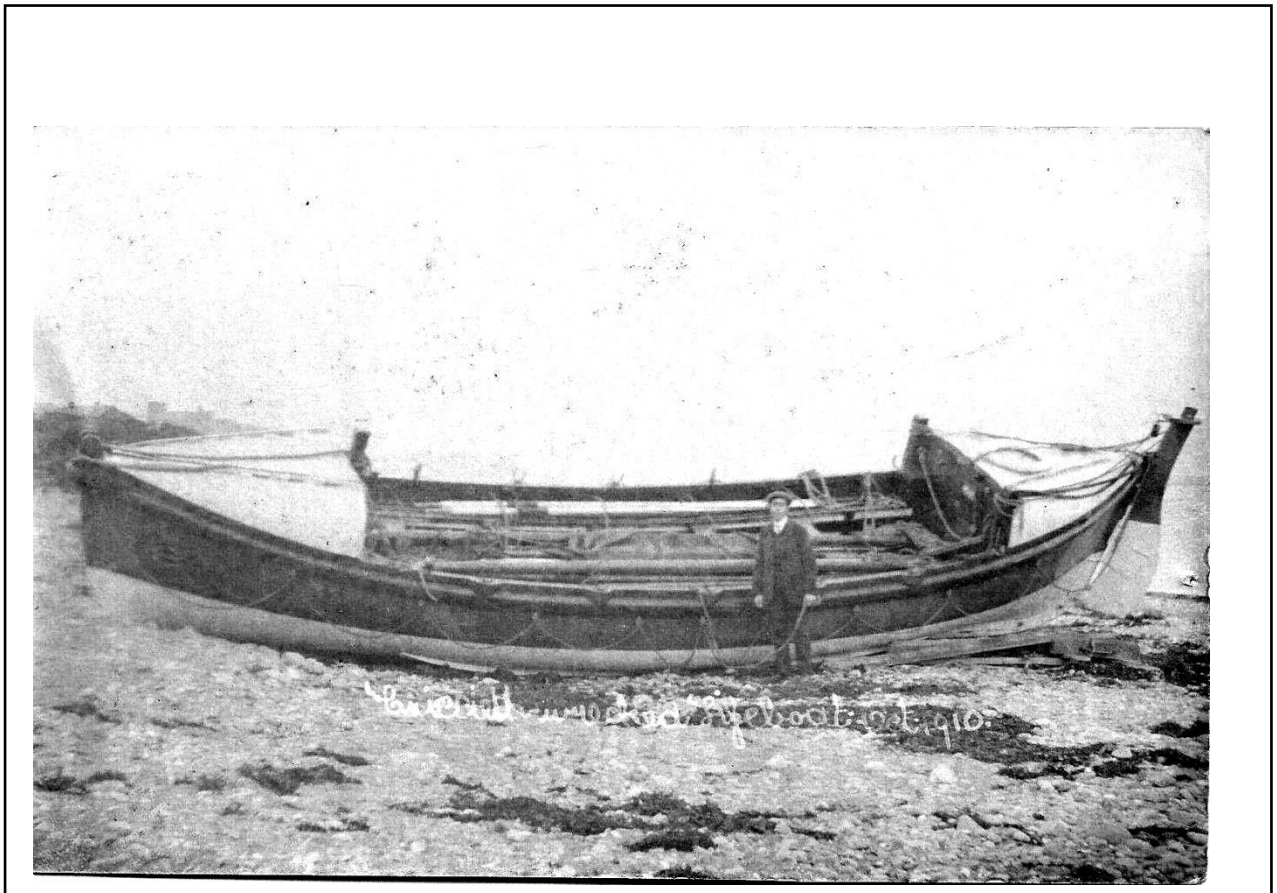


**Welsh Wreck Web Research Project**  
**(North Cardigan Bay)**  
**On-line research into the wreck of the:**  
**JAMES AND CAROLINE**



Wreck of the JAMES AND CAROLINE October 14<sup>th</sup> 1910

Report compiled by:  
**Robert Dafydd Cadwalader**

Report Title: **Welsh Wreck Web Research Project  
(North Cardigan Bay)  
On-line research into the wreck of the:  
JAMES AND CAROLINE**

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Date: **October 2020**

Report Ref: ***Leave blank***

## **1.0 Abstract**

The Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) currently has a database of 453 shipwrecks in the north end of Cardigan Bay in North West Wales. These wrecks date from 1590 to 1993 and very few have been investigated in any depth! With corona virus currently requiring us all to rethink the way we live, on-line research would appear to be something we could all safely consider taking on.

The author has no diving experience or training in archaeology. This report describes the historical aspect of the incident.

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**2.4 Contributors**

Porthmadog Maritime Museum  
MADU  
RNLI Criccieth Station

**2.5 Abbreviations**

A list of any abbreviations used in this report, i.e.

MADU	Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit
NAS	Nautical Archaeology Society
OS	Ordnance Survey
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales
MW/CM	Maritime Wales/Cymru a'r Môr Journal
CH	Chris Holden
HP	Henry Parry
IWJ	Ivor Wynne Jones
RNLI	Royal National Lifeboat Institution

### 3.0 Introduction

The author of this report is from a seafaring /fishing/ lifeboat family from Criccieth at the northern end of the Bay and the sea has been in his blood all his life, serving on ships of all types, including, as master, on research vessels, for over 40 years. His particular interest is in Tremadog Bay as the whole expanse of the bay is visible from Criccieth and as Trustee/Secretary of the Porthmadog Maritime Museum has gathered material on local shipwrecks and maritime incidents for many years and aims to correlate this and expand the information from written and the many on-line resources available. Anecdotes are included, but as always, though often useful, this type of information should be treated with caution so will be clearly indicated.

The hundreds of vessels that have been wrecked or in trouble in and around the Bay involved the lives of thousands of men (and women). Seafaring was a hard life in the days of sail; primitive living conditions, meagre food and poor pay. Life onshore was also difficult with many young men taking up the sea as there was no other alternative. Hundreds of lives have been lost over the years, some far from home, and several within sight of their loved ones. Many lives have been saved by local people, from the shore, other vessels and small boats. In particular, the lifeboats stationed around the coast have taken to sea in all conditions to rescue many of the crews. The newspaper clippings and anecdotes included in this report give an insight into just one of these small communities.

This report recounts one incident, when the Criccieth lifeboat was launched into a full storm to go to the aid of two fishing boats. During the launch the boat was smashed against rocks and a crew member washed overboard. The damaged boat was re-launched and during the night other members were washed overboard but thankfully recovered. After being swamped several times, the next morning the unmanageable boat was washed up and wrecked two miles to the west of Criccieth. No lives were lost but the crew suffered terribly from their harrowing experience.

The fate of three other vessels, the ketch JAMES, fishing smack HELENA and the yacht IRIS is included. There is scant information, in various publications, of the final outcome to the incidents these vessels were involved in. These can be omitted from wreck lists.

During the period 1909 to 1911 four different lifeboats were stationed at Criccieth. The reason for this is explained.

## 4.0 Background

The long list of accounts of maritime casualties in northern Cardigan Bay can be found in several books, particularly of Henry Parry and Ivor Wynne Jones. Modern investigations of surviving wrecks and wreckage are described in Chris Holden's books.

