

**Welsh Wreck Web Research Project
(North Cardigan Bay)
On-line research into the Wrecking of:
S.S Mersey (Steamship)**



1884 British Built Cargo Coaster

Report compiled by:

Gareth J.S. Davies

Report Title:

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*S.S Mersey (Steamship)***

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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 S.S Mersey built at Birkenhead in 1884.

The S.S Mersey was a coastal cargo ship which sailed around the U.K. On Jul 31st 1886 the S.S. Mersey while sailing from Newport Wales to Liverpool ran aground on rocks at Penhros Point south of the South Stack Lighthouse and was wrecked. The previous day the S.S Mersey had picked up the 4 crewmembers of the schooner Clarissa which had sunk near the Cardigan Bay Lightship. Both the crew of the S.S Mersey and the Clarissa were forced to take to lifeboats.

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
MNL	Mercantile Navy List
LR	Lloyds' Registry

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3.0 Introduction

The S.S Mersey was chosen as:

- it covered a period of sea history from the late 19th century.
- it was a similar ship and time to other ships I had researched from the MADU Wreck list.
- it was involved in the rescue of the crew of the schooner Clarissa which had been previously researched.
- 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?
- 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 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

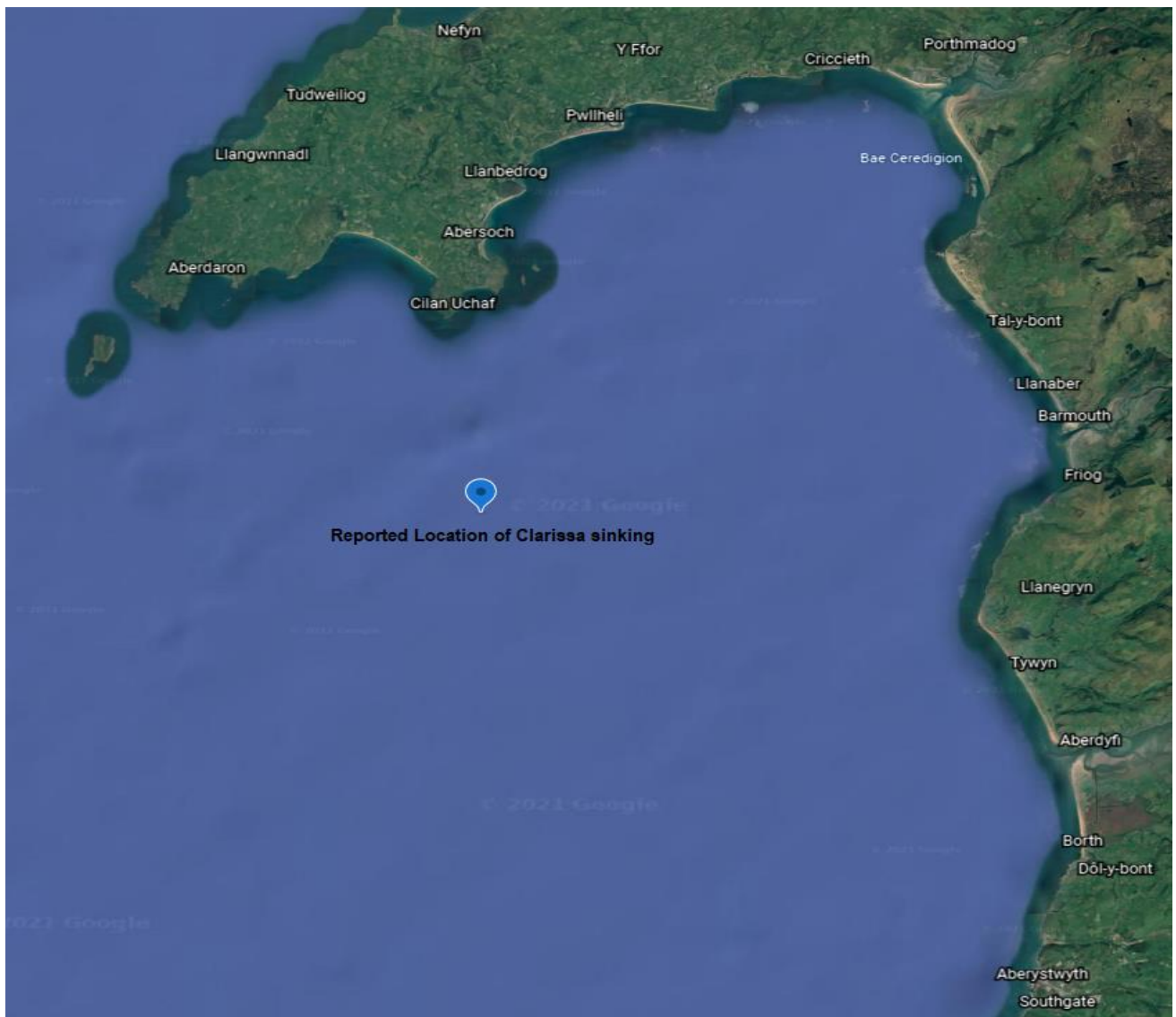
MADU Ref #	Date Wrecked	Name	Location 1	Location 2	Details	Vessel Type	Matls	Ref.
N/A	31/07/1886	Mersey	Anglesey	South Stack	Wrecked	Steamship	iron	rl

