evidence leads to the conclusion that there was nothing unusual, and certainly nothing improper, about the way in which the "Red Falcon" may have been expected to have been laden and trimmed, and perhaps the only matter of significance in this aspect of the subject is the fact that she left the fishing grounds with no more than 500 boxes of fish, whereas her full capacity was some 2,800 boxes. Since she had been away for about the usual length of time for such a voyage, and had therefore used the same quantity of bunkers and stores as would have been expended to obtain a full catch of fish, she must have been returning on a lighter draught than is usual, and therefore with a reduced margin of stability, but nothing in the evidence suggested that in this condition she would be otherwise than adequately stable.

If the vessel was overwhelmed in the manner suggested, the fact that no distress signals either by wireless or radiotelephone or by visual means were picked up by anybody is not surprising, and in the view of the Court it is unnecessary, and would in any case be unprofitable, to attempt any speculation as to what may have happened to the radio equipment and, in particular, the aerials at whatever may have been the critical moment of time.

The "Red Falcon" had, when new, been fitted with two boats under davits – one on either side of the deck abaft the funnel; but these had been replaced by a single boat likewise stowed aft but under a boom on the centre line of the vessel, a change which incidentally was said to have improved her trim and made her easier to handle. No part of the boat itself was recovered, but a part of a wooden cover almost certainly identifiable with the boat was found on the Island of Tiree two or three days after the loss was reported. The Court was unable to attach any significance to this fact, for no one can say how the cover was secured in position on the

boat, and it is almost impossible to conclude anything more than that it floated clear when the vessel went down.

Consideration was also given by witnesses and by the Court to the possibility of the "Red Falcon" having lost power owing to the inability of the men in the stokehold to keep their fires going properly in the extremely rough conditions which must have prevailed for a good many hours on the 13th and 14th December, 1959. The consensus of opinion was, however, that, although it might be an uncomfortable and disagreeable job to feed the furnaces of this trawler in very rough weather, there was no previous experience of such difficulties leading to a serious falling-back of steam in the boilers, and there is no reason to suppose that there was not sufficient power to bring the vessel up into the wind if at any time, in circumstances other than catastrophic, the pressure of the weather on her side appeared to be becoming excessive. There is, of course, always a possibility that something may go wrong with the steering gear of any vessel and if this were to happen in extremely severe sea conditions very dangerous consequences might result, but there was no evidence in this case that any such thing happened or that there was anything to make it likely that it might happen.

A good deal of work was done with a view to discovering whether there remained in the waters off the West coast of Scotland any significant danger from mines and the results of this research were made available to the Court in evidence. The Court has, however, been unable to conclude that there is anything but a chance of many millions to one against the loss of the "Red Falcon" having been due to this agency. The fact that no signal was received from the "Red Falcon" indicating the development of a position of danger makes it likely that her end came upon her very suddenly. This would be consistent with contact with a mine, but it is also consistent with the vessel having been overwhelmed in an exceptionally heavy and confused sea, which is the answer to the problem which the Court is bound to favour.

Since the Court favours the view that the "Red Falcon" was overwhelmed, it may be valuable to record the weather as experienced by other vessels in somewhere about the same neighbourhood and as described by meteorological officers in a position to collate weather information from various sources relating to this general sea area. The "Red Sabre", which on the 13th December was some 40 to 50 miles ahead of the "Red Falcon", reported that the wind, which was about W.S.W., increased from force 8 to force 10 and 11 and at times to force 12. This vessel also, when between Barra Head and the Stanton Bank, experienced a confused swell, but as she passed Skerryvore and was running south past Islay the wind and swell were both from the W.S.W., although the swell became confused again as Inishtrahull was approached. These conditions, however, did not cause the "Red Sabre" to reduce her engine revolutions, although the state of the weather cut down the revolutions to give the vessel, whose smooth water full speed is about 11 to 11½ knots, a speed of about 8 knots. The most significant part of the evidence of the skipper of the "Red Sabre" was to the effect that his vessel "behaved like a normal good ship would behave.

She would take an occasional sea, but almost immediately was clear to the scuppers. One particular time she lay over on the lee side and filled the lee side up, but the next roll she was clear. I had no anxiety at all." The same witness who had sailed as skipper of the "Red Falcon", also said: "In the 'Red Falcon' in the 18 months I was in her I sailed through several storms as bad as the one we went through that night in the 'Red Sabre'."

The skipper of the "Red Knight" who was well astern of the "Red Falcon" on the morning of the 14th December, being then about ten miles to the Northward of Rosemary Bank and to the Westward of it, was experiencing a full gale from the S.S.E., and he was easing his trawler down to dodge the seas, but by the time the "Red Knight" reached the neighbourhood of the Skerryvore the wind had changed to the Westward and moderated considerably.

It is a fair summary of the observations of the Meteorological Office of the Air Ministry to say that in the area which has to be considered, winds were at all material times of a force of about 9, gusting, often in gusts of long duration, up to force 12 of the Beaufort Scale. The same Office estimated that in the same area the "Red Falcon" might have met waves of 18 to 20 feet in height from trough to crest and that a length of wave from crest to crest of the order of 450 feet might be a possibility. A fitting together of all this weather information suggests that a heavy confused sea is likely to have been found in the whole of the area under consideration during the whole of the time in which the "Red Falcon" must have been passing through it.

