

1. SUMMARY

On 7 August 1992, QUEEN ELIZABETH 2, a United Kingdom registered passenger vessel with 1824 passengers and 1003 crew members on board, grounded on uncharted and previously unsurveyed rocks located to the south of Cuttyhunk Island, USA.

The vessel was on passage from Martha's Vineyard to New York and was proceeding under pilotage. The weather was fine with light winds. There was no sea or swell and visibility was good.

Following the grounding, key members of the ship's complement acted swiftly in assessing the extent of damage and steps were satisfactorily taken to monitor and limit ingress of water. Appropriate use was made of designated damage control equipment provided on board the vessel, and there was no resultant oil pollution of any significance.

Damage was largely confined to the forward half of the vessel and was concentrated in the areas of the keel and associated bottom plating. Ingress of water to the vessel was contained within deep and double-bottom tanks and caused no adverse effect on stability.

There were no injuries. Passengers were kept informed of the prevailing situation following the grounding until they were successfully disembarked from the vessel.

The immediate causes of the grounding were that the depth of water was significantly less than that shown on the chart; and that the height of tide had been over-estimated and the effect of squat was substantially greater than had been allowed for. Contributory factors included high speed and failure to heed fully the guidance provided in Merchant Shipping Notice No M.854 with respect to the planning and conduct of passages.

Cautionary advice is published as to the degree of reliability which ought to be placed on charts; but a crucial factor is the age and nature of the survey on which the chart is based, and this information is not provided on the charts which were in use. Some advice is published on squat but its scope is at present very limited. It is recommended that the responsible authorities should seek to remedy both these deficiencies.

To conform with the usage adopted in evidence and documents put before the Inspector and referred to in this Report, it variously quotes feet, metres and fathoms:

1 metre = 3.28 feet 1 fathom = 6 feet

Times in this Report are Eastern Daylight Saving Time (GMT -4) except where otherwise stated.