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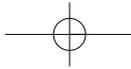
**DRAFT REPORT OF THE  
SINKING OF A  
BLACK WOODEN CURRAGH  
OFF GALWAY BAY  
ON 28th DECEMBER 2006**

The Marine Casualty Investigation Board was established on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2003 under The Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) Act 2000

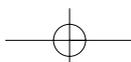
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**REPORT No. MCIB/133**





Report MCIB/133 published by The Marine Casualty Investigation Board  
5th December 2008



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## SYNOPSIS

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### 1. SYNOPSIS

- 1.1 On the morning of the 28th December 2006, Ms. Emer Joyce and some friends departed from Kingstown, enroute to Inish Turk Island, with the intention of staying there for the New Year. They encountered bad weather during the crossing, which lead to the Curragh taking on water and eventually sinking. Of the six persons who fell overboard, two persons swam to shore, leaving four persons clinging to the upturned vessel 150 yards from shore. Four survivors were rescued from the water by the Clifden Lifeboat, while the other two survivors, were recovered from Inish Turk back to the mainland. There were no fatalities.

## 2. FACTUAL INFORMATION

### 2.1 Description of vessel



The vessel was defined as a 6 oar wooden Curragh. The build construction of the vessel is carvel built with  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch larch planking. The vessel had sawed oak frames. The hull was caulked with a tar film cover. The colour of the 'Curragh' was white at the gunwhales with a black hull.

### 2.2 Technical details:

Length Overall:	19 ft.
Length at Waterline:	17 ft.
Beam:	5 ft.
Date of Construction:	1977
Equipment on Board:	Oars and rowlocks Anchor and Line Bailer

The "Curragh" was fitted with a 15 H.P outboard engine.

### 2.3 Persons on Board

Ms. Emer Joyce (Vessel Owner & Skipper)  
 Ms. Martha Conneely  
 Mrs. Geraldine MacCann  
 Ms. Erica Jewitt  
 Mr. John Towler  
 Ms. Maresa Wren

## EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

### 3. EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

- 3.1 On Wednesday the 27th of December 2006, Ms. Emer Joyce travelled in her Curragh from Kingstown to Inish Turk with the intention of staying there for the New Year. She expected a number of friends to arrive the following day. Ms. Joyce later met with Mrs. Geraldine MacCann who was also expecting a friend to arrive the following day, so it was agreed that they would collect them all together the following morning.
- 3.2 At approximately 10.50 hrs. the following morning, Ms. Joyce met Mrs. MacCann and set out from Inish Turk to Eyrephort Beach on the mainland.
- 3.3 The crossing went without difficulty and as they approached Eyrephort Beach, Mr. Brian Hughes, who had just arrived in from Inish Turbot, advised that there was a lot of swell and to transit around to the North shore inside Kingstown Bay, to embark their awaiting guests, which Ms. Joyce did.
- 3.4 The weather at this time was described as South South East Force 5.
- 3.5 All persons on board were wearing life jackets and the vessel also carried an additional three spare life jackets on board.
- 3.6 Mr. Brian Hughes said he would watch them as they travelled across the channel to Inish Turk.

#### 4. THE INCIDENT

- 4.1 With the vessel loaded with luggage, and all six persons on board, the vessel left Kingstown Bay at approximately 11.30 hrs., and motored into the channel between the Island and mainland heading in a southerly direction. As the vessel began to clear the shelter of Eyrephort Beach, the sea became choppy. As the wind was south easterly, the vessel was unable to steer the required westerly course.
- 4.2 The vessel thus continued in a southerly direction but this proved to be very difficult due to the wave ride motion and the lack of advancement of the vessel.
- 4.3 The vessel was then manoeuvred onto a westerly direction. Immediately a wave swamped the vessel and filled it with water up to the underside of the athwart seating. Persons on board tried to bale out the vessel but to no avail.
- 4.4 The concern was that the vessel could now sink. The vessel was situated in the middle of the channel, approximately 300 yards from the shoreline of Inish Turk. The westerly heading was maintained and the speed was increased, which had the effect of shipping water quicker.
- 4.5 The vessel then sank, leaving all persons floating in the sea way approximately 200 yards from the shore. Everybody was accounted for and stayed close together. The vessel suddenly reappeared in an upturned state beside them and persons were instructed to go to the vessel and cling to it.

