

Welsh Wreck Web Research Project (North Cardigan Bay)

On-line research into the wreck of the: *Bronwen*



Bronwen wrecked at New Quay

Report compiled by:

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Report Title:

**Welsh Wreck Web Research Project
(North Cardigan Bay)
On-line research into the wreck of the:
*Bronwen of London***

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1.0 Abstract

The “www Research Project” is about, discovering by on line research details of ships, on the MADU data base of wrecks of North Wales , the circumstances of their loss, details of the owners and crew, the cargo carried and their history. The Bronwen was a three masted steel schooner of 102 tons gross, launched in 1891 by the Ardrossan Shipbuilding company for Edward Richards and company. The Bronwen was wrecked on her maiden voyage at New Quay, Wales in September 1891. Bronwen was in ballast on route from Ardrossan to Cadiz to load cargo for Rio Grande when she was driven ashore by a force 9 gale. The crew of the Bronwen were all saved by ropes floated ashore and the efforts of local Rocket brigade.

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2.4 Contributors

MADU

2.5 Abbreviations

BOT	Board of Trade
GAT	Gwynedd Archaeology Trust
IJNA	International Journal of Nautical Archaeology
LR	Lloyds Register of Shipping
MADU	Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit
MNL	Mercantile Navy List
NAS	Nautical Archaeology Society
NPRN	National Primary Resource Number
OS	Ordnance Survey
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales
URL	Uniform Resource Locator

3.0 Introduction

- I choose this wreck because I was looking for a short lifetime wreck to research and on being wrecked in the year it was launched, this was likely to be short. I was interested because it was a schooner made of steel and driven ashore, after which many vessels I had researched before had been repaired.
- Bronwen was a three masted steel schooner of 128 tons gross weight, length 95 feet, breadth 22 feet 5 inches and draught 9 feet built by the Ardrossan Shipbuilding company and launched on 9/7/1891.
- Bronwen set sail on her first voyage from Ardrossan on 21st September 1891 for Cadiz in ballast to load for Rio Grande, Brazil. In severe weather she was driven ashore in New Quay, Wales and wrecked.
- The rocket brigade assisted the crew ashore with ropes, although the rocket apparatus could not be used. All 5 crew members were saved. The Bronwen was smashed by the storm and everything washed out of her.
- The sails were salvaged along with the wheel boss, a name board and a envelope opener which are now in Ceredigion museum, Aberystwyth with a photograph of the wreck.
- There is an entry on Coflein and "wrecksite.eu" for Bronwen but no record of a site visit , survey or previous report.

4.0 Background

When I started this research I knew Bronwen was a steel Schooner of 106 tons, constructed in 1891, driven ashore on 21/9/1891 near New Quay, Cardiganshire.

