

17 DEAD IN AIR CRASH

But thirty survive to tell of miracle escapes

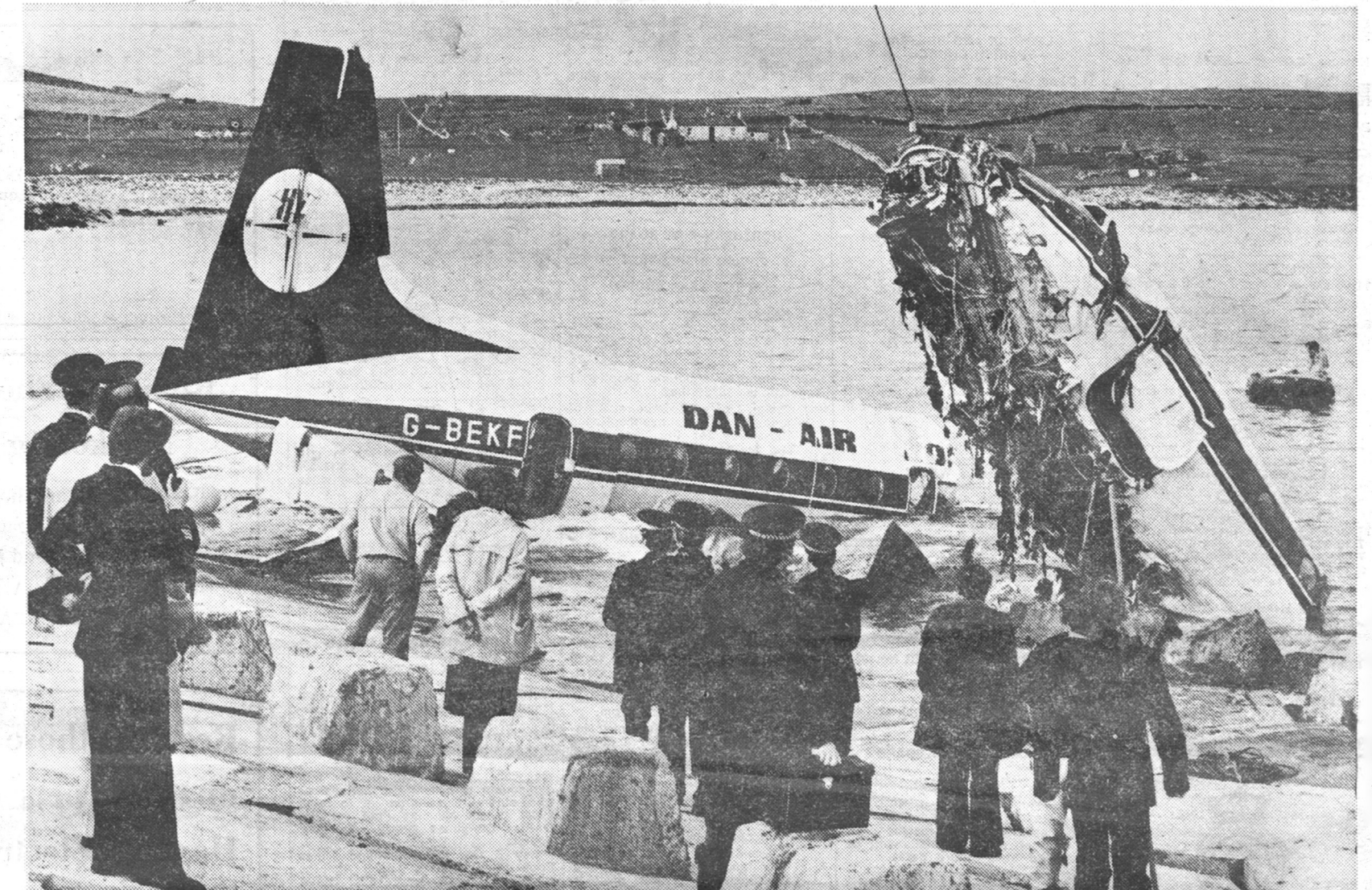
Seventeen died at Sumburgh on Tuesday in Scotland's worst air crash in 25 years. Miraculously, another 30 survived when a Dan-Air charter HS 748 ploughed off the end of the runway, and into the sea.

All but one of the bodies have been recovered, and divers were yesterday continuing the search of the seabed in the area of the accident.

