

**Welsh Wreck Web Research Project  
(North Cardigan Bay)**

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



**A similar Fully rigged ship**

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Report Title:

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

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## **1.0 Abstract**

The “www Research Project” is about, discovering by on line research details of ships, on the MADU data base of wrecks of North Wales, the circumstances of their loss, details of the owners and crew, the cargo carried and their history.

The Transit was an American fully rigged ship registered in Boston, but the builders and owners are unknown. Transit is recorded in 1837 travelling between Europe and Boston, in 1838 between Boston, the Southern ports of the USA and Liverpool. In 1838 Transit sailed from Savannah in January for Liverpool with a cargo of cotton and was wrecked in February in Devils Mouth, Carmarthenshire, North Wales during fog. The crew were saved and part of the cargo. Transit was broken up by the action of the sea.

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### 2.4 Contributors

MADU

### 2.5 Abbreviation

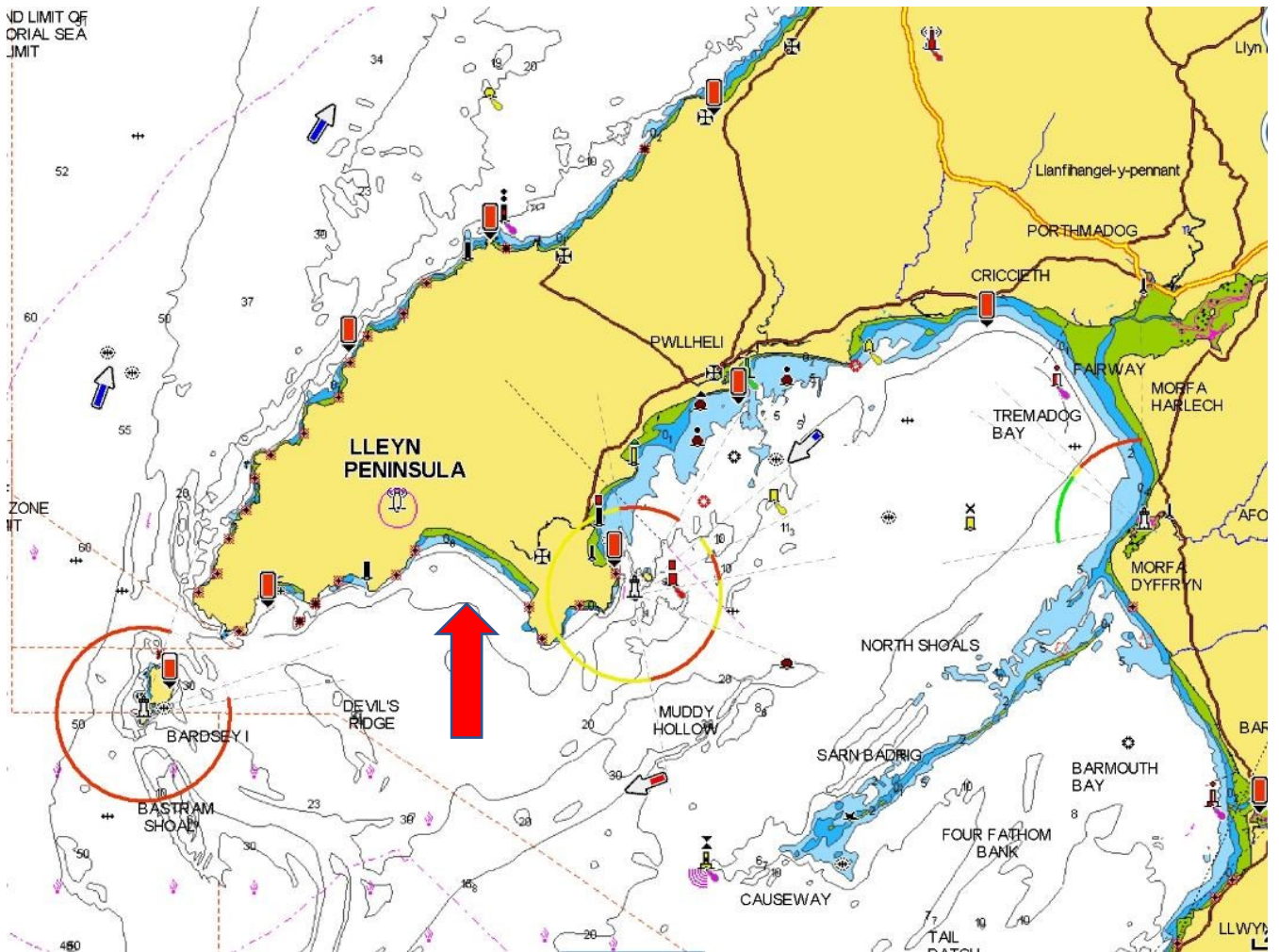
BNA	British Newspaper Archives
LC	United States Library of Congress
LR	Lloyd’s Register of shipping
MADU	Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit
NAS	Nautical Archaeology Society
WNL	Welsh Newspapers on Line
US	United States of America

