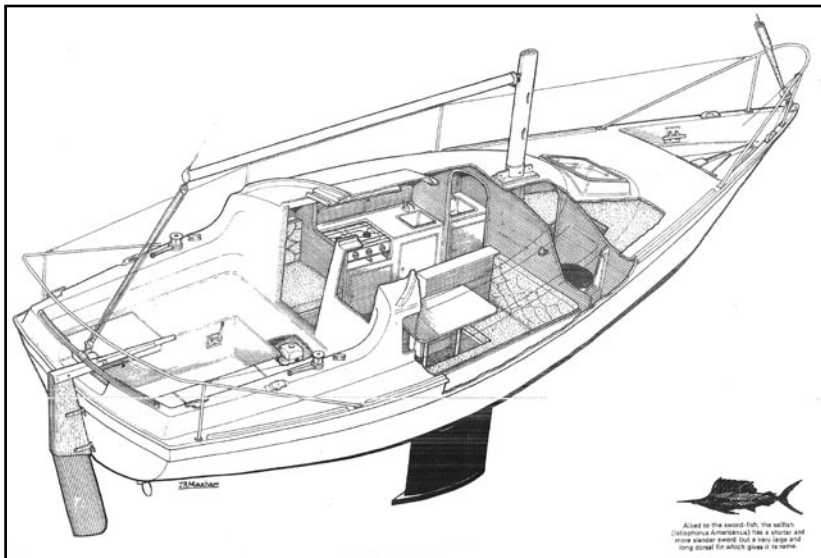


MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

FLYER TO THE MERCHANT SHIPPING INDUSTRY

OUZO: ACCIDENT WITH THREE FATALITIES 21 AUGUST 2006



Narrative

The yacht *Ouzo* sailed from Bembridge, Isle of Wight (IOW), bound for Dartmouth, Devon on the evening of 20 August 2006 with her three regular crew on board. The last record of the yacht was at 2230 when she went out of range of the Southampton/Portsmouth VTS radar system in Sandown Bay. At this time it is believed that the yacht was sailing close hauled in a south-south-westerly direction.

The body of one of the crew members was found in the sea just before midday on 22 August about 10 miles south of the

Nab Tower. At about 1900 on the following day, the bodies of the other two crew were recovered from the sea. They had all been wearing inflated lifejackets and good quality yachting clothing. Despite extensive surface and sub-surface searches no trace of the yacht has been found.

Voyage data recorder (VDR) records from ships that had been in the area during the night of 20/21 August were recovered and analysed by MAIB inspectors and it was discovered that the ferry *Pride of Bilbao* had been involved in an incident with a yacht 6 miles south of the Isle of Wight in the early hours of 21 August. The investigation concluded that she had either collided with, or passed so close to *Ouzo* at that time, and that the yacht had been swamped or capsized by the vessel's wash.



The watchkeeping officer and the lookout had seen the yacht at the last minute but had been unable to keep well clear. The sighting of a single red and then, possibly, a white light astern of the ferry after the incident was considered, by the watchkeeping officer, sufficient indication that the yacht was safe. The ferry continued to Bilbao without taking further action.

Safety Issues for merchant shipping

1. The lookout on the ferry had not seen the yacht until it was very close ahead. There are several possible reasons for this, including:
 - i. The lookout was wearing glasses with photochromic lenses. Research carried out for the investigation has concluded that his glasses stopped at least 20% of light and, furthermore, all photochromic lenses stop a significant proportion of light. **Photochromic lenses should not be worn by bridge lookouts at night.**
 - ii. On the morning of the incident, there was significant light pollution on the bridge of *Pride of Bilbao* due to poor blackout procedures. **For visual lookout to be effective, blackout curtains should be used to keep stray light to a minimum.**
 - iii. The lookout first saw the yacht when he had been on the bridge for 9 minutes. His eyes were still adapting to the dark at that time, and it is possible that he did not see the light earlier because of this. **Handovers of 15 minutes should be allowed for a lookout's eyes to become sufficiently adapted to the dark.**
2. The yacht had not shown up on the ferry's radars. Yachts of the size and construction of *Ouzo* have very poor radar reflectivity even with a radar reflector displayed. Radar reflectivity is reduced further in moderate or rough sea conditions. At least one of the ferry's radars was adjusted using automatic clutter control. **Radars should be routinely switched to manual clutter control to check for small targets.**
3. The ferry did not stop to assist, or attempt to communicate with the yacht after the incident. Although the officer had seen a light astern, this did not mean that the yacht was safe: in fact it is likely that her three crew were in the water and in dire need of help. The effect of a large fast ship passing close to a small boat can be extremely dangerous and, in these circumstances, **every effort should be made to ensure that the boat is safe before continuing the passage.**

A similar flyer has been produced for yachtsmen, identifying the safety issues pertinent to them.

Further details on the accident and the subsequent investigation can be found in the MAIB's investigation report, which is posted on its website: www.maib.gov.uk

Alternatively, a copy of the report will be sent on request, free of charge.

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