Last body in the aircraft was found trapped in the front section of the fuselage, pictured as it was lifted from the sea by a crane late on Wednesday afternoon.

The Dan-Air flight was carrying mainly offshore oil workers on their way home on leave, but there was one local resident on board — Mr Ian Leslie, manager of the Sumburgh Airport Hotel, who escaped from the wreck.

According to passengers the accident apparently happened when an engine failed as the aircraft was taking off and the pilot was unable to stop.



Photo

Gibby Irvine

The HS 748 partly broke up on impact with the sea, about 40 yards from the shore, and sank quickly. Helicopters were on the scene in minutes to drop liferafts and start winching survivors on board.

Divers were flown to Sumburgh to search the wreck for survivors who might have found pockets of air, but they reported that nobody was left alive

onboard and after removing three bodies they were told to leave the wreck until clearance was given by the CAA.

This is the first serious accident at Sumburgh since the airport started functioning in the 1930s, and it is the worst air disaster at a Scottish airport since 28 people lost their lives at Prestwick on Christmas Day, 1954.

A Sumburgh-based pilot, **Capt. Jonathan Dalrymple-Smith**, of Peregrine, witnessed the crash. He saw the pilot braking heavily towards the end of the runway; he went right off the end, slipping sideways, and the plane ended up within fifty yards of the shore with the port wing broken off and the starboard wing and the tail clear of the water. Capt. Dalrymple-Smith saw various people emerging, some clinging to parts of the aircraft and others in the water heading towards the shore. Conditions in the sea were difficult, as it was fairly choppy. Along with some other people he helped survivors on to the shore.

Meanwhile helicopters had been alerted and were quickly on the scene and many boats responded to a coastguard Mayday call to shipping in the area.

Divers flown in

Divers and members of the local sub-aqua club were called for and when it became dark floodlights were placed in position. But progress was very slow, and by the time the search was abandoned for the night only seven bodies had been recovered. Two more were recovered on Wednesday forenoon, still leaving eight people officially missing.

One of the divers involved was **Mr Ken McIntosh**, of Subwork Diving Services, who confirmed the plane was lying in about 30 feet of water, with the front section broken off almost completely. He also confirmed there were bodies still in the wreck.

The identities of the dead and those still missing were not revealed until late on Wednesday night. There had been some difficulty in contacting next-of-kin and there was also a problem of formal identification.

AT THE HOSPITAL

For the Gilbert Bain Hospital it was the first time

its full scale emergency plan had been put into operation, and **Mr Ronald P. Cumming**, the surgeon-consultant, said the mobilisation procedure had been excellent. They had learned a few lessons, but the hospital could have coped with the greater number of serious casualties that might have been expected. (Continued on centre pages)

The dead named

Late on Wednesday police issued a list of the names of the 15 men who died in the crash or are still missing. Dan-Air has still not yet revealed the names of the two pilots on the aircraft. The third crew member, hostess **Elizabeth Cowie**, Aberdeen, escaped from the wreck.

The bodies of the dead are in a temporary mortuary at Sumburgh awaiting formal identification.

The dead and missing named by police are: **Philip Arthur Renshall**, 79 Brentfield Circle, Auchterellon; **Timothy Harding Parsloe Ooditn**, 61 Provost Buchan Drive, Brechin, Angus; **Archibald MacDonald**, Bogtechie, Bridge of Muchalls, Newtonhill, Kincardineshire; **Bruce Cotton**, 2 Stewart Crescent, Tarves, Aberdeenshire; **Russell Hughes**, 7 Plantation Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire; **Thomas J. Startup**, 50 Mirren Drive, Hardgate, Clydebank; **David Thomson**, 23 Barraview, Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire; **John King**, 46 Knowhead Road, Shartlees, Kilmarnock; **Andrew Ross**, 3 Barnett Place, Nairn; **John O'Shea**, 5 Osborne Place, Aberdeen; **Hugh Smillie**, 34 Grange Place, Arbroath; **Alexander Marr**, 5 Pitmeddie Crescent, Aberdeen; **Fraser H. Scott**, 3 Silverknowes Road, Edinburgh; **Paul William Blampey**, 27 Burwell Close, Eastover, Plymouth; **Royston Brooks**, 45 Derrick Road, Tiverton, Devon.

Yesterday divers were combing the seabed around the wreck site, but police said that of the pieces of the fuselage still in the sea none was big enough for a body to be trapped inside.



A casualty arriving at Seafield.

[Photo: Gibby Irvine.]

