



The Bristows helicopter in flight.

Dornoch

Lucky Escape — A Coastguard helicopter winchman from Dornoch, sent to aid an ill crewman on a Spanish fishing boat in the Atlantic had to be rescued himself when he was swept off the trawler.

Chris Murray, who now lives at Aginish, outside Stornoway, suffered a dislocated finger, and bad bruising to his legs, ribs and backside as he was flung along the vessel's deck and into the sea.

But he was able to rescue the man, Lorenzo Menuina (45), in a race against time as the helicopter's fuel was reaching critically low levels.

It was a marathon nine-hour rescue operation, during which the machine, operated by Bristow Helicopters, had to dash back to Benbecula to refuel and allow for daybreak.

The protracted rescue, hampered by language difficulties and its location — at the very edge of helicopter range off Rockall — cost hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Captain Alan Elphinstone, the chief pilot of contractors Bristow Helicopters told how the rescue helicopter crew carried out "a very long and dangerous mission". He said: "There was one particularly tricky moment. Just as he was unhooking himself on deck, the winchman, Chris Murray, was thrown off the trawler's back-end. He ended up floundering in the mountainous seas."

Chris himself then had to be found among the rolling waves and rescued by the helicopter. But, despite dislocating a finger and being in severe pain from banging his body, after getting himself hooked he signalled to winch operator Vic Carcass to lower him back on to the pitching trawler.

Chris was again lowered to aid the pain-wracked crewman. Capt Elphinstone said: "Capt Mike Roughton, and the co-pilot Graham Findlay, both did a good job in the pitch dark and heavy rain. There was nothing for them to look at, first of all — no point of reference. Chris Murray is a very hardy type. He did very well indeed in very difficult circumstances."

Trapped fisherman saved with one minute to spare

A SERIOUSLY-ILL Spanish fisherman was snatched to safety with just one minute to spare last month.

It took winchman Chris Murray seven attempts and nearly nine hours to do it. And left him battered, bruised and even facing death as he found himself in the water just feet from the boat's churning propellers.

"I've been with the rescue service since it began but this really was something else," confessed 43-year-old Chris.

"We were called to a Spanish trawler where a crewman had a perforated ulcer. The boat was well out in the Atlantic near Rockall and at the very extreme of our range.

Limit

"We calculated that if he steamed towards us and we took on extra fuel at Benbecula, it would be about 240 miles, which was our absolute limit.

"It was the middle of the night when we got out there, the weather was horrendous and visibility was very poor.

"On top of that, we were having serious language problems with the crew and struggled to tell them what we wanted them to do.

"I was lowered time and again but the boat was moving up and down about 40 feet so it was really wild.

"One of the times I was lowered, the boat suddenly reared up and I was battered against the side.

"I didn't realise it at the time but the impact had badly bruised my ribs and back and dislocated one of my fingers.

"I also almost fell into the propellers.

"All you're thinking, though, is that you want to get onto that deck and get to the casualty.

"We had very little time on scene because of the fuel situation and had to leave to go back to land and refuel.

"By the time we did that and got back out, it was getting light, which we hoped would help.

"The next time I was winched down, I did get on deck and had started to unhook myself from the winch wire, when



Bristows' winchman Chris Murray.

an almighty wave came out of nowhere.

"I just felt myself somersaulting through the air and the next thing I knew, I was in the water and unhooked from the chopper.

"I had no idea if the wire had snapped and when I looked up, I could see the propellers of the boat just feet away.

Danger

"There was a real danger of being caught by them and I frantically swam clear before looking up to try and find the helicopter.

"When I saw it and the wire below, I realised the hook had just been open far enough when the wave hit for it to come free and it hadn't snapped.

"So the aircraft came in low and trailed the wire close enough to me for me to catch and rehook myself.

"I didn't inflate my lifejacket as I knew it would take time to change it in the helicopter and we just didn't have that time.

"Even when I was winched up and then went down again, I realised that time was running out fast because of the fuel situation.

"Finally, with one last attempt, I did get on board. I've never been so glad to land on a deck in my life.

"The man was in terrible pain but also very frightened and I literally had to tie him into the stretcher while his crewmates held him down.

"We got back into the helicopter with just one minute to spare. After that, the pilot would have had to head back to land, regardless.

"We couldn't have cut it any finer but we were all so relieved just to have got the job done, especially when the doctor confirmed how vital it was that he got to hospital."

The whole rescue mission took over nine weary hours. Now Chris is in line for a bravery award for his amazing exploits.

**Life-saving successes
in eight years of
Stornoway search and
rescue chopper service**

BRISTOW HELICOPTERS

LIMITED

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Mr W I Murray
14 Aignish Point
Stornoway
Isle of Lewis
PA86 OPB

10th May 1995

Dear Chris,

SAR Sortie 997/95 - 17th April 1995

I have been away from the office since 14th April 1995, and accordingly I have only today learned of the circumstances surrounding the above SAR task involving the Spanish vessel FV Moraime.

Having had the misfortune to be ejected from the deck of the vessel into the sea as a result of the deck motion, it is clear to me that you exhibited a creditable presence of mind in re-attaching yourself to the winch hook by use of the hi-line. You then demonstrated a commendable dedication to duty in immediately requesting that you continue with the designated task of being placed on to the deck of the vessel to complete the rescue.

Notwithstanding your discomfort and possible injury throughout this unfortunate distraction, it is clear that you were conscious of the marginal fuel state of the helicopter at 180 nautical miles from base, and your determination to press on with the task ensured the rescue could be completed without the need to divert for additional fuel.

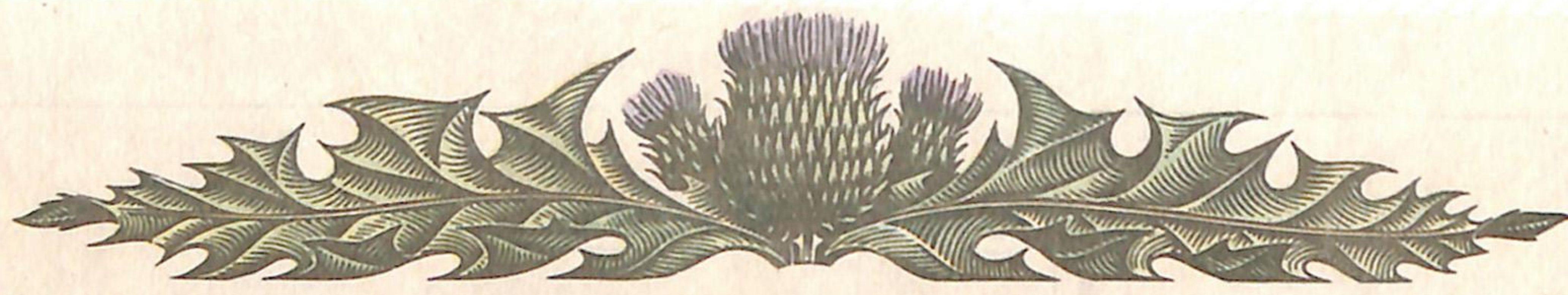
I wish to commend you for your actions on this occasion, which continues to demonstrate the high standards which the Company and the Coastguard have come to expect from our Search and Rescue units.

Yours sincerely,
Bristow Helicopters Limited



M J Norris
Operations Director





The searchers

WITHIN a hangar in Stornoway shared with the Lewis Canine Club for dog training sits a state of the art Sikorsky S61 helicopter which can be relied on to respond rapidly to emergencies anywhere in the largest Coastguard patch in the UK.

Stornoway Coastguard, which is responsible for a massive chunk of the north-west, from the Butt of Lewis to Barra and from Cape Wrath to Applecross, has just clocked up its 1000th mission.

One of only three Coastguard districts in Britain with a search and rescue helicopter on its doorstep, each of the seven crews can take advantage of the machine's added fuel capacity to fly for five hours.

Fitted with twin General Electric CT140/2 engines, the helicopters can travel at up to 130 knots and includes advanced auto-pilot and auto-hover capability unusual in normal helicopters. The Sikorski



is also kitted out with a multi-frequency radio beacon homing system and sophisticated search radar.

Crews, normally comprising a pilot, first officer and two winchmen, are rostered on 24 hour shifts and must live within 15 minutes travelling distance of the bases.

They are trained to cope with a wide range of injuries, from broken bones to severe hypothermia as they deal with casualties on sea and land. Doctors and medics can be carried as required.

But the Coastguards are responsible for much more than just search and rescue. They handle safety inquiries from the public, carry out safety investigations and make meteorological and navigational broadcasts. Then there is fishing vessel inspections, animal rescue, coping with press inquiries and carrying out surveillance. As they pass a major milestone, they are needed more than ever before.

PICTURES BY
DONALD MACLEOD

Stornoway Gazette

Thursday, April 20, 1995

SUNDAY MAIL, April 23, 1995

Copter winchman defies waves to carry out rescue

A WINCHMAN on the Stornoway coastguard rescue helicopter sent to aid an ill crewman on a Spanish fishing boat in the Atlantic early on Monday had to be rescued himself when he was swept off the trawler.

Chris Murray, who is originally from Dornoch and lives in Aignish, suffered a dislocated finger, and bad bruising to his legs, ribs and backside.

But he was able to rescue the man, Lorenzo Menduina, 45, in a race against time as the helicopter's fuel was reaching critically low levels.

It was a marathon nine-hour rescue operation, during which the helicopter had to dash back to Benbecula to refuel and allow for daybreak.

The protracted rescue, hampered by language difficulties and its location - at the very edge of the helicopter's range off Rockall - cost hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Delays because the Spanish fishermen could not understand the helicopter crew's instructions for taking a line on board forced the helicopter to fly back 240 miles to Benbecula and refuel before returning to the scene, 80 miles east of Rockall.

The helicopter, with Stornoway GP Dr Ian Lawson on board, had originally topped up its fuel at Benbecula just after the callout at 11pm. It then flew, with a Nimrod maritime reconnaissance plane from RAF Kinloss, to help communications, to the 27-metre trawler Moraima, east of the lone rocky outcrop.

Janice Brand from Bayble, a languages teacher at the Nicolson Institute, was eventually summoned from her bed to help with the language difficulties. A radio-telephone link with the vessel was set up by coastguards and the aircraft captain's instructions relayed.

Captain Alan Elphinstone, the chief pilot of contractors Bristow Helicopters, told how the rescue helicopter crew carried out "a very

long and dangerous mission".

He said: "There was one particularly tricky moment. Just as he was unhooking himself on deck, the winchman, Chris Murray, was thrown off the trawler's back-end.

"He ended up floundering in the mountainous seas."

Mr Murray then had to be found among the rolling waves and rescued by the helicopter.

But despite dislocating his finger and being in severe pain from the fall, after getting himself hooked he signalled to winch operator Vic Carcass to lower him back onto the pitching trawler. Mr Murray was again lowered to aid the crewman.

Captain Elphinstone said: "Captain Mike Roughton, and the co-pilot Graham Findlay, both did a good job in the pitch dark and heavy rain. There was nothing for them to look at, first of all - no point of reference."

He went on: "Chris Murray is a very hardy type. He did very well indeed in very difficult circumstances."

A trailing rope, known as a High Line was put down to the deck of the vessel. Mr Murray, 40, a former Royal Navy diver, was able to make some preliminary checks on the man before he was successfully winched aboard the aircraft.

The casualty was then tended by Dr Lawson on the way back to Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway.

"All this was done at the very limit of the aircraft's range and endurance. There was no fuel left to mess about," said the chief pilot.

Mr Murray was back at work on Tuesday. He said: "To be honest, I'm pretty much walking wounded but my spirits are high.

"I'm very pleased the casualty is recovering."

Madrid rescue controllers later named the rescued seaman as Lorenzo Ramon Menduina, age 45. He is from Cangas de Morrazo in Pontevedra, on the Spanish west coast.

A hospital spokesman in Stornoway said Snr Menduina was out of danger.

A 999 call of fame

SCOTLAND'S Atlantic mercy men are 999 heroes!

For the fearless fliers who patrol the UK's most notorious stretch of water have notched up 999 rescues.

