

**Welsh Wreck Web Research Project**

**(North Cardigan Bay)**

**On-line research into the wreck of the:**

***FIFE MAID (157)***

Report compiled by:

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## 1.0 Abstract

Between 2001 and 2009 the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) held various licences under the Protection of Wrecks Act (1973) to dive and work on the Welsh designated wreck site known as the *Diamond*. The *Diamond* was a fully rigged American ship, built in 1823, that made 4 return transatlantic crossings before wrecking on the Sarn Badrig Reef, north Cardigan Bay in January 1825.

Over the research into the *Diamond*, MADU compiled a list of all the vessels that we could identify as having wrecked on or around the Sarn Badrig Reef, and to date there are 453 vessels on MADUs data base. Of these, very few have been investigated in any depth.

With corona virus currently requiring all to rethink the way we live, MADU instigated an on-line research project to identify details of these wreck on their data base.

This is a report on the results internet-based research of the FIFE MAID which has thought to have been wrecked on the St Patrick`s Causeway on November 26th, 1861. The results of this project indicate that the FIFE MAID was not wrecked on this date, in fact the vessel was reported to have been wrecked on the Blackwater Bank off the Wexford, South Eastern Irish coast on the 15th November 1861.

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### **3.0 Introduction**

Database entry No 157 FIFE MAID was selected to be the subject of an on-line research based project. The FIFE MAID was chosen as there was not data entries in the database

This project aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What were the vessel's specifications?
- What historical information is available relating to the vessel?
- What was the story leading up to wrecking?
- What caused the wrecking?
- What has happened since the wrecking?
- Has any salvage, etc. been carried out?
- Have there been any previous reports produced relating to the vessel?

### 4.0 Background

Prior to starting this research project, the only known information about the FIFE MAID in regards to the Cardigan Bay wreck information is summarised by entry 157, Figure 1, of the data base provided by MADU.

130	13/09/1861	No Name	Cardiganshire	Between Harlech and Mochras Point	beached, total wreck	boat		le			
157	26/11/1861	Fife Maid	Cardiganshire	Causeway	Wrecked	?		rc			

Figure 1 MADU Database Entry for FIFE MAID

No entries in any of the additional information supplied by MADU related to this vessel.

Although the vessel does not appear on the map of wrecks in the Merioneth and Caernarvonshire sections of Cardigan Bay, Figure 2, extracts from local newspapers supported the idea that the FIFE MAID was wrecked in this sea area.

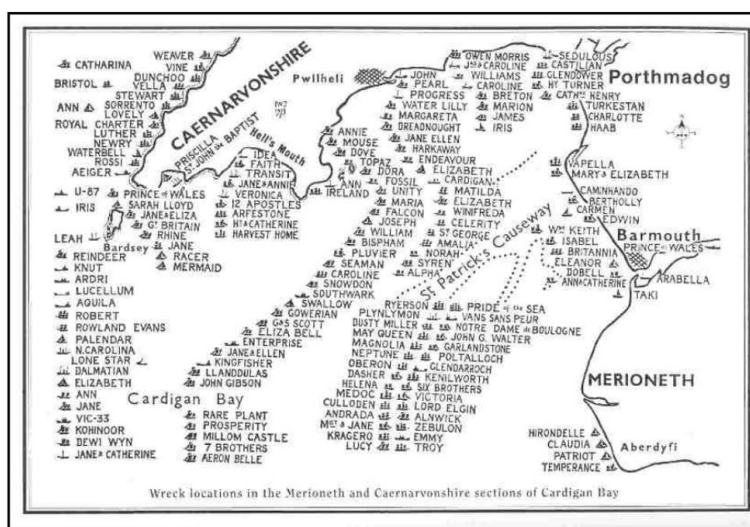


Figure 2 Wreck locations in the Merioneth and Caernarvonshire sections of Cardigan Bay

**“SHIPWRECK.**

*On Tuesday last, several pieces of the wreck of a ship were washed on shore at Morfa Bychan beach, supposed to be the wreck of a vessel which had struck on the Sarn Badrig, as the timbers were quite fresh. During the day, the figurehead – a woman’s bust – also came on shore with the letters ‘Fife Maid’ upon it, so that it must have been a Scotch vessel. Planks and timbers also came up the river with the tide during the day to the Cob at the port. No particulars are known of this wreck, but it is supposed that the whole crew must have perished.” (North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality. 30th November 1861).*

*“On November 26th, 1861, the vessel FIFE MAID was wrecked and lost with all her crew, off the St. Patrick’s Causeway” (Jan Lettens 2011).*

Sarn Badrig, also spelled *Sarn Padrig* (Welsh for *St. Patrick’s Causeway*), Figure 3, is one of several more or less parallel shingle reefs extending under the sea in Cardigan Bay on the west coast of Wales. Sarn Badrig is the longest and most northerly of these, and extends south-westwards under the sea from Mochras Point, on Shell Island, near Harlech, parallel to the Llŷn Peninsula for a length of about 20km, and can be seen at low tide. It is a hazard to shipping.