## EVENTS FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT

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### 5. EVENTS FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT

- 5.1 Mr. Brian Hughes had been watching the events as they unfolded and at 11.54 hrs. had raised the alarm by dialling 999.
- 5.2 The vessel drifted towards the shoreline of Inish Turk but then stopped as the attached anchor had become snagged.
- 5.3 Ms. Wren and Ms. Joyce swam ashore, leaving 4 persons clinging onto the upturned vessel.
- 5.4 The Clifden Lifeboat arrived on scene at 12.15 hrs. and began searching. By 12.24 hrs., the Clifden Lifeboat had rescued the 4 persons from the water and had moved them to Clifden Pier where they were transferred to Galway University Hospital. They were all treated for hypothermia.
- 5.5 At 13.51 hrs., the Clifden Lifeboat departed from Inish Turk for Clifden with the 2 remaining casualties on board. On arrival at Clifden Pier no medical attention was required.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This casualty investigation, like all others unearths a chain of events leading up to a serious incident and by understanding the development of those links, hopes to build a picture of what happened based on the facts.
- 6.2 Earlier that morning local weather conditions were described as fresh with a heavy swell. The wind was South South easterly, gusting to force 5 in the late morning and the sea temperature was 8 degrees Celsius. The weather was due to deteriorate.
- 6.3 The condition of the vessel was not assessed with respect to the following specific requirements:
  - a) Seaworthiness: - was the vessel fit for purpose.
  - b) Stability Requirements: - would the vessel have satisfied the incline requirements in the fully loaded conditions.
  - c) Loaded condition: - the effects of 6 persons and associated luggage on board and what angle of equilibrium would be remaining.
  - d) Freeboard: - was there adequate freeboard remaining.
- 6.4 No evidence could be found that prior planning for the intended trip had been undertaken. Had the requirement for prior planning been fulfilled, it is considered likely that the crossing would not have been undertaken in the prevailing weather and sea state conditions.
- 6.5 Solas Chapter V - Safety of Navigation came into force on the 1st July 2002, transposed into Irish Law and reproduced as Marine Notice No. 9 of 2003. One particular section deals with new Regulations applicable to privately owned recreational craft. In summary, Regulation V/34 covers Safe Navigation and the avoidance of dangerous situations. (See Appendix 8.4 Marine Notice No. 9 - Application of Solas Chapter V to Recreational Craft).
- 6.6 Mr. Brian Hughes immediate action ensured the safety of all those concerned.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The fundamental lessons to be learned from an incident of this nature is the importance of preparing oneself by wearing and carrying the prescribed safety equipment and adhering to a realistic passage plan. (See Appendix 8.4 Marine Notice No. 9 Application of Solas Chapter V to Recreational Craft).

Owners and operators of recreational craft are reminded to take cognisance of the following:

- Check the weather prior to departure and arrange regular updates throughout the voyage.
- Factor in tidal conditions.
- Limitations of the vessel should be considered with particular respect to the intended voyage.
- Adequacy of safety equipment and stores carried.
- Assess the suitability of the crew and devise appropriate watch keeping arrangements making due allowance for weather, proximity of hazards to navigation, high-density traffic/fishing areas etc.
- Plotting the intended route on the latest corrected charts with reference to other nautical publications such as tide tables, tidal atlases, nautical almanac, etc.
- Incorporated in the plan should be carefully thought out contingency plans which would offer a degree of safety in the event of engine failure, adverse weather, medical emergency on board etc. These should identify good sheltered anchorages, harbours etc.
- Ability to navigate safely in the event of the loss of G.P.S. for example.
- Designate a person ashore to monitor your situation arming him/her with your plan, ETA's for the various stages and establish an effective means of communication.
- Marine Notice No. 24 of 2005 deals with solo sailing and the requirement for compliance with the International Regulations For Preventing Collisions At Sea. (See Appendix 7)
- Contact the Coast Guard prior to your departure again advising them of details of your voyage. It is important to remember that the responsibility of reporting overdue vessels to the Coast Guard remains with the designated shore contact. The Coast Guard will not act on overdue craft from Traffic Report information.