The crew of the Stornoway Coastguard Sikorsky helicopter in the Outer Hebrides have braved horrific conditions over the years to reach the milestone.

Just last Monday, winchman Chris Murray was washed overboard from a storm-lashed Spanish trawler near Rockall.

"They are a modest lot, but very brave," said Clive Watts, acting district controller of Stornoway Coastguard.

"Their courage and airmanship knows no bounds. They have the admiration of everybody in these isles."

FURY OVER 'CHEEKY' SPAIN

A SICK Spanish trawlerman was airlifted to a Scottish hospital in a £250,000 mercy mission yesterday as his country's government carpeted Britain for supporting Canada in the fish wars.

The seaman was winched by a helicopter from his trawler, 240 miles west of the outer Hebrides, suffering from stomach pains and

taken for treatment at Stornoway. Furious Tories last night called on John Major to hit back after Britain's ambassador was ordered to the Spanish Foreign ministry to be rebuked for the UK's stance in the fish wars.

Envoy David Brighty was told of Spain's disgust at Britain's support for its Commonwealth partner.



CHEEK: David Porter

21 April 1995 FISHING NEWS 11

Winchman saved during rescue

THE HELICOPTER winchman was praised after going to aid an ill crewman on the Spanish trawler *Moraima* in the Atlantic on Easter Monday — only to be rescued himself when a huge swell swept him off the trawler.

After an eight-hour rescue operation, during which the Coastguard helicopter had to dash back to the Western Isles to refuel, crewman Lorenzo Menduina (45) was winched off and taken to hospital in Stornoway.

He was thought to have a perforated ulcer and was said to be 'stable'. The rescue, hampered by language difficulties and its location — at the very edge of a helicopter range east of Rockall — cost thousands of pounds. Delays, due to the trawler crew not understanding the helicopter crew's instructions for taking a line

on board, forced the helicopter to fly 240 miles back to Benbecula and refuel before returning to the scene.

The helicopter, with Stornoway GP Ian Lawson on board, had topped up fuel at Benbecula after the call-out just before 11pm. It then flew, with a Nimrod reconnaissance plane from RAF Kinloss in Grampian, to where the 27m trawler was, 80 miles east of Rockall.

Capt Alan Elphinstone, the chief pilot of contractors Brit-tow Helicopters in Stornoway, told how the rescue helicopter crew carried out "a very long and deadly mission".

"There was one particularly tricky moment," he said.

"Just as he was unhooking himself on deck, the winchman, Chris Murray, was thrown off the trawler's back end. He ended up floundering

in the sea."

Mr Murray then had to be found among the rolling waves and rescued by the helicopter.

But after getting himself hooked up again and signalling to winch operator Vic Carcass that he was unhurt, Mr Murray was again lowered onto the trawler to aid the pain-wracked crewman.

"Capt Mike Roughton, and the co-pilot Graham Findlay, both did a good job in the pitch dark and heavy rain. There was nothing for them to look at — no point of reference," added Capt Elphinstone.

Mr Murray was able to make some preliminary checks on the man, thought to be suffering from a perforated ulcer, before he was winched aboard the aircraft.

He was tended by GP Ian Lawson on the way to Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway.

"All this was done at the very limit of the aircraft's range and endurance. There was no fuel left to mess about," said the chief pilot.

None of the helicopter crew were available for comment.

The seaman, Lorenzo Ramon Menduina (45), is from the port of Cangas de Morrazo in Pontevedra, on the Spanish west coast.

Brian Scarisbrick, associate general manager at Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway, said on Monday that Snr Menduina was still having treatment but out of danger. He would not confirm the nature of his medical problem.

"He is now stable and comfortable," said Mr Scarisbrick.

Chris Murray (40) is a former Royal Navy diver from Dornoch in Sutherland, who lives at Aignish near Stornoway.

Daily Record



Price

THE rescue of a sick Spanish trawlerman has cost UK taxpayers up to £350,000.

The Stornoway coast-guard helicopter had to make two hazardous trips in darkness.

The first attempt had to be abandoned because the trawler was at the chopper's extreme range and the aircraft ran dangerously low on fuel.

It flew back to Ben-

of one life!

By IAN DOW

becula to refuel before making the second trip.

An RAF Nimrod used radar to guide the chopper through the rain-lashed skies and then circled as a flying communications station.

And during the nine-hour drama, helicopter winchman Chris Murray had to be rescued from the sea after being thrown from the Spanish

trawler's heaving deck.

The chopper took off, with local GP Dr Ian Lawson on board, just after 11pm on Sunday night after a distress call from the trawler *Moraima* more than 80 miles off the lonely out-crop of Rockall.

The Spanish crewman, Lorenzo Menduina, 45, was last night stable in hospital with a suspected perforated ulcer.

Double drama for rescuers

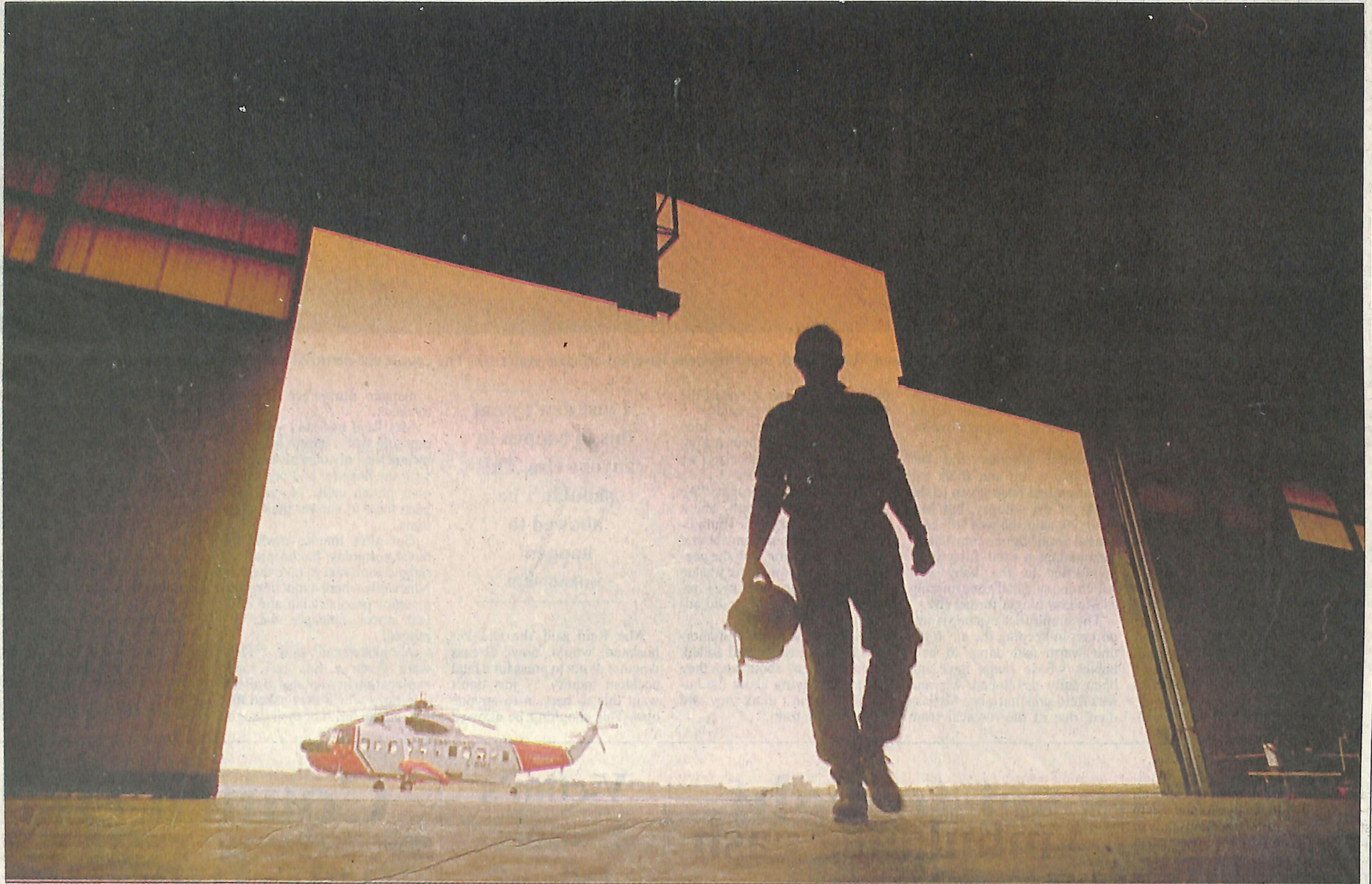
Stornoway Coastguard helicopter winchman Chris Murray was himself saved from heavy seas on Monday morning during a rescue operation.

Chris was being lowered onto the Spanish fishing boat 'Moraima' to transport a sick fisherman to the Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway. Just after unclipping his winchline, a wave hit the vessel and he fell into the sea. After being picked up by the helicopter Chris went back aboard the trawler and he and the fisherman, Ramon Menuina Lorenza, were winched to safety.

Captain Alan Elphinstone said that the sea conditions were particularly frightening and with rain and strong winds the visibility was poor.

West Highland Free Press





Mission accomplished: Stornoway coastguard's search and rescue helicopter crew have just notched up their 1,000 rescue in the three years since the service was established. The helicopter picked up an injured lobster fisherman, who was suffering from an injured leg and hypothermia after falling overboard, on Loch Snizort, to the west of Skye. Picture: Donald Macleod

1000 RESCUE MISSIONS OF DARING HELICOPTER HEROES

TODAY

**NEWS
TODAY**

Sailor in 8-hour rescue

AN injured fisherman was winched by helicopter from a trawler yesterday after an eight-hour rescue operation.

The Stornoway coastguard helicopter flew 240 miles to reach the Spanish vessel, *Moraine*, but had to turn back because of low fuel.

A winchman was lowered on to the ship on the second attempt but had to be rescued himself when he was catapulted into the sea in high winds.

Dark

The Spanish sailor was taken to Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway with a perforated ulcer. He was in a comfortable condition last night.

Captain Alan Elphinstone, of Bristow Helicopters, which operates the rescue service, said: "They did a good job in the pitch dark and heavy rain.

"There was no point of reference."

SCRAMBLING FOR LIFE

**THE
Sun**

SAILOR RESCUED IN 8-hr DRAMA

A SPANISH fisherman was recovering in hospital last night after an airlift off the west coast of Scotland took eight hours and cost around £350,000.

The trawler crew called for assistance to take one of their men to hospital after he fell ill as they fished 240 miles out to sea.

A £3,800-an-hour Sikorsky rescue helicopter was scrambled from the RAF base on the island of Benbecula and had to fly to the limit of its fuel range to reach the boat.

But it had to return for more fuel after a series of delays because none of the Spanish crew could speak English.

Coastguards at Stornoway on the isle of Lewis spoke to colleagues in Valencia and Madrid and finally got a languages teacher out of bed to translate and help co-ordinate the operation.

And then one of the rescuers had to be plucked to safety himself after falling into the sea.

The sick crewman, Lorenzo Ramon Menduina, 45, was finally taken to hospital in Stornoway where he was recovering last night.

**West Highland
Free Press**



SAR helicopter flies 1,000th rescue mission

Stornoway's search and rescue helicopter team carried out their 1,000th mission this week when they saved a semi-conscious fisherman who had fallen overboard from his creel boat off Lyndale Point in north-west Skye.

The alarm was raised when another fishing boat saw an empty craft sail by under power. The fisherman who had fallen overboard — Donald Bethune from Skeabost — was found by the helicopter on the tiny island of Eilean Beag.

"He was very cold and hypothermic," said winchman Terry Freeman. "I told him he was our thousandth call-out and he could join in the celebrations when he recovered."

Mr Bethune was taken to hospital in Broadford where he was detained overnight.

Winchman almost lost in rescue bid

HERALD



A SPANISH seaman was flown to hospital in the Western Isles yesterday after a dramatic eight-hour rescue operation.

During it, a helicopter winchman was tossed into heavy seas in the North Atlantic while trying to lift the seaman on to the aircraft and had to be rescued himself.

