

SYNOPSIS



At about 0700 (UTC) on 20 February 2001, the Liberian-registered container ship *P&O Nedlloyd Magellan* ran aground in the Western Approach Channel to Southampton Water. There was no damage to the ship, no pollution and no injuries to persons. Associated British Ports Southampton reported the accident to the MAIB that day.

P&O Nedlloyd Magellan was inbound from Rotterdam to berth 207 at Southampton Container Terminal. At 0530 the pilot boarded the ship at the Nab Tower pilot station. The pilot's and the master's passage plans were exchanged and the ship's pilot card was given to the pilot. The passage continued along the East Solent, during which time there were various VHF radio conversations between vessels and Southampton Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), about restricted visibility.

The VTS officer gave the pilot a countdown from 5 to 2 cables to the Gurnard buoy. This was given so that the pilot could judge the timing of the wheel-over manoeuvre for the 141° turn into the narrow Thorn Channel. The wheel-over occurred at about 0652 and the ship began to turn. At this time, the W Bramble and NE Gurnard buoys, which are at the entrance to Thorn Channel, could not be seen because of restricted visibility. Various helm and engine movements were made during the turn. However, when W Bramble and NE Gurnard buoys appeared, the pilot realised that the ship was in the wrong position for the heading she was on. Despite further helm and engine orders, the vessel grounded soon after, at 0700. It was not until about 0710 that the escort harbour launch informed VTS of the grounding.

With the assistance of two tugs, the ship was refloated near the time of high water, and she safely berthed at 1232.

The cause of the grounding was an error of judgment by the pilot during the execution of the turn into Thorn Channel. Contributing factors include restricted visibility, lack of full monitoring of the pilot by the bridge team, no warning of reduced visibility in the area of the turn, and the pilot erroneously reading the electronic bearing line on the radar.

Recommendations have been made to:

- Associated British Ports Southampton, with regard to monitoring areas of restricted visibility, implementing a dedicated VTS service for the turn, and modifying port passage guidance procedures;
- The ship's management company, regarding monitoring the standard of passage plans and navigational procedures on its ships and producing turning data for various conditions; and
- The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office, regarding radar reference lines.