

Report on the Investigation of
the alleged marine incident at

LA VALETTE BATHING POOLS, HAVELET BAY

On 08 July 2017



Introduction

At 1815 local time on Saturday 8th July 2017, the Guernsey Police were directed by the Joint Emergency Services Control Centre (JESCC) to attend the La Valette Valette Bathing Pools, Havelet Bay, St Peter Port due to reports of individuals being hurt by crashing waves. Medical assistance had already been dispatched by the JESCC and was on route.

Guernsey Police reported that on arrival, the area was very busy and it was established that a lot of young people were present. A lot of the young people were not accompanied by an adult but various adults were in the area.

It was alleged that the high speed craft CONDOR LIBERATION had caused a swell, which, due to the height of tide washed into the pools. Individuals swimming in the pools were not able to get out quick enough and were caused to be knocked into the walls of the pool. The main injuries were abrasions to the skin and people ingesting sea water. There was also a case of an anxiety attack and the effects of the cold. Police assisted paramedics in treatment and also made efforts to contact parents. Although not entirely clear, it is reported that approximately six persons were injured.

Four ambulances attended and conveyed people to A&E for treatment. Parents were called and attended hospital with their children or picked them up from the area.

Under the requirements of The Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Regulations, 2009, the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents (CIMA) deemed it necessary and appropriate for an investigation, particularly as it was alleged that vessels may have contributed to the incident.

The investigation was conducted by the Guernsey Harbour Master.

Background

La Valette Pools are salt water bathing pools built onto rocks at Havelet Bay. The bathing pools at La Valette, were built from 1844 to compensate for the loss of beaches caused by the expansion of St Peter Port harbour.

Originally the four pools were for men, women and children separately, although now they are more commonly known as the Children's, Ladies', Gents' and Horseshoe pools.

The Children's and 'Ladies' pools are divided by a "gulley". There is another pool further to the north in Havelet bay which was not relevant to this incident.

The water in the pool comes directly from the sea at high tide. The height of the walls allow a certain amount of water to remain in the pool as the tide lowers. The Pools cover with a height of tide of between 7m and 8m.

The pools are an area under the control of Agriculture, Countryside and Land Management Services (ACLMS). There have been a number of incidents over the past where wash has caused concern which typically has coincided with the passing of high speed craft.

The Children's and Ladies' pools at La Valette are approached from a single pathway. ACLMS has previously installed warning signage which has to be passed to access the Pools. There is also other warning signage posted adjacent to the changing rooms.



Figure 1. Warning signage at the approach to the Pools

Wash/wake Risk assessments for Condor High Speed Craft had identified the pools as a potential location of concern and procedures had been identified and discussed with successive Guernsey Harbourmasters to mitigate the risk. Extensive procedures have been developed by Condor over many years and are continuously monitored and reviewed over the last 15 years.

The weather conditions at the time, as recorded by Guernsey Port Control were fine and clear with light and variable winds.

Being a Saturday with favourable weather and tidal conditions, there was a high volume of leisure craft activity in the vicinity, as well as regular commercial operations.

The cruise ship ADONIA was also departing the anchorage during the period under investigation.

Details of Investigation

Throughout the day the weather conditions were benign with light winds and negligible wind generated waves.

Low Water was predicted for 1313 local, 2.3m

High water was predicted for 1913 local, 8.5m

The height of tide at 1817 local time was recorded to be 7.9m.

It was alleged by users of the pools that the wash encountered was caused by CONDOR LIBERATION, which passed the pools inbound from the south shortly before. The Guernsey Harbour Master therefore requested a report from Condor during the morning of 9th July 2017.

Following review of the preliminary report, the Harbour Master requested the opportunity to review the Voyage Data Recorder (VDR). A representative from Condor attended the Harbour Offices on 21st July 2017 with the VDR and the full approach of CONDOR LIBERATION was reviewed.

The radar capture at figure 2 (at 1802 local time) indicates a high volume of movements in the Little Russel. All moving contacts have a blue trail astern of the yellow contact. Other significant vessels and objects have been labelled.

