



Incident: Merrilyn Grounding

Location: Bramble Bank

Date: September 2022

Summary of the incident:

Merrilyn was under sail at 3-4 knots, on a course of 160, tacking down the Thorn Channel. The tide was rising with approx. 2 hours until HW. The reasonably experienced (adult) crew member on the helm noticed a rapid drop in depth. He called the skipper who then realised they were approaching the Bramble Bank. Helm was turned to starboard, towards clear, deeper water. The vessel gently slowed and then stopped. Depth was reading 2.2 meters. Engine was started to slowly back the vessel off the bank, but the flood tide was pushing the vessel in a NE direction further along the bank. The vessel was turned into the tide, with the plan to stem the tidal flow so as not to be pushed further east along the bank as the tide rose. Sails were dropped as the wind was westerly and there was a concern that the vessel could be blown further along the bank. The tide then took the bows until vessel was facing North. Vessel slowly moved North with medium revs and the Mate had managed to motor clear into free and deep water. Steering gear and bilges were checked and there was no evidence of any damage or leaks. VTS were informed on CH12. Tide rose and the vessel floated off.

What lead to the incident?

Confusion over who had the deck.

The mate had the deck and the skipper was down below. The skipper then came back up and was engaging with the crew. The mate then thought the skipper had the deck and stood himself down. This resulted in the neither having the deck and no one was directing the helm.

Was it avoidable?

Yes

Key lessons learned:

It should always be clear who has the deck when underway.

Key recommendations:

The handover of deck responsibilities needs to be clear and those on deck should check in with each other for clarification.

Follow up actions:

Reported and discussed with MAIB – no further action.

Procedures for command of vessel and deck reiterated in skipper's briefing.