



Barmouth Sailors' Institute



(Founded in 1890 by the late Canon EDWARD HUGHES B.A.)

Sailors' Institute, The Quay, Barmouth, Gwynedd, LL42 1ET

Registered Charity No. 1057490

NEWSLETTER ISSUE TWENTY EIGHT

(Edited & Published by Trevor Roberts)

June 2022



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Reverend Tony Hodges

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Trevor Roberts.

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Chairman's Chat

It's pleasing to start by saying as the Covid pandemic moves away, some kind of normality is starting arrive back amongst ourselves.

The Covid restrictions have now all been lifted and our doors can remain open for everyone to come in and enjoy the surroundings.

Your committee have now returned back to monthly face to face meetings which allow networking amongst the committee, something which we seem to have lost for over 2 years.

Despite the fact that committee members have suffered the covid virus one way and another they have managed to ensure our institute has survived and is now looking spick and span and going forward.

Although as the Chairman I have all the praise, the Institute is run and controlled by the committee, a committee that has made a lot of personal sacrifices in time and hard work to ensure that both our local residents and visitors enjoy coming to the Sailors Institute.

But we move on and here we have our 28th Newsletter with articles I'm sure will be enjoyed by you our members.

Our Secretary has mentioned committee member Peter Thompson who passed away several months ago and I have included one of the articles Peter wrote for a newsletter 19 years ago.

Another article I'm sure many of you, especially those of you who remember Cadwaladr Williams (Wally) will enjoy the article I requested from his son Robert.

Our President the Rev Tony Hodges has moved on to pastures new in South Wales and hopefully by our next issue towards the end of the year we will be able to

introduce the new president. At the moment the institute constitution states that our president must be the senior leader of the local Church in Wales here in Barmouth.

The church trustees are now discussing a new Barmouth Church leader.

Thanks again to our committee for ensuring we continue to go from strength to strength, and in closing my thanks to all you members whose membership and interest ensures that the Barmouth Sailors Institute has been around for 132 years.

Trevor (Chairman)

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The advertisement features three images: a top-left photo of shelves stocked with various fabrics and sewing supplies; a bottom-left photo of several bottles of 'Abermaw' brand fabric dyes in various colors; and a right-side photo of the shop's window display, which is labeled 'Abermaw Quilting & Crafts' and shows more craft items. A small logo for 'Abermaw Quilting & Crafts' is positioned in the bottom right corner of the image area.

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SECRETARY MORSELS

'Procrastination is the thief of time' and so it is!! Due to a lack of things to say, I've left my words for our Editor until the eleventh hour. How not to earn brownie points!

The reason being, so little has happened since our last publication.

We had the sad passing of Mr. Les Darbyshire in February. He had been a very loyal supporter of the Institute for many years and he was 'my man to go to' when I needed any information on Barmouth history. When he was an active Committee member in the 1990s, he managed to get the Institute registered with the Charities Commission. A massive help to me when I was looking for our restoration grant monies. Being registered opens doors otherwise securely locked. Unfortunately, due to Covid restrictions, only a limited number of mourners were allowed in Capel. I was one of the lucky few because Les had requested I said a few

words at his funeral, something I felt very honoured to be able to do. With all of his connections, both in Barmouth and surrounding area, the Capel would have been full to bursting, overflowing outside. Thank you, Les, for your loyal support and help over the years.

Alas, we also lost another Committee member, Mr. Peter Thompson who was another person with a wonderful knowledge of historical Barmouth and local history. He was involved with CADW and was one of the instigators of the well-known Barmouth Heritage Trail. Thankfully he has documented so much for future generations. Once more, thank you Peter.

Since the building fully opened again to the public, life at the Institute has ticked over nicely. According to the Visitors Book, there has been a steady flow of visitors through the door. As I write, next week I am due to meet up with a member who lives in The Netherlands. It will be nice to put a face to the exchange of emails we have had over the years. Then, in June, I'm looking forward to meeting up again with two families I was able to help last summer regarding their relatives' maritime history and they subsequently became members. We've recently had a number of new applications for membership which is encouraging.

A few days ago, the producer of ITVs, 'Fishlock's Choice' series, spent a day in Barmouth filming the Institute, Tŷ Gwyn and Barmouth harbour area for an autumn showing. Thankfully the weather played ball and the sun shone. It was slightly overcast when they started in the morning but by 1600hrs, the sun was shining enhancing the view of the harbour at high tide and the estuary in the background. The rest of the week was not so good.