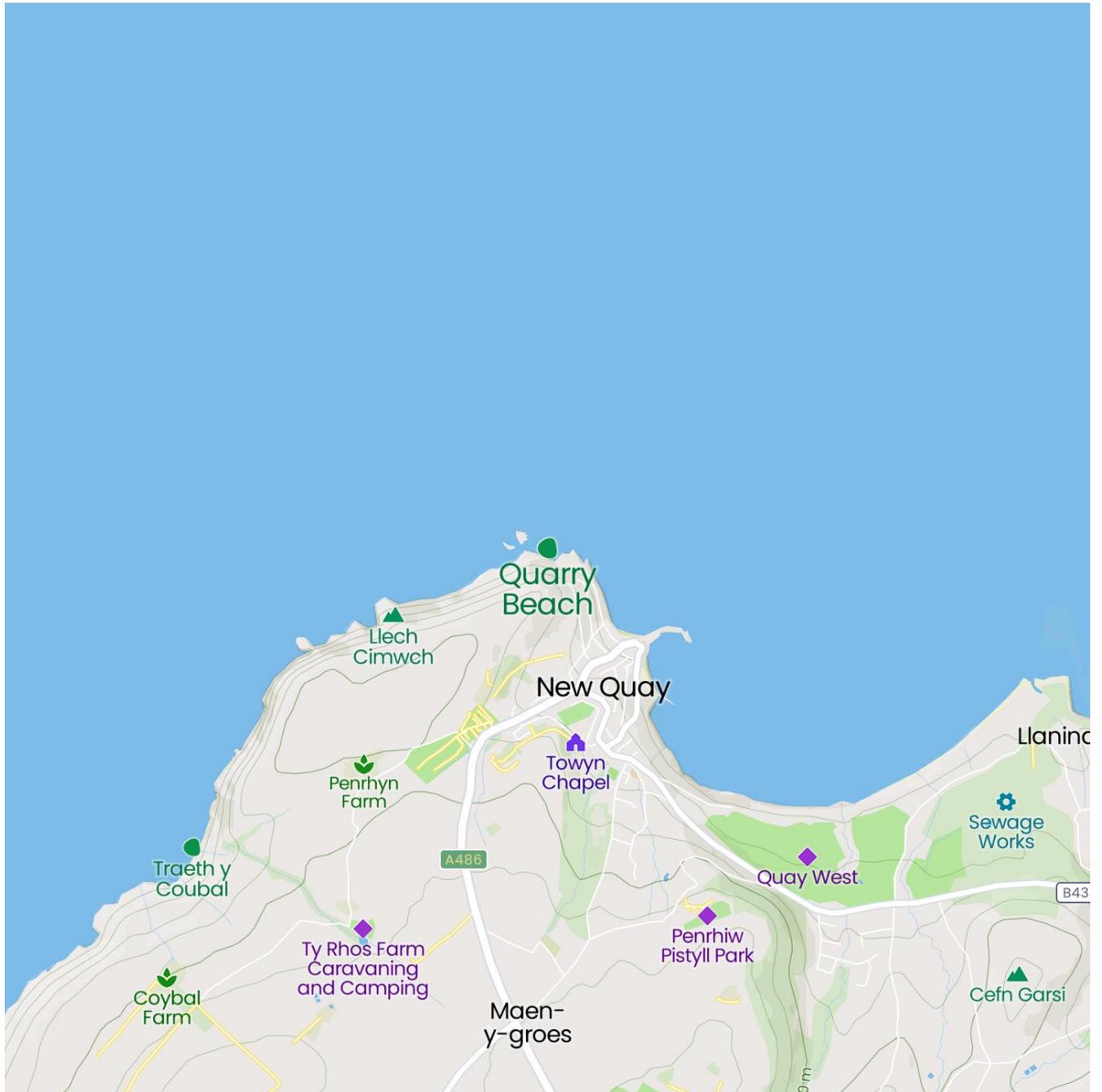
Wreck site for Bronwen



NPRN 273042

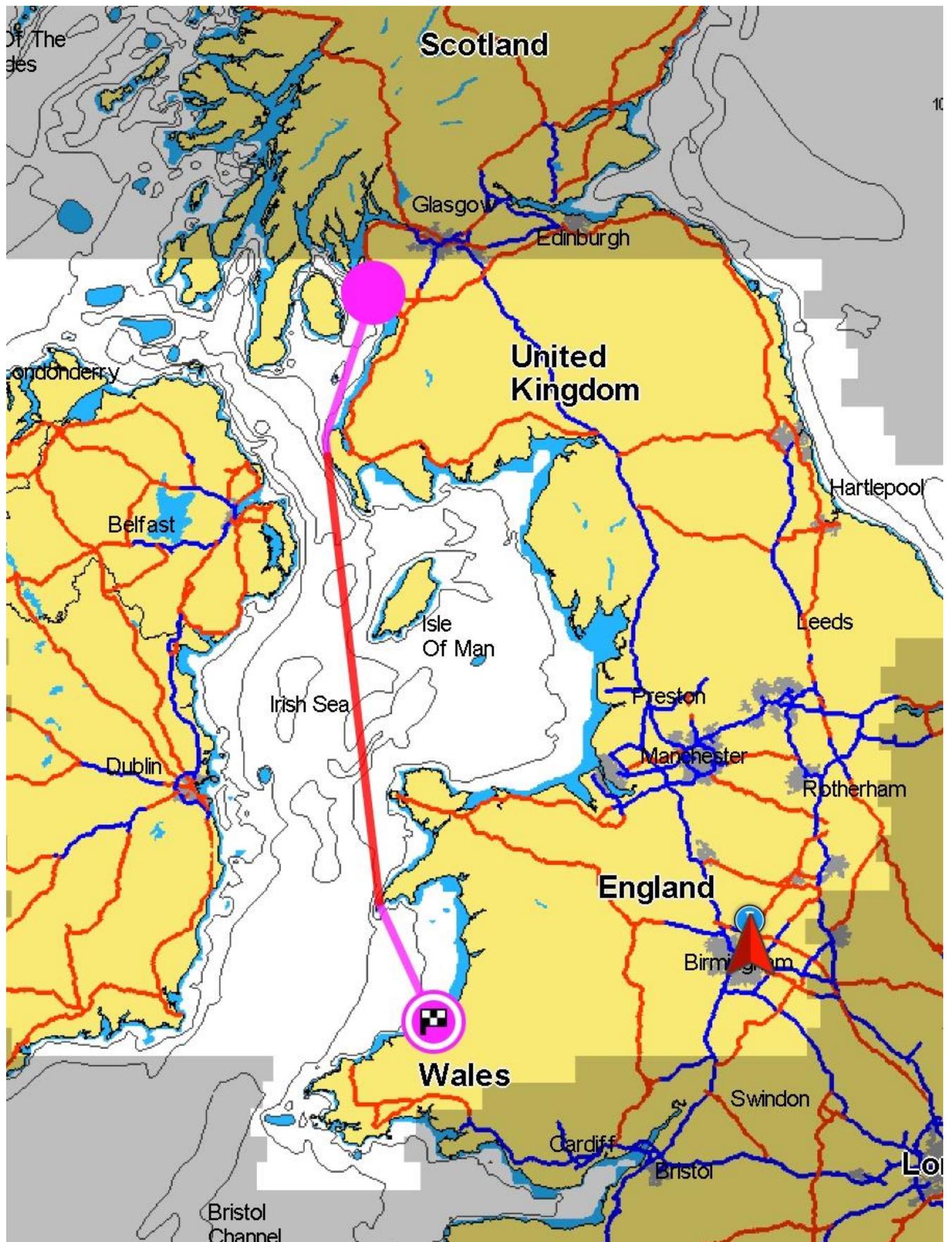
Map Reference SN36SE

Grid Reference SN3877660450



Quarry Beach where Bronwen was wrecked

Likely Route followed by Bronwen



5.0 Research Methodology

I used a Microsoft Pixel laptop with access to my home internet running windows 10 operating system. I also used my Apple I pad for research when I was away from the laptop and to assist in transcribing reports from the British newspaper archives. The new internet provider has now connected my home by a fibre connection so it is very much faster than the maximum of 18mb sometimes achieved. The Lap top uses bling search engine but I also use Goggle.

I searched Lloyds Register of Shipping (LR) for "Bronwen" looking for details of her dimensions, master, builders and owners but 1891 is not available on line and found no entries in the first year after that year 1893 or the one previous 1889. I searched the LR ships plans and surveys, looking for any plans, correspondence or survey reports and found a match. I searched "Taff Vale" to discover if the vessel was completed with no matches.

I searched the Crewlist Project for "Bronwen" looking for her official number and links to MNL, appropriation book, crew lists, owner and master with no match. I found her official number in Clyde ships and search again with this and found a match. I followed the link to the National Archives and the appropriation book. I checked the Mercantile Navy List for 1891,1892 and there is no entry. The crew list for 1891 is held by the Maritime History centre, St John's, Newfoundland, Canada and is not available on line. The register is held at the National Archives ref. BT/110/13/5 but is not available on line. The ships plans are held at the Falkirk Archives. I searched "Taff Vale" to discover if the vessel was completed with no matches.

I searched The British Newspaper Archives for "Bronwen" looking for sailings, arrivals, a launch, owners, builders and any details of her loss and found a number of matches. I also searched " Evan Mendus" and "Edwards Richards" and found matches looking for any background or further information about them after the wrecking from 1890 to 1895. I also searched " Albany Mendus" looking for details of the loss of the Albany and proceedings and found matches. I searched "Taff Vale" to discover if the vessel was completed with no matches. I searched "John Roberts", "John Roberts, Glanmeiron", "Captain John Roberts" with no matches.

I searched Welsh newspapers on line for "Bronwen" looking for sailings, arrivals, a launch, owners, builders and any details of her loss and found a number of matches. A search for "schooner Taff Vale" produced no matches, "Taff Vale" produced 1773 matches almost all for the railway company in the ten pages I viewed. I was checking for any record to indicate the vessel was completed. I

also searched "Captain John Roberts" looking for information about him and found two matches.

I searched the Plimsoll catalogue at Southampton Library for a BOT report on her loss without finding a match, I also searched for "Thunderbolt" a barque on which Evan Mendus was the master when it was lost but it produced a BOT report for another vessel Brittonia which is not listed in the index.

I searched google for "Schooner Bronwen" and found a match in Clyde ships website with details of owner, builder, official number and details.

I searched Coflein site for "Bronwen" and found a match looking for any details of the wreck and a chart.

I searched Wrecksite.eu site for "Bronwen" and found a match looking for any details of the wreck and a chart.

I searched google for "Bronwen ship company" and found a match in the falkirkcommunitytrust website for the Falkirk archives with details of ships plans they hold. I was looking for details of the company set up by Edward Richards.

I searched the Welsh Mariners site for "Evan Mendus" I was looking for details of date and place of birth and any further information available, I found one match with details of a suspension of his masters certificate in 1887, giving his year and place of birth.

6.0 Results

Vessel	Name/s	Bronwen	
	Type	Schooner, 3 masts	
		Cargo	
Built	Date	Laid down - unknown	
		Launched 9/7/1891	
		Commissioned 21/9/1891	
	Builder	Grangemouth Dockyard Co	
		Grangemouth, Alloa and Ardrossan	
Construction	Materials	Steel	
	Decks	One deck	
	Bulkheads	None	
Propulsion	Type	Sail	
	Details	Fore and aft rigged	
Engine	Details	N/A	
	Boilers		
Drive	Type		
	Number		
Dimensions	Length	95ft	0 ins
	Beam	22ft	5 ins
	Draught	9ft	0 ins
Tonnage	Gross	128 tons	
	Net	99 tons	
Owner	First	Edward Richards, & Co.	
		Porthmadog	
	Last	Edward Richards, & Co.	
		Porthmadog	
	Others		
Registry	Port	London	
	Flag	British	
	Number	98978	
History	Routes	Ardrossan to Cadiz continuing to Rio Grande, Brazil	
	Cargo		
Final Voyage	From	Ardrossan 19/9/1891	
	To	Cadiz	
	Captain	Evan Mendus	
	Crew	5	
	Passengers	None	
	Cargo	Ballast	
Wrecking	Date	21/9/1891	
	Location	Near New Quay, Cardiganshire	
	Cause	Gale force 9	
	Loss of life	None	
	Outcome	Total Loss – wrecked on shore	

Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent 13th February 1891

LAUNCH.—A three-masted schooner, christened "Blodwen" by Miss Maggie Richards, was launched from the yard of Mr David Jones. last Tuesday. She is intended for the home and foreign trade, and will carry about 220 tons dead weight. Her owners are Messrs Richards and Co., shipbrokers, and Capt John Roberts, Talsarnon. Messrs Richards and Co. have two similar vessels, named respectively "Bronwen" and "Taff Vale," in course of construction at Ardrossan. They will be made of steel.

