

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

**On-line research into the wreck of the:
Marion (1853-1885)**



Figure 1. Criccieth Castle (photo: Chris Holden)

Report compiled by:

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Report Title:

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Marion (1853-1885)**

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1.0 Abstract

Maritime Archaeology is only one of the many fields severely impacted by Covid-19. As field-works haven't been possible for most of 2020, a collective on-line researching activity was proposed to engage Marine Archeologists and passionate volunteers. The activity consists in reviewing our knowledge from the literature of more than 450 shipwrecks collected by the Malvern Archeological Diving Unit in north west Wales during the 2001-2009 period. The aims of the project are to (i) maintain high scientific productivity during the pandemic, (ii) increase our knowledge, especially on shipwrecks that lack of past investigations, and (iii) help practicing important scientific skills, such as writing, communication and online research.

Here, I investigated the history of the wooden schooner Marion, wrecked in 1885 in Criccieth (Wales). The reason why I chose the Marion is because I hypothesized it was one of the shipwrecks with not much information available, due to the time of the incident, the small size of the ship compared to many others and the construction materials. I thought it was worth investigating such a challenging shipwreck that otherwise could be forgotten or underestimated.

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2.4 Contributors

I would like to thank Ian Cundy for this opportunity and the great help provided finding information from books that I could not retrieve from my actual location. Also, a huge thanks to Chris Holden for sending me

2.5 Abbreviations

MADU Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit

3.0 Introduction

The reasons why I selected this shipwreck are (i) the limited information available, (ii) my interest for ships from the 19th century and (iii) the curiosity in studying something I didn't know before. My aim was to answer the following questions:

1. What are the information available relating to the vessel before the incident?
2. What day did it wreck and what's the story leading up to wrecking?
3. How much of the shipwreck is still in the area?
4. What ship components could be still present in the area?

4.0 Background

All starting information were provided in the MADU Research Database supplied by Dr Ian Cundy (Table 1). A spatial representation of the incident location is shown below (Fig. 1).

Table 1. Background information extracted from the MADU research database.

MADU Reference Number		254
Date the ship wrecked		29/09/1885
Ship's name		Marion
Location 1		Caernarfonshire
Location 2		Tremadog Bay, Criccieth beach
Details		Wrecked on the beach
Materials		Wood
Vessel type		Schooner
Metric	Length	18.61
	Breadth	5.18
	Depth	2.87
Imperial	Length	61.1
	Breadth	17
	Depth	9.5

