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

Report compiled by:  
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1.0 Abstract

This report discusses the loss of the SS *Aberdeen* in 1941. The *Aberdeen* was built in Govan on the Clyde in 1896 and initially fished from Grimsby. She was a steel trawler with her bridge aft, behind the funnel and was owned by a Grimsby based company, Hagerup, Doughty & Co. In around 1925 she moved to fish from Lowestoft, acquiring the Lowestoft fishing number LT123 and being owned by Consolidated Fisheries Ltd.

By the late 1930’s she was owned in, and fishing from, Milford Haven although she was still registered in Lowestoft and appears to have retained her Lowestoft fishing number. Most of her crew still seem to have been from east coast ports and there appears to have been only one person from Milford Haven on board.

On 11th March 1941 whilst fishing in Cardigan Bay the *Aberdeen* was bombed and machine-gunned by a German aircraft and although apparently not hit directly near misses were sufficient to sink the vessel. It appears that all of the crew were able to abandon the vessel but in bad weather only two survived, both reported to have been Belgian refugees. Six of the crew who lost their lives are recorded on the Merchant Navy memorial at Tower Hill:

- Arthur Butler (Third Hand);
- Frederick Catchpole (Chief Engineer);
- Leslie Harrison (Third Engineer)
- William Mills (Fireman);
- James Murphy (Second Engineer); and
- George Page (Cook).

The two remaining victims, Skipper John Barber and Second Hand William Coe, are not listed on the memorial but lie in the Grangegorman Military Cemetery in Dublin. Their bodies were recovered near Drogheda in Eire and buried locally, before being moved to the military cemetery in 1961. It is notable that although the *Aberdeen* was sunk on 11th March two of the crew are reported to have died on 12th March 1941; perhaps they survived for longer whilst adrift.

It has not been possible to identify the names of the surviving Belgian crew members or locate any details of how they were rescued, there is no record of an RNLI service to the *Aberdeen* and no newspaper articles could be found that reported her loss, presumably due to wartime censorship. The Milford Haven Town Council website notes that a large number of Belgian refugees established themselves in South Wales in World War 2 with the Belgian government in exile being located in an army camp at Tenby. It is notable that there were also a large number of Belgian refugees in South Wales in World War 1 and the website notes that when the refugees arrived in World War 2 the ‘fishermen went to Milford Haven again’.

From the information that has been located on line it has not been possible to establish the location of the wreck. The Coflein web site gives a position about 10nm west of Aberdylfi but other than this no further information has been located to corroborate this. It is possible further information may be available at the National Archive, or in Lloyds List.
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2.4  Contributors

Key contributors:  Nigel Cossons, Chris Holden, Ian Cundy

2.5  Abbreviations

CD  Chart Datum
GRT  Gross registered tons
MADU  Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit
NAS  Nautical Archaeology Society
nm  Nautical miles
NRT  Net registered tons
SS  Steamship
3.0 Introduction

In 2020 Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) in conjunction with the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) commenced a project to research ship wrecks in Cardigan Bay. The project was based on a list of known wrecks in the area and individuals were asked to select a vessel, or vessels, as subjects for research. The project took place during the COVID pandemic and therefore the focus of the research was intended to be on web-based sources.

The SS Aberdeen was selected from the MADU list as a research topic as part of a group of steamships identified in the list of vessels wrecked in Cardigan Bay provided by MADU, along with the SS Duncan and the SS Glendarroch.

The objectives of the research were to establish:

- The vessels specification and details;
- The history of the vessel, including if possible how and why she was in Cardigan Bay;
- The circumstances of the loss, including if possible where this took place and details of what caused the ship to be lost;
- Any subsequent history following the loss of the vessel, including whether there was any salvage work undertaken; and
- Any information on the wreck, including the location and the current state of the wreck.
4.0 Background

The SS *Aberdeen* was wrecked in Cardigan Bay but it has not been possible to establish where this took place. It is known she sailed from Milford Haven for the fishing grounds in Cardigan Bay but to date it has not been possible to establish where she was lost.

The only reported location places the wreck off Aberdyfi, towards the middle of Cardigan Bay. The location of Milford Haven and Aberdyfi is shown in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1 Key locations referred to in the report © MADU.
5.0 Research Methodology

Research was limited to web based sources. No archives were visited or consulted. A laptop computer was used for research principally using the Google website with the information recorded and collated in MS Word.

Searches centred on the following terms were used:

- Aberdeen;
  - SS Aberdeen;
  - Loss of Aberdeen;
  - Grimsby trawler Aberdeen;
  - Lowestoft trawler Aberdeen;
  - Milford trawler Aberdeen;
  - Pair trawler Aberdeen;
  - Hagerup Aberdeen;
  - Mackie and Thomson Aberdeen;
  - Don trawling Aberdeen;
  - Don fishing company Aberdeen;
  - Trawler Zania;
  - Trawler Xania;
  - Trawler Milford;
  - Yolland & Llewellyn Aberdeen;
  - Pair fishing company;
  - Pair fishing co;
- Milford trawlers;
- GY129;
- LT123;
- Lowestoft trawlers;
- Grimsby trawlers;
- German bombing of shipping;
- Vessels lost to German bombing;
- Heinkel 111 bombing;
- Condor bombing;
- Kampfgeschwader 27;
- Grangegorman Cemetery;
- Cardigan Bay bombing;
- Cardigan Bay trawler wrecks; and
- Belgian refugees in Wales.

In addition searches were made using the names of crew members; this led to finding information from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission but did not reveal any information on the loss of the ship. Other sites were also used comprising:

- [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) - for historic newspapers;
- [www.hec.lrinformation.org.uk](http://www.hec.lrinformation.org.uk) - for Lloyds Register;
- [www.crewlist.org](http://www.crewlist.org) - for the Mercantile Navy List and appropriation books;
- [www.clydeships.co.uk](http://www.clydeships.co.uk) - for information on Clyde built vessels;
- [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) - registration information;
- [www.coflein.gov.uk](http://www.coflein.gov.uk) - information on Welsh heritage sites;
- [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) - for information on Commonwealth War Graves;
- [www.borthmaritimehistory.com](http://www.borthmaritimehistory.com) - Borth maritime history;
- [www.cardigan-maritime.com](http://www.cardigan-maritime.com) - which included links to other maritime websites;
- [www.dive-pembrokeshire.com](http://www.dive-pembrokeshire.com) - list of Pembrokeshire wrecks; and
- [www.dive-in2-pembrokeshire.com](http://www.dive-in2-pembrokeshire.com) - list of Pembrokeshire wrecks.
Searching of websites dedicated to Grimsby (www.deepseatrawlers.co.uk) and Lowestoft (www.lowestofthistory.com) trawlers did not yield any additional material information. The Welsh National Library website (www.library.wales) does not include newspaper articles after 1919 and so was not of any assistance.

In some cases records of information were found, for example, from the National Archive but these have not been requested. Where possible a record of the information that is held has been included. No enquiries to the Admiralty Hydrographic office or local archives were made.

