

SYNOPSIS



On 28 June 2001, the MAIB was notified of a near-miss incident involving the 3,957gt feeder container vessel *Mathilda*, and the 8.53m fishing vessel *Lady Hamilton of Helford*. The incident occurred 7 miles east-south-east of Lizard Point, Cornwall. An investigation began on 2 July 2001.

At 0430 on 28 June, *Lady Hamilton of Helford* left her moorings on the River Helford, bound for fishing grounds approximately 7 to 8 miles east-south-east of Lizard Point, Cornwall to haul her gill nets which had been shot on a previous day. She arrived there about 2 hours later and began hauling. She then steamed towards her third fleet south-east of Lizard Point, and began hauling it at about 0800.

Meanwhile, the container vessel *Mathilda* was on passage from Cork to Rotterdam, making one of her regular passages between Warrenpoint, Cork and Rotterdam. She was steaming at 15 knots and her course was 093°. She was being steered by auto-pilot.

At about 0810, *Lady Hamilton of Helford's* skipper detected *Mathilda* at an approximate distance of 5 miles. When that distance decreased to 1 to 1.5 miles, he interpreted that *Mathilda* was on a collision course and tried, unsuccessfully, to call her on VHF radio channel 16. When the distance between the vessels had decreased to less than 0.5 mile *Lady Hamilton of Helford's* crew stopped hauling.

Mathilda's master estimated he only saw *Lady Hamilton of Helford* at a distance of approximately 600 metres. This was due, in part, to the glare from the sun. At that time he assumed the two vessels would pass each other within a safe distance, so made no attempt to alter course, or reduce speed.

When *Lady Hamilton of Helford's* skipper interpreted that a collision was imminent, he instructed the gear to be cut and came hard to port and full ahead on the main engine.

Lady Hamilton of Helford passed *Mathilda's* starboard side at a distance of less than 30 metres at 0830.

The immediate cause of the near-miss incident, was *Mathilda's* master failing to maintain a proper lookout in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

Contributory causes were:

- *Mathilda's* master failing to make a full appraisal of the situation
- The lack of a second person on the bridge to act as a dedicated lookout
- The glare from the sun.

Mathilda's owner is recommended to employ an additional person to act as a dedicated lookout on the bridge, when the officer of the watch is unable to give his full attention to that duty. He is also recommended to equip his vessel with a means of reducing glare from the sun to those on the bridge.