



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

No verifiable image located

Report compiled by:  
**Ashton East**

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On-line research into the wreck of the:  
*SS Cyrene***

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## Abstract

The SS Cyrene was a cargo-carrying screw-steamer launched 1888, and wrecked 1918 off Caernavon Bay by torpedo from German submarine UC-31 with the loss of 24 lives. This report summarises the ship's particulars and history as identified by a review of primary sources, limited to those available in online format only, conducted in May 2020.

## Introduction

The SS Cyrene was launched in September 1888 with steel hull, Triple Expansion engine, twin Scotch boilers, and single screw propeller. Four distinct trading routes were identified across the working life of the ship: early years with routes between the United Kingdom to Brazil and Uruguay; middle years with the routes extended to their peak between Belgium to Chile and Peru around Cape Horn; later years (following a sale) much reduced routes from the United Kingdom to the Mediterranean; and finally appears to become a short range coastal collier around the United Kingdom by the time of wrecking. The wrecking event occurred on 5 April 1918 while carrying a cargo of coal. The ship was wrecked by a torpedo fired from German submarine UC-31, killing 24 crew. No record of post-wrecking salvage or verifiable site visit was located.

## Research Methodology

The research was conducted in May 2020 during the stay-at-home restrictions, and therefore limited to online resources. The research was conducted on a Microsoft Surface Pro, operating system: Microsoft Windows 10, and internet browser: Google Chrome.

In the first instance the ship's entry was located on [wrecksite.eu](http://wrecksite.eu). This website uses wiki-type crowd sourcing for information and has generally poor referencing. Information sourced from this website must be validated against primary sources.

The following primary sources were examined:

- 1) Lloyd's Register;
- 2) Lloyd's Shipping Index – searched through the British Newspaper Archive advanced search function for "Cyrene", "Lloyd's Shipping Index", and date range 1888-1918;
- 3) General search of the British Newspaper Archive for "Cyrene" or "SS Cyrene" with results limited to "articles" and date range 1888-1918;
- 4) Mercantile Navy List made available through the Crew List Index Project;
- 5) HSMO's 1919 publication of merchant shipping losses 1914-1918; and
- 6) National Maritime Museum crew records made available through The National Archives.

Finally, general searches were conducted through the Google search engine to identify any further information that might be available. Search terms: "Cyrene" "SS Cyrene" "Cyrene 1918" "Cyrene Caernarvon" "Cyrene 1888 ship" "Cyrene 1888" generated few relevant results and no new information.

## Results

Vessel	Name/s	SS Cyrene
	Type	Cargo
Built	Date	Launched 4 September 1888, Trial 17 October 1888
	Builder	Short Brothers (partnership pre-incorporation in 1900)
		Pallion, Sunderland
Construction	Materials	Steel
	Decks	3
	Bulkheads	5
Propulsion	Type	Screw-steamer

Engine	Details	Triple expansion	
		23 1/3" 38" 62" cylinders, 42" stroke	
		250 HP	
		George Clark	
	Boilers	2 single ended Scotch boilers, 150 lb pressure	
Drive	Type	Screw propeller	
	Number	1	
Dimensions	Length	302 ft      ins	92.05 m
	Beam	42 ft      ins	12.80 m
	Draught	19 ft      4 ins	5.89 m
Tonnage	Gross	2953	
	Net	1905	
Owner	First	Lumsdon, Byers & Co, Sunderland	
	Last	Cyrene Shipping Co Limited, Milburn House, Dean St, Newcastle-on-Tyne	
	Others	James Frazer and Co, Newcastle	
Registry	Port	Liverpool	
	Flag	UK	
	Number	95272 KVGW	
History	Routes	Liverpool to Buenos Aries	
		Belgium to Callao	
		Newcastle to Mediterranean	
Final Voyage	From	Tyne	
	To	Blaye	
	Captain	A E Wilson	
	Crew	26	
	Cargo	Coal	
Wrecking	Date	5 April 1918	
	Location	15 miles north of Bardsey Island, Caernarvon Bay 52.950000, -5.133333 (low confidence)	
	Cause	Torpedoed by German submarine UC-31	
	Loss of life	24	
	Outcome	Loss	

### Analysis

Searches of the British Newspaper Archive for references to SS Cyrene in the Lloyd's Shipping Index produced a large volume of results from which it was possible to infer the ship's trading routes over time and a collision incident. However, the OCR quality of records in this resource is poor and the search function is quite limited. It is probable that references were not picked up by the search, and no references at all were identified after 1910.