The word 'Aberdeen' formed the basis of the search strategy but this rapidly led to a large number of returns, particularly from newspaper articles (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk). A key issue in this respect was that there were a large number of fishing vessels either built and/or operating from the city of Aberdeen. This meant that it was difficult to disentangle the SS Aberdeen, a trawler, from the large number of hits relating to broader ship building and fishing from the city. In order to try and circumvent this consideration was also given to her sailing from Grimsby, Lowestoft and Milford Haven and this did lead to some other avenues of research.

The other challenge was the fact that the Aberdeen was lost during World War II. It proved relatively straightforward to locate information on the broad details of her loss both on the web and from published sources but much more difficult to get any details from sources such as newspapers. This is considered to be due to wartime censorship together with the fact that the Aberdeen would have been a relatively minor vessel.

Lloyds Register entries for the vessel were reviewed; these were only available on line from 1930 onwards.

Limited printed publications were available to the author that were relevant to the research, however, reference was made to the Shipwreck Index of the British Isles West Coast and Wales (Larn 2000), Ceredigion Shipwrecks (Troughton 2006), British Vessels Lost at Sea 1939-1945 (HMSO 1983) and British Warships 1914-1919 (Dittmar & Colledge 1972). The vessel is not reported in Shipwrecks of North Wales (Jones 2001). In addition, a report on the wreck was obtained from the website www.wrecksite.eu.
6.0 Results

HISTORY

The *Aberdeen* was built by Mackie and Thomson at Govan on the Clyde. She is reported to have been launched on 12th October 1896 as Yard Number 121, from the Old Yard\(^1\).

Merchant Navy List

The *Aberdeen* first appears in the Merchant Navy List in 1897\(^2\), it has not been possible to find Lloyds List entries from this period on line. The Merchant Navy List notes the following details:

- Official Number: 106676;
- Name of Ship: *Aberdeen*;
- International Code Signal (if any): None;
- Port and Year of Registry: Grimsby 1896;
- Where Built: Govan;
- When Built: 1896;
- Whether Iron, Wood, Steel or Composite: Steel;
- Length: 104'2";
- Breadth: 20'5";
- Depth of Hold: 10'7";
- Net Tonnage: 63;
- Gross Tonnage: 163;
- Horsepower of Engines and Description of Propeller: 45 sc; and
- Owner, or Part Owner, and Manager (if recorded): Hagerup, Doughty & Co., Lim., Grimsby. Fred Hagerup, same address.

These details remain the same up to and including the list for 1906, however, by 1909 the owner has changed as follows (no information available for 1907 and 1908):

- Owner, or Part Owner, and Manager (if recorded): Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co. (Grimsby). Lim., 1, Quality Court, City, London. John Denton Marsden, Fish Dock, Grimsby.

In 1921 the address of the Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co. (Grimsby) Ltd changes to Auckland Road, Fish Docks, Grimsby. The details then remain the same until 1926 when the port of registry changes to Lowestoft although the ownership remains the same.

In 1938 the ownership changes as follows, but other details including the port of registry in Lowestoft remain the same:

- Owner, or Part Owner, and Manager (if recorded): Don Trawling Co. (Milford Haven) Lim, The Docks, Milford Haven. John C. Llewellyn, 11, Priory Road, Milford Haven.

The name and official number is crossed out in the 1940 list although the details remain the same. The list for 1941 could not be located on line.

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2. [https://www.crewlist.org.uk/data/viewimages?&name=ABERDEEN&steamsail=Steam&submit=Enter&year=1897](https://www.crewlist.org.uk/data/viewimages?&name=ABERDEEN&steamsail=Steam&submit=Enter&year=1897) accessed 09.12.20
Lloyds Register

The first available online record of the *Aberdeen* is in the 1930 Lloyds register that notes the following:

![Figure 6.1 Extract of Lloyds Register 1930](https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?150730 accessed 27.08.20)

The Lloyds Register entry for 1930 is summarised below:

- No 56405;
- Official number 106676;
- Aberdeen;
- SteelsCY1;
- ssLwt.2"No8-10,22;
- ssLwt.No.1-27;
- Gross tonnage 163;
- Under deck tonnage 150;
- Net tonnage 69;
- 100A1 Stm Trawler 10,30;
- Port of survey Lowestoft LMC ?,27;
- Tail shaft last seen 10,30;
- Built 1896 11 mo;
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP;
- Owner Consolidated Fisheries, Ld (Sir John D Marsden, Bart. Mgr);
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’;
- BK 7½”;
- Port of Registry Lowestoft;
- Flag British;
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 180lb 45 RHP;
- 1SB. 2pg, GS26, HS656;
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls; and
- Moulded depth 11”7.

There are entries in Lloyds Register throughout the 1930’s. In 1936 the vessel was not recorded as Class 100A1. In 1937 the ownership changes to Don Trawling Co (Milford Haven) Ltd (J.C. Llewellin Mgr) but the Port of Registry remains Lowestoft. By 1939 the ownership is recorded as the Pair Fishing Co. Ld. (H.J. Horwood, Mgr) but the vessel still remained registered at Lowestoft. In 1940 the manager is recorded as H.J. Richards. The final entry in Lloyds Register dates from 1941.

Records of all the available Lloyds Register entries are included in Appendix A. Records of Lloyds Register survey certificates[^4] are included in Appendix B.

[^4]: [https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/ships/aberdeen-1896/search/ship-name:aberdeen/page/1](https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/ships/aberdeen-1896/search/ship-name:aberdeen/page/1) accessed 20.03.21
Milford Haven Trawlers Website

The following information has been obtained from a website which records Milford Haven trawlers which includes a lot of the information from Lloyds Register:

- Official number: 106676;
- Port and year: Grimsby, 1896 (GY129); Lowestoft, 1925 (LT123);
- Description: Steel side trawler, single screw, coal burning. Crabbing and Pareja (pair) fishing. Yawl rigged. Wheelhouse aft;
- Crew: 11;
- Built: 1896, by Mackie & Thomson, Govan. (Yard no. 121);
- Tonnage: 163 grt 63 net;
- Length / breadth / depth (feet): 104.2 / 20.5 / 10.7;
- Engine: T 3-cyl. 45 rhp. Engine and boiler: Muir & Houston, Glasgow;
- Owners:
  - As GY 129:
    - Nov 1896: Hagerup & Doughty, Grimsby;
    - Apr 1906: Consolidated Steam Fishing & Ice Co., Grimsby;
  - As LT123:
    - Jan 1925: Consolidated Fisheries, Lowestoft, Manager: John D. Bart Marsden, Auckland Rd., Fish Docks, Lowestoft;
    - 19 Nov 1937: Don Trawling Co. (Milford Haven), Docks, Milford, Manager: J. C. Llewellin;
    - 17 Mar 1939: Pair Fishing Co., Docks, Milford, Manager: H. J. Horwood. (1940: H. J. Richards);
- Landed at Milford: 19 Oct 1937 – 27 Feb 1941;
- Skippers: G.T. Brader (1913); and
- Notes:
  - Oct 1914: Requisitioned by the Admiralty (No. 639). 1 x 6 pdr.1919: Returned to owners; and
  - 11 Mar 1941: Bombed, machine gunned and sunk by German aircraft in Cardigan Bay.

Further information in another part of the website notes:

- Official number 106676;
- Fishing number LT 123;
- Built 1896;
- GRT 69 tons; and
- Fished from Milford Haven 1937-1941. Owned by Yolland & Llewellyn, United Trawlers 17.3.39. Sunk by enemy aircraft in Cardigan Bay 11.3.41.

