

SYNOPSIS



Shortly after starting a pleasure cruise on the River Avon in Bath, *Pride of Bath* suffered a galley fire, which required the evacuation of her passengers and crew.

The gas-fired barbecue in the galley, located at the forward end of the enclosed welldeck, was lit when the vessel left her berth at 1230 on 20 July 2002.

At about 1245, hot fat, from the greasy food, dripped on to the hot coals of the barbecue and ignited. Although the gas to the barbecue was turned off, the flames continued to flare up, and eventually reached the overhead extract filters. They were drawn through the filters by the extractor fan located further along the galley exhaust duct. The flames ignited residual grease in the ductwork.

The crew smothered the barbecue flames with damp tea towels, but attempts to extinguish the duct fire were unsuccessful. A considerable amount of smoke built up in the welldeck.

At about 1300, the vessel was brought alongside the riverbank, and the 52 passengers and eight crew evacuated without injury. The fire brigade was called. It extinguished the fire and ventilated the welldeck.

The welldeck of the vessel was extensively damaged, and required a complete refit. Fortunately, there was no structural damage.

The MAIB investigation found that the extract filters were cleaned daily. However, the twice yearly cleaning of the duct work was not enough to maintain the duct clear of grease, thus increasing the risk of a fire within it. The structural fire protection of the vessel was minimal, so smoke and flames were able to pass freely into the passenger accommodation from the galley. The material structure of the welldeck was composed largely of varnished wood, which probably assisted in the spread of flames.

Recognising the problem of barbecues on small passenger vessels, the MCA has issued a draft MGN, advising on the siting of barbecues and the safeguards necessary in case of fire. Subsequent to the accident, the MCA has issued another draft MGN advising crew training needs on domestic passenger vessels.

The owner has refitted the vessel with fire resistant materials, to limit the spread of smoke and flame through its interior, and is conducting a review of crew training.

Additionally, a recommendation has been made to the MCA to ensure that the public address system on board domestic passenger vessels satisfies the relevant requirements