

Welsh Wreck Web Research Project (North Cardigan Bay)

On-line research into the wreck of the: *S.S. Empire Kingfisher*



[Clark County Historical Museum Photos](#)

***S.S.Coaxet* renamed *S.S.Empire Kingfisher* (1940)**

Built 1919 by G.M. Standifer Construction Corporation, steamer *S.S.Coaxet*.
This ship was wrecked off Cape Sable in 1942 during World War II as the *S.S.Empire Kingfisher*.

Report compiled by:

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*S.S. Empire Kingfisher***

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1.0 Abstract

This project is to discover information relating to the reported wreck of the steamship *Kingfisher* for which there is a report (MADU Ref. 436) of it having gone aground on 09 October 1940 at Abersoch, Caernarfonshire, Wales and been abandoned. The home port was given as New York.

There were two ships in Lloyds Register named 'Kingfisher' in the 1940 list.

The objective is to determine which ship is referred to in the wreck report and discover the circumstances leading up to the grounding and the outcome, together with any other relevant information.

The research is limited to information available on-line as access to libraries and record offices was not possible at this time due to the lockdown for the CORVID-19 pandemic.

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2.4 Contributors

I have not consulted any other parties in compiling this report.

2.5 Abbreviations

A list of abbreviations used in this report,

GAT	Gwynedd Archaeology Trust
IJNA	International Journal of Nautical Archaeology
MADU	Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit
NAS	Nautical Archaeology Society
NPRN	National Primary Resource Number
OS	Ordnance Survey
RCAHMW	Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales
URL	Uniform Resource Locator

3.0 Introduction

This wreck was selected as being a more modern event with very little information and the challenge of it being a WW2 event.

I wished to establish which vessel the MADU reference related to and then discover details of,

- The vessel's specifications
- Historical information relating to the vessel?
- Information about the wrecking?
- What caused the wrecking?
- What has happened since the wrecking?
- Previously investigation
- Research of the vessel back story?
- Has anyone dived, recorded, surveyed or worked on the site?
- Has any salvage, etc. been carried out?
- Have there been any previous reports produced relating to the vessel?

4.0 Background

I had no knowledge of the incident or the vessel involved prior to this research.

Coflein has no record of either *S.S.Kingfisher* or *S.S.Empire Kingfisher*.

The information available from MADU and Cadwallader is shown here:

Figure 1, MADU & Cadwallader, extract from data base.

Welsh Wreck Web Research Project - Data Base (master)

Shipwrecks of North Cardigan Bay (compiled by Sue Barker)

	435	05/02/1940	Emmy	Caernarfon shire	St Tudwals Causeway?	grounded / re-floated after 2-days	Steamship	tc, (w)									home port: Greece	435
Malcolm Whitewright	436	09/10/1940 *	Kingfisher	Caernarfon shire	Abersoch	aground / abandoned	Steamship	tc, (w)									* No. 09-08-1940 / home port: New York	436
	437	11/03/1941	Aberdeen	Cardiganshire	Cardigan Bay		Fishing Trawler	steel	tl							163	Screw	437

The Cadwallader entry implies a USA Steamship 'abandoned' at Abersoch on 09/10/1940.

SCH = Schooner
 3SCH = Three masted Schooner
 BRG = Brig
 BQ = Barque
 4BQ = Four masted Barque
 FRS = Full rigged ship
 BQNT = Barquentine
 BGNT = Brigantine
 KTCH = Ketch
 SMK = Smack
 SLP = Sloop
 DY = Dandy
 YCHT = Yacht
 SS = Steam ship
 MV = Motor Vessel
 FISH = Fishing vessel

NAME	TYPE	BUILT	HOME PORT	DATE	LOCATION	NOTES
KENILWORTH	?	?	LIVERPOOL	17/1/1870	CAUSEWAY	WRECKED
KINGFISHER	SS		NEW YORK	09/10/40	ABERSOCH	Abandoned
						Aaround. SS.REBECCA of P'madoo went to assist but was

The location of the site at Abersoch is shown at Fig. 2

Figure 2, Site map showing location of Abersoch, North Cardigan Bay.



