



**Welsh Wreck Web Research Project
(North Cardigan Bay)**

**On-line research into the wreck of the:
Schooner Diligent**



Report compiled by:
Melanie Taylor

Report Title:

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

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1.0 Abstract

Since 2001 the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) has built a database of vessels known to have wrecked in the north of Cardigan Bay. This was undertaken as part of their investigation in to the vessel designated under the Protection of Wreck Act (1973) as the 'Diamond'. The 'Diamond' had been wrecked on Sarn Badrig Reef in January 1825, but the vessel designated was later determined not to be the 'Diamond'.

During the process the database developed in to a large collection on names for vessels lost in the vicinity, however there is little investigative work that has been undertaken this project aims to look into the history of some of these vessels adding to the national historic record. This project was launched during the Corona Virus Pandemic, as a web-archive project giving interested individuals a focus during "lock-down".

This report focuses on the reports of a vessel named *Diligent*, wrecked at Abersoch, 1862. However, this research was not as simple as it would initially appear. In the WWW Project dataset this vessel was named as *Diligence*. Only through careful review of the primary sources of evidence was the real identity of the vessel uncovered and her story revealed.

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2.4 Contributors

The sole contributor to the text within this report is the author. However, the author acknowledges that without the internet databases that have been developed this review could not have been possible. This includes the Lloyd's Register Foundation Historic and Education Centre which provide access to multiple resources regarding the Lloyd's Register and Returns via their website.

Cover photograph taken by Peta Knott, 2019

2.5 Abbreviations

MADU Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit

3. Introduction

Since 2001 the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) has built a database of vessels known to have wrecked in the north of Cardigan Bay. This was undertaken as part of their investigation in to the vessel designated under the Protection of Wreck Act (1973) as the 'Diamond'. The 'Diamond' had been wrecked on Sarn Badrig Reef in January 1825, but the vessel designated was later determined not to be the 'Diamond'.

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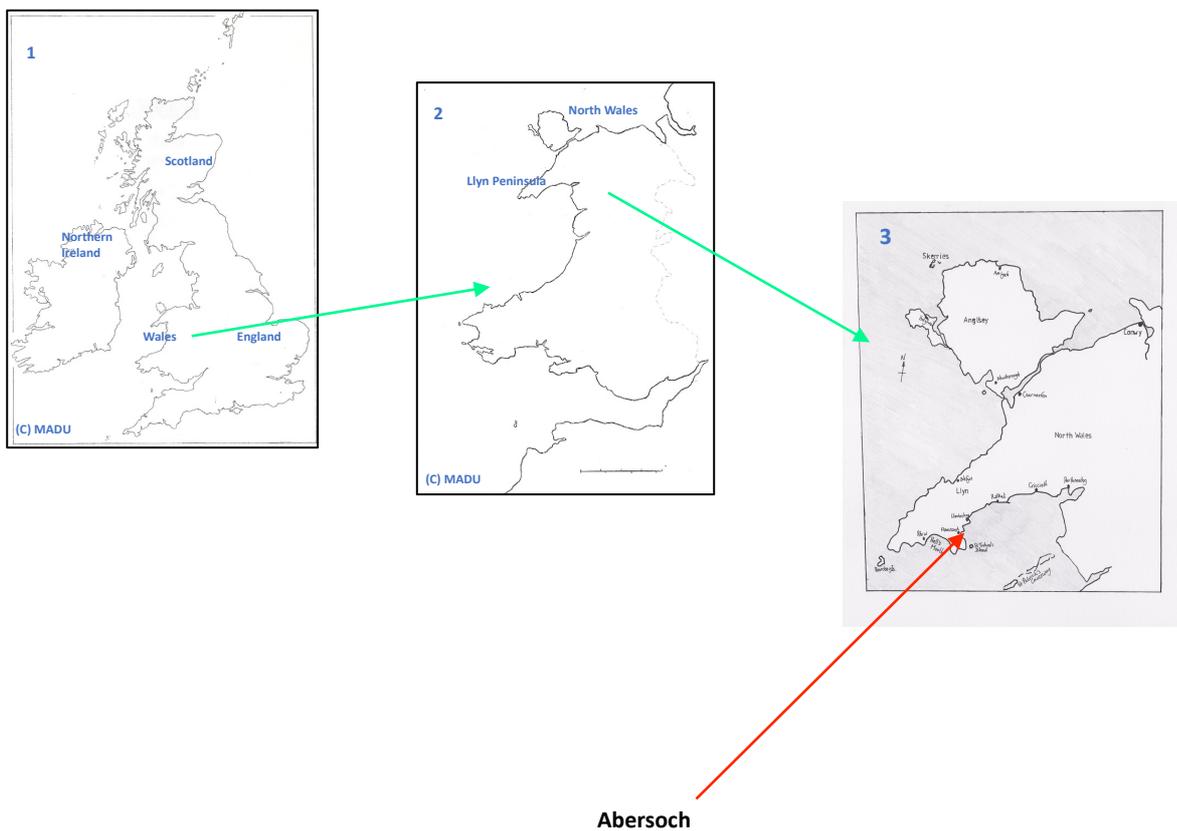
Using archive records available on the internet this project aims to see how much information regarding the wrecks listed in the MADU data set. The research will look at newspaper archives, Lloyd's Register plus any other identified resource. This particular report will focus specifically on the wreck of the *Diligent* although this was initially thought to be the *Diligence*.

