

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

**Report compiled by:
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Report Title: **Welsh Wreck Web Research Project
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On-line research into the *SS Aquila***

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Date: **November 2020**

Report Ref: ***Leave blank***

1.0 Abstract

Since 2001 the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) has developed a database of vessels known to have wrecked around the coast of Wales.

This project is to discover information relating to the history of the SS Aquila.

The SS Aquila was a cargo steamship registered in Panama. On October 23rd 1961, SS Aquila was adrift 10 miles SW of Bardsey Island in a severe storm after failure of its steering gear. The Porthdinllaen lifeboat was sent out to assist and experienced one of its worst trips while assisting the SS Aquila. After successfully repairing the steering gear the SS Aquila headed to Holyhead.

The research has been conducted from information gathered from MADU and on-line sites as I do not reside in the U.K.

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2.4 Contributors

Ian Cundy MADU Archaeological Diving Unit,
Nautical Archaeology Society (Regional co-ordinator for Wales)

2.5 Abbreviations

MADU Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit

2.6 Appendices

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3.0 Introduction

The SS Aquila was chosen as:

- it was a similar ship and time to other ships I had researched from the MADU Wreck list.
- I live overseas online information would be my priority research tool and similar to my previous research a ship from this period should be reasonably well documented online.

The following topics form the basis of the research:

- What were the vessel's specifications?
- What historical information is available relating to the vessel?
- What was the story leading up to the incident?
- What happened after the incident? Has anyone previously investigated or researched the vessel back story?

4.0 Background

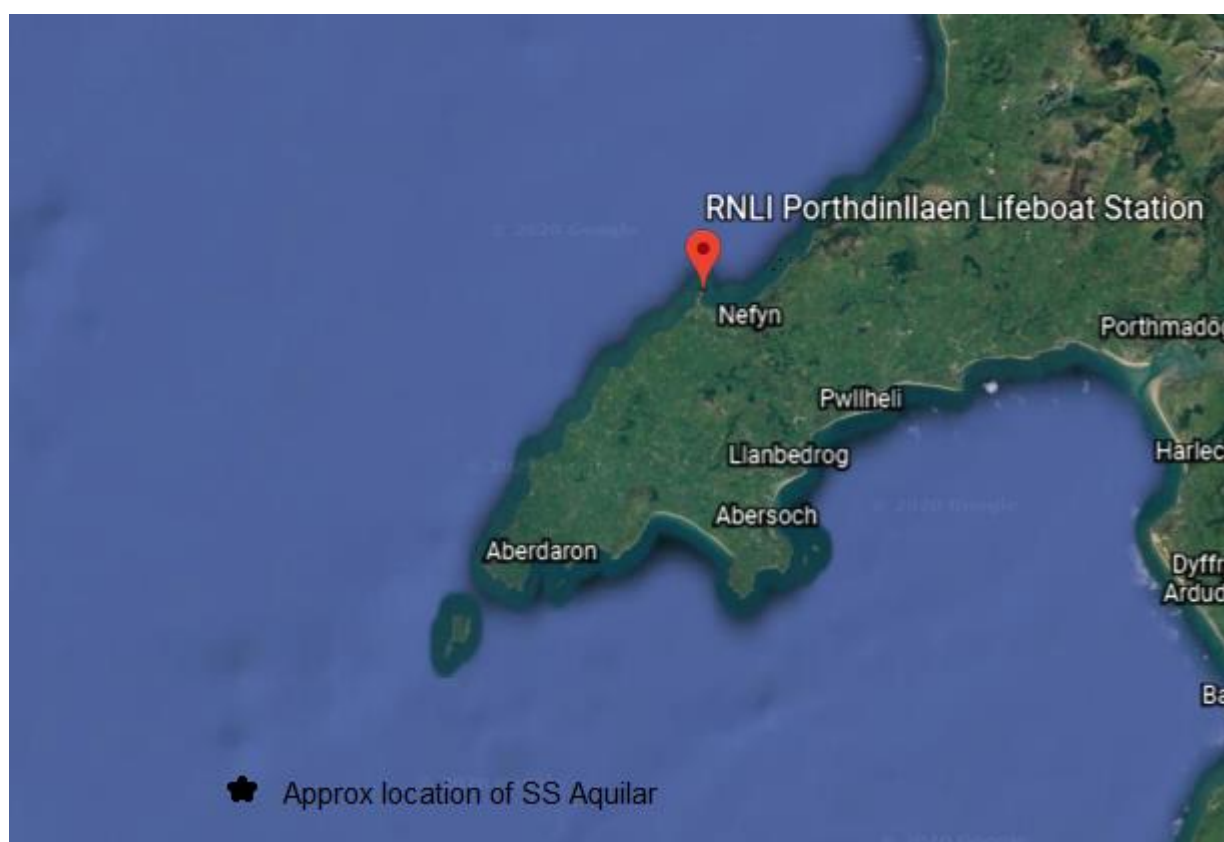
Prior to starting this research the only known data available to me was from the MADU Master Wrecksite Database Listing (Table 1) supplied by Mr Ian Cundy.