5.0 Research Methodology

The following were used in this research:-

Acer Laptop with fast fibre wireless internet connection, I-phone.
Search engines used were
Google Chrome
AVG Secure Browser
Microsoft Office
Windows 10
Snip & Sketch

***S.S. Empire Kingfisher* research,**

Methodology: first step to check out Coflein, but nothing there relating to this 'wreck' at Abersoch.

Then Lloyds Register. USA shipyards. Newspaper records. Crewlist.

List of sources,

Coflein: <https://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/search> No record of this wreck site.

Lloyds Register of shipping: <https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/lloyds-register-of-ships-online> - Lloyds Register, starting point. Records missing for some of the years.

Library of Wales: <https://newspapers.library.wales/view/3310679/3310687/68/> - excellent for local news reports

<https://newspapers.library.wales/search?query=Kingfisher&publication%5B%5D=The+Cambrian+News+and+Merionethshire+Standard> – good source.

<http://www.maritimearchives.co.uk/> - good to identify ships and for crew lists but none available for *S.S. Empire Kingfisher*.

Crew lists and other documents: <http://www.crewlist.org.uk/about/findingoncrewlists> - good for dates but no crew information available

<http://shipbuildinghistory.com/shipyards/emergencylarge/foundation.htm>

https://content.libraries.wsu.edu/digital/collection/cchm_photo/id/6983/

<https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?33705>

<https://www.crewlist.org.uk/data/vesselsalpha?>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070425234855/http://freespace.virgin.net:80/r.cadwalader/maritime/lifeboat/wreck.htm>

<https://southampton.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/FULL/WPAC/BIBENQ/>

6.0 Results

Firstly I wished to establish which vessel the MADU reference related to. Lloyds Register for the year 1940 lists two 'Kingfishers', but neither of these fitted the database information. Further research revealed that the S.S.Coaxet had a name change during 1940 to the S.S.Empire Kingfisher. I believe that this is the vessel referred to in the databases (Fig 1). It also matches the description and date given in the Pwllheli Lifeboat report 9th August 1940. (Fig 4).

Figure 3, Extracts from Lloyds Register,

1940

GYZM Wireless D.F. E.S.D. 159922	Cruiser Stern	288	9,38	24	1908	Selby Lloyd	(J.G.Little, Mgr.)	Q89° F80'	BK8	BHCem	15B(Spt), 3cf, 6s63, ns2350	
59924 King of England		194			1908	Bow, Mc-Lachlan & Co. Paisley	B. Zammit	115° 5' 21" 0'	9-2	Malta British	Amos & Smith, Ld. Hull	
59925 Kingfisher (ex Sambre-et-Meuse)		414		Sav	1919	Foundat'n Co. Savannah Ga.	Marine Products Co.	140° 2' 25" 0'	14-6	British	Bow, McLachlan & Co. Pay.	41NH
59926 E.S.D. Wireless		303	9,19		9mo			Q79° F96'			T.3Cy. 12 1/2', 21 1/2' x 35'-24'	14 x 8
59926 MMTS	Oil Eng. 1 Dk Shelter dk Cruiser Stern	276	4,40	Lon	1938	J. Koster Hzn. Schpw. "Gideon" Groningen	General Stm. Nav. Co. Ld.	150° 7' 25" 8'	6-9	London British	Oil Engines 4S.C.S.A	8 x 6
59927 King's Channel (ex Port of London Authority Hopper No. 12)	1 Dk (St)	583	12,38	Lon	1911	Ferguson Bros. Pt. Glasgow	Tilbury Contracting & Dredging Co. Ld.	173° 7' 32" 1'	12-8	London British	Oil Engines 4S.C.S.A	8 x 6
59928 King's Cross (ex Audax II)		282			1918	Gebr.	Tees Towing Co. Ld.	115° 6' 25" 1'	12-7	Middlebro'	Humboldt-Deutzmotoren, A.G. Köln-Deutz	8 x 5 1/2

Also 1940

72500 Coaxet	Fitted for oil fuel 1 Dk	6038			1919	GM Standifer Const. Corp. Vancouver, Wash.	United States Maritime Commission	401° 4' 53" 2'	81-9	P48° B81' F37'	T.3Cy. 24 1/2', 41 1/2' x 72'-48'	859NH	R
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1941-42

