

SYNOPSIS



On 20 June 2001, the 8,904gt Greek-registered ro-ro cargo vessel *Thelisis*, collided with the 14.02m UK-registered fishing vessel *Our Sarah Jayne* in the Thames Estuary. The accident was reported to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) that day, and an investigation began immediately.

At the time of the collision *Thelisis* was under pilotage and *Our Sarah Jayne* was engaged in fishing.

As a result of the collision, *Our Sarah Jayne* flooded then foundered. The skipper, who was operating his vessel single-handedly, was rescued by a Thames pilot cutter. There were no injuries. *Thelisis* sustained slight damage to her hull plating.

The cause of the accident was the failure by the pilot on board *Thelisis* to take avoiding action in sufficient time, and the failure of the skipper on board *Our Sarah Jayne* to keep a proper lookout in accordance with the *Collision Regulations*.

Contributing factors were:

- The pilot's reliance on the use of VHF radio for collision avoidance.
- The pilot's complacency and expectation that *Our Sarah Jayne* would alter course on his request.
- The master of *Thelisis* failing to override the pilot's instructions.
- The decision by *Our Sarah Jayne*'s skipper to sail single-handedly, thereby denying himself the ability to keep a safe navigational watch.

Recommendations have been addressed to the PLA, the owner of *Thelisis* and also to *Our Sarah Jayne*'s skipper and owner, which if implemented should reduce the risk of such an accident recurring.