The Shetland Times

"The Old Rock"

Lerwick,
Friday, 3rd August, 1979.

DISASTER

They were strangers, birds of passage southbound from their bizarre workplaces far north of us. Death came as they sought to travel onwards to their mainland homes, and as the appalling news spread throughout the islands a whole community identified itself with the seventeen victims and their families.

Yet the loss of life could have been much greater. The miracle is that thirty of the 47 onboard the aircraft escaped with their lives and mainly without injury. It would probably have been otherwise had these not been exclusively young fit men capable of clawing their way from the wreckage and braving the bitter sea to reach safety.

That is all that should be said at this time, beyond extending heartfelt sympathy to bereaved families from Aberdeen down to Devon. It is unfortunate that some newspapers have already gone beyond speculation as to the cause of the crash, one going so far as to claim that Sumburgh airport has a "notorious reputation." Others have discussed the suitability of the aircraft and tried to divine whether pilot error was a factor. The fact is that Sumburgh's limitations are known to the aircrews who fly there, its record for accident-free operation is impressive, and the aircraft involved in Tuesday's disaster is of a type especially suited to the island routes. The inquiry will doubtless reveal the cause, but whatever that may prove to be it will not disprove the general contention that air travel is safe and in statistical terms safer than most other means of travel.

HELD OVER

Because of the coverage given to the major story of the year we have had to hold over reports from Tuesday's SIC meeting and other items.

FINED FOR PARKING

Two motorists were each fined £5 for parking vehicles on Commercial Street on 4th June. They were **John Hayes** (35), West Houlland, Bridge of Walls and **Mrs Catriona Devonald**, 11 Wirliergert, Aith.

Few had serious injuries

It was surprising that so few of the survivors sustained serious injuries. Of the 30 survivors 29 were taken to hospital, but only eight were detained — and of these six were released the following afternoon. The remaining 21 were found hotel accommodation for the night before arrangements were made to fly them back to the mainland on Wednesday morning.

HIS WATCH STOPPED

The exact time of the crash was pinpointed by survivor **Joseph MacKinnon** (30), 6 Redmoss Place, Aberdeen, who is a technician employed by Shell on the Dunlin production platform—his watch stopped at four minutes past five, just when the plane hit the water.

Mr MacKinnon's story was: "We had only recently got into Sumburgh by helicopter and then boarded the 248 for the flight to Aberdeen. I was sitting about six seats from the back, beside a window, out of which I was looking as we were taking off. The plane seemed to lift a bit at the front, then come down, tried to lift again, then went down. The pilot braked and veered to the left, but the plane just ploughed on over the grass, across the road, and into the sea. It seemed to go nose down. The water came in really quickly, probably within a minute it was completely inside the plane."

"The lad sitting beside me did not move, so I unfastened my seat belt and jumped over the back of my seat to the one behind me which was empty. I headed for the back door, which had been opened, but somebody shouted to me to get my lifejacket, and I went back to my seat for it, but I didn't have time to put it on because the water was nearly at roof height."

"I was in the queue waiting to get out, and before I

reached the door I was completely submerged. Lots of things went through my mind, but somehow or other I just got dragged along with the rush of people and suddenly I found myself out and in the sea.

"I couldn't get my life-raft to inflate, so I got rid

Her Majesty the Queen, who is now in Africa, has sent a telegram of sympathy to the relatives of those who lost their lives.

of it and started to swim for the shore. It seemed to be the longest swim I have ever had, but I suppose it was only about thirty yards. By that time a helicopter was right above us, and that made it worse trying to reach the shore. Two fellows there grabbed a hold of my arms. The waves were battering the shore and these two pulled me ashore. I damaged my right hand when scrambling ashore, but it is nothing serious."

Asked if he would be going back to offshore employment, Mr MacKinnon said he would. He understood this was the first crash at Sumburgh in over forty years, and it wouldn't happen to him again.

COASTGUARD CO-ORDINATION

As always the Coastguard service played an important role in the event, and **District Officer Alex Webster**, was well satisfied with the way things had gone within his organisation.

It was around 5.10 p.m. when the initial message was received at the coast-guard station from the tower at Sumburgh, and immediately a broadcast was made to shipping on VHF radio. Lerwick lifeboat was called out, the Sumburgh Coast Rescue Company was alerted, local skin divers contacted in case they would be of assistance, the Gilbert Bain Hospital warned to stand by



Survivors relax in the Gilbert Bain Hospital. At bottom right of picture is Joseph MacKinnon.

for casualties, and the mobile rescue unit with its general purpose boat was sent to Sumburgh.