Tonnage	67
Gross tonnage	73
Year built	1853

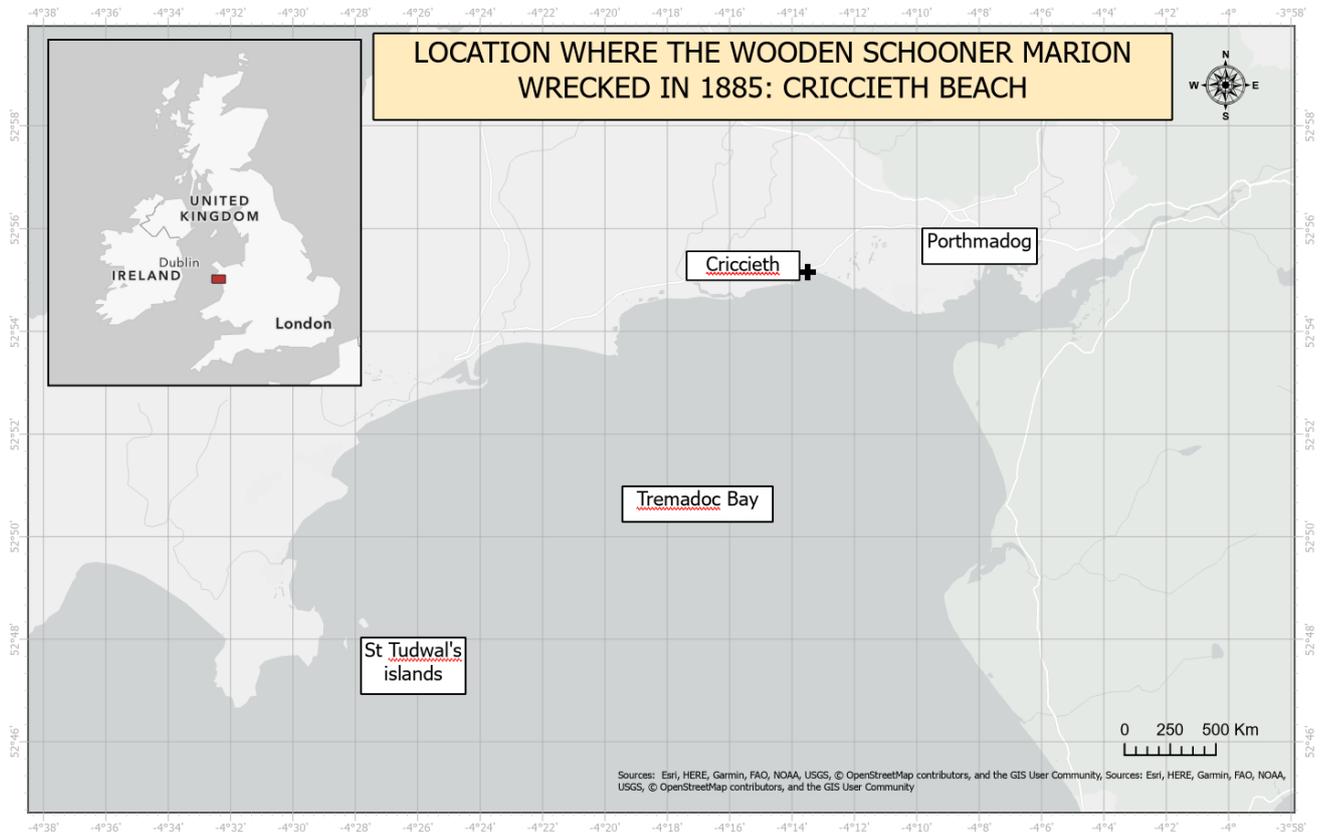


Figure 1. Map showing the wreck site (Criccieth – black cross).

5.0 Research Methodology

The entire research was conducted on a PC brand DELL at James Cook University in Townsville (Australia). The Windows edition was Windows 10 Enterprise, with a 64-bit operating system and x64-based processor. The search engines utilised were Google and Google Scholar, last of which didn't contain any information of the selected shipwreck (Fig.2).

I started on Google Scholar first (<https://scholar.google.com/>), trying to identify possible studies conducted on the incident location or literature reviews. As nothing was found, general information of the ship were searched on Google (<https://www.google.com.au/>) by using the name of the shipwreck, the name of the last owner and the location and year of the incident. Nothing was found, due to the great number of bigger ships sharing the same name and the names themselves of both the captain and the ship for being common names. The next approach was to look at the Lloyd's registers (<https://archive.org/details/@Irfhec>; <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/lloyds-register-of-ships-online>). All registers from 1853 and 1885 were checked, in order to identify changes in the ship structure or owners. Details of the ship were found from 1854 to 1884. Detailed information of the incident were investigated by looking at two archives of newspaper, Welsh newspaper and the British Newspaper Archive. Little information was available from both archives. Only one article was found on the Wales Newspaper website (<https://newspapers.library.wales/>) under "Shipwreck Marion Criccieth". Similarly, one article was available from the Lloyd's list (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/search/results/1801-01-01/1884-12-31?newspapertitle=Lloyd%27s%20List>) within the British Newspaper Archive, also by searching "Schooner Marion Criccieth". However, two more articles were found in other newspapers within the British Newspaper Archive (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>) by adding the incident year and the name of the owner. Also, few information were available from the Coflein website (<https://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/mapping>) under the search "Marion".