### 3.0 Introduction


1. I selected Transit to research because the date of the incident the vessel was involved in only gave the year but its home port was Boston and wished to see how much information I could find about her and I wanted to find out what happened and I wanted to discover:
2. The dimensions of the vessel, although for this period of time apart from the draught, they would have only been recorded in on line information if the Lloyd's survey was available or the vessel had been advertised for sale in a surviving newspaper. Who the builder was and when she was built and any other information available about her.
3. Information concerning the voyages, cargo's, any events affecting the vessel, details of its masters, crew and owners.
4. To find out the sequency of events leading up to the loss of the vessel, whenever that was and the event in 1839.
5. To discover the cause of the event in 1839 and if the vessel survived, the cause of its eventual loss.
6. The events that happened after the incident in 1839 and up to and after its loss if it survived.
7. If there were any previous research of the vessel for the 1839 incident and its story.
8. If there was a wreck site for Transit and if it had been identified, dived and recorded.
9. If any salvage of the vessel and its cargo had been carried out
- 10.If any previous reports had been produced for the Transit.

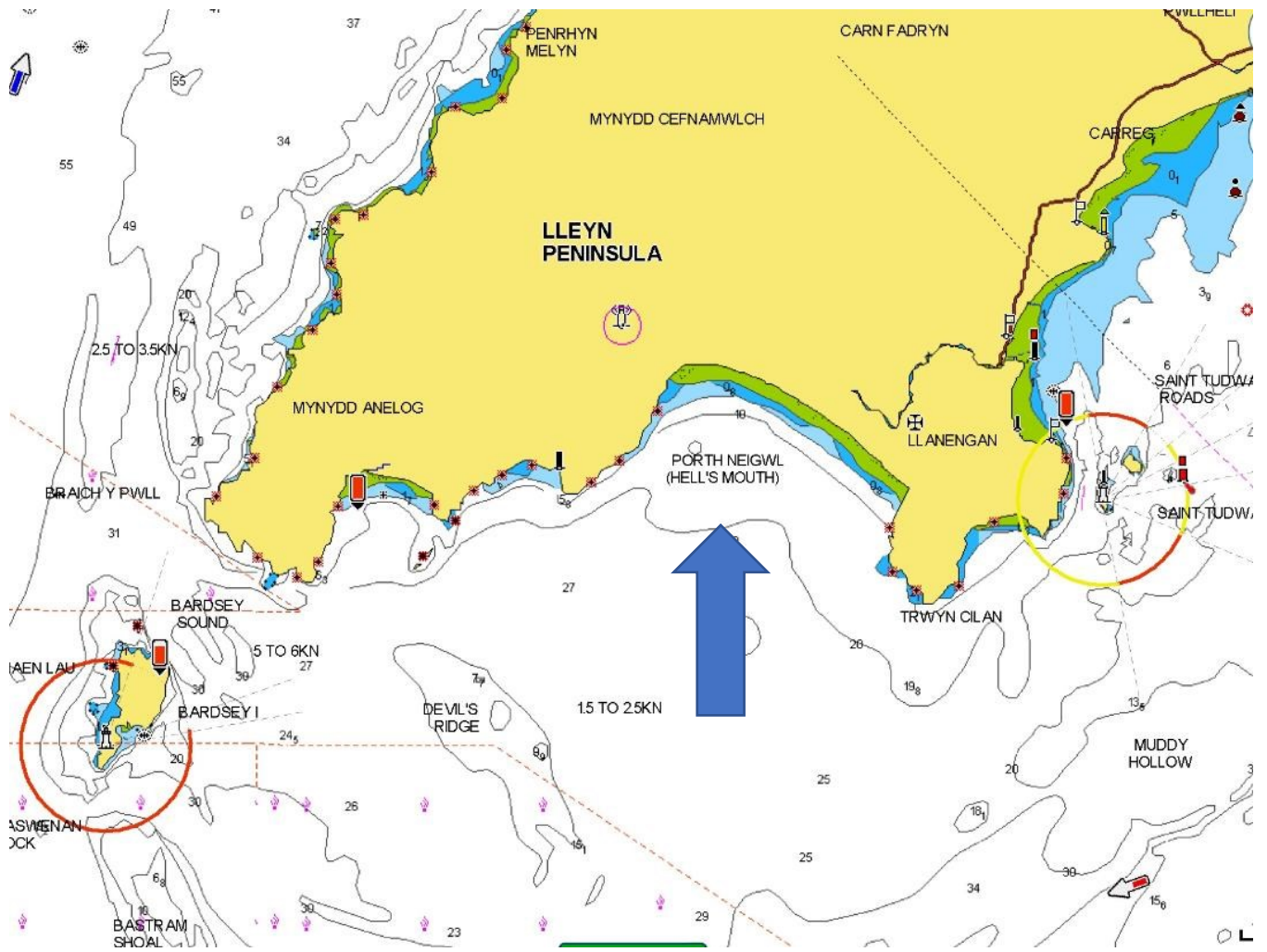
### 4.0 Background

When I started this research it was stated that the Transit was wrecked in Hells mouth during 1839 and was registered at Boston.



Lleyn Peninsula and Hells Mouth (Porth Neigwl)

 Hells Mouth (Porth Neigwl)



Hells Mouth ( Porth Neigwl)

## 5.0 Research Methodology

I used a Microsoft Pixel laptop with access to my home internet running windows 10 operating system. I also used my Apple I pad for research when I was away from the laptop and to assist in transcribing reports from the British newspaper archives. The new internet provider has now connected my home by a fibre connection so it is very much faster. The Lap top uses bling search engine but I also use Goggle which produces less advertisements and less Americanised content.