Only the 1889 edition of the Lloyd's Registers covering steam powered vessels was available online from the period 1888-1915 (the ship's operational life). Sale of the ship from the original owners (Lumsdon, Byers & Co) to

the second owners (James Frazer and Co) in January 1907 was established by contemporaneous newspaper reporting. The third owners were established by reference to the Mercantile Navy List.

No information concerning post-wrecking salvage or inspection could be located. The ship would benefit from a preliminary survey to validate location and condition, and potentially to validate wreck identify.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Approximately six hours were spent on this project. The majority of time was spent tracing Lloyd's Shipping Index entries to establish the ships voyages. The location data is noted from Wreck Site as this was the only information source available, but low confidence is indicated.

Particulars of the ship's construction and propulsion were verified across multiple primary sources including the 1989 Lloyd's Register (which would have been given priority in the event of conflict), 1988 reporter accounts of launch and sea tests, 1907 advertisements for sale of the vessel and reporter account of completion of same.

It is unlikely that more information concerning the SS Cyrene can be obtained online. It seems likely that by wrecking in 1918 the ship was reaching the end of her working life and increasingly confined to operating as a collier on local routes.

While records of the SS Cyrene would benefit from site recording and survey as part of the broader investigations into North Cardigan bay, no distinguishing characteristics of vessel, cargo or story were identified that would justify priority attention.

### References

A J Tennent, "British Merchant Ships Sunk by U-boats in World War One" (1990) <available 10 May 2020 at <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=dDv573hawjc&lpg=PA1&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q&f=false>>.

Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, "Mercantile Navy List" <available 18 May 2020 at <http://www.crewlist.org.uk/data/viewimages?year=1917>>.

National Maritime Museum, "BT 400/3434 - Crew Lists", "Ship: Cyrene; Official number: 95272" from <available 10 May 2020 at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C14135036>>.

HSMO, "Navy Losses and Merchant Shipping (Losses)" (1919) <extracted content available 10 May 2020 at <https://www.naval-history.net/WW1LossesBrMS1918.htm>>.

Lloyd's Register of British and Foreign Shipping from 1st July, 1889, to the 30th June, 1890 <available 10 May 2020 at <http://www.archive.org/stream/lloydsregisters28unkngoog#page/n4/mode/2up>>.

Lloyd's Shipping Index, archive records, <available 10 May 2020 at <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>.

Wiki-type contributions, "SS Cyrene [+1918]", Wreck Site <available 10 May 2020 at <https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?11546>>.

