

The Bronze Bell (Tal-y-Bont) Shipwreck



Divers recording a cannon on the Bronze Bell Shipwreck Site.

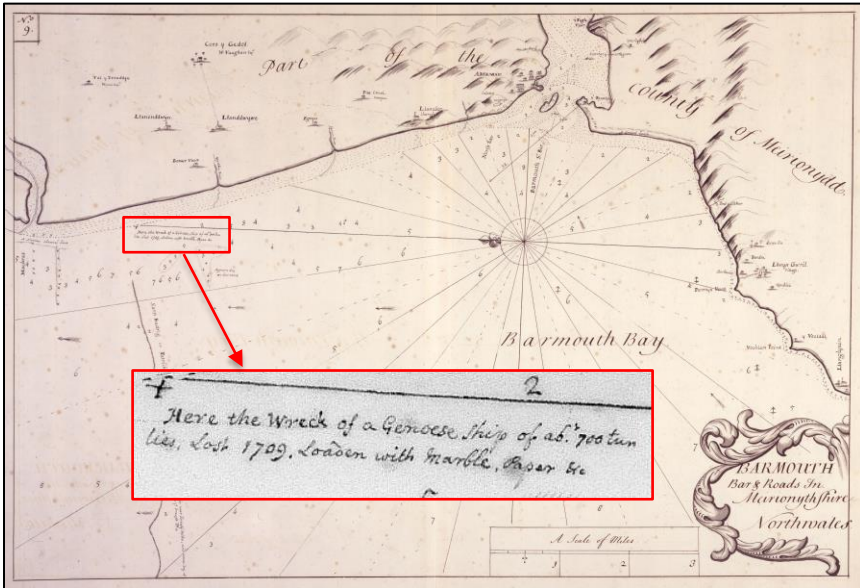
© MSDS Marine

Site: 450m off of Bennar Beach,
Dyffryn Ardudwy

Museum: Bronze Bell Shipwreck Museum,
Ty Gwyn, Harbour Quay, Barmouth

History of the Site

The vessel on the site just off Bennar Beach is thought to have wrecked in 1709, as can be seen from the note on the chart below.



A chart of the site from the Cambrian Coasting Pilot Collection by Lewis Morris - c. 1742. (Source: UK Hydrographic Office Archive)

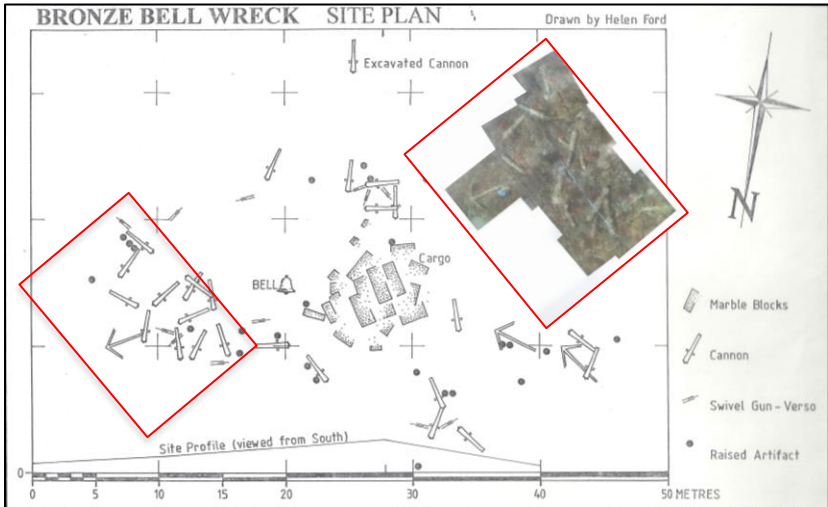
The wreck was discovered by divers from the Glaslyn and Harlow Sub Aqua Club during the summer of 1978. They came across 26 cannons, 8 swivel guns, 3 anchors, 43 large blocks of marble (presumed to be the cargo) and a bronze bell cast with the date 1677.

The wreck was subsequently considered to be of significant historical importance, and in 1979 the wreck site was duly designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973.

