

## SYNOPSIS

On 15 October 1998 the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) was notified that the fishing vessel *Amber Rose* had foundered off the Isle of Man that day and one man had not survived.

The investigation started straight away but had to be suspended on several occasions while waiting the results of an underwater survey carried out by the vessel's insurers. This was hampered by adverse weather and tidal conditions. Further delays to progressing the investigation were due to the conflicting demands on MAIB inspectors who were conducting several investigations at once.

*Amber Rose* and *Quiet Waters III*, two Northern Irish fishing vessels, were operating as partner vessels in pair pelagic trawling. Both had been fishing for herring on 15 October 1998 on the grounds to the east of the Isle of Man. After catching a large haul, it was decided to load it aboard *Amber Rose*. She would then head for Ardglass to land.

While *Quiet Waters III* headed for Portavogie, *Amber Rose* remained on the fishing grounds to load the catch. Having filled her three refrigerated seawater (RSW) tanks to capacity she left the remaining herring outboard in the trawl. This was eventually dumped prior to her getting underway. With loading complete, *Amber Rose* headed for Ardglass and set course to pass to the south of the Isle of Man.

During the passage *Amber Rose* capsized and sank in a position 1½ miles south of the Calf of Man. Weather conditions at the time were moderate with a force 5 to 6 south-westerly wind and swell.

The capsize was seen by an eyewitness ashore who raised the alarm.

Liverpool Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre (MRSC) conducted a search and rescue operation during which five members of the crew who had escaped from the sinking vessel, were recovered. They were able to board an inflatable liferaft which had been automatically released when *Amber Rose* sank.

The skipper failed to survive the capsize and was trapped in the accommodation as the vessel sank. His body was recovered from the wreck four months later.

The most probable cause of the capsize and sinking of *Amber Rose* was undetected flooding of the forward spaces.

Contributory causes were: the failure of the bilge alarm in the RSW tank space, overloading of the vessel, the failure to have the vessel's stability re-calculated after substantial modifications and not having the vessel re-inclined after a refit in Buckie.

The investigation has resulted in three recommendations to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) covering: detention procedures, improving fishermen's awareness and understanding of stability, and the reliability and maintainability of bilge alarms.