

SYNOPSIS

At about 1912 (UTC) on 19 March 2000, the United Kingdom registered 4,015gt cargo ship *Celtic King* was in collision with the Belgian registered 38m fishing vessel *De Bounty*. The MAIB was informed of the accident at 2243 that day. Captain D Wheal and Captain P Kavanagh carried out the investigation.

Celtic King was on passage from Dublin to Le Havre with a cargo of containers. The chief officer was on the bridge. A lookout, who could be contacted at any time, was on stand-by below. The chief officer altered course at 1755 to 196° true to take the ship through The Smalls traffic separation scheme. The ship was making good a speed of 13.1 knots. The range of visibility was about 0.5 to 1 mile at that time. At about 1830, he observed a radar echo about 6 miles away on the starboard bow. The ARPA predicted that its CPA ahead was about 2 miles, the vessel was making good a course of about 110° and a speed of about 6 knots. At about 1902 the chief officer lost the echo in the sea clutter and used the manual clutter control to try and find it. He then saw a vessel on his starboard side at close range. The range of visibility had reduced such that he could not see the bow of his own ship. The bow of the other vessel collided with *Celtic King* and damaged the forward end of her accommodation superstructure.

De Bounty, a beam trawler, had shot her gear away at 1700; the mate relieved the skipper at about 1730 to take the navigational watch. The skipper went to his cabin, which was behind the wheelhouse, to read. The mate kept to the tracks which the skipper had entered into the electronic chart system. At first, the mate headed north, then turned the vessel and steered her in a generally southern direction. At about 1842 the echo of *Celtic King* appeared on *De Bounty*'s radar set on the 6-mile range scale. The mate knew that the echo was a ship heading towards *De Bounty* but he did not plot her movements. At about 1903, he turned the fishing vessel to port on to an easterly heading and made good a course of about 050°. At about 1907, he altered course to starboard and made good a course of about 072°. He then became concerned that a close quarters situation was developing, and made a sound signal on the whistle. This alerted the skipper, who entered the wheelhouse and saw an arced echo at close range. The skipper and the mate looked out of the wheelhouse windows and saw the starboard side of a ship at close range. The skipper put the engine astern but it was too late, and *De Bounty*'s bow collided with the ship. The fishing vessel sustained only minor damage.

The mate of *De Bounty* wrongly assumed that *Celtic King* was obliged to keep out of the way of his fishing vessel in restricted visibility, and kept to the planned track on the electronic chart system. The chief officer of *Celtic King* did not appreciate the changes in course made by *De Bounty* after the initial prediction made by the ARPA. Had he done so he might have taken suitable early and substantial action to avoid a close quarters situation.

The MAIB has no safety recommendations to make at this time.