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FINDS OF AIRCRAFT PARTS

From time to time, fishermen, coastal rescue teams, other agencies and members of the public find aircraft components, and inform the Air Accident Investigation Unit of the find. The Air Accident Investigation Unit endeavours to identify all such items. The following is a press release, dated 5 February 1999, relating to one such find. Photographs of the object are included in Annex A.

Air Accident Investigation Unit

PRESS RELEASE

SUBJECT:- Examination of item trawled from sea bed on 21st January 1999, by the trawler Angela B, at a position approximately twenty miles south of Tuskar Rock.

DATE:- 5 February 1999

The object landed at Kilmore Quay from the trawler Angela B, skippered by Dermot Bates, on the 28th January 1999, which had been hauled-in on 21st January 1999, was examined by the Air Accident Investigation Unit of the Department of Public Enterprise at its facility at the Air Corps Station, Gormanston, Co. Meath.

The object was heavily encrusted with marine growth, mainly small barnacles, but some other forms of growth were also present. Samples were taken of the various marine specimens. The growth was then removed by scraping. A small brass plate was found with the legend:

**"LICENCED UNDER
PATENTS NUMBER
288173 308301 349438"**

No other numbers or identification marks were found on the external surfaces of the object.

The object was largely constructed from magnesium alloy. Considerable portions of the object had totally decayed due to salt water corrosion. The object is circular in nature, with a maximum diameter of 18" and it is approximately 16" long. Initial inspection led to the conclusion that it was a large part of an aircraft type piston engine supercharger. The size of the air passages indicated that it came from an engine of roughly 1,000 horse power size.

A small portion was removed, to liberate a bolt which was corroded and could not be removed by unscrewing. Measurement of this bolt showed it be 5/16 BSF (British Standard Fine). The brass tag used the English, as opposed to the American, spelling of "Licenced". This information leads to the conclusion that object was of UK design and probably of UK manufacture.

Subsequent contact with the patents desk of the British Library showed that the three patents on the tag were issued between 1928 and 1931, and relate to the supercharging of aircraft engines. The patents were granted to Henri and Maurice Farman.

Further comparison of the object with photographs of UK engines of the 1930's and 1940's indicate that the object is part of the supercharger of a Rolls Royce Merlin aero engine. It appears to be similar to an early version of the Merlin, such as the Merlin XX. Versions of the Merlin were also produced under licence in the USA, for use in both UK and US aircraft.

In order to positively identify the object, a letter has been sent to the Rolls Royce Heritage Trust, asking for specific dimensional data. If the object co-relates positively to this data, the identity will be positively confirmed. Information from Rolls Royce may possibly lead to identification of the actual mark of Merlin. The letter also contain queries regarding US manufactured Merlins.

The exact position where the item was caught in the nets can not be determined, as the trawl was of two hours duration at a speed of 4 knots. The object could therefore have been caught anywhere along the eight nautical mile long trawl.

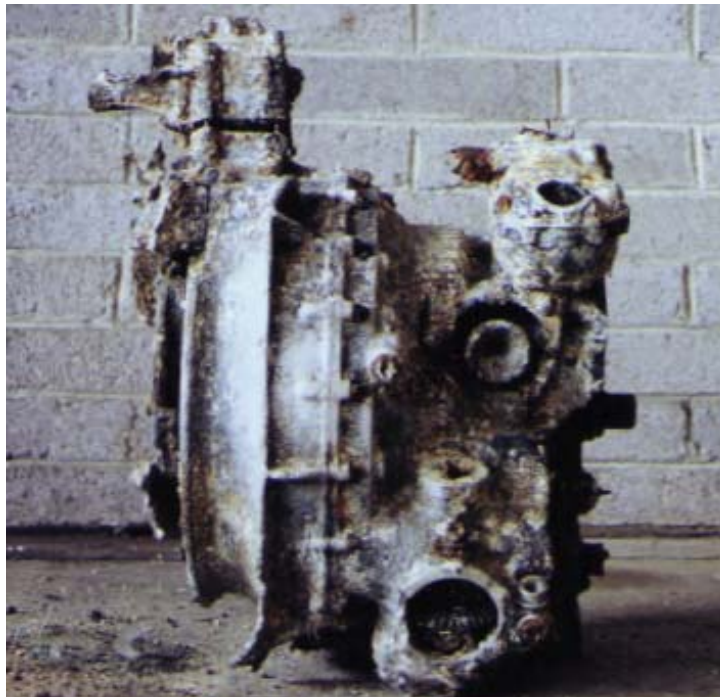
The identification of the supercharger, so far, indicates that it is extremely unlikely that it has any connection with the loss of the Aer Lingus Viscount at Tuskar Rock on 24th March 1968

Kevin Humphreys
Chief Inspector of Accidents.

ANNEX A



Supercharger as recovered, prior to cleaning



Supercharger after initial cleaning.
In the installed position, the unit would be inverted.