

SYNOPSIS

The accident occurred during the afternoon of 31 August 1999, and the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) was informed late that evening. MAIB inspector Richard Barwick carried out the investigation.

Donna M was fishing for crabs and lobsters off the island of Sanday in Orkney. The weather was calm and the visibility good.

When she did not return to her home port when expected, a search was mounted. The next day the body of the skipper was discovered, but the body of the skipper's father, who was also on board, has not yet been found. On 2 September *Donna M* was located on the seabed.

The vessel had a low freeboard at the aft end when loaded and underway. There was a non-watertight access panel in the aft bulkhead with a low lip at the bottom. Water was getting on to the aft part of the open deck and over this lip into the bilges; initially the crew were unaware of this, because the creels were stowed at the aft end. Water taken on board in this way built up to a significant extent. The electric bilge pump failed and the hand bilge pump was inadequate to deal with a large quantity of floodwater. The engine-driven deck wash pump was being jury-rigged to evacuate the bilge water, when *Donna M* capsized.

The crew might have survived had they been wearing lifejackets, because the accident occurred only about a mile offshore. It is recommended that the compulsory wearing of lifejackets be discussed at the next Fishing Industry Safety Group (FISG) meeting.

It is also recommended that a representative from the vessel's insurers arranges for a competent naval architect to rectify *Donna M*'s deficiencies if she is put back into service.