The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard 10th July 1891

THE SHIPPING TRADE.—Messrs Richards and Co., of this town have built a steel three-masted schooner which was launched a few days ago at the yard of the Ardrossan Shipbuilding Co. The vessel is called the "Bronwen" and is to carry 220 tons dead weight. There has for some time past been a project on foot to construct an iron shipbuilding yard in this town there being, according to the opinion of those taking an active part in the project, special advantages for carrying on such a trade in this port. The "Bronwen" is likely to be an object of much curiosity on her arrival here.

Bristol Times and Mirror - Tuesday 22 September 1891

SEVERE GALE AND FLOODS. DISASTERS TO SHIPPING. A severe gale prevailed in the North of England yesterday. In the Mersey a fierce storm raged, and at Blackpool the promenade was swept, houses flooded. and considerable damage done. In the neighbourhood of Bangor the valleys were flooded. Several vessels had to run into Welsh ports.

Liverpool Mercury - Wednesday 23 September 1891

WRECKS AND CASUALTIES

Bronwen, from Ardrossan for Cadiz. in ballast. ashore at Newquay. '

The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Weekly Advertiser 25th September 1891

WRECK.—On the evening of Monday last, the three masted schooner, "Bronwen," of London, was driven with one anchor down on the "Quarry Beach," during a heavy gale of wind from the north. She was iron built, and had left Ardrossan on her first voyage on Saturday night for Cadiz, to load for Rio Grande. The sea was running very high, and by 10 o'clock the same evening the vessel had become a

total wreck. Had it been driven in two or three hours later the chance of saving the crew would be almost nil as they would then been in a position where they could receive very little, if any assistance from the Rocket Brigade, which was in attendance on shore as it was, they were landed safely, and taken care of by the agent of the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society. Great praise is due to Messrs. Owen T. Owens, D. Jenkin Thomas, Phil Jones, and others for the energy and fearlessness, which they displayed whilst assisting the shipwrecked sailors. They hesitated not to rush into the boiling surge after those who whilst attempting to gain the land, fell from the rope, which was the only communication between the ship and the shore. How becoming in young men is bravery. Another correspondent writes:- This place was visited on Monday last, the 21st, by a severe gale from the north during the highest of which a three masted schooner was observed in distress in the Bay, which about half past five in the afternoon was driven on the rocks, outside New Quay Head. Before this had happened the rocket apparatus and crew under Mr Upton, chief boatman of the Coastguard, were in readiness, and as it was not possible from her position to fire a rocket over the wreck; the hawser and lines were carried over the beach, and by a life buoy floated on shore from the vessel, the hawser was hauled on board, and made fast to the foremast the other end being held by many ready hands stationed on the rocks. By this means the crew consisting of five hands was safely landed. The vessel was the Bronwen," on her first voyage from Ardrossan, and was owned, in Portmadoc, She has become a total wreck.

The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard 25th September 1891

SHIPWRECK.—On Monday afternoon during a strong northerly gale, a three-masted schooner was observed standing eastward under short canvas. In a short time it was evident that the crew had observed that the land head reached them, as the vessel was put on the other tack and more sail was put on. As the vessel was light, she made considerable leeway, and in returning she was fairly in New Quay Bay. Grave fears were entertained that she would not be able to weather New Quay Head and just before she was abreast of the point, a danger signal was displayed on the pier head and a gun was fired to summon the Rocket Brigade as it was highly probable that the vessel would soon be ashore or on the rocks. She just managed to clear Carreg Gwalltog, and the Captain, seeing no hopes of weathering the next point, dropped anchor. In a few minutes, the vessel struck within a few yards of the place where, under almost similar conditions twenty years ago, the Arica was lost. The Rocket Brigade were soon on the shore opposite the stranded vessel having carried and dragged the necessary apparatus over the rocks and boulders to the scene of the disaster. The rocket, however, was not required on the occasion, as the vessel, which only drew some five feet of water, was washed so near the shore that the crew by attaching a rope to the lifebuoy were enabled to communicate with the shore, from where a strong rope was drawn aboard and fastened to the foremast. The Brigade worked hard in effecting the rescue, and but for the brave manner in which the shipwrecked were met in the strong surf by them, the former could, undoubtedly, never have reached the shore. One member of the Brigade - O. T. Owens

especially distinguished himself, being several times washed off his feet. In a very short time, the first of the crew was safely landed, some of the members of the Rocket Brigade with ropes attached to their bodies assisting him through the strong backwash of the receding waves. The first, who was a native of Ballycastle, Ireland, was soon followed by the mate, a Norwegian, who fastened to his body a bag containing some of his clothes. The third to take to the ropes was the ship's lad, Wm. Parkin, of Glasgow, sixteen years of age. The only effects which he brought ashore with him were his Bible and his mother's picture. The fourth to land was a native of Dublin, and the last to land was Captain Mendus, who is a native of Pembrokeshire. All five had to be drawn or carried through the strong surf and were of course dripping wet. The vessel proved to be the Ardrossan built three-masted schooner Bronwen, of London, owned by Mr Richards of Criccieth. She was a new ship, this being her first voyage. She and a twin ship built on the Clyde on precisely similar lines left Ardrossan at noon on Saturday last. At 8 o'clock Monday morning, the Bronwen was off the Calf of Man and at noon they could discover a lightship, now known to have been the Cardigan Bay lightship. Land was seen about half-past one and the vessel was observed from New Quay about three in the afternoon. Soon after six she was stranded. Before eight o'clock, the foremast had gone by the board, and the nature of the ground, sharp rocks and huge boulders, on which she lay, with the heavy sea running left no hope of getting her away. By Tuesday morning, she was a complete wreck and everything had been washed out of her. Most of the sails were saved. She was in ballast, bound for Cadiz, to load for Rio Grande. The shipwrecked crew were taken care of by the agent of the Shipwrecked Mariner's Society, and were comfortably lodged at London House.

South Wales Daily News - Saturday 26 September 1891

THE LOSS OF THE BRONWEN.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir,- Please kindly allow me, on behalf of self and the crew of the ill-fated, three-masted schooner Bronwen, to express our most sincere and warmest thanks to the inhabitants of New Quay, who have done all in their power to succour us and to make us comfortable in our misfortune. Their kindness towards us is greatly appreciated, and will never be forgotten.—Signed on behalf of myself and crew,
-
EVAN MENDUS, Master.

New Quay, Sept. 24th, 1891.

Liverpool Mercury - Monday 28 September 1891

NEW COMPANIES,

The Investors' Guardian announces that the of following companies have been recently registered:-

Bronwen Ship Company Limited.- This company was registered on 17th inst. With a capital of £2300 , in £5 shares, to purchase. own, and work the ship Bronwen. Messrs. Edward Richards and Co., of Portmadoc, Carnarvon, are the managers Registered office, 4, Cornhill, Portmadoc.

Shields Daily Gazette - Monday 05 October 1891

OFFICIAL INQUIRY ORDERED. The Board of Trade have requested their solicitor take the necessary steps for holding an inquiry into the circumstances connected with the stranding of the schooner Bronwen, in Cardigan Bay, on the 21st ult.

Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald - Friday 25 December 1891

THE ARDROSSAN COMPANY

launched 5 sailing ships of 2074 tons:—Bronwen and Olwen. steel schooners of 128 tons, for Messrs Edward Richards and Co., London ; Hirotha. steel barque 504 tons, for Messrs A.& F. Smith, Tvedestrand: Martha Bockhahn, steel barque of 778 tons, for Mr Henri Bauer. Rostock ; and Anna L. iron and steel barque of 500 tons for Mr Carl Beeh, Tvedestrand.