Figure 3 St Patrick`s Causeway or Sarn Badrig/St Patrick`s Causeway

## 5.0 Research Methodology

The research methodology was mainly a literature review of internationally recognised shipping registers (Lloyd`s Register of Shipping), local and national newspaper archive searches, and ancestry databases.

Wholly internet based the search was conducted through established search engines i.e. Google, Lloyds Register of Shipping Foundation archives, British Newspaper archives etc. A wide range of portals were used:

- Personal Computers – DELL, Toshiba & ASUS;
- Tablets – IPAD
- Smart Phones – IPHONE 8 & 6S

All using Microsoft Operating Systems.

As a lot of newspaper articles are compiled from 3<sup>rd</sup> party accounts, and in some case anecdotal information, the first part of the research focussed on identifying an entry of the FIFE MAID in a reputable source, Lloyds ship registers, as these are 1<sup>st</sup> hand entries made by what is accepted reliable sources.

Identifying the FIFE MAID in the register books, enabled subsequent information from not so academic sources to be verified.

## 6.0 Results

The search of Lloyd’s register of shipping register books, newspaper archives and internet search engines produced very little information. The following paragraphs detail what has been discovered, covering the vessels specification and a brief history of the FIFE MAID.

An entry for the FIFE MAID was found in Lloyd’s Register of Ships digital archive 1858, Figure 4.

No.	Ships.	Masters.	Tons.	BUILD.		Owners.	Port belonging to.	Destined Voyage.	Classification	
				Where.	When.				No. Years first assigned.	Character for Hull&Stn
7	Fiery Cross S YM.57c.f.	J. Dallas	788	Livrp'l	1855	JCampbll	Glasg'w	Lon.	C. 4 10	57 A 1
8	Fife Maid Sr I. B	JM'Kenzie	93	Invrkg	1849	DM'K'nzie	Invrktg	Lth.Coaster	7	A 1
9	Fifeshire Bk r.&YM.54		463	NBrns	1843	J. Lidgett	London	Sws. Aden	4	—
			472	w.pts.47	Srprs 54				C. 1	57

Figure 4 Extract from Lloyd’s Register of Ships 1858

From the register entry we can identify the following: The vessel is a schooner (Sr) built in 1849 in Inverkeithing. The vessel was awarded the highest classification, 'A1 at Lloyds', indicates by the letter A that a ship's hull is in first **class** order and by the number 1 that the trappings are also sound and was built using iron nails (I.B). The FIFE MAID has 2 tonnage assignments, the upper one (93) is the Measurement by the old Act, the under one (78) is that by the new Act, which commenced on the 1st January, 1836, (Lloyd’s Register of Ships, nd).

It would appear that in 1853 the vessel sustained damage which was repaired. This can be cross referenced with a newspaper article dated 27th July 1852, where it stated that the vessel had collided with the HELEN. The FIFE MAID was on passage to/from Newcastle and was reported to have drifted onto rocks between Craster to Caithness, the crew was saved (British Newspapers Archive, nd).

From the list of subscribers to Lloyd’s Register, Figure 5, we can determine that the owner DM M<sup>c</sup> Kenzie, was a ship and insurance broker from Dundee (Lloyd’s Register of Ships, nd).

1855	M'Ewen, William	...	...	...	Glasgow
1834	M'Farquhar & Co	...	...	...	George-st. Mansion-house
1852	M'Kenzie, David,	<i>Ship &amp; Insurance Broker, Dundee</i>			
1844	M'Laren John F.	...	...	...	Glasgow
1860	M'Leish & M'Nutt	...	...	...	Glasgow
1839	M'Leod, D. R., & Co.,	<i>Commis. Agents Leith</i>			

Figure 5 – Extract from Lloyd’s Register of Ships detailing the subscriber’s

To determine the name of the builder the register entry gave two pieces of useful information. The FIFE MAID was built in Inverkeithing, Fife during 1849. The only shipbuilders recorded at that time in Inverkeithing were George Ross & Sons. The National Records of Scotland has an entry of plans Plan of certain occupied by the ship-building yard and patent slip belonging to Messrs. George Ross & Sons in Inverkeithing dated 1857 (National Records of Scotland, nd).

What happened to the FIFE MAID? We have several newspaper articles (Lloyds List, Liverpool Mercury Dundee Courier), that report that the FIFE MAID was wrecked on the Blackwater Bank, whilst on passage between Wick and Waterford. The cargo is listed as herring and the crew were reportedly saved. All three confirm the wrecking took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1861.

