

U.S.

WAR/W2H/#13

Naval and
Military

1939.

No. 5/1940.

O.C. Defense Force
Harbors Master

SUBJECT.

1939

25th Novth

Previous Paper.

✓

War Examination vessel S.S.
Ryder - failure of to
answer signals on the 19th
Novth 1939.

MINUTES.

- 1-2 Report by O.C. Canopus Battery. 19. XI.
- 3-4 Report by Pay Sub. Lieut. Carr R.N.V.R.
- 5 Minute from O.C. Defense Force to
St. the Governor. 20. XI. 39
- 6 Report by Master and Watchman of
"Ryder"
- 7 Letter from Manager F. Is. Coy. 22. XI.
- 8 Minute from O.C. Defense Force to
St. the Governor.
- 9 Minute by St. the Governor.
- 10-11 Report by Captain Ilesco 24. XI. 39.

Subsequent Paper.

P. A
MCH
19. 1. 40

No.
(It is requested that, in any reference to this minute, the above Number and the date may be quoted).

MINUTE.

20th. November 1939. 19

From O.C. Defence Force.

To His Excellency the Governor
and Commander-in-Chief.

Stanley, Falkland Islands.

I have the honour to submit in accordance with Your Excellency's commands the reports received from the Officers concerned in the incident in connection with the Roydur yesterday morning. That of the Captain has not yet been received although he was asked for this at the same time as the others.

Having carefully read the reports, I would submit for Your Excellency's consideration the major fact that arises and that is the complete lack of military or naval control over the crew that the Examining Officer or any other serving officer has. I understand from Sub.Lt. Carr that during the past few days there has been some question of his authority to issue orders, which matter was referred to the Honourable Colonial Secretary and satisfactorily disposed of at least for the time being. It is obvious that even though he may post look-outs on board other than continuous personal supervision he has no means of ensuring that his orders will be carried out and no redress if they are not.

I submit that as a solution of the problem that there should be formed a Marine Detachment of the Force for service on the Roydur or such other ship as may eventually be used and that the Examining Officer be put in command with instructions not only to see that watches are kept but that the boat and its fittings are kept in a clean and service-like manner. I understand from the Examining Officer that he would in such circumstances be far happier and more confident to carry out his duties in the way that I know Your Excellency would wish.

If your Excellency considers this proposal favourably I will submit a more detailed scheme of the arrangements that would need to be made

Sub. Carr to be examined.

Paul Woodfall.

Major. O.C. Defence Force.

2

CANOPUS HUT BATTERY.

19th November, 1939.

Submitted.

Sgt. M. Luxton reported vessel sighted by the sentry at 0510 bearing 78. degrees.

0515. In communication with Captain Fleuret and was informed that Sapper Hill Battery, Mount Low and Lighthouse had failed to get in communication with the "Roydur".

Captain Fleuret requested us to try from Yorke Bay to attract attention.

0520. Yorke Bay guard tried to attract attention from rocks by shouting and waving but no notice was taken by "Roydur".

0530. Shots were fired by guard and men appeared on the deck.

In the meantime Cpl. W. Grierson had ran over from Canopus to put through signal. Trying first from the rocks he got no reply so then ran down to the sea-shore and got the message through.

" Warship east of the Light ".

0555. "Roydur" started to move from anchorage and proceeded down to the East of the top tussac Island, where she appeared from Canopus to remain for some time.

Vessel was then bearing 62 degrees from Canopus, but seemed to be at a stand-still waiting. Afterwards she was observed following the "Roydur" to the anchoring grounds.

0850. Vessel lifted anchor and proceeded to sea.

NOTE.

With reference to the message passed to the "Roydur" it must be understood that everything was done without delay to try and call attention of "Roydur" quickly.

Cpl. Grierson not being aware of the nature of the vessel rushed away to call the "Roydur" as quickly as he could and passed to her the stated message, which should have read:-

" Ship to the East of the Lighthouse".

