

## **Background and Context**

The Marchioness disaster, in which 51 people lost their lives, occurred on 20 August 1989, when the passenger vessel collided with the dredger Bow Belle on the River Thames.

## **How the Topic was Handled**

The formal inquiry into the Marchioness disaster was not opened immediately, because successive Governments' considered that a public inquiry was unnecessary, in the light of the technical inquiries, the criminal proceedings and when, these last proved abortive, the inquests.

However, on 14 February 2000, the Secretary of State for the (then) Environment, Transport and the Regions asked Lord Justice Clarke to undertake an inquiry under section 268 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. As the inquests had already concluded, an adjournment under section 17A of the Coroners Act 1988 did not apply.

The inquiry had terms of reference in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Formal Investigation) Rules 1985. 72 witnesses gave evidence at the hearing.

The Inquiry reported in March 2001 and made 30 recommendations about inland waterway safety.

## **Lessons Identified**

None provided