Filming is back in June with Channel Four's, 'Britain by Beach' series 2 with Anita Rani. The Institute and area

again will be featured. Fingers crossed for some more lovely weather.

On that note, until next time, I'll sign off and get these words over to Trevor, our Editor.

Janet Griffith Hon. Secretary

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Cadwaladr Williams

Cadwaladr was born on 14th November 1944 at Tawelfa, No 1 Kings Crescent, Barmouth. He was the son of Robert (Bob Tyddyn) and Sybil Williams and was one of a long line of Cadwaladr's that came from this area. Known locally as "Wally" as a shortened form of his forename, he was one of three children, the eldest being Pat and the youngest Jane.

He always had an affinity with the sea and travel. At the age of four he decided to take a bus to Dolgellau and during his childhood could always be found hanging around the quay. He befriended the ferry men and local fishermen and would often go to sea or up the Mawddach with them. He enjoyed all things to do with the sea and was a strong swimmer, a keen rower and skilled sailor often competing in competitions at the Yacht Club.

He attended Barmouth Grammar School before going to Ysgol Ardudwy. Then at the age of fourteen he got a grant and along with his parents backing went to HMS Conway, a prestigious naval school on Anglesey. The school was quite brutal by modern standards but Wally enjoyed his time there and honed his sea skills. He became a Cadet Captain and ran his own boat of cadets on the Menai Straits. He was very fit and was part of the rugby team and learned gymnastics. At one point he received some training from the Swedish Olympic Coach. He could do the rings and walked quite easily on his hands, sometimes along the decks of his ships.

In 1957 nine children were swept to sea from the beach and sadly five of them drowned. William Morris and George Berridge went out on their ferry boats to help and rescued four. Wally was waiting on the slip in his black oilskins, aged twelve, as they landed the casualties ashore. He was photographed walking up the slip with the ferrymen as they carried the stretchers and the image appeared on the cover of a National Newspaper. It is hard to imagine a child of that age being allowed to be anywhere near such an incident by today's standards.

On 3rd October 1959 Wally was on the beach with Mike Hunter when they witnessed a sailing boat capsize on the Bar Bach, throwing a couple in to the water. Wally, at the age of fourteen, immediately went in to the sea and swam out to the woman. Mike could not swim so waded out to his chin. Wally rescued the woman and swam her back to Mike who pulled her on to the shore. Wally then went back out and rescued the man bringing him safely to the shore as well. After the rescue he returned home to Tawelfa where his mother took one look at him in his soaking wet Sunday Best and accused him of messing about in the harbour and sent him to his room with a clip. Wally didn't say a word. A few days later a policeman turned up at the door and she asked "what's he done?" fearing the worst. The

policeman explained that he had saved two lives. Sybil said she always felt bad for punishing him when he came home in his wet clothes. In 1960 he received a Royal Humane Society Bravery Award for this action and it was presented to him at the HMS Conway.

In 1966 The Prince of Wales hit Penmaenpool bridge and sank with a large loss of life. The following day Wally was there in a rowing boat aiding Police Divers in the recovery of bodies. He also rescued a suicidal woman off the beach one evening by dragging her out of the water and was also involved, along with other locals, with trying to resuscitate some people who had been in a boat accident on the Fairbourne side of the channel.

In 1962 he had left HMS Conway and signed on as an apprentice with Shaw Savill Line. By 1965 he had qualified and was at sea as Fourth Mate on the Iberic. He spent most of his career sailing as 2nd or 3rd Officer on a variety of ships. He would go to the Pool in Liverpool and pick which ship he wanted to sign on to, depending on where it was going in the world. New Zealand was one of his favourites. In 1967 he joined the Yewbank in Hong Kong on a fateful voyage. Whilst in the Indian Ocean he fell 70ft from the top of a mast to the metal deck below, smashing his pelvis and leg. These injuries would blight his health through life but he was lucky to survive the fall. He was landed on Reunion Island, where he was cared for by French Missionary Nuns until he was well enough to be repatriated. He was then moved to Gobowen Hospital where he met Pam, a nurse that was working there. They became friends and stayed in touch after he was discharged, eventually dating a couple of years later before marrying and having two children. They always lived in Barmouth and their children still do.