I am

Sir,

Your's obediently,

D. R. Grierson
Officer Commanding
Canopus Area.

The Commanding Officer,

F.I.D.F.

Head-Quarters,

STANLEY.

No. 4

(It is requested that, in any reference to this minute, the above Number and the date may be quoted).

MINUTE.

19th. November, 19 59.

From Examining Officer.

To The Officer Commanding,

Falkland Islands Defence Force.

Stanley, Falkland Islands.

Stanley.

Sir,

In accordance with His Excellency's instructions I beg to submit my report on this morning's incident so far as it concerns the Examination Vessel.

Firstly, I would explain the procedure that has been followed since the war began, and that has, up to now, worked efficiently on all occasions.

On reaching a safe anchorage (which varies according to the prevailing winds) the vessel is brought to and anchored, and an anchor watch is set. The man detailed for this watch has strict instructions to keep a sharp lookout and to report to the Examining Officer immediately any signal is made by any of the shore stations.

The Examination Vessel normally remains at anchor until the sun is up, and then, should no word have been received announcing the sighting of a vessel, the anchor is weighed and she returns to Stanley.

This morning the watch was set as usual, F. Barnes being the man told off for the purpose. At twenty-five past five he came to me and told me that a man was hailing the "Roydur" from the beach, but that he could not make out what was the matter. I immediately went on to the bridge where the signaller was trying to get into touch with the man by means of his Aldis lamp.

Ten minutes later, another man appeared among the rocks ashore, who, by means of a flag signalled that a warship was in sight to the eastward of the lighthouse. When asked to repeat the type of ship, he again answered "warship." I immediately told the Master to get under weigh and to proceed to the North side of Port William as (i) we had received no intimation of the expected arrival of a British man of war; (ii) it was no duty of ours to intercept any man of war, and (iii) in the event of the vessel's proving hostile, we were in the direct line of fire of both batteries.

No. _____

(It is requested that, in any reference to this minute, the above Number and the date may be quoted).

MINUTE.

..... 19

From

To

Stanley, Falkland Islands.

(Continue.)

As we cleared the Fussac Islands I saw that the vessel was a merchantman, and I therefore gave the order to proceed at full speed to a point midway between the lighthouse and Menpeary Point (which point we reached shortly after six a.m.) where we hove to and waited for the vessel to come up to us.

Until we returned to Stanley I had no idea that anything serious had gone wrong.

On learning that three stations had been trying to get into touch with us since five o'clock, I went to the Master, G. Osborne, and instructed him to question the man on watch. (I would here state that I told Major Woodgate that there were two watchmen on duty: actually there was only one.) From Osborne I learnt that Barnes had been on deck the whole time the vessel was at anchor, but that he had spent part of the time in assisting the fireman to empty ashes over the side. I make no comment on this information.

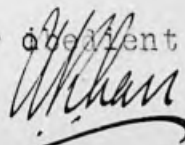
As Officer in charge of the Examination Vessel I must take full responsibility for what occurred, but I would respectfully put forward in extenuation the fact that I had no way of knowing that a system that had worked well for nearly three months, was going to break down through the neglect of a normally conscientious man. I regret exceedingly that such an incident should have occurred in any vessel under my control, and I beg to assure you that I will see that there will be no possible chance of such a thing's occurring again.

In conclusion I would add, that the resignation of my commission as an Officer in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve is at His Excellency's disposal should he require it.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,



Paymaster Sub-lieut. R.N.V.R.

8

No.

(It is requested that, to any reference to this minute, the above Number and the date may be quoted).

MINUTE.

22nd. November 1939

19

From O.C. Defence Force.

To His Excellency the Governor
and Commander-in Chief.

Stanley, Falkland Islands.

I have the honour to forward the attached letter and report for the consideration of Your Excellency. It would appear that there was even a longer time lag than was at first supposed. I have the honour to await Your Excellency's commands in the matter.



Major.
O.C. Defence Force

The Falkland Islands Company, Limited.

