

Preliminary assessment of the explosion resulting in damage and abandonment of the potting fishing vessel *Galwad-Y-Mor* (BRD116) 22 nautical miles north of Cromer, Norfolk on 15 December 2020

The information contained in this preliminary assessment is based on investigations to date. Readers are cautioned that new evidence may become available that might alter the circumstances as depicted in this statement, and the MAIB's final report of this accident.

NARRATIVE

On 15 December 2020, *Galwad-Y-Mor* was operating in potting fishing grounds east of the Wash (**Figure 1**). At about 1120, the crew was in the process of hauling in a string of crab pots; the skipper was in the wheelhouse with other crew members below decks working the pots. The hauler was being used to heave in the back rope, and the crew had let the skipper know that there was a lot of tension on the line, when there was an unexpected explosion.

Galwad-Y-Mor was thrown up from the sea surface, then landed heavily back down; all propulsion and electrical power was immediately lost. The skipper was injured and dazed, but conscious, and saw that the wheelhouse had been completely wrecked. As he became aware that other crew members had been badly injured and that the engine room was flooding, the skipper ordered the crew to abandon ship. He also raised the alarm by texting the skipper of a sister vessel and activating the electronic position indicating radio beacon.

Image courtesy of Macduff Ship Designs



Galwad-Y-Mor

Extract from The United Kingdom Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012 – Regulation 5:

“The sole objective of a safety investigation into an accident under these Regulations shall be the prevention of future accidents through the ascertainment of its causes and circumstances. It shall not be the purpose of such an investigation to determine liability nor, except so far as is necessary to achieve its objective, to apportion blame.”

NOTE

This report is not written with litigation in mind and, pursuant to Regulation 14(14) of the Merchant Shipping (Accident Reporting and Investigation) Regulations 2012, shall be inadmissible in any judicial proceedings whose purpose, or one of whose purposes is to attribute or apportion liability or blame.

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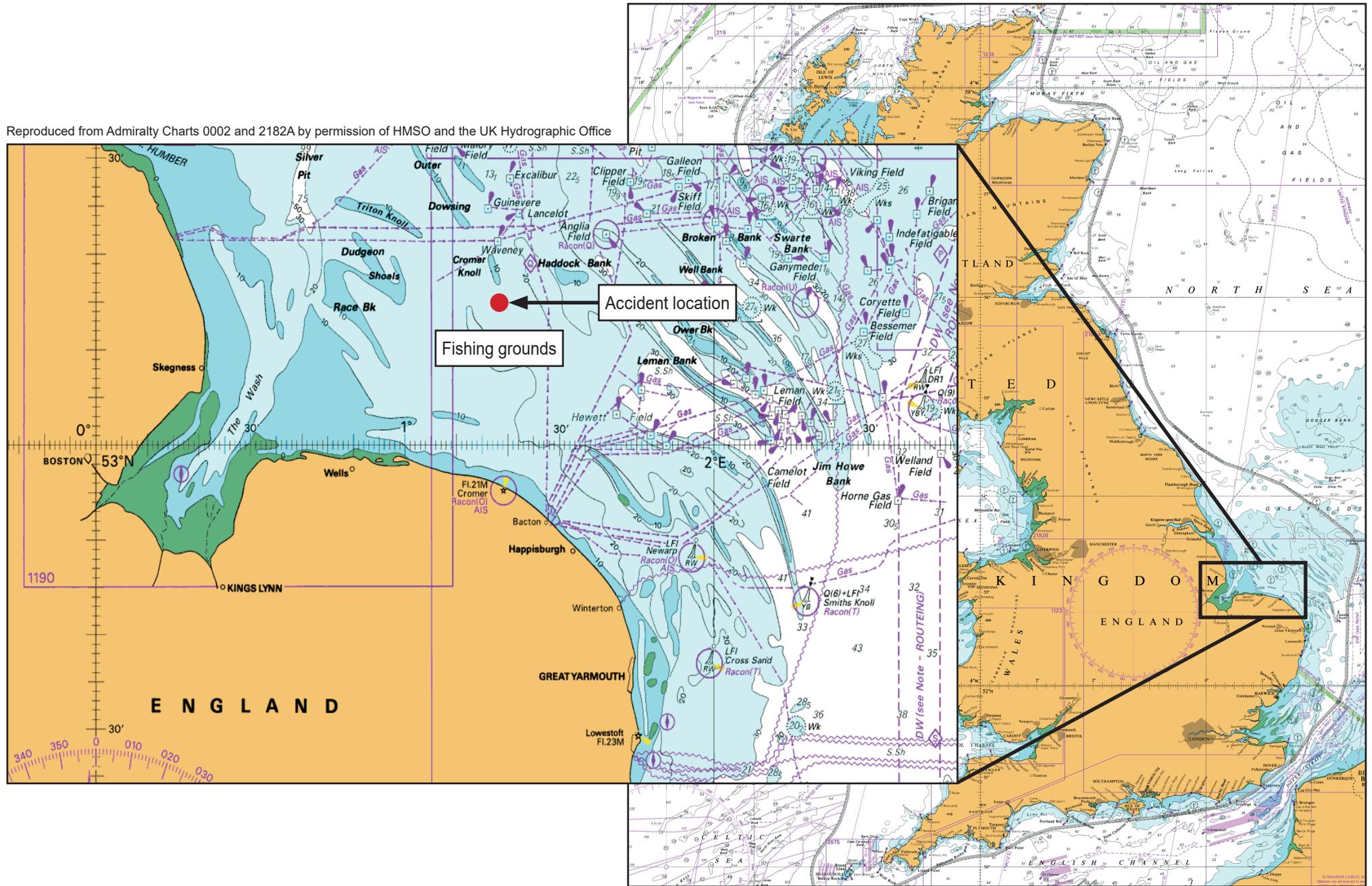