After his initial recovery he went back to sea because medicals weren't so stringent at the time. He managed

to do this for a few more years until the process was tightened and he was made redundant.

He found work locally and ran the Sea Bar, a charter fishing boat, for John Hopcroft, as well as working for John Stockford transporting boats and running the Caroline, usually as a safety boat for works on Barmouth Bridge and Dyfi Bridge. He was onboard the Caroline as safety boat the last time the span on Barmouth Bridge was opened.

After the boat work dried up he laboured for a few local builders before taking a job in the Motor Transport section of RAE Llanbedr. This job took him to retirement.

Wally was also a Town Councillor for some years and often took satisfaction in helping local residents with their problems and issues. He was well known around Barmouth and remembered fondly for his stories after he passed away in 2020. He was described as a true Barmouth character.

Robert Cadwaladr Williams



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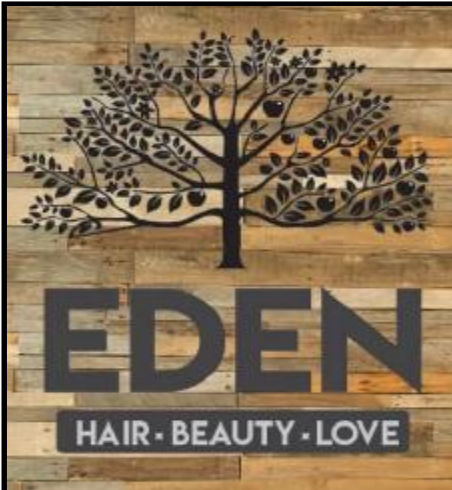


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Early Barmouth Maritime Trade

**An account of small ships and local men
1567 – 1615**

We are indebted to Lewis Lloyd for his work on maritime Merioneth and elsewhere of course and it was he that first really imprinted on our minds one of the earliest recorded extracts giving details about the town of Barmouth. While many are no doubt familiar with this it is worth repeating the entry for Barmouth from the Elizabethan 'Survey of Creeks & Havens' of 1565 ... *'Abermowe, being likewise a haven havinge no habitacion, but only foure howses, where of there owners Res ap Res, Harry ap Eden, Thomas ap Edward and John ap Howell goche. And there is neither shop nor vessel that belongeth to the same haven, but only tow small bootes that the said Res ap Res and Harry ap Eden do use to carry men over the Passage'*

Of course the main motivations for the survey were Elizabethan concerns with security and not merely with piracy – that's piracy against her own shipping, the exploits

of her own privateers were another matter! It was only seven years after she had come to the throne and Elizabeth was highly aware of the Catholic threat, both from within and from abroad. In this context Barmouth must have appeared a very sleepy backwater then and this tends to be confirmed by what trade she did enjoy during the remainder of Elizabeth's reign as far as we can tell. So what else do we know about the town's activities.

We should first realise that the above extract gives no real indication of habitation and dwellings within the vicinity. Abermowe was situated in the '*townshippe of Llanaber*' and many of the older farmhouses surrounding Barmouth were already in existence by the third quarter of the 16th century origin and has connections with Cors y Gedol, but Llwyn du, Plas Canol, Sylfaen, Plas-yn Egryn, Llwyn Lockus (Llwynwccws) and others all point to well established, substantial landholders who would take an interest in the port at Barmouth, such as it was, from the second half of the 16th century onwards. These men were making enough money to send their sons to Ruthin and Shrewsbury to school, to Cambridge and Oxford and to the Inns of Court. Robert ap Morgan of Plas Canol was Rector of Llanaber but was also said to have been a chaplain to Henry VIII. He built his home, according to some pedigrees, in 1561. Robert Edwards of Llwyndu, was recorded as a merchant taking consignment of goods from Le Angell de Bermo in April 1587. This is the first recorded vessel officially attributed to the port of Barmouth itself. In 1588, the year of the Armada, Robert Edwards along with others, was recording his pedigree with Lewis Dwnn's herald. So while Barmouth may only have had a few small boats and four houses, this snapshot is misleading and many who inhabited the surrounding environs were very much in touch with the world beyond Merioneth.