APPENDIX I

APPEARANCES

Mr. R. F. Stone (instructed by the Treasury Solicitor) appeared on behalf of the Minister of Transport. Mr. J. V. Naisby, Q.C., and Mr. Peter Bucknill (instructed by Messrs. Lawrence James & Company, Solicitors, of London) appeared on behalf of The Iago Steam Trawler Company Limited, of Fleetwood, the owners, and of the designated manager, Mr. William John Meazey.

APPENDIX II

The following witnesses were called:

Tom Shaw McKernan, skipper s.t. "Red Sabre", formerly skipper s.t. "Red Falcon".
Leon Matthew Mecklenburgh, skipper s.t. "Red Knight".
George Wilson, formerly second hand s.t. "Red Falcon".
Benjamin Thomas, chief engineer s.t. "Red Sabre", formerly chief engineer s.t. "Red Falcon".
Richard Farrer, formerly second hand s.t. "Red Falcon".
Royden James Gluning, director Iago Steam Trawler Company Limited.
Alexander McKinnon Mitchell, formerly engineer and ship surveyor, Ministry of Transport.
William John Meazey, director Iago Steam Trawler Company Limited, designated manager of s.t. "Red Falcon".

Frank Emerson Lumb
Meteorological Office
James Edward Chew,
Marconi's.
John Thomas Walton
Ministry of Transport
Alan Coulson Manson
Ministry of Transport
Angus Lewis Finlayson
quarters Staff of the
of Transport.

QUESTIONS

The Court's answers to the Minister of Transport

- Q. 1. By whom was the time of her designated manager?
- A. The Iago Steam Trawler Company Limited, having its principal office at Wyre Docks, Lancashire (64 square miles) of 49 Rossall.
- Q. 2. When, where was the "Red Falcon" built?
- A. 1936; Beverley, Yorkshire; Gemmill, Limited.
- Q. 3. How many of the "Red Falcon" carry?
- A. 19.
- Q. 4. Had the "Red Falcon" departure on her class?
- A. Yes; Class +.
- Q. 5. Did the life-savers on the "Red Falcon" on her Regulations in properly surveyed?
- A. "Yes" to all.
- Q. 6. Was the "Red Falcon" worthy at the voyage?
- A. Yes.
- Q. 7. When did the "Red Falcon" wood on her voyage?
- A. At 0630 hours on 13th December 1959.
- Q. 8. (a) At what time did the "Red Falcon" grounds of wood?
(b) At this time estimated?
- A. (a) 1530 hours on 13th December 1959.
(b) 500 boxes.
- Q. 9. With what vessel was the "Red Falcon" keeping her voyage?
- A. The steam trawler "Red Falcon".

Frank Emerson Lumb, principal scientific officer, Meteorological Office, Air Ministry.

James Edward Chew, marine technical assistant, Marconi's.

John Thomas Walton, senior nautical surveyor, Ministry of Transport.

Alan Coulson Manson, senior nautical surveyor, Ministry of Transport.

Angus Lewis Finlayson, senior ship surveyor, Headquarters Staff of the Chief Ship Surveyor, Ministry of Transport.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Court's answers to the questions submitted by the Minister of Transport are as follows:

Q. 1. By whom was the "Red Falcon" owned at the time of her loss and who was her designated manager?

A. The Iago Steam Trawler Company Limited, having its principal place of business at Wyre Docks, Fleetwood, in the County of Lancaster (64 shares); William John Meazey, of 49 Rossall Grange Lane, Fleetwood.

Q. 2. When, where and by whom was the "Red Falcon" built?

A. 1936; Beverley, Yorks.; Cook, Welton & Gemmell, Limited.

Q. 3. How many officers and crew did the "Red Falcon" carry on her last voyage?

A. 19.

Q. 4. Had the "Red Falcon" up to the time of her departure on her last voyage been maintained in class?

A. Yes; Class +100A1 Steam Trawler.

Q. 5. Did the life-saving appliances in the "Red Falcon" on her last voyage comply with the Regulations in force and had they been properly surveyed and maintained?

A. "Yes" to all parts of the question.

Q. 6. Was the "Red Falcon" in all respects seaworthy at the commencement of her last voyage?

A. Yes.

Q. 7. When did the "Red Falcon" sail from Fleetwood on her last voyage?

A. At 0630 hours G.M.T. on 25th November, 1959.

Q. 8. (a) At what time on what date did the "Red Falcon" leave the Icelandic fishing grounds on her return voyage to Fleetwood?

(b) At this time what was the amount of her estimated catch of fish?

A. (a) 1530 hours G.M.T. on 11th December, 1959.
(b) 500 boxes.

Q. 9. With what vessels in particular did the "Red Falcon" keep in radiotelephone contact during her voyage towards Fleetwood?