A Bristow's helicopter, chartered by the coastguard at £4000 per hour, set off early yesterday from its Stornoway base to a point more than 200 miles west of Benbecula after an appeal for help from the Spanish trawler Moraine, on which a crewman was suffering from a suspected perforated ulcer.

The Sikorsky helicopter, which had four crewmen and a local doctor on board, refuelled at Benbecula airfield before flying to the trawler.

Once there, two attempts to get a winchman on board the trawler failed. Weather conditions, described as "horrendous" by Bristow's, meant the trawler was pitching and rolling violently in the sea and poor visibility caused by low cloud in the darkness made it

By KEITH SINCLAIR

difficult for the pilot, Captain Mike Roughton, to hover above the vessel.

A Nimrod maritime reconnaissance aircraft from RAF Kinloss attended to help with communications between the helicopter and the trawler but language difficulties also hampered the rescue.

A radio-telephone link was set up to allow a languages teacher from the Nicolson Institute in Stornoway to translate and relay the helicopter captain's instructions to the trawler's crew.

Then the helicopter was forced to return to Benbecula for more fuel because the trawler was sailing close to the helicopter's extreme range limit and fuel was getting low.

Such aircraft have an operating range of 250 miles for straightforward missions without significant delays.

After refuelling, it flew back to the Moraine which had been asked to sail towards Benbecula to reduce the length of the

helicopter's second journey to the trawler.

A slight improvement in conditions allowed winchman Chris Murray, 40, to be lowered on to the trawler at the third attempt.

The operation almost resulted in tragedy when the trawler was struck by a 20ft wave as Mr Murray unhooked himself from the winch. He was thrown over the stern and into the sea.

The helicopter was quickly manoeuvred to a point above where Mr Murray was spotted and a line was dropped into the water, enabling him to re-hook himself.

After signalling to the helicopter's winch operator, Mr Vic Carcass, that he was uninjured and able to continue, Mr Murray was lowered back on to the trawler then lifted on to the aircraft along with the sick man.

The fisherman, Lorenzo Ramon Menduina, 45, from Pontevedra on Spain's west coast, was tended by Dr Ian Lawson during his journey to the Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway, where his condi-

Tuesday, April 18, 1995



The Spanish fisherman arrives at hospital in Stornoway after being taken off a trawler operating in the North Atlantic 200 miles off the Western Isles.

Picture: JOHN MACKINNON

tion was described as stable and comfortable last night.

The total cost of getting the crewman to hospital is likely to be about £200,000, from public funds. Foreign vessels are not charged in such circumstances.

The estimated operating

costs of a Sikorsky S61N rescue helicopter are about £4000 per hour and a Nimrod £20,000. The helicopter which carried out the rescue was airborne from 12.45am until 9.45am yesterday.

Bristow's chief pilot, Captain Alan Elphinstone, who

was not involved in the operation, said yesterday: "Chris could have been injured when he was knocked over. He was in the water for almost five minutes but he was wearing all the necessary survival equipment and signalled to his

fellow crewman that he was okay and could continue.

"Captain Mike Roughton and co-pilot Graham Findlay did a good job in the pitch dark and heavy rain. There was nothing for them to look at — no points of reference.

"Their quick thinking and Chris's bravery meant he was able to just get back on board the trawler and carry on with the job."

Captain Elphinstone described the rescue as "a very long and dangerous mission".

Hero of the storm

Copter winchman risks his life to save fisherman in trouble

A HELICOPTER winchman plucked a sick seaman to safety from a storm-lashed Spanish trawler yesterday — and nearly paid for his bravery with his life.

Chris Murray was washed overboard seconds after being lowered on to the deck of the vessel near the end of an eight-hour rescue battle off the Scottish coast.

As he fought against mountainous waves, he managed to grab a lifeline from the aircraft and was hauled out of the water.

Without thinking of his own safety, he insisted on being dropped back on to the trawler to complete the rescue of the seaman minutes before the helicopter's fuel level dropped to danger level.

Plea

Last night the Spanish man was in hospital in Stornoway in the outer Hebrides being treated for a suspected perforated ulcer.

Winchman Chris, 40, from Dornoch, Sutherland, and the rest of the crew of the Sikorsky helicopter flew nearly 200 miles out into the North Atlantic — the limit of the aircraft's range — when the trawler *Moraima* sent out its first radio plea for help.

The team made several attempts to lower Chris on to the vessel in the dark but were foiled by heavy seas, torrential rain and high winds.

The Sikorsky was eventually forced to return to Benbecula to re-fuel.

The *Moraima* was tracked by a Nimrod from RAF Kinloss as it steamed past Rockall.

It made a second rendezvous with the rescue helicopter 100 miles off the Scottish coast and Chris was lowered again.

He had just unclipped the steel winch cable from the helicopter when he was washed over the stern of the boat by a wave.

A nylon rope, used by the trawlermen to steer the winchman on to their deck, was still attached to the

By KEVIN MANSI

cable and the helicopter pilot manoeuvred the aircraft so that Chris could grab it and pull himself towards the winch cable.

As he was hauled out of the sea he signalled that he wanted to be lowered on to the trawler again and this time the sick Spaniard was lifted to safety.

The privately-owned Bristow Sikorsky was working for the coastguard under contract and the helicopter firm's chief pilot, Captain Alan Elphinstone, said: "It was a gutsy performance."

"Chris knew the helicopter was low on fuel but decided to press on with the rescue rather than return to land once more."

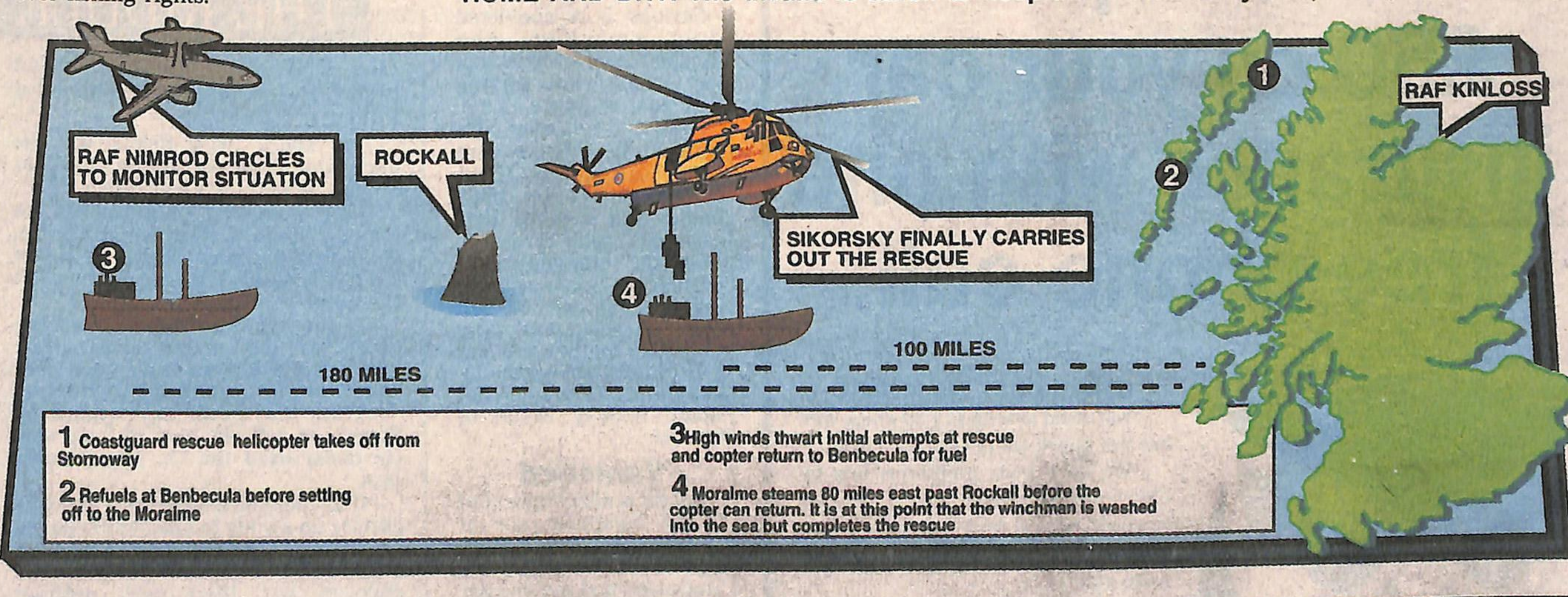
Now Chris, pilot Captain Mike Roughton, co-pilot Graham Findlay, winch operator Vic Carcass, and the team's doctor, Ian Lawson, may get bravery awards.

Coastguard senior watch officer Ian Burgess said: "It was a job very well done by the helicopter crew. They showed a lot of determination."

The rescue highlighted international co-operation despite the bitter battle between Britain and Spain over fishing rights.



HOME AND DRY: The invalid is taken to hospital in Stornoway and, inset, Chris Murray



Drama in the Atlantic as language barrier hampers night-time mission

The price of mercy

By JAMES GRYLLS

A COMPLICATED lifesaving operation to rescue a sick Spanish sailor cost taxpayers £300,000 and almost cost the life of one of the rescuers.

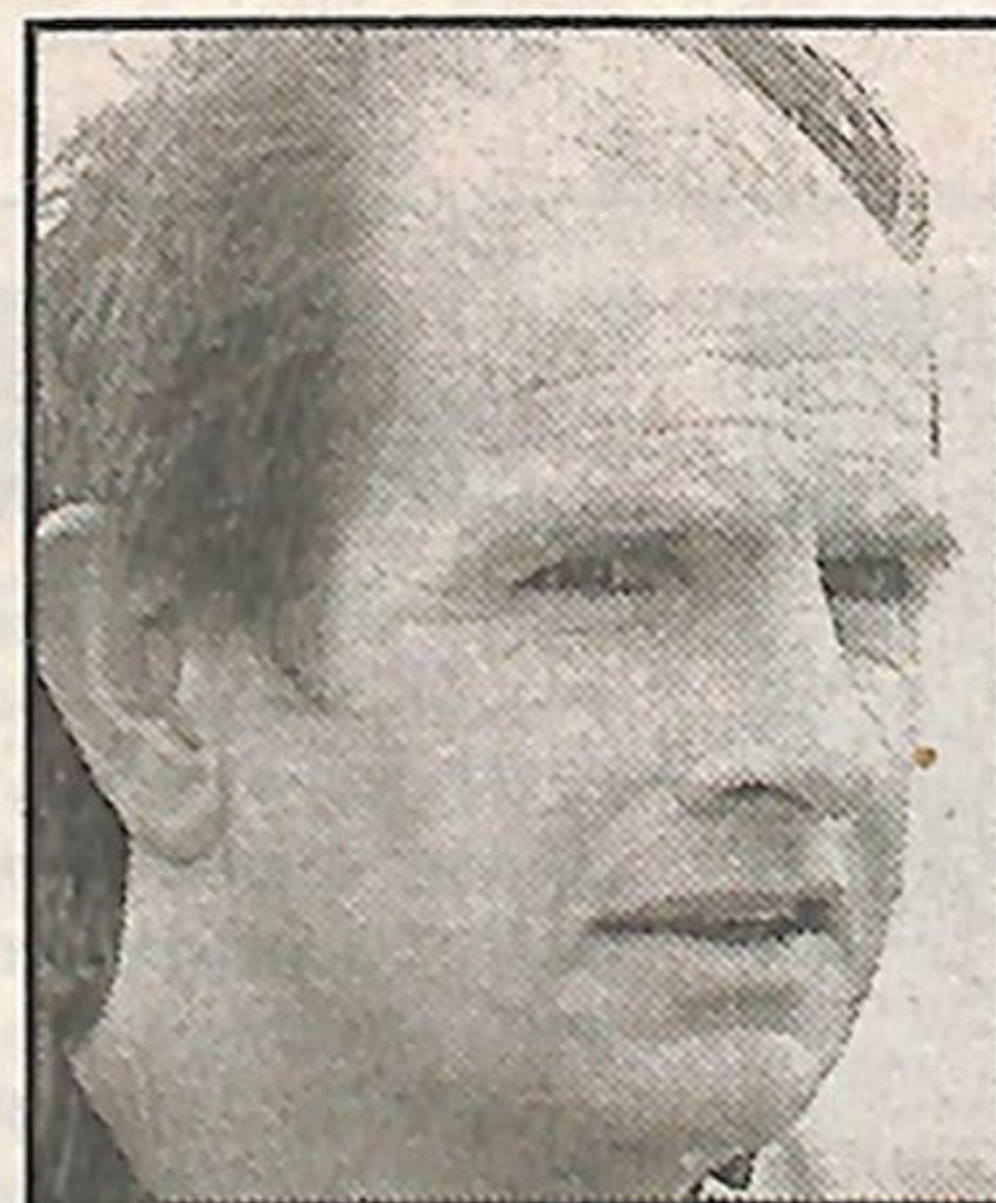
A helicopter, an RAF plane, coastguards and a school-teacher all had to be drafted in to help pluck the seaman from a trawler in darkness and heavy seas off Rockall.