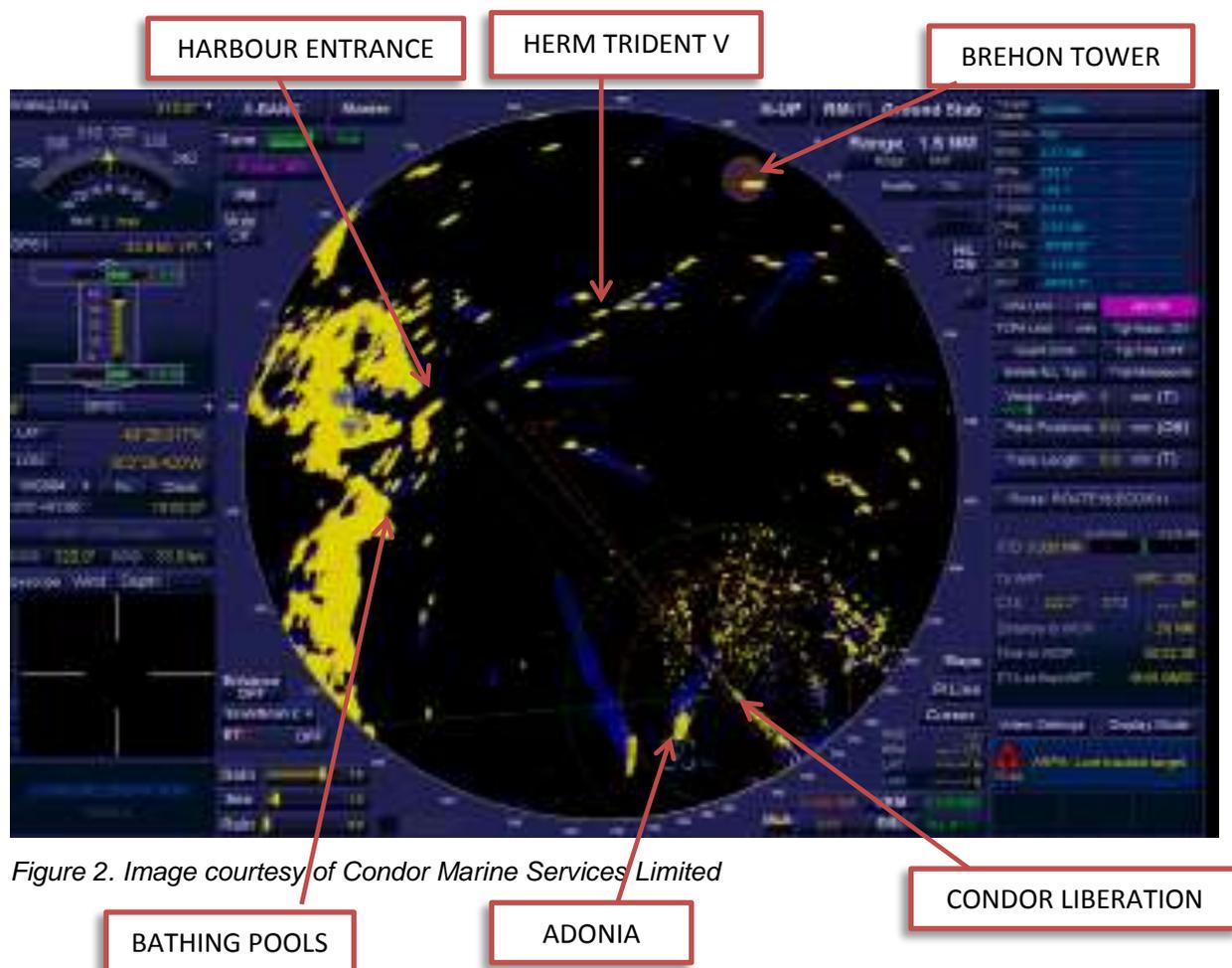


Figure 2. Image courtesy of Condor Marine Services Limited

The radar capture at figure 3 was taken at 1808. It shows HERM TRIDENT V approaching the harbour entrance from the north, and CONDOR LIBERATION making her final approach. In addition, an unknown leisure craft is seen approaching Havelet Bay at speed. Eye witness reports describe the leisure craft to be a large motor yacht which entered Havelet Bay at speed and carried out laps within Havelet Bay before leaving again to the east.