This website recorded the fishing numbers for the vessel, GY 129 when she was fishing from Grimsby and LT123 when she fished from Lowestoft.

The Milford Trawlers website also notes the following reported from an unknown local newspaper dated Thursday 28th October 1937:

Another pair of locally owned trawlers put to sea on Tuesday night's tide. They were the S.T. Rattray and the S.T. Charmouth, recently purchased by the Don Fishing Company from Fleetwood and Aberdeen, and reconditioned and adapted for the Spanish "Pareja" method of fishing. This enterprising firm has purchased four more of this class of trawlers from

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5 http://www.llangibby.eclipse.co.uk/accidents%20&%20incidents/aberdeen.htm accessed 27.08.20
6 http://www.llangibby.eclipse.co.uk/othertrawlers_a-h.htm accessed 27.08.20
Fleetwood, viz., S.T *Aberdeen*, S.T. *Zania*, S.T. *Ilfracombe* and the S.T. *Scarborough*, two of which have arrived in Milford Docks to be fitted out. This makes five pairs of boats under the management of Yolland and Llewellyn.

The website notes that on 22\(^{nd}\) March 1940 the *Aberdeen* collided with and sank the *Xania* (spelt *Zania* in some cases but included in Lloyds Register as *Xania*), an article from the West Wales Guardian, Friday 22nd March 1940, points to the success being enjoyed by the Pair Fishing Company at the time:

Disaster befell the Milford steam trawler *Xania* whilst on the fishing grounds during the weekend. She sank after being in collision with her pair mate trawler the steam trawler *Aberdeen*. The skipper and crew of the *Xania* fortunately were all rescued and brought safely home to Milford by the *Aberdeen*. The *Xania* has been in the port for a few years and was bought from the East Coast for the purpose of working the pair system method. As things are going at present there is little doubt the vessel will be replaced by the enterprising Pair Fishing Company, who continue to smash records.

The *Zania/Xania* appears to have been part of a group of vessels built by Mackie and Thomson to the same design, see reference below to the newspaper article of October 1896. She was built in 1897 as yard number 143 with identical dimensions to the *Aberdeen*, but of slightly smaller tonnage, 161 grt. Like *Aberdeen* she was owned by Hagerup and Doughty in Grimsby (as GY330) until 1906 when she passed to the Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co. In 1925 she was registered in Lowestoft (LT138) still with the Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co before passing into the ownership of the Don Trawling Co in 1937 and the Pair Fishing Co in 1939. She was also requisitioned by the Admiralty (as no. 641) between Oct 1914 and 1919.

**NEWSPAPER REPORTS**

Several newspaper articles have been located specifically referring to the *Aberdeen*, as follows:

- October 1896 reporting the launch of the *Lynx, Aberdeen and Bradford*, and that the latter two vessels were the first instalment of an order for 25 vessels\(^7\) of the same type which Mackie and Thomson were building for Messrs, Haggerup [sic], Doughty and Co. of Grimsby\(^8\). The article reports dimensions of length, 90 feet, breadth, 20 feet and moulded depth 11½ feet and triple expansion engines by Muir and Houston’
- January 1900 reporting the loss of Alfred Howes\(^9\). The report notes that the small boat was sent to the cutter to ‘board’ the fish but was capsized when the steamer rolled in heavy seas. Howes clad in oilskins and sea boots but was reported to be a good swimmer, he remained on the surface for 30 minutes but attempts to rescue him were to no avail and he drowned;
- February 1904 reporting the vessel having been ashore on the Lincolnshire coast\(^10\);
- November 1931 reporting Herbert Boast of Seago Street, Lowestoft being lost overboard 40 miles from Lowestoft\(^11\); and
- December 1937 poorly reproduced article that appears to refer to the vessels *Aberdeen, Xania, Scarborough* and one other vessel (illegible) under Mortgages and Charges, referring to the Don Trawling Company (Milford Haven) Ltd\(^12\).

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\(^7\) Vessels that appear to form part of this group include: *Aberdeen, Bradford, Ilfracombe, Scarborough, Xania, Grimsby, Dover, Fleetwood, Eastbourne, and Harwich*. The earliest launch noted is March 1896 for the *Harwich*, but the Lloyds certificates often cross refer to the *Aberdeen* so she may have been the lead ship of the group, albeit not first launched.

\(^8\) Shipping Gazette and Lloyds List 15\(^{th}\) October 1896

\(^9\) Norwich Mercury 20\(^{th}\) January 1900

\(^10\) Hull Daily Mail 5\(^{th}\) February 1904

\(^11\) Lancashire Evening Post 14\(^{th}\) November 1931

\(^12\) Western Mail 11\(^{th}\) December 1937
The Lloyds Survey report for the *Bradford*\(^{13}\) and *Scarborough*\(^{14}\) notes they were sister vessels of *Aberdeen*.

**IMAGES**

The Milford Trawlers website has two images for the *Aberdeen*, as follows:

![Image of SS Aberdeen](https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/documents/lrf-pun-gls176-0149-r) accessed 20.03.21

Figure 6.2 SS *Aberdeen* – date unknown but post 1925 based on LT fishing number\(^{15}\)

![Image of SS Aberdeen](http://www.llangibby.eclipse.co.uk/milfordtrawlers/accidents%20&%20incidents/aberdeen.htm) accessed 20.03.21

Figure 6.3 SS *Aberdeen*\(^{16}\)

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\(^{13}\) [https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/documents/lrf-pun-gls176-0149-r](https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/documents/lrf-pun-gls176-0149-r) accessed 20.03.21

\(^{14}\) [https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/documents/lrf-pun-gls177-0164-r](https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/documents/lrf-pun-gls177-0164-r) accessed 20.03.21

\(^{15}\) [http://www.llangibby.eclipse.co.uk/milfordtrawlers/accidents%20&%20incidents/aberdeen.htm](http://www.llangibby.eclipse.co.uk/milfordtrawlers/accidents%20&%20incidents/aberdeen.htm) accessed 20.03.21
In addition to these images a further picture of the *Aberdeen* is available on the Wrecksite.Eu website\(^7\):

![Image of SS Aberdeen](image_url)

**Figure 6.4 SS Aberdeen – date unknown but post 1925 based on LT fishing number\(^8\)**

**WORLD WAR 1 SERVICE**

The *Aberdeen* was requisitioned for service in the First World War and is recorded in Dittmar and Colledge (1972, pg. 177) as follows:

- Admiralty Number 639;
- Port Number GY129;
- Tonnage 169;
- Year built 1896;
- 1-6pdr gun; and
- Service 10.14 to 1919.

No further information has been located on her service during World War I and generally it is difficult to trace the detailed history of such minor war vessels. Further information may be available in the National Archives.

A time line for the *Aberdeen* is included as Appendix C.