Table 1: Extract from MADU Master Wrecksite Database

Date Wrecked	Name	Location 2	Details	Vessel Type	Mats	Ref.
23/10/1961	Aquila	nr. Bardsey	mechanical failure	Steamship	Steel	iwj

In October 1961, the SS Aquila broke its steering gear and was adrift 10 miles SW of Bardsey Island (Fig 1). The SS Aquila was assisted by the Porthdinllaen lifeboat before sailing to Holyhead.

Fig 1: Approximate Location of SS Aquila



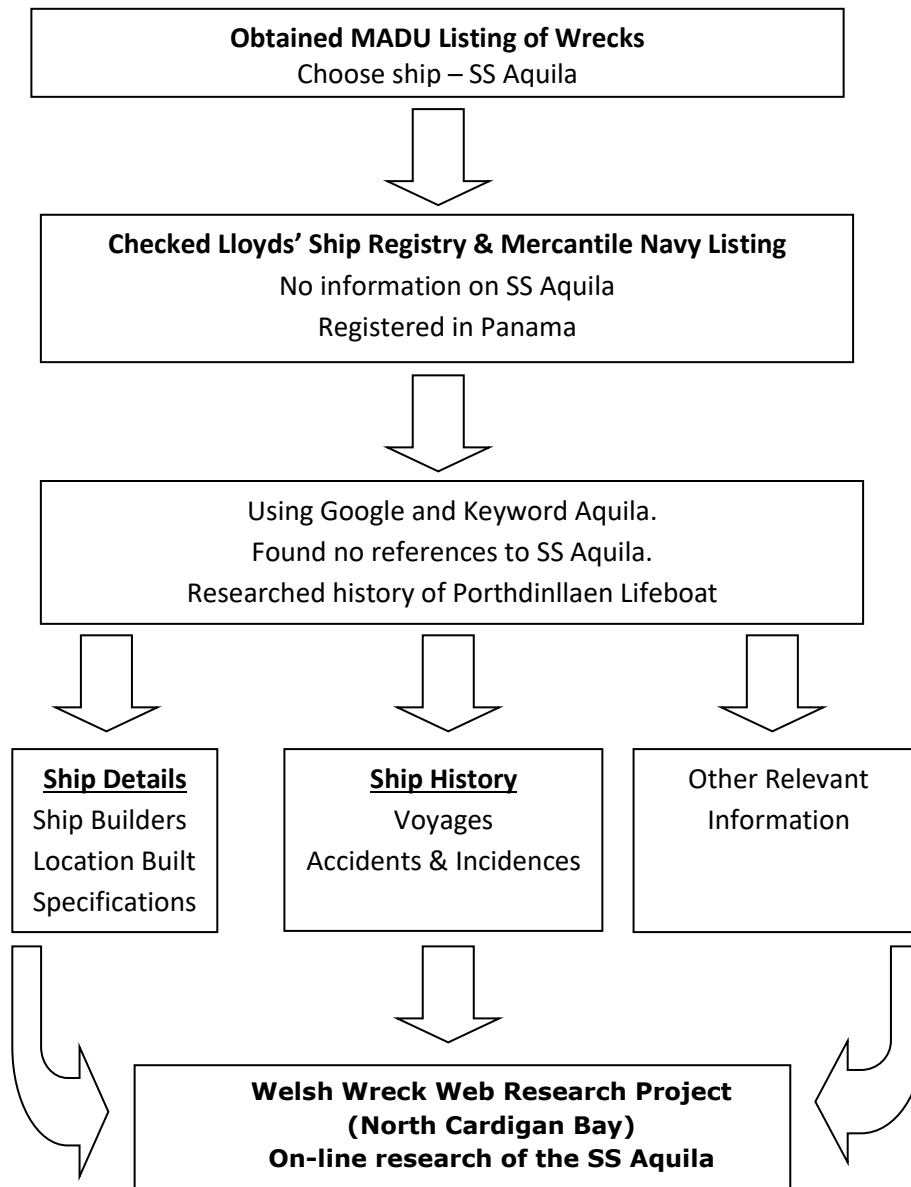
5.0 Research Methodology

Computer System

Acer Desktop 64 bit OS; 8 GB Memory, wireless connection.
Windows 10Pro
Microsoft Office 2007