As far as maritime trade was concerned, sources indicate that herring fishing was the dominant activity in the mouth of the Mawddach and in Cardigan Bay. In 1554 the noted Lewis Owen of Dolgellau, was leasing land and the '*fissherie of Abermowe*' according to the entry in the Proceedings of the Court of Augmentations. This suggests Owen was taking advantage of some post dissolution opportunities afforded by

the breaking up the Cymer monastic lands.

To appreciate how important and abundant herring fishing was at this time we can look at the Survey's entry for nearby Aberdovey *'Dovey Haven ... havinge no habitacion only three houses ... and no resort(!) save only in tyme of fishynge at which tyme ... there is wonderful great resort of ffysshers assemble from all places within the realm with shippes, boottes & vessels ... during this tyme ... (one is) chosen amongst themselves ... be their Admirall'*

One can only wonder at the sight of our local waters thronged with fishing craft from all over the country with the Merioneth 'ports' so heavily involved.

(Havens & Creeks of Caerns. & Mer.1565 (State Papers Domestic Eliz vol38 no30)

The Welsh Port Books, edited by E. A. Lewis in 1929, reveal further information about early trade to Barmouth. The entries cover the period 1550 – 1603 and detail voyages to and from the port of Milford in Pembrokeshire. Between May 1567 and July 1603 there are 15 entries referring to Barmouth and all show the cargo coming into Barmouth as grain of various types – wheat, barley malt for brewing and another grain called pilcorn and some rye. As Lewis suggests, the sparsely populated Cardigan Bay region was probably poorly served with its own cereal production and much of the supplies came from the Severn area. In return, although the Milford records do not show details, fishing and timber provided much of the outward crops and this trade was to some extent accommodating national economic policy.

The vessels used were small coastal boats, usually around 6 – 10 tons burden, but the Le Angell of Bermo sailed at 18 tons in 1587 and she was still going in 1603 but with a reduced burden of 12 tons on two recorded voyages in that year.

As we move into the 17th century, it would be easy to imagine that Barmouth was not destined to increase its outward trade a great deal. Trade through ports like Beaumaris, which shipped well over 100,000 slates to

Ireland in 1586 alone, together with numerous loads of oak, would propel these local economics and swell the coffers of the local gentry in those areas, while inward loads to Beaumaris and Conwy around 1600 onwards begin to include wines, rugs, furniture and foreign spices & fruit to satisfy the increasingly sophisticated tastes of men like John Wynn of Plas Mawr in Conwy. Barmouth surely could not compete. Yet even on the Ardudwy coast there were calls for Barmouth and Aberdovey to employ a full time customs officer such as the increase in trade and a document of 1615 I found recently in the National

Library of Wales shows that demand for goods of a less utilitarian nature existed here too. Among the more usual goods of wheat, pilcorn & rye *'unladen and unburdened'* from a barge that came into Barmouth on this occasion, was also not immodest *'twenty tonnes of ffrenche wines'*. We can but reflect on where this was distributed to!

In later years the wool and slate trades would boost the activity in trade and shipbuilding immensely and is the maritime history we are more familiar with, perhaps, but even in these early years we can see how important and at times how busy, the coastal trade must have been and how important to the local economy. Quite obviously many of the trips have not been recorded and the picture is incomplete as there are other port books that may yet shed more light on Barmouth's early sea trade and further research is needed to allow us to fully appreciate the work of these mariners and the contribution they made to the local economy.

Peter Thompson



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The CHERISH Project and The Bronze Bell Wreck

CHERISH (Climate, Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands, and Headlands) is a 6-year European-funded Ireland -Wales project, bringing together four partners across two nations: the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, the Discovery Programme: Centre for Archaeology and Innovation Ireland, Aberystwyth University: Department of Geography and Earth Sciences and Geological Survey, Ireland. The project began in January 2017 and will run until June 2023. It will benefit from €4.9 million through the Ireland-Wales 2014-2020 Programme.

CHERISH is a truly cross-disciplinary project aimed at raising awareness and understanding of the past, present and near-future impacts of climate change, storminess, and extreme weather events on the rich cultural heritage of our sea and coast. We link land and sea and employ a variety of techniques and methods to study some of the most iconic coastal locations in Ireland and Wales.



One of these locations is the **Bronze Bell Wreck** on Sarn Badrig (St Patrick's Causeway)

This dive was carried out by MSDS Marine (<https://msdsmarine.com>).

Alison James of MSDS Marine wrote a blog of their activities and segments of it are reproduced here to give our readers an understanding of the work that was carried out in September last year.



