

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



Report compiled by:
Jay Grave

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1.0 Abstract

The Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) maintain a database of more than 453 shipwrecks in the north end of Cardigan Bay in north west Wales. The list was compiled between 2001 and 2009 when MADU were working under license on the Welsh designated wreck site known as the Diamond. These wrecks date from 1590 to 1993. Very few have been investigated in any depth. During the coronavirus outbreak and subsequent quarantines of 2020 and 2021, an on-line research project was undertaken to provide a way for MADU friends and family to remain connected while accomplishing an interesting maritime historical task.

The online "Research Project," utilizes online and print resources while practicing safe social-distancing protocols, to synthesize historical information concerning the ships on the MADU database, including the circumstances of their loss, details of the owners and crew, the cargo carried and other history.

This particular research project investigates the loss of the *Elizabeth*. On January 1st, 1808, she and her crew were reported stranded in Caernarfonshire, Tremadog Bay, near Pwllheli, Wales, in *Lloyd's List*. The wreck site has been identified in the bay, however there is very little information presently known about the *Elizabeth*, her crew or cargo, the wreck or any rescue/recovery effort. What could be collected is reported here.

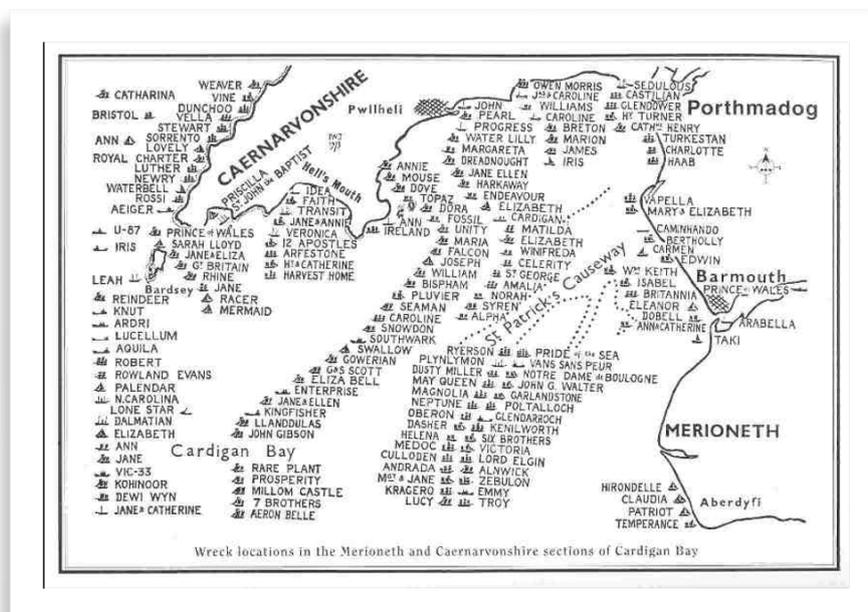


Fig 1. The above map is taken from "Shipwrecks of North Wales" by Ivor Wynne Jones, and shows around 38% of the wrecks on MADU's database.

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2.4 Contributors

I would like to give significant credit to Ian Cundy, for his guidance in this project. From the very beginning he graciously offered corrections and his careful eye for edits. I am grateful for his willingness to scan and email pages from books inaccessible to me.

2.4 Abbreviations

CLIP	Crew List Index Project
LL	Lloyd's List
MADU	Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit
NAS	Nautical Archaeology Society
RMG	Royal Museum of Greenwich

3.0 Introduction

There is very little information known concerning the wreck of the *Elizabeth* on Tremadog Bay. The wreck was reported in *Lloyd's List* (LL) on January the 1st, 1808. This wreck was reported elsewhere in the following days and months with no additional information published. The wreck and wreck site are included in a database of wrecks in north west Wales compiled by the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) along with more than 400 additional wrecks in the area. Larn & Larn, include the wreck of the *Elizabeth* in their *Shipwreck Index of the British Isles: Volume 5 – West Coast and Wales*.

During the initial coronavirus outbreak and subsequent quarantines of 2020 and 2021, an ongoing research project was developed to explore these wrecks using online and socially-distanced methods. The project was created in such a way as to connect members and friends of MADU with each other while at the same time compiling interesting maritime historical data. In the March of 2021, while quarantine time continued, I joined this project to connect with others and explore historical research data connected to four of my interests of family, sailing, scuba, and archaeology (not always in that order).

