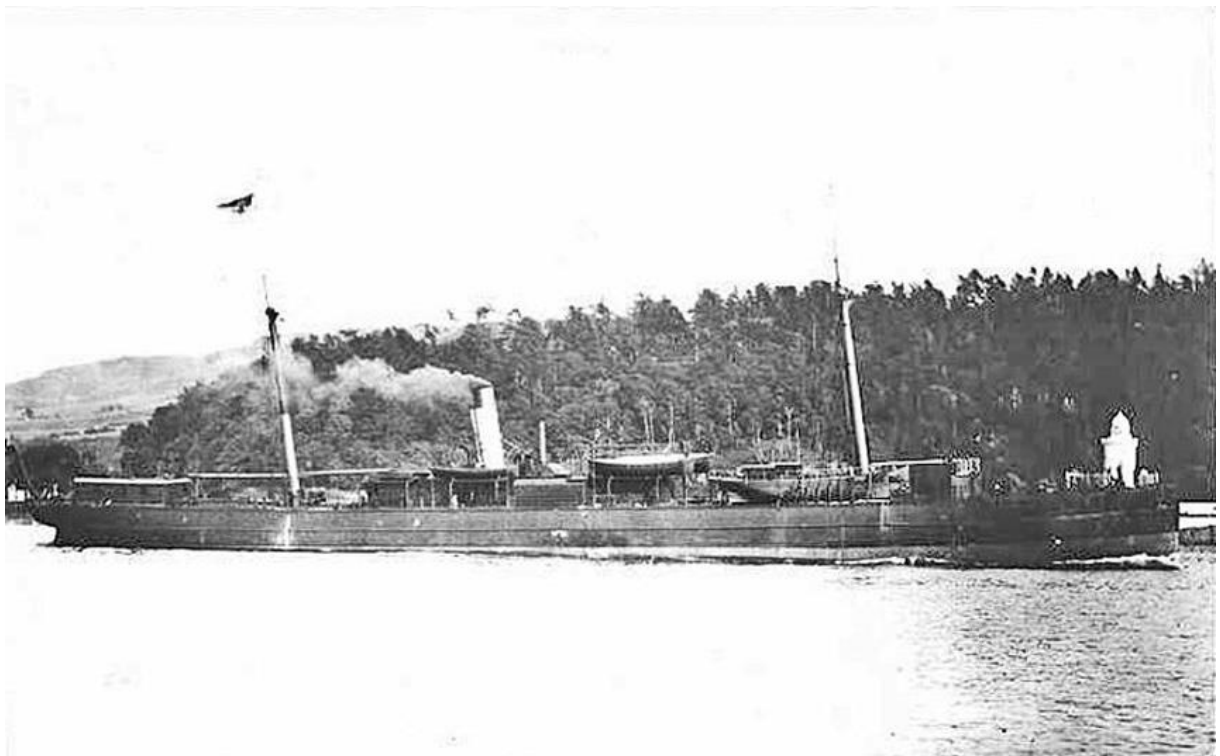


**Welsh Wreck Web Research Project
(North Cardigan Bay)
On-line research into the: SS Rio Negro**



Steam Cargo Ship built by Charles Connell & Co. (1900)

**Report compiled by:
Gareth J.S. Davies**

Report Title:

**Welsh Wreck Web Research Project
(North Cardigan Bay)
On-line research into the grounding of the:
*SS Rio Negro***

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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 SS Rio Negro which ran into difficulties off Barmouth in Jan 1920 (MADU Ref.419).

The SS Rio Negro a cargo steamship was built as the SS Mera in Glasgow in 1901 and owned by Deutsche-Dampfsfahrts Ges Kosmos, Germany and sailed between Germany and South America. In 1914 she was interned in Montevideo by the Uruguayan Government. In 1917, the SS Mera was seized by Uruguay and renamed the SS Rio Negro. In 1918, the SS Rio Negro was owned by the Shipping Controller, London and managed by Houlder Bros. In Jan 1920, SS Rio Negro experience propeller failure in the Irish Sea and drifted near to the coast of Barmouth resulting in a rescue operation. The SS Rio Negro continued to sail after the incident and was repurchased by Uruguay in 1920 sailing between South America, North America and Europe. In 1928, SS Rio Negro was purchased by F.W.O. Boning & Co, Bremen, Germany and renamed SS Brema. In Jan 1930, SS Brema was laid up and in 1933 was broken up at Bo'ness, River Forth.