Coflein

Event and Historical Information:

The BRONWEN was a 106gt iron-hulled schooner built in 1891. At time of loss 21 September 1891, the vessel was owned by Richards & Co of Porthmadog. The schooner was on passage from Ardrossan to Cadiz when it was caught by a

FALKIRK ARCHIVES

Records of Businesses Shipmaking, Shipping Industry, Marine Engines Finding Aid

Grangemouth Dockyard Co Ltd

Grangemouth Dockyard Company was established in 1885 by William Miller and Samuel Pophouse Jackson. The company started with a shipbuilding yard in Grangemouth and in 1888 acquired two yards in Alloa and Ardrossan.

Ship plans

The plans are listed here in alphabetical order of the name of the ship (or the name of the ship which is earliest in the alphabet, if the plan relates to more than one ship).

A1041.066/01 1891 General arrangement plan of Bronwen and Olwen, schooners. Yard No 150 & 151

A1041.066/02 1891 Rigging plan of Bronwen and Olwen, schooners. Yard Nos 150 & 151

Cambrian News - Friday 09 November 1894

SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST A WELSH SHIPOWNER. Edward Richards. 30, described as shipbroker, of Clerkenwell Police Court, on Monday, with obtaining Criccieth, Carnarvonshire, was charged on a warrant, at £200 by fraud from John Russell James, master mariner, on the 12th of June.— Mr Warburton appeared for the prosecution, and Mr G. Elliot for the defence. The prosecutor, who resides at Osborne Road, Forrest Gate, said he had been a master mariner for 13 years, and had had commanded vessels of from 300 to 1500 tons. Last June he saw the following advertisement,— "Master wanted for new boat, 3,000 tons. Ready. Must insert address and copies of testimonials to No. 476, Shipping Gazette and Lloyds List office. 56, Gracechurch street," He answered the advertisement, and received a request from "Edward Middleton Richards" to call at Ferntower Road, Canonbury. In consequence he had several interviews with the prisoner, who told him he was the manager of the "Park's Steamship Company," and that they had a vessel being built by a West Hartlepool Firm, and that the ship would be ready by the end of July. Prosecutor, at an interview on the 12th of June, at 25, Bedford Row, was told by Richards that the company had £15,000 subscribed by debenture shareholders. With the prisoner at this

interview was a man named Errington, who said he was a trustee for the debenture shareholders. Richards said there would also be £15,000 worth of ordinary shares on call. Witness was induced by what he was told to enter into a contract to become captain of the vessel, the Rosebery, whose first voyage would probably be the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. He paid the prisoner £200 deposit. Afterwards he was taken to West Hartlepool and shown a steamship that was building, and was told she was the Rosebery. The owners of the vessel believed that she was to be purchased by the " Park's Company." Learning subsequently that there was no such company as that described, and that he had been defrauded of the deposit money, he placed the matter in the hands of the police. The prisoner had paid him £20 for visiting the ship and making arrangements , but that was he had been able to obtain back.—Mr Elliot said he had good answer to the charge.—The prisoner was remanded on bail.

Shields Daily Gazette - Monday 14 January 1895

SHIPPING FRAUD. TWO CAPTAINS TO SHIP. Edward Middleton Richards, 30, shipbroker, and Geo. Errington were indicted at the Central Criminal Court for conspiring to obtain £200 from Captain James, and Richards for obtaining that sum by false pretences. The prisoners obtained the money, it was alleged, by falsely representing that they had promoted a steamship company and by offering the prosecutor the command of the first ship.—The Recorder having summed in detail, the jury almost immediately returned verdict of guilty.—Mr Avory said there was another indictment against Richards relating to the obtaining of £100 under similar circumstances from Major-General Henderson, but owing to a technical difficulty it was not deemed desirable to proceed with it. The facts disclosed that he had received large sums of money from other persons. Mr Avory added that the remark made by Captain James about "another fake" in the course of his evidence referred to another case in which a Captain Park had invested £100 with Richards, after having seen the other prisoner, in the same steamship company, upon the same promise as was given in the case of Captain James viz., that was to have command of the same ship ; and Park, too, went down to Hartlepool, where he met James. "Hullo," said Captain James, what are you doing here ?" and mutual explanation led to the revelation that they were both looking after the same vessel. Captain Park considered it was no use wasting further time, and had obtained another ship and gone to sea. Mr Gill said he wished to say that the business carried on by Errington was bona-fide.—The Recorder said the evidence adduced by Errington as to character was more unsatisfactory than any he had ever heard in that court. —Mr Gill said if the

Recorder would allow the case to stand over until next sessions the prisoner Errington would hand back to Captain James all the money which he had received in the matter.- Mr Ivory said he was bound to inform the Court that 1891 Richards obtained from Mr Owen Lewis, a gentleman now in court, £1,000 by inducing him to take shares in certain ships which had no existence.—The Recorder, who said prisoners had been guilty of an ingenious and impudent fraud, assented to the application to postpone sentence until next sessions.

South Wales Echo - Wednesday 30 January 1895

FRAUD ON A CAPTAIN. At the Old Bailey to-day George Errington, accountant, and Edward Middleton Richard, ship's broker, were sentenced to four months and six months' imprisonment respectively for fraudulently obtaining money from Captain John James Russell, under the pretence that he should have the command of a vessel at Hartlepool.

Evan Mendus, master

UK and Ireland, Masters and Mates Certificates, 1850-1927

Evan Mendus born Pembrokshire

Held by Ancestry.com

Western Daily Press - Thursday 07 December 1865

At the meeting of the Bristol Marine Board yesterday there passed, as masters ordinary, Evan Mendus and Joseph Humphrey

Glasgow Herald - Saturday 10 December 1887

GREENOCK BRIG AMSHORE.-A telegram from Beer (Devon) yesterday reports that the Albany (brig), of , Greenock, Evan Mendus, master, from Monte Video to Falmouth, with hides, has gone ashore at Branscombe Devon. -A later telegram states that the Albany is likely to become a total wreck, and that the crew have been landed at Beer.

Lloyd's List - Saturday 04 February 1888

OFFICIAL REPORTS. [No. 3,438.]

STRANDING OF THE ALBANY.

In the matter of a formal investigation held at the Town Hall, is Swansea, on the 28th, 29th, and 30th days of December, 1887, before John Coke Fowler, Esq., stipendiary magistrate for the borough of Swansea, assisted by Captains G. Richardson and Z. B. Drage, into the circumstances attending the stranding of the British sailing vessel Albany, of Greenock, on the 9th day of December, 1887, off Sidmouth.

REPORT OF COURT.

The Court, having carefully inquired into the circumstances attending the above-mentioned shipping casualty finds, for the reasons stated in the annex hereto, that the cause of the stranding was, that the master took the vessel up Channel in thick weather without a knowledge of the ship's true position, and his supposition that the land sighted at 4 30 p.m., on December 8, was not based on valid grounds. And further, that though uncertain of his position, he stood into Lyme Bay on a thick and dirty night, and there dodged about several hours without using the lead or making any signal for a pilot. The Court finds the said master Mr. Evan Mendus in default, and suspends his certificate of competency, number 18,858, for nine calendar months from this date, but recommends that he be granted a mate's certificate for that period.

Dated this 31st day of December, 1887.

JOHN COKE FOWLER, Judge.

We concur in the above report,— Geo. RICHARDSON, ,

- assessors.

- Z. B. DRAGE,

ANNEX TO THE REPORT.