1941-42 LLOYD'S REGISTER. STEAMERS & MOTORSHIPS. EMP														
No. in Book	Steamer's Name. Material, Rig, &c.	Builder	Particulars of Classification.	Built.	Owners.	Registered Dimensions & Deck Erections, &c.			Port of Registry.	Engines.	Keel depth.	Draft.	Remarks.	
						Length.	Breadth.	Depth.						
Official No.	Special Surveys. No. of Decks, &c.	Character.	When.	By Whom.	Where.				Flag.	No. & Dia. of Cylinders.—Stroke.	Boiler Pressure. HP.—Horse power by Holtz's formula.	HP.—power by Napier's Register.	Particulars of Boilers & Furnaces.	Register's Name.
23225	Empire Kingfisher (ex Coaxet-41)	6082		1919	GM Standifer Const. Corp. Vancouver, Wash.	Ministry of War Transport (Sir R. Son & Co. Ld. Mgrs.)	402° 5' 53" 2'	81-9	P48° B81' F37'	London British	T.3Cy. 24 1/2', 41 1/2' x 72'-48'	859NH		R
23226	Empire Kittiwake (ex Forben Hauptman-10, GLA (ex Western Ally))	5675	100A1	1919	Ames S. B. & D. D. Co.	Ministry of War Transport (Sir R. Son & Co. Ld. Mgrs.)	409° 8' 54" 2'	29-2	P44° B120' F47'	London British	T.3Cy. 28 1/2', 46' x 80 1/2'-48'	689NH		

Figure 4, Extract from RNLi Lifeboat magazine**Believed to refer to the *S.S. Empire Kingfisher*:-****Date: 1940****Volume: War Years****Issue: 1940****AUGUST 9TH. - PWLLHELI, CAERNARVONSHIRE.**

At about 4 P.M. information was received that a steamer making for St. Tudwald's Road was in need of help.

A S.W. breeze was blowing and the sea was smooth. The motor life-boat C & S, on temporary duty at the station, was launched at 4.50 P.M. and found the *S.S. Kingfisher*, an American vessel now under the Ministry of Shipping. She was bound light from Falmouth to the Clyde and had sprung a leak.

Her master had beached her in Abersoch Bay in a sinking condition. At his request the life-boat stood by while the flood tide was making, and then, as help was no longer needed, she returned to her station at 4.30 A.M. the following morning. - Rewards, £13 11s. 6d.

Note: a lot of information given in two paragraphs.

Further information is available from the Southampton Libraries: Local History and Plimsoll Catalogue, where we see the build year and registered tonnage, also confirmation of the name change during 1940 (Fig. 5).

The entry in the extract from the Appropriation listing gives the *S.S. Empire Kingfisher* Official Number 16802 (Fig. 6).

Figure 5, Extract from Southampton Libraries: Local History and Plimsoll Catalogue,

Main title: Coaxet: Lloyd's Register of Ships

Notes: Build Year: 1919 / Grosse tonnage: 6038

Credits: Lloyd's Register of Ships

Access restrictions: This document may be used for private research only

BRN: 1434342

Electronic access:

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1941 Now "Empire Kingfisher," see letter ??

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1930

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1931

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1932

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1933

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1934

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1935

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1937

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1938

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1939

Coaxet : Lloyd's Register of Ships - 1940 Now "Empire Kingfisher," see No. 90938 in Supplement

Figure 6, Official Number 16802, Appropriation listing for the S.S. Empire Kingfisher.