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

2.0 Index

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2.4 Contributors

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2.5 Abbreviations

MADU Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit

2.6 Appendices

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3.0 Introduction

The SS Rio Negro was chosen as:

- it covered a period of sea history from the early 20th century to pre WW2.
- it was a similar ship and time to other ships I had researched from the MADU Wreck list.
- I live overseas online information would be my priority research tool and similar to my previous research a ship from this period should be reasonably well documented online.

The following topics form the basis of the research:

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

4.0 Background

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

Table 1: Extract from MADU Master Wrecksite Database

MADU Ref. No.	Date Wrecked	Name	Location 1	Location 2	Details	Vessel Type	Mats	Ref.
419	12/01/1920	Rio Negro	Cardiganshire	Barmouth	Broke down	Steamship	stl	rc

In Jan 1920, the SS Rio Negro broke its propeller and rudder during a storm and was adrift in the Irish Sea (Fig1). A passing steamer Dewey attempted to tow her to a safe haven but the tow line parted and the SS Rio Negro was left adrift for a second time. The SS Rio Negro drifted into Barmouth Bay where it was eventually safely anchored.

Fig 1: Location of SS Rio Negro Distress Call. Barmouth also marked



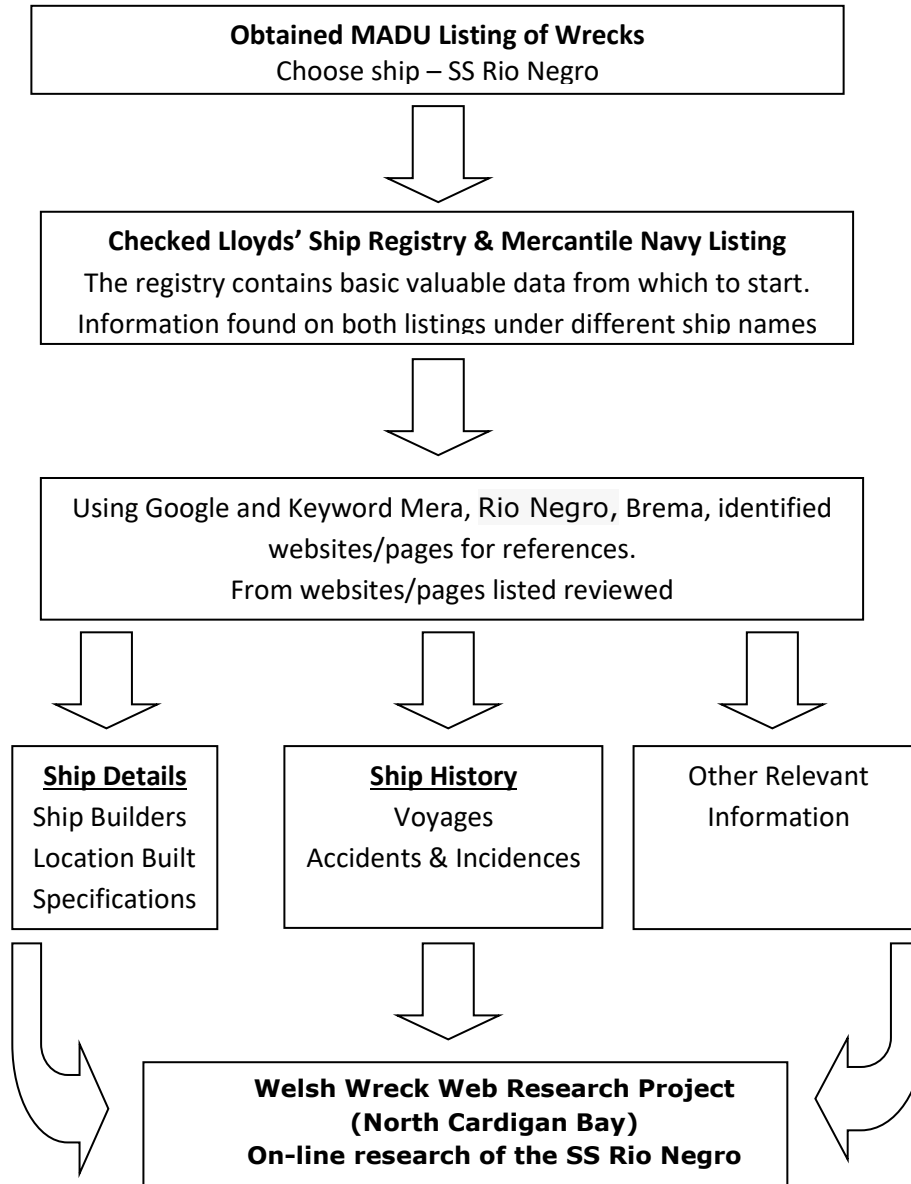
5.0 Research Methodology

Computer System

