

Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

“The sole objective of a safety investigation into an accident under these Regulations shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of such an investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame.”

As the full investigation report will not be published within 12 months of the accident date, this interim report is published, pursuant to Regulation 14(2)(b) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012.

NOTE

This report is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

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Interim report on the investigation of the accidental release of the suspended fishing gear on board the beam trawler *Cornishman* (PZ512), resulting in one fatality, approximately 55 nautical miles south-west of the Isles of Scilly on 6 February 2021

The aim of this interim report is to inform owners and skippers of UK beam trawlers and scallop dredgers of the circumstances of the accident and MAIB's initial findings. A full report will be published when the investigation is complete. The information contained in this interim report is based on investigations to date. Readers are cautioned that new evidence may become available that might alter the circumstances as depicted in this report.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

At about 0630 on 6 February 2021, the suspended port fishing gear on board the UK registered beam trawler *Cornishman* fell to the deck without warning while repairs to the net were being undertaken between hauls. The trawl beam landed inboard, trapping a crewman under its aft end. The beam also struck and injured another crewman.

Other members of the crew used the Gilson winch to lift the trawl beam and pulled the trapped crewman from under the gear. They carried out emergency resuscitation while waiting for a rescue helicopter and lifeboat to arrive, but the crewman was declared deceased by the attending helicopter paramedic.



Cornishman

INITIAL FINDINGS

The ongoing MAIB investigation found that a chain link in the port fishing gear quick-release mechanism had failed, causing the trawl beam to fall. The 32mm chain link had fractured at the point where it went over a fixed steel pin at the derrick head. The investigation also identified that the derrick head pin was badly worn. A photograph (**Figure 1**) taken shortly after the accident shows the same mechanism on the starboard side derrick head.

The arrangement of a chain passing over a fixed pin is used for quick-release mechanisms on board many beam trawlers and scallop dredgers that operate in the UK. Similar chain failures have led to fishing gear collapsing on other vessels and chain fractures have been identified during vessel inspections (**Figure 2**).

The practice of passing lifting chains over fixed pins introduces complex loadings on the chain links. This makes it very difficult to calculate the tensile strength of the arrangement and makes it more susceptible to failure. It is therefore imperative in the short-term that these types of release mechanisms and derrick head pins are subject to regular inspection and replaced at the earliest sign of wear.

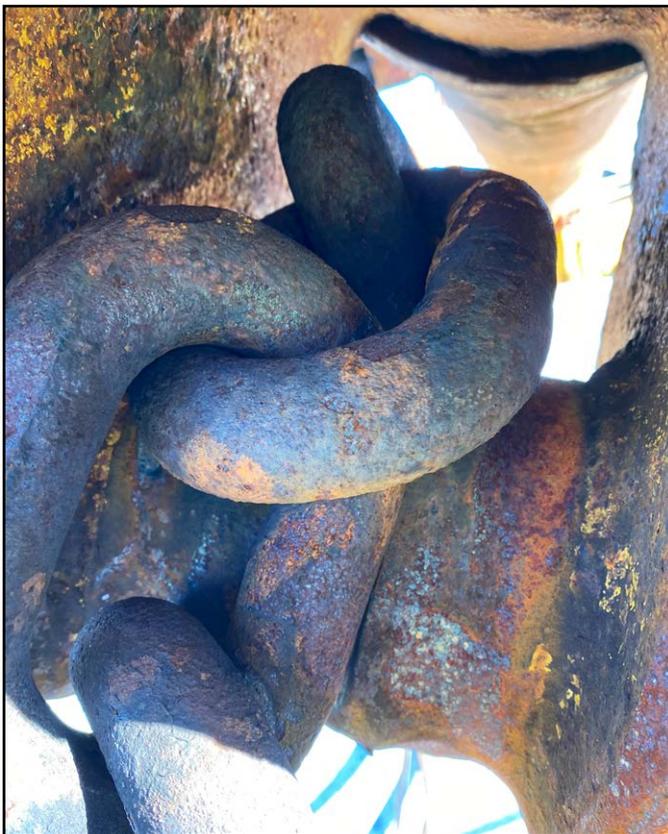


Figure 1: Starboard side derrick head quick-release mechanism



Figure 2: Chain fracture discovered during inspection of a quick-release mechanism on another vessel

ONGOING ACTION

The MAIB's investigation into the accident is ongoing. Further aspects of the material composition and suitability of the quick-release mechanism for use in the sea environment are being analysed and these, along with other safety issues relating to this accident, will be discussed in the final report. A draft report of the investigation will be distributed to key stakeholders for a 30-day consultation period in due course.

SHIP PARTICULARS

Vessel's name	<i>Cornishman</i>
Flag	UK
Classification society	Not applicable
IMO/Fishing numbers	7102558/PZ 512
Type	Beam trawler
Registered owner	W. Stevenson & Sons Limited
Manager	W. Stevenson & Sons Limited
Construction	Steel
Year of build	1971
Length overall	32.82m
Registered length	29.37m
Gross tonnage	208.20
Minimum safe manning	4
Authorised cargo	Fish

VOYAGE PARTICULARS

Port of departure	Newlyn, Cornwall
Port of arrival	Newlyn, Cornwall
Manning	6

MARINE CASUALTY INFORMATION

Date and time	6 February 2021 at about 0630
Type of marine casualty or incident	Very Serious Marine Casualty
Location of incident	55 nautical miles south-west of the Isles of Scilly
Place on board	Main deck
Injuries/fatalities	1 injury, 1 fatality
Damage/environmental impact	Failure of quick-release mechanism
Ship operation	On passage
Voyage segment	Mid-water
External & internal environment	Calm seas with slight swell, wind force 3 to 4, fine and clear weather, good visibility but dark
Persons on board	6