Table 1 is a summary of the specification of the FIFE MAID's and its history gained the Lloyd's entry and the limited newspaper articles.

Vessel	Name	FIFE MAID	
	Type	Schooner (Sr)	
		Cargo	
Built	Date	1849	
	Builder	George Ross	
		Inverkeithing, Fife, Scotland	
Construction	Materials	Wood (assumed from wreck reports)	
Propulsion	Type	Not known	
Dimensions	Length	Not Known	
	Beam	Not Known	m
	Draught	Not Known	m
Tonnage	Gross	93 (old Act)	
	Net	78 (new act 1 <sup>st</sup> January 1836)	
Owner	First	DM McKenzie	
		Dundee, Scotland	
	Last	Not Applicable	
Registry	Port	Inverkeithing, Fife	
	Flag	British	
	Number	Not Known	
History	Routes		
		To	
	Cargo	Coal, Herring, Peruvian Guano	
Final Voyage	From	Wick, Caithness	
	To	Waterford	
	Captain	JM McKenzie	
	Crew	3	
	Passengers	None	
	Cargo	Herring	
Wrecking	Date	15/16 November 1861	
	Location	Blackwater Bank, 5 mi offshore Ballyconnigar	
	Cause	Infamous navigation hazard – foundered during storm	
	Loss of life	None reported	
	Outcome	Total Loss	

Table 1 Summary of FIFE MAID Specification

What happened to the FIFE MAID?

MADU reports that the FIFE MAID was wrecked on the St Patrick's Causeway. This was not based on an actual first hand account of a wrecking, rather on the presumption that as a result of wreckage being washed up on the Morfa Bychan beach.

The internet search indicates that in fact the FIFE MAID was wrecked on the Blackwater Bank whilst on passage from Wick to Wexford, Ireland. The Dundee Courier, Figure 6, gives a comprehensive account of the wrecking. It states that the vessel was carrying 750 barrels of herring bound for Wexford.

On the evening of the 15th November 1861, the FIFE MAID was `driven` on to the Blackwater Bank. The crew were saved and the following morning nothing could be seen of the FIFE MAID (British Newspaper Archive, nd).

This is corroborated in other articles. Lloyds List dated November 18th 1861 (British Newspaper Archive, nd), and The Liverpool Mercury 19th November 1861 (British Newspaper Archive, nd). Lloyds List states that the following day timbers of the FIFE MAID could be seen (British Newspaper Archive, nd).

## Dundee Courier - Saturday 30 November 1861

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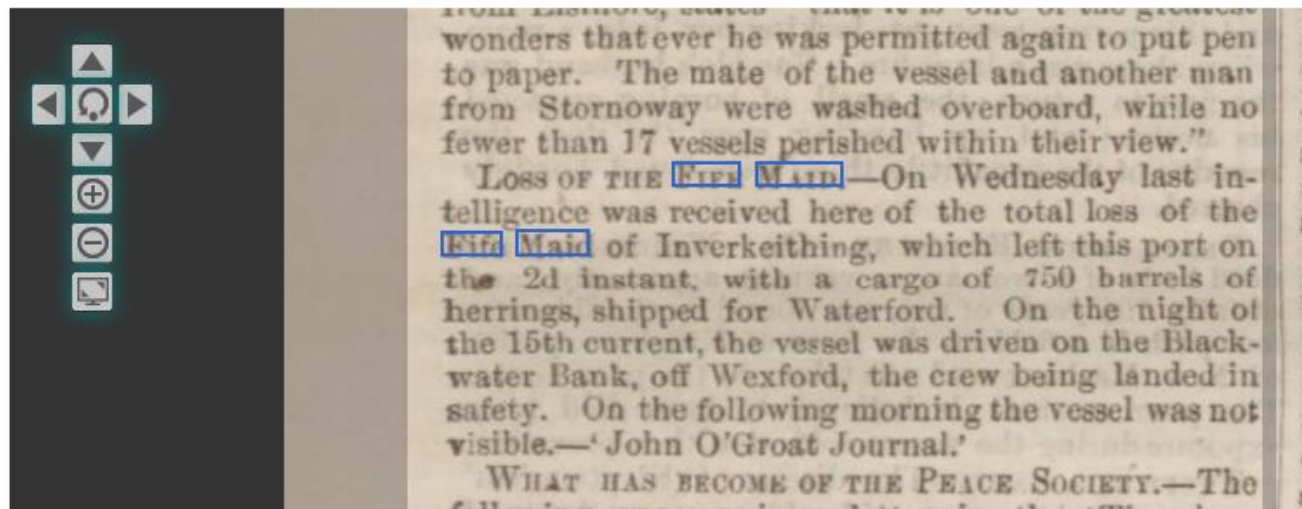


Figure 6 The Dundee Courier report on the Wrecking of the FIFE MAID on the Blackwater Bank

The Blackwater Bank, Figure 7, was a notorious navigational hazard off the Wexford coast. In 1845 there were calls for there to be fitted a light on the south end of the Blackwater Bank (The Social Historian, nd).