The Albany, official number 63,459, was a wooden sailing ship, built at Hylton, Durham, in 1871, and was registered at the port of Greenock, and was owned by Mr. James Burgess, of 13, Northampton-place, Swansea, and others. Mr. Burgess was appointed managing owner on the 27th day of October, 1886, and continued so up to the time of the casualty. Her length was 111 feet 6 inches, breadth 26 feet 8 inches, and depth 16 feet, having a gross tonnage of 306.2 tons, and registered 291.84 tons. She was originally classed for 11 years, and continued for eight years. In 1893 she was rigged as a brig, and carried two boats of 380 feet cubic capacity, which was ample for the accommodation of the crew she carried. The longboat was stowed on chocks amidship, and the jollyboat on skids at the break of poop. They appear to have been in fair order, and supplied with oars and rowlocks. She had four compasses, of which the maker's name was not given ; one in the binnacle, and one swung in cabin skylight in use, and two spare ones below. The two in use were adjusted in January, 1885, and the captain stated that he tested them repeatedly at sea by azimuth and amplitudes. She was fitted with two pumps, which seem to have been in good working order. It appears from the evidence that she left Fray Bentos on Aug. 4, 1887, and proceeded down the river without a pilot, in charge of the master Evan Mendus (whose certificate of competency is numbered 18,858), and with a crew of nine hands all told. Her cargo consisted of 10,000 raw hides, 20,000 horns, and 7,500 horn tips, about 292 tons weight in all. With this cargo her draught of water was 12 feet 6 inches forward and 12 feet 9 inches aft, and she had a freeboard of 4 feet 10 inches. After a long detention in the river, caused by being 21 days on shore at different times and places, she eventually left Montevideo on Sept. 26 bound for Falmouth or Plymouth for orders. At noon on Dec. 5 the master states he made his position by observation—latitude 47 35 N., and longitude 9 47 W., and from this shaped a N.E. by E. E. magnetic course to sight the Lizard. This course was continued without any allowance for tide, current or leeway until 4 a.m. on the 8th, when the master having some doubt as to the certainty of his position, and the weather being thick, hove the ship to. The captain stated that he took a cast of the lead at 8 a.m., getting 46 fathoms, fine sand and shells, and another at 11, giving 44 fathoms, fine sand, shells, and one pebble. At noon a signal was made to a passing steamer that they wished to communicate with her, and she ran down under the brig's stern, when the boatswain was ordered by the master to ask. " How the land bore," and the distance off. The answers from the steamer could not be distinctly made out. The crew having been for some days previous on very short allowance of provisions, and nothing being left in the ship but three tins of arrowroot and one tinned tongue, the master now determined to run for the land, and in conversation with the mate said, " We are short of provisions, and the ship must go neck or nothing. So at 12 30 p.m. the

vessel was steered towards the land on a N. by E. coarse under upper topsails and foresail, the weather continuing thick and hazy with a fresh W.S.W. wind. The ship was said to be making about three knots per hour. At 4 30 p.m. high land was made bearing N.E. by N. N., and estimated by the master to be distant 10 miles, and supposed by him to be Dodman Point, but which was in reality Beer Head. At 5 30 several lights were seen at the head of the bay, especially one fixed light larger than the others, and which were taken by the master to be those of Falmouth. Sail was now reduced, and the vessel dodged about the bay with the intention of awaiting daylight. No lead was used, or any signal made for a pilot. It would appear that the master was now quite confident that he was in Falmouth Bay, and was off the deck at intervals between 8 p.m. of the 8th and 3 a.m. of the 9th. Shortly before the vessel struck the boatswain who was in charge of the deck called the master, and told him that the vessel was too close to the land. He came on deck at once, and whilst in the act of trying to get the ship's head off the shore, she struck at or about 3 a.m., on some rocks about three miles east of Sidmouth and near to Branscombe. The crew all reached the shore in a fishing boat and their own jollyboat, most of their effects being saved, including the chronometers; but no satisfactory reasons were given by either the master or mate why the logbook and chart were not saved and produced before the Court. At the conclusion of the evidence, Mr. Strick on behalf of the Board of Trade asked the following questions 1. What was the cause of the stranding of the vessel ? 2. Whether proper measures were taken on December 5, and from time to time thereafter, to ascertain and verify the position of the vessel ? 3. Whether, on December 6, a safe and proper course was set and thereafter steered for Falmouth, and whether any, and if so due and proper, allowance was made for tide, current, and leeway ? 4. Whether any, and if so proper, alterations were made in the course at and after the said Dec. 5, and whether due and proper allowance was made for tide, currents, and leeway? 5. Whether, when the land was made about 4 30 p.m. of December 8, the master was justified in mistaking it for Dodman Point, and subsequently when the lights of Sidmouth were sighted, whether he was justified in mistaking them for Falmouth town and harbour lights respectively? 6. Whether the non-use of the lead after 11 o'clock on Dec. 8 whilst the vessel was approaching the land was justifiable, notwithstanding the master's alleged confidence as to the position of his vessel, and were there any, and what, grounds for such confidence? 7. What was the cause of the provisions running short? 8. Were there any, and what, insurances upon the vessel ? 9. Whether the vessel was navigated with proper good seamanlike care? 10. Whether the master and mate are, or either of them is, in default? And, in the opinion of the Board of Trade, the master's certificate should be dealt with. The Court answered the above question as follows:- 1. The cause of the stranding was that the master took the vessel up channel in thick weather without a knowledge of the ship's true position, and his supposition that the land

sighted at 4 30 p.m. on Dec. 8 was not based on valid grounds. And, further, that though uncertain of his position, he stood into Lyme Bay on a thick and dirty night, and there dodged about several hours without using the lead or making any signal for a pilot. 2. The latitude and longitude by observation appear to have been obtained by the master at noon on December the 5th, and the only means afterwards available of verifying that position by taking a line of soundings with the deep sea lead was neglected. 3. A safe and proper course was not set and steered from the position at noon on the 5th of December as given by the master in his evidence, and no allowance of any kind appears to have been made on the course. 4. No alteration was made in the course from noon on the 5th of December until 12 30 p.m. on the 8th; then, after being hove to for eight hours, the vessel was steered N. by E. into the land, and no allowance was made for tide, currents, or leeway. 5. The master was not justified in mistaking the land for Dodman Point, nor in supposing the lights seen to be those of Falmouth. According to the master's evidence as to the distance run, he was miles to the eastward of the entrance to Falmouth. 6. The non-use of the lead after 11 o'clock of the 8th of December, whilst the vessel was approaching the land, was not justifiable. The master took two casts in 96 and 44 fathoms at 8 and 11 am. that day, but not afterwards. A reference to the chart ought to have shown the master the necessity of continuing line of soundings for verifying his position. This would have been in conformity with the explicit directions in the "Channel Pilot," which he told us he had on board. 7. The cause of the provisions running short on this voyage (which was not of exceptional duration) was the neglect of the master to provide sufficient stores before the departure from Montevideo, and also his neglect to overhaul and check the issue and consumption of provisions during the voyage. 8. The Court has received no evidence as to the insurance of the ship. 9. The ship was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care. The vessel appears to have been lost through a series of errors of commission and omission such as no careful and competent officer would have made. The excessive self-confidence which characterised the conduct of the master from the 5th to the 9th December was not justified by corresponding efforts to obtain the needful information. 10. The master is alone in default. He appears to have taken his mate very little, if at all, into consultation, and to have navigated the vessel entirely in his own way. The Court suspends the certificate of the master for nine calendar months from this date, and would have made the suspension longer had he not borne a good character hitherto, and been free from suspicion of intemperance.

Dated this 31st day of December, 1887.

Jno. Coke Fowler, Judge.

We concur in the above report,— GEO. Richardson, Nautical
- Z. B. DRAGE, Assessors.

The Cambrian 22nd December 1893

THE WRECK OF THE THUNDERBOLT.