Appropriation Books, Official Numbers 168051 - 168100 (168082) 18th March 1941

Official Number.	Name of Ship.	Gross Tonnage.	Steam, Motor, or Sailing.	Port of Registry.	Date of Registry.
168051	Dea... ..	8145	Motor	London in 1941	1st Jan. 1941.
168075	Stuart Queen	1224	"	" " 31..	6 Mar. "
168076	Aronda	9031	"	" " 32..	10 " "
168077	Empire Starling	6103	"	" " 33..	11 " "
168078	Empire Hawk	5033	"	" " 34..	11 " "
168079	Empire Falcon	5494	"	" " 35..	11 " "
168080	Yeddington	4762	"	" " 36..	13 " "
168081	Empire Mahseer	5087	"	" " 37..	18 " "
168082	Empire Kingfisher	6082	"	" " 38..	18 " "

Note that the S.S.Coaxet was operating under the USA number 217953 and listed in Lloyds Register by that number. Although the S.S. Empire Kingfisher was renamed during 1940 the official number was not allocated until March 1941.

- **The vessel's specifications,**

The S.S.Kingfisher was originally named the S.S.Coaxet built as an iron hulled stem powered cargo ship to USSB specification 1015 Cargo Class.

The ship had two main decks as well as forecastle and poop deck and was built on the Isherwood principle of longitudinal framing providing extra strength to the body of the vessel. The freighter had five main holds and also possessed all the modern machinery for quick loading and unloading of cargo from five large hatches, including ten winches and a large number of derricks. She was also equipped with wireless apparatus, had submarine signal system installed and had electrical lights installed along the decks.

As built, the ship was 401 feet 4 inches (122.33 m) long (between perpendiculars) and 53 feet 2 inches (16.21 m) abeam, a depth of 31 feet 9 inches (9.68 m).^[4] *Coaxet* was originally assessed at 6,094 GRT and 3,816 NRT and had deadweight of approximately 9,604.^{[1][4]} The vessel had a steel hull with double bottom throughout with exception of her machine compartment, and a single 2,500 ihp triple expansion steam engine, with cylinders of 24 1/2-inch (62 cm), 41 1/2-inch (105 cm) and 72-inch (180 cm) diameter with a 48-inch (120 cm) stroke, that drove a single screw propeller and moved the ship at up to 11 knots (13 mph; 20 km/h).^{[4][5]} The steam for the engine was supplied by three single-ended Scotch marine boilers fitted for oil fuel.

The full specification is tabled at Appendix A.

Picture 2, The *S.S.Coaxet*.



The *S.S.Coaxet* alongside berth

- **Historical information relating to the vessel,**

Towards the end of the First World War the American government had ordered the building of many ships for war service including naval ships, cargo ships and naval trawlers etc. Companies were ordered to make new shipyards as necessary. At the end of the war the vessels under construction were completed and many of those not commenced were cancelled.

One such vessel was the *S.S.Coaxet* (See Appendix C) built by Standifer Construction, Vancouver, Washington State, USA, launched in February 1919 (Fig. 8) being a steel cargo ship of nominally 6100 tons (see Fig. 7).

Picture 3, Naming at the Launching of the *S.S.Coaxet*



Carol Percival Standifer.

Photo taken during the christening of the *S. S. Coaxet* and is dated February 27, 1919.

Contributed by Matt Oftedahl, Records Officer of the Port of Vancouver USA.

In 1920 the *S.S.Coaxet* was owned by The United States Shipping Board with home port of Portland, Oregon.

The owners name changed in 1937 to the United States Maritime Commission:

The United States Maritime Commission (MARCOM) was an independent executive agency of the U.S. federal government that was created by the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, passed by Congress on June 29, 1936, and replaced the United States Shipping Board which had existed since World War I. (en.wikipedia.org)

Figure 7 Extracts from Lloyds Register entries *S.S.Coaxet*.

1930

68092 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Shipping Board	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
68093 Cobaki	Wireless Steel Sc Fitted for oil fuel Sub. Sig. 1 Dk Longitudinal framing	257	1918	D. Drake	North Coast Sm.	127°0'28"8' 8"4"	Sydney NSW O.2Cy.15°48'0"-21"		

1931

18095 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Shipping Board	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
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1932

60251 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Shipping Board	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
60252 Cobargo	Wireless Steel Sc Fitted for oil fuel Sub. Sig. 1 Dk Longitudinal framing	860	1929	Ailsa S.B. Co. Ld. Ayr	Illawarra & S Coast Stm. Nav. Co. Ld. (A.L. Miller, Mgr.)	190°8'34"4' 9"5" Q111°B61'F85'	Sydney NSW British W/B	T.6Cy.12½, 30°43'2"-24" 100NH Ailsa S.B. Co. Ld. Troon	C