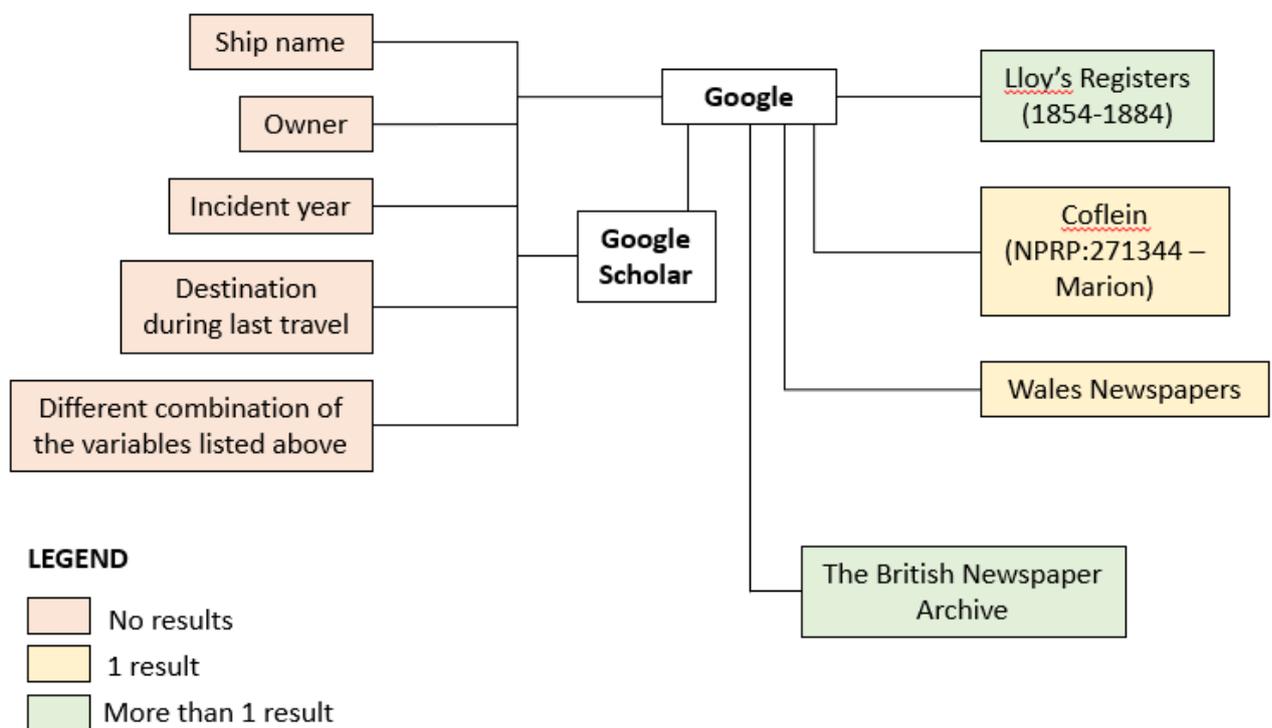


Figure 2. Flowchart showing the Google researching activities and amount of information found in each search.

6.0 Results

Very limited information were found on the schooner Marion, most of which are related to the last years of its service. This can be due to (i) the very common name of the ship or (ii) the small size of the ship compared to many others, probably also considered more important. Also, no information were found on the last captain and owner William Roberts, due to his common name that made impossible to perform an accurate analysis. However, many information about the schooner were available on the Lloyd's registers from 1854 to 1884 (Table 2). When the ship was built in 1853, the Master was R. Owen, and the owner was under the name Griffiths. Nothing changed for about ten years, when in 1866 the owner was under the name Owen & Co. Then, the Master name changed in 1868 into W. Owen, but the owner remained the same. Here, I'm assuming the owner and Master transition was occurring in 1871, as both W. Owen and W. Roberts were present (Coflein, 2008), and was completed in 1872, when W. Roberts became the only Master and owner (W. Roberts & Co).

Table 2. First and last Lloyd's registers available of the sailing ship *Marion*.

LLOYD'S REGISTER OF THE SAILING SHIP <i>Marion</i>			
		1854-1855	1884-1885
Official number		293	391
International code signal letters			14423 L.N.C.M.
Ship's name		<i>Marion</i> Sr – I.B.	<i>Marion</i> Sr – I.B.
Master		R.Owen	W.Roberts
Registered tonnage	Net		67
	Gross	72	73
	Under deck		73
Registered dimensions	Length	-	61.1
	Breadth	-	17.0
	Depth	-	9.5
Engines of steamers			
Materials, repairs of ships, &c.		-	srp.63,68 & 72 ND.&srp.77drp.80
Built	Where	PtMdc	Portmacod
	Builders' names		
	When	1853	1853
Owners		Griffiths	W.Roberts & Co
Port belonging to		Pt.Mdc	Carrvn SSPmd79
Port of survey		-	Pmd -4yrs
Years assigned & equipment		9	9 C3
Character <i>if assigned</i> Also, date of last survey		A1 53	11.82

It is also important to notice that the dimensions of the ship weren't registered before 1863, and the tonnage was completely distinguished in Net, Gross and Under Deck only in 1877. Few more information were available from the book 'Shipwreck index of the British Isles: Volume 5', such as cargo, propulsion and crew number (Table 3) (Larn, R. & Larn, B. 2000).

