

1. SUMMARY

On 13 June 1989, the motor fishing trawlers MAJESTIC and MYSTIC were pair trawling in a position approximately 30 miles west south west of Sumburgh. This involved towing one net abaft the two boats when they were about a quarter of a mile apart. The trawl gear became fast on the sea bed, which is not uncommon for this type of operation, and the Skippers of the two boats after trying unsuccessful manoeuvres to set it free decided to heave it in. During the process of heaving on its trawl wire, MAJESTIC took on a starboard heel and capsized shortly afterwards. The boat was manned by a Skipper and six other crew members, five of whom were drowned as a result of the accident.

Following the capsize MYSTIC immediately cut its trawl wire and went to assist the people in the water. The Skipper and one of the crew members from MAJESTIC were rescued from the water by the crew of MYSTIC. The body of one of the drowned crew members was later recovered from the water by another boat. The four remaining bodies have not been recovered.

MAJESTIC was fitted with an enclosed shelter space which extended over most of the vessel's length. The shelter space's watertight integrity was dependent on two doors at the aft end and various other openings being closed using the fittings provided; with the boat totally closed she met the statutory stability requirements.

A Department of Transport approved stability information booklet, for the reference of the Skipper and crew, was carried on board.

The heaving in operation, attempted after the fishing gear had fastened/ snagged on an unknown object on the seabed, led to the accident. This operation was carried out with the shelter space closure fittings in the open position. The Skipper, who was in the wheelhouse, stopped the winch but, the control system did not allow him to reverse it. He ordered the winchman in the shelter space to slack off but for reasons unknown the tension in the heaving wire was not released and the boat capsized.

A number of recommendations have been made which, if followed, should not only reduce the probability of a similar accident occurring but should also improve safety of life at sea for fishermen.

All times in the Report are local time.