7.2 In addition to the above a new Code of Practice came into force on 1 July 2005. This code is presented in two parts, the provision of Part (A) being mandatory and Part (B) being recommendatory.

Part (A) is a reinforcement of existing regulatory requirements.

Part (B) of the code provides guidance for the safe operation of recreational craft. It offers best safe operating practice with further information contained in a series of appendices.

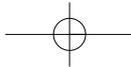
There is greater emphasis on Training, Voyage planning, Pre-Departure check lists and Briefing, Recommended Safety Equipment to be carried taking into consideration the area of operation.

A section on survival in the water can be found within the code, which is self-explanatory but should be to the fore in all mariners minds as such basic information may one day save your life. Survival in cold water is an issue that mariners should be very well acquainted with.

Normal core body temperature is 37°C, hypothermia occurs when the core body temperature drops to 35°C. One can become hypothermic in water up to 24°C. It should be borne in mind that around Irish waters sea temperature varies from between 5°C and 18°C.

At the time the 6 persons entered the water the sea temperature was approximately 8°C.

Survival is dependant on the wearing of suitable warm clothing and a lifejacket. The rate of heat loss is 26 times greater in water than air.

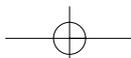


# APPENDICES

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8.4 Marine Notice No. 9 of 2003.	16





## APPENDIX 8.2

### Appendix 8.2 Malin Head MRSC.

TRA/28. DEC. 2006 14:40 TO:MSO DOM	MALIN HEAD MRSC	Ref No. 0003162	NO. 206 08/12/2006 P. 1
DTG 200612281330	INCIDENT NAME	CURRAGH SINKING AT INISTURK IS	
FROM MALIN HEAD MRSC	UIN REFERENCE NO.	0001738	
TO	MRCC DUBLIN MHSC VALENTIA PRESS SAR OPS MANAGER VS&T MSO		
SITREP NUMBER		ONE AND FINAL	
A. Identity Of Casualty	BLACK CURRAGH SINKING WITH 8 PERSONS ON BOARD		
B. Position	OFF INISTURK SOUTH		
C. Situation	CURRAGH SINKING WITH NUMBER OF PERSON IN WATER		
D. Number of Persons at risk	EIGHT		
E. Assistance Required	RESCUE		
F. Co-Ordinating RCC	MALIN HEAD MRSC		
G. Description Of Casualty	BLACK CURRAGH		
H. Weather	SSE F5		
I. Initial Action Taken	TASKED CLIFDEN LIFEBOAT, SHANNON HELICOPTER, CLEGGAN COAST GUARD. MAYDAY RELAY		
J. Search Area	INISTURK SOUTH		
K. Co-Ordinating Instructions	SEARCH AND RESCUE		
L. Future Plans			
M. Additional Information / Conclusion	<p>1154 999 CALL REPORTING 8 PERSONS IN WATER FROM SINKING CURRAGH OFF INISTURK SOUTH</p> <p>1154 TASKED CLIFDEN LIFEBOAT, SHANNON RESCUE HELICOPTER AND CLEGGAN COAST GUARD</p> <p>1202 MAYDAY RELAY BROADCAST ON VHF</p> <p>1215 CLIFDEN LIFEBOAT ONSCENE AND SEARCHING.</p> <p>1224 CLIFDEN LIFEBOAT RESCUES 4 PERSONS FROM THE WATER AND RECOVERS 2 MORE FROM SHORE. PROCEEDING TO CLIFDEN PIER.</p> <p>1229 R115 CHECKED 2 REMAINING CASUALTIES ON INISTURK ISLAND.</p> <p>1250 CLIFDEN LIFEBOAT LANDS 6 CASUALTIES AT CLIFDEN PIER. HELICOPTER LIFTING 4 OF THOSE TO GALWAY UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, TWO WITH SEVERE HYPOTHERMIA</p> <p>1257 CLIFDEN LB PROCEEDING TO INISTURK ISLAND TO PICK UP 2 REMAINING CASUALTIES</p> <p>1258 R115 LIFTS CLIFDEN PIER WITH 4 CASUALTIES FOR GALWAY HOSPITAL.</p> <p>1334 R115 LANDS AT GALWAY HOSPITAL PAD TO 2 WAITING AMBULANCES</p> <p>1351 CLIFDEN LIFEBOAT DEPARTS INISTURK ISLAND FOR CLIFDEN WITH 2 RAMAINING CASUALTIES. ALL OK.</p> <p>1414 CLIFDEN LB LANDS TWO REMAINING CASUALTIES AT CLIFDEN PIER. NO MEDICAL ATTENTION REQUIRED.</p>		