From December of 2020 and continuing to the present, my family and I are living our lockdown days on our 15 meter cruising sailboat, *Vivaldi*. We are moored in Roccelle Ionica, Italy awaiting the end of the red-days of lockdown, hoping to continue our journey to Malta for the summer months, as I write these words. My wife and I are homeschooling two of our three children, a thirteen year old girl, Isla and a three year old boy, Thørin, along the way. Our oldest daughter, Isabelle, studies at Pacific Lutheran University in Washington, USA.

As a sailor, I have great interest in sail-craft, traveling, and boats. I often wonder about the history of wrecks marked on charts and the lives of their sailors. I, of course, do whatever I can to avoid being shipwreck on those charts! I wonder about the harbors and through the passage of time. I dream, like every sailer, of the treasure down below and I am drawn by the romantic notion of traveling under the power of the wind and wave, I think often of the courageous sailors of old.

My proficiency in scuba was born out of a love for water and the undersea world and was nursed by boating-necessity before growing into a full-fledged hobby/obsession. The undersea world is like no other. The sounds and sights never cease to amaze, the gear is fascinating, the locales offer opportunities for travel and of course there are more practical aspects. There is much work to do under and around a boat and especially while living aboard full time. Acquiring the skills and tools to accomplish many of these tasks is much more cost efficient than paying someone else to do them for you; at least that is what I tell my wife.

I have been married to a beautiful and talented woman named Elizabeth for nearly fifteen years. She is a spectacular partner and I can't imagine traveling the world with anyone else. It didn't take long for me to choose the *Elizabeth* from the database of lost ships. This is a name I know intimately. Having a "Wreck of the *Elizabeth*" to bring up in conversation seemed like a great opportunity for marital bliss (or well-intentioned dis-bliss).

Lastly, I have been interested in archaeology for as long as I can remember, particularly maritime archaeology. During my undergraduate studies, I spent a brief time living/studying near the Yigal Allon Museum at Kibbutz Ginosar, Israel; near the "Jesus Boat." I was able to do field work on the Bethsaidi dig during the summer of 1996. Later, while doing graduate work in Copenhagen, Denmark, I would take visiting friends and family on tours of the Viking Ship museum at Roskilde. I am forever taking my kids on homeschool field trips to ruins and archaeological museums, and a walk on the beach with me can often take the better part of a day. I wonder what is underneath the stones and hills and rocks. I wonder who are the people who live there and I have a yearning to know all I can about the lives of the people involved. These interests intersect so very well at the point of the MADU online research project.

I have been able to find very little information about this particular vessel, *Elizabeth*, under the leadership of a Captain Lewis, unfortunately. Many *Elizabeths* are listed in *Lloyd's Lists* and there are also several Lewis' listed as Master. I found no photos or drawings of this particular *Elizabeth*. I found scarcely any information to identify this particular ship and ship wreck. I was unable to identify any information concerning the building or ownership of this ship. I found no record of a rescue or recovery operation. There are reported to be remains of the shipwreck in Tremadog Bay at the coordinates of 52.53.45N 04.23.00W.

I was able to use online navigation tools to imagine a sailing plan for the *Elizabeth* that would have put her on the aground in Tremadog Bay shortly before January the first, 1808. I used mapping software to mark the location of the wreck site on a map included in this report.

In the following sections of this report, I will share the known history of the *Elizabeth* run aground and reported in *Lloyd's List*. You will also find my research methodology, results and analysis. I will offer some of my conclusions and recommendations before listing the references and resources used in this online research project.

My hope is this will be a jumping off point for future researchers who may connect more deeply with the wreck of the *Elizabeth*.

No other details of this particular wreck were given in following editions of *Lloyd's List*. A search of the British Newspaper Archive uncovered a republishing of this *LL* news item in the *Caledonia Mercury* on January 4, 1808. This is not uncommon as the *Lloyd's List* shipping news was often republished in local newspapers. Below is a screen shot of the published bulletin in the *Caledonia Mercury*. A *Wikipedia* article on "Shipwrecks in 1807," restates the *Elizabeth* was,

"...driven to shore at Pwllheli, Caernafonshire. She was on a voyage from Dublin to Bristol, Gloucestershire."