I searched Lloyds Register of Shipping ( LR ) for "Transit" looking for details of her dimensions, master, builders and owners in 1839 with no match. I then searched yearly backwards until 1830 with no matches.

I searched LR ships, plans and survey reports for "Transit" with no match.

The American Bureau of Shipping was not founded until 1862 as the American Shipmasters' Association certifying ship's master's and from 1870 issuing technical standards for survey and classing of wooden ships.

I searched The British Newspaper Archives (BNA) for "Transit ", "Transit Boston", "Transit Savannah", "Transit Mayhew", "Transit Winsor", and "Transit Havana" looking for sailings, arrivals, a launch, owners, builders, mishaps and any details of her loss and found a number of matches.

I searched Welsh newspapers on line for "Transit" looking for sailings, arrivals, a launch, owners, builders and any details of her loss and found no matches.

I searched Coflein site for "Transit" looking for any details of the wreck and a chart with a match giving only a map of the location.

I searched wreckeu site for "Transit" looking for any details of the wreck with no matches.

I searched "American newspapers" and found a free site for some American Newspapers on line and searched "Transit Boston" finding a match for the vessel arriving at New Orleans in 1838. I then searched "Transit Winsor" and found a match for the vessel arriving in Boston from New Orleans in 1838. I then searched "Transit Liverpool " and found a match for the vessel being spoken to on route from New Orleans to Liverpool in 1838. I also searched "Transit New Orleans", "Transit Savannah", " Transit Havana" and "Transit Mayhew" with no matches. The majority of American newspapers only appear to be available on line for later dates. I also found a "ship Transit, Latterman of Newport" in the 1820's but there is no evidence to confirm this is the same vessel.

