

## Report from the Division for Investigation of Maritime Accidents

# The grounding of **KARIN SCHEPERS** on 22 March 2009

### Factual information

*In the report all times indicated are local times (UTC +1)*

KARIN SCHEPERS, IMO No. 9494077, is a 7,852 GT, 9,340 DWT Container Ship with a length of 140.64 m. It is built in 2007, registered in Antigua & Barbuda and classed in Germanischer Lloyd.

KARIN SCHEPERS had a crew of 12. Amongst these a master, a chief officer, a 2<sup>nd</sup> officer, 3 able bodied seamen and 2 ordinary seamen.

KARIN SCHEPERS departed Helsinki, Finland, on 20 March at 1730. The ship was bound for Teesport, England with a cargo of containers.

On 22 March at 0935 KARIN SCHEPERS grounded in position 55°39'44 N - 012°42'15 E, 0.9 nm north of Drogden dredged channel in the Sound. The speed when the ship grounded was 12 knots. The draft was 6.40 m fore and 6.60 m aft before the grounding. After the grounding the draft fore was reduced by 1.90 m and the draft aft was increased by 0.80 m.



Karin Schepers grounded in the Sound

Photo: The Royal Danish Navy

At highest water in the morning of 23 March at 0820 the ship was refloated by help of a tug and towed into Port of Copenhagen.

A diver's survey unveiled impressions in the bottom and hull. The ship was by Germanischer Lloyd granted one month sailing permit within further inspection of the ships bottom was to take place.

## **Narrative**

*The following section is based on the investigation on board KARIN SCHEPERS by the Investigation Division on 23 February and on interviews with the master, chief officer and 2<sup>nd</sup> officer. The interviews were carried out by the Danish Police with participation of a special adviser from the Investigation Division. In addition to this information from a Danish Police is used.*

At the time of the grounding the wind came from a north-westerly direction with a speed of approximately 6 m/s. The current was south-going, speed approximately 1 knot. There were no waves of importance and the visibility was good.

When at sea the master, the chief officer and the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer shared the watches as OOW. In port the watches were shared by the chief officer and 2<sup>nd</sup> officer.

During the interviews with the master, the chief officer and information given by a Danish pilot some discrepancies between the statements were obvious. For this reason the statements are referred to separately.

### **The master**

The master explained that he at 1000 was awakened by telephone by the chief officer who asked him to come to the bridge. When he arrived at the bridge he realized, that the ship was aground. He should have been called by the chief officer at 0750 to take over the watch. He did not know the reason why he was not called.

Arriving at the bridge he found the chief officer, a Danish pilot, an officer from the Royal Danish Navy and a third person he did not know. According to the pilot only he and the chief officer was on the bridge, when the master arrived. Personnel from the Royal Danish Navy first arrived 10-15 minutes later.

He was informed by the chief officer the he had notified VTS Sound at 0900 as planned.

He discovered that the propeller was turning and that the propeller pitch was set to zero. He tried to manoeuvre the ship off the ground by help of the thrusters. As he did not succeed in doing this, he stopped the main engine.

The master had no recollection whether the Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System had ever been switched on.

Neither helmsman nor lookout had been on the bridge during the passage of Bay of Botany and Danish Waters.

The lack of lookout was explained by the master as a result of lack of resources amongst the ratings because they had to work many hours during the frequent calls at ports.

### **The chief officer**

The chief officer had signed on KARIN SCHEPERS 13 March 2009 and had experience as watch keeping officer for 4 years. It was his first signing on as chief officer. In the evening of the 21 March he had consumed some alcohol in his cabin. He went to sleep at midnight.

He had been called as usual at 0350 by the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer and a normal change of watch had taken place. This is confirmed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer. He felt tired as he had worked many hours in Helsinki where he shared the watch with the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer. The workload in port was usually massive.

He explained that he had not called for the master at 0750 as normal. He did not arouse him until at 1000 after the grounding. Between 0800 and 1000 he had not spoken to anybody. In the same period of time he had heard no radio communication. When the pilot arrived on the bridge he found the VHF fully operational and set to a suitable loudness.

He first realized that the ship was aground when a man he did not know came on the bridge. He admitted to have been sleeping, but stated that he was awake until the ship had passed Drogden dredged channel. He felt sure that he was awake until approximately 0930.

For the 10 days he had been on board the Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System had never been switched on.



The BNWAS as found in position off.

### **The Danish pilot**

The Danish pilot was piloting a southbound ship in the Sound when he by ECDIS became aware of KARIN SCHEPERS because the ship could cause him trouble when passing the narrow waters at Drogden Lighthouse. In lack of an expected manoeuvre from KARIN SCHEPERS he called the ship by VHF on channel 16 and 71.

The calls were not answered and he agreed with VTS-Sound to send the pilot boat Jupiter off to KARIN SCHEPERS to attract attention. The attempt to attract attention was done by blasting the whistle.

