



On April 11 1886, the steamer *Taiaroa* went aground just north of the Clarence River mouth in north Canterbury. The following reports are taken from various newspapers of the day.

Those on board numbered 47, being 20 passengers and 27 of a crew. The number saved was 14, thus leaving 33 drowned, with 25 bodies unaccounted for as of April 14.

The *Taiaroa* at low water at four this afternoon was within 10 yards of dry land. She seems to be lying steady, with small seas breaking over her, and leaning to seaward, in seven feet of water by the bows. Three men, working at Clarence bridge, swam on board this morning and rescued a monkey and a cat. They obtained dry clothes from the forecastle, and made two wraps fast from the forecastle, and made two wraps fast from the mast-head to the beach. The vessel seems to have her bottom stove in, but no holes are visible. The monkey and cat are now at Woodbank station.

It is stated there was only one rocket fired. *Had lights and rocket been used continuously*, help would speedily have been obtained from workmen at Clarence River bridge, who saw the steamer's light, but took no further notice of it.

*Had the passengers and crew remained on board the steamer, there would apparently been no loss of life.*

The body of Robert Monkman, First Officer, of Dunedin, was found washed ashore south of Flaxbourne and was identified from a bundle of certificates found inside his left stocking near the ankle.

The funerals of First Officer Monkman and Robert Morrison, a fireman, of the *Taiaroa*, which took place to-day, were very largely attended. The Druids, of which Morrison was a member, mustering strongly. Mr Morrison has a wife and one child living in Dunedin. His wife is at the present time, we understand, in a rather critical condition. Mr Monkman was a nephew of Mr H.B. Monkman, of the Union Company of Dunedin. The bodies were conveyed to Dunedin in the steamer *Omapere* on Saturday, and the joint funeral took place on Sunday afternoon. Some thousands of people assembled to witness the procession starting from the Rattray street wharf at 3 o'clock, and the streets were all along the line of the route thronged with spectators. A great crowd of people had also assembled in the cemetery, and when the cortege arrived there must have been between 7000 and 8000 people present. The coffins were borne to the graves by seamen in uniform of the Union Steam Ship Company, the coffins being covered with wreaths and bouquets.

The Court of Enquiry composed of Mr Stratford, R.M., and Captain Morris, Nautical Assessor cancelled the Captain's certificate.

Mr Stratford found that the vessel was navigated safely up to 3.30 pm when the wind changed to the southward. The course ought then to have been altered, the ship being light. He should have allowed at least a point, and moreover, knowing he was on a lee shore, with the wind and sea increasing, a leadsmen should have been placed in the chains till the weather cleared. Had this been done at 6 or 6.30 the soundings must have shown him he was too close inshore. The neglect of Captain Thomson to look at the compass shows want of care, and ignorance of the responsibilities of his position. His certificate would be cancelled; but, in view of the judgment, coolness, and courage displayed after the wreck, the Governor would be recommended to be reissue his certificate, providing he shall have served in the meantime regularly at sea as mate. The costs of the enquiry amounted to 33 6s of which 16 and 10 would be charged against the captain.

Robert Boyle Monkman is buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery and his final resting place is marked with an appropriately carved stone.