I searched "Portland newspapers" and found the Library of Congress (LB) with American newspapers on line and searched "Transit Boston", "Transit Winsor", "Transit New Orleans" ," Transit Havana" and "Transit Savannah". I found the

same matches as American newspapers on line with one additional match for Boston confirming the Transit was a fully rigged ship.

I searched "Transit of Boston", "Boston Ships", "Boston Ship building", "Boston Ship owners" and "Boston registered ships" with no matches.

I searched "When did US start registering ships" and found in the Library of Congress web site "Alphabetical list of ship registers, district of Barnstable, Massachusetts, 1814-1913" which I checked with no match.

I also found "Rogers' marine telegraphic list of merchant vessels of 150 tons and upward, employed in the commerce of the United States : furnished for the American code of signals" which lists all American vessels over 150 tons between 1846 and 1854.

I also searched LC for "Boston registered merchant ships" and "Boston Merchant ships" with no matches but found "Boston merchant vessels, 1851-1856 as written by Duncan McLean for the Atlas of Boston".

I searched Mystic Seaport web site but their records of American merchant vessels start in 1859.

## 6.0 Results

Vessel	Name/s	Transit	
	Type	Fully rigged ship	
		cargo	
Built	Date	Unknown	
	Builder	Unknown	
Construction	Materials	Wood	
	Decks	One	
	Bulkheads	None	
Propulsion	Type	Sail	
	Details	Square rigged	
Engine	Details	N/A	
	Boilers		
Drive	Type		
	Number		
Dimensions	Length	Unknown ft	ins
	Beam	ft	ins
	Draught	ft	ins
Tonnage	Gross		
	Net		
Owner	First	Unknown	
	Last	Unknown	
	Others		
Registry	Port	Boston, USA	
	Flag	American	
	Number		
History	Routes	USA to Havana, Liverpool and Europe	
	Cargo	Cotton	
Final Voyage	From	Savannah cleared 4 <sup>th</sup> January 1839	
	To	Liverpool	
	Captain	Mayhew	
	Crew	unknown	
	Passengers	None	
	Cargo	Cotton	
Wrecking	Date	February 7 <sup>th</sup> 1839	
	Location	Hells Mouth (Porth Neigwl) Carmarthenshire	
	Cause	Fog	
	Loss of life	None	
	Outcome	Wrecked – part of cargo saved	

**Waterford Mail - Wednesday 06 January 1836****TRANSIT OF BRITISH GOODS THROUGH THE UNITED STATES TO CANADA**

It appears by some letters from New York that strenuous effort intended to be made during this session of Congress to introduce a law authorising the importation and transit, ' under proper regulations, of British goods from Great Britain, through the United States, the British provinces in Canada, free of duty. The object is without doubt to benefit the carrying trade in American vessels, though it must also prove of great advantage to the Canada merchants, and enable them, unless their own communications undergo very great and extensive improvements, to receive their goods several weeks earlier than by the way of Quebec. It is to be feared that, in point of enterprise in regard such matters, our North American colonies will bear no sort of comparison with the people of the United States, who receive, however, and this is a material feature in the question, much more efficient support from their own government, all that relates to the improvement the internal communications, than can possibly be rendered to the Canadians by us. Still there is evidently much left undone which might be done for this purpose. Times.

**Liverpool Mercury – Friday 08 February 1839**

Pwllheli, 7th Feb Transit, Mayhew, from Savannah onshore at Portpatrick, twelve miles from hence with loss of masts: crew saved

**Lloyd's List - Monday 11 February 1839**

Pwllheli, 8th Feb. The Transit, Mayhew, from Savannah to Liverpool, was wrecked yesterday morning in Hell's Mouth, (Coast of Carmarthenshire); Crew and part of the materials saved.

**The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality 19th February 1839**

PWLLHELI.—During the fog about two o'clock in the morning of Thursday the 7th inst., the ship Transit of Boston, Mc, M p eu, master, laden with cotton from Savannah, for Liverpool, was stranded at Porthneighgwyl, and was soon after dis-masted. The crew were fortunately saved; but it is feared that the vessel will be a complete wreck.