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

Search engines used: Google Chrome

Methodology



This report has been written using the ship name as it was at that time

See Section 9 for list of websites viewed

6.0 Results

**Table 2: SS Mera (renamed SS Rio Negro 1917, renamed SS Brema 1928)
Specification and History**

Vessel	Name/s	Mera		
	Type	Steamship		
		General Cargo		
Built	Date	Laid Down: N/A		
		Launched: 7/11/1901		
		Delivered: 1901		
		Cost: N/A		
	Builder	Charles Connell & Company		
		Scotstoun, Glasgow, Yard# 257		
Construction	Materials	Steel		
	Decks	2, P&B'decks 230, F'castle 45		
	Bulkheads	N/A		
Propulsion	Type	Engine, Steam		
	Details	1 x screw		
Engine	Details	T3cyl		
		Size: 25, 41.5, 70 x 48in		
		HP: 386		
		Manufacturer: Dunsmuir & Jackson Ltd, Govan		
	Boilers	3, Standard; 9cf; GS 198; HS 5910		
Drive	Type	Propeller		
	Number	1		
Dimensions	Length	374ft	0 ins	105.8 m
	Beam	48ft	1 ins	14.7 m
	Draught	27ft	6 ins	8.4 m
Tonnage	Gross	4787		
	Net	3087		
Owner	First	Deutsche-Dampfsfahrts Ges Kosmos		
		Hamburg, Germany		
	Last	F.W.O Boning & Co, (from 1928)		
		Bremen, Germany		
	Others	1917 - Seized by Uruguay 1918 - Shipping Controller, London. Managed by Houlder Bros. 1920 - Repurchased by Uruguay		
Registry	Port	Hamburg, Germany		
	Flag	DEU		
	Number	143303		
	Code	J.V.F.K		
History	Routes	South America, North America, U.K, Europe		
	Cargo	Coal, grain		
Grounding	From	Dublin		
	To	Barry Dock		
	Date	Jan 12 th 1920		
	Location	Barmouth		
	Cause	Broken propeller and lost rudder		
	Loss of life	0		
	Outcome	Repaired		
Scrapped	Date	1933		
	Location	Bo'ness, River Forth		

