

# Synopsis

This accident was notified to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) by Shetland Coastguard at 0951 on Wednesday 19 November 1997. The investigation was upgraded to an Inspector's Inquiry on 20 November and was undertaken by Captain D A Wheal and Mr A M Rushton with Mr J S Withington, Principal Inspector appointed as Inspector in Charge.

*Green Lily* was a Bahamian registered, 3,624 gross tonnage, single engine, refrigerated general cargo vessel, built in 1978 and lengthened in 1984. The vessel loaded frozen fish in Lerwick Harbour, Shetland Islands, and sailed for the Ivory Coast early on 18 November 1997. The weather on departure was south-east force 7, increasing to severe gale force 9, and eventually storm force 10. Early on the morning of 19 November and when only 15 miles south-east of Bressay, a sea water supply line fractured in the engine room. The flooding was controlled and pumping out had begun when the main engine stopped suddenly. Unsuccessful attempts were made to restart the engine while the vessel drifted north-west at about 1.5 – 2 knots before the weather. Shetland Coastguard was advised of the situation, and "Pan Pan" messages were transmitted followed by "Mayday Relay" broadcasts. Three tugs, the harbour tug *Tystie* and the anchor handling tugs *Gargano* and *Maersk Champion*, prepared to proceed to the scene of the casualty. *Maersk Champion* got underway once her deck cargo had been discharged. A Coastguard helicopter was tasked and the Lerwick RNLI lifeboat launched.

A tow by *Gargano* was initially successful but parted after about 51 minutes. An attempt by the Coastguard helicopter Lima Charlie (LC) to lift off non-essential crew was aborted due to vessel movement. *Tystie* then made a second tow connection but this failed after five minutes. *Green Lily's* starboard anchor was let go to slow the vessel's drift towards land. The lifeboat then approached and successfully rescued five crewmen before weather and sea conditions prevented further attempts. *Maersk Champion* snagged the starboard anchor of *Green Lily*, but as the tug pulled her head into the wind, the anchor cable parted. Meanwhile the Coastguard helicopter lifted off the ten remaining crew members with the master and second engineer being the last to leave. The helicopter winchman, who had remained on deck, was swept into the sea and lost. With *Green Lily* aground and starting to break up, the rescue attempt was suspended overnight and resumed the following day when the body of the winchman was found and recovered.

The vessel had undergone an extensive dry dock and repair period in May/June 1997. On departure from Lerwick she was seaworthy with no known deficiencies and was manned with appropriately qualified and experienced officers.

The cause of the grounding was the lack of propulsion and failure to restart the main engine to arrest the drift of the vessel towards the shore in the prevailing environmental conditions. Contributory causes included flooding of the engine room, failure to reset the mechanical over-speed trip, inadequate knowledge of the cooling water system, failure of towage attempts and inadequate teamwork.

Recommendations are aimed at improving operational teamwork and the probability of effecting a successful tow in similar circumstances.