Appendix A – Table of Lloyd’s Registers entries for the SS Cyrene

CYP		LLOYD'S REGISTER.										1889-90				
1 No. for Special Survey, Official No. Code Letters.	2 Ship's Name, Material, Rig, &c. Master, and Dates of Appointment to present Owner's Service & to Ship. Ship's Late Name, No. of Decks, &c.	3 Register Tonnage Net Gross Under Deck	4 Registered Dimensions Length Breadth Depth			5 Moulded depth Freeboard etc. as ships ft. in.	6 Engines of Steamers. Builders of Engines. Materials. Repairs of Ships, &c., if Closed.	7 Built. Where. Builders' Names.		8 When	9 Owners.	10 Port belonging to.	11 Port of Survey.	12 No. of Survey.	13 Character of Assignment, for Hull and Steer. Also Date of Last Survey	14
1341 63991 LBSN	Cyphrenes SewStm Iron Sr <del>W. &amp; A. 1886-88</del> 2DksStrB 3BHds 1PBH Aspld 1904	1309 1994 1904	300-0	34-1	25-5		C.2Cy.40"a71"-39" NB82 250HP J.Elder&Co.Glasgow	Dundee AStephen&Sns	1872 2mo	C.W.Kellock FourtASurveyLiv. WB=JT	Liverp'l 88	Liv.	Lv	A101 2,903.88		
1342 28788 QBFS	Cypruss Sw Wood Bambra -78 cf 288	286 245 288	101-0	24-5	14-7		..... arp70&74	Sunderland Austin	1860 8mo	R.G.Sanders	Folkstne	Bly.	10 C7	1.81		
1343 78821 SDBH	Cypromene S Iron Robertson83-88 2Dks 1BHd Cem 1754	1834 1889 1754	260-0	39-5	24-0	26 " 6	..... arp90	Southampton Oswald, Mordaunt&Co.	1878 9mo	H.Fernie&Sns 2ndCal.No2-88 SecondSurveyCal.88	Liverp'l 88	Cal.	10 LV	100A1 2,903.88		
1344 68992 SGHP	Cyprus SewStm Iron Sr C.M'Cormick87-88 2Dks(Irn) 3trB 5BHds Cem 1656	1205 1889 1656	274-5	36-0	23-8	25 " 2 53 " 8 # 3 11	C.2Cy.33"a62"-42" (i) 80h 160HP G.Clark,Sunderland	Sunderland ShortBros. LM	1878 12mo 11,88	Taylor&Sanderson 2ndGot.No.3-84 2ndSid.No1-88 DBa 84/1/48/171ts FPT 30ts AP	S'ndrind 88	Sid.	10 LV	100A1 7.89		
1345 76248 RWKT	Cyrene SewStm Iron Sr E.Guild86-86 1Dk(Irn) 3trB 5BHds Cem 1182	832 1291 1182	245-0	33-2	19-6	20 " 9	C.2Cy.30"a56"-36" (s) 75h 160HP J.Shaw&Co.Newcastle BS11,59	Newcastle Wigham Richardson&C.	1878 8mo	Elliott,Lowrey & Dunford 2ndCal.No3-87 WB=DBa 70/1,79A	Newc'stl 88	Lon.	10 LV	100A1 6.89		
1346 95272 KFGW	Cyrene SewStm Steel Sr G.Hedley71-88 KeelonsIron 5BHds Cem 2778	1905 2953 2778	302-0	42-0	19-4	20 - 6	T3Cy.28i"38"a62"-42"(r) 150h 250HP G.Clark,Sunderland	Sunderland ShortBros. LM	1888 10mo 10,88	Lumsd'n,Byers &Co. DBa 92/1/50/1354tus FPT62tus	S'ndrind 88	Sid.	10 LV	100A1 10.88	Spar de	
1347	Cyrenian SewStm Iron	916	292-2	30-1	22-2	22 " 4	C.2Cy.33"a64"-36" 150h 250HP G.Clark,Sunderland	Liverpool	1874	SS.Cyrenian Co	Liverp'l	Liv.	Lv			

Appendix B – The Timeline for the SS Cyrene

1888, 4 September	Hull launched without engines, at that time it was the largest hull constructed by the Short Brothers firm, located Pallion, Sunderland.
1888, 17 October	Sea trials completed after engines installed by George Clark.
1888	Began regular Liverpool to Buenos Aires route (Liverpool to St Vincent, Maceio, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Roasrio)
1892	Began additional Antwerp to Callao route (Antwerp to London to Callao)
1894, 2 February	Collision with Italian barque Teresinella during a gale
1907, January	Sold to James Frazer and Co; ceased Liverpool to Buenos Aryes, and Antwerp to Callao routes; began United Kingdom to Mediterranean routes (Newcastle, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Marseilles, Genoa, Algiers)
1918, 5 April	Sunk by torpedo from German submarine UC-31

Appendix C – The Location for the SS Cyrene

