

SYNOPSIS



At 1601 on 13 November 2007 the roll on, roll off (ro-ro) ferry *Ursine* made contact with the passenger ferry *Pride of Bruges* while manoeuvring onto a berth in King George Dock, Hull, causing damage to both vessels.

Ursine was on her first voyage into Hull, having recently been chartered by P&O Ferries Holdings Ltd (P&O) to undertake a service between Hull and Rotterdam (Europort).

In accordance with the terms of the charter party agreement, P&O had placed its representative on board to perform the pilotage duties for both ports. He joined *Ursine* the evening before the accident, in Europort, but was not signed on the crew agreement.

In accordance with local regulations the P&O representative, who held a Pilotage Exemption Certificate (PEC) for the river Humber, was on *Ursine's* bridge with the vessel's bridge team when the vessel entered the river. As *Ursine* approached Hull, the PEC holder gave a briefing to the rest of the bridge team on the approach and entry into the lock for King George Dock.

The master, who was not experienced in handling ro-ro vessels, assumed that the PEC holder would be in control. However, the PEC holder, who was not an experienced ship handler, assumed that the master would take charge of the manoeuvre. Eventually, with both men involved in the ship handling, *Ursine* berthed in the lock.

In the lock, the PEC holder and the master, who had not been to Hull before, discussed the required approach for berthing at the P&O terminal. Again, there was no clarification as to who would be in control of the vessel. Once the lock had filled, *Ursine* proceeded stern first towards the berth, with both men handling the controls. From the conning position, on the port bridge wing, neither of them could see the P&O terminal.

In the absence of any formal berth allocation, the PEC holder directed *Ursine* towards the berth which he assumed had been allocated to the vessel. This berth, 5 Quay Middle, was adjacent to the one regularly used by *Pride of Bruges*. However, on this occasion, for operational reasons, *Pride of Bruges* had been berthed on 5 Quay Middle. In the confusing situation, during which key bridge team members found themselves undertaking tasks for which they were inadequately prepared, *Ursine* was manoeuvred stern first towards the berth already occupied by *Pride of Bruges* until contact was made between the two vessels.

A number of actions have been taken as a result of the accident. Additionally, a recommendation has been made to the BPA/UKMPG Marine/Pilotage Group to promulgate to Competent Harbour Authorities the importance of ensuring candidates for PECs are bona fide masters or first mates, and of carefully assessing a candidate's ship handling ability before a PEC is issued or vessels of particular types and sizes are added to existing certificates.