On Jul 31 1886, the SS Mersey ran aground in bad visibility just south of the South Stack Lighthouse, Anglesey and was wrecked. The SS Mersey was sailing from Newport to Liverpool with a cargo of coal. The previous day the SS Mersey had picked up 4 crew members of the schooner Clarissa which had sunk near the Cardigan Bay Lightship.

Fig 1: Reported Location of SS Mersey Wreckage, Jul 31 1886



Fig 2: Reported Location of Clarissa Wreckage, Jul 30 1886



5.0 Research Methodology

Computer System

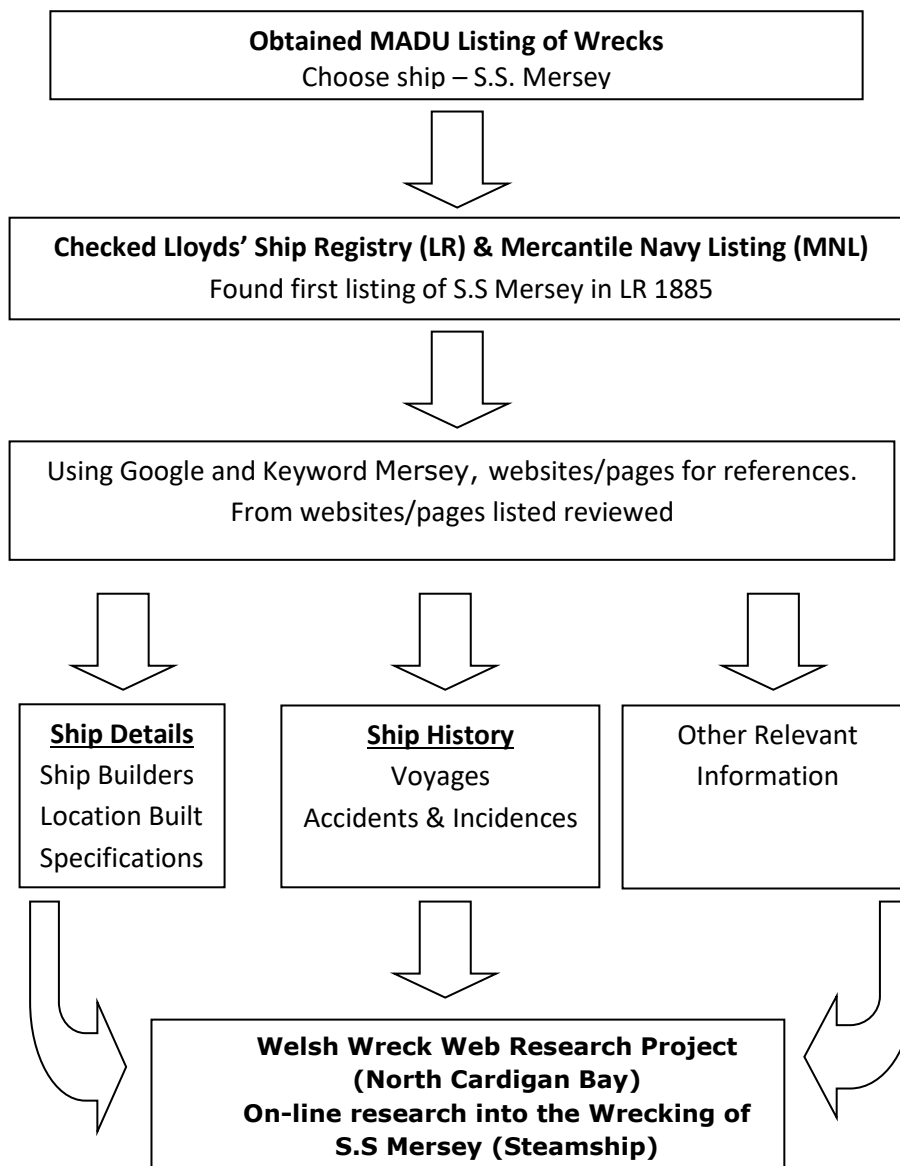
Acer Desktop 64 bit OS; 8 GB Memory, wireless connection.

