

SYNOPSIS



(All times are UTC +1)

At about 2137 on 3 September 2005, the emergency towing vessel (ETV) *Anglian Sovereign* ran aground on the small island of Bulta Skerry, 3 miles west of Scalloway, in the Shetland Islands. There were no injuries to the crew, but the vessel was severely damaged and about 84 tonnes of gas oil were lost into the environment.

On the day of the accident, the ETV had been tasked, in one of its secondary roles, to carry out hydrographic survey sea trials in an area between Scalloway and the island of Foula.

The trials finished at 2019, and the master, who was on watch, set course for the entrance to the South Channel for Scalloway harbour. After a short hiatus for a further trial, the master resumed a similar course, although as the final trial had displaced the ETV from its previous track, the vessel was now heading towards the small island of Oxna. It was dark, but there was no lookout posted, so the master was the lone watchkeeper on the bridge. Passing very close to Skelda Ness, the ETV maintained a steady course at 16 knots for 17 minutes until it grounded.

The master reported the grounding to Shetland Coastguard, and requested a rescue helicopter to evacuate all of his crew, who were mustering, in their survival suits and lifejackets, on the after working deck. There was little effort to assess the situation before deciding to evacuate the vessel. Unnoticed by the master, the ETV had floated off where it had grounded, and then drifted some distance before coming to rest in a cleft in one of the islands of the Cheynies.

By 2240, the mustered crew were evacuated by rescue helicopter, leaving the master alone on board. At this stage, the master decided to clutch in the main engines and drive the ETV out of the cleft into the open sea. By 2253, *Anglian Sovereign* was underway, listing about 15° to starboard, trimmed down by the head, and was leaking diesel oil. Subsequently the master momentarily ran aground on another island, before successfully reaching and berthing in Scalloway.

The police boarded the ETV shortly after arrival, and breathalysed the master. Finding him to be 3.4 times over the proscribed limit for alcohol, he was arrested and taken to Lerwick police station.

The following safety issues were identified:

- The master's alcohol consumption was the major causal factor of this accident.
- The master routinely consumed alcohol onboard, despite company policy.
- Other senior officers were aware that the master had been drinking, but took no action.
- The master was alone on watch on the bridge at night in contravention of STCW and MSN 1767.

- Proper navigational practices were not observed onboard.
- After the grounding, there was no effective command and control of the emergency situation onboard.
- Klyne Tugs's Safety Management System and auditing system had proved ineffective on alcohol and navigational practices.
- As charterers, the MCA had an inadequate regime for verification that the ETVs were being operated to an appropriate standard.

Recommendations have been made:

- To Klyne Tugs on its Safety Management System and auditing.
- To the MCA to establish an effective verification regime.

Photograph 1



Anglian Sovereign