

SYNOPSIS (Return to Index)



On Sunday 29 October 2000, the MAIB was informed of a fatal man overboard accident from the Stena Line ferry *Koningin Beatrix* in the Irish Sea. The investigation was originally an administrative enquiry and was upgraded to a full investigation on 27 November. MAIB inspector Andrew Clifton led the investigation and visited the vessel on 5 December, assisted by two other inspectors.

Koningin Beatrix departed from Rosslare at 1040 UTC on 29 October 2000 bound for Fishguard. She was carrying 1092 passengers and 105 crew. The weather was south-westerly force 7 to 8 with wave heights of around 4 metres. A south-westerly swell was causing wave heights of about 1.5 metres.

At 1145, the bridge was informed that three passengers had seen a man in the water. The vessel was turned and, with another nearby vessel, started a search and rescue operation. The master considered the weather too rough to safely lower a rescue boat. The man was sighted several times, and between 1230 and 1238 was reportedly very close to the vessel's starboard side.

At 1238, he passed around the vessel's bow and was then seen floating face down. At around 1300 he was picked up by an Irish coastguard helicopter and taken to Wexford hospital. He was declared dead at 1605.

The victim had fallen overboard from *Koningin Beatrix*. However, as there were no witnesses, it is not known if he fell accidentally or intentionally.

The investigation into the rescue attempt concluded that the master was justified in not lowering a rescue boat in the prevailing weather conditions. However there was no clear plan once the decision was made not to lower a rescue boat, and there were no detailed company procedures to cover this circumstance.

Recommendations are addressed to Stena Line concerning company procedures, bridge wing lifebuoy release arrangements, bridge resource management training for deck officers, risk assessment in respect of rescue boat unavailability and passenger access to the outside decks in adverse weather.