On the 20th of October 1881, the Shields Daily Gazette reported the arrival of the schooner Marion at Portsmouth, coming from Shields. The schooner was severely damaged, but the cause was not stated. The damages reported were on the stream anchor, hawsers, jib, fore topsail and bulwarks. On the same page, several more ships were described as damaged or wrecked on the

same day. Indeed, although it is unsure what cause such damages to the Marion, another schooner named Rainbow was described to suffer damages travelling from Mistley to Stockton, due to a storm. A similar scenario may be the reason behind the damaged Marion.

(<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000286/18811020/017/0004>)

Similarly, the Isle of Wight Observer reported on the 3rd of December 1881 that the schooner Marion lost the anchor and chain after a severe storm from Eling for Swansea. The wind was described to be extremely severe, with up to two weeks of unpleasant weather.

(<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000170/18811203/012/0006>)

On Friday the 2nd of October 1885 and on Saturday the 3rd of October 1885, the North Wales Express and Caernarvon & Denbigh Herald wrote about the last moments of the schooner Marion, respectively. Although the schooner was described to officially wreck on Wednesday the 30th of September 1885, the situation escalated quickly from Tuesday the 29th of September, when the ship was seen in Cardigan Bay heading to Criccieth. Indeed, a strong breeze was described around midnight and quickly transformed into a severe storm when the ship was entering Tremadoc Bay. At that point, the schooner was close to St. Tudwal's islands, but it could not stop there because the main-boom was lost. With no possible alternative choices, the pilot John Jones successfully led the schooner ashore in Criccieth, where it was partially discharged. The storm increased of intensity through the night, causing the ship to hit rocks that created several holes. As the water was coming inside, the schooner capsized at around 11 a.m. of Wednesday the 30th of September. Both the pilot and the crew were saved. The vessel was transporting limestone at that time and it was described to be not insured. Also, it appears pieces of the ship were covering the entire beach area.

(<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0002967/18851003/054/0003>)

More information in regard to the Marion last moments were found and described by Chris Holden in his book "The essential underwater guide to North Wales: volume one – Barmouth to South Stack" (2003). In his book, Holden reported an article from the Welsh Nation, published on the 7th of October 1885, where the amount of limestone carried was described to be around 100 tons. More importantly, Holden highlighted how the materials that were found ashore were collected and sold. For example, the schooner body, chains and anchors were valued and sold for around £14 (Holden, C. 2003).

(https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Chris_Holden_The_Essential_Underwater_Guide_to_Nor?id=-60SBwAAQBAJ)

Table 3. Other information related to the shipwreck *Marion*.

Date of Wrecking	29-09-1885
Location	Criccieth beach, Tremadog Bay, Caernafonshire
Coordinates	52.54.50N, 04.14.15W
Voyage	Clare – Criccieth
Hull Dimensions	18.61x5.18x2.87 (m)
Port of registry	Caernarfon
Flag	United Kingdom
Cargo	Lime & Stone
Propulsion	Sail
No. of Crew	4

7.0 Analysis

The Lloyd's registers presented a huge amount of ships named Marion. Although it was not hard to identify the correct ship, it appeared evident that most ships were bigger than the schooner here analysed. This suggests that the little information available may be due to the limited socio-economic importance of the schooner compared to many other ships at that time. Another reason may be the fact that most pieces were sold after the incident, such as the anchor and chains, so that there is not an actual wreck (Fig. 3). This made the entire analysis more challenging, because an actual wreck would have helped local communities to remember the history of such ship via diving opportunities or specimens in nautical museums.

If there is anything left at sea that could still be found, that could only be iron bolts. Indeed, the second column in the Lloyd's registers shows the symbol 'I.B.', which indicates the presence of iron bolts in the ship structure. It is possible that some was lost during the storm and never retrieved.

Here, the most useful information was found from the Lloyd's registers, the British Newspaper Archive and books that were provided by Chris Holden and Ian Cundy. Both the Coflein and Google provided little or no information. For future research, books and memories from locals could be the better options. Here, I couldn't investigate the story of the owners, as no information was found on the internet. Again, books or memories from locals could be the only way to retrieve useful information.