The operation became 'long and dangerous' because the crew of the 154-tonne Moraine could not understand instructions from the rescue helicopter.

And last night helicopter winchman Chris Murray was hailed a hero after being rescued from the sea and then insisting on carrying on his mission to rescue Lorenzo Ramon Menduina, 45. Last night the Spaniard was in hospital at Stornoway with a perforated ulcer.

The operation lasted eight hours. The helicopter, owned by the Bristows, set out from Stornoway at 11pm on Sunday with local doctor Ian Lawson. It flew down the Western Isles to Benbecula and refuelled before heading out to the 85ft-long trawler's position, 80 miles off Rockall. The helicopter was flying at around 1,000ft shepherded by an RAF Nimrod flying at 25,000ft to help with radio communications.

Snags began as the Sikorsky



Hero: Ian Lawson



Hero: Chris Murray

£300,000 operation to save Spaniard nearly costs life of rescuer

S61N helicopter, with a range of 250 miles, approached the trawler. This range is adequate for missions where no delays are encountered.

But the trawler crew could not understand the internationally-recognised method of taking a line on board. The helicopter had to return to Benbecula to refuel.

Meanwhile, coastguards in

Stornoway tried to resolve language difficulties by liaising with counterparts in Valencia and Madrid, without success. So languages teacher Janice Brand, asleep in Stornoway, was called to help. Via a radio-telephone link she relayed instructions to the trawler skipper from helicopter pilot Mike Roughton. It was at this point that helicopter winchman, Chris Murray, a 40-year-old

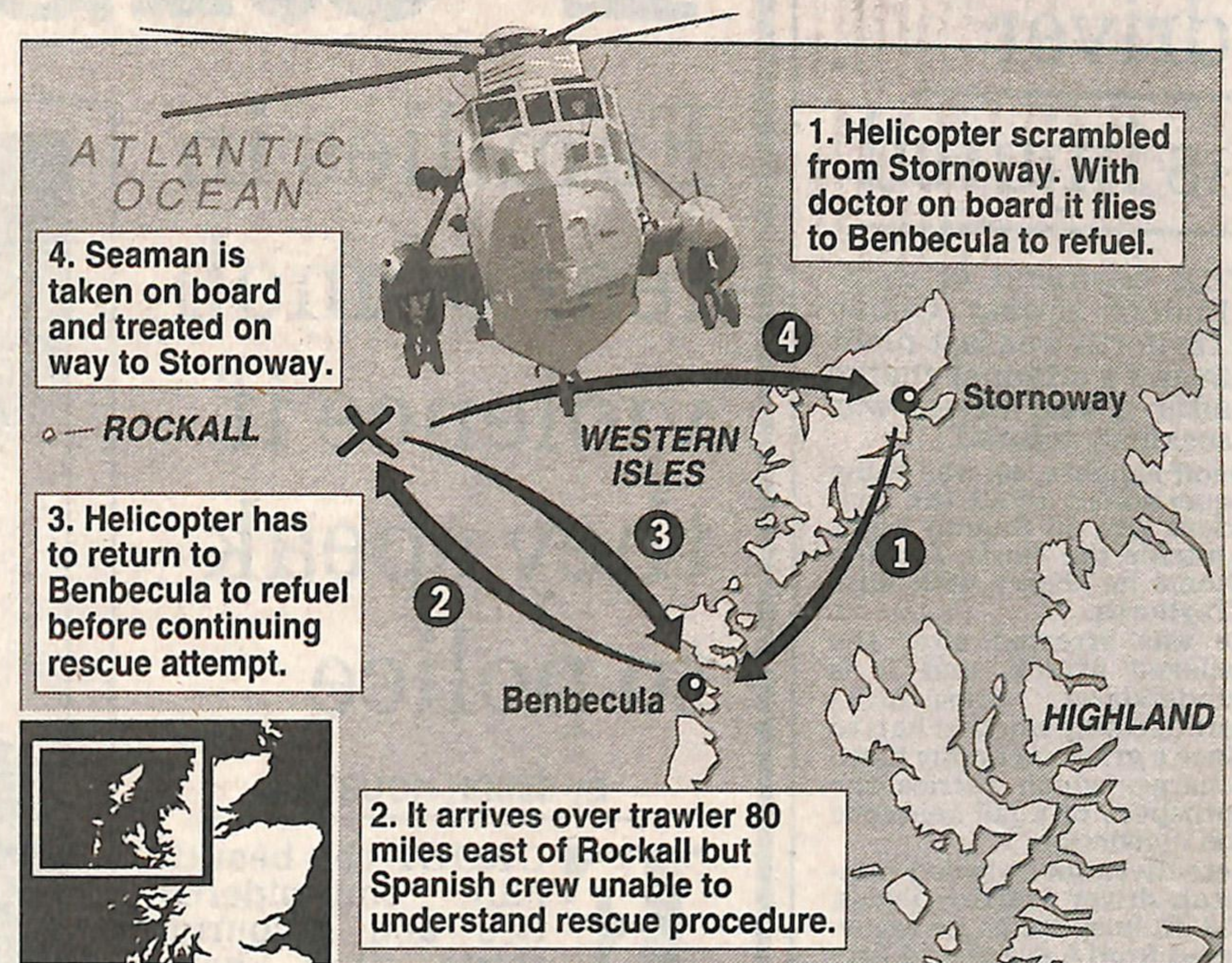
former Royal Navy diver from Aignish, Stornoway, ended up in the sea as he tried to board the trawler using the line.

Captain Alan Elphinstone, chief pilot of Bristow Helicopters said: 'Just as he was unhooking himself on the trawler deck he was thrown off the stern. The helicopter searched for him. Then winch operator, Vic Carcass, was lowered and Mr Murray was hooked

up and insisted on bringing the casualty off.'

Defence sources estimated the cost of the eight-hour operation at more than £300,000: £40,000 an hour for the Nimrod and about £3,800 an hour for the helicopter.

Experts said the cost might have been cut had the Spaniards known the technique of taking a trailing line on board from the helicopter.



Graphic: Adrian Black

Press and Journal

TUESDAY APRIL 18 1995

Rescued crab fisher had no lifejacket

But he vows to put that right



■ Helicopter winchman Chris Murray . . . hazardous operation

A FISHERMAN who cannot swim managed to scramble on to an uninhabited island yesterday after falling out of his open creel boat.

Donald Bethune (32), of Knott, Skeabost Bridge, Skye, then lay unconscious for more than two hours before a searching coastguard helicopter took him to hospital.

The rescue was sparked by Mr Bethune's nephew, Christopher MacKinnon (19), of Duntulm, who was fishing nearby and spotted his uncle's empty boat, Tiree Maid, moving under power in Loch Snizort, Skye.

He radioed the coastguards and their Stornoway-based Sea King helicopter — on its 1,000th rescue mission — spotted Mr Bethune on the small island of Eilean Beag, about 350yd off Lynedale Point, near Uig.

He was flown to Broadford's Mackinnon Memorial Hospital suffering from hypothermia.

Speaking from his hospital bed, Mr Bethune said he had been looking for somewhere to throw his creels to catch velvet crabs when the accident happened.

"I was just jumping across from where the wheel is, looking for rocks at the side, when I must have tripped and fallen overboard," he said.

"I was not far from the shore, because it was very shallow, but I can't swim. I could not believe how cold it was — and that's what bothered me most.

"I think I banged my head before scrambling on to the island and then I must have fallen asleep, because the next thing I remember is seeing the helicopter."

Coastguard Alan Elphinstone, who coordinated the rescue, said Mr Bethune was shaken and cold when he was found.

"He apparently felt dizzy and faint before falling into the sea," he said.

"He was waving to attract the crew's attention when he was seen."

Mr Bethune, who is married, was dressed in oilskins and was not wearing a lifejacket when he fell overboard, Capt Elphinstone said.

A hospital spokeswoman said Mr Bethune was being detained overnight.

But he is determined to get back to work in a few days — although this time he plans to wear a lifejacket.

● Many missions carried out by the Lewis-based coastguard are more hazardous.

A winchman was swept into the Atlantic last week during a mission near Rockall, 240 miles from base, while rescuing a seriously ill Spanish fisherman.

Chris Murray (43), who was not involved in yesterday's mission, said it was only because of his crewmates' skill that he was plucked to safety from mountainous seas.

by Iain MacIver

A RESCUE mission to pick up a sick Spanish trawlerman in the Atlantic turned into a nine-hour farce costing almost £400,000 when coastguards and fishermen hit a language barrier.

The rescue off Rockall was also hampered by being at the limit of helicopter operating range.

The fiasco started because the trawler crew could not understand the helicopter crew's instructions for taking a line on board.

The delay lengthened as:

- The helicopter was forced to fly 240 miles back to Benbecula and refuel before returning to the scene.

- The winchman had to be rescued himself when the pitching trawler threw him into the sea.

- Coastguards in Stornoway liaised with Spanish rescue controllers in Valencia and Madrid.

- A languages teacher at Stornoway's Nicolson Institute was summoned from her bed to interpret.



■ Winchman Chris Murray
... pitched overboard

The Stornoway coastguard helicopter, with Dr Ian Lawson, was called out just before 11pm on Sunday.

The helicopter and a Nimrod maritime reconnaissance aircraft from RAF Kinloss responded to the call from the trawler *Moraime* when it was 80 miles east of the rocky outcrop.

It was found the trawlermen were not familiar with the internationally-recognised method of recovering a casualty on a trail rope.

The helicopter crew were unable to understand the master of the *Moraime* and they called coastguards at Stornoway for help from an interpreter.

A radio-telephone link with the vessel was set up and the aircraft captain's instructions were relayed.

At one point, coastguards at Stornoway were holding the phone to radio speakers to let Spanish rescue coordinators in Valencia and Madrid hear the transmissions from the *Moraime*.

"All in all, it was quite a complex operation," said a spokesman.

The Spaniards had difficulty understanding what was being said and interpreter Janice Brand was asked to help.

Captain Alan Elphinstone, the chief pilot of Bristow Helicopters in Stornoway, said: "There was one particularly tricky moment during the rescue."

"Just as he was unhooking himself on deck, the winchman, Chris Murray, was thrown off the trawler and ended up floundering in the sea."

Rescued

Chris had to be rescued by the helicopter.

After getting hooked up again and signalling to winch operator Vic Carcass that he was okay, Chris was again lowered on to the trawler.

Capt Elphinstone said: "Capt Mike Roughton, and co-pilot Graham Findlay both did a good job in the pitch dark and heavy rain. There was nothing for them to look at — no point of reference."

Winchman Murray (40), a former Royal Navy diver from Dornoch, made some checks on the casualty, Lorenzo Ramon Menduina (45), before he was winched up.

He was thought to have a perforated ulcer and was tended by Dr Lawson on the way to Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway, where his condition was said to be stable last night. He had finally got aboard the aircraft at 8am.

