

## SYNOPSIS

During the evening of 10 September 1999, the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) was informed that a steel fishing vessel had sunk 90 miles north-east of Fraserburgh earlier that day. An investigation began the following day, and on 15 September an inspector interviewed her crew in Peterhead.

*Jasper III*, a steel fishing vessel of 24m registered length, left Peterhead with her partner vessel *Crystal River* on a pair trawling trip at 0930 on 10 September 1999. The weather was southerly winds force 5/6 with a moderate sea running.

Part way through their first tow, at about 2000, the bilge alarm on *Jasper III* sounded. On investigation, the engine room was found flooded up to the propeller shaft. The bilge pumps were started and the driver searched for the source of the leak. The vessels began to haul the fishing gear.

The source of the leak could not be found and the rate of flooding exceeded the bilge pumps' capacity. Flooding spread aft into the accommodation, and forward into the fish hold. *Jasper III* cut her end of the fishing gear away and pulled clear of her partner vessel while she still had engine power. Shortly afterwards the main engine and auxiliaries stopped. A "Mayday" was sent at 2041 and the crew prepared to abandon ship.

At about 2100 the crew abandoned to the liferafts from where they were rescued by *Crystal River*. By 2130 all the crew had been safely recovered. At 2232, *Jasper III* sank. Her Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) did not surface and transmit.

The cause of the flooding was not found, but was probably the sudden failure of a pipe or small area of hull plating, weakened by advanced corrosion.

*Jasper III* did not meet the requirement of the Fishing Vessel (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975 for the engine room on a steel fishing vessel to be contained between watertight bulkheads. The flooding spread aft of the engine room because the aft bulkhead was penetrated by two open drain pipes from the accommodation. It is not known how the flooding spread forward, or if *Jasper III* would have survived had her engine room bulkheads been watertight. In any case, with non-watertight bulkheads, her chances of sinking would have been substantially increased.

One recommendation has been made to Caley Fisheries (Peterhead), agents of *Jasper III*, to circulate copies of this report to the owners and skippers of steel fishing vessels for which they are agents. One recommendation has been made to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), to review the existing procedures for the survey of steel fishing vessels.