Figure 1: Charts showing the fishing grounds and accident location

Although the liferaft had been manually activated, all crew members were initially rescued by the offshore support vessel, *Esvagt Njord*, then transferred ashore to hospital by helicopter and lifeboat. The abandoned *Galwad-Y-Mor*, which had settled low in the water (**Figure 2**), was towed to Grimsby by the tug, *GPS Avenger*, then lifted out of the water.



Figure 2: *Galwad-Y-Mor*, low in the water, after the abandonment

VESSEL AND CREW

Galwad-Y-Mor was a 12.9m registered length, potting fishing vessel built in 2007. It was powered by a 268kW main engine driving a single, fixed-pitch propeller; deck machinery included a crane and hauler for handling pots.

There were seven crew on board, two UK nationals and five Latvians. All crew members suffered injuries, some life-changing, during the explosion.

INVESTIGATION

MAIB inspectors attended *Galwad-Y-Mor* once it had been lifted ashore in Grimsby. A summary of the key areas of damage was:

- Extensive shell plating indentation between frames (**Figure 3**)
- Shell plating ruptures and shearing of a seawater suction
- Main engine displaced from bedplate
- Widespread and significant levels of destruction of the wheelhouse (**Figure 4**) and other internal compartments
- Buckling of internal bulkheads and warping of decks
- Widespread damage to upper deck fittings.

There was no evidence of an internal explosion.



Figure 3: Detail of shell plating damage showing coating loss and indentation between internal frames