Figure 3. Photos by Holden Chris showing the West and East side of the Criccieth castle, respectively.

8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

About 120 hours were spent searching information on the wooden schooner Marion, organising tables and writing. Unfortunately, no useful books were available from my University library. All information were so retrieved from the internet, with the only exception of few information provided by Ian Cundy and Chris Holden. Although there were many ships sharing the same name, it wasn't complicated to identify the correct one, as many variables were known, such as dimensions, owners and year the ship was built. The only conflicting result was related to the day the ship wrecked. Indeed, although the storm started on the 29th of September 1885 (Tuesday), it officially wrecked the following day (30th of September 1885).

It could be worth investigating further the story of the last owner, W. Roberts. Specifically, why wasn't the ship insured, who bought the chains and anchor and whether they were used on other ships or other purposes. However, it is unlikely this could be achieved via online research. Moreover, there is no possibility to dive the wreck, as components were sold after the ship wrecked. So, tracking down relations of those involved in the wrecking could be the only way to retrieve more information.

This exercise taught me that online research can be extremely challenging when looking for such common names. Moreover, for such a small and old schooner, it was impossible to find any information by googling its name, owner or general characteristics. If it wasn't for the initial help provided by Ian Cundy, I would have never been able to find some of the websites here used easily, as most of them were unknown to me. It was extremely interesting looking for information from so many different sources. Even though the information available were extremely limited, I was able to broadly answer my questions and, as mentioned above, it would be interesting to investigate where the sold pieces went.

9.0 References

Coflein (2008) *Marion* <https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/271344/details/marion>

Lloyd's registers <https://archive.org/details/@lrfhec>

The British Newspaper Archive <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Welsh Newspapers

<https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3561559/3561563/7/schooner%20Marion%20Roberts>

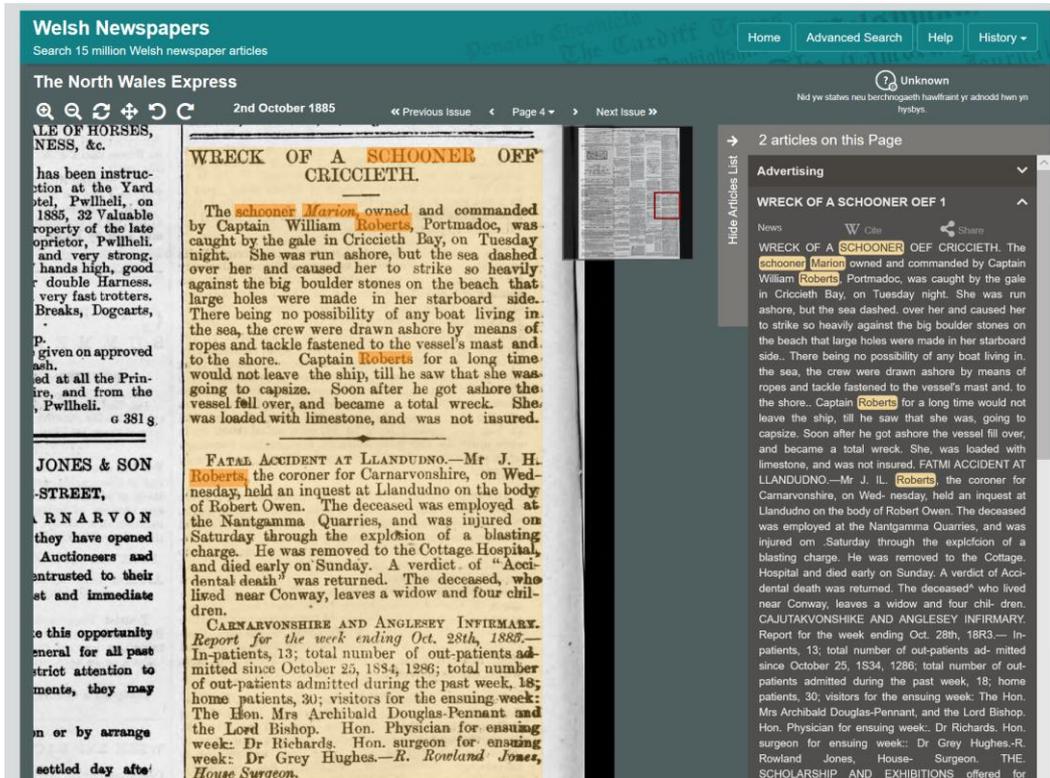
9.1 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED

Holden, C. (2003) 'The Essential Underwater Guide to North Wales: Volume One – Barmouth to South Stack', *Calgon Publications*.

