

SYNOPSIS



On the evening of 29 May 2002, the Antigua and Barbuda registered general cargo vessel *Maria H* struck the railway bridge at Keadby on the river Trent.

The vessel had loaded steel pilings on Top Gunness berth, which is situated about 150m downriver of Keadby bridge. She was berthed port side alongside, facing upriver, which required her to turn off the berth before heading downriver towards the Humber and, eventually, the sea.

The vessel had a pilot on board and the last line was let go about 1½ hours before HW. The vessel was then swept on to the bridge under the influence of an approximate 3-knot spring flood tide.

The vessel suffered extensive damage to her wheelhouse, foremast and mainmast. The master was injured, suffering lacerations to his left leg. The railway bridge was only superficially damaged. No pollution occurred as a result of the accident.

The investigation found conflicting evidence regarding a number of issues.

The cause of the accident was control of the vessel being lost during the flood tide while close downriver of the Keadby railway bridge. Further contributing factors were identified which included:

- The decision to single up and move the vessel astern before turning around or leaving the berth.
- A manoeuvring plan apparently not being successfully communicated to, understood, and agreed by all parties.
- The long spring line forward being on the drum end of the forward winch and not made fast on bitts.
- The last remaining line being let go before the vessel had swung.
- The inexperience of both the master and the pilot in conducting unberthing operations on the Trent.
- The pilot being prepared to begin the singling-up operation, and possibly the swinging operation, sooner than the ideal time because of one or more of the following:
 - the falling water levels further downriver
 - the presence of an inbound vessel
 - the linesman being required by another vessel.