Windows 10Pro

Microsoft Office 2007

Search engines used: Google Chrome

Methodology



See Section 9 for list of websites viewed

6.0 Results

Table 2: S.S. Mersey (Steamship) Specification and History

Vessel	Name/s	Mersey
	Type	Steamship
		Coaster General Cargo
Built	Date	Date Launched: 12/1884
		Date Completed: 02/1885
	Builder	W.A. Stevens
		Birkenhead
Construction	Materials	Iron
	Decks	Q 28t; B 50t; F 12t; H 5t
	Bulkheads	4
Propulsion/Drive	Type	Steam
	Details	Single screw
Engine	Details	1 x 2 cyl. Compound steam engine
		21, 42 x 30in
		H.P: 80
		W.A. Stevens
	Boilers	1
Dimensions	Length	159 ft 2 ins
	Beam	23 ft 7 ins
	Draught	10 ft 3 ins
Tonnage	Gross	342 grt
	Net	149 nrt
Owner	First	S.S. Mersey Co. Ltd. - J. J. Croxton, Liverpool
Registry	Port	Liverpool
	Flag	GBR
	Number	91181
	Code	N/A
History	Routes	Coastal U.K.
	Cargo	General
Final Voyage	From	Newport Wales
	To	Liverpool
	Captain	W. H. Ball
	Crew	10
	Passengers	3
	Cargo	Coal
	Date	31/07/1886
	Location	Penhros Point, south of South Stack Lighthouse, Anglesey, Wales
	Cause	Struck rocks and grounded, bad weather
	Loss of life	0
	Outcome	Wrecked

Table 3: Clarissa (Schooner) Specification and History

Vessel	Name/s	Clarissa
	Type	Sailing Ship – Schooner ACD Pt 1B
		General Cargo
Built	Date	Laid Down: N/A
		Launched: N/A
		Delivered: 1854
		Cost: N/A
	Builder	John Evans
		Aberystwyth Wales
Construction	Materials	Wood
	Decks	1
	Bulkheads	N/A
	Others	rigged with a standing bowsprit, square stern, carvel built, with a woman full figurehead, wooden framework and planking, partly fastened with iron bolts
Propulsion	Type	Sail
	Details	2 masts
Dimensions	Length	81 ft 4 in
	Beam	16 ft 6 in
	Draught	10 ft 4 in
Tonnage	Gross	96 grt
	Net	N/A
Owners	1855	Thomas Jones, Aberystwyth
Registry	Port	Aberystwyth Wales, Wales
	Flag	GBR
	Number	3220
	Code	H.S.K.P
History	Routes	U.K, Ireland, Europe, Canary Islands, Azores, Baltic, Mediterranean, Black Sea, East Coast of Canada, Caribbean
	Cargo	Raw materials, grains, food products
Wrecked	Date	30/07/1886
	From	London
	To	Douglas, Isle of Man
	Captain	J. Jones
	Crew	4
	Cargo	Bagged cement
	Location	Near the Cardigan Bay Lightship
	Cause	Developed a leak
	Loss of life	0
	Outcome	Sank