Whilst reviewing the VDR, it was noted that CONDOR LIBERATION made an alteration to port once past ADONIA to a heading of 315T, in order to regain the navigational track. Company guidance issued to all Masters specifically advises that when approaching from the south during the approach phase, the course of vessel should not be less than 325T and no attempt should be made to regain track if forced to starboard of track until wash has dissipated on a heading between 010-025T.

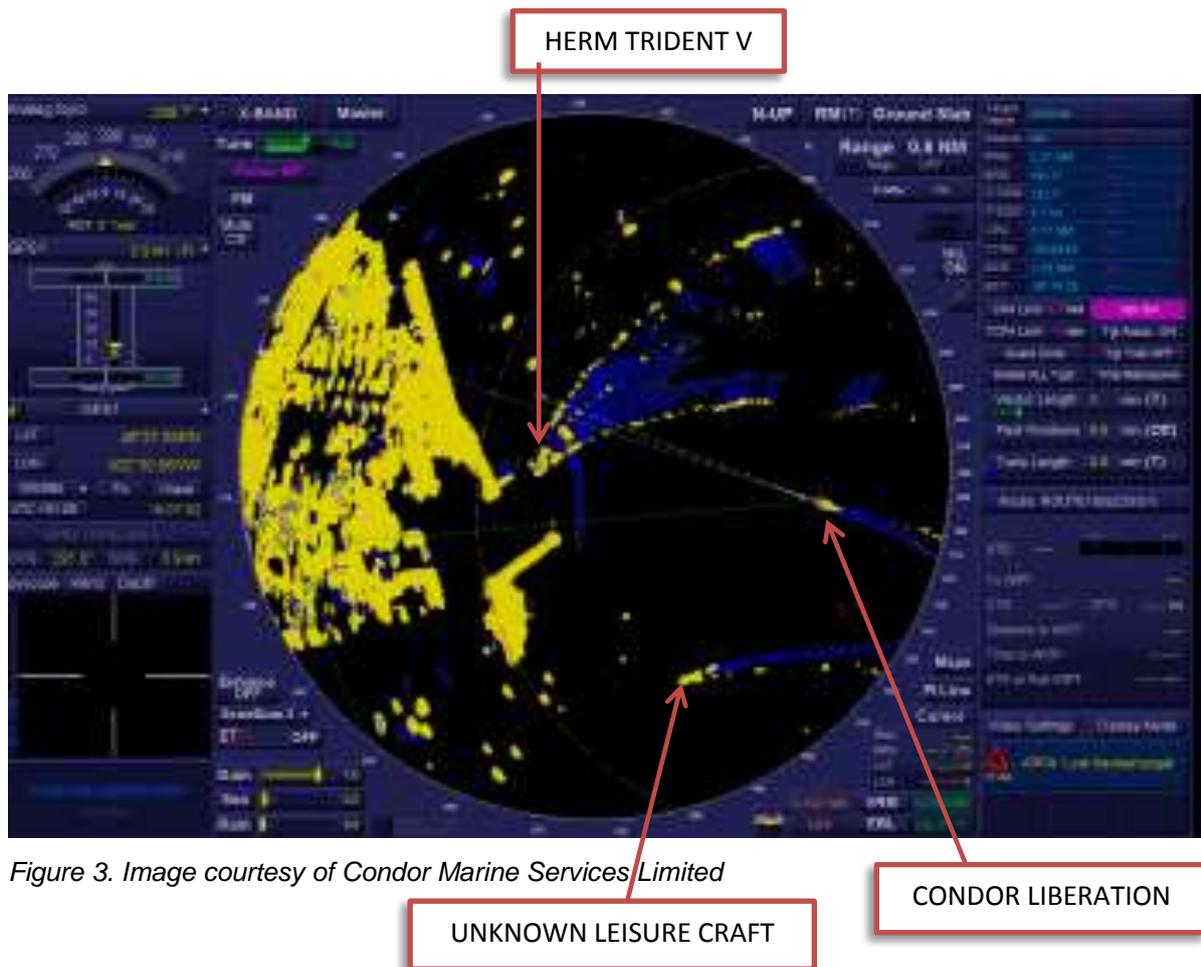


Figure 3. Image courtesy of Condor Marine Services Limited

Whilst this deviation from company procedure is considered to theoretically contribute to an increased wave height of approximately 60cm at the pools, it is unlikely to have been the cause of the magnitude of wave reported and therefore other vessel movements are considered to have contributed to the incident experienced at the pools.

CCTV footage shows numerous young people running and jumping into the water when a change in sea conditions arrive at the pools. This backs up the view of many individuals that the Bathing Pools are not always being used for 'bathing' anymore and are often used for children and young people to jump into deep water. Young people regularly go to the pools for the purpose of getting into the swell and waves as they hit the pools.

Conclusions and Observations

1. It is highly likely that the change in sea conditions at the La Valette pools resulting in injuries to users were caused by waterborne activity given the benign weather conditions at the time.
2. During the period preceding the incident, there was a high volume of movements in the adjacent area of both leisure and commercial craft.
3. Some people regularly use the pools specifically when there is increased swell and wave action.
4. Following traffic avoidance, the Master of CONDOR LIBERATION deviated from approved procedures by altering course to less than 325T in an attempt to regain track which, based on analysis, is likely to have generated a wave of approximately 60cm.
5. Considering the approach of the CONDOR LIBERATION in isolation, it is possible that an effect may have been felt at the La Valette pools, however it is unlikely to have been of the magnitude reported.
