Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for
authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

The Lawyer's Marine Pocket Case

Captain Bedford Pim R.N.

Published online: 25 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Captain Bedford Pim R.N. (1881) The Lawyer's Marine
Pocket Case, Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 25:113, 839-841, DOI:
[10.1080/03071848109423560](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071848109423560)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071848109423560>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan,

sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

THE LAWYER'S MARINE POCKET CASE.¹

By CAPTAIN BEDFORD PIM, R.N.

HOWEVER much I may pride myself on the usefulness of the little Case before you, I do not attempt to raise it to the dignity of an invention. Its contents occurred to me as the results of observation in our Law Courts of the want of some such *multum in parvo*, especially in cases like those of the "Bywell Castle" and "Princess Alice;" of the "Forest" and "Avalanche;" the running down of the "Tongue" light ship; H.M.'s cutter "Fanny" and the "Hibernia;" H.M.S. "Bellerophon" and the "Flamstead," or the German steamer "Franconia" and the "Strathelyde," in all of which cases (typical ones) I was either retained as Counsel, or took a deep interest. But it was not until laid on my back by a severe accident that I was able to bring the Case as near perfection as I at least could make it; and I have brought it here to day, in the earnest hope of being useful to my brother seamen, whether of the Royal Navy or Mercantile Marine, for, indeed, in the present day, it is hard to say why these two great Services should not always be coupled together, as combined they are the true mainstay of the empire, whereon its wealth, safety, and strength chiefly depend.

In dealing with the shipping casualties of the present day (to say nothing of their frightful frequency), a great deal more knowledge is required than in former times. When I first went to sea in the Merchant Service, about forty years ago, collisions were of comparatively rare occurrence; they were, moreover, generally of a trifling nature, and certainly not attended with anything like the serious loss of life of those of modern times. In those days the crews were English, now the greater part are foreigners.

I am anxious to dispel a popular error, as to the cause of the numerous collisions which now take place, an error prevalent in very high quarters, viz., that these casualties are attributable to the extraordinary increase in the number of English ships, and consequent overcrowding of our ports and rivers. But in point of fact, the number of our ships is less now than it was twenty years ago.

The figures may be interesting, and therefore I will mention that, in 1865, the amount of British shipping reached its culminating point in nearly 27,000 vessels. At the present moment, the number is about 22,000, although it is quite true that British *tonnage* has largely increased.

To give an idea of the frightful frequency of shipping casualties, let me tell you, that the average, for some years, has reached between two and three thousand per annum, that is to say, that since the time

¹ Taken as read at the Meeting on Friday, June 17th.

I mentioned, forty years ago, when a collision was a comparatively rare occurrence, we have now to lament that at least five vessels daily come to grief, whilst in the Mercantile Marine some 3,000 lives are lost yearly by drowning alone.

You will therefore see, that there is, alas! abundant opportunity for testing the usefulness of my Case, and I hope by its use to enable our Courts to arrive at the true reason of the loss or casualty, and thus to bring about in time the application of effective remedies to prevent the present deplorable state of things.

I will now call your attention to a few of the leading points or features in the contents of the Case, and first in respect to the models.

It must be obvious, I think, to everyone, how important (I might say all-important) it is to illustrate as graphically as possible the leading features of a collision. Now no word painting can convey to the judge and jury the idea of the situation so clearly as by means of models. It is true that wooden blocks shaped at both ends have long been used at the trials of shipping casualties; but those blocks, supposed to represent ships, were always of the same size, and therefore quite failed to convey the right impression, whenever the vessels colliding were of different sizes. It will be observed that these models can be readily taken to pieces and joined at any ordinary dimensions. Suppose, for example, the case of the "Hibernia" and H.M.'s cutter "Fanny." Here you have a vessel four times her beam for length. All that has to be done is to unship the model you intend to represent the "Fanny" and join the two parts marked 2. You will notice that each joint has the number of its length underneath. The model representing the "Hibernia" need not be disturbed, because it is of the same proportions as that ship. A glance at the models placed in the position of contact gives a good idea of the situation.

In respect to the compasses, you will see that they are made to answer a double purpose, viz., as compasses to measure distance with one end, as callipers to take the thickness of a plank or iron plate with the other; in the case of iron ships, this latter measurement is often of great importance.

The protractor, as everyone knows, is very useful to lay off the course, or to fix the position by cross-bearings. I have added a scale at foot, and I have had the whole printed on thick paper so as to reduce the cost to a minimum.

On the principle that "trifles make the sum of human things," my pencils are made green and red, to match a ship's lights, and can thus show by a stroke of the pencil whether the ship was going to port or starboard by means of the colour, also her course is thus kept in the memory of those concerned.

I now come to a few points in the blue book, the "Aid to Memory." There will be found in this little work many useful hints! Most shipping cases turn, I think, on obtaining from the witnesses exact information with regard to lights, distance, sound,—and on each of these points I have called attention to very

simple facts; such, for example, that under no circumstances can the present green lights be seen beyond two miles, consequently, whenever a green light is reported, not a moment should be lost in directing the course to be steered: and if this is not done, we know pretty well whom to blame.

The question of distance I have always found a "burning" one in collision cases. I have therefore worked out tables, by which, given the ship's speed and the time from sighting, the distance traversed can be seen at a glance at page 15. For example, a knot is 2,028 yards; if a ship is going ten knots an hour, she will cover very nearly 340 yards in one minute, say three times the length of an ordinary passenger steamer of the present day.

Regarding sound, I need only allude to the facility with which an accurate measurement of distance can be obtained from the knowledge we possess of the rate at which sound travels; in fact, in H.M.'s Surveying Service, and elsewhere, I have often been dependent for a base measured entirely by sound, calculated by the time between seeing the flash of a gun and hearing the report.

Altogether, I think I may say that some useful information will be found in the pages of this little book, and therefore I will not enlarge upon its contents, but venture to beg you to read it. I have had great pleasure in asking the acceptance by the Institution of one of my Cases, which will be found in the library, and may, I trust, prove useful.

In conclusion, I beg to ask those who read these few lines to do me a favour. I am engaged during my little leisure in preparing for publication a "Maritime Cyclopædia," which shall contain every kind of information useful to mariners, and to a maritime population. I am anxious to complete my collection of printed and manuscript matter for this book, and I can only say that any information on subjects even remotely affecting those of our seafaring countrymen whom I have mentioned will be thankfully received.

ERRATUM.

Vol. xxv, page 167, line 8, for "men in close order by men in open order," read "men in *open* order by men in *close* order."