Mr Webster said there had been an excellent response from vessels in the area. The ferryboat Grima offered assistance and this was accepted, as it was considered she would be an ideal boat if required to lift casualties, but in the end her services were not required.

Great praise was given by Mr Webster to **Mr Derek Black**, who was in his boat, the Quest, when the broadcast was sent out. He responded immediately, and was first on the scene — indeed he had some bodies onboard before anybody else was near the place.

THE SURVIVORS

But the names of the survivors were made known on Wednesday. They included the only stewardess on the flight, **Elizabeth Cowie**, 19 Kings Hill Road, Aberdeen, who was uninjured.

The eight detained in hospital were: **Alan Ray**, 131 King George Road, South Shields; **Gregg Jones**, address unknown; **Albert Avery**, 4 Cheyhanne, Norwich; **Alexander Gallifant**, 40 Springbank Close, Farsley, Leeds; **Keith Dyer**, 25 Farquhar Street, Moray; **John Finney**, 20 East Park Road, Kintore (a British Airways helicopter pilot usually based at Sum-

burgh); **Ronald McVeigh**, 35 Albert Avenue, Glasgow; and **Michael Hutson**, 31 Marcus Crescent, Aberdeen.

Also on the list of survivors was **Mr Ian Leslie**, manager of the Sumburgh Hotel, the only plane passenger who did not go to hospital for attention. **Mr Leslie**, one of whose hobbies is underwater swimming, swam along inside the submerged fuselage, and he helped to get several of the passengers out. Indeed he intended collecting his diving gear and going back to the scene, but he was advised he had undergone too much of an ordeal.

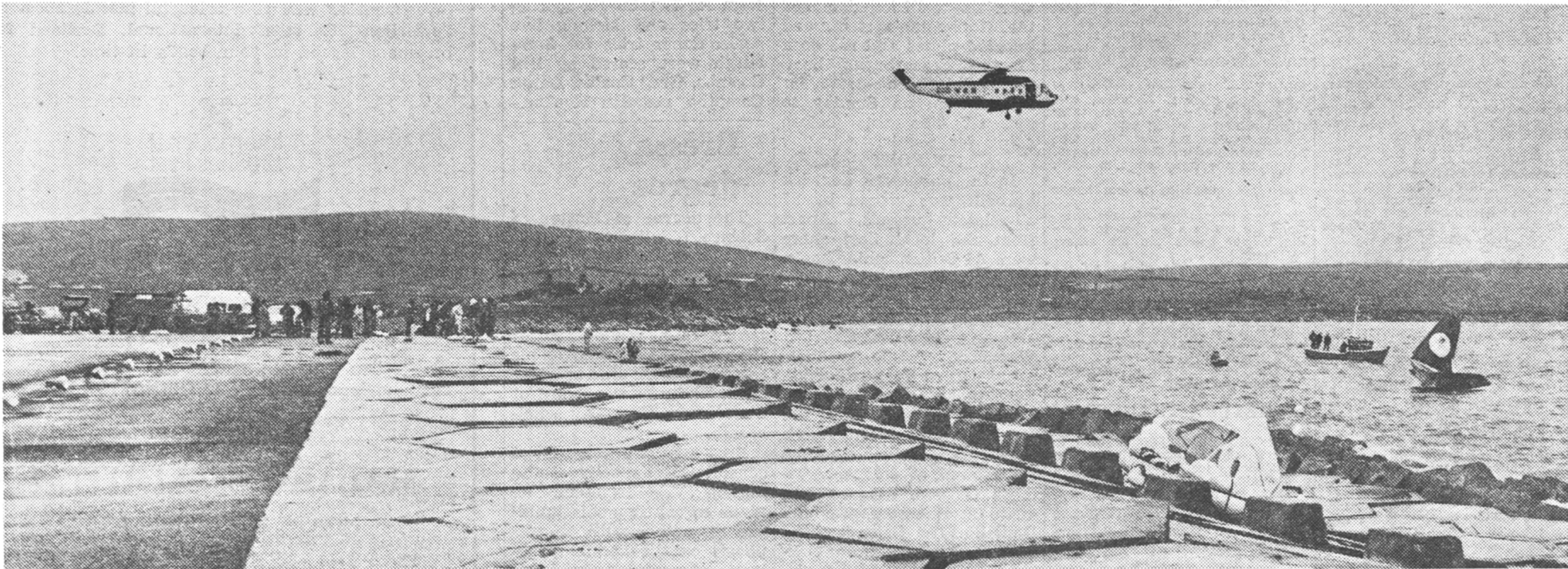
The others who were allowed out after treatment, generally for minor cuts and bruises, or suffering from shock, were: **Richard Leitch**, 18 Dixon Avenue, Montrose; **Alexander Nicol**, 10 Cairnwell Crescent, Montrose; **Richard M. Keillor**, 1 St John Road, Wallasey; **James S. Finlayson**, 35 St John's Way, Bo'ness; **Ronald S. Robertson**, 12 Drum-brey Park, Edinburgh; **Vincent Cain**, 39 Niederfield Road, Edinburgh; **Colin F. Hutchins**, 17 Swanwood, Merevale Park, Antherstone; **William White**, Dairy Cottage, Whitehouse, Aberdeen; **Daniel B. Quick**, 66 Bushwood Road, Kew, London; **Howard Jones**, 31 Sandmouth Drive, Wallasey; **William Crombie**, 29 Sand