Dive Diaries : Alison James – MSDS Marine

Alison writes:

Day 0 – Sunday 12th September

On Sunday the MSDS Marine team, accompanied by a film crew, travelled to Barmouth to meet one of the original team who found the site in the late 1970's. Geraint Jones was full of enthusiasm and knowledge about the site and was able to share his experiences with the team. He is very keen that his knowledge of the site is passed on to a new generation of divers ready to further understanding of the wreck. He shared his experiences on the site with us and was able to update the team with his observations of how the site changed over the twenty years he was diving the wreck site. He believes that the species seen on the site changed over time and he believes this is due to climate change and the ocean getting warmer.

We were shown around Barmouth Museum, in Ty Gwyn, by Alan Vincent and John Puddle, two of the volunteers who open the Museum to visitors. The Museum is not opening in 2021 due to Covid-19 but the team hope to be back open at Easter 2022. (Ed. The museum is currently open most afternoons, 1pm to 4pm) The Museum houses a fabulous collection of material from the wreck including the Bronze Bell that gave the wreck its name and many fascinating items from swivel guns to a tiny fly that came out of a concretion. Many of the finds were conserved by Geraint and their current condition is testament to his skill.

We were also joined by Ian Cundy of the Malvern Archaeological Diving Unit (MADU) who has been involved with the site for many years. The team visited the beach at Tal-y-Bont and were able to look out to the site which is only a few hundred metres from the shore. Ian then joined the MSDS Marine team at their accommodation in Pwllheli and spent the evening sharing his site knowledge and enthusing the team with the wreck.

By the end of the day the team had gained a much better understanding of the wreck site, and its history, and were keen to get out to dive the next day. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Geraint, Ian, Alan and John for their time and willingness to share their knowledge and experience.

Day 1 – Monday 13th September

The team met the diving support vessel, **SeeKat C**, at Hafan Pwllheli. Skipper Jon Shaw had brought the boat round from Amlwch the previous evening. The equipment was loaded onboard, and the team set off to site. The wreck is located over an hours ride from Pwllheli which is made longer due to the Sarn Badrig reef which requires a longer journey round it to avoid going aground.

The team have all managed to dive on the wreck to get an orientation and to start to understand the wreck as well as completing a number of tasks. The wreck is in 10m of water which is relatively shallow and allows the divers to spend up to 232 minutes on the bottom without the need for any decompression stops. The first dive team of Tom and Jess explored the whole site and started to take high quality video footage across the wreck that will be used in the outreach trailer this week as well as on school visits.

Jenny and Simon formed the second wave of divers and had been part of the team from Wessex Archaeology who surveyed the site in 2004. Their orientation dive enabled them to make observations about how the site has changed in the last seventeen years as well as to collect sea water samples for pH testing. The team will be taking many samples for testing this week as part of the work to collect baseline data to enable future researchers to monitor the

effects of climate change. The final dive saw Tom heading back into the water with Felix. Felix is an underwater photogrammetry expert and on the dive managed to gather footage of the marble blocks that form the cargo mound. This evening he will be starting to process the footage and the team will be sharing this over the next few days.

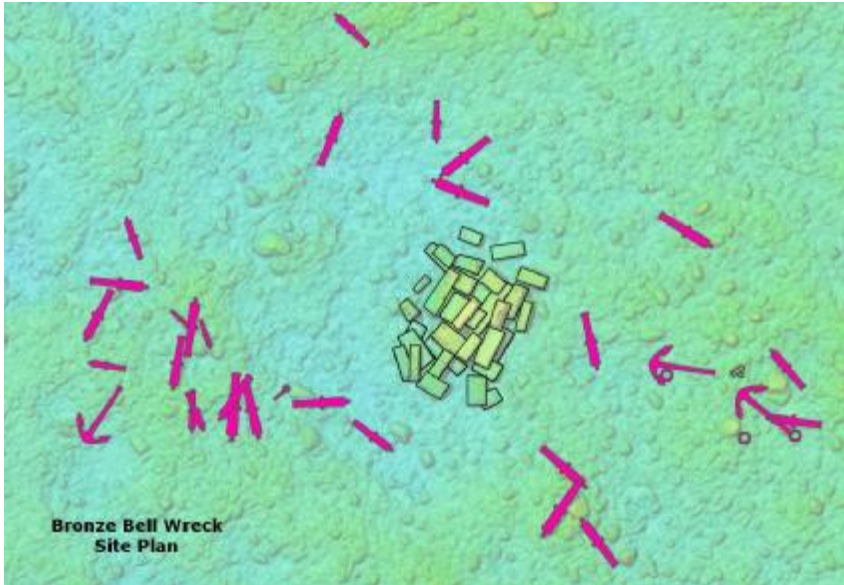
Evenings are a busy time on a dive project; cylinders need filling, paperwork needs completing, videos need editing, photogrammetry needs processing and tomorrow's jobs need planning. Stay posted for more from the team tomorrow as well as the first video diary.