Figure 7 The Blackwater Bank off the Wexford Coast

A commission set up by Sir Robert Peel reported:

“ Verifiable by Captain Denis Kenselah, for 22 years a master mariner out of this port, and since 1827, a ship owner residing at Wexford and, Captain Lambert, who is a master mariner trading to this port, and has been for many years. The banks outside Wexford Bay included Howlin's Bed and the Blackwater Bank, the two of which laid in a direct line, each being not more than one-half mile wide. They have from five to ten fathoms water close to them inside, and also deep water at a quarter of a mile outside, with regular soundings. The passage between the two banks is about four miles wide, between Howlin's Bed and Greenore Point, two-thirds of a mile. 'A light on the south end of Blackwater Bank is absolutely required to prevent the frequent shipwrecks on that bank.'

— Wexford No 33, Evidence taken on 29 Aug 1845 ”

(The Social Historian, nd)

## 7.0 Analysis

The results of the demise of the FIFE MAID indicate that the vessel was wrecked on the Blackwater Bank, Wexford, off the South West coast of Ireland on the 15<sup>th</sup> November. This was positively reported in several articles at the time. On the 26<sup>th</sup> November it is reported that *“the figurehead – a woman’s bust – also came on shore with the letters ‘Fife Maid’ upon it, so that it must have been a Scotch vessel”*. There were no actual positive sightings of the FIFE MAID having been wrecked on the St. Patrick’s Causeway.

The locations of both the Blackwater Bank and St. Patrick’s Causeway are shown in Figure 8. It is quite conceivable that over the course of 9 days wreckage of the FIFE MAID could have drifted across the Irish Sea only to be washed up on the Welsh coast at Morfa Bychan beach.

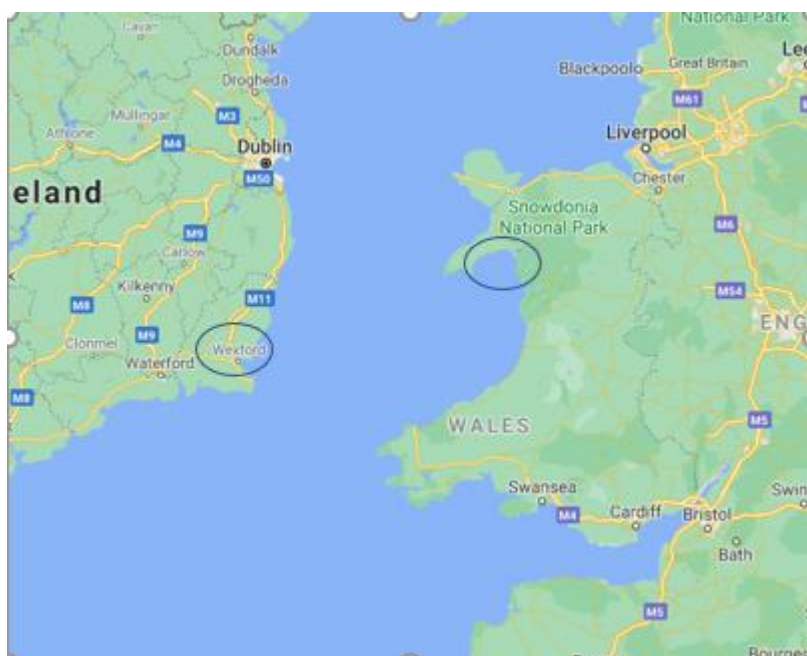


Figure 8 Locations of the Blackwater Bank and St. Patrick’s Causeway

Could the FIFE MAID have been wrecked on the Blackwater bank, crew saved, re-floated and drifted across the Irish Sea, only to be finally wrecked on the St Patrick’s Causeway. This is highly unlikely and Lloyds List newspaper article indicated that the day following the wrecking, 16th November, timbers of the FIFE MAID on the Blackwater Bank could be made out (British Newspaper Archive, nd).

## **8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations**

Firsthand accounts indicate that the FIFE MAID was wrecked on the Blackwater, Wexford, Ireland and not on the St Patrick`s Causeway.

It was conjecture that had the FIFE MAID being wrecked on the St. Patrick`s Causeway.

It should be recorded that the FIFE MAID was wrecked on the Blackwater Bank and the entry removed from the MADU database.

## 9.0 References

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