For centuries ships had blundered or been swept into the Bay, which is exposed to the prevailing south westerly storms, and come to grief on Sarn Badrig/St Patrick's Causeway or the shores between Enlli/Bardsey Island and Barmouth. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century Porthmadog, four miles to the east of Criccieth, developed rapidly with the exporting of roofing slates from the quarries in the hills. Almost three hundred wooden ships were built here and in nearby Borth y Gest between 1825 and 1913. These were mostly small schooners but also several bigger brigs, brigantines, barquentines and two or three barques (see appendices for diagrams of the different types).

In 1852, concerned by the loss of shipping and lives in the Bay a group of prominent shipowners, captains and citizens approached the Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners' Benevolent Society (Later to become the RNLI) - "and a lifeboat was allocated to the port. In 1854 the boat was transferred to Criccieth, the crossing of the bar of the River Glaslyn being at the best a hazardous operation particularly so in bad weather. At Criccieth the boat could be launched from the beach at any stage of the tide and in most weathers. The station continued to be named Portmadoc(sic) and in fact its name was not changed to Criccieth until 1892". (HP).

A history of the station can be found here - <https://historypoints.org/index.php?page=criccieth-lifeboat-station>

This report covers only a brief period in the life of the station.

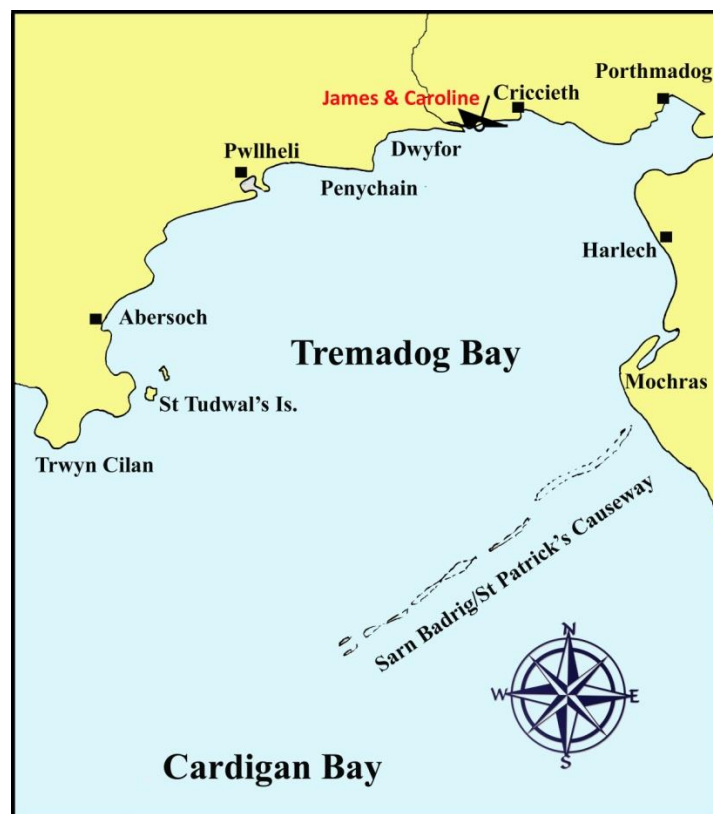


Fig 2. Cardigan Bay

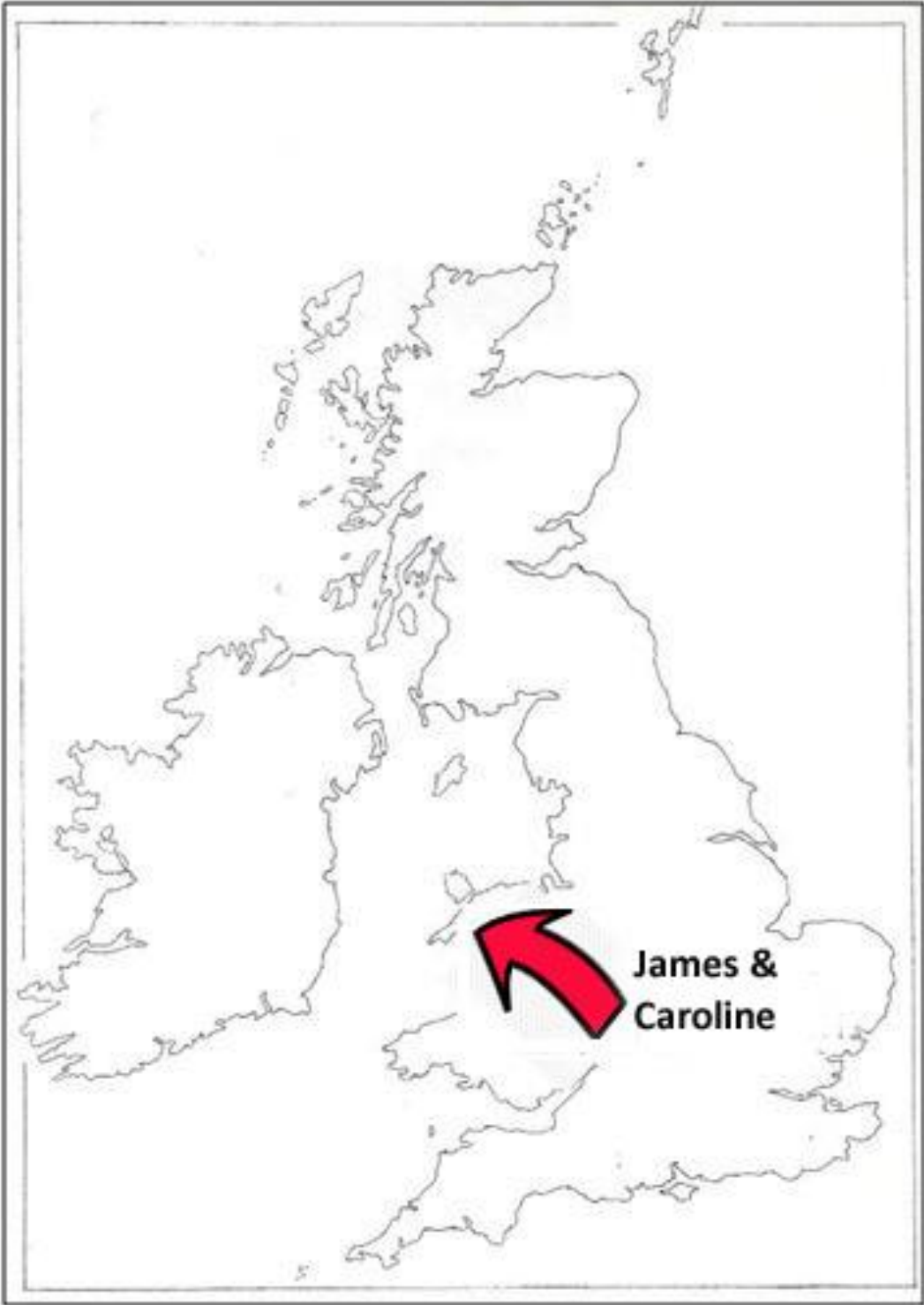


Fig 3 Map of UK

## 5.0 Research Methodology

### Equipment used

LENOVA C40-3D Desktop PC with Windows 10  
High speed broadband  
Microsoft Office  
Google search engine  
Ancestry.co.uk  
Adobe Photoshop Elements  
Admiralty chart – Cardigan Bay Northern Part 1984 Edition

