

H. M. Naval Base,  
MILFORD HAVEN

28th December, 1940.

Sir,

In accordance with your letter dated 27th December, 1940, we have the honour to submit the following report of the Court of Inquiry into the loss of H.M. Paddle Minesweeper MERCURY on 25th December, 1940 held at the Naval Base, Milford Haven on the 28th December, 1940.

2. We find that the loss of the ship was caused by the explosion of a mine at 1632 on 25th December, 1940, which had become foul of the otter, whilst carrying out a clearance sweep of a British minefield.

The ship sank in position 51 degs. 36.3 mins. North  
006 degs. 24.2 minutes West at 2115 on 25th December, 1940.

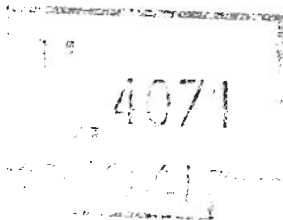
3. This mine may have been one moored at its correct depth or one that had been previously sunk and was sufficiently buoyant to prevent it sinking to the bottom.

4. The force of the exploding mine under the stern opened the after watertight compartment to the sea. The watertight transverse bulkhead of this compartment was fractured close to the keel admitting water into the next compartment. Other leaks which were not located caused the vessel, while under tow to suddenly increase trim by the stern. The pumps were operating but were unable to compete with the water entering the ship. The vessel commenced to ship water through the sponson doors then rapidly flooded and sank by the stern.

5. The causes of the loss, in the opinion of the Court, were:-
- (a) The instructions laid down in C.U.6950, Manual of Minesweeping 1940, paragraphs 146 and 147 were not adhered to.
- (b) The ship was allowed to remain without way on whilst heaving in the sweep wire when sighting the otter.
6. The sweep wire should have been cut immediately it had been established that an obstruction was present in the otter.
7. The Commanding Officer and ships' company did all that was possible to keep the ship afloat after the explosion.
8. The work performed by H.M.Trawlers "LANGROVE" and "ALION" in the darkness was highly commendable.
9. No recommendations can be made that could usefully be adapted to ships of this type for the conditions that caused the vessel to founder, unless consideration is given to re-arrange and amplify the watertight sub-division.
10. A copy of the report from the Commanding Officer of "MERCURY" on the loss of Confidential Books received subsequent to the Court of Inquiry is attached, together with a list of those Confidential Books lost.

H. M. Naval Base,  
MILFORD HAVEN.

28th December, 1940.



We have the honour  
to be, Sir,

Your obedient servants,

*W. A. Scholey*

Commander R.N. (Retd)  
President.

*J. Mc Linden*  
*A. J. W. L.*

Actg. Ty. Lieut. Commander, R.N.R.  
H.M.S. SCAMPELL

Shipt. Lieutenant, R.N. (Retd)

To  
The Flag Officer in Charge,  
H.M. Naval Base,  
MILFORD HAVEN.