## Appendix 8.3 Met Éireann weather report.


**MET ÉIREANN**  
*The Irish Meteorological Service*

 Glasnevin Hill,  
 Dublin 9, Ireland.

 Cnoc Ghlas Naíon  
 Baile Átha Cliath 9, Éire.  
 www.met.ie

 Tel: +353-1-806 4200  
 Fax: +353-1-806 4247  
 E-mail: met.eireann@met.ie

**Weather Report for sea area Inishturk South to Kingstown, near Clifden,  
 on 27-12-2006 between 1100 hours and 1400 hours Local Time.**

**General Meteorological Situation:** The area was in a slack, southerly airflow between weak frontal systems; slight ridging was evident in the isobars.

**From 1100 to 1400 hours (Local Time):**
**Wind(Beaufort):** South 3 or 4

**Weather:** Fair to cloudy

**Visibility:** Good to moderate

**Sea state:** Slight(mostly swell)

**Nearby observations from offshore weather buoy MI (station number 62090)  
 position 53.1 N 11.2 W**

Station number	Date Time GMT	Wind Direction	Wind Speed (knots)	Highest Gust (knots)	Wave Height (meters)
62090	27-12-06/1100	170	6	9	2.2
62090	27-12-06/1200	190	9	12	2.2
62090	27-12-06/1300	170	7	14	2.3
62090	27-12-06/1400	150	7	10	2.0

UTC Universal Time Coordinate = Greenwich Meantime

XXXX Local Time = British Summer Time = UTC + 1 hour

Wind direction in degrees from North

Wind speed and gusts in knots

Temperatures in degrees Celsius

Significant wave height in meters

## APPENDIX 8.4

### Appendix 8.4 Marine Notice No. 9 of 2003.



*Department of Communications, Marine and Natural  
Resources*

**MARINE NOTICE No. 9 of 2003**

Notice to all Recreational Craft owners, Certifying Authorities, Surveyors, Training Establishments, Masters and Crews of all Recreational Craft.

**APPLICATION OF SOLAS CHAPTER V TO RECREATIONAL  
CRAFT.**

On 1 July 2002, some new regulations came into force, which directly affect recreational craft. These regulations are part of Chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, otherwise known as SOLAS V. Most of the SOLAS convention only applies to large commercial ships, but parts of Chapter V apply to small, privately owned recreational craft. The regulations described in this Marine Notice apply to recreational craft.

**Voyage Planning**

Regulation V/34 'Safe Navigation and avoidance of dangerous situations', is a new regulation. It concerns prior planning for a boating trip, more commonly known as voyage or passage planning. Voyage planning is basically common sense. Recreational craft users should particularly take into account the following points when planning a boating trip:

- weather: before going boating, check the weather forecast and get regular updates if planning to be out for any length of time.
- tides: check the tidal predictions for the trip and ensure that they fit with the planned trip.
- limitations of the vessel: consider whether the boat is up to the proposed trip and that there is sufficient safety equipment and stores.
- crew: take into account the experience and physical ability of the crew. Crews suffering from cold, tiredness and seasickness won't be able to do their job properly and could even result in an overburdened skipper.
- navigational dangers: make sure the crew is familiar with any navigational dangers that may be encountered during the boating trip. This generally means checking an up to date chart and a current pilot book or almanac.
- contingency plan: always have a contingency plan should anything go wrong. Before departing, consider places where the boat can take refuge should conditions deteriorate or if the crew suffer an incident or injury. Bear in mind that the GPS set is vulnerable and could fail at the most inconvenient time. It is sensible and good practice to make sure that the crew are not over-reliant on the GPS set and that they can navigate to safety without it should it fail.
- information ashore: make sure that someone ashore knows the plans for the trip and knows what to do should they become concerned for the crews' well being. The Irish Coast Guard has a Yacht and Boat safety scheme and all vessels planning to sail off-shore are encouraged to submit a Sail Plan before commencing the voyage. In addition, the Irish Coast Guard reminds all vessels that they should pass TR messages via their nearest Coast Radio Station. There is no charge for this service. Please note, however, that overdue reporting remains the responsibility of the vessels shore contact. The Irish Coast Guard will not initiate overdue procedures on the basis of TR messages.

## Appendix 8.4 Marine Notice No. 9 of 2003.

### **Radar Reflectors**

Many large ships rely on radar for navigation and for spotting other vessels in their vicinity. So, whatever size the boat is, it's important to make sure that it can be seen by radar. Regulation V/19 requires all small craft to fit a radar reflector 'if practicable'. If the boat is more than 15m in length, it should be possible to fit a radar reflector that meets the IMO requirements of 10m<sup>2</sup>. If the boat is less than 15m in length, it should be fitted with the largest radar reflector possible. Regardless of the size of boat, the radar reflector should be fitted according to the manufacturer's instructions and as high as possible to maximise its effectiveness.

### **Life Saving Signals**

Regulation V/29 requires the boat to have access to an illustrated table of the recognised life saving signals, so that it can communicate with the search and rescue services or other boats if it gets into trouble. A table of life saving signals is produced in the Annex to this Marine Notice and it can also be found in various nautical publications. If the boat is not suitable for carrying a copy of the table on board (because it's small or very exposed), make sure the table has been studied before going boating. Larger boats should keep a copy on board.

### **Assistance to other Craft**

Regulations V/31, V/32 and V/33 require a vessel:

- to let the Irish Coast Guard and any other vessels in the vicinity know if it encounters anything that could cause a serious hazard to navigation, if that hazard has not already been reported. This can be done by calling the Coast Guard on VHF, if on board, or by telephoning them at the earliest opportunity. The Coast Guard will then warn other vessels in the area.
- to respond to any distress signal that it sees or hears and help anyone or any boat in distress as best it can.

### **Misuse of Distress Signals**

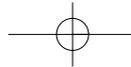
Regulation V/35 prohibits misuse of any distress signals. These are critical to safety at sea and misusing them could put a person's life at risk.

In addition to SOLAS V, recreational craft users should note that the International Convention for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs) applies and therefore they should ensure that the correct lights and shapes are carried. The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) also applies. Vessels should not discharge oil or drop garbage into the sea and vessels over 12m should display a placard. Vessels of 13.7 m in length are required to meet certain life saving and fire protection requirements.

Director General  
Maritime Safety Directorate  
Department of Communications, Marine  
And Natural Resources  
Dublin 2.

29 April 2003

For any technical assistance in relation to this Marine Notice please contact the Marine Survey Office, 26-27 Eden Quay, Dublin 1 at 01-8744900. For general enquiries please contact the Maritime Safety Division at 01-678 2360. Any enquiries concerning Marine Notices should be addressed to: Maritime Safety Directorate, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2. Email: [marine.notices@dcmnr.gov.ie](mailto:marine.notices@dcmnr.gov.ie)

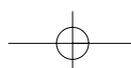


# CORRESPONDENCE

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## 9. LIST OF CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

	<b>PAGE</b>
9.1 Ms. Martha Conneely MCIB Response	19 19
9.2 Ms. Emer Joyce MCIB Response	20 21
9.3 Mrs. Geraldine MacCann MCIB Response	22 22



8 Cuirt Cregg  
Galway Road  
Clifden  
Co. Galway

10 August 2008

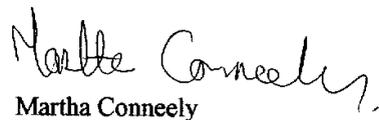
Ms Bridie Cullinane,  
Secretary  
Marine Casualty Investigation Board  
Leeson Lane,  
Dublin 2.