1. I have a good library of reference books on maritime history including the classic books on shipwrecks and rescue on the North Wales coast. As an amateur local historian I have a collection of autobiographies and biographies by local people plus typewritten and hand written notes by residents of Criccieth going back to the 1830s. I start my research from here.
2. The COFLEIN website has information on some wrecks so this is checked
3. A general search with GOOGLE, always remembering to precede the vessel's name with.... barque, brig, schooner, sailing ship, SS , MV etc. And the date of the incident. Other search words used are... stranded, foundered, wrecked etc.
4. The National Library of Wales newspaper collection of Welsh newspapers 1800-1919 (English and Welsh) is invaluable <https://newspapers.library.wales/> (Free). Try using the name of a nearby community combined with the name of the ship or date of the incident using modern Welsh name or, more likely, the old English version or spelling e.g. Portmadoc/Port-madoc. Criccieth was spelt in several different ways.
5. The National Library of Wales Tithes Map site is excellent.  
[https://places.library.wales/browse/52.892/-4.126/13?page=1&alt=&alt=&leaflet-base-layers\\_70=on](https://places.library.wales/browse/52.892/-4.126/13?page=1&alt=&alt=&leaflet-base-layers_70=on)
6. The British Newspaper Archive online is a valuable source of information (Subscription required) <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>
7. Wrecksite.eu is an excellent website. A very reasonable fee of 4 eu is charged for further information and HD image (if available). This site sometimes has the Board of Trade Inquiry Report.
8. Anecdotal – sometimes elaborated over the generations but often an element of truth so well worth researching.
9. Archive catalogues from U.K and the U.S.A are sometimes online and often include a summary of the item.
10. Lloyd's Register Casualty Returns 1890-2000 <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/casualty-returns/casualty-returns>
11. I was given access to the Log and Maintenance books of Criccieth Lifeboat Station by Station Manager William Walker Jones.
12. The author is a Welsh speaker so possibly has wider access to newspapers in that language.

## 6.0 Results

<b>TABLE 1</b>			
Vessel	Name/s	JAMES AND CAROLINE	
	Type	Pulling and sailing Self Righting (SR) lifeboat	
Built	Date	1890	
	Builder	Woolfe	
	Built	Shadwell	
Construction	Materials	Wood	
	Decks	No decks, open boat, watertight whaleback spaces bow and stern.	
	Bulkheads	2	
Dimensions	Length	34'.0"	10.36m
	Beam	7'6" ft	2.28m
Tonnage	Deadweight	3ton 8cwt	
Owner	First	Royal National Lifeboat Institution	
Registry	Port	London	
	Flag	UK	
	Number	275	
History	Routes	1890 – 1904 Stationed at St Agnes, Isle of Scilly where she saved 32 Lives	
Final Voyage	From	Criccieth	
	To		
	Coxswain	Evan Hughes	
	Crew	13	
Wrecking	Date	14 <sup>th</sup> October 1910	
	Location	Ynysgain Beach West of Criccieth	
	Wrecked	Stranding	
	Loss of life	0	
	Outcome	Badly damaged, condemned and broken up	

### **THE PRELUDE**

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century slate export by sea from Porthmadog was declining due to more slates being taken away by main line railway so consequently fewer ships called in the Bay. The last major rescue by Criccieth's pulling and sailing lifeboat was in December 1907 when the crew of six from the OWEN MORRIS were taken off minutes before the local schooner was driven into the big cave at Black Rock between Criccieth and Porthmadog and smashed to pieces. The lifeboat CAROLINE had been stationed at Criccieth since 1890. See account of rescue <https://historypoints.org/index.php?page=owen-morris-shipwreck-1907-near-criccieth> Possibly the lifeboat suffered some damage during this incident for, by July 1910 she was condemned unfit for further service.

A reserve lifeboat arrived the next month, The JAMES AND CAROLINE which had been stationed previously at St Agnes, Isles of Scily. The lifeboat was called out twice during its first month on station.

#### The Problem with launching the lifeboat at Criccieth

The town faces south and the full force of storms. A rocky headland, on which the castle sits, gives some shelter to the east beach. For centuries a landing place was maintained here by moving the large boulders and rocks to either side, to landward to form an accretion where the

buildings at Abermarchnad developed and to seaward where a rough "berm" or embankment was built. In the 1850s this "Cob", as it was known, was further strengthened to provide some more protection. By 1881 winter storms had caused damage to this embankment and repairs and further work was carried out.

**CAMBRIAN NEWS 21st September 1881**

***CRICCIETH.***

*The injury to the embankment, the re-construction of which was commenced this season was found not to be so serious as was at first imagined after the late storm. The work is now setting well together, and the money contributed is being expended in strengthening and enlarging the embankment. Much has already been done, but the length of the embankment depends upon the amount received towards the work, and the larger the sum received the better will be the shelter of yachts and boats at this watering place.*



Fig. 4 Schooner at Criccieth

In 1889 a group of local businessmen formed "The Criccieth Pier and Harbour Company" and obtained an Act of Parliament with the very ambitious aim to construct a port at Criccieth. This would have involved the building of a strong stone breakwater extending from the castle headland. The foundation stone was laid in 1890 but building ceased after a couple of years as only a fraction of the required capital was raised. The only part built was the stub of the inner pier (This is what we see today) which reached the low water mark. The remains of the old "Cob" at this end were to cause big problems as winter storms over the following years displaced them, moving them landwards and narrowing the safe launching and landing beach. By 1908 this had become dangerous, particularly when launching the lifeboat in rough weather.

**CAMBRIAN NEWS 4<sup>th</sup> September 1908**

***Boulder stones near the Pier***

*It was agreed to write to the secretary of the Local Lifeboat Committee inquiring whether he had any report to make with reference to the suggestion to remove boulder stones by Criccieth pier alleged to be dangerous in connection with the launching of the lifeboat.*

Over the next few months there was much correspondence between the RNLI, Criccieth Council and the Board of Trade representing the Crown. The Council held the lease to the foreshore while the Crown owned the beach between High water and Low water. The moribund Pier and Harbour Company still held a lease to a

part of the beach involved. The BOT laid down stringent conditions, requiring to know how many boulders were to be moved (within the beach only) and to where. It was finally decided that up to 200 boulders could be moved to the outside (seaward) side of the breakwater. This correspondence is stored at the Public Record Office at Kew and the author of this report has obtained copies. The work commenced during the summer of 1909 but as this could only be carried out at Low water Spring tides in reasonable weather it was to be a long process and it was not until 1911 that the boulders were cleared. Anecdotally, explosives were also used. Consequently, in October 1910, when the incident described in this report occurred, the boulders were still causing difficulties during the launching and recovery of the lifeboat.