Place, Lossiemouth; **James Crawford**, 38 Fullerton Drive, Troon; **Brian Coulston**, 36 Antone, Camelon, Falkirk; **Joseph MacKinnon**, 6 Redmoss Place, Nigg, Aberdeen; **John Fraser**, 29 Torrance Avenue, Airdrie; **Harald Kennedy**, 8 Puffin Court, Stonehaven; **John Gillies**, 1 Lodge Mews Park, London; **David Richardson**, 47 Penrith Crescent, Cologne, Lancs; **Alistair R. Ritchie**, 6 Belmont Gardens, Aberdeen; and **William Lees**, 4 Wood Crescent, Elgin.

POLICE INVOLVEMENT

Among the hardest working groups involved in the incident were the police. **Chief Inspector Ian Fraser** and about a dozen of his men worked more than 24 hours non-stop. Every available policeman was on duty, and special constables were called in — a rare event in Shetland.

Chief Constable Donald Henderson was on a plane which arrived over Sumburgh late on Tuesday night — he had returned to Inverness from his leave — but the plane could not land. However, he did manage to get to Sumburgh on Wednesday to see the situation for himself. Also arriving in Sumburgh were **Dan Air's** accident team, including their chief pilot, and a Department of Trade accident investigation team.



Rescuers stand by on Tuesday but hope fades for those in the plane.

[Photos: Gibby Irvine.]

SURVIVORS!

One of the eight who spent the night in hospital, Ronald McVeigh (22), of Glasgow, was sitting right at the front of the aircraft when it crashed. "I knew we were going to go off the runway. I saw the engine cut out and I realised we were going off, but I thought we would just end up in a field and wasn't too worried. Suddenly there was a bang, and then nothing, and then an almighty crash as we hit the water."

"Then there was total darkness and I was immediately in water up to my knees. Everybody was shouting things like 'don't panic,' and panicking at the same time. Most of them were moving back up the aircraft. I was the only one to go forward. I tried to get on my lifejacket, but it was going to take too long to hang about. I tried to open a door, but the pressure of water was too much. I went into the cabin and the windows were open—the two pilots had gone. The windows were a bit small but I would probably have tried to get out them except the whole place filled with water."

"I swam back up the plane and got a breath from a pocket of air. I swam down and got out beneath a door which had opened as the pressure equalised."



Gregg Jones, Ron McVeigh and Keith Dyer (left to right) in hospital on Wednesday. [Gibby Irvine]

"When I was in the cabin I thought that was it. I thought what a way to go, drowning in the cockpit of a plane."

"When I got up I could see others about 40 yards away, and about another 40 yards to the shore. I didn't think I was going to make it, but thought I might as well try anyway."

"I couldn't make much headway swimming, but I got hitched up on the wing."

I hung on there, but I was being forced to take mouthfuls of water when I went under. Eventually I got washed off, and floated until the helicopter turned up and I was winched on-board."

Warwickshire man Keith Dyer (26) was seated nearer the rear of the aircraft. "I thought I was going to drown, and I just hoped it would be quick," he said.

"I went out through the rear door, which had been

opened by the stewardess. She was trying to keep people calm and get them to put on their lifejackets, but there was no time to go through the proper procedures."

