

SYNOPSIS



On the morning of 9 February 2001, the MAIB was informed of a near miss in the Eastern Solent between the passenger ro-ro ferry *Pride of Cherbourg* and the cargo ship *Briarthorn*. The two vessels came within about 80 metres of each other in the vicinity of the Warner buoy, at 2040 UTC on 7 February 2001. An investigation started, with MAIB inspector Andrew Clifton appointed the lead inspector.

Pride of Cherbourg was bound for Portsmouth from Cherbourg with 56 crew and 185 passengers on board. *Briarthorn* had left Cowes with a crew of six, bound for the Netherlands in ballast, and had dropped the Cowes pilot in the vicinity of the North Sturbridge buoy.

The master and a lookout were on the bridge of *Briarthorn*. The master was not familiar with the Solent and had been half expecting the pilot to take his vessel out to the Nab Tower, and was a little surprised when he disembarked by the North Sturbridge buoy.

Pride of Cherbourg was slightly to the west of her intended track due to her having passed a vessel anchored in St Helen's Roads. She observed the crossing vessel, and attempted to communicate by VHF but was unable to because of a prolonged conversation on VHF channel 12 involving another vessel. Having correctly assessed that if both vessels maintained their respective course and speed, *Briarthorn* would pass ahead at about 5 cables with a CPA of between 1 and 2 cables, she then altered her course to port by 10°.

Shortly after this, having altered course 20° to starboard in accordance with the pilot's advice, *Briarthorn*, with the Warner buoy abeam, made a substantial alteration to starboard having misinterpreted the situation and not realising that *Pride of Cherbourg* was in the process of altering her course to port.

Pride of Cherbourg put her helm hard to starboard and went full astern on her two operational engines. The transverse thrust canted her bow to port, closer to *Briarthorn*. The diesel bow thruster was then started, on full to starboard, which prevented the bow swinging any further to port.

The initiating cause of the incident was poor watchkeeping on *Briarthorn* which resulted in an inaccurate and scanty means used to assess if risk of collision existed. Further contributory causes were also identified.

This report makes recommendations which, if implemented, will reduce the possibility of a recurrence of this incident.