

SYNOPSIS

Sea Containers Services Ltd notified this accident which caused heavy weather damage to the hovercraft *The Princess Anne* to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) on Tuesday 29 February 2000. MCA supplied additional information on Monday 6 March and an investigation began later that day.

After studying the weather forecast and local conditions, *The Princess Anne*'s captain took her into service at 0730 on 29 February. The wind and wave heights were within the designated operational limits. The hovercraft left Dover at 0740 and arrived in Calais at 0825.

At 0850 *The Princess Anne* left Calais for Dover, the wind on departure was south-west 25 knots. On receiving information that local wind speeds had increased to 42 knots, the captain decided that this would be the last trip until the weather improved. He informed Dover Base One of his decision and, after confirming that conditions were still within operational limits, continued to Dover.

About 30 minutes later, when in mid-channel, the hovercraft dropped into a wave trough, resulting in a minor impact on the port forward side of the craft. The starboard bow sustained damage in the vicinity of the first three windows and above.

Apart from one person suffering from shock and wet clothing, there were no injuries. There was no reported damage to the vehicles.

The captain immediately turned the craft to starboard and returned to Calais.

On arrival in Calais, the passengers and their vehicles were off-loaded and an inspection of the damage carried out. The damaged area was covered and the hovercraft returned to Dover at 0605 the next day for repairs. These were largely completed by 10 March when the craft resumed service.