As no reaction or sign of life was seen on board KARIN SCHEPERS the pilot boat fetched the pilot and they closed in on KARIN SCHEPERS once again trying to attract attention blasting the whistle almost continuously. Still no reaction from KARIN SCHEPERS was noticed.

When the ship had grounded the pilot observed, that the propellers still were turning. From Admiral Danish Fleet the pilot was granted permission to board the ship. On his way to the bridge, he observed several crewmembers looking out of their cabins with the doors ajar.

When entering the bridge he found the chief officer asleep in the chair in front of the radar and ECDIS. The sea chart on the chart table was covering an area from Bornholm to Falsterbo TSS and not the area where the ship grounded. The ECDIS was showing an area east of Falsterbo and not the Sound.

Slowly the chief officer woke up. He seemed to be tired and intoxicated. The pilot changed the propeller pitch to zero and asked the chief officer to find the master and sound the general alarm. The chief officer refused to sound the general alarm. Therefore the pilot activated either the general alarm or the boat roll. As nothing happened for some minutes the pilot went downstairs to find the master, and meet him coming up the stairs. The master seemed tired and apathetic. When told the ship was aground the master denied this. The pilot observed that the master in vain tried to manoeuvre his ship off the ground by repeatedly going forward and astern using the manoeuvring handle to the propeller.

After boarding of personnel from the Royal Danish Navy the pilot left KARIN SCHEPERS.

## Analysis and conclusion

The passage planning was found to be conducted in a satisfactory manner.

The last manoeuvre of the ship was at 0801 where the course was changed to 004° in the traffic separation scheme at Falsterbo. Several changes of course was planned to take place between 0801 and the time of the grounding at 0935.

When changing the watch it is the custom that the officer leaving the watch rouses the officer to go on watch 10 minutes prior to the watch. The chief officer had not aroused the master prior to his watch at 0800.



Figure showing the track over the ground



Photograph of KARIN SCHEPERS sea chart showing the planned track (blue line) and the track over ground (red line)

First in the afternoon 22 March blood samples was taken to test the content of alcohol in the blood of the master and chief officer.

The analysis result regarding the master showed a blood alcohol content of 1,765 per thousand with a minimum value of 1,67 per thousand ethanol.

The analysis result regarding the chief officer showed a blood alcohol content of 1,286 per thousand with a minimum value of 1,19 per thousand ethanol.

The rest hour forms had no entries since 18 March 2009, making it impossible to analyze possible fatigue of the crewmembers prior to the grounding. Statements from the master and the chief officer contain evidence of extensive workload for the chief officer and 2<sup>nd</sup> officer as well as the ratings due to numerous calls of ports.

According to the master the workload on the ratings was the reason why designated lookout on the bridge was not kept.

The chief officer claims to have called VTS-Sound when passing the southern reporting line. VTS-Sound has no record of KARIN SCHEPERS making a call when passing this reporting line.

Various attempts were made to contact and attract attention to the ship during its passage from the traffic separation scheme at Falsterbo and going north in the Sound.

Time	Event
0722	Southern reporting line in VTS-Sound was passed.
0801	Last change of course.
0853	VTS-Sound was calling constantly by VHF on channels 16 and 71 as it was obvious that the ship was following a wrong track.
0902	Pilot boat JUPITER tried to contact the ship by VHF channel 16 and 71 and by blasting the whistle. It circled around the ship while it tried to make contact. Shortly after the pilot boat approached the aft ship blasting the whistle almost continuously.
0903	Lyngby Radio tried by all means to make contact. – The attempts was ongoing until the grounding. No response was heard.
0933	A rescue helicopter from the Royal Danish Air Force arrived.
0934	From the helicopter it was observed that a person was sleeping on the bridge. No one else was to be seen.
0935	The helicopter observed that the ship was aground.
0940	A Danish pilot boarded the ship.

It is remarkable that the watch keeping AB or other crewmembers did not react to the turmoil around the ship and notified the master or watch keeping officer before the ship grounded. There seems to be lack of communication and co-operation on board.

The grounding of KARIN SCHEPERS was caused by the following:

- The chief officer was incapacitated due to intoxication.
- The chief officer fell asleep during his watch.
- There was no look out on the bridge.
- The Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System was off.
- No crewmembers reacted on the various attempts to draw attention to the dangerous path the ship was taking.

## **Recommendations**

- The shipping company is recommended to find ways to ensure that the Drug & Alcohol Policy (*Marlow Navigation Co. Ltd Drug and Alcohol policy*) is complied with.
- The shipping company is recommended to introduce procedures ensuring that watch keeping on the bridge always is optimal in the prevailing circumstances and conditions including the use of lookout and Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System.
- The shipping company is recommended to promote safety management on board their ships by enhancing communication in order to make crewmembers think pro-actively and react in unusual situations.

24 June 2009