

# Shipwrecks in Pembrokeshire

## - The Great Storm of 1859



A SCENE OF THE WRECK OF THE "ROYAL CHARLES"  
ON THE 26th OF FEBRUARY 1859, NEAR PLYMOUTH.

By Shannan, Andrea, Abby and Jade

# The Great Storm of 1859

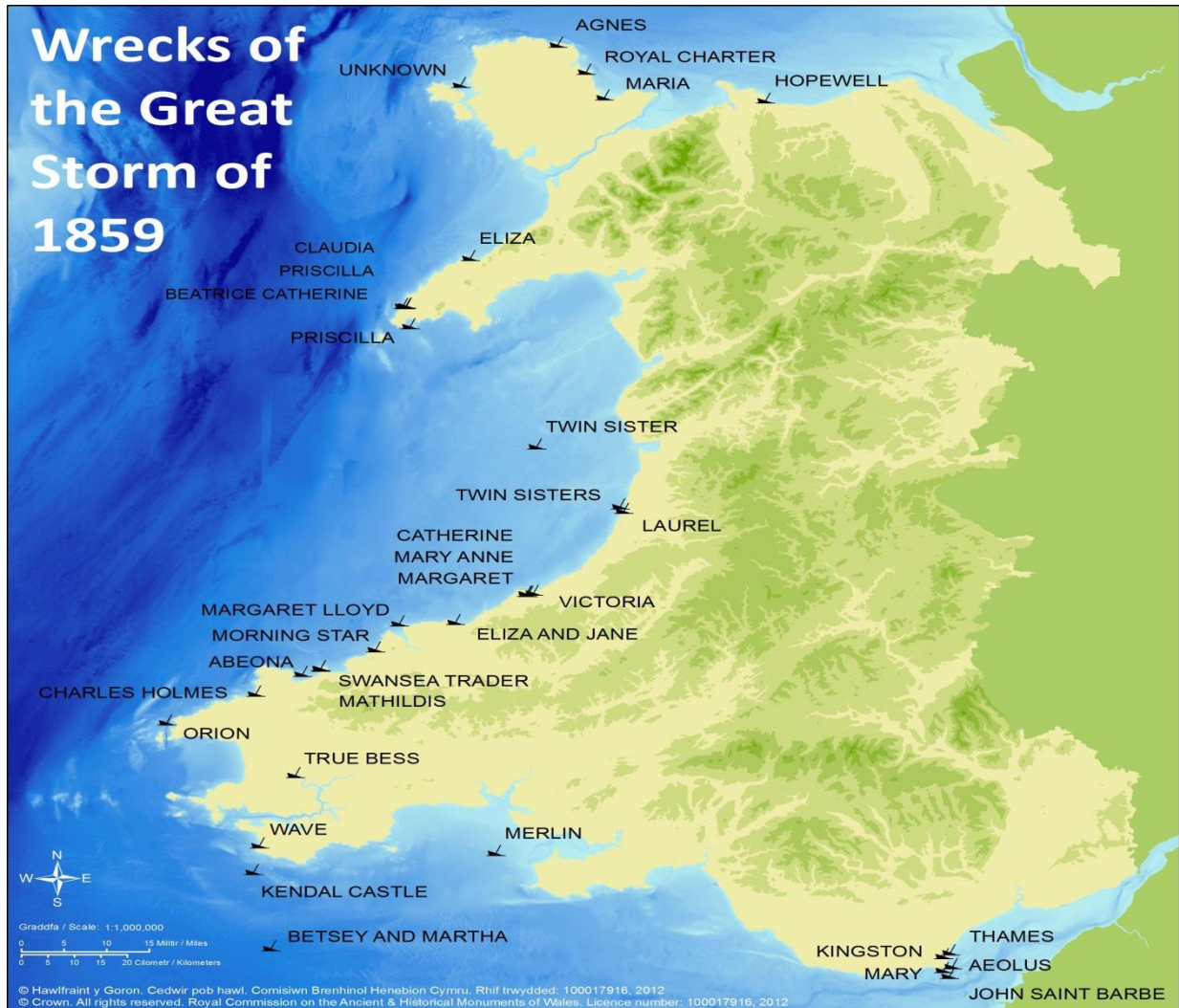
In October 1859 there occurred a storm that wreaked such havoc around the coasts of Britain that it is probably unique in British maritime history. On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October that year the weather, which had been moody for several days, took a turn for the worse. On the west coast it began raining heavily around 12 noon and the wind had picked up significantly by four o'clock. Those old, experienced sailors knew that there was worse to come and ships began putting into harbour wherever they could. In Cardiff even the pilot cutters ran for shelter and ships already in dock put out extra mooring lines. By the evening the wind had reached severe storm force and overnight it whipped up the seas into such fury it led to the loss of 133 ships around the coast of Britain with hundreds of others damaged. It also took the lives of more than 800 people. Lying in the path of the prevailing west wind, the West Country, Wales and Ireland usually took the brunt of storms and this night was no exception.

