

FLYER TO FISHING VESSELS

Capsize and sinking of the fishing vessel *Ocean Way* with the loss of three lives, 2 November 2014



Image courtesy of SY. Photos and Trawler Photos

Figure 1: Fishing vessel *Ocean Way*

Narrative

At 1058 on 2 November 2014, the 17m, twin rig fishing vessel *Ocean Way* (**Figure 1**) capsized and subsequently sank about 100 miles off the north-east coast of England while on passage to its fishing grounds. Two of the crew were rescued about 3 hours later when the body of the skipper was also recovered; the other two crew have not been found.

Ocean Way had left North Shields the previous evening and was heading north-easterly towards the Gut fishing grounds, about 120 miles offshore. The wind was south-south-west Force 6 with a heavy southerly swell and very rough sea.

At about 1056 the skipper, who was in the wheelhouse, shouted down to the four crewmen in the cabin to get out, as the vessel was going down. Two of the crew, wearing tee shirts and shorts, managed to climb up and out of the accommodation and over the rails as the vessel capsized. The men then managed to climb onto the upturned hull from where they saw the skipper and another crewman, unresponsive, in the water.

At 1058 a signal from the vessel's EPIRB was received at the UK's search and rescue satellite receiving centre and this information was passed to the MCA at 1101. The EPIRB was not fitted with integral Global Navigation Satellite System and so the signal identified the vessel, but not its position. A number of satellite passes were necessary before the EPIRB's position could be confirmed, which took about 50 minutes.

The two crewmen remained on the upturned hull for about 30 minutes until the vessel sank under them. Two lifebuoys floated to the surface and the men used these to keep themselves afloat.

The coastguard issued a “Mayday Relay” broadcast for the vessel and, once they had an accurate position about an hour after the accident, tasked a rescue helicopter. This helicopter arrived at the scene about 3 hours after the capsizing.

Wreck survey

An underwater ROV survey of the wreck found the vessel upright and intact with no visible signs of damage. The rudder was hard to port. Some of the freeing ports were found jammed, and others had been reduced in size. The shelter deck behind the wheelhouse opened on to the aft deck and was not weathertight.

Ocean Way's two liferafts had not floated to the surface after the accident. The ROV survey found that the hydrostatic releases on both liferaft canisters had activated correctly, but their painters led into the accommodation. It was concluded that once out of their cradles the liferaft canisters had floated into the inverted vessel's shelter deck area, where they had become trapped.

Analysis

It is probable that *Ocean Way* broached and capsized in high following seas. The vessel's stability, which would have been reduced while surf riding, was probably further reduced due to entrapped water on deck as, unlike its sister vessels, its shelter deck area was not weathertight. It was calculated that with around 6 tonnes of water on deck (about a foot of water), the vessel would have become unstable.

Ocean Way was 40 years old and was well regarded for its seakeeping qualities, yet its survey records showed a history of marginal stability compliance. No inclining test had been carried out since 2004.

Safety Lessons

- If *Ocean Way*'s EPIRB had been fitted with an integral GNSS receiver the rescue services would have arrived sooner.
- The water trapped on deck had an adverse effect on stability. Had the freeing ports been of the correct size and functioning this water would have been able to drain more quickly. Further, the amount of trapped water could have been significantly reduced had the shelter deck been made weathertight.
- Quartering seas create a broaching risk for well-found vessels, and can be exceptionally hazardous to vessels with marginal stability.

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