7.0 Analysis

- The S.S. Mersey was built and launched in late 1884 at Birkenhead Liverpool by W.A Stevens and registered at Liverpool (Appendix A, B).
- Very little is recorded about voyages of the S.S. Mersey (see below)
- On Jul 30 1886, the S.S. Mersey while sailing from Newport Wales to Liverpool with a cargo of coal picked up 4 crew members of the schooner Clarissa which had sunk near the Cardigan Bay Lightship (Appendix D).
- On Jul 31 1886, while continuing its voyage to Liverpool, the SS Mersey ran aground on rocks at Penhros Point, south of South Stack Lighthouse Anglesey. The 10 crew members and 3 passengers of the S.S. Mersey and the 4 rescued crew members of the schooner Clarissa were forced to take to lifeboats. The SS Mersey was totally wrecked. (Appendix D, E, F).

From newspaper articles the S.S Mersey was recorded:

1885	
Jun 24-Jul 09:	Sailed regularly between Penzance Cornwall and Garston Liverpool, cargo potatoes (Appendix C).
Jul 13:	Arrived Peterhead Scotland from Runcorn Cheshire, cargo salt.
Jul 16:	Sailed Peterhead Scotland for Middleborough, light.
1886	
Jul 30:	Departed Newport Wales for Liverpool with 290 tons of coal. Picked up 4 crew members of the schooner Clarissa which had sunk near the Cardigan Bay Lightship.
Jul 31:	Ran aground on rocks off South Stack Anglesey Wales and was wrecked.

8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

The project took approximately 1 working day with half of that time spent on on-line research. The S.S. Mersey was added to the project listing due to its links with the schooner Clarissa

Having read the report sufficient information has been collated to compile a comprehensive history of the S.S Mersey.

From what little information that could be gathered S.S Mersey appears to have sailed between various ports of the U.K, carrying various cargoes from raw materials to food produce.

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. Some of the historical and interest in a subject WebPages were extremely useful. Newspaper archives were also very helpful in giving an overall picture of the operation of the ship and filling in information gaps.

Much of the data collated between websites checked out with some discrepancies observed.

A few WebPages viewed led to pay to view pages. However in most cases the information was obtained from other sources.

From the research conducted, setting a goal and how to reach that goal should be mapped out first. As Mersey is a common name, searches using Mersey with the captains' name and filtering the newspapers viewed reduced the number of entries considerably.

The wreck of the S.S. Mersey is reported to be broken up with some section of wreckage inshore and other lying in 21m of water. The propeller and shaft are some 90m to the northwest of the main concentration of wreckage. The full character and extent of archaeological remains associated with the loss of this vessel is presently unknown.

9.0 References

9.1 Online WebPages

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

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

Keyword: Steamship Mersey, Mersey Ball

<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/272527?term=Clarissa>

<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/271882?term=Mersey>

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

<https://www.crewlist.org.uk/data/vesselsalpha?shipsearch=CLARISSA&SearchType=Exact&submit=search>

<https://www.crewlist.org.uk/data/vesselsalpha?shipsearch=Mersey&SearchType=Exact&submit=search>

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

<https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/archive-library/lloyds-register-of-ships-online>

http://shippingandshipbuilding.uk/view.php?a1PageSize=20&year_built=&builder=&a1Order=Sorter_year_built&a1Dir=ASC&ref=201436&vessel=MERSEY