BOARD OF TRADE INQUIRY AT SWANSEA. An inquiry by order of the Board of Trade was held at the Townhall, Swansea, on Friday, into the loss of the barque Thunderbolt, of Swansea, together with the lives of ten of her crew, off the Cape de Verde Islands. Mr. J. C. Fowler sat as judge, and Captain Reed and Captain Brook as nautical assessors, Mr. E. Strick appeared on behalf of the Board of Trade, and Mr. Handcock (Cardiff) watched the case on behalf of the owners, Messrs. Burgess, Shaddick, and Co.. Swansea. Mr. Strick, in opening the case, said the "Thunderbolt" was an iron barque of 1,193 tons register. She left South Shields on the 16th of September for Port Nolloth. The usual captain (Mr. Mendus) being ill, his brother took command by arrangement, and he was one of those whose lives were lost. The vessel was loaded with 1,410 tons of coal and coke, and carried a crew of nineteen hands, together with one passenger—a clerk from Swansea. All went well till Nov. 2, when the vessel was off the Cape de Verde Islands, the weather being clear and a light breeze blowing. Between one and two a.m. on the 3rd, the vessel struck on the Hartwell Reef, off Bona Vista Island, the boats were all lost, and ten of the crew were drowned, the others saving themselves, by means of wreckage. Morris John James, first mate of the vessel, who also held a master's certificate, said he joined the Thunderbolt at North Shields. The vessel behaved first-class he said, during the voyage to the Cape de Verde Islands. Witness gave evidence as to the course steered, and detailed circumstances which led to the loss of the ship. Questioned by the Assessors, he said that although chief mate he had never asked the captain what the position of the vessel was. He did not know there was an island before. He looked after the dead reckoning and took sights at midday and at night, but otherwise he took no means to discover the position of his vessel. The captain told him to steer S. by W., and he would see land at daylight. John Elias Davies, second officer, who was on deck when the vessel struck, said the course set was strictly kept to. They could not distinguish land before the vessel struck, but something black, which looked like a cloud, loomed before them. Other witnesses, including the look-out man and the steerer, were called, and the court adjourned. The inquiry terminated on Saturday. The Court found that the chief officer, Morris John James, and the second officer, Mr. Davies, were both in

default-the chief officer in respect of neglecting to call the master when he saw land and the ship steering a dangerous course, and the second mate, who was in charge of the ship at the time of the stranding, and had seen land an hour previously, for seriously neglecting his duty by not hauling the ship off her course sufficiently to clear the land. The mate's certificate was suspended for three months, and the second mate's for twelve months.

Ardrossan Shipbuilding Co.

The firm of Barr & Shearer was established in 1842 at Ardrossan, North Ayrshire, Scotland, and changed its name in the 1870s to become the Ardrossan Shipbuilding Co. In 1891 it acquired limited liability, as Ardrossan Dockyard Ltd, but was dissolved eight years later, at which time a successor company, the Ardrossan Dry Dock & Shipbuilding Co Ltd was incorporated. During the First World War the new south yard was constructed and from 1919, Harland & Wolff Ltd, shipbuilders, Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Govan, Glasgow, managed the yard on behalf of the Royal Mail Group. In 1925 a new company, Ardrossan Dockyard Ltd, was incorporated. This company was later placed under the control of Coast Lines Ltd (a member of the Royal Mail Group) and John G Kincaid & Co Ltd, marine engineers, Greenock, Inverclyde, Scotland. In 1930, the south yard was purchased and closed by National Shipbuilders Security Ltd, London, and, in 1962, Archibald D Kelly acquired the remaining yard. Archibald Kelly attempted to modernise the yard, but it closed in 1969.

The third vessel the Ardrossan Shipbuilding Company was building for Edward Richards does seem to have been completed or completed under that name. It has no entry in the MNL for any year, no entry in available editions of LR, I can find no record in the British Newspaper archives of any event involving it.

Captain John Roberts

Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and North and South Wales Independent 29th March 1895

SAD DROWNING OF A CAPTAIN.— Captain John Roberts, master of the three-masted schooner "Blodwen," of Portmadoc, met with his death last Thursday morning in a most unfortunate manner. Captain Roberts lived at Ty Gwyn, the Merionethshire side of the estuary of the Glaslyn river, and opposite Borth-y-Gest. When the vessel was at Portmadoc he frequently crossed over in a small sailing-boat each evening, returning in the morning. This he did on Wednesday last, and on Thursday morning he started as usual all right. There was a strong breeze at the time, gusty occasionally, and when the boat got near Borth-y-Gest, it somehow capsized, and Captain Roberts, the sole occupant of the boat, was drowned. The body was found floating in the river, with oilskins and souwester on, by Mr John Humphreys, Mr R. Humphreys, and Mr Evan Morris, pilots, and was removed to the house of Mr David Jones, shipbuilder, Cornhill. Deceased was about 42 years of age, was a most successful captain. He was the son of the late Mr John Roberts, Ty Gwyn, who very many years ago was one of the ferrymen that plied between Portmadoc and Talsarnau.

7.0 Analysis

The British newspaper archive provided most of the newspaper reports but the Welsh newspapers on line provided the detailed newspaper reports of her stranding and the rescue of the crew. It also provided the details of Captain John Roberts. Bronwen had an official number and I had to use that to find a record in MNL since she did not survive long enough for it to be published including her details.

The BOT enquiry into the loss of the Bronwen is not available on line. The master was drowned on another ship 2 years later which struck rocks in the Cape Verde Islands when he was the replacement master for his brother who was ill. The BOT enquiry found the Chief officer and second mate at fault for the wrecking by ignoring sights of land and failing to call the master.

The Ships Broker, Edward Richards who claimed in a share offer to be the managing agent was convicted of fraud a few years later and another fraud involving £1000 in 1891 involving non-existent ships was mentioned. He was sentenced to eight months imprisonment. It may be that the company he set up to sell shares to run the Bronwen was a fraud that failed because she was wrecked. The agreed cost of the Bronwen was probably paid by the time of her first voyage but this was when the share issue was launched. The other ship that was launched the Blodwen (Olwyn) was shown in MNL with him as the managing owner for 1892 and from 1893 by H Parry both of 7 Cornhill, Portmadoc when the owner as shown as John Roberts, Glanmeiron, Merioneth. John Roberts was described as the owner of Blodwen with Edwards Richards in newspaper report of her launching. John Roberts was the owner/master of Blodwen and drowned in 1895 returning to her in a small boat in Portmadoc.

The sister ship is called Olwyn in reports from the ship builders and in "Clyde ships" but registered on MNL as Blodwen 92201, later fitted with an engine and operated until she was disappeared in 1916.

The ship plans and arrangement of the rigging for Bronwen survive in the Falkirk archives but are not available on line.

8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

I have spent about 20 hours on this project with 95% of that time on line. I did think it might be shorter but with the managing agent being convicted of fraud, the master being drowned a few years later and his masters certificate being suspended prior to that extended the research. I was also interested in the rocket brigade I had heard of before, they rescued the crew, even if they did not need the equipment having hauled it to the wreck site.

I used British newspaper archives with the NAS subscription.

The paid for site Ancestry.com hold details of British and Irish masters certificates including Evan Mendus but it is in their premium subscription.

The site may have some metal remaining but it is not confirmed by Coflein, a few items from the wreck are in the Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth include a photograph of the wreck, the boss from the ship's wheel, a letter opener and the ship's name board. The site is on shore and not a dive site.

The managing owner Edward Richards was a fraudster convicted in 1894 but a fraud of £1000 from 1891 was mentioned but I could find no further details of that event. The loss of the Bronwen may have caused financial problems if not insured. I wanted to find out if Captain John Roberts was involved in the Bronwen but he was the owner/master of her sister ship Blodwen so its unlikely and there is no evidence of his involvement.

The Bronwen is shown on the Lloyds survey report as being built by the Ardrossan Shipbuilding company but "clydeships" and the Falkirk Archives who hold the ships plans show her as built by the Grangemouth Dockyard Company who bought a Yard in Ardrossan in 1888. I accept the details written by the Lloyds surveyor in 1891 as correct and with the amalgamations of the ship building company's in later years before closure, the plans probably have become mixed.

