

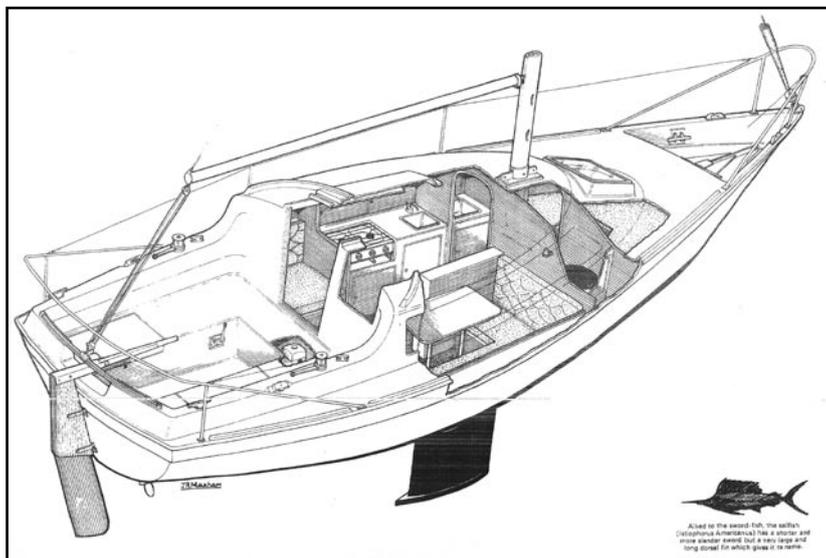
MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FLYER TO THE LEISURE INDUSTRY

OUZO:

ACCIDENT WITH THREE FATALITIES 21 AUGUST 2006



Narrative

The yacht *Ouzo* sailed from Bembridge, Isle of Wight (IOW), bound for Dartmouth, Devon on the evening of 20 August 2006 with her three regular crew on board. The last record of the yacht was at 2230 when she went out of range of the Southampton/Portsmouth VTS radar system in Sandown Bay. At this time it is believed that the yacht was sailing close hauled in a south-south-westerly direction.

The body of one of the crew members was found in the sea just before midday on 22 August about 10 miles south of the Nab Tower. At about 1900 on

the following day, the bodies of the other two crew were recovered from the sea. They had all been wearing inflated lifejackets and good quality yachting clothing. Despite extensive surface and sub-surface searches no trace of the yacht has been found.

Voyage data recorder (VDR) records from ships that had been in the area during the night of 20/21 August were recovered and analysed by MAIB inspectors and it was discovered that the ferry *Pride of Bilbao* had been involved in an incident with a yacht 6 miles south of the Isle of Wight in the early hours of 21 August. The investigation concluded that she had either collided with, or passed so close to *Ouzo* at that time, and that the yacht had been swamped or capsized by the vessel's wash.



Just before the incident, *Pride of Bilbao* had made an alteration of course for navigational purposes which might have inadvertently served to confuse the yacht's crew about the ferry's intentions. In any case, any attempts the yachtsmen might have made to attract the ferry's attention were ineffective as the ferry's watchkeeping officer and lookout only saw the yacht's lights at the last minute, by which time they were unable to keep well clear. The yacht had not shown up on the ferry's radars despite probably having a radar reflector hoisted.

Safety Issues for yachtsmen

1. Yachts cannot be seen easily from the bridges of ships, and yachtsmen need to be proactive in attracting the attention of the ship's watchkeepers. The crew of *Ouzo* kept a powerful torch at hand for just such an emergency but, in this case, were probably unaware of the real danger until it was too late. **Yachtsmen should not hesitate to attract the attention of ships' watchkeepers by whatever means are available.**
2. The lookout on the ferry had not seen the yacht until it was very close ahead. This gives rise to a number of possible factors including, from the yachtsmen's point of view:
 - i. The lenses of navigation light units similar to the one fitted to *Ouzo* are prone to crazing which substantially reduces their efficiency. **(as shown on photo)**
 - ii. The lamps (bulbs) fitted to the navigation lights used on *Ouzo* can easily be inadvertently replaced with lamps of a lower rating.
 - iii. It is quite common for replacement lamps for yacht navigation lights to have damaged filaments, which cause an intermittent fault.
 - iv. If the yacht heels more than 5° the horizontal intensity of her navigation lights may be decreased.



Yacht owners should make every effort to ensure that their navigation lights are fully effective, and their characteristics understood.

3. *Ouzo's* small radar cross section, coupled with the moderate sea conditions, made it unlikely that the radars on *Pride of Bilbao* could separate *Ouzo* from the sea clutter even if *Ouzo* had been displaying her octahedral radar reflector. A study of the capabilities of typical radar reflectors that may be fitted to yachts will be published on the MAIB website on 1 May 2007. **Yacht owners should be encouraged to fit the best radar reflector they can afford.**
4. One of the crew members survived in the water very much longer than the others probably due to the fact that he had fitted his lifejacket tightly. The simple addition of a crotch strap would have significantly increased the survival times of the yachtsmen. **Crotch straps should not be optional extras on lifejackets; they should be supplied, fitted and worn.**
5. After the incident, the alarm was not raised by the yacht's crew. The factors contributing to this include:
 - i. There was probably too little time before the yacht's crew found themselves in the sea. **A hand-held VHF set in a waterproof cover could have provided a means of sending a distress alert.**
 - ii. The boat did not carry an EPIRB and/or a liferaft rigged with a hydrostatic release unit. **An EPIRB and/or a liferaft would have dramatically increased the crew's chances of survival.**

A similar flyer has been produced for merchant vessels, identifying the safety issues pertinent to them.

Further details on the accident and the subsequent investigation can be found in the MAIB's investigation report, which is posted on its website: www.maib.gov.uk

Alternatively, a copy of the report will be sent on request, free of charge.

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