<https://newspapers.library.wales/>

<https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?294670>

<https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?66964>

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

Larn, R. & Larn, B., 2000, Shipwreck Index of the British Isles: Volume 5 – West Coast and Wales. Lloyd's Register of Shipping.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Appropriation Book Aug 1885, S.S Mersey

Official Number.	Name of Ship.	Tonnage.	Whether Steam or Sailing Ship.	Port of Registry.	Date of Registry.	Occasion of Appropriation.	Date of Appropriation.
9118	Gallao	978	"	"	13/85	"	16 .. "
	Navigator	141.970.55	"	"	14/85	"	21 .. "
	Mersey	356	Steam	"	15/85	"	24 .. "
	Soudan	1699	Sail	"	16/85	"	24 .. "

Appendix B: Lloyd's Registry 1885, S.S Mersey

1885-86		LLOYD'S REGISTER.										MER				
1 Official Number.	2 Ships' Names.	3 Masters, &c.	4 Registered Tonnage Net Gross Under Deck.	5 Registered Dimensions.			6 Moulded depth. Freeboard amidships ft. in.	7 Engines of Steamers. Builders of Engines. Materials. Repairs of Ships, &c., if Classed.	8 Built.		9 Where. Builders' Names.	10 When.	11 Owners.	12 Port belonging to.	13 Port of Survey. Years Assigned, also Equipment Letters, &c.	14 Character of Assigned, for Hull and Stores. Also Date of Last Survey
				Length.	Breadth.	Depth.			Where.	When.						
781 91181	Mersey	SowStm 2MstSr	Iron 34277 261300	159-2	23-7	10-3		C.1.2Cy.21" & 42"-30" 80HP W.A.Stevens, Birkenhead	Birkenhead	1885	W.A.Stevens	S.S.Mersey Co. (Lim.) (J.J.Croxton)	Liverp'l			See No. 41 in Supplement
782 68015		SowStm	Iron 227 224	132-0	23-1	10-0		1.2Cy.16"-22" 20HP Cunliffe & Dunlop, P. Glsgw.	Port Glasg'w	1872	Cunliffe & Dunlop	J.&A.Allen	Glasgow			

Appendix C: Newspaper Article June 1885

Public Notices.

NEW POTATO CLIPPERS.

PENZANCE TO GARSTON
SEASON 1885.

MARSHALL STEVENS AND CO. will run the new steamships "MERSEY" AND "SCOTT HARLEY."

Built within the past twelve months and guaranteed to steam 11 knots, sailing from PENZANCE and arriving at GARSTON at the undermentioned times, all circumstances permitting :-

LEAVING PENZANCE.		DOCKING AT GARSTON.	
June 21 - Wednesday .. 6 ..	June 23 - Thursday .. 11 ..	June 23 - Sunday .. Midnight	July 3 - Thursday .. 2 a.m.
June 22 - Saturday .. 7 ..	June 24 - Friday .. 12 ..	June 24 - Friday .. 3 ..	July 4 - Friday .. 3 ..
June 23 - Sunday .. 8 ..	June 25 - Saturday .. 1 ..	June 25 - Saturday .. 4 ..	July 5 - Saturday .. 4 ..
July 1 - Wednesday .. 3 ..	June 26 - Sunday .. 2 ..	June 26 - Sunday .. 5 ..	July 6 - Sunday .. 5 ..
July 4 - Saturday .. 3 ..	June 27 - Monday .. 3 ..	June 27 - Monday .. 6 ..	July 7 - Monday .. 6 ..
July 6 - Monday .. 5 ..	June 28 - Tuesday .. 4 ..	June 28 - Tuesday .. 7 ..	July 8 - Tuesday .. 7 ..
July 8 - Wednesday .. 6 ..	June 29 - Wednesday .. 5 ..	June 29 - Wednesday .. 8 ..	July 9 - Wednesday .. 8 ..
July 1 - Wednesday .. 6 ..	June 30 - Thursday .. 6 ..	June 30 - Thursday .. 9 ..	July 10 - Thursday .. 9 p.m.

