

SYNOPSIS

(all times are BST)

Harwich Haven Authority notified the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) at 1125 on 17 July 1999, that a rod-fishing boat had reported having been swamped by a very large wave, with one person lost overboard, off Harwich earlier that day. After gaining further information an investigation began on 19 July, conducted by MAIB inspector, Captain Nick Beer.

Purdy, a 10m long, Aquabelle angling boat with the skipper and one guest on board, was preparing to anchor and begin fishing on a shallow sandbank off the East Anglian coast when *Stena Discovery* passed inbound for the port of Harwich. *Purdy*'s skipper turned his boat towards the wash from the high-speed ferry. The weather was fine with good visibility and a slight sea. As the first wash waves approached *Purdy* they appeared to grow in height to 4m and begin to break. The first wave crashed over *Purdy*'s bow swamping the vessel and washing the guest, who had been sitting on the engine casing aft, overboard.

The skipper threw a lifebuoy towards the man in the water and tried to manoeuvre the boat towards him. The man disappeared from view. Despite extensive searches carried out by the skipper and the rescue services, his body was not recovered until 12 days after the accident. He had been wearing heavy leather boots and no lifejacket.

An interim recommendation was addressed to both the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and Stena Line BV to carry out route assessment trials with respect to wash generation. Further recommendations are addressed to the MCA to ensure that all operators of high-speed craft undertake route assessment trials with respect to wash generation as a requirement for the issuance of a Permit to Operate. Guidance criteria should be developed on maximum permitted generated wave heights for measuring the efficacy of the route assessment results.