7.0 Analysis

- The SS Mera was built at Scotstoun Shipyard in Glasgow by Charles Connell & Company in 1901 for Deutsche-Dampfsfahrts Ges Kosmos, Hamburg, Germany. In a number of articles it states the SS Mera was built for the Uruguayan Government. She was renamed the SS Rio Negro in 1917 and the SS Brema in 1928 (Appendix A, B, C).
- As the SS Mera was owned by Deutsche-Dampfsfahrts Ges Kosmos, Hamburg, she probably sailed on the lucrative Hamburg to River Plate routings and possibly sailed to Callao, Peru.
- On Dec 2nd 1914, Montevideo port authorities prevented the SS Mera from taking on coal beyond the capacity of her bunkers. It was alleged the SS Mera crew tried to smuggle coal through the bunkers into the ship's hold. The SS Mera was one of three German vessels coaling and provisioning at Montevideo and was believed to be connected with the reported arrival of the German Pacific Squadron in the Southern Atlantic (Appendix E).
- SS Mera left Montevideo shortly before the Battle of the Falkland Islands (Dec 8th 1914) with her holds full of stores, provisions and her deck full of cattle to join up with Admiral Von Spee's fleet of warships and ancillary ships. The SS Mera was due to meet up a pre-arranged rendezvous off the Falkland Islands. To avoid neutral complications SS Mera had a customs clearance for Hamburg from the Uruguayan authorities.
- As the SS Mera was approaching the rendezvous she received word to head to the nearest port as the German ships were being fired on. The SS Mera returned to Montevideo arriving just 2 hours before the pursuing British. The SS Mera was the only auxiliary ship to escape sinking or capture from the Battle of the Falklands.
- In Montevideo the SS Mera was interned by the Uruguayan government and a military guard placed onboard. However before leaving the SS Mera the German crew destroyed the engines and all the navigational equipment rendering the ship inoperable.
- The SS Mera lay in Montevideo harbour for 3½ years and in 1917 the Uruguayan government took ownership of the disabled ship and renamed her SS Rio Negro.
- In 1918, the SS Rio Negro was handed over to the British Government under the ownership of the Ship Controller a post created by the Lloyd George Coalition Government in 1916 under the New Ministries and Secretaries Act (6 & 7 George 5 c.68) to regulate and organize merchant shipping in order to supply the United Kingdom with the materials to fight the war following severe losses. In June 1918 Captain Henry Daniel, D.S.C from Penzance was sent to Montevideo to bring the ship to the U.K.
- The SS Mera was in such bad condition that it took until Feb 1919 before she was repaired and ready for sea.
- The SS Rio Negro arrived in Dublin in Dec 21st 1919 flying the British flag and hailing from London. She carried a cargo of flour from Canada. This was her 2nd journey across the Atlantic. During the voyage back, the SS Rio Negro ran ashore in the Gulf of St Lawrence. By pumping water out of the forward tanks and flooding stern tanks, SS Rio Negro was refloated without assistance and sailed 200 miles to Quebec for repairs. In a Canadian court the captain was complimented but the chief and 2nd officer were found in default of disobeying the captain's written orders and their certificates were suspended.
- On Jan 11 1920 at 12:10pm whilst sailing from Dublin to Barry, SS Rio Negro lost all the blades of her propeller and rudder. Fishguard Wireless Station received a report from the American steamer Dewey that the SS Rio Negro was totally disabled at N52.17, W5.24 and required assistance.

- The steamer Dewey was able to get a towing line to the SS Rio Negro but while in tow, the towline parted and the SS Rio Negro lost sight of the towing vessel and was left adrift. The SS Rio Negro drifted into Barmouth Bay to anchor.
- On Jan 12th, a small boat with 4 men suffering exposure landed at Barmouth Beach to obtain assistance after several hours battling the weather. The 3rd officer Davies said the SS Rio Negro with a crew of 48 had been driven helplessly in a gale after breaking its propeller.
- The Barmouth lifeboat was launched to find the SS Rio Negro in a precarious position. The remaining crew stayed onboard to safely anchor the vessel.
- The SS Rio Negro anchored about 4 miles off Barmouth on Jan 13th and the Barmouth lifeboat returned the 4 men who had rowed to shore.
- In Feb 1920, a contribution of £20 was received by the Mayor of Barmouth from the captain and crew of the Rio Negro. The donation was for the crew of the lifeboat for their assistance when the SS Rio Negro was adrift in Jan 1920 (Appendix F).
- In Oct 1920, Lord Inchcape saw the disposal of 48 steamers including the SS Rio Negro which had been under the control of Shipping Command. The SS Rio Negro was sold to the Uruguayan Government.
- Under the authority of the Uruguayan Government the SS Rio Negro sailed between South America, North America and the U.K. Coal was probably the main cargo that departed the UK.
- In Jan 1921, the SS Rio Negro sailing from Port Talbot, Wales to Montevideo, Uruguay was towed into Ferrol, Spain by the steamer Millais due to broken propeller blades.
- In 1928, the SS Rio Negro was sold to F.W.O Boning & Co, Bremen, Germany and was renamed the SS Brema.
- The SS Brema continued to trade with South America carrying coal to Argentina and returning with grain to the U.K.
- In Dec 1931, the SS Brema was beached at P & W. M'Lellan Shipbreakers Carriden Yard Bo'ness, Scotland for scrapping after being towed from Bremen, Germany.
- The SS Brema was scrapped in 1933. (Appendix D).