### Launching the Lifeboat

The boat at Criccieth did not have a carriage. It was slid down the slipway to the beach then manhandled across the stones and gravel to the water across temporary baulks of timber. Launching the boat (and recovering) in heavy seas was a dangerous and very physical operation. Captain W.E. Williams, who was a crew member on the last sailing boat in the 1920s, described it in an article in the *Cymru a'r Môr/Maritime Wales Journal No 11 1987*.

The lifeboat was manned by coxswain, second coxswain, bow man and 10 rowers, 13 in all. During the winter months a buoy was anchored around 75 yards from the end of the pier and made fast to the buoy was a hawser the other end being made fast to a baulk of timber about 15 inches square and around 15 feet high situated to the left of the launching slip. There were two lizards (length of rope attached to a galvanized ring) through which the hawser had been passed and when the lifeboat put to sea these lizards were fastened to the lifeboat, one at the bow and the other at the stern. This enabled the crew to pull the lifeboat out to the buoy and when the sails were set the lizards were cast off.

In a sailing lifeboat stationed at Criccieth there is very little shelter for the crew, and with low freeboard spray continually drenching the crew. The rowers sat two abreast with a life line attached to the thwart with a cork at the other end. These life lines were passed over to each rower but never made fast. The clothes supplied to the crew in those days was an oilskin jacket (waist high) with oilskin trousers sou'wester sea boots and life jacket strapped to the body.

As the crew hauled on the tow out warp several men, and anecdotally, women pushed on a heavy pole secured to the stern of the boat, wading out to their waists. This pole can be seen in the bottom left corner of the following photo.



Fig. 5 Launching the Lifeboat

The difficulties with launching the boat is illustrated by the plan and photo below.