INCORPORATED BY ROYAL CHARTER 1851.

REGISTERED 1902.

Stanley

AGENT FOR LLOYDS

AGENTS FOR
THE PACIFIC STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY.

TELEGRAMS: FLEETWING PORT STANLEY VIA RADIO.

22nd November, 1939. 19

Sir,

With reference to our conversations regarding the operations of s.s. "Roydur" on harbour patrol on Sunday last, 19th November, I append herewith a Report from the Master of the vessel covering the relevant period.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,



Manager.

The Harbour Master,

Stanley.

MASTER'S REPORT.

6

s.s. "ROYDUR" ON HARBOUR PATROL, SUNDAY, 19th NOVEMBER, 1939.

3.30 a.m. Cast off from Dockyard jetty and proceeded to Port William.

4.15 a.m. Anchored in Port William off Kelly Rocks. Watch set.

Watchman, Fredk Barnes.

5.15 a.m. Two men seen on beach by watchman, hailing vessel.

Signalman called.

5.20 a.m. Signalman endeavouring to get the men's message, but they did not appear to be able to understand or answer his light.

5.30 a.m. A third man appeared from direction of Canopus Hut with a flag, and the ship's signalman reported to the watchman that this man was signalling "Warship to the Eastward". Crew called and commenced to weigh anchor.

5.45 a.m. Anchor weighed and proceeded to Eastward.

6.15 a.m. Stopped on line roughly Cape Pembroke/William Point awaiting reported vessel.

The times given are accurate to the best of our knowledge and recollection, but no absolute guarantee can be given.

Geo. Osborne.
.....
MASTER.

F. W. Barnes
.....
WATCHMAN.

Stanley, F.I.,
21st November, 1939.

No.

(It is requested that, in any reference to this minute, the above Number and the date may be quoted).

MINUTE.

24th November, 1939

From Captain A. I. Fleuret,
Sapper Hill Battery,
Stanley, Falkland Islands.

To Officer Commanding,
Defence Force.

In accordance with your instructions I have the honour to submit the following report regarding the failure to establish communication with the s.s. "Roydur" on Sunday last.

2. At 0440 on Sunday the 19th November, a vessel was reported by Lt. Lowe to be coming in from the Eastward. She was sighted by the sentry at Sapper Hill at 0450 bearing 075° T.

3. As the "Roydur" was lying at anchor in Yorke Bay I ordered the Signalman to call her by lamp which he did continuously from 0455 until 0555 but received no reply. At 0505 I made the vessel out to be a merchantman with 2 masts and 1 funnel. Sgt. Browning of Mt. Lowe at that moment reported that he had been calling "Roydur" from 0442 but without success. He continued calling until 0530.

4. I 'phoned Canopus at 0510 and requested Captain Watson to make a signal by lamp to "Roydur" to the effect that a ship was in sight.

5. From 0500 onwards Sapper Hill observed Cape Pembroke calling "Roydur" by lamp and at 0520 the Principal Kepper 'phoned me and asked whether we could see his light and stated that as he had been unsuccessful in getting a reply from "Roydur" he had hoisted a 3 flag signal to attract the attention of those on board but all to no avail.

6. Captain Watson reported to me that after repeated attempts he had been unable to establish communication with the "Roydur" until 0535 when he passed a message after drawing their attention by rifle fire.

7. The "Roydur" actually weighed anchor and proceeded at 0556.

A. J. Stewart

Captain.

O. C. D. J.

The records should be kept together in one file. I have not yet seen the written report from Lappers Hill. When that is received it would be wise to let Mr. Roberts see our reports confidentially.

The master's report shows that even on this account it was 25 minutes (4:50 ~~5:15~~ was when first signal was made for Mr. Low) before a signal was observed.

~~W. H. H.~~ 23/11

Honourable Colonial Secretary

The attached passed to you
please vide H.E. minute
of 23/11. Sapper Hill report
attached.

C.S. ac. of.
25.11.39