"There were people standing at the door wondering whether to jump into the water or not, but I pushed out because there were people pushing to get out."

"Once I was in the water I knew I was alright because I am a strong swimmer."

'Outlaw' dog shore trip costs £600

The skipper of the German floating approved school "Outlaw" was fined £600 in Lerwick Sheriff Court on Tuesday when he admitted allowing a dog ashore from the ship in contravention of the British anti-rabies laws.

The dog was on the islands known as the Cheynies, near Scalloway, where boys from the ship had been put ashore on a three-day survival expedition. They decided they had had enough and hailed a passing boat to take them back to the Outlaw, but the owner of the boat also contacted the police to say that the dog had been ashore on the island where a number of sheep were kept.

In court on Tuesday Peter Otto Schwaz, the Outlaw's captain, pled guilty to failing to ensure that the dog was kept secured on the ship.

The court was told that there were two dogs and a parrot on board the Outlaw, and all three had been registered when the ship reached its first British port, Peterhead. A licence had been granted to allow the animals to be kept, on condition that they were secured on the ship.

Sheriff Alistair Macdonald said that the responsibility for the very serious offence was fully the skipper's. He imposed an alternative 90 day prison sentence, and allowed no time to pay.

The sheriff also asked why the Outlaw was spend-

ing so much time in Shetland waters, and was told she was due to sail for Ullapool. The ship is the equivalent of a British List D School, and has on board a number of German young offenders. The survival expedition on the Cheynies was part of their rehabilitation programme.

New gas find off Shetland

The British National Oil Corporation and Gulf Oil have announced a gas and gas condensate discovery 100 miles south-east of Shetland. The participants each held a one-third interest. The well tested 37 million cubic feet of gas per day and 1,986 barrels of 48 degree API condensate per day from sand of middle jurassic age.

The discovery well was drilled to a depth of 13,700 feet in 390 feet of water. Additional evaluation of information derived from the drilling of the well will be required to determine the size and commercial significance of the reservoir. The well was drilled by the Norjarl rig. An additional exploratory well is planned in the area this year.

Inquiry team at work

Leading the Department of Trade team was Mr William Trench, chief inspector of accidents, who said yesterday that the "black box" recorder had been recovered, apparently intact, from the rear of the plane. This should provide them with a tremendous amount of knowledge about the incident, but he could not say when the investigations would be complete, and he would not be drawn about making any conclusions at the moment. The instrument could indicate whether or not there had been an engine failure — if it did then it would be up to the engineers to try and find the cause.

Helicopters played a prominent part in the incident, although they actually picked up very few of the survivors. They maintained a hover watch over the area, and were used to ferry the injured to the Gilbert Bain Hospital, using Seaford as a landing pad. Onboard a British Airways helicopter was winchman Mr Brian Johnston, who was at home when the accident happened. He said the weather was pretty lousy, but it was not preventing the rescue services from working. This chopper did not rescue anybody. In the helicopter were Capt. Steve Jowett and Capt. Jim Hodges, along with Mr Peter Garland.

Another helicopter picked up a survivor very soon after the crash. Mr Adrian Jeffs, a senior rescue crewman, was onboard, and went down on the winch to him. But instead of taking him back to the helicopter they simply moved back to land him on the road where ambulances were standing by.

With Mr Jeffs still on the end of the winch the helicopter moved back out towards the wreck, and he spotted two bodies very close to the concrete blocks which act as a breakwater. He got a grip on one of the bodies, but became swamped by the sea and was winched aboard again as it was too dangerous. The helicopter then airlifted a survivor who had been picked up by a fishing boat and took him to an ambulance. A further hour's search yielded no more rescue attempts.

LIFEBOAT'S ROLE

The value of the high-speed Lerwick lifeboat was demonstrated by the fact that she took just 65 minutes from Lerwick harbour to the scene of the crash. Immediately on arrival at 6.25 pm she launched a

rubber boat and searched the area and the wreck for survivors. There was a heavy shore swell and poor visibility. As it was considered the plane might run out on the tide, the rubber boat put a towrope round its tail and passed the rope to the beach, but the aircraft did not move. The rubber boat recovered

three of the bodies, giving assistance to divers, who were later stopped from working because of the dangerous conditions.

The lifeboat was appointed "scene commander" by the Coastguards and she kept excellent VHF control of the situation. She returned to her Lerwick station at midnight.