4. Background

Prior to undertaking this report the author had no knowledge of the Diligence, except for name and date of wreck (02 February 1862).

Location

According to sources the Diligence went ashore and was wrecked at Abersoch. Maps 1, 2 and 3 show in turn British Isles, Wales and the Llyn Peninsular, North Wales, map 3 is hand drawn by the author.



5. Research Methodology

This report will focus solely on archival material available through internet resources. As a start the name of the vessel - Diligence - plus the approximate location - Abersoch - and the date of the wrecking - 02 February 1862 - are known. Therefore these will form the initial terms of any search undertaken.

Newspaper archives

There are two primary newspaper archives available on-line which cover Welsh related events:

1. Welsh Newspaper Archive: <https://newspapers.library.wales>
2. British Newspaper Archive: <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>

Both of these resources would be searched using the "Advanced Search" option in order to focus the search. It is important to note that a number of the Welsh newspapers are not published in English and therefore translation of these texts will be required to ensure that there is no information omitted.

Search Terms:

- Diligence
- Diligent
- Abersoch
- February 1862

Documentary Archives

There are multiple repositories of documents relating to wrecks available on-line. Key amongst these is the Lloyd's Register Foundation Heritage and Education Centre which provides an invaluable repository of, not only, Lloyd's Register but also the Casualty Returns. Other resources will also be accessed as listed below and using the previously determined search terms:

- Lloyd's Register; <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/lloyds-register-of-ships-online>
- Lloyd's Casualty Returns; <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/casualty-returns>
- Crew List Index; <https://crewlist.org.uk/#top>
- Plimsoll Database, Board of Trade Wreck Reports; https://southampton.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/WPAC/COMB_LOCAL

Once the particulars of the incident surrounding the wrecking have been examined information taken from this evidence to further explore the career of the Diligence, including voyages, crew and cargo. It may also be possible to explore the history of her owner through archives such as [ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk).

The search terms for this will be defined by the information found in the primary sources and are therefore subject to be as yet unknown. Any terms that are used will be described in the text, so that replication is possible.

6. Results

Table 1

Vessel	Name	<i>Diligent</i>
	Type	Schooner
Built	Date	1840
	Built	Fife
Construction	Materials	Wood
	Decks	1
Propulsion	Type	Sail
	Details	Not Known
Engine	Type	Not Applicable
	Details	Not Applicable
Dimensions	Length	Not Known
	Beam	Not Known
	Hold Depth	Not Known
Tonnage	Net	47
Owner		Not Known
Registry	Year / Port	1855, Liverpool
	Number	14306

Lloyd's Register

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1841)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1842)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1843)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1844)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1845)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1846)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1847)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1848)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1849)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1850)

Lloyd's Register of Shipping (1851)

Mercantile Navy List

Mercantile Navy List, 1861, page 539 Ship: DILIGENT
Mercantile Navy List, 1862, page 569 Ship: DILIGENT
Mercantile Navy List, 1863, page 616 Ship: DILIGENT
Mercantile Navy List, 1865, page 91 Ship: DILIGENT
Mercantile Navy List, 1878, page 220 Ship: DILIGENT, Sail

Appropriation Books

Appropriation Books, Official Numbers 15751 - 15800 (15771)
Appropriation Books, Official Numbers 14301 - 14350 (14306)

Newspaper Reports of Wrecking

Llanangan (1862) *The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality*, 1st February
The Late Shipwreck at Castellmarch (1862) *North Wales Chronicle*, 8th February
Royal National Lifeboat Institution (1862) *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 7th March
Maritime Extracts; Abersoch (1862) *Mercantile and Shipping Gazette*

Newspaper Reports (pre-1855)

Bo'ness (1851) *Falkirk Herald*, 31 July
Boston (1852) *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 19 May
Scarborough (1852) *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 18 October
Goole (1853) *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 27 September
Coasters (1854) *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette* 5 December
Harwich (1855) *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 22 February
Died (1855) *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 3 March

7. Discussion

The *Diligence* appears in the WWW dataset as it is listed as a vessel wrecked at Abersoch, 2 February 1862, on the www.PennLlyn.com website¹. An initial newspaper archive search was undertaken and it was immediately clear that this was not going to prove to be an straight forward investigation. The first discrepancy is noted to be in the date of the incident, as there seems to be a variance.