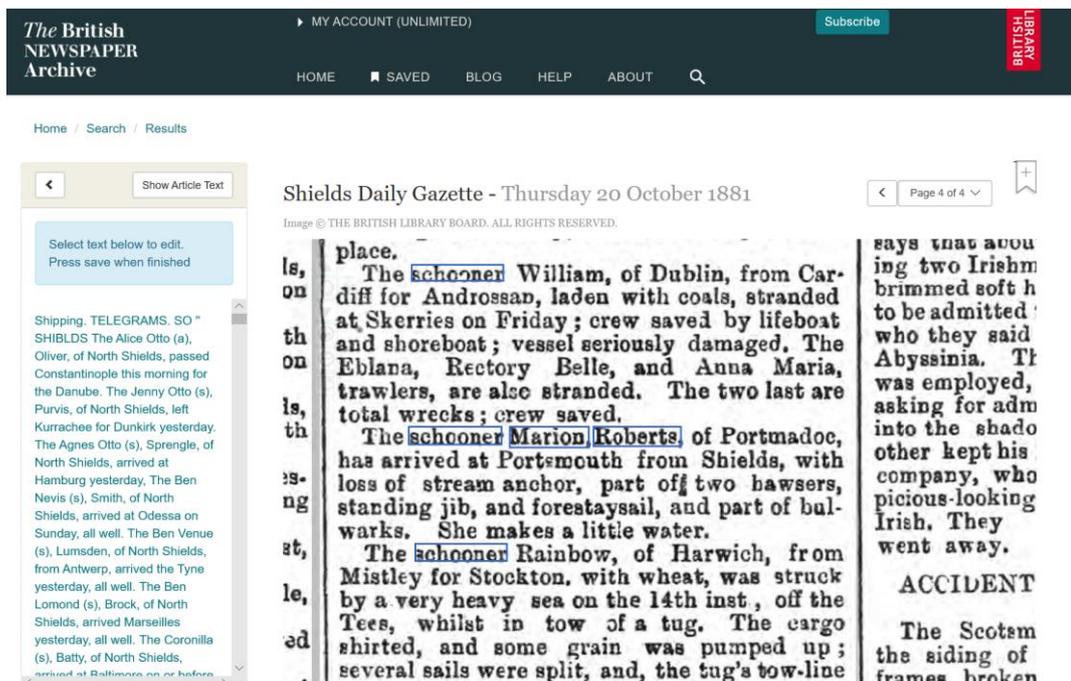
Larn, R and Larn, B. (2000) 'Shipwreck index of the British isles: volume 5 – West Coast and Wales', *Lloyd's Register of Shipping*.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Newspaper article from the Welsh Newspaper website



Appendix B – Newspaper article from the Shields Daily Gazette (The British Newspaper Archive)



Appendix D – Newspaper article from the Isle of Wight Observer (The British Newspaper Archive)

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Isle of Wight Observer - Saturday 03 December 1881

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Capt Link, from Gooles for Plymouth, carrying away the latter vessel's mizen mast. Both vessels were at anchor at the time, and from what we hear it appears that they both sheered together. The Ceres, of Gooles, Capt Prentice, from Selby for Penzance, lost an anchor, owing to the shackle parting; she however recovered it again next day. In Lymington Roads the storm was felt much more severely than here, the sea running very high. The schooner Marion of Carnarvon, Roberts master, from Eling for Swansea, lost anchor and chain, and the schooner Mary, of Carnarvon, Griffiths, master, from London for Dublin, lost her boat, owing to the heavy sea. The boat was picked up here, and claimed by the captain next day. On Monday the weather was somewhat finer, several vessels passing up for Cowes, with damage, shewing that they had experienced even worse weather than we had. Among them was the Norwegian barque, Beta, Captain Christensen, from Liverpool to New York, cargo salt in bags, reported experienced continued gales and two hurricanes in the Atlantic. She lost boats.