**LOSS**

The *Aberdeen* is reported to have been bombed and gunned by aircraft on the 11\(^{th}\) March 1941 HMSO (1983 pg.60)\(^9\). The position is given as ‘Cardigan Bay’ but despite extensive searches in newspaper archives it has not been possible to find any further information on a more detailed location. There may be further information in the National Archive (see below). The Coflein

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\(^7\) ibid
\(^8\) www.wrecksite.eu report on *Aberdeen*
\(^9\) Source: Wrecksite.EU website report
\(^9\) British Vessels Lost at Sea 1939-1945 HMSO Second Edition 1983 – British Merchant Vessels Lost or Damaged by Enemy Action during the Second World War, pg. 60
website includes a location for the wreck at National Grid Reference SN4125795649\(^2\) as shown in Figure 6.5 but it is not clear where this is sourced from – sources reported on the website are Larn and Larn (2002) and Troughton (2006 pg. 102). This position translates to approximately 52° 32’08” N 004° 20’31” W\(^2\) and is located about 10nm offshore. Larn (2000) quotes a position of 52.20N 04.08.30W but this plots onshore and Larn notes that when locations are not known a ‘holding’ position may be used, as described in Larn (2000 pg. xviii).

![Wreck location](https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/272549/details/aberdeen)

**Figure 6.5 Wreck location\(^2\)**

Wikipedia notes that the *Aberdeen* was bombed and sunk in Cardigan Bay by Heinkel 111 aircraft of Kampfgeschwader 27 (KG27), Luftwaffe with the loss of eight of ten men\(^2\).

The Coflein website notes that:

The trawler had left Milford for fishing grounds. A lone enemy bomber spotted the vessel and dropped a bomb near the stern. Enough damage was done to start the trawler taking on water and the captain was forced to order his crew into the ship's boat. Shortly after abandoning the trawler, the survivor's small boat was hit by gale. Only two crewmen, both Belgium [sic] refugees, were eventually saved.

The reference to Belgian refugees is not clear as all of the names of those lost appear to be British whilst the use of the word ‘eventually’ suggests it took some time for a rescue to be effected. The information on the Coflein website appears to be sourced from Troughton (2006 pg.102) which notes that:

Being a lowly trawler was no reason to be immune to the aggression of Hitler’s Germany in 1941. *Aberdeen* set out from Milford Haven and was nearing the Cardigan Bay fishing grounds when she was spotted from the air, probably given away by the plume of smoke belching from her aging boilers. A lone bomber attacked dropping a heavy bomb just off her stern. Although not a direct hit, the bomb had done enough damage to the stern for *Aberdeen* to start taking in water. The captain ordered the crew of nine to take to the ships boat. Shortly after abandoning the sinking trawler a gale sprang up and by the time it had abated only two of the crew, both Belgian refugees, were still alive. Two days after the sinking of the *Aberdeen* the Dutch steamer *Perseus* was to suffer a similar fate further out into the Irish Sea.

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\(^{20}\) [https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/272549/details/aberdeen](https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/272549/details/aberdeen) accessed 27.08.20

\(^{21}\) [https://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/webservices/convertForm.cfm#bngToLatLng](https://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/webservices/convertForm.cfm#bngToLatLng) accessed 01.09.20

\(^{22}\) [https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/272549/details/aberdeen](https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/272549/details/aberdeen) accessed 27.08.20

The War Office Weekly Resume for the period 27th March to April 3rd 1941\textsuperscript{24} includes the loss of the \textit{Aberdeen} and notes that the vessel was sunk by bombs and machine guns, with the fate of the crew described as two landed and eight lost.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Date & Name and Yards & Nationality & Cargo & From & To & How sunk & For Convoy or not & Position & Fate of Crew and Remarks \\
\hline
Mar 21 & J/1369 Aberdeen (110) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb and M.G. & Not & Cardigan Bay & 2 landed, 8 lost. \\
\hline
Mar 22 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Harwich & & Bomb & Not & 7 miles W.N.W. of Brest & All lost. \\
\hline
Mar 24 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & Coal & Harwich & & Bomb & Not & 12 miles N.W. God. very Island & 4 landed, 8 injured, 5 missing. \\
\hline
Mar 24 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & Norwegian Government Store & Fiesole & & & Bomb & Yes & Off Brest Coast of Geno & All saved. \\
\hline
Mar 24 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British Government Stores & Fiesole & & & Bomb & Yes & Off Brest Coast of Geno & Not yet known. \\
\hline
Mar 25 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & 190 miles N.W. Cape Wrench & All saved. \\
\hline
Mar 25 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & 8 miles N.B. 1 wounded. \\
\hline
Mar 25 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & 190 miles N.W. of Cape Wrench & All saved. \\
\hline
Mar 26 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & 27 miles N.W. of Roscoff & 19 landed, 36 missing. \\
\hline
Mar 26 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & 60 miles E of Roscoff & All saved Therembia. \\
\hline
Mar 26 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & Near St. Genois & All saved. \\
\hline
Mar 26 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & Near St. Genois & All saved. \\
\hline
Mar 26 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & 9 miles W of Half Point & 9 lost, 4 saved. \\
\hline
Mar 26 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & N.E. of Lady Island & 1 killed. \\
\hline
Mar 26 & J/1388 Aberdeen (113) & British & & Falmouth & & Bomb & Not & 22 miles E.K. Plimsoll Point & All saved. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{War Office Weekly Resume 27th March to April 3rd 1941 Sunk by Aircraft\textsuperscript{25}}
\end{table}

The Resume goes on to note that ‘during March, the Condor Unit carried out its highest number of sorties yet recorded. The most effective attacks on shipping during the past month have been made by a He. 111 unit based at Tours, using advanced bases at Brest and Dinard and operating against shipping in the Western Approaches. During March, this unit carried out a considerably greater number of sorties during daylight than any other gruppe in the German Air Force’. KG27 is reported in Wood & Gunston (1977 pg. 25) to have been based at Tours, Dinard and Rennes-St Jacques until May 1941 when the unit left for the East. A German website\textsuperscript{26} notes that ‘during air raids in the west of Great Britain, German planes, especially He 111 from KG27, sunk… in Cardigan Bay on 11.3 the trawler \textit{Aberdeen}’. It has not been possible to corroborate this German source so whilst it is possible \textit{Aberdeen} was sunk by KG27 this cannot be considered definitive. Figure 6.7 shows a photograph of a crashed Heinkel 111 on 1\textsuperscript{st} April 1941 reported to be from KG27, victory symbols for shipping losses are visible on the tail.

Poolman (1978) notes that the Focke Wulf FW 200 Condor was a four engined German maritime reconnaissance aircraft and bomber converted from a pre-war airliner. It was known for sinking a large number of vessels in British waters in the early years of the Second World War. After the capture of France these aircraft were involved in long range missions over the Western Approaches and Atlantic, Wood & Gunston (1977 pg. 67) note that in some cases this involved flights originating at Bordeaux on the West coast of France that then circumnavigated the British Isles to terminate in Norway, followed by a return mission several days later back to France. Several of the trawlers owned by the same company as \textit{Aberdeen} encountered German aircraft around this time. Poolman (1978 pg. 61) records that in February 1941 ‘the trawlers \textit{Scarborough} and \textit{Ilfracombe}, replying to the cannon and machine gun fire of a Condor off Bantry Bay with their Lewis guns, shot their attacker down’\textsuperscript{27}. Similarly, a newspaper report of 1\textsuperscript{st} April 1941 suggests this attack took place on 20\textsuperscript{th} February 1941, reporting an article from the West Wales Guardian of 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2021.
February 1941\textsuperscript{28} notes that ‘the British trawlers Charnouth and Rattray drove off a German plane which attacked them while they were fishing’, bombs missed both vessels and they were then attacked with machine guns and cannon but the German plane was hit and crashed some miles away. All four of these vessels were owned by the same company as the Aberdeen.