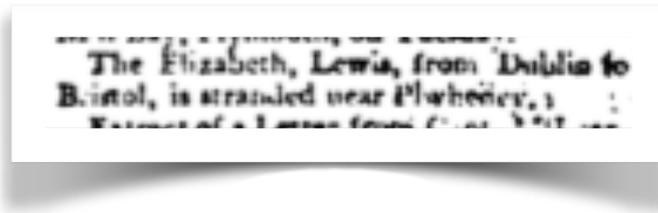


Fig 3. Caledonia Mercury. Jan 4, 1808.

While there are many many references to *Elizabeths*, published in *LL*, I was unable to identify any as "*Elizabeth, Lewis*." I turned to the Crew List Index Project (CLIP) to find the *Elizabeth* and her skipper, Lewis. CLIP is a volunteer project, set up to assist research into the records of British merchant seafarers of the late 19th and early 20th century. CLIP maintains a large database of seafarers' records and provide resources used by maritime researchers. Unfortunately, I didn't have enough information for a Crew List search to be useful in identifying this particular *Elizabeth* or this Captain Lewis.

Lloyd's List is credited within the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) database for providing the following information, including a position of the wreck (Table 1.)

Name:	ELIZABETH
Date of wrecking:	01/01/1808 (R)
Location:	Caernarfonshire, Tremadog Bay, Pwllheli, near
Co-ordinates:	52.53.45N 04.23.00W
Voyage:	Dublin - Bristol
Ship type:	Sailing vessel (unspecified)
Construction:	Wood
Flag:	United Kingdom
Propulsion:	Sail
Captain:	Lewis
	LL (Lloyd's List) No 4,216: 01.01.1808 (Fri) (R)

Table 1. MADU Database. *Elizabeth*.

I was unable to determine the sailing plan for the *Elizabeth* from Dublin to Bristol using historical records. Below is a sketch map of steamer routes from England to Scotland and Ireland from 1891. You can see the proposed route from Bristol to Dublin. (fig.4).

From the map below, this sailing journey would have been approximately 245 nm, not accounting for needed tacking based on wind direction. This is a near the round trip from Tottenham Hotspur Stadium to Old Trafford in Manchester.

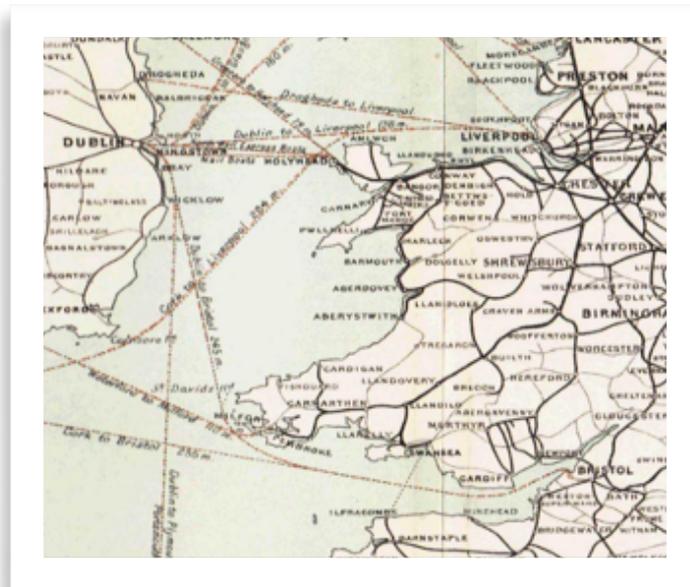


Fig 4. Sketch Map of Routes From England and Scotland to Ireland (1891)

Neither Larn & Larn, nor LL identify the which type of wooden sailing vessel best identifies the *Elizabeth*. The historical record, derived from *Lloyd's List* does provide information that several of the *Elizabeth's* were Brigs (fig 5).

For arguments sake let's assume our *Elizabeth* was also a brig. A brig in 1808 may well have a maximum speed of nearly eleven knots and a cruising speed of approximately six knots. Again, assuming no stops over a direct course with an average speed of eight knots, this voyage from Bristol to Dublin would have taken the *Elizabeth* approximately twenty-six hours of sailing time. There was nothing in the historical record, that I was able to find, which noted a sail plan or



Fig 5. Typical 1800's Brig.

departure time for the *Elizabeth*, but if she set sail at noon, assuming eight knots she would have been near the wreck site (not on the direct Bristol/Dublin route) round 1pm, or 25 hours later.

