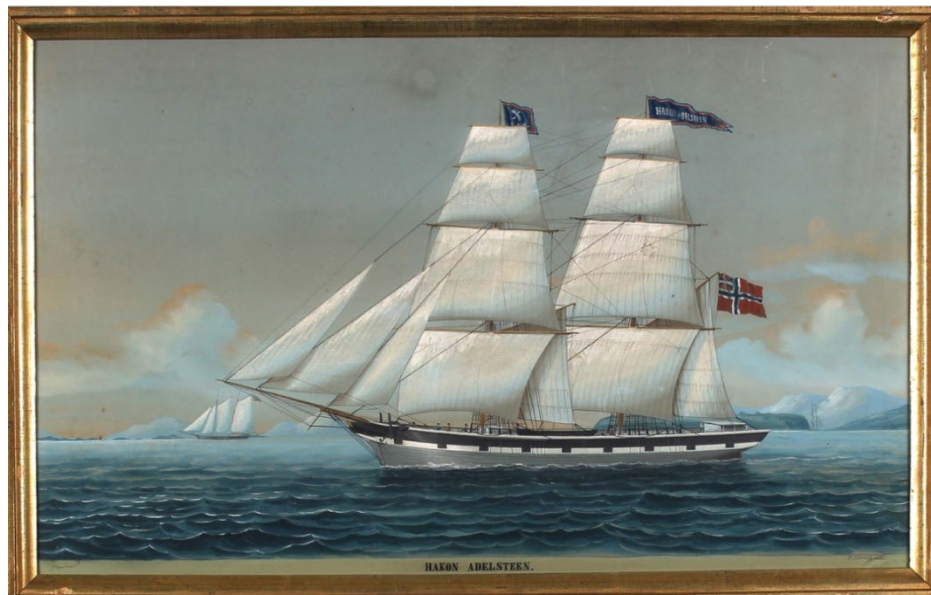


Welsh Wreck Web Research Project (North Cardigan Bay)

On-line research into the Unknown Wreck of Aberdaron Bay - January 16th, 1853 (*Haakon Adelsten?*)



Report compiled by:

Riccardo Mandolini

Report Title:

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January 16th, 1853 (Haakon Adelsten?)***

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1.0 Abstract

The www Research Project has involved researchers from all over the world in the last months to carry on a literature research on a list of lost vessels along the coast of Cardigan Bay, in Wales. Thanks to the resources found online, it has been possible to digitally dig into many pieces of information, which eventually sum up to delineate the story of the vessel and this, unexpectedly, comes with profound amazement. The surprise is even bigger if one begins with an unknown ship and slowly finds out that she could be named. The project has started as a COVID-safe activity during the pandemic in 2020 and it proved to be an exciting practical first-hand experience. The reports will be coordinated by MADU, for forwarding to the RCAHMW for adding to the Welsh maritime historical record and their Coflein on-line database and to GAT for adding to their regional HER and their Archwilio on-line database.

This report focuses on the unknown vessel MADU Ref. N. 113. The starting point was the record N. 271572 in the Coflein database, which reports a newspaper article from February 3rd 1853. From this point on, it has been an exciting discovery, leading to a reconstruction of events and to the Bergen Maritime Museum.

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2.4 Abbreviations

cl	commerce-lest
EIC	East India Company
GAT	Gwynedd Archaeology Trust
HER	Historic Environment Record
IJNA	International Journal of Nautical Archaeology
inst.	Instante Mense (current month)
MADU	Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit
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

The unknown vessel, listed with MADU Ref. N. 113, was chosen because very little information was present in the records, hoping to grasp a clue from the news at the time of the loss. The location of the wreck was listed to be either “Lleyn” or “Aberdaron” or “Penycaera”. However, as discussed later, Bardsey Island and a location called Pwllheli are related to the last days of the vessel.

Llŷn, often written Lleyn or Llyn, is the Peninsula which extends 30 miles (50 km) into the Irish Sea from North West Wales (Map 1). The scant information on the ship refers that she was a sailing vessel made of wood and was lost on the 20th of January 1853 in the above location due to a gale. As we will see, the actual date of the loss is January 16th 1853.

In the next section, the historical tracing of the data is leading to a manned crew on a long voyage, typical Scandinavian goods, a gale and an auction.



Map 1: Position of the shipwreck and highlighted locations relative to the historical tracing.