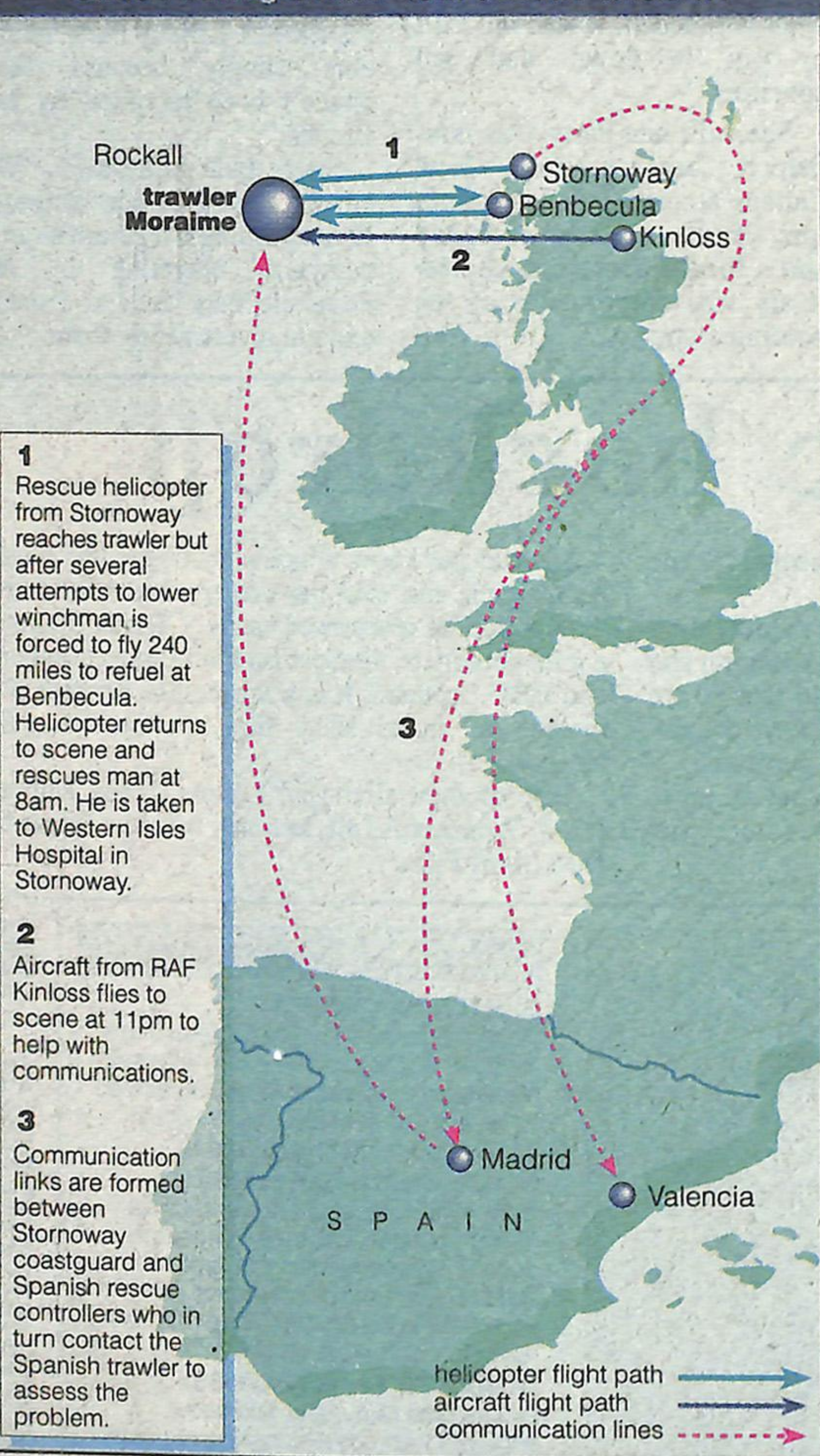
"All this was done at the very limit of its range and endurance. There was no fuel left to mess about," said the chief pilot.

Coastguards estimate the operating costs of a Sikorsky S61N rescue helicopter at £3,800 an hour.

Defence sources have said that Nimrod reconnaissance costs at least £40,000 an hour, bringing the total estimated cost for the two aircraft to £394,200.

Comment — Page 12

Chaos during a nine-hour rescue mission



SCOTS HERO OF THE ATLANTIC

PICTURE SPECIAL - PAGE 19

Press and Journal

Nine-hour rescue farce for Spaniard

Giant wave threw the winchman into the sea

IT was 11.30 on Sunday night and Chris Murray, of Aginish near Stornoway, was about to go to bed when his phone rang.

The message for Chris, an air sea rescue winchman with Bristow Helicopters, was simple. Scramble!

A seriously-ill crewman had to be uplifted from the *Moraime*, a Spanish trawler sailing close to Rockall.

Only problem was that at 240 miles off the Scottish coast, it was too far for the chopper to make the rescue. It couldn't carry enough fuel.

So there was an agonising delay of two hours while the fishing boat steamed a bit closer.

The giant 78-foot Sikorski chopper with its four-man crew and a local doctor on board eventually took off at 1.30 am for the two-hour journey.

In gale-force winds and with 30-foot waves lashing beneath them, an RAF Kinloss Nimrod aircraft, equipped with high-powered radar, helped spot the tiny

trawler in the pitch blackness.

The chopper hovered 50 feet above the pitching vessel. After dropping a line onto the trawler, Chris was lowered. But it took seven attempts before he finally put his feet on the lurching deck.

Suddenly, a giant wave smashed into the boat, battering Chris against the guard rails before throwing him over the stern.

Surfacing perilously close to the churning propellers he was quickly reeled in by the winch operator.

Four hours

Immediately, the pilot set course for Benbecula, without the sick crewman. The rescue bids had taken 20 minutes and they were at the limit of their fuel.

It was almost four hours before they returned to the trawler.

This time Chris was on the deck after two attempts. But he'd just unhooked when another huge roller threw the rear of the boat into the air, once more pitching him into the sea.

This time there was no line attached. Yet Chris refused to inflate his life-jacket. That would have meant winching him back to the helicopter to



■ Safe after his ordeal, Chris back at work at the air sea rescue base in Stornoway.

change it for a new one and he knew they didn't have enough time.

Chris somehow grabbed hold of the line dropped to him and was winched straight on to the boat.

The stretcher and Chris were only just on board when the pilot headed for home. They were running on

reserve tanks by the time they set down at Stornoway where an ambulance was waiting.

Although the seaman's now well enough to return home to Madrid, doctors reckon he'd have died if treatment had been delayed any further.

Chris could probably have

done with some treatment himself as he discovered a dislocated finger and bruises all over his body.

It was only when he got back to work that he noticed how many rescue missions the chopper crew had just completed.

Appropriately enough, it was number 999!

1000 RESCUE MISSIONS

A FISHERMAN slipped off his boat — and into the record books of the Stornoway search and rescue helicopter.

It was the 1000th rescue mission that the daring crews of the remote Coastguard SAR chopper had mounted since it was founded just eight years ago this month.

The man, who couldn't swim, was lucky to be spotted but he's just one of over 1000 people to whom the huge Sikorsky helicopter has proved to be vital. For many, it has very definitely been the difference between life and death.

In May, 1987, the service took to the air to fill a gaping hole in the search and rescue helicopter cover over Britain.

The east coast of Scotland is well covered by the RAF, while the Navy cover the south west, but the north west of Scotland with its unforgiving mountains, craggy coastline and scattered islands was worryingly vulnerable.

The Coastguard took out a contract with Bristows Helicopters, who run the dedicated service with a Sikorsky S61 aircraft.

Call of duty

Seven pilots and seven crewmen, backed by seven engineers, train constantly to pull off rescues — many, though, are still above and beyond the call of duty.

"About 35% of our call-outs are over the land, with the rest out in the Atlantic — and that's never a nice place to find yourself in trouble," explained Chief Pilot Alan Elphinstone, who has been with the SAR

service since the beginning.

"Our aircraft is equipped with the very latest high-tech search equipment and that has proved to be a real life-saver on many occasions.

"One young couple from Wales were on holiday up here on the west coast when they were cut off by the tide.

"They were soaked and trapped, and the only way they could see to escape was up one of the cliffs.

"They got about halfway up and then got stuck. They couldn't make it any further up and couldn't get down because of the waves.

Life-saving successes in eight years of Stornoway search and rescue chopper service

"We were alerted that they were missing and started a search. Finally, about 2 o'clock in the morning, we were doing a sweep past the cliffs when the infra-red scanner picked them up. "They said later that their hearts soared when they saw us — and then sank as they thought we hadn't seen them and were going to fly past.

Infra-red

"It was absolutely pitch black and if it hadn't been for our infra-red, they would never have been seen.

"The girl in particular was suffering from hypothermia and in years gone by, we'd have had to wait for daylight — by that time, I believe it may well have been too late."

Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis, is especially exposed to the elements, and Alan was the pilot on the day back in 1989 when a ferocious storm hit the island and left the chopper crew dodging high-flying roofs!

"The wind was recorded at over 100 mph and severe structural damage was forecast," he said. "That couldn't have been more accurate.

"We were actually called to three separate rescues and as we got airborne, the sight which met our eyes was amazing. Roofs were being ripped off buildings and debris was flying everywhere.

Strong

"We were called from one end of the island to the other and the wind was so strong that it took us 25 minutes to get there and just five minutes to get back.

"When we'd safely carried out the rescues and got back to the airfield, we were just in time to see the massive roof being ripped off our own hangar!"

The crew regularly get letters of thanks from those whose lives they've saved and they put them all on a notice board on the wall and in a

scrapbook as a reminder of just why they're doing the job.

But not everyone is quite so thankful.

"We were called to help trace a yacht with a family on board which had sent a Mayday message," continued Alan.

"We finally located it and discovered that it had capsized but then righted itself.

"The father was in the middle of telling us to go away, that they didn't want any help — when it capsized again.

"It was the one occasion when we literally couldn't have been closer to the scene of a rescue and were able to winch them all to safely.

"Happily, the yacht again righted itself and was recovered intact.

Fortune

"One thing which never fails to amaze me though is the good fortune and little twists of fate which can mean the difference between life and death.

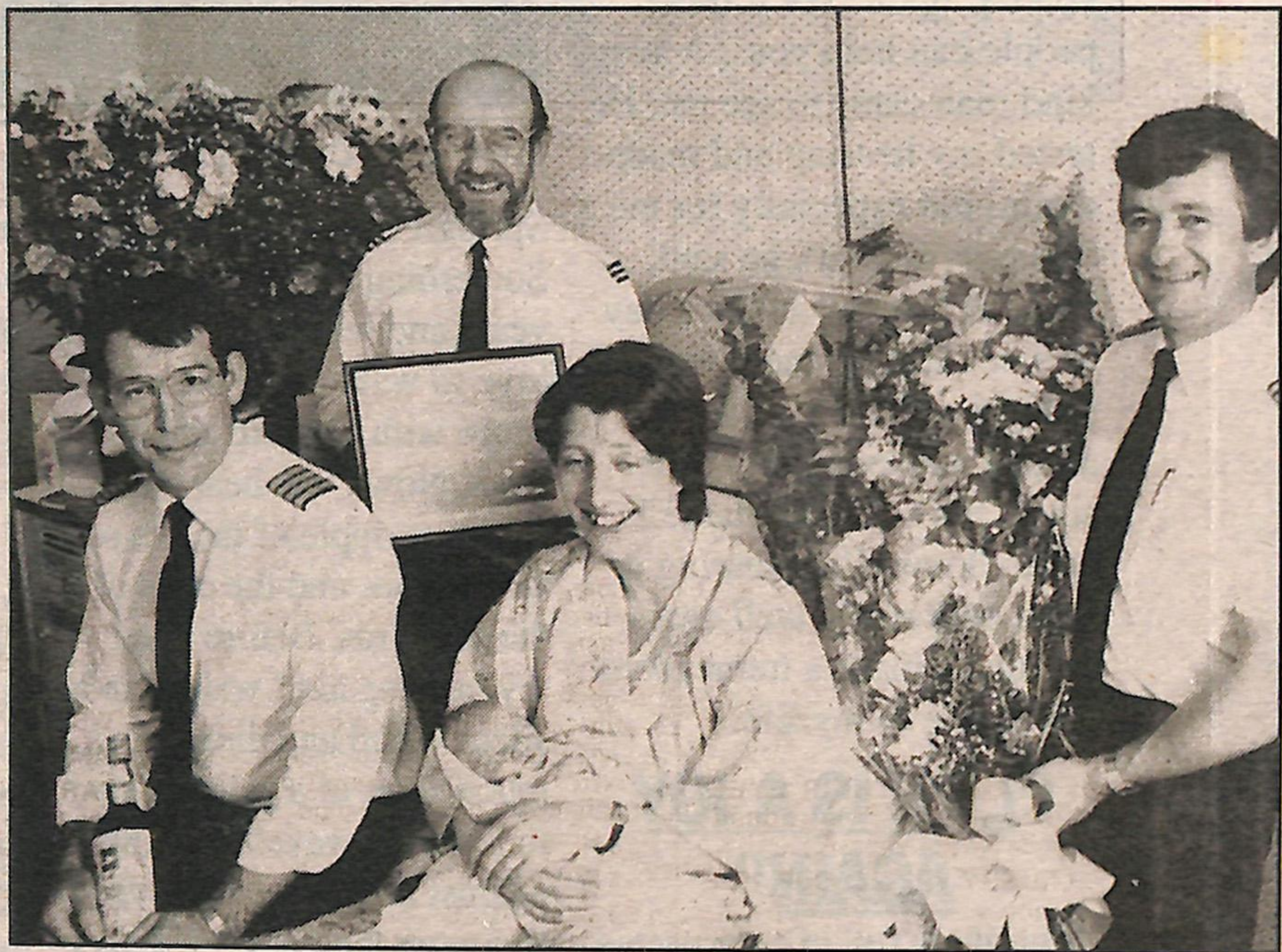
"The 1000th rescue last month was an example of that. The man was on his own in a creel boat in Loch Snizort when he felt dizzy and tumbled overboard.