IMPORTANT—The Northern Markets can be more quickly reached by this route than by rail, and the sailings, which will be strictly adhered to, are timed so that the potatoes may reach the same markets as though they left Penzance the same day by the noon train.

Shippers are requested, in their own interests, to have their potatoes alongside in good time.

The steamers leaving Garston on the following dates, will also call at Liverpool for cargo for Penzance and district.

.. Friday, .. 29th, .. Saturday, .. 27th, 10 a.m.
.. Friday, July 3rd, .. Saturday, July 4th, 2 p.m.

Traders receiving Consignments from Liverpool, Manchester and the North, are requested to support the Service.

For further information apply to
GEORGE BAZELY and SONS, Penzance,
Who will supply the labels, or to
MARSHALL STEVENS and Co.,
Fenwick Chambers, Liverpool and Garston.

Appendix D: Newspaper Reports on Sinking of S.S. Mersey Jul 31 1886

WRECKS AND CASUALTIES

Lord of the Isles, from Newport for Rockhampton, put in to the Mauritius with loss of boats, and bulwarks stove in. First officer drowned. Need not discharge.

Mary Blundell.—The owners, in reply to inquiry, state—Mary Blundell, we believe, arrived at Valparaiso on the 13th June.

Fredrickshaven, July 30.—The Jacoba Petronella (Dutch), from Riga for Louvain, with timber, towed in with masts cut away.

Holyhead, July 31.—The Mersey (ss), from Newport for Liverpool, struck on rocks off Penrhos Point this morning, and remains full of water and likely to be a total wreck. A later account says—The Mersey (ss) has landed here crew of the Clarissa (schooner), of Aberystwith, reported to have struck on the Kundlestone, and afterwards foundered.—A telegram from the captain states—Vessel struck a rock off Penrhos Point at two a.m. to-day (dense fog), and sunk at 6 a.m. Crew saved.

A DOUBLE SHIPPING DISASTER.

The schooner Clarissa, belonging to Aberystwith, of 93 tons register, and bound from London for Douglas, Isle of Man, with a cargo of cement, foundered on Friday night in Cardigan Bay. She had for several days experienced bad weather, and becoming leaky, the crew of four hands abandoned the vessel and took to their boat, from which they were rescued by the crew of the steamship Mersey, of Liverpool. The Mersey, with her crew of ten hands, then proceeded on her way for Liverpool, to which port she was bound from Newport with coals for the African Mail Steamship Company, and all went well until Saturday morning at two o'clock, when the vessel struck on a reef of rock near the South Stack, called Penrhose Point, which was excluded from view by fog and drizzling rain. The four men belonging to the Clarissa at once took to their boat and made for the shore, which they reached with much difficulty. Intelligence of the disaster was at once conveyed to Holyhead, distant about two and a half miles from the wrecked vessel, and the coastguards at once proceeded with the life-saving apparatus to the rescue of the crew. Before the spot was reached, however, they learned that the crew had left the steamer in their boats, and about ten o'clock they succeeded in saving their bags, containing clothes, &c. The Mersey has since become a total wreck.