PWLLHELI, Feb. 9.—Transit, from Savannah for Liverpool, (reported on Friday,) has been full of water the last two days. It is expected the vessel will break up, when the cargo will probably be secured as it washes on shore. The surf is too high to allow anyone to approach the wreck.

**Liverpool Standard and General Commercial Advertiser - Tuesday 02 April 1839**

AUCTIONS

WEDNESDAY.

On account of whom it may concern.

To-morrow, (Wednesday,) the 3d instant, at Twelve o'clock, at Hollinshead, Tetley, and Co.'s Office, Rumford-street,

About 70 Bales COTTON,

Saved from the wreck of the Transit, from Savannah, and which may be seen on the Quay, north end of Prince's Dock. —Apply to Messrs. COLLMANN and STOLTERFOHT, Merchants, or to HOLLINSHEAD, TETLEY, and Co., Brokers

**Liverpool Mail - Tuesday 09 April 1839**

AUCTIONS

THURSDAY

On account of whom it may concern.

On Thursday next, the 11th instant, at 12 o'clock at Hollinshead, Tetley, and Co.'s Office. Rumford-street,

About 110 Bales COTTON

Saved from the wreck of Transit, from Savannah, and which may be seen on the Quay, north end of Prince's Dock.—Apply to Messrs Collmann and Stolterfoht, Merchants. or to HOLLINSHEAD, TETLEY, and Co., Brokers.

**London Courier and Evening Gazette - Thursday 28 February 1839**

The Harriet. Rockwell, late Jewess, bound Boston, has put Into Tobermory leaky, and with loss of sails, &c,, the master, second mate, and four of the crew drowned, off Barra Head, in endeavouring to obtain assistance from the shore.

**Gore's Liverpool General Advertiser - Thursday 28 March 1839**

The ship Harriet Rockwell, which vessel sailed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> for Boston and put into Tobermory with the loss of the master, second mate, and four seamen. Is now ready for sea again, and will pursue her voyage under the command of Capt. Mayhew, late of the ship Transit of Boston, lost on the Welsh coast in January last. The second mate of the Harriet Rockwell, named C. W. Calvert, said to be native Hull; and Thomas Moore, seaman, is reported to have belonged to Liverpool. The other three seamen were Thos. Ball, John Higgins, and Wm. Benson.

Porth Neigwl, also known in English as "**Hell's Mouth**", is a broad bay, about 3 miles wide, on the south coast of the Llŷn Peninsula in North Wales. The bay faces south-west and lies between the headlands of Mynydd Rhiw to the west and Mynydd Cilan to the east.



Fig 1 Porth Neigwl

### **American Maritime Documents 1776-1860**

The basic format for a Certificate of Registry was established by an Act of 31 December 1792, which prescribed numerous regulations for American shipping. The document was issued throughout the customs districts, to any American owned and built vessel over 20 tons, employed in foreign trade. It contained the vessel name, as well as the names of the owners and master. A physical description of the vessel was also included, along with the name of the place where she was built. A new Registration and a Register Bond was required whenever the vessel was physically altered (re-rigged, new deck house, etc.), or when her ownership changed

## 7.0 Analysis

The Transit an American vessel did not appear in Lloyds Register and the American Bureau of shipping only started classifying vessels in 1870. The Navigation Acts in the current in the 1830's prohibited American vessels from carrying goods to or from the United Kingdom except from the USA. The Navigation acts were finally repealed in 1849 and 1852. They had been enacted from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to prevent Dutch vessels carrying goods from the then British colonies but continued with amendments until they were repealed. The newspaper report from Waterford Mail January 1836 seems to reflect an attempt to circumvent the Navigation acts by the United States congress.

The Transit only appeared in British newspapers when travelling to and from British ports so there a few records of her voyages. The American Newspapers on line are limited without payment for the 1830's so only a few reports available on line from that source. The details available from the archive of American Newspapers is unknown but is a further avenue for research.