8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

The project took approximately 3 working days with half of that time spent on on-line research.

I set out with the goal of researching the history of the SS Rio Negro with basic information provided. Reading the report here, I believe I have collated sufficient information on the history of the SS Rio Negro from when it was built to her scraping in Scotland in 1933.

The breaking down of the SS Rio Negro in the Irish Sea was only a small event in its history. From reports and documents found, the SS Mera (original name) was a near casualty of the Battle of the Falklands in Dec 1914. After being renamed SS Rio Negro she was taken under the control of the British Government to replace lost shipping during WW1. The SS Rio Negro in 1920 was sold back to the Uruguayan government and was sold to a German company in 1928 and renamed the SS Brema.

The SS Rio Negro (also known as SS Mera and SS Brema) was well documented and newspaper achieves were very helpful in giving an overall picture of the operation of the ship and filling in information gaps.

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.

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. Careful use of specific words in search engines is very important. An initial problem with the research was that the ship was not named the Rio Negro until 1917. However a reference showing the previous name of SS Mera solved this problem and more information was found.

9.0 References

9.1 Online WebPages

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

<https://archive.org/details/HECROS1903ST/page/n533/mode/2up>

<https://www.crewlist.org.uk/data/viewimages?name=Rio+Negro&year=1920&steamsail=Steam&submit=Enter>

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

Keyword: Mera, Rio Negro, Brema

http://www.clydeships.co.uk/view.php?official_number=&imo=&builder=&builder_eng=&year_built=&launch_after=&launch_before=&role=&propulsion=&category=&owner=&port=&flag=&disposal=&lost=&a1Page=4&ref=4753&vessel=MERA

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

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

https://southampton.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/ENQ/WPAC/BIBENQ?ENTRY=brema+%3A+lloyd%27s+register+of+ships&ENTRY_NAME=BS&ENTRY_TYPE=K&SORTS=SQL_REL_BIB&GQ=brema+%3A+lloyd%27s+register+of+ships&CF=gen&NRECS=28&QUERY=&QRYTEXT=

<https://www.theshipslist.com/ships/lines/kosmos.shtml>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shipping_Controller#:~:text=Shipping%20Controller%20was%20a%20post,the%20war%20following%20severe%20losses.

9.2 Personal Correspondences

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

9.3 Publications

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

Appendices:

Appendix A: Lloyd's Registry 1903, SS Mera

MEM-MER	LLOYD'S REGISTER.										NAVIRES A VAPEUR.				1901-02														
1	2	3	4	5			6		7		8		9			10			11			12			13			14	
Numero d'Ordre.	Nom du Navire. Matériau, Grément, etc.	Tonnage Officiel.	Détails de la Classification.	Cote.		Port de Visite.	Quand.	Par qui.	Armateurs.		Dimensions d'après la Douane, Superstructures, &c.			Port d'Armement.			Machines.			Creux sur Quille.									
Numero Officiel.	Ex-nom, s'il y a lieu.	Sous le Pont.	Surveillance Spéciale.	Port de Visite.	Quand.	Par qui.	Armateurs.		Dimensions d'après la Douane, Superstructures, &c.			Port d'Armement.			Machines.			Creux sur Quille.											
Signaux.	Visites Périodiques. Nombres des Ponts.	Net.	Date de la dernière visite de l'arbre propulseur.	Port de Visite.	Mach.	Oh.	Armateurs.		Dimensions d'après la Douane, Superstructures, &c.			Port d'Armement.			Machines.			Creux sur Quille.											
651	Mera 5 B.P. Beelenorfs 89-01 2 Dks (Stl-Uteaks) & Web frames Elec. light lower dk (Stl) forward	4797 3975 3087	100A1 2,01	Gls	1901	C. Connell & Co. Glasgow	2mo	Lloyd's	Deutsche-Dampfs- fahrts Ges Kosmos	374'0"	48'1"	27'6"	Hamburg German	T. 3 Cy 25', 41 1/2" & 70" - 48"	30 = 3														

Appendix B: Mercantile Navy List 1920, SS Rio Negro

Official No.	Name of Ship.	International Code Signal (if any).	Port and Year of Registry.	Where Built.	When Built.	Material.	Dimensions.			Registered Tonnage.			Owner, or Part Owner, and Manager (if recorded). × Signifies Managing Owner. Italics signify Manager.			
							Length.	Breadth.	Depth of Hold.	Net Tonnage.	Gross Tonnage.	Horse Power of Engines and description of Propeller.				
143303	Rio Negro	J.V.F.K	London, 1919	Glasgow	1900	Steel	374	0	48	1	27	6	3061	4819	241 Sc.	The Shipping Controller, London. Walter C. Warrack, of Houlder Bros. & Co., Lim., London.

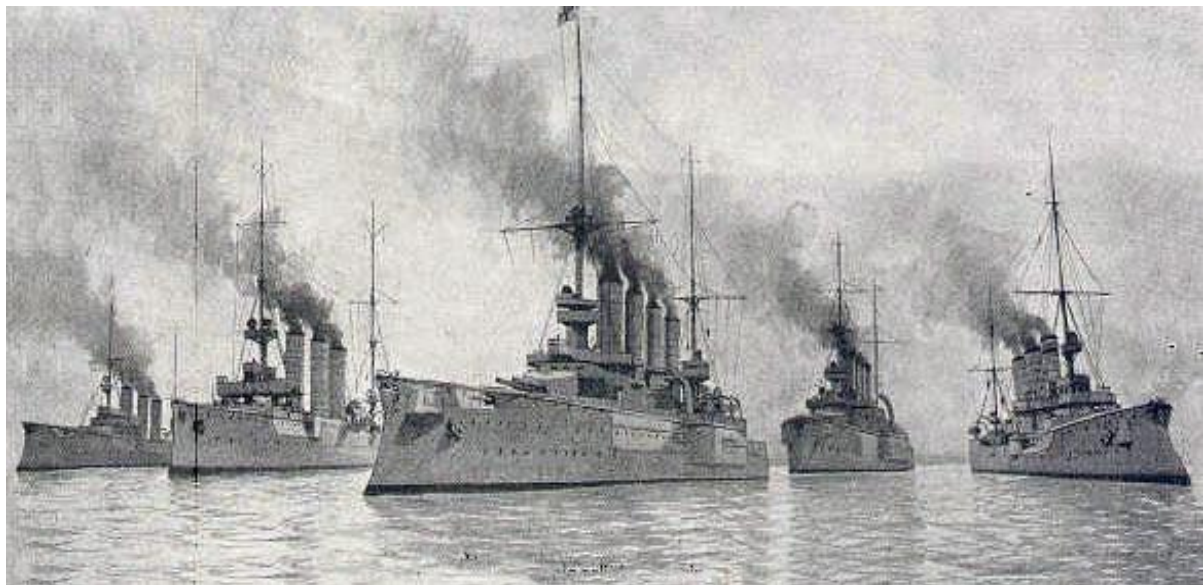
Appendix C: Lloyd's Registry 1930, SS Brema