To be absolutely clear, this travel estimate is not from the historical record but is provided to better imagine the wreck. The wreck position as identified by Larn & Larn can be seen in the following figure. The coordinates are 52°53'45.0"N 4°23'00.0"W. I found no information regarding a survey of the wreck site.

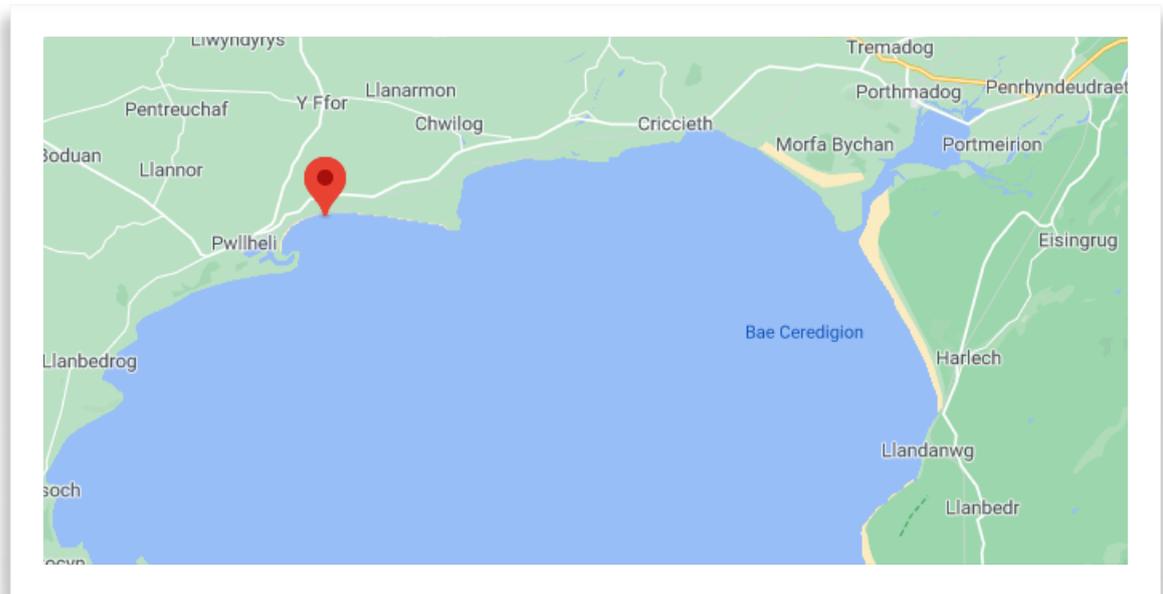


Fig 6. Map of Wreck Site

This is the sum of the information I was able to identify for the wreck of the *Elizabeth*. In the following section, I will share the research methodology and resources explored while looking for additional information on the *Elizabeth*, her captain and crew, her cargo, her remains and her legacy.

5. Research Methodology & Results

This section describes my research methodology, including the tools and online resources I used in completing this report. Work began on this research project in March of 2021, during the time my family and I were living full time on our sailboat on the Italian coast. I am thankful for mobile wifi and the Vodafone and WindTre mobile routers and Sim cards that kept me connected to the outside and online world. I used an Apple MacBook Pro laptop. The MacBook was up-to-date running MacOS Catalina 10.15.7. Internet Explorer is my internet browser and Google and Google Scholar were most used search engines. I used Windy and Navionics Chart Plotter for creating the sail plan and navigational charts including plotting the Bristol to Dublin route and plotting the wreck site. I use Apple Pages as my word processor and the final document was saved as a .pdf.

My research began with the MADU database as provide by the Ian Cundy. I cannot express my gratitude sufficiently. Ian was so helpful to me during this project. While not a new researcher this was my first go in many of these archives. Ian was quick to offer support and advice as well as scanning the appropriate pages in Larn & Larn when I didn't have access to it. Ian also read a first and embarrassingly dreadful draft.

The MADU database was a jumping off point and a Google search or two brought my to the online and searchable *Lloyd's List*, available through the Royal Museum of Greenwich. I knew to start with LL (*Lloyd's List*) No 4,216: 01.01.1808 (Fri) (R), thanks to the information provided. I quickly needed a *Lloyd's List* tutorial which was provided by the Royal Museum, Wikipedia, and historian Michael Palmer. Continued searching led me, with a brief stop a Wikipedia, to the British Newspaper Archive and a republishing of an early *Lloyd's List* by the *Caledonia Mercury*. Online searches included, *Elizabeth*, *Elizabeth* 1808, *Elizabeth* 1808 wrecks, *Elizabeth*, Lewis, *Elizabeth* 1808 stranded, and so on.