Dear Bridie

Thank you for the copy of the Draft Report of the sinking of a curragh off Galway Bay on 28 December 2006. I have read the draft report fully and am satisfied that the report is an accurate account of the events that took place on that date. I have no additional comments or observations.

Thank you for your assistance with this.

Yours sincerely

  
Martha Conneely



**MCIB RESPONSE**

The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.

## CORRESPONDENCE

**EMER JOYCE  
MAIN STREET  
CLIFDEN  
CO GALWAY  
TEL NO. 095 21034, 21705 OR 22707  
FAX NO 095 22723  
E-MAIL [emer@jamesbjoyce.com](mailto:emer@jamesbjoyce.com)**

The Chairman  
MCIB  
Leeson Lane  
Dublin 2

Date: 30 July 2008

**Re: Draft Report of the Investigation into the capsizing and sinking of a black wooden Curragh off Galway Bay, on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

Dear Sirs

I am in receipt of your letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July enclosing draft report and I now enclose my observations in connection with same.

of the investigation and capsizing and sinking of a Black Wooden Currach of Clifden on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December 2006.

I now enclose my observations with regard to this report.

Yours faithfully

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**EMER JOYCE**



## OBSERVATIONS

### SYNOPSIS

- 1.1 This is incorrect, I had travelled to the Island on the 27<sup>th</sup> of December stayed over night and went out the following morning the 28<sup>th</sup> to collect some friends. The upturned vessel was approximately 50 yards from shore not 150. The facts as stated in paragraph 1.1 are correct.

### FACTUAL INFORMATION

- 2.3 Persons on Board Ms Martha Kinneally name is spelt Conneely

### EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INCIDENT

- 3.1 Is correct except Ms Emer McCann is incorrect and it should read Ms Geraldine McCann  
3.4 The weather at this time was actually South approximately Force 5

### THE INCIDENT

- 4.4 The vessel was approximately 100 to 150 yards from the shore at this point. The speed was increased but was not quite full throttle. No extra water was shipped .  
4.5 The vessel just sank under us and at this point we were 50 yards from shore approximately. If we had been 200 yards from the shore we would have been in the middle of the channel and would have been swept away.

### CONCLUSIONS

- 6.2. I had checked the weather forecast that morning by ringing 1550123855 on my mobile and the weather forecast was for southerly winds. I also discussed the weather with Mr Michael Hannon a local fisherman from the Island who had just travelled out to the island who I met on the Island at approximately 10.30 a.m. and he told me that the wind at that time was coming from a southerly direction and the wind was southerly when we went across. I would not have undertaken this journey in South Easterly conditions as there was no shelter and was surprised to encounter South Easterly winds on the return journey. I had also planned to do this journey at slack tide.  
6.4 See 6.2 above

*Handwritten signature and date: 31/12/08*

### MCIB RESPONSE

The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.

# CORRESPONDENCE

Loughbrown Stud  
 The Curragh  
 County Kildare  
 TEL: 045-433363  
 FAX: 045-435744  
 Mobile 086-1735829  
 geraldinemaccann@loughbrownstud.ie

REF: MCIB/133

24<sup>th</sup> July 2008

Ms. Bridie Cullinane, (Secretary)  
 Marine Casualty Investigation Board,  
 Leeson Lane,  
 Dublin 2.



Dear Ms. Cullinane,

Thank you for your letter received and Draft Report.  
 May I make some slight corrections.

- (i) The correct spelling of my surname is MacCann. **(Mrs. Geraldine MacCann)**
- (ii) The correct spelling of name of Person on Board **(Ms. Erica Jewitt)**
- (iii) 3.1 Ms. Joyce later met with **Mrs. Geraldine MacCann**
- (iv) 3.2 Ms. Joyce met **Mrs. MacCann**

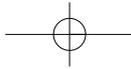
Thank you very much,

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Geraldine MacCann

## MCIB RESPONSE

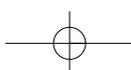
The MCIB notes the contents of this letter.

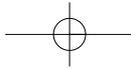


**NOTES**

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# NOTES

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