



Department for Transport

Samantha Goward
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From the Parliamentary
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Our Ref: [REDACTED]

9 June 2025

Dear Samantha,

Thank you for your report into the death of Barrie Thomas Mills, dated 23 April 2025, along with accompanying correspondence concerning the ownership of the SS VINA.

First, may I offer my condolences to the family of Mr Mills for their loss in such tragic circumstances.

Having reviewed our records, I can confirm that the wreck is not owned by the Department for Transport.

By the time of World War 2, it was already an old vessel and had been purchased by the government for the purpose of being sunk as an underwater blockade. In 1944 it was repurposed by the Air Ministry as a bombing practice target until it became too badly damaged. At some subsequent time, the remaining wreck dragged its anchor and came to rest at its current location.

As was common practice at the time, The then Ministry of Transport sold what was left of the wreck to a private individual for a scrap value of £25 in 1957. The original purchaser then passed title to another private individual in 1959.

A small number of enquiries were received in subsequent years, which were all referred to the owner. We have no record of any further interest for a number of decades.

The Department does not possess any further information that might assist in ascertaining whether title to the wreck was ever passed to anyone else or if a current owner exists. As the Department is no longer the owner of this wreck and has no legal responsibility pertaining to it, we are not proposing to take any further action on this occasion.

Yours sincerely,

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MINISTER FOR AVIATION, MARITIME AND SECURITY