Understanding that the *Elizabeth* was on her way to Bristol from Dublin, I tried including more terms including, "Bristol, Dublin, 1809, 1807, Tremadog, Pwllheli, Plwheley" and so on in various combinations. I found many, *many*, articles of stranded and wrecked *Elizabeths*. I found much history on ships named *Elizabeth* which were connected in one way or another to Dublin or Bristol. I discovered several ships commanded by Lewis's. I even found a ship named the *Elizabeth Lewis* commanded by Master Lewis. However, I was able to uncover any more information about this particular wreck.

I started to wonder about the journey and the wreck site. Being a sailor myself, I tried to put myself at the helm of the *Elizabeth* and create the sailing plan through the imagined eyes of Captain Lewis. Using Google and Google Scholar, I started searching sailing plans, shipping routes, to determine the 17th Century factors in play developing this route. I found a website devoted to steaming ships which provided a sketch map of passenger routes and fares from England to Scotland and Ireland. I like maps and charts so I spent a great deal of time researching admiralty charts from the early 1800's.

I continued to imagine what might cause a ship like the *Elizabeth* to be driven ashore in this area. I created a route map of the route as if it were sailed today using Navionics charting software (fig 7). I plotted the course from the approximate center of today's Dublin harbor. I did the computations for distance using Windy and Navionics.

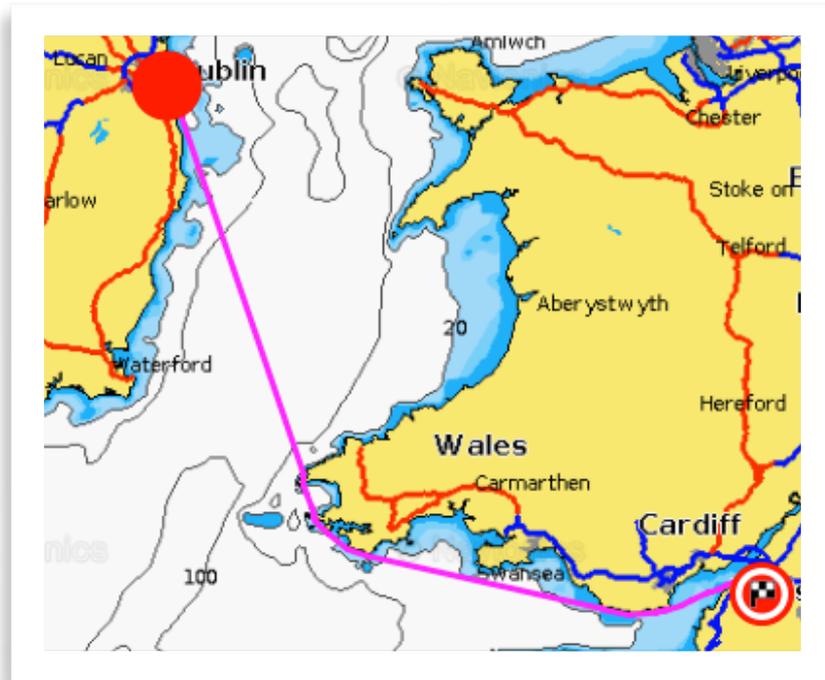


Fig 7. Navionics. Bristol to Dublin.

Being unfamiliar with the waters and route included, I wanted to better imagine the view. I used online tools to create a sail plan for me in my current vessel. Using Navionics and Windy, I looked at wind and tide information for December and January to better understand what the water conditions could have been. I found some impressive photos of the current Bristol harbor and Dublin harbors not included in this research project. I similarly Googled searched images of the harbors of both Dublin and Bristol near the date of Elizabeth's loss. It was helpful to imagine what an *Elizabeth* may have looked like in the time before her wreck.

I began to look at Pwllheli harbor, as well. While I found no historic information about the *Elizabeth* making berth at Pwllheli, because of it's location so near the wreck. Below is a photo of the harbor at Pwllheli in 1890, eighty-two years after the wreck of the *Elizabeth*. You will notice the wooden sailboat supposedly on land for repairs, as well as the large rocks quite near to this vessel.