"The boat then continued on its way. The man recovered in the water and, somehow, although he couldn't swim, he paddled and splashed his way to a little island which was luckily nearby and pulled himself onto the rocks.

"He was freezing cold and absolutely exhausted by that time and by sheer chance, another boat which saw his empty boat raised the alarm.

"If the empty boat hadn't been spotted then it might have turned out very differently.

"As it was, we were able to locate him and picked him up. I think the fact that he was rescued on our 1000th mission was the last thing on his mind!"



Teacher Catherine Macleod gave birth to daughter Kirsty in mid-air. They're pictured with helicopter crew members Alan Elphinstone, Gordon Davies and Steve Colton.

BABY DRAMA IN

NOT all of the missions on which the rescue chopper sets out are deadly dramas.

One in particular still brings a glow — the day they landed with one more passenger than they had when they set out.

"It was April 2, 1989, and we were called to pick up a pregnant woman from South Uist," recalled Chief Pilot Alan Elphinstone.

"We took a doctor and a midwife along with us, as we were told there were some potential complications.

"It wasn't a long journey back and we were racing at full speed, when the doctor simply said, 'I don't think we're going to make it.'

"He asked us to slow down as much as we could to reduce the vibration and turbulence, and a few minutes later, despite having a

helmet and headset on, I heard the sound of the baby crying.

"It really was the most marvellous noise and we all knew then that everything was going to be OK.

"There was real delight among all of us and we had a good look at the baby before the little girl and her mum were taken to hospital.

"We all went to visit with flowers and presents a couple of days later just to see how our unexpected passenger was doing."

MID-AIR

Press and Journal

Mission of mercy

THE bill for the rescue of a Spanish trawlerman will approach £400,000 by the time all costs of aircraft, manpower and materials have been tallied. The rescue, off Rockall, involved Stornoway Coastguard, RAF rescue effort and a civil-contracted rescue helicopter and took an inordinate nine hours to complete successfully.

The principal hurdle was not high seas or dangerous conditions — although they were bad enough. The barrier was one of language. No one on board the Spanish vessel could speak English or had even a basic grasp of one fundamental and universal rescue technique. The Stornoway monitors could muster not a sentence of Spanish among them.

Ultimately, the mission was successful; the Spaniard is recovering well in hospital in Lewis, but his experience in what is little better than a nine-hour farce of delay and frustration has thrown up glaring weaknesses in his countrymen's seamanship.

If civil aviation recognises English as the standard language of communication, and insists that crews from all nations use it so that safety standards are maximised and confusion minimised, it cannot be beyond the bounds of reason to demand similar standards on the high seas.

Mastering a working vessel, however humble, is a highly responsible job in the 1990s, calling for people of education and quick wit. A basic command of English should not be beyond them. Equally, ignorance of a fundamental international rescue technique can never be excused and a working knowledge among any crew should become a condition before a boat puts to sea.

This time, the rescue worked, to the great credit and relief of the rescue teams and Stornoway Coastguard, but it worked despite the Spaniards, not because of them. One can never put a price on a life saved, but needless waste of money because of a basic disinterest in safety must be questioned.

No rest for hurt helicopter winchman

by **Iain Maciver**

BRUISED and battered helicopter winchman Chris Murray was back at work yesterday despite being injured in a dramatic rescue early on Monday.

Mr Murray (40), a Dornoch-born winchman on the Stornoway-based coastguard helicopter, was thrown overboard into mountainous Atlantic waves from a Spanish trawler as he dropped in to aid a sick crewman early on Monday.

The helicopter crew then had to search for him and fish him out after "a huge lump of sea" hit the 27m trawler Maraima just as Mr Murray unhooked his lifeline.

But despite the pain wracking his own body, he signalled to anxious winch operator Vic Carcass that he was going on to the trawler again.

He succeeded in getting the casualty, with a suspected perforated ulcer, winched up and the helicopter dashed the 240 miles back to Stornoway from the scene, 80 miles from Rockall.

Nursing a dislocated finger and bad bruising on his legs, ribs and backside, Mr Murray insisted on going back to work yesterday afternoon.

He said: "I'm just very pleased that the casualty is recovering."

Bristow chief pilot Alan Elphinstone said: "Chris knew that the helicopter could only stay there for a few minutes as fuel was getting low."

The crewman, Lorenzo Ramon Menduina (45), was "comfortable" in the Western Isles Hospital.

DIY fells storm hero

A RESCUE helicopter crewman who was hailed an Atlantic storm hero has been injured — doing a spot of DIY.

Chris Murray (44), a winchman on the Stornoway-based coastguard helicopter, was attempting a spot of maintenance to his roof at Aignish, near Stornoway.

The Dornoch-born mercy man was trying to hook the top section of a ladder into place when it came loose and hit him in the face.

He was floored by the force of the blow which injured his nose.

He said yesterday: "It's not broken. I lost a lot of blood but I got away with a cut nose, a burst lip and a bruised shoulder."

Chris was praised for his heroism after a tricky mission on April 17 to pluck a sick Spanish crewman off a trawler in wild conditions near Rockall.

He was winched down on to the deck and just as he unhooked himself, the boat was hit by a giant wall of water.

Chris was thrown off and was lost in raging seas for a few minutes. But he was spotted by his colleagues in the helicopter and rescued himself.

The ex-Royal Navy diver then went back on to the trawler, the Moraima, and successfully airlifted the crewman to hospital.

12:13 am F A X M E S S A G E 23. Apr. 95

Mike Merritt, Isle Of Wight News Agency, Tel: (0983) 612999
7 Garfield Rd, Ryde, IOW. PO33 2PS. Fax: (0983) 562222

heli (Helicopter crew log 999th call)

from Mike Merritt tel 01851672280 or 0374637768.
FOR PICS RING JOHN MACKINNON ON 01851870546.

They are the Atlantic angels who regularly fly against 100 mph winds. For the crew of the Stornoway Coastguard Search and Rescue Helicopter in the Outer Hebrides are literally a 999 service - they have now answered 999 emergency calls.

The crew patrol the most difficult and fearsome rescue area in the UK.

Call out 999 was at the weekend to an upturned dinghy. The occupants were found safe and well.

But there will be no grand celebration when the 1000th call comes. For the crew do not celebrate somebody's distress or their own undoubted bravery. They would be happy if the telephone did not ring for the 1000th time.

Battling against snow, sleet, ice, storms and winching a crewman aboard a tiny trawler sinking in 30ft waves is more matter-of-fact than the stuff of heroes for the crew of the Sikorsky S61.

Only on Monday winchman Chris Murray nearly paid with his life after being washed overboard from a storm-lashed Spanish trawler near Rockall - more than 200 miles out into the Atlantic.

The eight-hour rescue - which saw the helicopter's fuel drop to a dangerously low level - ended when 40-year-old Chris courageously insisting on being lowered down on to the deck of the Moraine again, after being rescued himself in mountainous seas, to winch a sailor with a perforated ulcer to safety.

The six-man crew, which had even to divert to Benbecula to refuel before returning to the trawler for the second time, were hailed heroes. But for them it was simply call-out 998.

"They are a modest lot, but they are brilliant and brave, very brave," said Clive Watts, acting district controller of Stornoway Coastguard.

"We have the largest rescue area in the UK and weather wise probably the most hostile.

"Before we got the helicopter, on long range rescues all we could effectively do was call-up a Nimrod and drop a liferaft.

"Now the helicopter is at the frontline of our rescues. They have undoubtedly saved many lives. I don't know how we coped without them before - in truth we probably didn't on some rescues.

"Their courage and airmanship knows no bounds. They have the admiration of everybody in these isles."

It needed a terrible tragedy to persuade the Government for the need of a Search and Rescue base at Stornoway, at the jaws of the wild North Atlantic. It may be hostile, but it is also a fishing-rich area and disaster always stalks the region, often wedding sailor and sea tragically together.

In 1986 the entire crew of a Scottish fishing boat died after their trawler hit rocks off the west coast of The Minch. By the time a RAF helicopter from Losiemouth, 100 miles away, arrived the crew were dead.

Helicopter operator Bristow won the Coastguard contract to man the Stornoway base in 1987 and the two million pounds-a-year deal for Coastguard was renewed for another five years in 1993. Bristow's has 23 staff at the extreme outpost, including three crews.

But it has not been a trouble free-operation for Bristows. Two years after starting a two million pounds chopper was written-off after the pilot lost control and ditched while searching for two people from a sunken dinghy off Handa Island.

And sometimes the weather is so atrocious - particularly ice - they simply cannot even take-off.

But the 125mph Sikorsky, which drinks 120 gallons an hour, has carried out rescues 250 miles into the Atlantic, 120 miles north to the Orkneys, south to Tiree and east to Inverness.

The memorable incidents also include managing to locate at night a couple stranded on the edge of a 100ft-high cliff at Applecross. Suffering badly from hypothermia the pair were close to death. Finding them would be like looking for a needle in a haystack at night!

But thanks to the Sikorsky's forward looking infra red search camera - and the chopper's auto hover system for nighttime flying - the couple were found and saved.

Then there was a crew member of an Irish fishing boat who almost drowned after being caught in his own nets. Despite a fierce snow storm and violent seas the man was winched off as the pilot hovered with great skill precariously above the lunging trawler.

But perhaps the most memorable was rushing a pregnant women from Uist to Stornoway Hospital. Half-way through the flight the baby was born at three thousand feet! Earlier this month the little girl celebrated her fifth birthday.

Last month the helicopter was homed-in on the satellite signal from a Buckie-based trawler which sank off St Kilda. Three crew were found in a liferaft - a fourth man died after failing to make it to the boat.

Western Isles MP Calum Macdonald also praised the sky rescuers.

"We fought to get a helicopter search and rescue base here and it has certainly proved its worth, many times over.

"A lot of fishermen and other people owe their lives to the helicopter crews, and have nothing but admiration for their courage."