Day 2 – Tuesday 14th September

Our second day diving the wreck saw glorious sunshine which was a nice change to the previous days rain and was a nice start for the team who had stayed up processing data into the early hours of the morning. The wind died down too from the previous day and three waves of divers achieved almost six hours underwater on the wreck. The shallow nature of the site allows divers to spend longer periods on the seabed than on deeper sites.

The first wave of divers saw Tom and Jess, a professional underwater camerawoman, start to take photographs at key points on the wreck, replicating those taken by Wessex Archaeology in 2004 as well as establishing new monitoring points. The second dive team of Simon and Felix continued the photogrammetry across the site. Having completed the cargo mound the previous day the team now focused on an area with multiple cannon and anchors present. The final dive team saw Tom and Jenny start to undertake a survey of marine flora and fauna that is present on the site, as well as collecting more pH samples. This baseline data will be important for monitoring the effects of climate change on the site in years to come.

As we prepared to lift our anchor the boat was surrounded by a swarm of barrel jellyfish ranging from tiny ones just a few centimetres across to huge ones over half a metre long.



Day 3 – Wednesday 15th September

The third day on the site started off very well with the chance to open up the MSDS Marine Heritage Hive trailer to the public to talk about our work on the wreck. The trailer has lots of activities for children to try as well as a TV showing our daily video diaries. It also acts as a shore-based information hub to bring our work underwater to a wider audience and to give people the chance to meet the team and ask questions.

Out on the wreck it was another fantastic day for weather but we had slightly worse conditions underwater with decreased visibility which meant our divers could only see shorter distances. Despite this we still managed six hours in the water! The first team to enter the water, Tom and Jess, completed the monitoring photos that will enable the condition of the wreck to be compared to the visit by Wessex Archaeology in 2004 as well as acting as a future baseline for further monitoring work. Our divers have spotted a number of monitoring tags from the 2004 survey around the site. Tom also completed a number of measurements of cannon on the site to help update the site plan and to refine its accuracy. Towards the end of his dive Tom spotted a plastic

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bag on the seabed that is evidence of marine plastic pollution on the site.

The second dive team completed two tasks; Felix completed the photogrammetry and Simon took pH samples and helped the surface team calibrate and check the diver tracking system. All the divers on the team are tracked using the Sonardyne Micro Ranger system. Mark, our diving supervisor, was able to direct Simon from the surface to aid Phoebe in her work on the GIS and tracking. Simon was tasked with swimming to a number of locations around the cargo mound to calibrate the system and to check the systems accuracy. We were really pleased to be able to show the system was operating with excellent accuracy.

The final wave of divers saw Jenny and Jess diving on the site to further our knowledge of the marine flora and fauna that are present across the wreck. This is an important study that will allow us to start to understand how climate change might affect the site in future. Species spotted include numerous tom pot blennies, cuckoo wrasse, various types of seaweed and a possible cup coral.

Day 4 – Thursday 16th September

Our fourth day on the wreck saw us joined by a team from Channel 4 news. They are interested in the work of CHERISH in relation to climate change and were keen to find out more about our work on the Bronze Bell wreck site. They interviewed members of the team and found out more about our work.

Felix continued his photogrammetry modelling across the wreck, capturing thousands of images in an area to the east of the site that we needed to complete the model. He was accompanied by professional underwater camerawoman Jessica Mitchell. Jess was tasked with capturing high quality footage of the survey in progress as well as with photographing the wreck itself. Felix will be doing the initial processing of the photogrammetry this evening but the final models will take a number of weeks to process once the team are back in the office with dedicated processing computers.