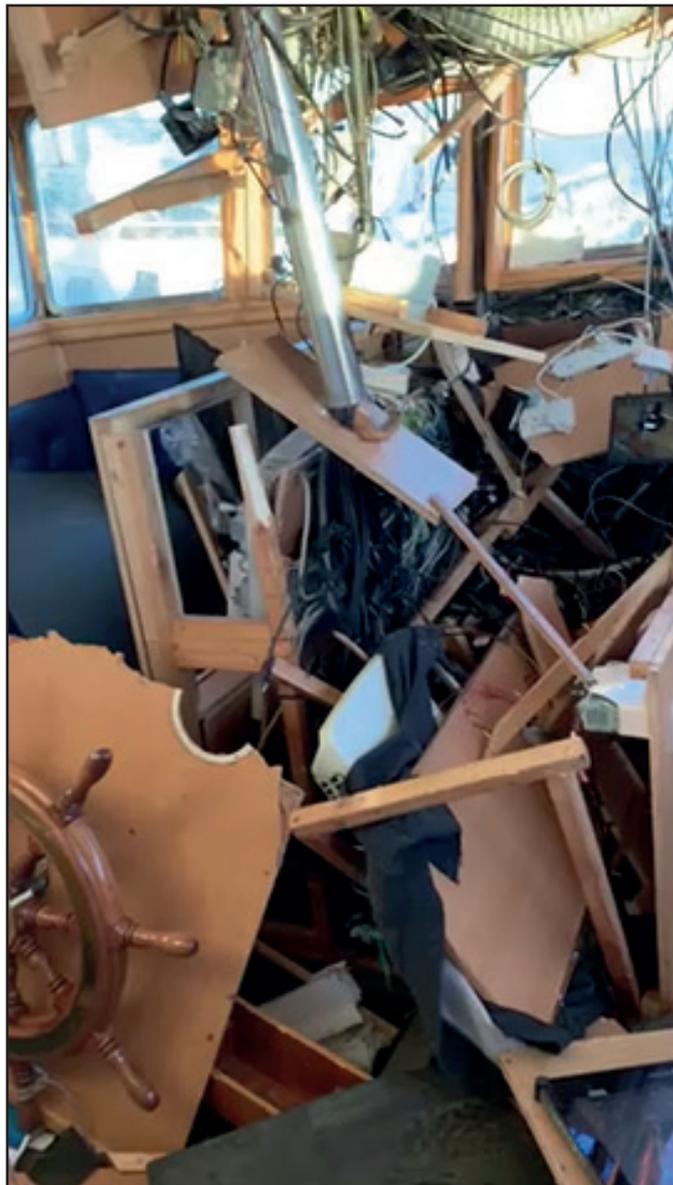


Figure 4: Wheelhouse destruction by shock damage

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

While recovering crab pots using its hauler, *Galwad-Y-Mor* was extensively damaged and serious injuries were inflicted on the crew by an explosion. The explosion was in the water and external to the vessel. There was nothing that the crew could have done to prevent the accident. The source of the explosion has not been determined, but it was possible that old munitions on the seabed were disturbed as the vessel hauled its pots. Although extensively damaged and flooded, it is almost certain that *Galwad-Y-Mor* stayed afloat because the bulkheads either side of the engine room maintained their watertight integrity, containing the flood.

ONGOING ACTION

The MAIB has notified other relevant agencies including: the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the Receiver of Wreck and the Ministry of Defence. The MAIB investigation is ongoing and a report of the accident will be published in due course.

SHIP PARTICULARS

Vessel's name	<i>Galwad-Y-Mor</i>
Flag	United Kingdom
Fishing numbers	BRD116
Type	Potting fishing vessel
Registered owner	Galwad-Y-Mor Shellfish Limited
Construction	2007
Year of build	Steel
Length overall	14.95m
Registered length	12.90m
Authorised cargo	Shellfish

VOYAGE PARTICULARS

Port of departure	Grimsby
Port of arrival	Grimsby
Type of voyage	Commercial
Cargo information	Shellfish
Manning	7

MARINE CASUALTY INFORMATION

Date and time	15 December 2020, 1120 UTC
Type of marine casualty or incident	External explosion (Serious Marine Casualty)
Location of incident	53°18.53'N 001°13.25'E
Place on board	Hull and all compartments
Injuries/fatalities	Significant, including life-changing injuries – full details not being disclosed with this report
Damage/environmental impact	Extensive damage to hull, including shell plating breaches, engine room flooded and severe shock damage in all internal compartments
Ship operation	Fishing, recovering crab pots
Voyage segment	In operation
External and internal environment	Wind, south-westerly force 3-4; sea state, slight/moderate; visibility good.
Persons on board	7