...eruet; Capt F. J.
...Langdon; Capt
...E. J. Jolliffe: M
...ornaments to Pr
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...to Private Sir ley
...to Sergeant Griff
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...the shooting se
...Rayner, siver of
...Private J. S. Car
...Faulkner, oak bi
...Sergeant Munde
...and A. Morgan;
...photos, Mr C. E
...played cup, Mr J
...Mr D. Hill; Co
...Wright; Serge

Appendix E – Newspaper article from the Caernarvon & Denbigh Herald (The British Newspaper Archive)

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Caernarvon & Denbigh Herald - Saturday 03 October 1885

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...e, by playing music, to come to their
...es. Mr. Bridge, the stipendiary, said
...allow such privileges to any religious
...bound the defendant over in his
...ces to keep the peace for six months,
...grant a case.

...ras held on Tuesday, before Mr Clarke
...respect to the death of Ada Challoner,
...ge, who lived with her parents at No.
...Hann-street. On Saturday last the
...in the parlour alone, her mother
...out to make some purchases, and her
...ill in bed. Whilst playing about the
...fell out of the firegrate, and set her
...She ran to her father, by whom the
...xtinguished, but she was so severely
...ath ensued the next day in the Royal
...ital. A verdict of "Accidental death"

...I addressed a meeting at Sheffield on
...as the Liberal for the central division.
...it Mr. Chamberlain's programme was
...r, and not antagonistic to Mr. Glad-
...sto. A resolution was proposed asking
...to retire in favour of Mr. Mervyn
...Radical candidate, but the meeting
...hisself.

...r morning, Edith Florence Baldwin,
...s, one of the children who were bitten
...at Bromley, just one month since, died
...obin. Symptoms of the disease devel-
...oped. Symptoms of the disease devel-
...Thursday last, and the child had re-
...any nourishment whatever since that
...she would answer questions in a most

...remains in a dangerous state.

**WRECK OF THE "MARION" OF PORT-
MADOC, AT CRICCIETH.**

NARROW ESCAPE OF THE CREW.

On Tuesday night, about midnight, the schooner Marion, Captain William Roberts of Portmadoc, was seen in Cardigan Bay making for Criccieth. There was a strong breeze at the time, and when the Marion approached Criccieth, there was a heavy gale on. It seems that the vessel had lost her main-boom, and could not possibly tack to St. Tudwell's roadstead against the wind that prevailed. Mr. John Jones, the pilot, advised that the vessel should be run ashore under Tyngelast. This was done, and she was partly discharged. The storm increased in violence, and when the tide came in on Wednesday morning, the sea was so heavy that the vessel bumped violently against the stones on the beach, and several holes were made in her. About eleven o'clock she capsized and filled with water, and was driven a total wreck a little beyond the lifeboat house. The crew were brought ashore by the means of ropes. The captain refused to leave the craft for about an hour after the crew had been saved. It required considerable persuasion before he would come from the wreck, and it was only a few minutes before the vessel toppled over that he was pulled ashore in a life buoy. The vessel was loaded with limestones, and owned by the captain, but was not insured. The beach was bestrewn with her wreckage during the whole of Wednesday.

...out one corner, trousers are warning in a
...manner, and left the court; and it was
...stated that the furniture was being ren-
...as possible. The magistrate told the
...ascertain whether the bill of sale was re-
...to apply to him again.

MARRYING A WARD OF C

A YOUNG man named Patrick J. Kavanagh, Wednesday afternoon arrested in Du
...warrant, for having taken away from t
...her guardians a ward of the English C
...cory, & Miss Florence Wilson, who is no
...years old. In the month of June last
...retired Indian tea merchant, accomp
...wife and only child Florence, went to
...Tunbridge Wells, where they resided,
...pose of taking a tour through the co
...visited various parts of Ireland, and i
...Dublin. Miss Wilson, who, it is stat
...she comes of age, be entitled to a ver
...fortune left her by a relative, was c
...Stephen's Green Park, Dublin, admir
...upon the lake, when she accidentall
...J. Kavanagh, aged about twenty-six,
...quickly made an impression on the la
...the acquaintance ripened into a lovi
...Wilson and Kavanagh tried to get ma
...before a Registrar in Dubln, but this a
...as due notice would have to be giv
...parents. When Miss Wilson return
...Wells with her father and mother she
...lowed by Kavanagh. On the 11th of S
...Wilson left her home, and accompani