BRA-BRE	LLOYD'S REGISTER.										NAVIRES A VAPEUR ET A MOTEURS.				1930-31													
1	2	3	4	5			6		7		8		9		10			11			12			13			14	
Numero d'Ordre.	Nom du Navire. Matériau, Grément, etc.	Tonnage Officiel.	Détails de la Classification.	Cote.		Port de Visite.	Quand.	Par qui.	Armateurs.		Dimensions d'après la Douane, Superstructures, &c.			Port d'Armement.			Machines.			Creux sur Quille.								
Numero Officiel.	Ex-nom, s'il y a lieu.	Sous le Pont.	Surveillance Spéciale.	Port de Visite.	Quand.	Par qui.	Armateurs.		Dimensions d'après la Douane, Superstructures, &c.			Port d'Armement.			Machines.			Creux sur Quille.										
Signaux.	Visites Périodiques. Nombres des Ponts.	Net.	Date de la dernière visite de l'arbre propulseur.	Port de Visite.	Mach.	Oh.	Armateurs.		Dimensions d'après la Douane, Superstructures, &c.			Port d'Armement.			Machines.			Creux sur Quille.										
MFVT 66154	Brema (ex Rio Negro, ex Mera) Elec. light	660 4210 3975 2660	100A1 8,16	Ham	1901	C. Connell & Co. Glasgow	2mo	Böning & Co.	372'8"	47'8"	27'6"	Bremen German	T. 3 Cy 25', 41 1/2" & 70" - 48"	30 = 3														


Appendix D: Lloyd's Registry 1931, SS Brema (shown as Broken Up)

BRE LLOYD'S REGISTER. NAVIRES A VAPEUR ET A MOTEURS. 1931-32																	
1 Numero d'Ordre.	2 Nom du Navire. Matériaux, Gréement, etc.	3 Ex-nom, s'il y a lieu.	4 Tonnage Omdel.	5 Détails de la Classi- fication.				6 Construit.		10 Armateurs.	11 Dimensions d'après la Douane. Superstructures, &c.			12 Port d'Armement.	13 Machines. No. & Dia. des Cylindres—Course Pression des Chaudières. HP=Force en chevaux d'après les formules de la société. HPF=Force en chevaux d'après les papiers du navire. Détails des Chaudières & Foyers. Nom du Constructeur des machines.	14 Crest No.	15 Call No.
				7 Cote.	8 Quand. Navire. Mois.	9 Par qui. Où.	11 Longueur.	11 Largeur.	11 Creux.								
16152 Broken up	Brema (ex Rio Negro, QMHB ex Vera) Elec. light Wireless	Steel & Sr Ham. No. 3-3, 13 2 Dks (Stl-Uteaks) & Web frames lower d& (Stl) forward	4210 3975 2650	+	8,16	Ham	x	1901 2mo	C. Connell & Co. Glasgow	Böning & Co.	372'8" P&B 230'F45' Cell D Ba 102' u E & B	47'8" 27'6"	27'6"	Bremen German 6 B H Cem FK 73/143'930	T. 3 Cy. 25', 41' & 70'-48' 386 HP 3 SB, 9 cf, 6 s 193, 16 s 510 Dunsmuir & Jackson, Ld Gls	80	3 GC

Appendix E: Admiral Graf von Spee's Squadron at the Battle of the Falkland Islands



Admiral Graf von Spee's squadron at the Battle of the Falkland Islands on 8th December 1914 in the First World War: SMS Nürnberg, Dresden, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Leipzig

Appendix F: Newspaper Article from Daily Mail Feb 5 1920

A contribution of £20 has been received by the Mayor of Barmouth, Merionethshire, from the captain and crew of the steamer, Rio Negro, Liverpool. This is to be given to the crew of the Barmouth lifeboat for their assistance, when the steamer was adrift during a gale in Cardigan Bay.