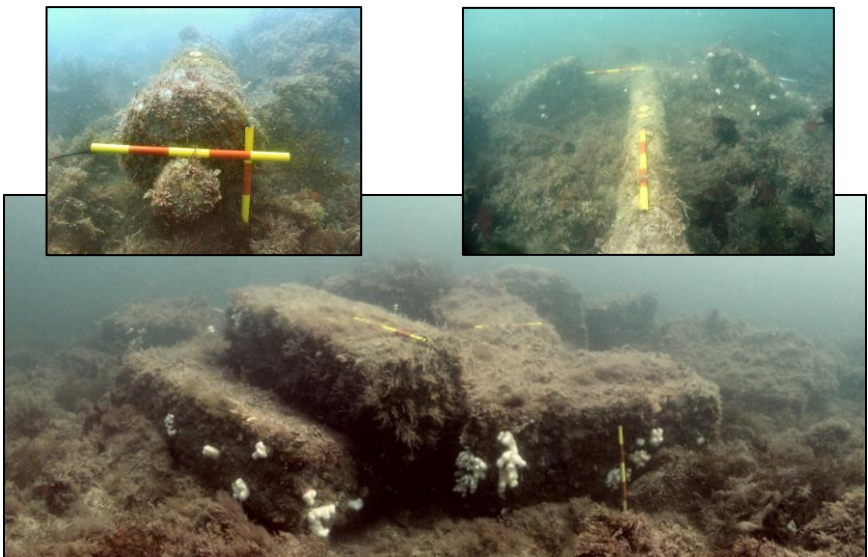
The Cae Nest Special Project Group was formed to record and survey the remains of the wreck, and through the 1980s, numerous items were recovered from the site, including, the bell, cannons, swivel guns, coins, pewter plates, navigational instruments, cutlery, pistols, and many other items, including two of the marble blocks.

The Wreck Site

Below is a copy of the original site plan, showing the locations of the cannons, anchors, the bell, and cargo, together with some of the more recent images showing how the site looks today.



*The site, with a photomosaic insert of part of the site.
Reproduced with permission © Wessex Archaeology*



*A Cannon, Anchor and the Marble Blocks on the Site.
Reproduced with permission © Wessex Archaeology*

The Artefacts

Following conservation of the artefacts recovered from the site, many of these objects can now be seen in the Barmouth museum that is dedicated to the shipwreck.

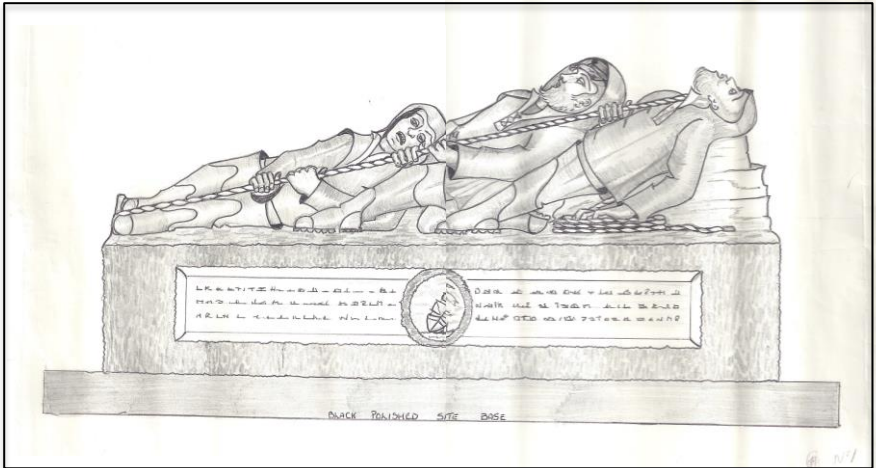


Some of the many artefacts on display at the Ty Gwyn Museum.

© Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit

The Cargo

The cargo of marble blocks, the largest of which measures 2.8m x 1m x 0.8m, has been confirmed as coming from the Carrera quarries of northern Italy. Following the recovery of two of the blocks, one has been carved by sculptor Frank Cocksey. It is called "The Haul", and can be seen on the quayside in Barmouth close to the museum.



Copy of the original sketch for the carving.



The carved block of marble on the quayside at Barmouth depicts three generations of mariners hauling in a net.

© Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit

Research

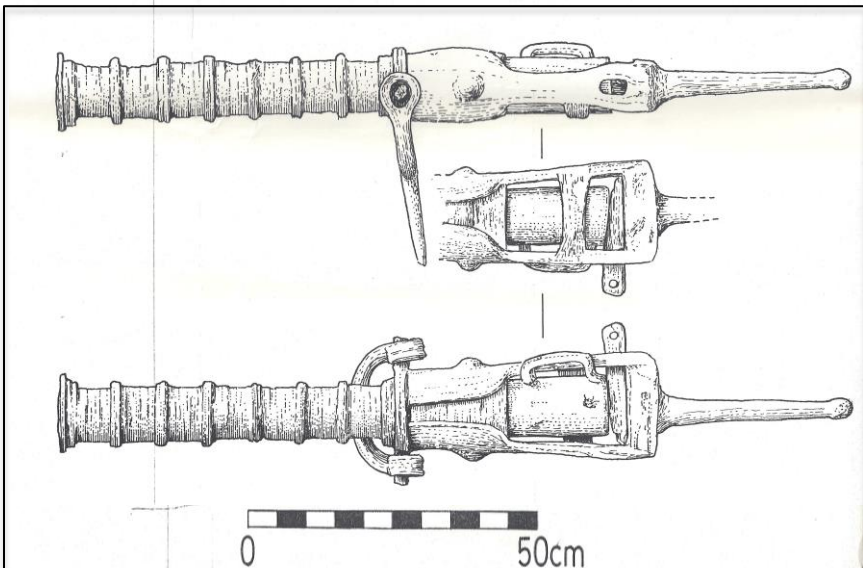
Investigations into the history of the vessel, and the story of how the ship came to be wrecked just off Bennar Beach, have been on-going since the remains were discovered.