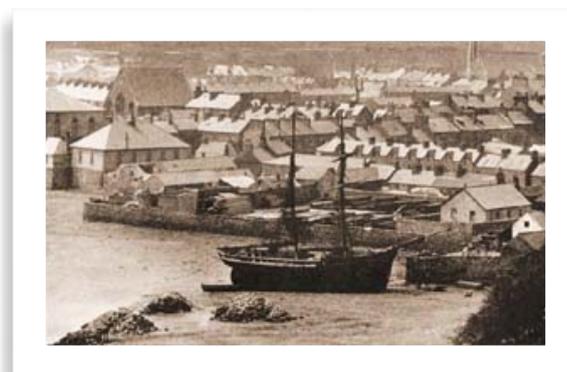


Fig 8. Pwllheli Harbor. 1890.

The MADU database identifies that the *Elizabeth* was a wooden sailing vessel but does not identify what type of vessel. Using Google and Google scholar, I found more information about vessels of the time. The historical record, including *LL*, identify many brigs who were making a route from Dublin to Bristol and returning during the time of the wreck of the *Elizabeth*. Desiring to continue computational work on a sail plan, I took the liberty of using a brig to calculate speed and time. N.B. this is not in the historical record.

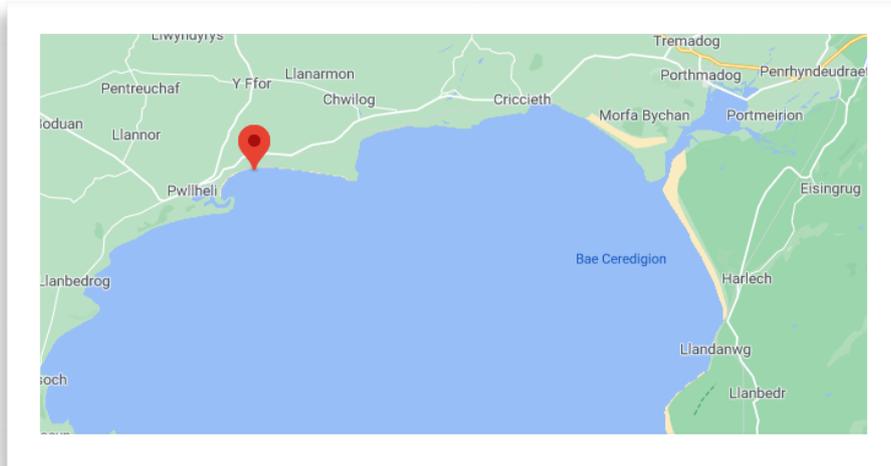


Fig 9. Map of Wreck Site

Unfortunately, the *Elizabeth* safely on the water, is not why we are here. In my mind's eye, it was time to better imagine the wreck itself. Using the vital statistics provided in the MADU database and using the coordinates given, I charted the wreck on a Navionics map. Here was a great learning opportunity for me. While I correctly converted the latitude and longitude to a format more accessible for my charting work, I incorrectly interpreted the notation. I then incorrectly positioning the wreck. Thanks to a careful editor, I was able to learn from my mistakes. The correct location is noted on the chart of vital statistics above and identified with a red dot on the map (fig 9).

I created a closer version of the area including the wreck site, Pwllheli, and Tremadog Bay, with the hopes of identifying shoals and shallow areas on today charts that may correspond the historical point where the *Elizabeth* ran into trouble.

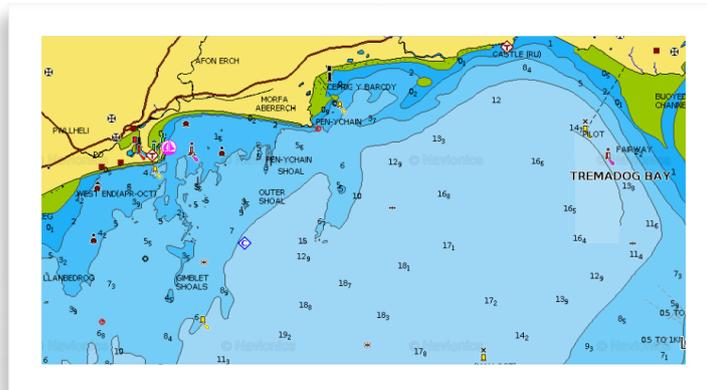


Fig 10. Pwllheli and Tremadog Bay.

My research then took a new turn. I started to Google and Google image dive shops and underwater photography in the area. Searches include Tremadog Bay, Phlwheli, and more. I found in this part of the search a great desire to see that part of world with my own eyes.

