

SYNOPSIS

On 1 October 2003, the Guernsey-registered fishing vessel *Chelaris J* was lost suddenly with her four crew while fishing on the Banc de la Schôle, a sandbank lying 6 miles to the south of Alderney.

The MAIB was asked by the States of Guernsey Board of Administration to conduct an investigation into the accident, in accordance with the MOU between it and the MAIB.

Chelaris J had left Cherbourg around midnight on 30 September 2003, fully fuelled and carrying ice. On board was the Guernsey skipper/owner and three French crew members. They headed for the Banc de la Schôle to fish in the area of the sandbank.

On arrival at the fishing grounds, the single trawl was shot away and they began fishing. About 4 hours later, the net was hauled on board and the catch stowed below in the fish hold. The fishing gear was shot away once again. Around that time, the wind was east-north-east force 6 and the tide was running north-east at about 3.5 knots. Not long before their second haul was due, *Chelaris J*'s EPIRB started to transmit at 1114 UTC.

St Peter Port Radio mounted a search and rescue operation, locating the EPIRB and debris, but no survivors. *Chelaris J*'s liferaft was recovered, inflated, the following morning. The wreck was located on the seabed, and divers retrieved the bodies of 2 crew members from the accommodation space.

Two video surveys were conducted of *Chelaris J* on the seabed, before she was raised for further examination and testing in Guernsey. She was raised because there were concerns about her condition, and in particular her stability, given her incomplete survey history at the time of her loss.

It was established that the vessel capsized while trawling. The MAIB has concluded that, given the weather at the time of the accident, a combination of the trawl gear becoming snagged in the sandbank, some water on deck, a little internal flooding and wave action caused *Chelaris J* to capsize.

Several safety issues have arisen as a result of this investigation. These included the hazards of snagging, in particular on the Banc de la Schôle, survey and safety approval, fishing vessel maintenance concerns and, finally, crew training and safety awareness issues.

Recommendations are made to the States of Guernsey Board of Administration on the introduction of fishing vessel codes of practice and guidance, the establishment of an effective regime for the survey of fishing vessels and the introduction of mandatory safety training for fishermen sailing on Guernsey registered fishing vessels. The MCA is also recommended to develop a stability awareness course as a matter of urgency.