Tom, Simon and Jenny undertook detailed recording of the cannon to the west of the cargo mound. Understanding the exact dimensions of the cannon will enable the team to find out more about them, including helping us to understand their date and where they were made. Our diving protocols mean that only two divers can be in the water at any one time. Tom and Simon did the first dive and then Jenny and Simon did the final dive of the day.

Yet again we achieved six hours bottom time today. This may not seem like a lot but the logistics of a diving project mean that this is actually a really good achievement by the team. The weather is looking very unsettled tomorrow and we are unsure if we will be able to get back out to the wreck for our final day. This is incredibly frustrating for the team but we are confident we have achieved a significant amount in the four days we have spent on the wreck so far.

Day 5 – Friday 17th September

Our final day on the wreck was defeated by the weather! High winds meant we were unable to get the boat out of

Pwllheli marina to get to the site. The team had anticipated this yesterday but it is always still frustrating when you are unable to dive. Despite this set back the team have achieved all our priorities for the week and more! Over the coming weeks we will be able to share a photogrammetry model with the public so that more people can see how the wreck looks underwater.

The day was not a wasted one though as we had a busy programme of school visits and outreach planned. Some of the team visited a local primary school, Ysgol Gynradd Abererch, to talk about underwater archaeology and the work of CHERISH on the Bronze Bell wreck.

Other team members opened the MSDS Marine Heritage Hive trailer. The trailer is named the Heritage Hive after a comment from a member of the public that the team look like busy bees in their distinctive yellow and black t-shirts. We were able to talk to passing members of the public about our work this week and the work of CHERISH on other sites. We were delighted to talk to a diving club from Southport who visit the area regularly and we have encouraged them to apply for a licence to visit the wreck. Visits to the site from groups like this could be a helpful tool for future site management.

The final team members continued editing video footage into the final dive diaries and processing the photogrammetry. The photogrammetry processing can take weeks to complete. This week's dives have resulted in over 7,500 images that have been taken across the wreck. We have covered an area 46m x 30m – a substantial area of the site! Felix will be continuing the processing once he returns to his office next week.

*Alison James, MCIFA,
Heritage and Systems Manager
MSDS Marine*
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An Introduction to Barmouth (1909)

THE rugged brows of the old Cambrian hills frown sternly on the little town of Barmouth as it nestles at their base. Shielding it from danger on the western side rolls the wide expanse of ocean, known to men by the appellation of Cardigan Bay, with the sepulchred cities of Cantref Gwaelod lying many fathoms below. To the south, rearing its lofty head above the plain beneath, that, dotted with hamlets and little towns, is watered by many rushing brook, stands the hoary Cader range, the whole forming a perfect scene which can only be compared, for picturesque beauty and exquisite loveliness, to the charming scenery of the banks of the Rhine. Northwards stretch the Ardudwy Mountains, where in ancient times battle and grim death have wrought such heavy havoc, while in the dim distance over the sea are the faint blue outlines of the Cardigan Mountains.

Carved out of that hill which protects the town beneath from cold eastern winds, are narrow ledges, rising in successive tiers from the base nearly to the summit, with steep steps and winding paths leading from one ledge to another. Set on these ridges are the stone cottages of "Old Barmouth," which were erected and inhabited long before the modern buildings in the High Street below were ever contemplated. So quaint is the position of these dwellings that Pennant's and Roscoe's remarks, that the inhabitants may be seen quietly looking down their neighbours' chimneys, are literally true.

From this height can be seen below the angry ocean "dashing to foam its waters dun" while conspicuous above the crests of its waves, not very many feet from shore, is a little island called in Welsh "Ynys Brawd, which signifies "Friars' Island." It is formed by the River Mawddach, which, rising near Mount Morgan and meandering in true serpentine fashion among pleasant and luxuriant valleys, here divides itself into two heads and so pours itself into the vast ocean, that ultimate destination of every mountain stream.

For my readers who prefer to be more precise, I may inform them that Barmouth, standing on the northern side of the efflux of the River Mawddach, is in the Parish of Llanaber, in the Union of Dôlgelley, in the Hundred of Ardudwy, in the County of Merioneth of the Principality of Wales, and that it is 10½ miles distant (west by south) from Dôlgelley, the capital of the said County; and 222 miles distant (north-west-north) from London.

Reproduced from "History of Barmouth and Vicinity" by E. Rosalie Jones. Pub. 1909.

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