The closest loss in terms of date reported in Poolman (1978 pg. 64) is that of the SS Inishtrahull attacked on March 13\textsuperscript{th} but there is no mention of the loss of the Aberdeen to a Condor, although the loss of a number of other trawlers is recorded in the book. It is unlikely that the names of ships attacked by Condors in Poolman (1978) is exhaustive but the fact that Aberdeen is not recorded may be consistent with an attack by the smaller, shorter ranged twin engined Heinkel 111 aircraft, perhaps also consistent with the Aberdeen being in Cardigan Bay rather than further out into the Atlantic.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Heinkel_111_France.png}
\caption{Heinkel 111 in France reported to be from KG27, 9\textsuperscript{th} April 1941, note the victory symbols for shipping missions on the tail showing one large and one small vessel\textsuperscript{29}}
\end{figure}

Although it is reported that two crew survived it has not been possible to establish how they got ashore, there is no record of any RNLI service\textsuperscript{30} to the Aberdeen which may be evidence she was some distance offshore.

A search of newspaper archives\textsuperscript{31} has not revealed any contemporaneous report of the loss of the Aberdeen. Searches for the names of the crew in newspapers from the towns where they lived have also not provided any information.

No record could be located of the wreck of the Aberdeen being a known site in Dive Guides or websites for Welsh Diving. It is possible the wreck is known but has not been identified. A report August 1941 stating that ‘The awards committee have awarded a total sum of one hundred pounds to the skipper and crew of the steam trawler Scarborough for meritorious service on February 20\textsuperscript{th} 1941 after enemy attack. The Scarborough was bombed out in the Atlantic but the men stuck to their boat and reached home without loss. Owing to the departure to the services and to other ports of members of the crew of the Scarborough, it was found impossible to mark the occasion with a special presentation and the owners’ secretary has sent each share of the reward for valour.’

\textsuperscript{28} Dundee Courier 1\textsuperscript{st} February 1941
\textsuperscript{29} https://www.asisbiz.com/il2/He-111/KG27/pages/Heinkel-He-111H5-1.KG27-WNr-3681-crash-landing-France-Apr-09-1941-01.html accessed 02.08.20
\textsuperscript{30} https://rnliarchive.blob.core.windows.net/media/1675/1941wys.pdf accessed 21.07.20
\textsuperscript{31} https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk accessed 02.08.20
on the vessel was ordered from the Wrecksite.EU website but this did not contain any location for the wreck and did not provide any additional information of note.

National Archive file BT347/8/1 Index to War Casualties includes the Aberdeen and confirms the date of loss of 11th March 1941; there may be more information available under the casualty lists in BT347. This source also refers to an entry in Lloyds List for 18th March 1942, though this may only relate to closure of the register for the vessel.

![Figure 6.8 National Archive BT437/8/1](image)

**CREW**

At the time of her loss Aberdeen was fishing from Milford Haven though she still retained a Lowestoft fishing number and many of her crew were from the east coast.

The Wrecksite.EU report\(^{33}\) gives a total of 16 people on board; this is highly unlikely for a steam trawler which more typically would have a crew of eight to twelve. On the basis of the dates on which they were lost it is considered that the following were members of the crew of the Aberdeen at the time of her sinking:

BARBER, JOHN CHARLES (56), Skipper, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †11/03/1941, Son of Mr. and Mrs. John Barber; husband of Rosa Barber, of Grimsby, Lincolnshire, Memorial: Grangegorman Military Cemetery

BUTLER, ARTHUR (59), Third Hand, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †11/03/1941, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

COE, WILLIAM A. (34), Second Hand, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †12/03/1941, Son of Ben and Alice Coe husband of Ruby E. Coe, of Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, Memorial: Grangegorman Military Cemetery

CATCHPOLE, FREDERICK ERNEST (40), Chief Engineer, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †11/03/1941, Husband of Emma Phoebe Martha Catchpole, of South Lowestoft, Suffolk, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

HARRISON, LESLIE (29), Third Engineer, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †11/03/1941, Son of William Dudley Harrison and Ethel May Harrison, of Hull, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

MILLS, WILLIAM THOMAS (50), Fireman, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †11/03/1941, Husband of Florence Mills, of Grimsby, Lincolnshire, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

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\(^{32}\) TNA BT437/8/1

\(^{33}\) [www.wrecksite.eu](http://www.wrecksite.eu) report on Aberdeen
MURPHY, JAMES ARTHUR (51), Second Engineer, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †11/03/1941, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

PAGE, GEORGE HENRY (49), Cook, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †11/03/1941, Son of W. G. and Mary Page; husband of Ethel May Page, of Hull, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

The following names are also listed in the Wrecksite.Eu report but in fact these seem to be sailors either from the city of Aberdeen, or relate to dates of loss later in March or in April 1941. Most of these names are recorded on the Tower Hill Memorial as the crew of the Kinclaven, an Aberdeen vessel lost on 27th March 1941; the details included of these individuals in the Wrecksite.Eu reports are as follows, note the date of death:

CHRISTIE, JAMES (55), Fisherman, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †27/03/1941, Husband of Isabella M. Christie, of Aberdeen, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

CHRISTIE, JOHN (46), Fisherman, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †27/03/1941, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

GAULT, JOHN (47), Second Hand, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †27/03/1941, Son of William and Jane Ann Smith Gault; husband of Isabella Gault, of Torry, Aberdeen, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

MAIN, WILLIAM (45), Skipper, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †27/03/1941, Husband of Margaret W. Main, of Torry, Aberdeen, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

MAIN, WILLIAM (41), Fireman, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †27/03/1941, Son of William and Anne Main; husband of Isabella Livingstone Main, of Kincorth, Morayshire, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

MOORE, EDWARD (71), Chief Engineer, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †27/03/1941, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

PHILLIPS, JOHN (63), Fisherman, FV Aberdeen, Fishing Fleet, †27/03/1941,

The final person in the Wrecksite.Eu report in fact appears to relate to the loss of the St Clements on 5th April 1941, the details included in the Wrecksite.Eu reports are as follows:

CRUICKSHANK, GORDON (44), Chief Engineer Officer, FV Aberdeen, Merchant Navy, 05/04/41, Husband of Isabella L. Cruickshank, of Aberdeen, Memorial: Tower Hill Memorial

Older Crew Lists

Crew lists for the earlier years of Aberdeen are available34, as follows, but no copies have been ordered at this stage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
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<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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LOST AT SEA

The Aberdeen is recorded on the Tower Hill Memorial with the following six names, all of which were included in the Wrecksite.Eu report:

- A Butler;
- F E Catchpole;
- L Harrison;
- W T Mills;
- J A Murphy; and
- G H Page.