ENDS


.....
TOTAL P.01




BRISTOW STORNOWAY SEARCH AND RESCUE

SEARCH AND RESCUE REPORT FORM

CODES N - NIGHT W - WINCH MTN - MOUNTAIN	S - SEARCH C - CASEVAC MAR - MARITIME	E - ESCORT MED - MEDEVAC MM - MISCELLANEOUS
REPORT NUMBER AND CODE 997 MAR N W MED		DATE 17/04/95
CREW Roughton Findlay Carcass Murray Dr Lawson		
AIRCRAFT G-BIMU		
WEATHER - BASE 280/25, 8/8 400',+5, 3Km	EN-ROUTE IF transit	SCENE As script
TIMES - OF REQUEST 2204	TAKE-OFF 2345	LANDING 0845
CREW REPORT AND LOG (Including names, places, details of injuries etc) Called in from home to medevac a seriously ill crew member from a 90' Spanish fishing vessel 205NM 260 deg from SY Y. CG advised to inform vessel to steam east towards Benbecula at best speed. delay in take off to allow fishing vessel to reduce range. Aircraft repositioned Benbecula ↘ 0030 — " — ↗ 0045 On scene 0245 A number of attempts were made with the hi-line to place the winchman on board. Size of deck and movement, together with lack of reference at night prevented safe transfer of winchman. Weather on scene 230/25 15' swell heavy rain, cloud base 500'. MU returned to Benbecula to refuel and return during daylight Benbecula ↘ 0440 — " — ↗ 0500 On scene 180 NM 250 SY Y 0620 Weather on scene: nil wind, 15' swell, rain Sct 500'. 600 lbs fuel dumped for performance. During first hi-line transfer, winchman on the edge of the deck, but due to extreme pitch and roll winchman flipped backwards by vessel movement back over guard rail. During roll backwards became detached from the hook. 'Wet hi-line' carried out to recover winchman. Winchman indicated to continue straight on to deck. Winchman down, stretcher down. Winchman and casualty recovered to the aircraft. Rescue MU return to Stornoway.		
CHIEF PILOT'S COMMENTS An outstanding performance by the crew in trying conditions. During the mission it is evident that the crew had to rapidly assess and respond to difficult problems, but Chris Murray's actions were of particular note and I commend him for his sterling efforts.		
Signed..... 		

FAX TO:- MJ Norris / RJC Follis - Redhill and AE Jones / D Smith - Aberdeen — 

COPY BY MAIL TO:- Sumburgh SAR; Lee on Solent SAR; Irish Helicopters Shannon; Shell SAR Unit, Safe Gothia (via Aberdeen) 

Seaman is 'stable' after hold plunge

A GERMAN seaman is in hospital in Stornoway after plunging into the hold of a trawler off St Kilda.

Alfred Siegfried (49), from Bremenhaven, was finally airlifted off the 95-metre trawler Dirk Dirk on Saturday after an all-night operation by the Stornoway coastguard helicopter.

Despite problems caused by "still air", Bristow pilot Roger Asbey was eventually able to lower an island GP, Dr Nigel Beresford, and winchman

Chris Murray on to the Bremenhaven-registered vessel.

The casualty was found to be paralysed on one side, with head and suspected spinal injuries.

Before he could be airlifted to hospital, the Sikorsky S-61N helicopter had to return to Benbecula to refuel.

As the vessel steamed towards Harris, Capt Asbey took on the minimum fuel to carry out the operation.

But delays at the scene meant he had to return to

Stornoway to refuel again before winching the three off the Dirk Dirk.

A Bristow spokesman said: "Still air, as it is known, is an aerodynamics problem.

"If there is no forward airflow under the rotor, the engine has to work very much harder to stay aloft.

"In this case, Capt Asbey and his crew dumped fuel to lighten the aircraft, but it was still not enough to maintain height over the vessel.

"They found the engine had reached the maxi-

mum power allowed before it was liable to damage the gearbox."

The aircraft eventually arrived at Western Isles Hospital in Stornoway at 7am on Saturday. The seaman was "comfortable" last night.

● Winchman Mr Murray (43), from Dornoch, was involved in another high-seas drama three weeks ago when he was knocked off a Spanish trawler near Rockall while rescuing a sick crewman.

He had to be rescued from the water by his own helicopter.

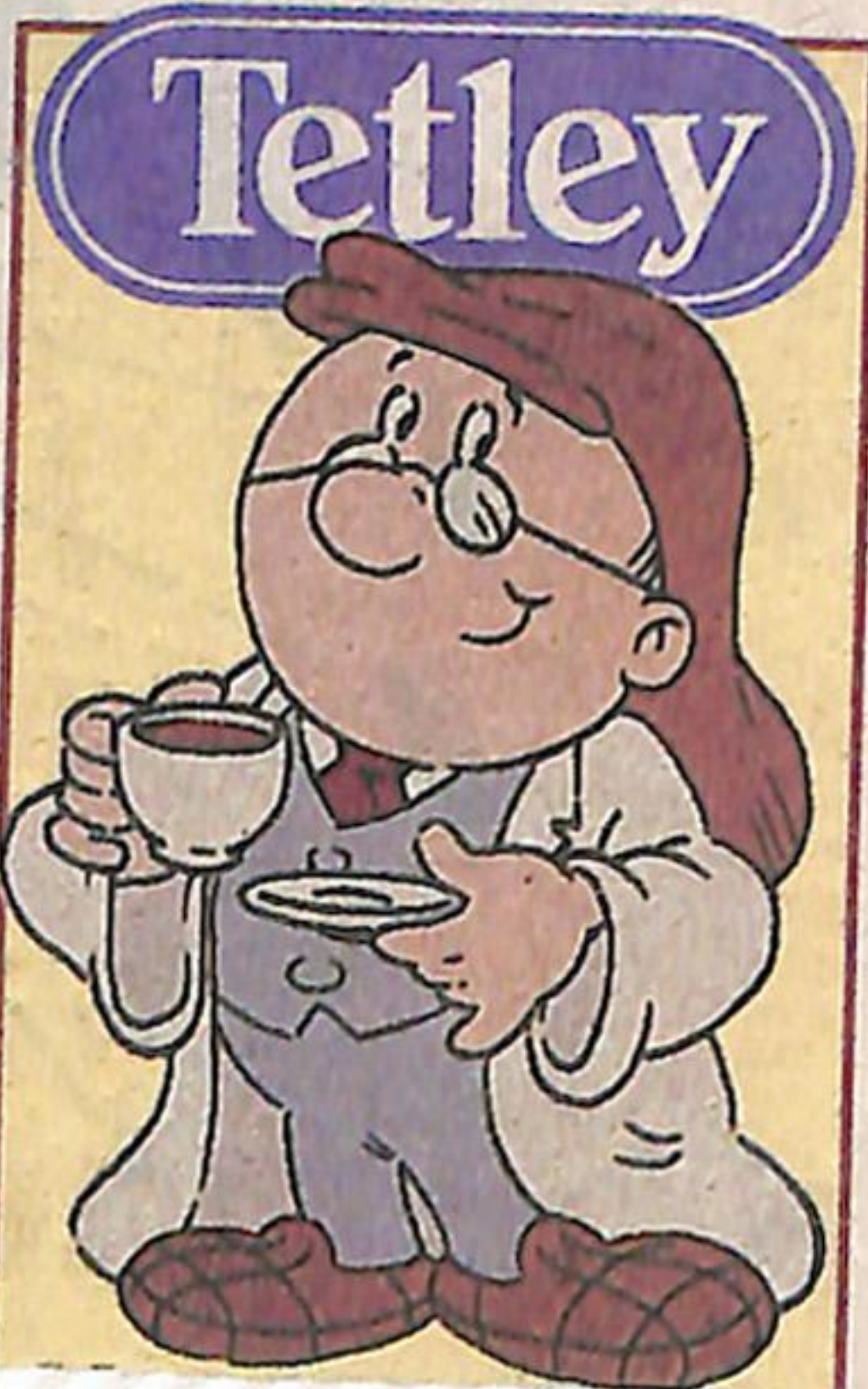
Daily Record

SATURDAY, JULY 22, 1995

Hero's hurt

HERO helicopter winchman Chris Murray has been injured doing DIY.

Chris, 44, of Aignish, Lewis, suffered cuts after hitting himself in the face with a ladder just three months after a daring rescue in the Atlantic.



DAILY STAR

DAILY STAR, Saturday, July 22, 1995

aturday, July 22, 1995 7



INJURED: Chris Murray

Helicopter hero's gaffe on the roof

A RESCUE helicopter crewman who was hailed an Atlantic storm hero has been injured — working on his roof.

Chris Murray, 44, a winchman on the Stornoway-based coastguard helicopter, was hooking a ladder's top section into place when it came loose and hit him full in the face.

Blood gushed from his injured nose at his home in Aignish, near Stornoway.

Chris was dubbed a hero after a tricky mission in April to pluck a sick Spanish crewman off a trawler in wild conditions near Rockall.

He said yesterday: "My nose is not broken. I suppose I'm quite lucky."

TO : HM COASTGUARD STORNOWAY

ATTN: DUTY OFFICER

CC : ALAN ELPHINSTONE

CC : GORDON BAIRD

CC : TAB HUNTER — APOLOGIES SMILER THIS IS FOR YOU AS WELL

CC : CHRIS MURRAY

Jan B

FROM: SONAT ARCADE FRONTIER

DATE: 30th JULY 85

SUBJ: MEDIVAC FLIGHT

**TO ALL CONCERNED IN THE MEDIVAC OF FLOORMAN MIKE
HEWITT, ESPECIALLY THE CREW OF "RESCUE HU" FOR THE SKILL
AND DEDICATION SHOWN IN FLYING IN BAD CONDITIONS
(THICK FOG) AND DETERMINATION TO LIFT THE MEDIVAC OFF
THE RIG AND GET HIM ASHORE TO HOSPITAL.**

**THE CREW OF THE SONAT ARCADE FRONTIER WOULD LIKE TO
THANK THE CREW MEMBERS AND SHORE STAFF.**

**IT IS NICE TO KNOW THAT MEN OF SUCH SKILL ARE STANDING BY
TO ASSIST US WHEN REQUIRED.**

MANY THANKS

GEORGE JAFFRAY — O.J.M.

PETER SCOLFIELD — CO-REP

AND ALL THE CREW

CAPTAIN, THE RIGHT HONOURABLE, HIS GRACE,
HIS EXCELLENCY. C MURRAY CCGC CDM+BAR

Memo

To: MJ NORRIS, cc AE JONES, D SMITH, RJC FOLLIS
From: A ELPHINSTONE
Date: October 19, 1995
Re: CHIEF COASTGUARD'S COMMENDATION

I have been advised by Stornoway Coastguard District controller, that Mr WI(Chris) Murray is to receive the Chief Coastguard's Commendation, for his actions during SAR mission 997/95.

The date of the presentation has not yet been agreed, but I will advise when known.

Mission 997/95 took place on the 16/17th April 1995, copies of the mission reports are attached.

Le Durachd



A Elphinstone
Chief Pilot

A:\PWO\CGC19OCT.SAM

cc. Memo only. M Roughton
G Findlay
V Carcass
C Murray
Noticeboard

THE HERALD

The Herald, Monday, January 22, 1996, Page Twenty Two



Coastguard helicopter winchman Chris Murray is to receive a bravery award for his part in a rescue mission in rough seas.

Picture: JOHN MACKINNON

Injured winchman praised for his bravery

A RESCUE helicopter crewman was swept overboard into the Atlantic when a huge wave hit a Spanish trawler as he tried to airlift a sick crewman.

When he was rescued himself, and despite suffering a dislocated finger and severe bruising, Mr Chris Murray, from Aignish, Lewis, went back on board the vessel and plucked the man to safety.

The head of the coastguard service, Commander Derek Ancona, will tomorrow present Mr Murray, a winchman

on the coastguard helicopter based at Stornoway, with a bravery award for his part in the rescue, which took place on April 17 last year.

When Mr Murray was swept overboard, the helicopter was already running critically low on fuel. Captain Mike Roughton and co-pilot Graham Findlay took several minutes to spot the 44-year-old former Navy diver in the rough sea, 90 miles from remote Rockall, and get a line to him.

He had a dislocated finger

and severe bruising to his legs, side, and backside but Mr Murray, originally from Dornoch in Sutherland, signalled to astonished winch operator Vic Carcass to put him back down on the pitching 27-metre trawler Moraima.