Despite exhaustive research over the years, very little information has come to light. However, following research carried out by MSDS Marine, the bell, which is stamped with the date 1677, has been identified as having been cast in Italy, possibly in either Veroli or Rome.



The Bronze Bell recovered from the site.

Many of the artefacts recovered from the site have been sympathetically conserved, including several cannons and swivel guns as shown below, some of which can now be seen on display at the Bronze Bell museum in Barmouth.



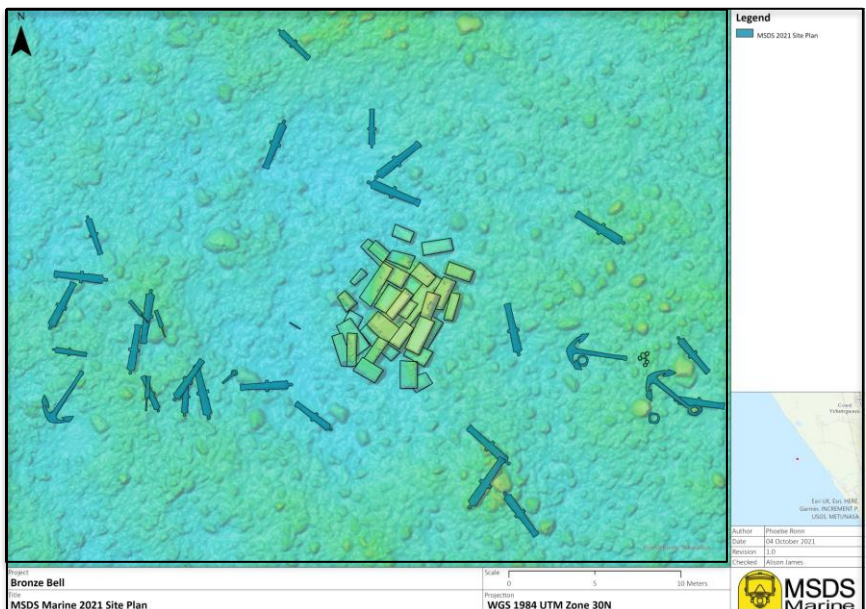
Drawing of one of the Swivel Guns recovered from the site.

Despite years of research the name of the ship that ended its days at this site remains a mystery, and until further investigation reveals its true identity the wreck continues to be known as the “Bronze Bell”, or the “Tal-y-Bont” shipwreck due to its location near to this village.

Investigations into the origin of the vessel on this site are on-going, and it is hoped that one day the name of the ship will eventually be revealed.

Site Inspections

In September 2021 MSDS Marine visited the site and carried out a week-long exercise to inspect, record and re-survey the wreck. The resultant image can be seen below.



The 2021 site plan overlaid onto an earlier Multibeam scan of the site.

While working on the site, the MSDS divers also took the opportunity to gather environmental data to provide a holistic overview of the current conditions across the wreck site. In addition, the team established a set of locations around the site, from which future photographic images can be replicated, and any site changes observed and monitored.

The Bronze Bell Wreck Site & Museum



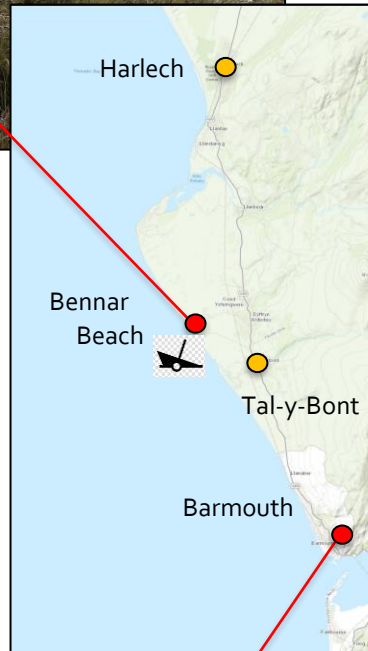
The Bennar Beach picnic area overlooking the wreck site.

Grid Reference: SH 56973 22691

Co-ordinates : 52° 46' 58" North
04° 07' 20" West

What3Words: crafts.agrees.enacts

Postcode (nearest): LL44 2RS



The Bronze Bell Shipwreck Museum, Barmouth.

Grid Reference:
SH 61499 15494

Co-ordinates:
52° 43' 10" North
04° 03' 07" West

What3Words:
unions.whistling.list

Postcode:
LL42 1ET