4.0 Research Methodology

The research has been performed on-line using Firefox® browser from a desktop computer, running Microsoft Windows 10 Enterprise®, located at the James Cook University Campus in Townsville, Queensland (AU). The ArcGIS Pro® software has also been used to create Map 1.

The only possible approach to the research was to start from the Coflein database and to go to the pointed news published at the time of the shipwreck. The following are the steps of the historical tracing and the related findings:

- <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/271572/>

Starting point – First information – Nature of the goods – No name

Coflein database reports an unnamed shipping casualty listed in the Lloyds List on 3 February 1853 regarding a derelict vessel onshore at Aberdaron (near Penycraera) which had gone to pieces. "The beach became strewn with small skins, codfish bones, and a quantity of sailors clothing, some of the clothes being marked EIC. It was surmised that the ship's cargo had consisted of oil, Stockholm tar, small skins and codfish".

- <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001316/18530121/040/0007>

Characteristics of the ship – Exact date – Still no name

The Evening Mail from Friday 21st January 1853 reports that in "Pwllheli (Jan. 17) a vessel of about 62 feet keel, very sharp fore and aft, fir built, recently sheathed with zinc and laden with oil, was washed on shore yesterday, bottom up, about two miles to the east of Bardsey".

This report refers to "yesterday" which means that the casualty occurred on the 16th of January 1853

- <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002194/18530119/025/0003>

A schooner? – Cargo is to be saved – Still no name

The Sun (London) from Wednesday 19th January 1853 reports that in "Pwllheli (Jan 18) a derelict vessel of about 62 feet keel, very sharp fore and aft, streaked quite fresh with zinc and supposed to be a schooner, has come on shore, laden with cod oil; and if the weather remains fine, a quantity of the cargo will be saved".

On January 18th the cargo is yet to be saved.

- <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000183/18530119/035/0003>

Foreign built – Still no name

The London Evening Standard from Wednesday 19th January 1853 says: in "Pwllheli (Jan 18) a derelict vessel of about 62 feet keel, foreign built, very sharp fore and aft, sheathed quite fresh with zinc and supposed to be a schooner, has come on shore, laden with seal or cod oil; and if the weather remains fine, a quantity of the cargo will be saved".

- <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000861/18530121/006/0003>

New destination of the cargo – More information on the nature of the goods – Weather information – Still no name

The Lloyd's List from Friday 21st January 1853 reports that in "Penycaera near Aberdaron (19th January) Eighty-three casks, a quantity of which are tar barrels, light wood, have been landed from the derelict vessel stranded near this place and will be forwarded to Pwllheli. The wind has shifted to SW and blows fresh, should it come on to blow hard, the vessel and cargo will be lost amongst the rocks. Neither papers nor names have yet been found".

- <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000861/18530122/008/0003>

A gale – EIC marks – Still no name

The Lloyd's List from Saturday 22nd January 1853 reports that in "Penycaera near Aberdaron (20th January), during the gale, the deck of the derelict vessel on shore here is supposed to have parted as the beach was strewn this morning with small skins, codfish bones, a quantity of sailor's clothes and some of the clothes were marked EIC, but no papers of names by which she may be recognized. The cargo appears to consist of oil, Stockholm tar, small skins and codfish".

- <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000532/18530129/027/0004>

150 tons – Still no name

The Gloucester Journal from Saturday 29th January 1853 reports that "the hull of a vessel, supposed to be a schooner of about 150 tons burden, has been driven ashore near Llyn, Pwllheli, North Wales. She is of fir, is copper-bottomed, and is supposed to be of foreign build. Other portions of the wreck have been washed ashore, and upwards of ninety casks of cod liver oil, supposed to have formed her cargo, have been saved".

This report says "copper-bottomed" instead of zinc, but we can safely suppose that those were very similar sheaths that could be easily confused in a newspaper report. Moreover, ninety is very close to eighty-three, which was the number of casks recovered in the other newspapers. Most importantly, the nature of the goods is the same as in the other reports, hence we can safely add to the picture a new piece of evidence: the tonnage.

- <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/4462110/4462114>

The wreck was moved to Pwllheli and sold by auction – The ship name is supposed to be Hakon Adelsteen

The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality from 11th February 1853 reports that in "Pwllheli, on the 8th inst., there was discovered in the wreck of the derelict, which was towed to this port about a fortnight ago, a blue and white bourgee, with the following letters inscribed thereon: Hakon, Adelsteen. It is now supposed that the above was the name of the vessel and of the port to which she belonged. The wreck was sold a few days ago by auction for £53".