A newspaper article, printed on 1 February 1862² refers to an incident on the 22 January 1862, where the schooner *Diligence* of Nevin had gone ashore and the lifeboat crew had managed to rescue the crew. This account is disputed by 8 February³ through a letter to the citing newspaper's editor, in which the writer suggests that it was not the crew of the lifeboat that went out but other locals. This in itself is an interesting contradiction, asking why would such an allegation of false representation be made, but more importantly in this account, whilst confirming date and times, gives a different, although similar, name for the vessel, *Diligent*. The validity of this contradictory reports is somewhat questionable as there is newspaper reports from the RNLI itself⁴ recounting involvement in the rescue of the crew of the *Diligent*, on 23 January earning rewards amounting to £21 10s to the crew. Whilst this article confirms the name of the vessel as *Diligent* and indicates that the RNLI were involved there is a discrepancy in date, although this can be easily explained as the rescue took place over night, therefore ending on 23 January. It does though change the vessels home port to Carnarvon. These contradictions make identification of the vessel in question complicated, giving two different, if similar names and differing home ports.

Therefore, it is necessary to identify from official documents if there are any matches for the evidence that is available. The most obvious place to look for potential vessels is the Mercantile Navy List of 1862⁵, as this will list all registered British vessels a this date of that name and compare to the previous and subsequent years.

First examination of the 1862 List⁵ clearly showed these vessels listed, both for *Diligence* and *Diligent*. There are 21 vessels named *Diligence*, of which five are from or near North Wales:

Newry - 19123
Cardigan - 23439
Cardigan - 25287
Aberystwith - 9817
Peel - 14383

On the same page is also listed vessels named *Diligent*, although at nine vessels this list is considerably shorter and this is also true of vessels operating around North Wales under this name, one, from Carnarvon with official number 14306. These numbers of vessels for *Diligent* remain unchanged in 1861⁶, but for *Diligence* there is an addition of one vessel to the list, that of *Diligence* of Aberystwith, official number 15771, suggesting that something had happened to this vessel during 1861 or early 1862 and therefore worthy of further investigation in this context. Between 1861 and 1863⁷ ship number

15771 is the only vessel listed in the Mercantile Navy List for either *Diligence* or *Diligent*. Even the vessel which most closely answers the evidence available for this project appears in the List, vessel 14306. This enables the search to be more tightly targeted, to the *Diligence* of Aberystwith, 15771 and the *Diligent* of Carnarvon 14306, attempting to answer two questions:

1. What happened to the *Diligence* (15771)?
2. If it was the *Diligent* of Carnarvon (14306) which went ashore at Abersoch what was the outcome?

Of these two questions, possibly the easiest question to answer, in relation to this investigation is the fate of the *Diligence*. Accessing her records, which are available on the crewlist.org.uk website it is possible to review her listing in the Appropriation Book⁸, which list vessels numerically. A handwritten note next to her entry states clearly that she was lost in January 1861, although no location is given. Nor has it been possible to identify any such intelligence, relating to the *Diligence* in any contemporary newspapers. However, this information is suggestive of this vessel being ruled out as one of the two possibles for the vessel reported at Abersoch, leaving just the *Diligent* of Carnarvon as the vessel ashore at Abersoch, confirming the corrections made in the latter newspaper reports^{3, 4}.

The Appropriation Book for *Diligent*⁹ provides a significant amount of information about her. She was a small vessel of 47 tons, which is typical of many of the vessels operating in the coasting trade around Wales at the time. She was registered at Liverpool on 5 March 1855.

Further evidence from the Mercantile Navy List⁷ also suggests that this vessel continues its career post the date that is given for her wrecking. The last entry for the *Diligent* (14306) is in the 1878 edition of the Mercantile Navy List¹⁰, which provides information regarding her origins, 1840 in Fife and ownership, Mr Evan Edwards of Merioneth. Unfortunately, though in the edition available the dimensions of the vessel are not given, as this is a later development of the Mercantile Navy List, but it does indicate, along with the 1865 edition¹¹ (the earliest edition where this data is recorded) that her registered tonnage is somewhat larger than that which was recorded in her listing in the Appropriations Book⁹, which may be explained through one or two ways. The first of these is that the Appropriations Book⁹ refers to Net tonnage and the Mercantile Navy List^{10, 11} refers to a different measurement, perhaps Gross. However, it is also possible, and even highly likely, that *Diligent* may have undergone some form of reconstruction, though without access to the vessel's official log this is purely theoretical. But speculation may lead to the possibility of the change being made in 1862 following the repairs required following her going ashore at Abersoch.

