

Neal Gibson Interview Notes 3 February 2022 (part 1)

- Role on the night was Team Leader, SMC for zones 13 and 14.
- Only 2 x VTSO for Sunk and CNIS so provided break cover.
- SAR team at Dover was NG (TL and SMC), SD (MOO Comms), EG (MOO unqualified).

- Provision in place for network to cover Dover zones (for when NG went to cover CNIS) and also to provide cover for Z13 and Z14 CH16 watch. MSI was at Stornoway also for the zones.
- Did not know the condition of the small boat from the 0119UTC call/incident and NG will never make an assumption if no vessel is alongside.
- Small boats are often small craft, no navigation lights, no equipment.
- As SMC made the decision that the small boat state was unknown.
- French CG had spoken to the small boat and also had received WhatsApp messages from the small boat. French CG confirmed this.
- NG stated that France believed they did not need to rescue the small boat, if that was really the case why did the small boat call the French CG then?

- BRAVO incident position from the 2102 tracker with course and speed, looked at an estimated position to allow for tide.

- Call recorded in VISION at 0211UTC was a transferred call from Cross Gris-Nez to Dover on the routine telephone line. There was no "hot key" on ICCS for Gris-Nez. Sometimes they also transfer calls through to Dover VTS.

- NG believes that the call was from a young boy called Mubin (as reported in the press) recorded in VISION as Moomin. He was very confident and had very good English.
- During the call the small boat was able to share their position on WhatsApp – sometimes small boats share a position of where they are now, and others share their follow and track (limited capability in the channel to do this).
- Thought about accuracy of position so gave it 0.1nm accuracy.
- There were two telephones on the boat.
- The position was realistic in time and distance.
- UKBF respond to incidents they were not already out on patrol.

- Valiant was tasked as soon as vessels were confirmed as crossing, as being close to the median line – this was to cut down on waiting time.
- Valiant were tasked and assigned to incident CHARLIE.
- Sometimes there are small boats who make it to the UK without the CG knowing, usually they will be seen and we will rescue them. The persons are always relieved to be rescued, human element.

- During and after the call recorded in VISION at 0211 the SMC thoughts were a gut feeling that it was not a routine call. The call lasted 20 minutes and didn't feel normal – elevated shouting gave NG concern. Calls were sometime calmer. There seemed to be a level of agitation onboard, so NG wanted a vessel alongside as soon as possible or a plane/aerial asset. Had a feeling it could get resolved with eyes on.
- Valiant were underway from Dover, her max speed was 20 knots, but they run at 15 knots.
- French assets were in the vicinity, and NG thoughts were to get assets.

- The small boat was near the Sandettie LV (NE lane of the TSS). A high-density area with commercial traffic and near the Dunkirk anchorage also – potential for visual observations.
- Vessels were asked to keep a sharp lookout, there were also French Naval Vessels in the area.
- Intention to get eyes on prior to Valiant arriving on scene.
- Mission statements were completed and a mayday relay broadcast.
- The vessel Flamant was closest on C-Scope, broadcast action intention was let people know and provide a rough position (WhatsApp position).
- WhatsApp provides a decimalised position and that is then converted into Lat/Long, can also get the position from google Maps and FINtan (conversion).
- Mayday relay broadcast was made by JRCC. NG might not have asked for DSC but assumed it would be done. If MDR it should be distress alert.
- MDR was repeated approximately every 20 minutes.
- C-Scope provided situational awareness on where vessels in the channel were – in relation to small boats. It was a calm night.
- At 0228UTC Flamant was the closest vessel.
- Did a MDR – SOLAS. Request any vessel to assist, nothing from the MDR – on C-Scope there was a French asset in the area. NG spoke to Gris Nez to ask if any chance they could investigate, but they were not able to release the Flamant as it was escorting two other vessels.
- More information was needed on the status of the small boat.
- NG stated he could have been more forceful with the French regarding the Flamant, and also made a formal request for assistance (using the formal terminology), but did make it clear they were the nearest vessel to assist.
- UK had Valiant proceeding.
- Incident 041393:
 - 0248UTC Vision Log entry merged as a repeat of CHARLIE.
 - 9 minute call approx.
 - Sinking in the middle of the sea, departed Dunkirk at 2100, matched time for CHARLIE.
 - There was a big ship 3km away, no need to lie.
 - Stated they were sinking, call fitted with CHARLIE.
 - 999 call but no telephone number available only an emergency roamer number provided. No other details available through EISEC/AML.
 - Similar background noise and concern.
 - No engine noise, engine had stopped.
- Incident 041395:
 - 40 people on board.
 - Departed from Calais
 - Also, a repeat of CHARLIE, similar information and telephone number was the same as what had been passed in the 0211UTC ViSION log.
- Can not remember is any telephone number is called back – probably not, as not sure the numbers were correct. Had the information needed and assets were tasked.
- Another call is then received, and you answer that. We were also dealing with different stakeholders as the JCR was not in (operates from 4-5am) and the Tug Haven was activated.