By far the greatest loss of life involved the steam clipper Royal Charter which was driven onto the rocks on a lee shore on the North West coast of Anglesey. She was at the end of her long voyage from Melbourne, and almost within sight of her destination at Liverpool when the tragedy happened. Despite the best efforts of the ship's company and of the local men on land, only twenty-eight people survived the shipwreck and 459 passengers and crew were lost. No women or children nor any of the ships officers survived.



Objects found in the Royal Charter Shipwreck 1859

# Wrecks of the Great Storm



There were many ship wrecks that happened in the Great Storm. The number of losses for the month of October rose from an average of 146 people to 343 people. In the former gale there were a total of 133 ship wrecks and 90 casualties resulting in serious damage, this includes the loss of 459 people in the Royal Charter.

In the map above the number of incidents around the Welsh coast, many were small vessels such as schooners and sloops which were mostly owned by consortiums drawn from coastal communities.



# Special Features

## CHARLES HOLMES

The CHARLES HOLMES was a full-rigged ship built at Rockland, Maine, in 1851. It became one of the shipping losses during the Royal Charter Gale

Captain Bowlby, was captain of the Charles Holmes

Owner of schooners at the time were:-

- ❖ William Llody Senior
  - ❖ William Llody Junior
  - ❖ Robert Richards
- }      Family
- Sail maker

On its last voyage, the CHARLES HOLMES was outward bound across the Atlantic again, from Liverpool to Mobile, with a general cargo consisting of coal, iron, tools, clothing, crockery and meat. It was blown ashore at Aberbach on 25 October 1859. Contemporary accounts suggest that it was de-masted at sea, became unmanageable and was capsized. The whole crew of 28 and a passenger were drowned.

There were 10 bodies that were recovered in Granston and 2 in Llanwnda in 1859 their burial ceremonies were performed by R. Daniel Vicar.

Charles Holmes shipwreck



## PEMBROKESHIRE.

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### PRELIMINARY NOTICE.

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*MR. LEVI JAMES*

Has been favoured with instructions to SELL BY AUCTION, early in October next, at ABERBACH, in the Parish of Granston, a quantity of goods saved from the wreck of the "Charles Holmes", for the benefit of all whom it may concern, consisting of a variety of articles, viz. :- complete sets of china, breakfast, tea and coffee services and dinner sets, tart and pudding dishes, chamber ware, &c; &c., some hundreds of frying Pans together with a variety of hard ware, (brass and steel), fire irons, boxes of carpenters' tools, brass and iron chains, tons of rigging &., &c.

N.B. Particulars will appear in a future hand bill. September 10th, 1860.

*(Pembrokeshire Herald and General Advertiser 11 May 186)*

Even after the initial events surrounding the wreck, such as the burial of the crew, interest in the wreck continued. The physical remains of the CHARLES HOLMES continued to play a part in local interest. The Pembrokeshire Herald and General Advertiser reported in December 1859 the arrival of a person from Falmouth in Aberbach to inspect the spot where the vessel was lost with the purpose of placing divers. The Pembrokeshire Herald continues the report in May 1860, writing that a party of divers have successfully raised parts of the wreck, including 50 tons of iron, mostly rods

According to the advert, the auctioneer would offer for sale a variety of articles, including a complete set of china, breakfast tea and coffee services, dinner sets and a variety of hardware, such as boxes of carpenters tools, brass and iron chains and rigging.

***This booklet covers various topics including The Great Storm of 1859, The story of the Shipwrecks and a special feature on the Charles Holmes.***

The Great Storm of 1859, sometimes known as the Royal Charter gale, was one of the most powerful ever to have pounded the Welsh coast. Many ships were wrecked and coastal settlements were battered by the winds and rain, resulting in many casualties and deaths.

The story of the Shipwrecks explores some of the many vessels which were driven ashore or wrecked during the hurricane of 25-26 October 1859.

On its last fateful voyage, the Charles Holmes, a full-rigged ship, was leaving from Liverpool and heading to America with a cargo of iron, tools and crockery. Blown ashore at Aberbach, Pembrokeshire, during the Great Storm of 1859, the crew of 28 were lost.



Created by

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**Acknowledgements:**

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