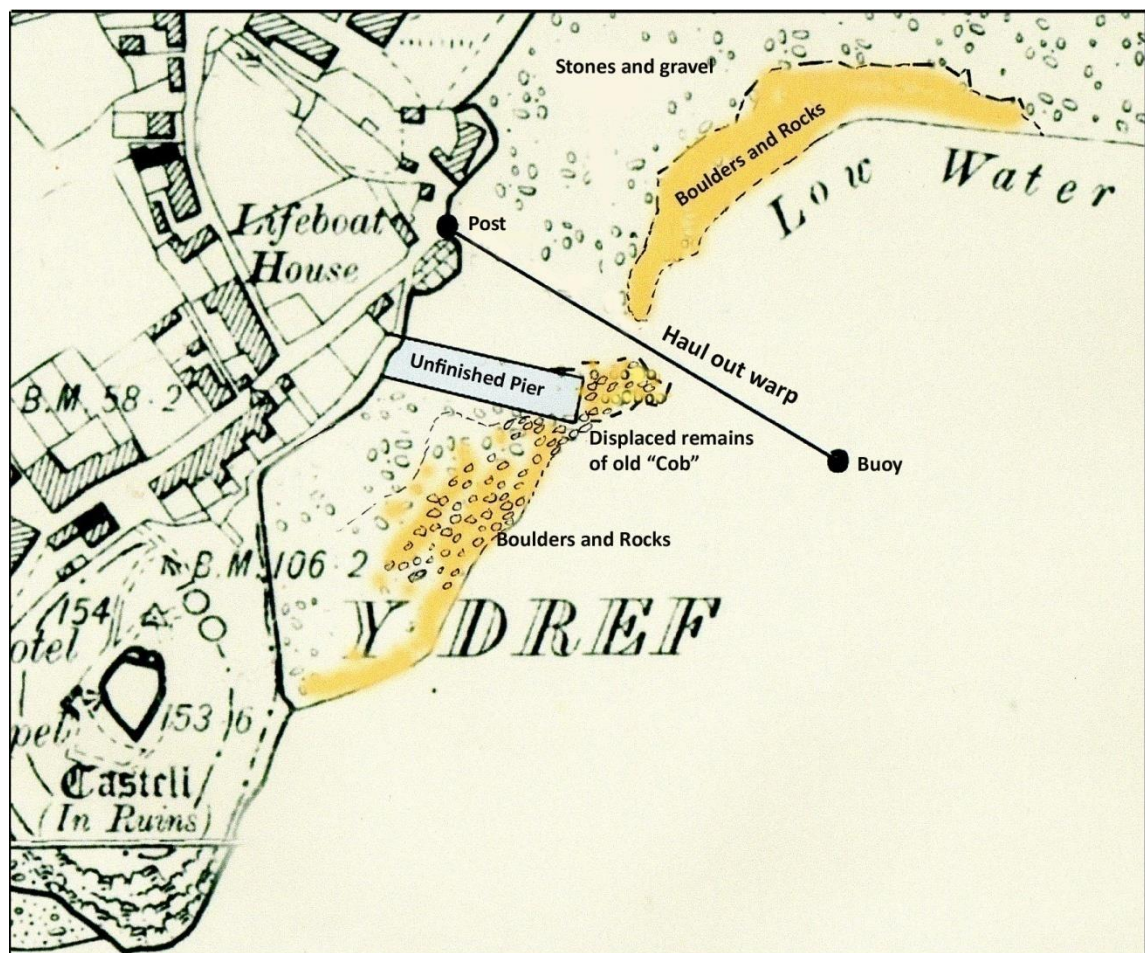


Fig.6 Plan showing launching difficulties

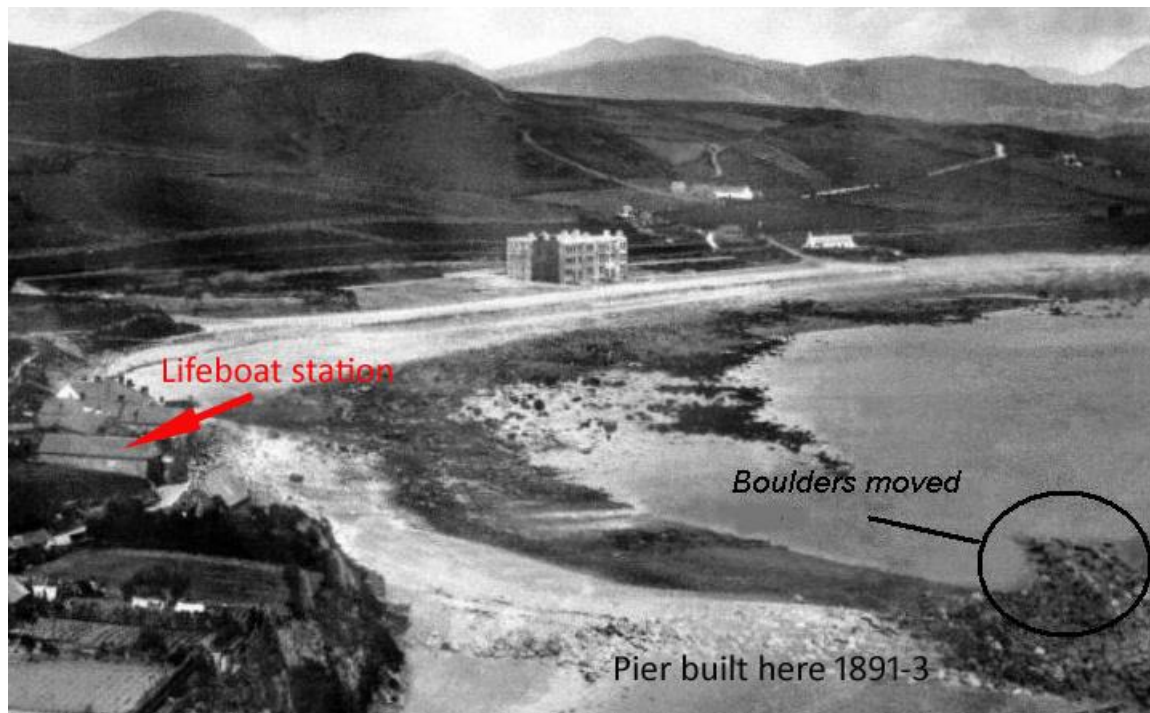


Fig. 7 Photo showing launching difficulties

**NORTH WALES EXPRESS 19thth August 1910**

**CRICCIETH, TUESDAY NIGHT.**

Two lifeboat rescues within a few days of one another such was the unusual spectacle which the inhabitants and visitors of Criccieth had during the past week. An account of Thursday night's rescue is given in another column. I might, however, mention an incident having connection with it, and which occurred on Friday morning. The storm had not yet altogether abated, but the abandoned ship seemed still to be riding safely at her anchors, and boatmen and sailors were busily engaged discussing the question of boarding her. It is true, I believe, that Messrs William Edwards and David Cadwalader made an offer to convey the ship's crew aboard, with their fishing boat, "The Pathfinder," but that the offer was definitely refused. It is important, therefore, that publicity should be given to this fact, in view of the various rumours to the contrary which have been circulated in Portmadoc. After the refusal, however, the two fishermen started on their own responsibility from the Dwyfor harbour, intent upon boarding the vessel. They were well on the way, when suddenly the tug "Wave of Life" came steaming at full speed from Portmadoc. The excitement on shore grew more and more intense as the two boats drew nearer their would-be prize. The tug, however, won the race by a few minutes, and the "James," of Cardigan, abandoned ketch, was boarded by the pilots, and towed to Portmadoc. Thus does the curtain fall on a series of dramatic incidents. Yesterday afternoon, another sensation was provided for the visitors. A small centre-board yacht came sailing down the bay from Abersoch. It came as far as the pierhead, and then made a direct, tack for the bar, with the intention, apparently, of running to Portmadoc. Two or three boatmen saw this, and did not hesitate to describe it as a foolhardy venture. By means of strong glasses, they kept the boat under close observation, knowing full well that trouble lay ahead. As the craft neared the big breakers on the bar, the watchers with bated breath saw the white mainsail being lowered. The crew, realising their precarious situation, had evidently taken this precaution lest the boat might "broach to" in the breakers. Soon afterwards, the jib was seen to be taken down, and an anchor dropped. And there the boat lay helpless in

*the great heavings of the bar, with mammoth waves ready to swallow the fragile craft and its occupants. There was no time to lose. The life boat rocket call summoned the crew together, and in a short time the lifeboat was successfully launched amid great excitement. The little craft on the bar, and which proved to be the "Iris," of Abersoch, had three gentlemen on board. These were persuaded by the rescuers to leave their boat, and come ashore. After some hesitation, they acquiesced, leaving the "Iris" to take its chances on the bar. By this afternoon, the sea had calmed down somewhat, and the boat, which had withstood the night gale well, was recovered by local sailors. Had the timely offer of assistance been refused, those who were in the lifeboat inform me, that a fatal ending would undoubtedly have crowned a day's mishaps and mistakes.*



Fig. 8 The fishing boat PATHFINDER

As the JAMES AND CAROLINE was a reserve lifeboat only, a permanent replacement was needed. There was much discussion on the type that would be most suited to the launching facilities, the condition of the beach and the weather and seas encountered in the Bay. Three crew members were despatched on a tour of other stations to assess various types of boats.

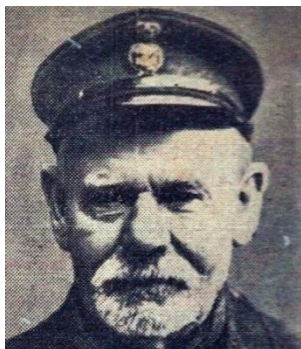
**Herald Cymraeg 4<sup>th</sup> Hydref 1910**

**BYWYDFAD.**—*Bu'r Mri Evan Hughes, David Cadwalader, a William Cadwalader ymaith yr wythnos ddiweddaf yn dewis bywydfad newydd i Griccieth*

**TRANSLATION**

**Herald Cymraeg 4<sup>th</sup> October 1910**

**LIFEBOAT** - Messrs Evan Hughes, David Cadwalader, and William Cadwalader were away last week choosing a new lifeboat for Criccieth.



Cox'n Evan Hughes



David Cadwalader



William Cadwalader

**CAMBRIAN NEWS 7<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 1910**

**Lifeboat Committee.** —*The members of the local committee of the Lifeboat Institution met last Saturday to receive the report of the representatives of the lifeboat crew on their inspection of types of boats at Llandulas, St. Andrew', Padstow, and Port Eynon, preparatory to a new boat being built for the Criccieth Station. There were present Mr J E. Greaves, chairman, Captain Drage, Messers Thomas Roberts, Portmadoc, T Burnell, Hon Sec Criccieth station, T. L. Manchester, Pwllhel i, Hon Secretary South Carnarvonshire Branch, Coxswain Evan Hughes, and Messrs David Cadwalader and William Cadwalader. The members of the crew reported in detail upon each boat inspected, and they were agreed that the type of boat best suited for the Criccieth Station was one similar to the St. Andrew's boat. The Committee unanimously resolved to make a recommendation to the Institution in accordance with the men's report.*



Thomas Burnell Hon Sec Criccieth Lifeboat Station

**The Incident 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> October 1910**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October a ferocious storm blew from the North East. With the wind from this direction the seas have a short "fetch" across the Bay but a short dangerous sea builds up directly on to the beach at Criccieth; the castle headland and pier offering no shelter whatsoever.

**CAMBRIAN NEWS 21<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 1910****THE RECENT GALE. CRICCIETH LIFEBOAT SERIOUSLY DAMAGED.**

Signals of distress from two fishing smacks near Portmadoc Bar were observed about seven o'clock on Thursday night. A whole gale was blowing from the north-east at the time, and an attempt was at once made to launch the reserve boat which has been temporarily placed on the Criccieth Station pending the building of a new life-boat. The difficulties of launching could hardly be greater, but the gallant crew with their characteristic determination, thought nothing of difficulties. Boulders impede the egress of the life-boat at all times, but with the force of a whole gale blowing against the boat's side, no seamanship could obviate the dangers of launching under these circumstances. The insuperable obstacles the boat had to encounter are obvious from the fact that at the first attempt to get out, the boat was forcibly swerved round and one of the crew who had braved many a storm before was thrown out of the boat. Nothing daunted, the crew worked on, but again driven by the gale, which at times attained the force of a hurricane, the boat struck the boulders outside the breakwater, and as was proved later was considerably damaged. An inspection of the boat revealed nothing to hinder another attempt being made to put out to sea. It goes without saying that, as always, here, when there is danger at sea there is a crowd of willing helpers at hand and the shore presented a lively scene all through the hours of Thursday night and Friday morning. Wind nor wave deterred Mr William Edwards from putting out

sea in one of his boats to render assistance to the life-boat crew, and his nephew, Mr John Williams was equally anxious to do anything and everything he could. The excitement on the beach was never so intense. No time was lost in getting the lifeboat off the holders and launching her again, and this next attempt was successful. The crowd hauled the boat along towards the Castle Rock and over the pier, and with a final effort she was got out again. It was now nearly ten o'clock. Hours passed, and the anxiety in and about the boat house naturally increased. It was known that the fishing boats "Venus" and "Helena," both of Portmadoc had been out since Wednesday night, and even if the four men on the smacks were still safe, they must be sadly in want of food. But now the safety of the lifeboat's crew added greatly to the anxiety. Between two and 2-30 a.m. red signals were seen the life-boat required more aid. What was happening or what had happened was a mystery. The thick darkness prevented the boat being seen.