Search engines used: Google Chrome

Methodology



See Section 9 for list of websites viewed

6.0 Results

Table 2: SS Aquila Specification and History

Vessel	Name/s	SS Aquila
	Type	Steamship
		General Cargo
Built	Date	N/A
Registry	Port	N/A
	Flag	Panama
Incident	From	N/A
	To	N/A
	Date	23/10/1961
	Location	10 miles SW of Bardsey Island
	Cause	Failed steering gear
	Loss of life	0
	Outcome	Repaired and sailed to Holyhead
Scrapped	Date	N/A

Table 3: Specifications and History of the Charles Henry Ashley Lifeboat, Porthdinllaen

Vessel	Name/s	Charles Henry Ashley		
	Type	Watson Class Lifeboat (Midship Steering Cabin type) – non self righting		
	Number	ON 866		
Built	Date	1949		
		Cost: £19,040		
	Builder	J. Samuel White, Cowes, IOW		
Owner		R.N.L.I		
Station		Porthdinllaen, Llyn Peninsula		
Service/Launches/Lives Saved		1949-1979 / 151 / 89		
Relief Fleet/Launches/Lives Saved		1979-1986 / 17 / 6		
Crew		8		
Construction	Materials	Wood		
	Decks	1		
		Aluminium Superstructure with open midship cockpit, large cabin aft, smaller cabin forward which gave access to engine room		
Dimensions	Length	46ft	9ins	14.25m
	Beam	12ft	9ins	3.89m
	Draught	4ft	6ins	1.37m
Tonnage	Displacement	22 tons		
Engine	Details	Ferry VE4, 4-cylinder diesel		
		Size: 2x40bhp		
Speed		8 knots		
Reengined	Year	1969		
	Details	Size: 2x70bhp		
		Manufacturer: Watermota Sea Lion		
Sold		March 1987		

7.0 Analysis

- No information could be found about the SS Aquila apart from 2 books (see Section 9.3).
- On Oct 23rd 1961, shortly after midnight the SS Aquila was reported drifting 10 miles SW of Bardsey Island with broken steering gear.
- The "Charles Henry Ashley" lifeboat was launched in a strong south-westerly gale with high seas to assist the SS Aquila.
- Shortly after leaving the shelter of Porthdinllaen Point the lifeboat was struck by large waves and her radio telephone was put out of action resulting in no communications with the shore base.
- Due to a lack of communication it was reported on the BBC news that the Porthdinllaen lifeboat had been reported missing. In the meantime the Holyhead, Pwllhwli and Criccieth lifeboats had been launched to carry out a search.
- However, although with no communications the "Charles Henry Ashley" battled through the gale for 6 hrs to reach the SS Aquila.
- Once there the "Charles Henry Ashley" stayed on standby until the steering gear of the SS Aquila had been repaired and then escorted the SS Aquila clear of Bardsey Sound on her way to Holyhead.
- At 11am after 10 hours with no communications the "Charles Henry Ashley" returned to her station at Porthdinllaen.

8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

The project took approximately 1 working day with half of that time spent on on-line research.

I set out with the goal of researching the history of the SS Aquila with basic information provided. However no details of the ship were found while researching apart from entries in 2 publications (see Section 9.3).

I have added some information on the "Charles Henry Ashley" Lifeboat which assisted the SS Aquila off Bardsey Island.

Many different WebPages were viewed ranging from large organisations e.g. Lloyd's Registry Listings to smaller WebPages such as local history or people with a given interest in a subject. The quantity and quality of the WebPages appeared depended on the targeted audiences and the amount of work undertaken.

From the research conducted, setting a goal and how to reach that goal should be mapped out first. Careful use of specific words in search engines is very important.

9.0 References

9.1 Online WebPages

The following websites and pages have been used in the compilation of this report:

<https://www.google.co.uk/>

<https://www.nationalhistoricalships.org.uk/register/2027/city-bradford-iii>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/46ft_9in_Watson-class_lifeboat#Midship_steering_cabin_type

<http://www.pylifeboat.org/index.php/history?id=27:boat-records&catid=1>

9.2 Personal Correspondences

I would like to thank Mr Ian Cundy for supplying the initial information and other information with regards to the research project.

9.3 Publications

Wreck and Rescue on the Coast of Wales – The Lifeboats of Cardigan Bay and Anglesey – Henry Parry

Shipwrecks of North Wales – Revised and Updated 4th Edition – Ivor Wynne Jones

Appendices:

Appendix A: Watson Class Lifeboat (City of Bradford, built 1954 by J. Samuel White)