6. It is considered likely that the pressure wave arriving in the vicinity of the pools at a probable height of 60 cm would have been modified by the effect of the topography as is usual, with the "Gulley" in particular, but also the surrounding rocks. Furthermore, the sub dynamic (conventional) wash effect of ADONIA southbound at approximately 10 Knots is likely to have reached the pools at around the same time and it is likely that this was compounded by both the TRIDENT V approach to St Peter Port and the UNKNOWN LEISURE CRAFT entering Havelet Bay at speed.
7. Although individually the effects of the other three vessels (ADONIA, TRIDENT V and the UNKNOWN LEISURE CRAFT) are unlikely to have been

significant at the La Valette Pools, cumulatively they are likely to have increased any effect generated by CONDOR LIBERATION, which normally does not create a problematic effect.

8. It is not possible to control all waterborne users of the area (both commercial and leisure) to the extent that their activities will not result in cumulative wash/wake effects.
9. Warning Signs already in place advising users of potential hazards are considered appropriate and sufficient.
10. Measures such as railings and granite structures erected to assist users do not appear to be fully effective and in some cases are used to by users to jump into the water.

Recommendations and Actions Taken

As a result of the incident and investigation, the following actions have been taken:

1. In agreement with the Harbour Master, Condor has amended approach procedures for high speed craft to ensure they route east of The Great Bank when approaching from the south at high speed, during daylight arrivals between 1st May and 30th September. This will be monitored for effectiveness over the following months. The purpose of this change is to ensure any wash/wake dissipates to the north when the vessel slows down, keeping it away from La Valette Pools and Havelet Bay.
2. ACLMS have fitted additional warning signage in prominent positions to try to raise awareness of the potential risk of changes in sea conditions.
3. CCTV will be used to monitor the La Valette bathing pools during the arrival and departures of high speed craft by JESCC to assist in assessing the effectiveness of the amended procedures.

As a result of the investigation, the following recommendations are also made:

1. Users of the pools should heed the warning signs posted in the area and exercise extra caution when the pools are covered by the tide or very close to being covered.
2. ACLMS and Guernsey Harbours should assess the feasibility and potential effectiveness of possible warning devices to advise users of the potential of changes in sea conditions due to passing vessels.

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01 August 2017