A fortnight before the 8th of February brings back to a few days after the 83 casks were recovered, hence it is plausible that the newspapers are referring to the same wreck. Therefore, we can assume that Hakon Adelsteen is the name of the ship. However, this is only a writing on a piece of ceramics.

- <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0001299/18530224/080/0004>

Owner is Christensen – The ship was heading to Genoa from Bergen (Norway) since 17th November 1852

The Gore's Liverpool General Advertiser from Thursday 24th February 1853 reports that in Bergen (Norway) on 7th February it is feared that the "wreck which was taken into Pwllheli and sold on 4th February is the Hakon Adelstein, Christensen, which sailed hence 17th November for Genoa, with cargo composed of oil, tar, skins and fish".

This means that the ship belongs to the Norwegian Maritime Registry and in fact there is no such a ship in the published Lloyd's Registers. The research is now shifted to Bergen and Norway. The place to look in is the Petter Malmsteins Seilskuteregister (Petter Malmstein's Naval Register) in <http://mm.test.kit.no/index>. A various combination of Hakon, Haakon, Adelstein, Adelsten and Adelsteen has been tried and the most sensible result obtained is <http://mm.test.kit.no/search?text=adelsten> using just "Adelsten", which gives a list of ships where the only feasible one is "Haakon Adelsten [no]", as the others were still alive after 1853 or the tonnage is different.

- <http://mm.test.kit.no/?uuid=ba81537b-171e-4bcd-b725-8cea0fcd5592&&offset=5150>

Haakon Adelsten [no]

Nationality: Norway

Type: Brig

Year of build: [no]

Material: Wood

Tonnage: 75 commerce-lest

equal to 2080Kg x 75 ≈ 150tons (Imsen and Winge, 2004)

Alternative id: 021176794611 Digital Museum

Reference: Malmstein Register

There is a correspondence with the tonnage and, in a way, with the type of vessel. The ship was found capsized and damaged and was only supposed to be a schooner, which, in any case, has a number of masts compatible with that of a brig. However, there is no record of the year of build and the year of loss. There is a link to a digital museum (next step).

- <https://digitalmuseum.org/021176794611/haakon-adelsten>

Haakon Adelsten [no]

Same information as above plus:

Part of the dataset: Petter Malmsteins Seilskuteregister (Norwegian Maritime Museum)

Provider: KulturNav

Date published: November 28, 2016

Date updated: March 15, 2021

UUID: ba81537b-171e-4bcd-b725-8cea0fcd5592

There is another link to follow (next step).

- <https://kulturnav.org/ba81537b-171e-4bcd-b725-8cea0fcd5592>

Haakon Adelsten [no]

Sam information as above plus:

Contact Information: Alexander Lindbäck (alexander.lindback@norskfolkemuseum.no)

Last changed: 23/11/2016 15:57:00

The research continues in the Bergen Maritime Museum (Bergens Sjøfartsmuseum), where the same search words were used (next step).

- <https://digitalmuseum.org/021027869042/maleri/media?slide=0>



Figure 1: The Haakon Adelsten Brig carries identification marks in formast and pennant, with the ship's name in the mainmast. She sees coastal landscape in the background and other sailing vessels. Painting by F. Sørvig 1855 (from Bergen Maritime Museum).

The merchant flag of Norway (Figure 2), in use between 1844 and 1898, is depicted in Figure 1, in accordance to the date of the shipwreck.