- At that time of the night, JMSC, UKBFMCC, another operator is tied up, COLO, etc. Can do it when on duty in the building or if information is shared on airwave.
- Information gathering provided that there were approximately 60-70 people. Valiant had capacity for 100 persons, so did not task RNLI. The boats we were aware of were in close proximity. As the night progressed then the RNLI would be needed was thinking about future operations also, felt had enough for active SAR missions. Air to search and surface to rescue. Surface asset is not ideal to search - escaping target. Small boats travel 5-6 knots – difficult to detect.
- SAR planning software not used for vessel underway/making way not drifting.
- 0229UTC KILO incident. Was aware had seen it flash up. Multiple calls were received around this time, pop in from other MRCCs. Can provide location in the Channel – West Sussex, downgrade to monitor as current information was it was still in the French SRR. It was a dropped call so not much information received. No positive information – no position, colour of small boat, speed. Difficult to send an asset.
- Calls coming in then dropping out – link to CHARLIE.
- Tracker had it in French SRR, no call made to Gris-Nez not able to match up all information.
- Closure of incidents regarding further information. Have to conclude.
- SMC comment was it could be from CHARLIE as that small boat was making multiple calls but could also link to JULIET.
- NG could not remember why it was a repeat.
- 0300UTC BRAVO incident was close the rationale was France had provided the wrong position initially. Made at repeat of CHARLIE.
- Jonas left Dunkirk at 2100. Jonas and Mubin may be on the same small boat. Migrant 1 departed Dunkirk at 2100 – educated – if two boats at Canal Des Dunes at 2100 would be reported.
- At 0320 content with survivor capacity with Valiant – could rescue more people.
- Flamant was escorting two vessels (on C-Scope they were heading to France) so two more small boats in the UKSRR. There were now multiple boats.
- Used total tide for direction of drift.
- Valiant had radar contact with two targets, possible radar reflection.
- 0328UTC position was not used (from WhatsApp) but Valiant went in the direction.
- Charlie incident had multiple incidents – merging into one incident was usual.
- Number of boats CHARLIE – ABC – three events in the vicinity.
- Delta with Flamant, and also another small boat
- By 0430 was getting tired, initial thought of sinking small boat has gone.
- UKBF asked if those rescued had made calls to UK. History states they do not always tell the truth. Two persons rescued spoke English and someone was seen to make a call. There was no interrogation to get names, pressure of work and limited numbers of people.
- Time as SMC needed to swap out but not able to.
- Priority was Sandettie area, high risk area, multiple boats small space.
- Was getting information from boats and helicopter.
- Other information coming in. unattended boats was the main concern and priority.

- Realtime information was waiting on the helicopter to get a good account, still dark and C-Scope was being used.
- Had accounted for all calls, considering next assets and getting ready to handover.
- 0358UTC CHARLIE and INDIA incident. 33 POB similar number, from French Tracker, actively try to match, following day was tied up more quickly.
- 0348UTC LIMA – asset in vicinity to where the Flamant was and Valiant had been searching.
- Incidents 041396 and 041397 – SMC was aware of calls, but not the full extent of the information or the actions taken.

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- Air commander tasked R163 – FW could not fly and conditions at Lydd enabled R163.
- Went into distress phase and MDR requested. Requested aerial asset through ARCC also.
- Intel was departures from small boats coming from eastern beaches – MPC and Sandettie area. Box to fly and look for a high concentration and report sightings.
- JRCC support for CH16 – TB also assisted with Dover Ops work.
- If commander had any questions regarding the incidents he could call me or message me to call him – NG focus was dealing with incidents.
- R163 sighted 3 targets.
- Reports received were descriptive and accurate.
- SAR tasking identifying small boats – course, speed and POB.
- 3 targets rescued.
- R163 gave good positions then tasked Valiant.
- No doubt that we hadn't recovered people who we had received calls from.
- UKBF spoke to people rescued, no names were confirmed, and they were reluctant to tell UKBF if they had made calls.
- Tide had turned.
- We tied up positions with small boats who had called.
- Engine problems not reported, motored toward situation.
- Handover from 0705 onwards.
- R Cockerill in ops from 0500 – great benefit recovering small boats around sandettie, brought up to speed, no concerns
- Handover, busy night, in for a busy day – closed and attributed some incidents.
- Day shift was going to busy but no concerns.
- Highlighted MDR action but been rescued, content carried out actions.
- Read media reports and names in the media. Knew position was in French waters, something didn't add up. Thought might have been in the water from some time.
- I did a backtrack quickly for my piece of mind. Drift into UK waters.
- Name Mubin in press – call stuck in my mind.

- Did a datum point replay, close to position. None of the search plans were saved.
- NG was bothered by the comment – nobody came when we range.
- Water temperature 10-11 C – 15 hours survivability (IAMSAR) – tied in with survivors.
- Helo track for search was in area.

- Migrant jobs not always align with our training due to nature of calls and information received.
- TACOM overseas what goes on, multiple incidents and some day ViSION is a sea of red incidents.
- Can get messages from TACOM, calling is sometimes difficult at times as SMC as so busy.
- In ViSION there are SMC comments for TACOM to review.
- NG could not recall speaking to TACOM that morning.
- Rely on flash messages or on TACOM to view incidents in ViSION.
- Used  to make calls that night.