Councillors attack litter louts

Many visitors to Shetland express the opinion that it is a "dirty" place — especially Lerwick. Many locals agree. The subject was very fully aired at Shetland Islands Council's meeting on Tuesday following a question by Mr Alex Morrison about enforcement of the Litter Act.

Chairman of the Environmental Health and Control committee, Mr Edward Thomason, said that no one who went around Shetland was unaware of a litter problem, and he suggested remitting the matter to his committee for a discussion, when the police would be invited to attend.

Mr D. C. Smith, the director concerned, explained that enforcement was a matter for the police, but it was difficult to get a prosecution — a person had to be seen dropping litter; if asked to pick it up and he did so that was the end of the matter; he might drop it again once the police had gone. He agreed this was a deplorable society as far as litter was concerned. Perhaps lack of rubbish bins throughout the county was a point, but that brought up the vexed question of finance. He spoke about rusting cars, and pointed out often they could not take action because the cars had not been abandoned unlawfully — often on a person's own land.

The chairman noted many cars were abandoned in quarries. Could the enforcement officer not take a look at this?

Mr Smith said they did attempt to enforce this, but it was often difficult to trace the owner.

Mr Morrison confessed it made him mad when he walked about Lerwick. At one time it was a fishing port and a very clean town. Fines for litter louts were now up to £200, and it was high time someone was before the court and fined this amount — it might cure the problem. Conservation volunteers were doing a first-class job, and Radio Shetland and "The Shetland Times" had helped but it was high time the police stepped in; he thought they could catch people quite easily. For example the Market Cross on a Saturday afternoon was a disgrace, with men drinking out of beer tins. South chaps had been blamed for this, but he saw mainly Shetlanders doing this and it was time they were hauled up and heavily fined. People like himself who tried to help were getting fed-up with the situation.

People who went to Norway or Sweden found lovely clean towns — it was the people who made them clean, and in these counties they were heavily fined if they

did not keep the place clean. He understood if anybody in Canada dropped a fag-end it cost them 25 dollars. It was time Shetland people were made to realise that they lived in a beautiful place and they should try to keep it beautiful. If they did not the solution was to fine them heavily.

Mr A. I. Tulloch, convenor, agreed with these sentiments, and approved Mr Thomason's suggestion to remit the matter to the committee, with the police in attendance — and Mr Morrison would also be invited to attend.

But Mr Ray Bentley did not think that was good enough. Why not instruct officials to advertise and make announcements that they were asking the police to report people who were deliberately fouling pavements? They could take that decision now, and Mr Thomason's committee could then look into the matter more deeply.

Mr W. A. Smith felt they should not concentrate too much on old cars, and he pointed out three eyesores around Lerwick where illegal dumping is going on. In time they would become health hazards.

Mrs Florence Grains pointed out many people did quite a lot about clearing up litter, but it was up to the police to act. She described how

litter collections had been made in her area, but someone poured out the contents of some of the sacks before they could be uplifted.

Mr Morrison concluded by asking the SIC to show an example around their own property. (This might be helpful. May we suggest the councillors should look around the grounds of the Town Hall as a starting point? — Ed., ST)

Tide Tables

High water times for Lerwick and Scalloway for the coming week. All times are G.M.T.

LERWICK		
Today	5.50	18.36
Saturday	7.14	19.46
Sunday	8.22	20.43
Monday	9.17	21.33
Tuesday	10.07	22.19
Wednesday	10.54	23.04
Thursday	11.40	23.49
Friday	—	12.25

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SCALLOWAY		
Today	3.47	16.31
Saturday	5.05	17.42
Sunday	6.19	18.47
Monday	7.27	19.45
Tuesday	8.26	20.39
Wednesday	9.20	21.30
Thursday	10.29	22.17
Friday	10.55	23.01

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To obtain the approximate time of high water at Sullom Voe, SUBTRACT 1 hour 30 mins. from the Lerwick times, or ADD 20 minutes to the Scalloway times.

Public thanked

Chief Inspector Ian Fraser and Mr Ron Fletcher, secretary of Shetland Health Board both paid tribute to people who had volunteered help when they heard of the disaster. Said Chief Inspector Fraser: "I would like to thank all the contractors who offered lifting gear, hoteliers and householders who offered assistance, and all members of the public who gave help or who offered assistance. The public in Shetland responded splendidly to the situation." Mr Fletcher thanked all the members of staff on duty at the time, and those who were off duty and offered to come. "We also had volunteers from the public, and even from holidaymakers with some experience who offered to help."