The winchman then successfully plucked Mr Lorenzo Menduina, 45, from Pontevedra, into the helicopter where Stornoway GP Ian Lawson was waiting. Mr Menduina was taken to hospital in Stornoway, where he made a good recovery.

Mr Alan Elphinstone, chief pilot with rescue helicopter operator Bristow, said: "It was a very difficult rescue in atrocious conditions at the very limit of the helicopter's range and endurance. There was no fuel left to mess about."

"Chris Murray is a very hardy type. He did very well under the circumstances."

Yesterday, Mr Murray was playing down his role. He said: "I was actually only doing my job. I suppose it can

get a bit hairy at times but that's all it was."

"But I'm delighted at getting the award. It recognises the value of the work all the coastguards and the air rescue base here do."

The citation on the Chief Coastguard's Commendation for Meritorious Service will say: "The courage, determination, and dedication to duty demonstrated by Chris Murray was entirely in keeping with the highest traditions of the service."

Sea rescue hero given top honour

Copter crewman risked own life

A COURAGEOUS coastguard who risked his life to pluck a man to safety from a Spanish trawler has won a commendation for bravery.

Chris Murray will receive the award tomorrow from the head of the coastguard service for his part in the daring rescue of sick crewman Lorenzo Menduina. Mr Murray, who works on the coastguard helicopter at Stornoway, was swept overboard by a huge wave during the Atlantic drama on April 17 last year.

Captain Mike Rough-ton and co-pilot Graham Findlay took several anxious minutes to spot the 44-year-old former Navy diver and managed to get a line out to him.

However, Mr Murray ignored severe bruising and agonising pain from a dislocated finger to go back on board the trawler.

The winchman, originally from Dornoch in Sutherland, then plucked Snr Menduina, 45, from Pontevedra,

EXPRESS REPORTER

into the helicopter where Stornoway GP Dr Ian Lawson was at the ready.

After the helicopter dashed to Benbecula to refuel and then to hospital in Stornoway, Snr Menduina made a good recovery.

The first few attempts to get him off had failed because of gale-force winds and language difficulties.

At one stage, the S-61N helicopter had to return to Benbecula to refuel before dashing back the 240 miles to the storm-lashed scene during the arduous nine-hour mission.

Alan Elphinstone,



BRAVE: Rescuer Chris Murray

chief pilot with rescue helicopter operator Bristow, said the conditions during the rescue were atrocious.

"Chris Murray is a very hardy type and did very well under the circumstances," he said.

However, Chris, who lives at Aignish, played down his role in the drama.

"I was actually only doing my job," he said. "I suppose it can get a bit hairy at times but that's all it was."

"But I'm delighted at getting the award. It recognises the value of the work all the coastguards and the air rescue base here does."

The presentation of the award will be made in Stornoway by Chief Coastguard, Commander Derek Ancona.

The citation on the Chief Coastguard's Commendation for Meritorious Service says: "The courage, determination and dedication to duty demonstrated by Chris Murray was entirely in keeping with the highest traditions of the service."

DAILY STAR
 OF SCOTLAND

Hero set for award

A RESCUE helicopter crewman swept overboard by a huge wave as during a rescue mission is get a bravery award.

Chris Murray, from Dornoch, Sutherland, was trying to rescue a sick crewman from a Spanish trawler when he was plunged into raging seas last April.

But he managed to get back aboard the vessel and despite his injuries, successfully rescued the crewman.

Yesterday, Chris was playing down his role.

He said: "I was actually only doing my job. I suppose it can get a bit hairy at times but that's all it was. "But I'm delighted at getting the award."

Hero of rescue plays down bravery award

by Iain Maciver

A RESCUE helicopter crewman who was swept overboard during a heroic rescue at sea will be rewarded for his bravery tomorrow.

Chris Murray was knocked flying by a huge wave and suffered agonising pain from a dislocated finger and severe bruising.

But he still climbed aboard a Spanish trawler to rescue a sick crewman last April.

Now the winchman on the Coastguard helicopter, based at Stornoway, will get a bravery award from the head of his service.

When the wave took Chris overboard, the helicopter was already low on fuel.

Captain Mike Roughton and co-pilot Graham Findlay took several anxious minutes to spot the 44-year-old former Navy diver in the gale-whipped waves, 90 miles from remote Rockall, and get a line to him.

Chris, originally from Dornoch, signalled to astonished winch operator Vic Carcass to put him back on the pitching trawler *Moraime*.

He then pulled the sick crewman into the heli-

copter where Stornoway GP Dr Ian Lawson was waiting. The crewman recovered after hospital-treatment in Stornoway.

Yesterday, Chris was playing down his role, saying: "I was actually only doing my job. I suppose it can get a bit hairy at times but that's all it was."

"But I'm delighted at getting the award. It recognises the value of the work that all the coastguards and the air rescue base here does."

At one stage, the Sikorsky S-61N helicopter had to return to Benbecula to refuel before going back the 240 miles to the storm-lashed scene during the nine-hour mission.

Alan Elphinstone, chief pilot with rescue helicopter operator Bristow, said: "It was a very difficult rescue in atrocious conditions at the very limit of the helicopter's range and endurance. There was no fuel left to mess about."

"Chris Murray is a very hardy type. He did very well under the circumstances."

The presentation to Chris, who lives at Aignish, will be made in Stornoway by Commander Derek Ancona, the Chief Coastguard.

The SUNDAY POST

January 21, 1996

Coastguard's commendation for Chris

CHIEF COASTGUARD Commander Derek Ancona will visit Stornoway on Tuesday to present the Chief Coastguard's Commendation for Meritorious Service to winchman Chris Murray.

Chris is a search and rescue winchman who has served on the coastguard helicopter in Stornoway since 1988 when Bristow Helicopters Ltd were awarded the original contract.

On April 16 last year the helicopter was tasked to go to the aid of a sick crewman on the Spanish fishing vessel *Moraime* — 90 miles east of remote Rockall.

Despite difficult weather, the helicopter sped to the scene and then made numerous attempts to land Chris and a doctor on board.

At the limit of its range the captain decided to return to Benbecula to refuel before returning to the vessel where Chris was successfully landed on board by high-line transfer.

Shortly after he disconnected himself from the winch he was washed overboard by the heavy seas.

But, after several minutes in the water, he managed to scramble back aboard the boat and proceeded to carry out a successful rescue of the crewman.

His citation reads, "The courage, determination and dedication to duty demonstrated by Chris Murray was entirely in keeping with the finest traditions of the service".

NO MEAN CITY

I'D never seen or heard of the place:
I asked a girl with a pretty face.
She looked on me as a creature lost:
"Yes, indeed, this is Garrabost;
And Bayable, of course, is farther south!"
A smile was hovering on her mouth.
She had surely met the most ignorant man
That ever had lived since the world began.
I smiled and thanked her. She smiled; went on;
And her milking pail in the sunset shone
All down the village, as twilight came
And hid the lassie and . . . What's-its-name?

* struthan: a small burn.

Page Nineteen

Stornoway Gazette

AND WEST COAST ADVERTISER
GUTH NAN INNSE-GALL



STORNOWAY-based Coastguard helicopter winchman Chris Murray was this week presented with a Chief Coastguard's Commendation for Meritorious Service by the Chief Coastguard Commander Derek Ancona.

Mr Murray is a search and rescue winchman who has served on the Coastguard Helicopter in Stornoway since 1988 when Bristow Helicopters Limited were awarded the original contract.

The citation to the award which was presented at a ceremony at the British Legion club on Tuesday evening reads:

"I hereby commend Chris Murray HM Coastguard helicopter,

Stornoway for meritorious service on April 16 1995 for his part in the successful evacuation of a sick crewman from the Spanish fishing vessel Moraima, 90 miles east of Rockall."

The citation goes on to describe how after a request from the maritime control centre in Madrid, the Coastguard helicopter based at Stornoway was sent out to the area. "In difficult weather conditions the helicopter proceeded to the scene and on arrival made numerous attempts to land Chris Murray and

a doctor on board. Due to the extreme range, fuel was a critical factor and the aircraft captain decided that he would need to refuel at Benbecula and then return to the Moraima.

"On returning to the vessel Chris Murray was successfully landed on board by high line transfer. However shortly after detaching himself from the winch he was washed overboard by the heavy sea.

"After several minutes in the water he managed to regain the vessel and proceeded to carry out a

successful rescue.

"The courage determination and dedication to duty demonstrated by Chris Murray was entirely within keeping with the finest traditions of the service."

Above are (l-r) Joe Bowser, District Controller Stornoway; Dr Iain Lawson, the GP on board during the rescue; Derek Ancona, Chief Coastguard; Chris Murray with his commendation certificate; Allan Elphinstone, Bristow Helicopters chief pilot in Stornoway; and Graham Finlay, helicopter co-pilot on the rescue mission. The rest of the crew were Capt. Mike Roughton and winch operator, Vic Carcass. SG.13240

Rescue award

Press and Journal

THURSDAY JANUARY 25 1996

High praise for rescue hero

MODEST hero Chris Murray paid tribute to fellow helicopter crew members when he received a bravery award from Coastguard Commander Derek Ancona at a ceremony in Stornoway.

Chris was washed overboard from a Spanish trawler and injured while attempting to airlift a sick crew member, but to the astonishment of his crewmen he signalled to them to put him back on board to complete his rescue mission.

After being presented with the award, Chris said: "The only reason I'm getting this

award is because of the skill and determination of the rest of the crew — not forgetting the engineers back at base."

Chris was washed overboard from the Spanish trawler Moraima last April 16 when it was 90 miles east of Rockall in the Atlantic.

There had been numerous attempts to land him on the deck of the trawler in difficult weather conditions. Due to the extreme range fuel was a critical factor and the helicopter captain decided that he would need to refuel at Benbecula and then return to the Moraima.

On returning, Chris was successfully landed on the trawler but shortly after detaching himself from the winch line he was washed overboard by a heavy sea.

He suffered a dislocated finger and severe bruising to his legs and body, but signalled that he wanted to be put back on board to complete his mission.

The fisherman was airlifted to hospital in Stornoway.

Commander Ancona, who said it was becoming something of a habit to present such commendations at Stornoway,

added: "But I do not give them away lightly."

"This incident is a good example of the risks, professionalism and courage that helicopter crews have to face and undertake during the course of their duties."

"It must have been a terrifying experience for Chris, but we have to remember that he was a clearance diver in the Royal Navy."

"The award reflects credit on the rest of the crew who must have watched in horror as he was washed overboard."

Stornoway Gazette Limited

10, Francis Street, Stornoway,

PAIRC

Congratulations: We say congratulations and well done to Chris Murray, winchman aboard the Stornoway based helicopter, and who recently received a Rescue Award.

Chris is well known in the South Lochs district, his late mother belonged to Marvig and his aunt, Mairi Anna, resides at No. 18 Marvig, where Chris is a frequent visitor.



BBC
S O U T H

Dramatic Stories of real life rescues

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Mr A Elphinstone
Chief Pilot
Bristow Helicopter
Stornoway
Isle of Lewis

Chris - for info

8 March 1996

Dear Alan,

I'm sorry it has taken me so long to put pen to paper following my visit last month but things have been a little hectic.

It was very useful to meet all those involved with the Moraimie rescue including Chris, Vic and Graham and to hear their various accounts. It has given me a much clearer understanding of what occurred.

We had hoped to consider filming the reconstruction for inclusion in the next series of "999" which is due to begin in the Spring and runs for 10 weeks. However, one of the programmes is now to be dedicated to a "999" special about speed and it means that we now no longer have programme time available for any more reconstructions.

To this end I am afraid that we have had to postpone any plans for a reconstruction at this stage. We are hoping that another series of the programme will be commissioned and work will begin on that in the Autumn so if its okay with you we will be back in touch later in the year.

I'm sorry things haven't worked out for this series, but at least the first part of the filming process has been completed i.e the recce.

In the meantime, many thanks for all your help to date and please pass on my apologies to all those concerned.

Kind regards

Sally Dyas, Researcher.