As shown in Figure 6.9 below:

Figure 6.9 Panel 123 Tower Hill Memorial, London

Table 6.1 Crew Lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>BT99/4211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>National Maritime Museum?</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>D1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Maritime History Archive</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>BT99/4455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>BT381/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>BT381/562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>BT381/1236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[D1\] denotes Official Log Book and Account of Voyages and Crew for vessels of less than 80 tons register; exclusively employed upon the coasts of the United Kingdom. \[S1\] denotes Running Agreement, Account of Voyages and Crew and Official Log Book for a Fishing Boat of 25 Tons Tonnage or upwards.

https://www.benjidog.co.uk/Tower%20Hill/Fishing%20Vessels%20Aberdeen%20to%20Bass%20Rock.html accessed 20.07.20
Research on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website revealed the following further details on the lost crew, which corroborates information in the Wrecksite.Eu report:

- **CATCHPOLE, Ch. Engr. FREDERICK ERNEST.** Fishing Fleet. Fishing Vessel *Aberdeen* (Lowestoft). 11th March, 1941. Husband of Emma Phoebe Martha Catchpole, of South Lowestoft, Suffolk. Panel 123;
- **MURPHY, Second Engr. JAMES ARTHUR.** Fishing Fleet. Fishing Vessel *Aberdeen* (Lowestoft). 11th March, 1941. Age 51. Panel 123; and

It is notable that the date of death for George Page is given as the 12th of March. The website Wrecksite.Eu notes that Leslie Harrison is commemorated on the Hull Memorial.

The remaining two crew members reported lost with the ship are not recorded on the Tower Hill Memorial but lie in the Grangegorman Military Cemetery in Dublin, as follows:

- **BARBER, Skipper JOHN CHARLES,** Fishing Fleet. Steam Trawler *Aberdeen* (Lowestoft). 11th March, 1941. Age 56. Son of Mr. and Mrs. John Barber; husband of Rosa Barber, of Grimsby, Lincolnshire. Grave C.E Section 1000; and

Again, the date of death for William Coe is given as the 12th of March. This may relate to the information from Troughton (2006) that the crew took to their boat and were then caught in a gale, rather than being lost in the sinking. Photographs of the graves of Barber and Coe are available on the internet:

38 [https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead](https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead) accessed 20.07.20


Figure 6.10 Headstones for J.C. Barber (left) and W. A. Coe (right) Dublin Cemetery

A further document, Figure 6.11, on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website shows that Barber and Coe were buried in Drogheda (Little Calvary) Cemetery.

Figure 6.11 Commonwealth War Graves Commission Record for J C Barber and W A Coe

An article in the Mid Louth Independent newspaper for 28th August 2018\(^\text{41}\) explains this, noting that:

No doubt there are some relations of the Murphy Brothers, the builders once based at the Old Abbey, out there. They would have been involved in a lot of jobs but hardly none more unusual than in September of 1961. They were asked to exhume two bodies close to Calvary cemetery on the orders of the British War Graves Commission and the Board of Works. The story began in March 1941 when the trawler ‘Aberdeen’, a steam vessel out of Lowestoft, was

\(^{41}\) https://www.pressreader.com/ireland/mid-louth-independent/20180828/281973198518478 accessed 21.07.20
attacked by a German plane [sic], both bombed and riddled with gunfire, in Cardigan Bay.  
Sometime later, two bodies were washed up near Drogheda and taken to the burial grounds at 
Calvary.  They were the skipper of the Aberdeen, John Charles Barber and the second hand, 
William Coe.  John Barber was 56 and lived in Grimsby while William was 34 and lived in 
Milford Haven.  It had been decided that two decades after they were buried in Drogheda, the 
part would be removed to the military cemetery in Grangemoran.

William Coe is commemorated on the War Memorial in Milford Haven:

William Alfred Coe, Second Hand, Fishing Fleet. William was the son of Ben and Alice Coe, of 
Yarmouth. He married Ruby E. Ball, of Milford Haven in 1931. William served aboard the Steam 
Trawler Aberdeen, a Lowestoft registered trawler. William drowned when she was sunk by enemy 
aircraft in Cardigan Bay on 12 March 1941. He was 34 years old, and is buried at Grangegorman 
Military Cemetery, Ireland.

Figure 6.12 William Coe entry - Milford Haven War Memorial

Leslie Harrison is commemorated on Panel 3 of the Hull Lost Trawlers of Hull 1939 – 1945, 
Hessle Road, Hull although George Page, also of Hull, does not appear to be listed.

SURVIVING CREW

The names of the two crew who are reported to have survived is not clear other than the 
reference in Troughton (2006 pg.102) which notes that the survivors were Belgian refugees.  The 
Western Mail of 20th February 1941 discusses the award of a gift from the Milford Haven Trawlers 
Association to trawler hands for fighting off an attack by enemy aircraft.  It notes that a Belgian, 
Julien Luca, who distinguished himself in the fight, was not available and would be presented with 
his award at a later date.  The website for Milford Haven Town Council includes information 
about Belgian refugees who came to the area in World War 1 and then notes that in World War 2 
thousands of Belgians again came to the UK.  The Belgian Government in exile established a 
 military camp in Tenby and the ‘fishermen went to Milford Haven again’.  The Council were 
contacted but to date it has not been possible to locate any further information.
7.0 Analysis

The research established the outline of the history of the Aberdeen and when and how she was lost but did not reveal the location with any degree of certainty, or any substantive details of how she was lost. It was frustrating that despite extensive web based searches almost no references could be found to the loss of the vessel. It is possible that she was further out to sea than the location provided on the Coflein website and there was no RNLI rescue, or the surviving crew were picked up further out to sea and landed at a more remote port. Given that the bodies of two of the crew were found in Eire it is also possible, but probably unlikely, that the rescued crew were landed in the Republic.

The vessel was lost at a time of intense anti-shipping aircraft activity in the Irish Sea and the Western Approaches. It was notable that several other ships owned by the same company were reported to have been attacked by German aircraft during this period though none appear to have been lost. In one case there was a claim that the attacking aircraft was shot down. On this basis it appears all of the vessels owned by this company were still fishing in 1941, rather than having been requisitioned, but also appear to have been armed. It is also notable that the company used pair trawlers, a technique that seems to have been relatively unusual in British waters at the time but evidently delivered good catches – perhaps this is why they remained fishing. This does raise the question that if the vessel were pair fishing where was the partner of the Aberdeen when she was attacked? A year before she was lost the Aberdeen is recorded to have collided with and sank another trawler called the Xania, which was her pair trawler. Perhaps the company was unable to replace her and she was fishing alone – and perhaps this made her more vulnerable to attack. The Xania was a sister of Aberdeen, part of a group of 25 vessels to the same design reported to have been built for Hagerup Doughty and Co, her history is almost identical - built in the same year by the same yard and then passing through the same owners to meet her fate a year before her consort. The focus of wartime service by trawlers is often on requisitioned ships taken up into Naval services – perhaps reflecting better survival of military records. But from the story of the Aberdeen it is also clear that many ships remained fishing in a civilian capacity, presumably to provide food and evidently at considerable risk. As noted below, research by the author into another wartime civilian trawler loss also proved difficult, the story of civilian fishing activities during the war is an area that might merit further research.

