

MAIB

MARINE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION BRANCH

SAFETY FLYER

Ursine contact with *Pride of Bruges*

Image reproduced courtesy of Euroship Services Limited



Ursine

On 4 November 2007, *Ursine*, a 17,000gt, Belgian flagged, ro-ro vessel, was time chartered by P&O Ferries Holdings Limited (P&O) for service on the Rotterdam to Hull route. She arrived in Rotterdam on 8 November.

The terms of the charter party required the vessel to carry a charterer's representative to perform the pilotage duties, and a P&O officer, who held Pilotage Exemption Certificates (PECs) for both Rotterdam and the river Humber joined the vessel a few hours before she sailed from Rotterdam on 12 November.

He was not signed on the vessel's crew agreement, and did not hold a Belgian certificate of equivalent competency.

Ursine left Rotterdam in the late evening. The master, chief officer and PEC holder formed the bridge team for the departure, which went smoothly. The bridge team was relatively inexperienced, the master having joined a few weeks earlier, with no previous experience of ro-ro ferries. The chief officer was newly promoted and the PEC holder, although an experienced ro-ro officer, was not an experienced ship handler, having been promoted to the substantive rank of chief officer in October 2007.

At 1200 on 13 November, as *Ursine* entered the Humber pilotage district, the PEC holder took conduct of the vessel for the passage in the river towards Hull. At 1500, the vessel approached the King George Dock lock and the PEC holder gave the master and chief officer a brief on the tidal conditions and the manoeuvre required for entering the lock. The PEC holder assumed that the master would take charge of the manoeuvre. However, the master, who was not experienced in ship handling or on ro-ro vessels, assumed that the PEC holder would retain the conduct of the vessel. Eventually, with both men involved in the ship handling, *Ursine* berthed in the lock.

In the lock, the PEC holder and the master, who had not been to Hull before, discussed the required approach for berthing at the P&O terminal. Again, there was no clarification as to who would be in control of the vessel. Once the lock had filled, *Ursine* proceeded stern first towards the berth with both men handling the controls. From the conning position, on the port bridge wing, neither of them could see the P&O terminal.

A second officer was stationed aft and was reporting, via a radio to the chief officer, distances of the stern in relation to berths and other vessels inside the dock. As *Ursine* came close to the berth, which, due to the angle of approach was not visible from the port bridge wing control position, the second officer reported that the distance from *Pride of Bruges* was closing rapidly. Just before contact occurred, the PEC holder went to the starboard bridge wing and saw that *Pride of Bruges* was in fact already secured on the berth he had assumed *Ursine* would be using. Contact occurred, with both vessels suffering damage; fortunately, there were no injuries.



Ursine pulls clear of Pride of Bruges - just after contact

Lessons Learnt:

- When appointing a representative to a time chartered vessel to perform the duties of a pilotage exemption certificate holder the charterer should ensure that the representative is sufficiently trained and experienced for the task.
- When appointing senior officers to a vessel, the owner should ensure they have the necessary ship handling and bridge team management training and experience.
- The charter party terms allowed for the representative to perform pilotage duties as a PEC holder, but did not stipulate that the representative must be bona fide the master or first mate of the vessel in accordance with the requirements of the Pilotage Act 1987, Chapter 21, Section 8.
- The master and PEC holder did not carry out an effective briefing for the berthing operation, resulting in the chief and second officers not contributing fully to its successful completion.
- Had the passage been effectively planned from berth to berth, recognition of the bridge team's lack of relevant ship handling experience could have resulted in a local pilot being employed for the arrival.
- The berth allocation process for the P&O terminal was ineffective; the PEC holder was relying on his previous experience of where *Pride of Bruges* normally berthed in assuming which berth *Ursine* would use.
- When issuing a PEC, Competent Harbour Authorities should ensure, through an appropriate assessment, that the candidate possesses the necessary ship handling skills for the vessel in accordance with the Guide to Good Practice on Port Marine Operations.
- When evaluating the suitability of a vessel for time charters, the charterer should consider the training and experience of the vessel's key personnel, taking into account the customs and requirements of the trade concerned.

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.

Marine Accident Investigation Branch
Carlton House
Carlton Place
Southampton, SO15 2DZ
Telephone 023 8039 5500
Email: maib@dft.gsi.gov.uk