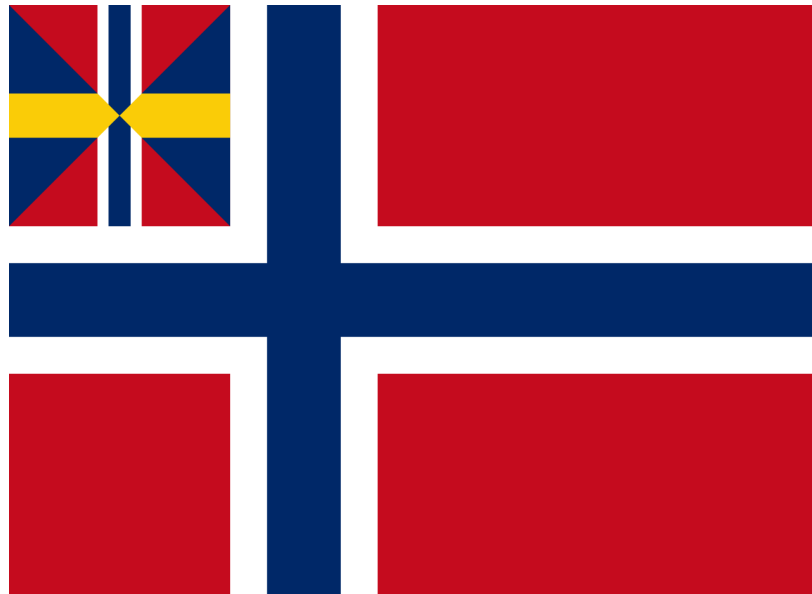


Figure 2: Merchant flag of Norway (1844–1898) (from Wikipedia).

However, the problem with the painting in Figure 1 is that it is signed 1855. Nevertheless, it could be that the ship was recently lost and the painter wanted to depict a commemorative picture of her using the many brigs that were sailing at that time as a model. In fact, the number of the ship has been intelligently masked by the sail and is not readable, as if the painter did not actually have that ship in front at the moment. The only definitive answer is in the original Norwegian Maritime Registers. If the Haakon Adelsten returned from the voyage to Genoa, it means that the shipwreck that was sold for £53 in Pwllheli is not her. Unfortunately, there is no photographed copy of the registers on-line, unlike the Lloyd's Registers. This is the dead end of the research. Hence, a confirmation from the Bergen Maritime Museum is highly advisable to complete the picture.

5.0 Results

Table 1: Summary characteristics of the vessel

Vessel	Name/s	Haakon Adelsten	
	Type	Brig	
		Cargo	
Built	Date		
	Builder		
	Location	Bergen	
Construction	Materials	Wood, fir	
	Decks		
	Bulkheads		
	Hull	Zinc or copper sheathed	
Propulsion	Type	Sail	
	Details	Square Rigged	
Engine		None	
Dimensions	Length	62ft	
	Beam		
	Draught		
Tonnage	Gross	75 cl	
	Net		
Owner	First		
	Last	Christensen	
		Bergen	
	Others		
Registry	Port	Bergen	
	Flag	Norway	
	Number		
History	Routes	Bergen	
		Genoa	
	Cargo	Stockholm tar, >83 cod liver oil casks, small skins, fish	
Final Voyage	From	Bergen	
	To	Genoa	
	Captain		
	Crew		
	Passengers		
	Cargo	Stockholm tar, >83 cod liver oil casks, small skins, fish	
Wrecking	Date	16 th January 1853	
	Location	2 miles to the East of Bardsey, washed ashore near Aberdaron	
	Cause	Gale	
	Loss of life		
	Outcome	Capsized, cargo lost ashore, no crew. Towed a few days later to Pwllheli and sold by auction for £53	

6.0 Analysis

The steps through which the research has been carried out in the newspapers do not reveal any major contradiction. Conversely, it is the dramatic lack of information about any name related to the ship that is a major problem for the last research steps in the Norwegian Museum and registers. In this case, any name found is easily attributed to the cargo, but it can be misleading. Nonetheless, the ship named Haakon Adelsten seems to be consistent, but there is no confirmation from the original register about the year of build and when/if she was lost. We have a painting dated roughly about the time of the shipwreck in Aberdaron, which testifies the presence of the Haakon Adelsten after 1853, but that could have been painted posthumous as the lack of the ship number in the picture proves. Further analysis in the original Scandinavian naval register is required.

7.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

Almost a week has been spent to complete the research, even though an end point has been reached, which requires the intervention of some officer of the Bergen Maritime Museum and the Petter Malmstein's Naval Register to be solved. The name of the owner, Christensen, must also be traceable somewhere in the registers. Although a considerable effort has been made to gather as much information as possible, a definitive answer has not been found. Underwater research could also be carried on in the wreck site in order to find some other piece of "bourgee" with additional information. There is no doubt that the ship was sold by auction, hence, it is possible to find ceramics and other items in the private property of some local citizen or in the antique's markets in Llyn. The wreck itself, however, does not demand for any particular interest, mainly because there is no vessel in the location. Being able to name a lost cargo, though, is always a desirable achievement.

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