The project has answered my original questions except for the crew of the Bronwen who have very little information about them available on line.

The six day, part of a voyage lifetime of this vessel does not provide sufficient material for an interesting story, pamphlet etc.

9.0 References

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Appendices:

Appendix A - Lloyd's Registers Survey report for the Bronwen

Sailing Vessels **STEEL SAILING SHIP.** 1. 23 AUG 1891

Date of completion of Report *2 August 1891* Port of *Glasgow*
 10891 Survey held at *Arman* Date of First Survey *2 Feb 89* Last Survey *2 August 1891*
 On the Schooner **Bronwen** Rig *Schooner, smut*
 TONNAGE under Tonnage Deck *126.12* ONE DECKED VESSEL. Master *Evan Macdonald*
 Do of Bridge House *1.91* Half Breadth (at widest) *11.0* Built at *Ardrossan*
 Do of Houses on Deck *1.91* Depth from upper part of Keel to top of Upper Deck Beams *12.0* When built *1881*
 Do of excess of Mainways *1.91* Girth of Half Mainway Frame (as per Rule) *19.0* By whom built *Ardrossan Shipbuilding Co.*
 Do of Forecastle *1.91* 1st Number *10891* Owners *Richard's Coy.*
 Gross Tonnage *229.03* Length *37.2* Managers *Richard's Coy.*
 Less Crew Space *12.92* 2nd Number *26010* Residence *4 Comhill, Port Glasgow*
 TONNAGE FOR FEES *116.16* Proportions—Breadth to Length *4.04* Port belonging to *London*
 Less Navigation spaces *9.19* Depth to Length—Upper Deck to top of Keel *1.82* If Surveyed while Building, Afloat, or in Dry Dock *while building afloat*
 Register Tonnage *108.91* Destined Voyage *Canada*

LENGTH on deck as per rule	breadth	DEPTH	No. of Decks with Flat laid	No. of Tiers of Beams
37	22.1	12.0	1	1

Dimensions of Ship per Register: Length *37* breadth *22.1* depth *12.0* Moulded depth *10* Round up of Beams *8 1/2* ins.

FORGINGS AND CASTINGS.

KEEL, Bar *7 1/2 x 1 1/2* depth and thickness *7 1/2 x 1 1/2*
 STERN POST, do. do. *7 1/2 x 1 1/2*
 MAIN-PIECE OF RUDDER, diameter at head *7 1/2*
 RUDDER, how constructed *Forged frame 2 plated with*
 Can the Rudder be unshipped afloat? *Yes*

FRAMING.

FRAME, Angles, *3 1/2 x 3 1/2* for 1 length amids. *3 1/2 x 3 1/2*
 Do. for 1/2 at each end *3 1/2 x 3 1/2*
 REVERSED FRAME, Angles, *2 1/2 x 2 1/2*
 FLOORS, depth and thickness of Floor Plate at mid line for 1/2 length amidships, *1 1/2 x 1 1/2*
 " thickness at the ends of vessel *3/4*
 " depth at 1/2 the half breadth, as per Rule *3/4*
 " height extended at the Bilges *2 1/2*

KEELSONS AND STRINGERS.

CENTRELINE KEELSON, Vertical Plate above floor, *9*
 " Ribber Plate, *6 1/2*
 " Bilge Keelson, Angle, *3 1/2 x 3 1/2*
 " Bilge Stringer, Angles, *3 1/2 x 3 1/2*

PLATING.

PLATES in Carboard Strakes, breadth and thickness *3 1/2 x 1/2*
 " from Gunwale to Ribber part of Bilge *3 1/2 x 1/2*
 " Bilge, number of Strakes Breadth and thickness *3 1/2 x 1/2*
 " and length of each *3 1/2 x 1/2*
 " from up part of Bilge to low part of strake *3 1/2 x 1/2*
 Sheerstrake, breadth and thickness *3 1/2 x 1/2*

Form No. 1 D. 1891. 7. 8. 2. 1891. ROBERT EDWARD TAYLOR & SON, PRINTERS, 15, OLD BISHOP LANE, LONDON. GL5162-0396 (112)

10891 *eb*

Order for Special Survey No. *2155*
 Date *15 January 1891*
 Order for Ordinary Survey No. *180*
 Date *15 January 1891*
 No. *180* in builder's yard

Days of Survey *1891. Feb 4. 19. 26. Mar 12. 19. April 6. 10*
 hold while building as per Section 18.

1st. On the several parts of the frame, when in place, and before the plating was wrought
 2nd. On the plating during the process of riveting
 3rd. When the beams were in and fastened, and before the decks were laid
 4th. When the ship was complete, and before the plating was finally coated or varnished
 5th. After the ship was launched and equipped

Total No. of Visits *30*

State dates and initials of letters respecting this case *12th Jan^r 1891 (719) 29th Feb^r 1891 (721) 2nd July 1891 (724)*

General Remarks (State quality of workmanship, &c.)
This is a one deck three masted sailing schooner constructed of steel in accordance with the approved Trade Ship Section forwarded to London on the 13th inst. the enclosed tabulates and Secretary's letters of above dates.

PARTICULARS FOR RECORD IN THE REGISTER BOOK.

Length of Poop ft., R.Q.D. or Break ft., Bridge Deck ft., Forecastle ft. (in feet and tenths).
 No. and Material of Decks (if Iron or Steel) and whether wholly or partially covered with wood, and No. of tiers of Beams (this information is to be given as it should appear in the Register Book) *One deck wood one tier beams.*
 Official No. _____ Signal Letters _____

PARTICULARS OF WATER BALLAST.

Double bottom, aft, length _____ and water capacity in tons _____ Double bottom, amidships, length _____ and water capacity in tons _____
 Double bottom, forward, length _____ and water capacity in tons _____
 Double bottom, constructed on the cellular system, length _____ and water capacity in tons _____
 Fore peak tank, water capacity in tons _____ After peak tank, water capacity in tons _____
 Midship deep tank, length _____ and water capacity in tons _____ Other tanks, if fitted, length _____ and water capacity in tons _____
 The above have _____ been tested as required by the Rules.
 (If necessary, furnish further information by sketch.)
 How are the surfaces preserved from oxidation? Inside *Concrete and Paint* Outside *Paint & Compression*

FREEBOARD assigned by the Committee, as per Secretary's Letter, dated *7th August 1891*
 State of march on Vessel's side in accordance with Notice No. 572 *Yes*

The amount of Entry Fee £ *1 : 6 : 0* is received by me. *(Signature)*
 Special £ *6 : 6 : 0*
 Certificate* £
 Travelling Expenses, if any £ *2 : 5 : 1*

I am of opinion this Vessel should be Classed ** 100A.1 steel*

Charles Edwards
 Surveyor in Lloyd's Register of British & Foreign Shipping.

Committee's Minute *TUES. 25 AUG 1891*
 Character assigned *100A.1 Steel*
A.C.P. 1 Deck

It is submitted that this vessel appears eligible to be classed 100A.1 (Steel) as recommended.
L.S.K.
(Signature) 20.8.91.