On the next few pages you will find my analysis and conclusions from the research portion on the wreck of the *Elizabeth*. As noted earlier information was scarce for this particular wreck, the ship, the crew or cargo of this wooden boat. Unfortunately, I did not bring any new information to light, nor was I able to fill in any blanks on the MADU database table of vital statistics.

In the next section, I will share a brief analysis of the research results. Following that I offer a few conclusions and recommendations for future investigatory work on the *Elizabeth*.

6. Analysis

The morale of the story is do not name your sailboat, *Elizabeth*.

One of the biggest struggles in this research project was the sheer number of ships named *Elizabeth* and the number of Captains named Lewis. *Lloyd's List* would offer up a bit of information or I would be in the midst of finding something that could be potentially important and my hopes would be dashed when this *Elizabeth* would be half a world away or scores of years before/ after *my Elizabeth*.

However, even with a scarcity of information on this particular shipwreck, this report is testament to the varied directions research can lead. The analysis of a make-believe *Elizabeth* may not be archaeological in the purest sense, but it can certainly give a student of history a fresh perspective and several new jumping off points.

Elizabeth, this ship (and also my wife) may forever remain a mystery but in the last few pages we have seen glimpses of ways we may investigate and uncover and cherish her a bit more.

Vessel	Name/s	Elizabeth
	Type	Unknown Sailing Ship.
Built	Date	Unknown.
	Builder	Unknown.
Construction	Materials	Wood
Propulsion	Type	Sail
Owner	First	Unknown.
Registry	Port	Unknown.
Final Voyage	From	Dublin
Wrecking	Date	Jan 1, 1808 (R)
	Location	Caernarfonshire, Tremadog Bay, near Pwllheli. 52.53.45N 04.23W

Table 2. Elizabeth Vital Statistics

7. Conclusions & Recommendations

Even with a scarcity of information, I am thankful for this project for several reasons. While I am no newbie when it comes to social-science research, this was my first time using many of these archives and sources. I have no doubt that with more practice I would be able to uncover something, *anything*, about the wreck of the *Elizabeth*, Master Lewis, the crew or cargo of this ship. I will not leave her abandoned. I am grateful for this opportunity, particularly in the quiet days of covid-19 lockdown.

I am grateful for this project affirming my own interests. Using my own instincts and gifts helped me to follow a research path that could have brought to light new information. I would love to see where someone else starting with this same information a might be led by the *Elizabeth*.

I am also pleased to get to know another part of the world. I love to travel and although I never left the comfort of my own laptop while chasing *Elizabeth*, I feel that through this project, I have been introduced to new harbors, communities, people, and locales. Perhaps someday in the future, I will be able to walk along these shores or better yet sail and dive in these waters. I would love to meet the people effected by the wreck of the *Elizabeth*. I am sure that somewhere along Tremadog Bay there is a someone who know something about the *Elizabeth*.

I am also so grateful to get to know a few of my fellow researchers in the process. I have read many of the other reports created during this project and have caught glimpses of the writers in each and every one. I have sent countless emails to the other researchers. I have seen your pictures on the NAS or MADU websites and I have stalked, friended, followed, liked, or added several on social media. It is a joy.

I would approximate my research, writing and editing time to be just short of 30 hours. I spent a great deal of time being led on wild goose chases, examining charts, reading about other *Elizabeths*, shopping for scuba gear, planing new adventures, etc. but the bulk of time was focused on this specific wreck. It was a steep learning curve using new research tools and archives as well as some geography lessons. If I was beginning again, I would be much more efficient.

I would recommend against a group or NAS club or dive school event at the *Elizabeth*, at this point. A more captivating story would be helpful to bring interest to a broader base of people. There is too little background information to garner the support or drum up the interest for a large group. There are better wrecks to choose from in the area.

I would, however, love to get in the bay and look around, mostly to satisfy my own curiosity. I would like to make the dive and see if there is anything there. When the time comes, in the future, there are only about four-hundred other known wreck sites in the area to visit, not to mention harbors and ships to see, pubs to eat and drink in, and so many people to meet.

Being closer to the wreck site and finding a personal connection would be the best way to continue any research into this wreck. Online research on this wreck seems to have hit a dead end. A personal or local connection may bring new life to this project. Without that connection, the research energy might be best expended on another site, in my humble opinion.

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