A lot of time was spent searching newspaper articles on BNA but this did not yield any significant information. Whilst this was a useful web site because it allows searches of the newspaper articles no information was found on the loss of the Aberdeen. This is a problem the author has experienced before when searching for information on small vessels lost during the war (in this case the small trawler SS Kincorth off Anglesey) where there also do not seem to be any contemporaneous records. It was not possible to locate a ‘wreck report’ for the Aberdeen and presumably formal inquiries into wartime losses were not held. The lack of information may reflect wartime censorship but even this seems unusual, in the case of the Kincorth it was possible to find local newspaper articles discussing individual crew members ‘lost at sea’ but this was not the case for the Aberdeen. It is possible there is information on her loss in the National Archive or Lloyds List, information sourced from the National Archive includes the note ‘see Lloyds List 18/3/42’. There may also be more information on individual crew members in local Grimsby or Lowestoft newspapers that are not yet present on the BNA. This is a factor in the use of websites like BNA in that not all newspapers are present on the site and there may be bias introduced by this. Also specialist newspapers like Lloyds List were not present on BNA for this period. Searches in local archives may be more productive.

The research was complicated by the name of the ship itself, and the fact that she was also a trawler. Aberdeen was an important port for both building trawlers and for fishing itself, searches around terms like ‘aberdeen trawler’ returned lots of information about vessels sailing from the port of Aberdeen.
From the information that has been found it appears that all of the crew were able to get off the ship when she was lost but only two survived. There are reports a gale after they abandoned ship and this presumably contributed to the fatalities, it is not clear whether all of the crew were in the ships boat or whether the two survivors were in a separate boat, or on a raft. Although sunk on 11\textsuperscript{th} March two of the crew have their date of death recorded as the 12\textsuperscript{th}, perhaps reflecting that the crew were in the boats until at least the following day.

The discovery that the two surviving crew members were Belgian and the presence of a community of Belgian refugees in an around Milford Haven was an interesting aside. It appears that this community replicated a similar one in the area during World War 1, the comment that the refugee Belgian fishermen returned to fishing at Milford Haven is interesting and points towards an area of research that might merit further attention.

Finally, the \textit{Aberdeen} was reported to have been sunk by a Heinkel 111 aircraft from KG 27 on 11\textsuperscript{th} March 1941. Figure 6.7 is reported to show an aircraft from this geschwader after crash landing in France on 9\textsuperscript{th} April 1941, on the tail is a tally of ships, one large and one small. Could the smaller vessel be the \textit{Aberdeen}? The number of this aircraft is visible in the photograph; further research in German archives could reveal this.
8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

The research partly met the objectives of establishing the history of the *Aberdeen*, however, research was impeded by the fact the vessel was lost during World War II and it is considered that this limited information available from sources such as newspapers.

No information relating to the loss of the vessel could be located in contemporary newspaper articles that were available on the British Newspaper Archive (BNA), a pay to view site. This may relate to wartime censorship. References to the loss of vessel were found in several published sources but information was limited. The greatest amount of information relating to the loss of the Aberdeen came from Ceredigion Shipwrecks (2006), which may relate to sources from local archives or newspapers not included in the BNA.

One location for the wreck was found on the Coflein website (www.coflein.gov.uk) about 10 miles west of Aberdyfi but this could not be verified from any other sources, and it was not clear from the information on the Coflein website where this location has come from.

It appears that the crew of the Aberdeen survived the attack that sank their ship but only two ultimately survived. Two bodies were recovered in Eire. The two survivors were Belgian refugees, from a community in South Wales. It was notable that there was a similar Belgian community in the area in World War 1.

In terms of further research the following could be undertaken:

- Try to establish the position in which the *Aberdeen* sank – it might be possible to confirm this from the sources used by the Coflein website or from the National Archive, Lloyds List or local archives;
- Try to establish the story of the loss of the ship, and in particular how and where the survivors were rescued; and
- Understand the role of the Belgian refugee community in South Wales during the war, and their links with the Milford Haven fishing fleet.

It is possible that the wreck of the *Aberdeen* is already known but has not been identified. Alternatively, especially if the wreck is 10 miles or more offshore the wreck may not be known to the diving community. If the location can be pinpointed then it could be dived to record its condition although the vessel appears to be a relatively typical steam trawler from the first part of the 20th century.
9.0 References


Larn, R. & Larn, B., 2000, Shipwreck Index of the British Isles West Cost and Wales Lloyds Register of Shipping

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www.wrecksite.eu report 150730 on Aberdeen

For website references please refer to footnotes.
Appendices:
Appendix A – Lloyd’s Registers entries for the SS Aberdeen
LLOYDS REGISTER ENTRIES

1930

- No 56405
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- SteelscY1
- ssLwt.2ndNo8-10,22
- ssLwt.No.1-27
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- 100A1 Stm Trawler 10,30
- Port of survey Lowestoft LMC ?,27
- Tail shaft last seen 10,30
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Consolidated Fisheries, Ld (Sir John D Marsden, Bart. Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 180lb 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2pg, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7

1931

- No 06404
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- SteelscY1
- ssLwt.2ndNo8-10,22
- ssLwt.No.2-31
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- 100A1 Stm Trawler 10,31
- Port of survey Lowestoft 10,31
- Date when tail shaft last seen 10,30
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Consolidated Fisheries, Ld (Sir John D Marsden, Bart. Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 180lb 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7
1932

- No 79444
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- SteelscY1
- ssLwt.2\textsuperscript{nd}No8-10,22
- ssLwt.No.2-31
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- 100A1 Stm Trawler 10,32 NB 10,14
- Port of survey Lowestoft DS7,32 LMC 10,31
- Date when tail shaft last seen 10,30
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Consolidated Fisheries, Ld (Sir John D Marsden, Bart. Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 180lb 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2 pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7

1933

- No 06045
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- SteelscY1
- ssLwt.2\textsuperscript{nd}No8-10,22
- ssLwt.No.2-31
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- 100A1 Stm Trawler 11,33 NB10,14
- Port of survey Lowestoft LMC 10,31 BS7,32
- Date when tail shaft last seen 11,33
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Consolidated Fisheries, Ld (Sir John D Marsden, Bart. Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 180lb 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2 pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7
1934

- No 56546
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- Y1
- ssLwt.2ndNo8-10,22
- ssLwt.No.2-31
- 1Dk
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- 100A1 Stm Trawler 9,34 NB10,14
- Port of survey Lowestoft LMC 10,31 BS8,338,34
- Date when tail shaft last seen 11,33
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Consolidated Fisheries, Ld (Sir John D Marsden, Bart. Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20”
- 180lb
- 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7

1935

- No 05041
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- Y1
- ssLwt.2ndNo8-10,22
- ssLwt.No.2-31
- 1Dk
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- 100A1 Stm Trawler ?,?? NB10,14
- Port of survey Lowestoft LMC 10,31 BS8,338,34
- Date when tail shaft last seen 11,33 11,35
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Consolidated Fisheries, Ld (Sir John D Marsden, Bart. Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 180lb 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
Moulded depth 11”7

1936

- No 55045
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- Y1
- ssLwt.2nd No 8-10,22
- ssLwt. No. 2-31
- 1Dk
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- ... 8,36 Stm Trawler NB10,14
- Port of survey Lowestoft
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Consolidated Fisheries, Ld (Sir John D Marsden, Bart. Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7

Note vessel not recorded as 100A1.