Lloyd's Register
 G.L.S. 167-0396 (2/2)

Appendix B Appropriation book entry

1	Pioneer	82	"	"	91 118 ⁺
2	Pasting	1088	"	"	91 122
3	Port Chalmers	2667	"	"	91 123
4	Wubawken	2101	"	"	91 128
5	Peregine	803	"	"	91 130
6	Poyang	1892	"	"	91 129
7	Olwen	99	Sailing	"	91 131
8	Bronwen	99	"	"	91 132
9	Providence	36	"	"	91 133
0	Ortyga	1361	Steam	"	91 135
1	Minnie	35	Sailing	"	91 136
2	Guide	82	Steam	"	91 137
3	Rowton	1511	"	"	91 138
4	Shasi	776	"	"	91 139

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Appendix C Lifesaving Rocket Apparatus



Fig. 1

"The marine department of the Board of Trade now maintains about three hundred stations furnished with complete life-saving apparatus - 195 on the coast of England and Wales, 45 on those of Scotland, 51 on the Irish coasts, and others in the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands, and Heligoland, besides supplying many more with life-belts and lines. The apparatus is under the charge of the Coast Guard, wherever there is a Coast Guard station, and in many cases there are companies of volunteers, not connected with the Life-boat service, who are enrolled up to a number sufficient, with the Coast Guard, or in the absence of the Coast Guard to provide 25 men for working the apparatus.

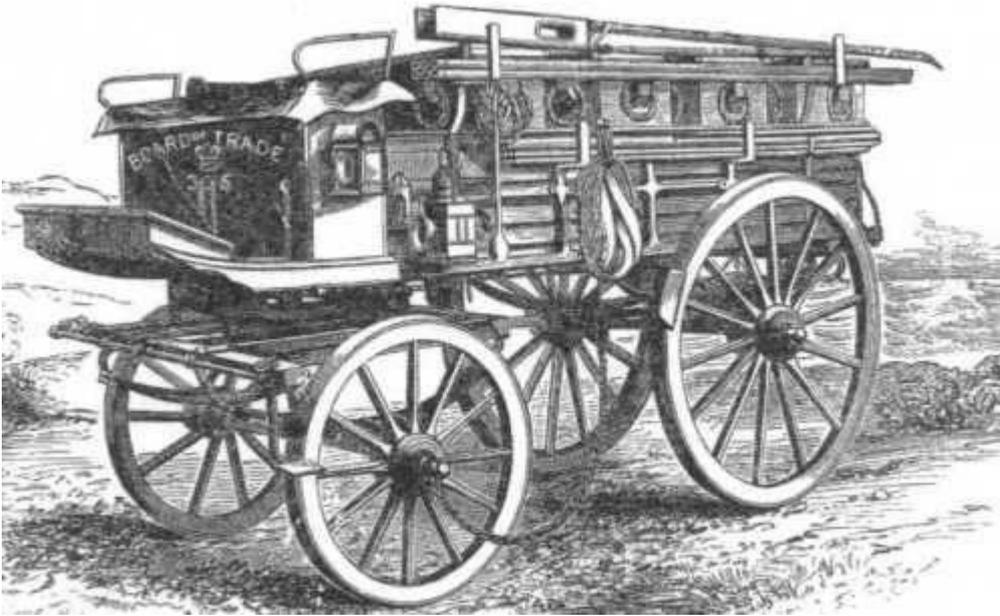


Fig. 2 Lifesaving Apparatus Cart

Rocket Cart Apparatus consisted of:

Whip Block and Tally Board

Hawser Cutter

Heaving Cane & Line

Rocket Machine

Fuse Box

Rocket

Whip, Hawser and Breeches Buoy

Cliff Ladder

Wagon

Light

Rocket Line Box

Portfire

Triangle

Anchor

Cliff Rescue Helmet

The Trenhouse Rocket

On 29th December 1807 Henry Trenhouse witnessed the wreck of the Royal Navy frigate Anson on the Cornish coast. Although only 100 yards from the shore there was no way of rescuing the sailors and over a hundred lives were lost. This disaster led Trenhouse to invent the Rocket life-saving apparatus.

An improved rocket was invented by John Dennett in 1826 and this, in turn, was replaced by a rocket devised by Colonel Boxer in 1855.

Compared to the mortar the rocket was much lighter, easier to move, more accurate, less likely to break the line after firing and cheaper. The rocket completely superseded the mortar and, after the lifeboat, became the most important means of saving lives from shipwrecks.

By the end of the 19th century almost 14,000 lives had been saved by the rocket apparatus.

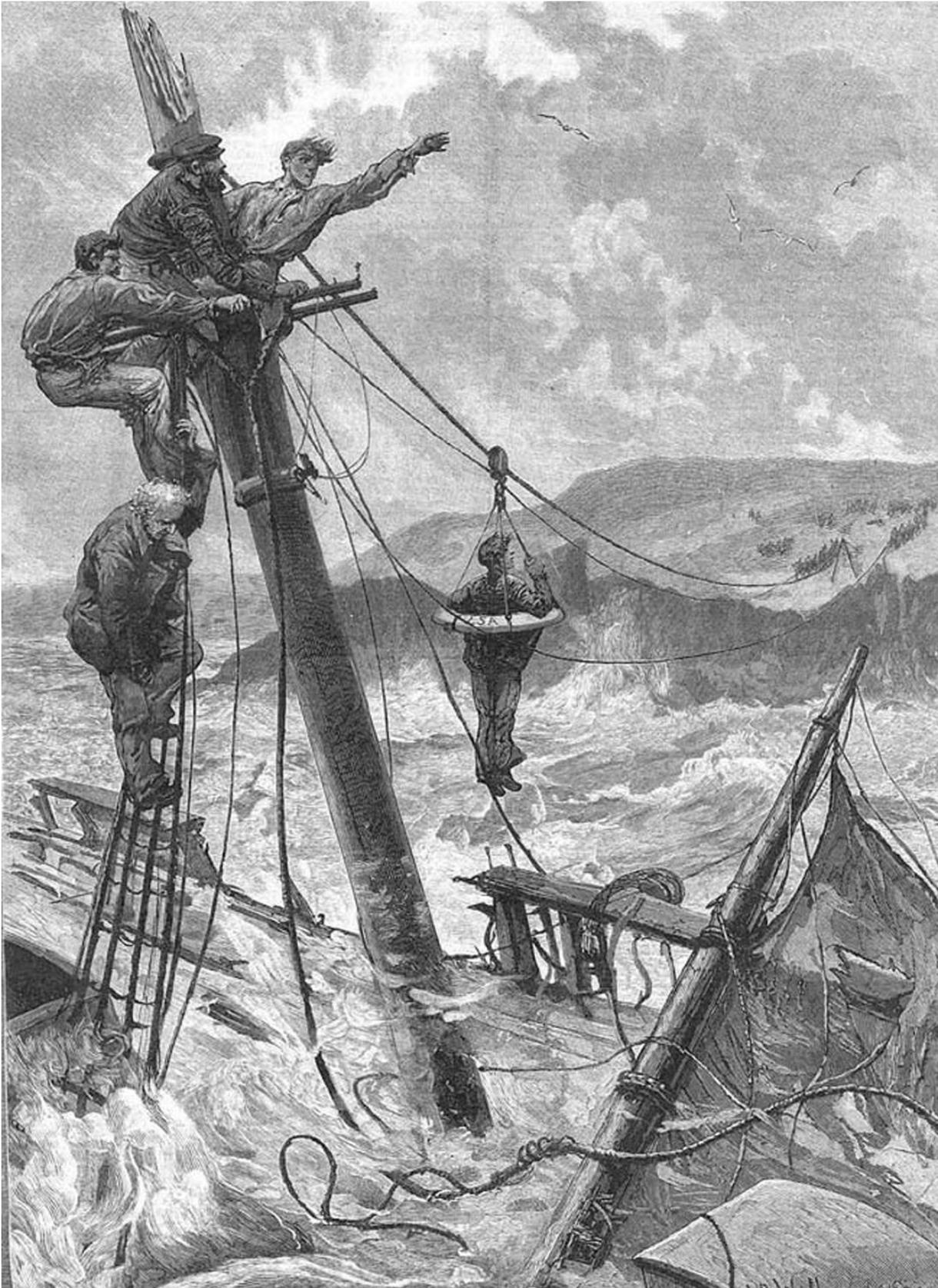


Fig. 3 Rescue by Lifesaving rocket apparatus