1933

23111 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Shipping Board	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
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1934

74293 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Shipping Board	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
74294 Cobargo	Wireless Steel Sc Fitted for oil fuel Sub. Sig. 1 Dk Longitudinal framing	860	1929	Ailsa S.B.	Illawarra & S Coast	190°8'34"4' 9"5"	Sydney NSW British W/B	T.6Cy.12½, 30°43'2"-24" 100NH	C

1935

23116 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Shipping Board	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
23117 Cobargo	Wireless Steel Sc Fitted for oil fuel Sub. Sig. 1 Dk Longitudinal framing	860	1929	Ailsa S.B.	Illawarra & S Coast	190°8'34"4' 9"5"	Sydney NSW British W/B	T.6Cy.12½, 30°43'2"-24" 100NH	C

1937

23036 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Shipping Board	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
23037 Cobargo	Wireless Steel Sc Fitted for oil fuel Sub. Sig. 1 Dk Longitudinal framing	860	1929	Ailsa S.B.	Illawarra & S Coast	190°8'34"4' 9"5"	Sydney NSW British W/B	T.6Cy.12½, 30°43'2"-24" 100NH	C

1938

72581 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Maritime Commission	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
	Wireless Steel Sc Fitted for oil fuel Sub. Sig. 1 Dk Longitudinal framing	860	1929	Ailsa S.B.	Illawarra & S Coast	190°8'34"4' 9"5"	Sydney NSW British W/B	T.6Cy.12½, 30°43'2"-24" 100NH	C

1939

22590 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Maritime Commission	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
22591 Cobargo	Wireless Steel Sc Fitted for oil fuel Sub. Sig. 1 Dk Longitudinal framing	860	1929	Ailsa S.B.	Illawarra & S Coast	190°8'34"4' 9"5"	Sydney NSW British W/B	T.6Cy.12½, 30°43'2"-24" 100NH	C

1940

72500 Coaxet	Wireless Cruiser Stern Cargo battens not fitted	6038	1919	GM Stand- fer Cust. Corp Vancouver, Wash.	United States Maritime Commission	401°4'53"2'31"9" P48°B81'F37'	Portland Or Utd. States W/B	Dunlop Bremr & Co Ld PG T.8Cy.24½, 41½°47'2"-48" 369NH Hooven, Owens & Rent- schler Co. Hamilton, O.	R
	Wireless Steel Sc Fitted for oil fuel Sub. Sig. 1 Dk Longitudinal framing	860	1929	Ailsa S.B.	Illawarra & S Coast	190°8'34"4' 9"5"	Sydney NSW British W/B	T.6Cy.12½, 30°43'2"-24" 100NH	C

CLY-COA

The *S.S.Coaxet* was leased to the British government during 1940 when it was renamed the *S.S. Empire Kingfisher*. The vessel was now under the 'ownership' of the Ministry of Shipping which subsequently became, on 1st May 1941, the Ministry of War Transport (MoWT). This department was formed to control transport and resources. It was formed by merging the Ministry of Shipping and the Ministry of Transport, bringing those responsibilities for shipping and land transport to a single department. Lord Leathers was appointed Minister of War Transport.