1937

- No 04543
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- Y1
- ssLwt.2nd No 8-10,22
- ssLwt. No. 2-31
- 1Dk
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- ... 8,36 Stm Trawler NB10,14
- Port of survey Lowestoft
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Don Trawling Co (Milford Haven) Ltd (J.C.Llewelin Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Dpts09
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11"7

Note vessel not recorded as 100A1

1938

- No 54443
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- Y1
- ssLwt.2ndNo.8-10,22
- ssLwt.No.2-31
- 1Dk
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- ... 8,36 Stm Trawler NB10,14
- Port of survey Lowestoft
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Don Trawling Co (Milford Haven) Ltd (J.C.Llewellyn Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Dpts09
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston,.Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7

1939

- No 04345
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- Y1
- ssLwt.2ndNo8-10,22
- ssLwt.No.2-31
- 1Dk
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- ... 8,36 Stm Trawler NB10,14
- Port of survey Lowestoft
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Pair Fishing Co. Ltd. (H.J. Horwood, Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½”
- Dpts09
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2pf, GS26, HS656
Welsh Wreck Web Research Project

Nautical Archaeology Society

- Muir & Houston, Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11"7

1940

- No 54347
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- Y1
- ssLwt. 2nd No 8-10, 22
- ssLwt. No 2-31
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- ... 8,36 Stm Trawler NB10, 14
- Port of survey Lowestoft
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Pair Fishing Co. Ld. (H.J. Horwood, Mgr) (H.J. Richards Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½"
- Deck pts 09
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2 pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston, Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7

1941

- No 04348
- Official number 106676
- Aberdeen
- Y1
- ssLwt. 2nd No 8-10, 22
- ssLwt. No 2-31
- Gross tonnage 163
- Under deck tonnage 150
- Net tonnage 69
- ... 8,36 Stm Trawler
- Port of survey Lowestoft
- Built 1896 11 mo
- Builder Mackie & Thomson, Glasgow A&CP
- Owner Pair Fishing Co. Ld. (H.J. Richards, Mgr)
- Length 104.2 ft Breadth 20.5 ft Depth 10.7 ft Q 17’ F 19’
- BK 7½"
- Deck pts 09
- Port of Registry Lowestoft
- Flag British ABH Cem
- T3 Cy. 10”, 16” & 27” – 20” 45 RHP
- 1SB. 2 pf, GS26, HS656
- Muir & Houston, Ld. Gls
- Moulded depth 11”7
Appendix B – Lloyds Survey Information
Appendix C – The Timeline for the Aberdeen
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13th October 1896</td>
<td>Launched at the yard of Mackie and Thomson, Govan. Yard No 121. First of a group of 25 vessels of the same type for Hagerup doughty and Co. Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1896</td>
<td>Engines and boilers certified, made by Muir and Houston Ltd, Glasgow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1900</td>
<td>Newspaper report of the loss of Alfred Howes, a native of Yarmouth, lost from the small boat of the Aberdeen and drowned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1904</td>
<td>Reported to have been ashore on the Lincolnshire coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Owner, or Part Owner, and Manager reported as Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co. (Grimsby). Lim., 1, Quality Court, City, London. John Denton Marsden, Fish Dock, Grimsby. (Other sources record first date of ownership by Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co in 1909).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Skipper identified as G T Brader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1914</td>
<td>Requisitioned by the Admiralty (as No. 639). 1 x 6 pdr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Returned to owners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Address of the Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co. (Grimsby) Ltd changed to Auckland Road, Fish Docks, Grimsby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>Port of registry changes to Lowestoft but ownership details remain the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>First Lloyds register entry located on line. Owner Consolidated Fisheries Ltd. Port of registry Lowestoft, fishing number LT123.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Report of the loss of Herbert Boast, lost overboard 40 miles from Lowestoft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937/1938</td>
<td>Ownership changes to Don Trawling Co. (Milford Haven) Lim, The Docks, Milford Haven. John C. Llewellyn, 11, Priory Road, Milford Haven but vessel appears to have still been registered in Lowestoft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th October 1937</td>
<td>Newspaper report noting that ‘Another pair of locally owned trawlers put to sea on Tuesday night's tide. They were the S.T. Rattray and the S.T. Charmouth, recently purchased by the Don Fishing Company from Fleetwood and Aberdeen, and reconditioned and adapted for the Spanish “Pareja” method of fishing. This enterprising firm has purchased four more of this class of trawlers from Fleetwood, viz., S.T. Aberdeen, S.T. Zania, S.T. Ilfracombe and the S.T. Scarborough, two of which have arrived in Milford Docks to be fitted out. This makes five pairs of boats under the management of Yolland and Llewellyn’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Ownership recorded as Pair Fishing Co. Ltd. (H.J. Horwood, Mgr) but the vessel remained registered at Lowestoft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd March 1940</td>
<td>Collided with and sank the Zania (also spelt Xania in some cases), pair fishing partner. Zania was built by Mackie and Thomson as Yard No 143 with identical dimensions to the Aberdeen. Her history parallels that of the Aberdeen, owned by Hagerup and Doughty in Grimsby (as GY330) until 1906 when she passed to the Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co. In 1925 she was registered in Lowestoft (LT138) still with the Consolidated Steam Fishing and Ice Co before passing into the ownership of the Don Trawling Co in 1937 and the Pair Fishing Co in 1939. She was also requisitioned by the Admiralty (as No. 641) between Oct 1914 and 1919.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st February 1941</td>
<td>Newspaper report of 1st February 1941 notes that ‘the British trawlers Charmouth and Rattray drove off a German plane which attacked them while they were fishing’, bombs missed both vessels and they were then attacked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with machine guns and cannon but the German plane was hit and crashed some miles away.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 1941</td>
<td>Trawlers <em>Scarborough</em> and <em>Ilfracombe</em>, replied to the cannon and machine gun fire of a Focke Wulf FW 200 Condor off Bantry Bay with their Lewis guns and shot their attacker down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; March 1941</td>
<td><em>Aberdeen</em> bombed and machine-gunned in Cardigan Bay. Near missed but took on water and sank. Reported to have been bombed by Heinkel 111 of KG27. Location unknown, only reported position is approximately 52° 32'08&quot; N 004° 20'31&quot; W about 10nm offshore 10nm west of Aberdyfi, but the source and position cannot be verified. Crew took to the boat but shortly after a gale sprang up and by the time it abated only two of the crew were still alive. Eight lost, two survivors reported to be Belgian refugees. The deaths of six of the crew are reported as 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; March 1941. Belgian exiles had settled in South Wales and were crewing on trawlers. Six crew commemorated on Panel 123 of the Tower Hill Memorial, London: Arthur Butler, (Third Hand), Frederick Catchpole (Chief Engineer), Leslie Harrison (Third Engineer), William Mills (Fireman), James Murphy (Second Engineer) and George Page (Cook).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; March 1941</td>
<td>Two crew, William Coe (Second Hand) George Page (Cook) reported in some sources to have died on 12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; March 1941.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date unknown</td>
<td>Bodies of Skipper John Barber and Second Hand William Coe recovered near Drogheda, Eire. Buried at Drogheda (Little Calvary) Cemetery, Co Louth, Eire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1961</td>
<td>Bodies of Barber and Coe moved to the military cemetery at Grangegorman, Dublin. Graves marked with Merchant Navy headstones.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>