A. The steam trawler "Red Sabre" and the steam trawler "Red Knight".

Q. 10. On 13th December, 1959, what messages, regarding the weather and her speed, did the "Red Falcon" pass by radiotelephone, to which vessel, and at what time or times?

A. On 13th December, 1959, the "Red Falcon" informed the "Red Sabre" that owing to adverse weather the speed of the former vessel was 4 to 5 knots.

Q. 11. (a) On 14th December, 1959, what messages regarding weather and courses between Skerryvore and Rathlin Island, were passed to the "Red Falcon" by radiotelephone, by which vessel, and at what time or times?

(b) Consequent upon such messages, what did the skipper of the "Red Falcon" say he proposed to do?

A. (a) At 0700 hours G.M.T. on 14th December, 1959, the skipper of the "Red Sabre" called the skipper of the "Red Falcon" on the radiotelephone and told him he had experienced Force 10 W.S.W. winds between Skerryvore and Rathlin Island and had had a very rough passage, but was now abeam of Rathlin Island and in the lee of the land where conditions had improved.

(b) The skipper of the "Red Falcon" said that he was then abeam of Skerryvore Lighthouse and asked the skipper of the "Red Sabre" how he (the latter) had got past Oversay Island, and upon being told by the skipper of the "Red Sabre" that in view of the severe weather he had steered direct for Inishtrahull, thus gaining the lee of the land and avoiding the tiderace off Oversay, the skipper of the "Red Falcon" said he would do the same.

Q. 12. (a) Subsequent to the events referred to in the preceding question, what other vessel was in touch with the "Red Falcon" by radiotelephone, and at what time?

(b) At this time what did the "Red Falcon" report as to

(i) her position

(ii) the wind

(iii) her proposed course of action?

A. (a) The "Red Knight" was in touch with the "Red Falcon" between 0710 hours and 0715 G.M.T. on the 14th December, 1959.

(b) (i) That she was approximately 12 miles (by radar) from Skerryvore, with that lighthouse abeam.

(ii) Weather very bad from W. or W.S.W., causing a very confused sea.

(iii) That it was proposed to steer for Inishtrahull and get a lee from the Irish coast.

Q. 13. Thereafter, what endeavours were made by the other vessels referred to in previous Questions to get in touch with the "Red Falcon", when, and with what results?

A. At 1830 hours G.M.T. on 14th December, 1959, the skipper of the "Red Knight" called the "Red Falcon" on the radiotelephone but received no reply; the skipper of the "Red Sabre", who by that time had passed the Mull of Galloway, called the "Red Falcon" several times on radiotelephone during the 14th December, 1959, but received no reply.

Q. 14. When was anxiety first felt for the "Red Falcon"?

A. After the arrival at Fleetwood of the "Red Knight" on the midday tide on the 15th December, 1959.

Q. 15. (a) What searches were made, in an endeavour to establish the whereabouts of the "Red Falcon"?

(b) What wreckage from or believed to be from, the "Red Falcon" came ashore, where, and when?

A. (a) At 1220 hours on the 16th December, 1959, the Northern Rescue Co-ordination Centre at Headquarters No. 18 Group, Royal Air Force, Pitreavie Castle, Dunfermline, were informed by H.M. Coastguard, Formby, Lancashire, that the "Red Falcon" was 24 hours overdue and assistance in searching for the vessel was requested. Due to the weather conditions prevailing at the time and the early onset of darkness it was decided to mount a search by Shackleton aircraft at first light on the 17th December.

At 1940 hours on the 16th December H.M. Coastguard, Southend, Kintyre, reported that white flares had been seen by a coast watcher about 10 miles west of Coul Point, i.e., in an area which the details given at the time of the first report indicated was the appropriate area for a search. On the basis that there was in his opinion a reasonable likelihood of

those flares being connected with the "Red Falcon" the officer in charge of the Northern Rescue Co-ordination Centre at once ordered off a Shackleton aircraft which searched the area in very bad weather but without result. It emerged later that the above-mentioned flares had no connection with the missing vessel. In all three sorties were made by Shackleton aircraft, viz., from 21.20 to 23.33 hours (2 hours 13 minutes) on the 16th December, 1959, 0755 to 1632 hours (8 hours 37 minutes) on the 17th December, 1959, 0943 to 1632 hours (6 hours 49 minutes) on the 18th December, 1959.

(b) An inflatable liferaft came ashore on the Island of Mull; 3 lifebuoys, 16 deck pound boards and a wooden boat cover came ashore on the Island of Tiree.

Q. 16. Was "Red Falcon" lost, and, if so, in what approximate position?

A. Yes; somewhere between the Stanton Banks and Skerryvore, and probably to the South-Westward of Skerryvore.

Q. 17. How many lives were lost and saved respectively?

A. 19; none.

Q. 18. What was the cause of the loss of the "Red Falcon"?

A. See Annex.

Q. 19. Was the loss of the "Red Falcon" caused or contributed to by the wrongful act or default of any person or persons?

A. No.

J. ROLAND ADAMS, *Judge.*

L. C. BURRILL } *Assessors.*
W. WALKER }