- **Information about the wrecking**, although both the MADU and Cadwallader data bases list the incident as occurring on 9th October 1940 in fact relying on the Lifeboat record I believe the correct date was 9th August 1940. Also the home port was listed as being New York whereas I believe it should be London as all the Ministry of Shipping are allocated to London. The data base lists the vessel as having been 'abandoned' which I do not believe to be the case. If my deductions are correct then the ship was deliberately and carefully beached in order to repair a leak which was sufficient to endanger the ship - 'She was bound light from Falmouth to the Clyde and had sprung a leak.' The Captain had requested assistance from the Pwllheli Lifeboat upon entering St Tudwald's Roads, I presume to escort him to the beach and standby during the grounding. The lifeboat stayed on watch throughout the night. Repairs seem to have been effected and the vessel re-floated without incidence and resumed its passage to the Clyde. The leak must have developed during the passage up the Irish sea and the Captain decided to enter Cardigan Bay in the knowledge that he could find a sheltered sandy beach to carry out a repair.
- **What caused the wrecking**,
It would seem from the accounts discovered that the ship's Captain deliberately ran the Steamer onto the beach in order to effect repairs to a leak which was substantial enough to trigger this action. The leak was evidently repaired and the ship re-floated and continued passage to the Clyde.
- **What has happened since the wrecking**,
During 1941/42 the S.S. Empire Kingfisher was on convoy duty from USA to UK
This from an account by Jordan Roger 3rd May 2012:
The S.S. Empire Kingfisher which was owned by the Ministry of War Transport and managed by Crosby, Son & Co Ltd, Stockton on Tees, struck a submerged object on 18th January 1942, 4 miles south of Cape Sable, when on a voyage from New York to Halifax and Liverpool with general cargo. She sank on 19th January, 7 cables south of Bantam Rocks Buoy.
More detail is available at: <https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?33705>
- **Previously investigation**, I am not aware of any previous investigation.
- **Site investigation**, The MADU site is a beach and therefore not appropriate for any on-site investigation.
- **Previous incident history**, I have not discovered any reports of incidents in relation to this vessel prior to this incident.
- **Masters and crew history**, I was not able to ascertain any information on these. The masters are not included in the Lloyds registers nor is any information available from crewlist.org

7.0 Analysis

I believe that the conclusions arrived at are accurate and the only information that I could discover that in some way match the basic information provided in the data bases.

My concerns relate to the discrepancy between my conclusions and the data base facts viz,

The date: given as 9th Oct 1940 but mine is 9th August 1940

The name: given as 'Kingfisher' – I have the *S.S. Empire Kingfisher* (formerly *S.S. Coaxet*)

Wrecked: given as 'aground/abandoned' – I have carefully beached in order to carry out repair

Home port: given as New York – I have London

Ivor Wynne Jones, his reference is for Abersoch on 9th August 1940 with the word 'Kingfisher' on his wreck map, not mentioned in text.

I was surprised that I could not find any local or newspaper reference to the beaching of such a large cargo ship – but then it was war time and so possibly not published.

8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

I have probably spent approximately 20 hours on this project including about 14 hours on-line.

My account conflicts to some extent with the basic facts set out in the data bases but I believe that I have developed the most plausible account.

I do not believe that there is scope for any further development of this incident.

The eventual wreck of the vessel is well documented elsewhere and has been dived on and filmed.

9.0 References

Lloyds Register 1940

Coflein

Plimsoll Project: Lloyds register entries

Library of Wales

Foundation Company & GM Standifer Construction Corp.

RNLI Pwllheli Lifeboat Report 09/08/1940

Crew List Plimsoll Project Lloyds Register

Appendices:

Appendix A, The *S.S.Kingfisher* specification.

Vessel	Name/s	<i>S.S. Empire Kingfisher</i> formerly <i>S.S. Coaxet</i>		
	Type	Steamship		
Built		USSB 1015 Cargo class		
	Date	1919		
		Launched 27 February 1919		
		Commissioned July 1919		
	Builder	GM Standifer Construction Corp. Vancouver, Washington County, USA		
Construction	Materials	Wood, Iron, Fibreglass, etc.		
	Decks	Two main decks also Forecastle and poop deck		
	Bulkheads	Longitudinal framing. Five holds and hatches		
Propulsion	Type	Engine		
	Details	Steam		
Engine	Details	Type Triple Expansion		
		Size 24.5" x 41.5" & 72" dia x 48" stroke		
		359 NHP 2500iHP		
		Manufacturer: Hooven, Owens & Rentschler Co. Ohio		
Drive	Boilers	Three single-ended Scotch marine fitted for oil fuel		
	Type	Screw Propeller		
	Number	Single		
Dimensions	Length	401ft	4 ins	m
	Beam	53ft	2 ins	m
	Draught	31ft	9 ins	m
Tonnage	Gross	Nominal at build 6100, later 6038 then 6082		
	Net	5632		
Owner	First	Name Coaxit 1919 : United States Shipping Board Address, Washington DC		
	Last	Name: Empire Kingfisher 1940 Ministry of transportation, London		
	Others	Crosby Son Ltd		
	Registry	Port	Location London	
Registry	Flag	UK identity flags G N D T		
	Number	168082		
	History	Routes	Coastal and later Transatlantic Convoys Voyage at Incident Abersoch: Falmouth to Clyde	
Final Voyage	Cargo	General		
	From	Falmouth		
	To	Clyde		
	Captain	Name		
	Crew	Numbers		
	Passengers	Numbers		
Wrecking	Cargo	Described as light – possibly ballast		
	Date	Beached (hull leaking) 09 August 1940		
	Location	Abersoch, North Cardigan Bay.		
	Cause	Deliberately run onto beach to repair hull leak.		
	Loss of life	None		
	Outcome	Re-floated		