At day break the boat was observed about a quarter of a mile seaward of the Castle Rock. The wind now veering towards south east never abated and as daylight advanced what seemed like dust clouds obscured for a time the distressed fishing smacks. About seven A.M. communications were possible with Pwllheli and the local secretary of the lifeboat Institution Mr Manchester, instantly got Coxswain Willoughby and his crew ready to proceed to the rescue. By this time the gale had moderated considerably, but its force made headway difficult for the Pwllheli boat. Just before seven o'clock- one the fishing boats, the "Helena," suddenly disappeared. Evidently she had been swamped and fears for the safety of the two men Hugh Morris and Henry Jones, increased. The mast was leaning towards the boat afloat and, appearing to be near, there was hope that the men had been taken aboard the "Venus." Hours later this turned out to be correct, but the anxiety in the meantime is indescribable. The Criccieth lifeboat was beached under Ynysgain Fawr about a mile west of the Castle. The crowd of watchers, now increased in numbers, hurried to the crew's assistance. The men's appearance testified to the terrible hardships of their fourteen hours struggle at sea. Their boat, water-logged at the start, could make no head-way against the fierce storm. At every attempt to put up sail the boat turned over. Four of the crew were thrown overboard during the night, including the coxswain, and the wonder is that the crew returned in safety. The boat was continually driven to leeward, and only once during the long struggle was she able to get within a quarter of a mile to the distressed fishing smacks. Mrs. Mary Davies and Misses Ellen Dora Jones. Annie Owen, and Lizzie Williams thoughtfully prepared hot tea for the men as soon as they came ashore, through the kind assistance of Mrs. Griffiths's household at Ynysgain Fawr, and on their way home warm OXO was kindly prepared for the men by Mrs Webster at the Marine Hotel. The Pwllheli boat rescued the fishermen safely, arriving alongside the "Venus" about 11-30 a.m. They were brought into harbour at Pwllheli.



Boatman William Edwards and his nephew John E Williams assisted in getting the lifeboat off the rocks during the launch

**Daily Telegraph Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October 1910****LIFEBOAT'S ADVENTURE OFF CRICCIETH. FOUR MEN BLOWN OVERBOARD AND SAVED.**

At daybreak on Friday a large crowd of Criccieth inhabitants, who had stayed out all night following the launch of the Criccieth lifeboat at seven o'clock Thursday evening in response signals of distress from two Portmadoc fishing boats —Venus and Helena—lying in Cardigan Bay between Portmadoc and Criccieth, found the lifeboat, tossing heavily in the easterly storm which raged. It appears that during the launch, which was accomplished with great difficulty after two unsuccessful attempts, the lifeboat struck some boulders outside Criccieth breakwater, sustaining serious damage. She was found to be leaking badly as she was proceeding towards distressed boats. The lifeboat crew, however, made desperate attempts to get alongside the fishing-boats, but utterly failed, the wind driving the lifeboat back again and again. Four of the lifeboat crew were blown overboard during the night, but fortunately were saved. One of them—the coxswain, Evan Hughes—was in the sea about thirty minutes. Eventually her damaged condition forced the lifeboat to return, and she was beached at nine o'clock on Friday morning mile outside Criccieth. The crew were completely exhausted after their fourteen hours' exposure. Meanwhile the fishing-boat Helena sank within few yards of the Venus. Shortly after eight o'clock the Pwllheli lifeboat was launched, and got alongside the Venus three hours later. It was then found that the Venus had picked up the crew of the sunken boat. The Venus, manned by the lifeboatmen, reached Pwllheli safely in the afternoon.



Fig 9. Traeth Ynysgain Beach

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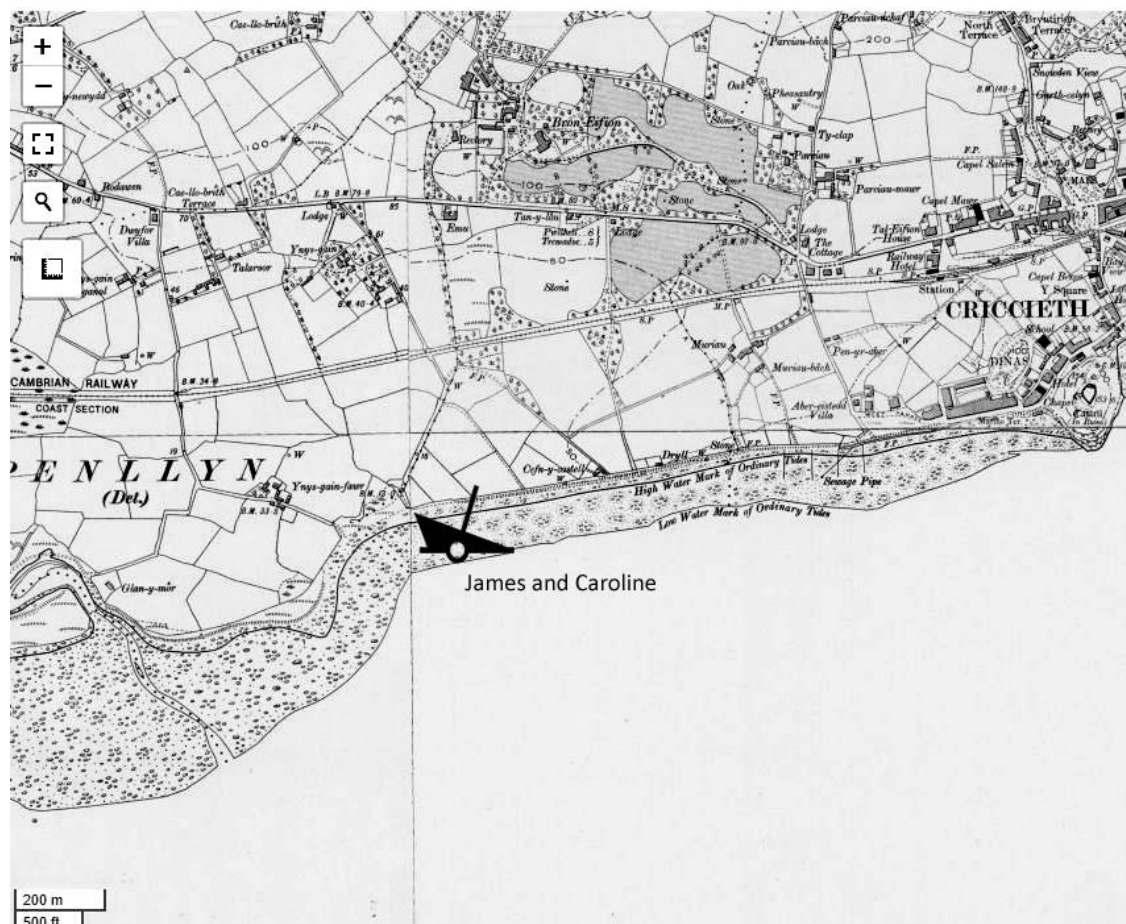