Appendix E: Lloyd's Registry 1887, S.S Mersey

1887-88		NAVIRES À VAPEUR.						MER-MET				
1 N ^o de l'Etat	2 Registre dans lequel le navire est coté.	3 Nom, Matériaux, Grément, etc. Capitaine et dates d'entrée au service des Armateurs actuels et à bord du navire. Ancien Nom, nombre de ponts, etc.	4 Pavillon. Port d'Armement	5 Ton- nage. Net Total	6 Dimensions.			7 Construit.		8 Nombre des cloisons. Détails sur le lest d'eau.	9 Machines. Détails. Nom du Constructeur.	10 Armateurs ou Directeurs-Gérants.
					Long.	Lar- gour.	Couez.	Où. Par qui.	Quand.			
433 8526	* BT 1.50	Mersey <i>Taylor</i>	I ScS IDk Liverpool	British 198 312	141'0"	20'7"	11'6"	Preston W. Allsup & Sons	1882	4 Blds. Dby 30k	2Cy. 17" & 34"-30" 70 HP. W. Allsup & Sons, Preston	A. Cook
434 9181	* BT 1.50	Mersey (WRECKED)	I ScS Liverpool	British 149 342	159'2"	23'7"	10'3"	Birkenhead W. A. Stevens	1884	4 Blds.	2Cy. 21" & 42"-30" 80 HP. W. A. Stevens, Birkenhead	"Mersey" S.S. Co. (J.J. Croxton.)
435 8815	BT 1.50	Mersey	I Sc Glasgow	British 151 227	132'0"	23'1"	10'0"	Port Glasgow Cunliffe & Dunlop	1872		2Cy. 16"-22" 20 HP. Cunliffe & Dunlop, P. Glas'w	J. & A. Allan
436 8009	BT 1.50	Mersey	I Pa3 IDk Liverpool	British 66 125	106'0"	20'1"	8'6"	Liverpool Bowdler & Chaffer	1868		2Cy. 34"-48" 70 HP. Fawcett, Preston & C., L'pool	London & N.W. Rail. Co.

N.B: S.S. Mersey listed as wrecked

Appendix F: Newspaper Reports on Inquest into sinking of S.S. Mersey

REPORT BY BOTTLE.

A bottle, containing the following, has been picked up on the sands at Port Talbot :—August 31, 1886.—s.s. Malabar, off Lundy; all well; left Penarth this morning.—C.E.W.”

MIDDLESBROUGH SHIPMENTS.

2,841 tons of pig iron, of which 800 tons went to Scotland, and 77 tons of manufactured iron, and 3,100 tons of steel—total, 6,018 tons—were cleared at Middlesbrough yesterday.

OFFICIAL INQUIRIES ORDERED.

† The Board of Trade have requested their solicitor to take the necessary steps for holding formal investigations into the circumstances connected with the stranding of the steamship Mersey at Penrhos Point, Caernarvon Bay on July 31st last; and the stranding of the schooner Silvia, of Beaumaris, near Skullmartin Light, co. Down, on Aug. 31.

LOSS OF THE STEAMSHIP MERSEY.

An inquiry was then opened into the loss of the Liverpool steamer Mersey, by stranding on Penrhos Point, near Holyhead, on the 31st July.—Mr. Paxton appeared for the Board of Trade, and Mr. Walter Bateson represented the owners and master.—Mr. Paxton stated that the Mersey was built at Birkenhead in 1885, and was owned by a limited company, of which Mr. J. J. Croxton was manager. She was of 149 tons net, and left Newport, Monmouthshire, on the 30th July for Liverpool, with a cargo of 290 tons of coal, and a crew of nine hands and three runners. On the evening of that day she picked up a boat containing four men of a vessel named the Clarissa, which had foundered. The Bardsey was passed at 9 30 p.m., and Carnarvon lightship was seen at 11 50, two miles to the eastward. The weather then became thick. At 12 30 the speed was reduced to dead slow and two men were put on the lookout. At 1 30 a light was reported on the starboard bow, and land being shortly afterwards sighted, the vessel's course was changed to S.W. At two o'clock she ran ashore on Penrhos Point. The boats were got out at 5 30 and the vessel was left. She afterwards broke up and became a total wreck. Mr. Paxton said there would be a question as to whether the gun at the North Stack had been regularly fired during the fog. It did not appear to have been heard from the steamer, but a gunner would be called who would state that the gun was regularly fired, and a coastguardsman from the locality would corroborate his evidence. It was quite possible that the gun might have been duly fired and not have been heard on the steamer. The master appeared to have been on deck attending to his duty, and it would be for the court to consider whether he had made due allowance for tide, and whether the courses steered were correct.—Evidence having been given, the inquiry was adjourned until two o'clock this (Saturday) afternoon, when judgment will be delivered.