

SYNOPSIS



Pride of Provence, a ro-ro passenger ferry with 641 persons on board, made heavy contact with the end of the southern breakwater at the eastern entrance to Dover Harbour on 18 April 2003 at 1724. It was daylight, the weather was good and the visibility clear. There was a strong north-easterly wind and a southerly flowing tidal stream across the entrance. Twenty-eight passengers and crew suffered minor injuries, and two suffered major injuries in the accident, and the vessel was extensively damaged above the waterline.

At the time of the accident, the ferry was approaching the port, having completed one of her regular cross-Channel passages from Calais. The vessel's master had the con and he was supported by a full team of officers and ratings. The master intended to turn his vessel as he passed between the breakwaters, and then to run down the inside of the eastern arm before swinging and securing stern-to on No 2 ro-ro berth. However, his heading at the end of his approach to the entrance, was such that, as he turned the vessel, her stern collided with the end of the southern breakwater. The sideways impact made furniture and fittings overturn, and it threw some passengers and crew to the deck. Their injuries were caused in falling or because of the movement of loose furniture or fittings.

The principal cause of the accident was poor communication and passage planning, and disorientation of the master. Although the master briefed his bridge team on his intended approach and pre-berthing manoeuvre, the briefing was rudimentary and did not give key team members the information they needed to monitor the approach. The master's approach was not planned in detail and was flawed: he did not show positive control of the navigation, and did not allow sufficiently for the effects of the tidal stream and wind.

As a result of their own internal investigations, both P&O Ferries and Dover Harbour Board have initiated actions to avoid similar accidents in the future. Recommendations arising from the MAIB investigation are aimed at improving the passage planning and communication on board P&O Ferries, and at improving port control procedures and infrastructure available to assist masters during the approach to the Port of Dover.