Fig.10 Map Traeth Ynysgain Beach

The storm caused much damage around the coast and several lives were lost and many saved. Here are a few excerpts from just one newspaper:-

**WESTERN MAIL 14<sup>th</sup> October 1910**

**VESSELS IN PERIL MANY CASUALTIES AROUND COASTS.**

*The severity of the gale was experienced all along the Welsh coast as well as on the English and Irish coast and many casualties are reported. Terrific weather prevailed at Fishguard. The Great Western Railway steamer Great Southern, from Wexford with passengers, troops and cattle was buffeted severely before reaching Fishguard. Several cattle were killed and others maimed owing to the pitching of the vessel. Seas broke over the northern breakwater doing some damage to the upper works. The force of the storm increased since nightfall.*

**DISASTER TO LIFEBOAT.**

**HEROIC RESCUERS DROWNED.**

**TERRIBLE ORDEAL OF ST. DAVID'S MEN.**

**FOURTEEN HOURS ON WAVE-WASHED ROCK.**

**STIRRING STORY OF BRAVERY.**

*After rescuing the crew of a vessel which was in distress during the severe gale of Wednesday night, the St David's lifeboat was wrecked on a rock in Ramsay Sound and her coxswain and two of her crew were drowned. The survivors, numbering fifteen, including those who had been taken from the vessel, spent a night of terror on the wave lashed rock, and it was with difficulty that they were rescued about fourteen hours later*

*THE DROWNED. The names of those who lost their lives were, Cox'n John Stephens, Henry Rowlands and James Price.*

**SEVEN DROWNED.**

*The full force of the storm was felt on the East Coast. and in the North seven lives were lost in a collision on the Dogger Bank between the Swedish barquentine Diana and the steam trawler Senator, the Swedish vessel going down with seven of her crew.*

**DROWNED WITH WIFE AND CHILD.**

*Lloyd's Agent Telegraph,- The barge Tertius of and from Ipswich for Ramsgate with a cargo of maise and barley went ashore one mile to the east of the coastguard station at Leysdown. The crew left the vessel in their own boat which foundered on leaving the ship. One hand was saved but the captain, his wife. and child were drowned.*

**BARRY LIFEBOAT LAUNCHED.**

*The Barry lifeboat. John Wesley was launched at one o'clock this morning to proceed to the assistance of the schooner Alnwick. from which signals of distress were being sent up The Alnwick was lying three miles out in the Channel in a direct line with Barry when her moorings parted in the gale and the lifeboat set out in pursuit*

**CRICCIETH LIFEBOAT OUT.**

*Signal of distress were seen in Cardigan Bay between Portmadoc and Pwllheli and as a result the Criccieth lifeboat was ordered out into the raging storm. It is surmised that the boats in distress were a number of fishing trawlers from the vicinity Up to the time of wiring the lifeboat had not returned.*

## **The Aftermath**

**GWALIA 24th October 1910**

**CRICCIETH**

*SUDDO YN YR UNFAN.-Fe suddodd yr "Helena" yn yr un fan ag y collwyd yr "Endora" y llynedd. Perthynai y ddwy bysgodlong i'r un perchennog.*

*Y BYWYDFAD.—Y mae y bywydfad "James and Caroline" wedi ei gondemnio fel un anghymwys, a cheir un gwell yn ei le.*

**Translation**

**CRICCIETH**

**SANK IN THE SAME PLACE.** — The "Helena" sank in the same spot as the "Endora" was lost last year. Both fishing vessels belonged to the same owner.

**THE LIFEBOAT.** — The lifeboat "James and Caroline" has been condemned as unfit, and will be replaced by a better one.

**Brython Cymreig 27<sup>th</sup> October 1910**

**O GYSGOD CASTELL CRICCIETH**

*Y CWCH PYSGOTA – Llwyddwyd i godi yr "Helena" o'r dyfnder y Sadwrn diwethaf. Cofir iddi suddo yn ystod yr ystorm enbyd a ysgotiadd dros y glannau hyn oddeutu pythefnos yn ôl. Dygwydd hi Borth y Gest i'w hadgyweirio.*

**Translation****FROM THE SHELTER OF CRICCIETH CASTLE**

THE FISHING BOAT - The "Helena" was lifted from the depths last Saturday. It is remembered that she sank during the severe storm that swept over these shores some two weeks ago. She was taken to Borth y Gest to be repaired.

**Herald Cymraeg 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1910****CRICCIETH**

**Y BYWYDFAD.**—*Dydd Sadwrn, symudwyd yr hen fywydfad a aeth yn ddrvlliau yn yr ystorm ddiweddar ymaith, a daw un newydd yn ei le yn fuan. Cafodd y dwylaw eu cydnabod yn deilwng am eu hymdrechion y pryd hwnnw.*

**Translation****CRICCIETH**

**THE LIFEBOAT.** — On Saturday, the old lifeboat that was wrecked in the recent storm was removed and a new one will arrive soon. The crew were duly recognized for their efforts at that time.

.....

A further Reserve boat, the 34ft SR JANE HANNAH MACDONALD was placed on service as her replacement which, as the ELINOR ROGET, had been originally stationed at Clovelly and later at Appledore under the new name. The following year (1911) A new Rubie class SR lifeboat the PHILIP WOOLLEY, built at a cost of £983, was placed on service in September(HP). During that year the troublesome boulders and rocks were finally removed making the beach a somewhat safer place to launch though still dangerous particularly at low tide.

The seaborne trade from Porthmadog had virtually ceased during the Great War and it was decided, by the RNLi, to station a motor lifeboat at Pwllheli and close the Criccieth station. The PHILIP WOOLEY was taken away in 1931.



Fig.11 1932 - Crew members receive their long service certificates from former Prime Minister David Lloyd George at his home in Criccieth.

On September 6<sup>th</sup> 1951 a tragic event occurred when a sailing boat capsized off the castle headland and four boys and their teacher drowned in full view of the residents of the town. A public outcry arose. The RNLi re-opened the station in 1953 and a motor lifeboat stationed here.

