

The following article has been compiled from various sources on the Internet (For those with Internet access, do a Google Search – “Pasha Bulker” for lots of sites, currently 73,300) – Editor.

PASHA BULKER

Early on the morning of 08 June 2007, Newcastle Port Corporation radioed the 56 moored ships waiting off the coast to load coal to warn them to move out to sea to escape the approaching storm. The **Pasha Bulker** along with 10 other ships did not heed the warning. As the storm hit, the **Pasha Bulker** could not clear the coast and it became beached at 9:15am.

The **Pasha Bulker** is a 40,000 ton Panamax bulk carrier belonging to the Lauritzen Bulkcarriers Shipping company. She was built in 2006 by Sasebo Heavy Industries Co., and sails under the Panama flag. She is 225m in length and has the capacity to carry 3,196,000 cubic feet of bulk cargo.

After the **Pasha Bulker** ran aground the 2 Korean officers and 19 Filipino officers and ratings aboard, two suffering from mild hypothermia and one with a minor arm injury, were successfully rescued by helicopter.

However, the vessel remains grounded about 100m from the shore at the popular Nobbys Beach. There was no cargo on board as she was waiting to load 58,000 tonnes of coal from Newcastle Port.

There are on board around 700 tonnes of fuel oil, 38 tonnes of diesel and 40 tonnes of lube oil, which if released could cause a major ecological disaster.

On June 9 a salvage team boarded the ship to assess the condition of the hull. Aerial surveillance has not yet detected any fuel leaks. At present the ship has remained intact.

The Danish company that operates the freighter **Pasha Bulker** for Japanese owners says the crew are not to blame for the accident, they were simply overwhelmed by massive seas and swells, reported to have been measured at close to 18 metres.

Based in Copenhagen, the company Lauritzen Bulkcarriers runs operations for the ship. One of the company's vice-presidents, Klaus Mygind, says the coal transport's anchor did not break and its steering and navigation systems were not damaged. *(The third picture clearly shows both anchors in the stowed position – Editor).*

"There's been a reading of almost 18 metres of swell which is enormous. We have of course asked the head owners to clarify if they had problems with the engine or the anchor, and they have confirmed that that was not the case," he said.

There are still concerns the ship might buckle under the harsh weather conditions but at stage the hull remains intact and the fuel on board has not started leaking.

Authorities are trying to work out how to salvage the vessel. Tugs have also been dispatched to stand by and assist if possible, the other three bulk carriers, **Sea Confidence**, **Betis** and **Coral Emerald** which were also close to disaster at one point.

The **Sea Confidence** came within 700 metres of nearby Stockton beach, but managed to avoid the same fate as the Pasha Bulker and is now more than two nautical miles off the coast.

The beaching of the Pasha Bulker has drawn parallels to the 1974 beaching of the **Sygnia** on Stockton beach just north of Newcastle, the remains of which are still visible.

Editor's Note

18 metres swell height seems a bit exaggerated as at that height waves should have been breaking over the narrow strip of land and cars in the many photographs on the internet certainly would not have been parked on the esplanade – like the one in the third picture. No mention is made in any report of the ship's engines being available. With the long anchorage were the engines possibly immobilised for repairs or maintenance.