The WNL provided some details of the loss of the Transit but most of the records of voyages came from the BNA except the voyages within the USA which came from newspapers held by the United States Library of Congress.

The Transit was engaged in carrying cotton from the USA to Liverpool and apparently sugar and Molasses from Havana to the USA. Searches for earlier periods failed to identify the vessel in the BNA or the newspapers at the Library of Congress. A Ship Transit, Latterman and Ship Transit, Latterman of Newport appeared for several years in the 1820's on voyages to and from Newport and Boston calling at Havana and Santander. There is no evidence this is the same vessel as the Transit subject of this research and no evidence to eliminate it. There were two other American vessels called Transit in the 1830's one that was a brig and the other a ship but was travelling to Africa at the same time Transit of Boston was travelling to the UK.

The story of the wrecking of the Transit is complete but little information is available before this date, and little further information is available on line in the USA without payment.

The description "ship" in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was shorthand for a fully rigged ship rather than other types of vessel such as a Brig, Brigantine, Bark, schooner etc.

## 8.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

I have spent about 30 hours on this research with about 95% spent on line. The name "Transit" is a word used commonly and a search without some other key word like "Winsor" produces hundreds of possible matches making checking each one unrealistic.

The Transit was wrecked on the shore and broken up by the action of the sea, with some bales of cotton washed ashore and recovered. So, there is not a wreck site to preserve or visit.

The US newspaper archive may have provided further details of the Transit but it is \$19.95 for a month, some details were found on an initial search but requires payment to view.

I found the Library of Congress web site which has some archived editions of American newspapers available on line free and was also able to update a previous wreck I had investigated from the newspapers it held. It also holds records for all American ships over 150 tons between 1846 and 1854, Boston merchant ships between 1851 and 1856 which may be of use to other researchers.

The details available on line for American vessels are limited for this time and the American Bureau of Shipping only operated from 1870, so unless a vessel joined Lloyds List which Transit's owners did not, there is no index available with details of the vessel, owners or master. I was unable to achieve most of my objectives due to this and American Newspapers requiring a subscription to view. I did however establish the date it was lost as 7<sup>th</sup> February 1839.

I have already mentioned another "Ship Transit" with the master Latterman which operated in the 1820's but I could not find any evidence this was the same vessel or any evidence to eliminate it. There was another vessel called Transit with a master called Martin but I found this was a brig and eliminated it. Another Ship Transit operated in the 1830's but was travelling to Africa from New York at the same time as Transit of Boston was travelling elsewhere so I eliminated it.

Unfortunately I was unable to find sufficient information concerning this vessel to publish any further than this report.

## 9.0 References

<https://www.loc.gov/>

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

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

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<https://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk/>

<https://research.mysticseaport.org/>

<https://www.navionics.com/>

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

<https://en.wikipedia.org/>

## Appendices:

### Appendix A – The Timeline for the *Transit*

1837

April 14 1837 Boston sailed *Transit*, Winsor for Havana

July 20 1837 Cuxhaven arrived *Transit*, Winsor (remainder of entry not visible)

October 26 1837 Boston arrived *Transit*, Winsor from Hambro

1838

January 8 1838 New Orleans arrived *Transit*, Winsor from Boston

February 28 1838 Boston arrived *Transit*, Winsor from New Orleans

March 9 1838 Boston cleared ship *transit* Winsor for New Orleans

April 17 1838 New Orleans arrived *Transit*, Winsor from Liverpool

May 31 1838 Spoken to *Transit*, Winsor from New Orleans for Liverpool lat. 42s  
. long. 47 40

June 16 1838 Liverpool arrived *Transit*, Winsor from New Orleans

July 19 1838 Liverpool cleared outwards *Transit*, Winsor for Boston

July 22 1838 Liverpool sailed *Transit*, Winsor for Boston

August 31 1838 Boston arrived *Transit*, Winsor from Liverpool

September 14 1838 Savannah arrived ship *Transit* from Boston

1839

January 4 1839 Savannah cleared *Transit*, Mayhew for Liverpool

February 7 1839 Hells Mouth wrecked *Transit*, Mayhew for Liverpool