For the account of the incident see... <https://historypoints.org/index.php?page=memorial-to-drowned-boys-criccieth>

#### Criccieth Lifeboat Today

An Inshore Lifeboat (ILB) Atlantic 85 lifeboat B-823 DORIS JOAN has been on service since 2007. A smaller Inshore Rescue boat (IRB) Arancia IRB A-70 was placed on station in 2010 to complement the larger boat, primarily to deal with casualties in the shallow waters of the Glaslyn and Dwyrdd estuaries. Criccieth men and women continue the tradition of saving lives at sea as do those of many communities around our coast thanks to the work of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

## 7.0 Analysis

1. Depressions sweeping in from the Atlantic invariably cause storms, with wind between South and West, in Cardigan Bay. The weather during this period was affected by an anticyclone to the north west of Ireland causing a northerly air stream. Newspapers report that there was a strong gale with winds from North East to East North East on the 13<sup>th</sup> October.
2. The position of the two fishing boats is variously given – between Portmadoc (sic) and Criccieth or – between Portmadoc and Pwllheli.
3. High water on the 13<sup>th</sup> was at around 1500 hrs. Reports from Liverpool state that the tide had “cut” considerably (lower than predicted).
4. The alarm was raised late afternoon/evening. Even if the fishing boats had been able to beat up to windward they would have probably come to grief on the Bar at this stage of a falling tide.
5. With the wind from this direction the uncompleted pier would have given little or no shelter and the lifeboat would have been launched into the teeth of the gale.
6. The lifeboat was launched after 1900hrs. At this stage of the tide the dangerous boulders mentioned in the report would have been partially exposed.
7. The sentence in the *Cambrian News* 21<sup>st</sup> Oct “The crowd hauled the boat along towards the Castle Rock and over the pier” is difficult to explain and the author will not speculate. The only point to note being that this was at 2200hrs which was low water.
8. The hardships endured by the crew of the lifeboat during the night are vividly described in the two newspaper articles in the report.
9. By daybreak of the 14<sup>th</sup> the wind had shifted to South East. The swamped and unmanageable lifeboat was blown ashore in the bight formed by the spit of land extending from the mouth of the river Dwyfor and Ynysgain Beach.
10. In his book “Ar Hyd Ben ‘Rallt” Elfed Gryffydd states that trading smacks would sometimes beach here to unload coal and limestones. It is reasonably clear of obstructions but eastwards to Criccieth the beach is covered with rocks and boulders. The lifeboat came ashore at 0900h. This was nearly low water so if the boat had beached further east she would have been smashed to pieces and the outcome far worse.

## 8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

1. The lifeboat was overwhelmed by the forces of wind and sea.
2. The boulders at the end of the pier made launching (and recovery) extremely difficult and dangerous. The photo of large boulders hurled onto the pier during a recent storm, in the appendices, illustrate the power of the sea and explains how the boulders from the old "Cob" had been displaced over the years.
3. The damage caused during launching was worse than was thought at first.
4. The involvement of the whole community is seen.
5. The reasons that four different lifeboats were stationed at Criccieth over a short period is explained in the report.
6. The newspaper accounts of the earlier incidents during August report that the ketch JAMES and the yacht IRIS were safely brought in to Porthmadog. The account of the refloating of the fishing boat HELENA after the incident described in this report are described in various books as being wrecks. These entries in the lists should be amended.
7. The four fishermen were rescued later by the Pwllheli lifeboat. The dedication and determination of both lifeboat crews is typical of that shown by the men and women of the RNLI down to the present day. It is fortunate that no lives were lost during this incident.

## 9.0 References

Sources include:

Wreck and Rescue on the Coast of Wales by Henry Parry 1969

Shipwrecks of North Wales by Ivor Wynne Jones 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2001

Porthmadog Ships by Aled Eames

Pwllheli The Port and Mart of Llŷn 1991 by Lewis Lloyd

Ar Hyd Ben 'Rallt by Elfed Gryffydd

Log Book and Maintenance Book Criccieth RNLI Station

Cymru a'r Môr / Maritime Wales Annual journal from Gwynedd Archives No 11 1987

RCAHMW COFLEIN <https://coflein.gov.uk/> No entry

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Welsh Tithe Maps (NLW) [https://places.library.wales/browse/52.892/-4.126/13?page=1&alt=&alt=&leaflet-base-layers\\_70=on](https://places.library.wales/browse/52.892/-4.126/13?page=1&alt=&alt=&leaflet-base-layers_70=on)

## Appendices:

### Appendix A Criccieth lifeboat station



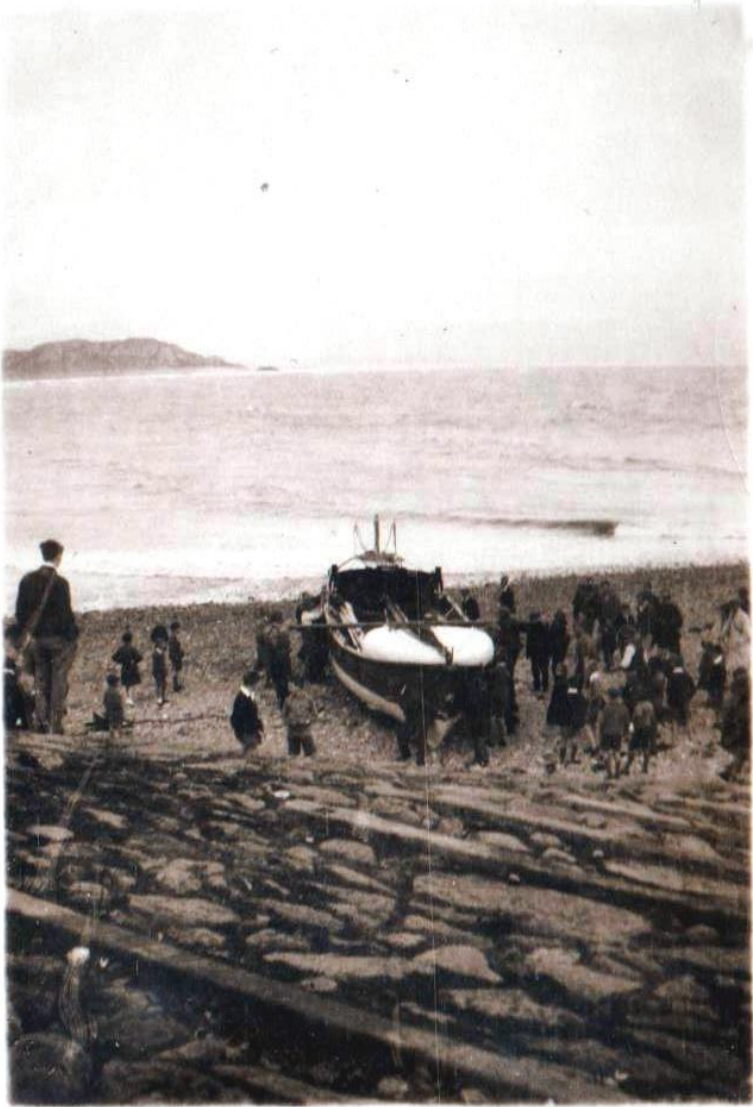
Criccieth Lifeboat Station The post for securing the shoreside end of the towing out warp with the "lizards" attached can be seen.

### Appendix B Photos of the PHILIP WOOLEY from Jean Emberton









## Appendix C Boulders hurled onto pier in recent storm



Facebook Photo Elwyn Pritchard



Facebook Photo Pete Havelock

## Appendix D Sailing ship types



Smack



Wherry



Topsail Schooner



Brigantine



Brig



Barquentine



Barque



Full Rigged Ship