Appendix B Timeline *S.S.Empire Kingfisher* formerly *S.S.Coaxet*.

1919 Built, by G.M. Standifer Construction Corporation, steamer *S.S.Coaxet* launched 27th February.

1920 Owned and operate by the United States Shipping Board with home port of Portland, Oregon.

1921 no change,

1922

1923

1924

1937 Owners name change to Unite States Maritime Commission, still out of Portland, Oregon.

1940 Now transferred under lease to the Ministry of Shipping of the British Government, home port listed as London. But operated under contract by Crosby, Son & Co Ltd, Stockton on Tees.

1940 Beached at Abersoch, North Cardigan Bay. Following repairs re-floated and continued in service.

1941 to 1942 on convoys USA to UK

1942 wrecked and sunk 19th January near Nova Scotia.

Appendix C, Build record of S.S.Coaxet / S.S.Empire Kingfisher

Standifer Construction, Vancouver WA

Most recent update: September 28, 2016.

Prior to World War One, Guy M. Standifer and James F. Clarkson operated the Standifer-Clarkson Shipbuilding Company, which was just west of the Interstate 5 bridge in North Portland, where Diversified Marine is today. As the war approached, Standifer built two additional shipyards across the river in Vancouver. One of these new yards - just west of the Interstate 5 bridge, where the Port of Vancouver's Terminal One is today - was for wooden ships; the other - just west of the railroad bridge - was for steel ships. Both the Vancouver yards were closed in 1921: the Portland yard continued as a repair facility. There are some great old photographs [here](#). If anyone can add to the table below, please e-mail me at timcolton@aol.com

Hull #	USSB #	O.N.	Name	Owner	Type	GT	Delivery	Disposition
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Steel Ships Built by Standifer in Vancouver

1	1063	217776	Cokesit	US Shipping Board	Cargo Ship	6,100	May-19	Later Adelfoi Chandris 1938, Saint Marin 1941, Catania 1942, bombed 1943 and scrapped 1949
2	1064	217953	Coaxet	US Shipping Board	Cargo Ship	6,100	Jul-19	Later Empire Kingfisher 1941, wrecked off Cape Sable 1942

"I checked the 2 vols. of Clark County Pioneers but there was no mention of any Standifers. Guy Standifer is mentioned in Clark Co. History vol. 17 in connection with the Standifer Wooden Shipyards in 1917. It stated that Standifer had been associated with James F. Clarkson for some years in railroad construction and had started building ships in Astoria, OR the previous year. He later pulled out of the venture to establish the Standifer-Clarkson shipyard in North Portland. In the Portland Oregonian newspaper on June 28th there was a story that told of a contract with the Federal government to build 10 ships, four at the yard in Kenton (North Portland) and six at the yard in Vancouver. At the Standifer wooden yard, 450 men were at work and six ships were in full frame. With four ships to be built at the North Portland yard, the Standifer vessels represented an investment of 5.5 million dollars. Standifer shipbuilders averaged \$4.10 per day. An additional 3,500 to 4,000 men were expected to be hired for the steel yard. The new Standifer, the first of the steel ships was not launched until Dec. 31, 1918. Ruth Standifer, sister of Guy Standifer, was the sponsor. Yard was to have five ways and would operate three eight hour shifts."