There is evidence though, from a newspaper article¹², that she was gotten off the beach on 30 August 1862, by her purchaser. This evidence also suggests that she would have lay on the beach at Abersoch for seven months, a long period of time that would indicate that substantial repairs would have been required. One thing though is almost certain, that this vessel does not lie wrecked on Abersoch Beach.

As an academic exercise the history of the *Diligent* was examined in greater depth, in an attempt to understand more about the master / owner of her at the time of her going ashore at Abersoch. From the evidence in the Mercantile Navy List of 1865¹¹ she was built at Fife, Scotland in 1840. Examination of the Lloyd's Register of Shipping for 1841¹³ lists a vessel called *Diligent* built in 1840 operating out of Kirkaldy and owned by F. Pringle (also master). Between 1841 and 1850^{13 - 22} she remains under the ownership of her master F. Pringle, but in 1850²² there is a change in master to T. Goodsir and in 1851 there is no entry for her in the Lloyd's Register²³. However, due to the way vessels are recorded in Lloyd's Register of Shipping there are no indications as to her dimensions, such as overall length. As she has obviously been inspected by the Lloyd's agent, having a "A1" classification applied to her in the 1844 register¹⁶, it may be possible to obtain from Lloyd's Historic Education Foundation, a copy of the survey report as some point in the future, although at this time such an exercise is not possible due to the COVID-19 restrictions that are currently in place.

Based on official records, that are currently available, it is not possible to deduce her whereabouts between 1850 and 1855, where she is re-registered in Liverpool⁹. However, newspaper reports can provide information that may be sufficient to fill the gaps. On 23 July 1851 the *Diligent* under Goodsir is listed as having arrived at Bo'Ness on the Forth River and sailing from there to Middlesborough on 25 July²⁴. Just short of a year later, in May 1852 a vessel named *Diligent* under a master Turner, is listed as arriving at Boston, Lincolnshire²⁵ from Middlesborough, although it is not certain that this is the same vessel the infrequency of the name *Diligent* on sailing vessels and the reference to Middlesborough are suggestive that this is the same vessel. Evidence suggests that she continues in this locality for the rest of 1852, arriving in Scarborough in October²⁶ and on through 1853²⁷ thorough to February 1855^{28, 29}. This would suggest that she was sold on in February and re-registered in Liverpool on 5 March. Her official number was given to her at this time, following the introduction of the Merchant Shipping Repeal Act [1854] which required registration of all merchant vessels operating in British waters. A possible explanation for her sale and re-register at Liverpool, at this time is that, based on newspaper evidence³⁰, her master George Turner, had died, at the age of 39, on 1 March 1855.

8. Conclusions & Recommendations

This record within the WWW project dataset has been a complex one to unpick, citing a vessel named *Diligence*. Careful review of the primary sources reveals that this name was inaccurately recorded in initial reports and in doing so demonstrates the importance of maintaining an open mind when researching vessels cited in secondary resources and subsequent research in primary resources. The correct name for the vessel that went ashore at Abersoch on 22 January 1862² and referenced in the PennLlyn.com website¹ as 2 February 1862 is actually the *Diligent*^{3, 4}.

Following the evidence from the contemporary newspaper reports^{2 - 4} it was possible to identify a vessel that fits the 'description' from the official records of the period - the *Diligent* 14306 - a small schooner of Carnarvon. Also based on the evidence from both the newspaper dated 10 September 1862¹² and the Mercantile Navy Lists^{7, 10, 11}. It is also possible to conclude that the *Diligent* was subsequently removed from the beach at Abersoch and continue to operate as a trading vessel until 1878¹⁰. Therefore the evidence suggests that the *Diligence* should be moved from the current dataset.

Recommendations

The evidence from this project has raised more questions than it has answered. Although it is suggested, based on the contemporary evidence, that the *Diligence* was incorrectly identified and that the vessel should have identified as the *Diligent* it is unclear of the final outcome for this vessel or the other vessels that were reviewed during the course of the research undertaken for this report. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

1. Identify through access to official log how the *Diligent* 14306 ended her career
2. Try to uncover evidence of how and when the *Diligent* 14306 was sold and any evidence of repairs undertaken
3. Determine what happened to the *Diligence* 15771

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