

Pencaer Master Mariners

Pencaer has a long maritime tradition, and researchers have worked hard in uncovering the stories of some of the individuals.

Special acknowledgement should go specifically to Hugh Jenkins of Goodwick, Pembrokeshire, and Mrs Mary Gray of Boon, North Carolina, USA.

These stories are presented in chronological order.

Henry Llewelin (1812 – 1870)

Born in Goodwick in 1812 into a seafaring family, Henry Llewelin was the third son of James Llewelin (born 1774), who was Master of the Schooner *Hope* of Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire.

In 1843, Henry Llewelin married Elizabeth Vaughan, daughter of Levi Vaughan (1785-1871), a prominent merchant of Fishguard. Levi Vaughan is buried in St Marys Church, Fishguard.

Together with Captain William Davies of Hubberston, Milford Haven, who married Henry Llewelin's eldest sister Ann, the Vaughan and Llewelin families were responsible for the investment to build the vessel *Gwaun Maid* at Fishguard in 1846. She was registered at Cardigan on 21st November 1846.

Gwaun Maid was sailed from Milford, around Wales, Channel ports, Gibraltar, the Mediterranean, the west coast of Africa, the Baltic and Scandinavia, with a crew of eight. Levi Vaughan was a timber merchant, and so the Baltic trade was no doubt of great importance.

In 1870, on return home from Gibraltar, Llewelin was taken ill and the ship returned to Gibraltar, where he died and is buried. William Davies (son of Captain William Davis, the other investor in the ship), went out to Gibraltar and brought *Gwaun Maid* back to Dover. The ship was sold to Irish owners and by 1892 ceased sailing.

Henry's wife Elizabeth lived until 1901, and is buried in the family grave in Llanwnda churchyard, where a memorial to Henry is recorded.

Thomas Roberts (c1829 – 1869)

Thomas Roberts was born around 1829 on Pencaer. He progressed from a young seaman to Master Mariner and Captain of the *Pathfinder*, built 1858 in Waterford, Ireland.

Roberts worked for the Bath family of Swansea who were involved in trading copper ore with South America. The ship was named after The Pathfinder story written by Fennimore Cooper, and featured a carved figurehead on the bow, correct to small details of leggings, cap and moccasin with a rifle in his right hand. Roberts is known to have sailed the ship out from Swansea to the coast of Chile, returning with copper ore for at least ten years.

He married Elizabeth Bowen (born 1832), daughter of the Reverend William Clement Bowen and Sarah Ann Bowen. Thomas and Elizabeth themselves became parents to 3 children. Their eldest, Mary Serena, was born on board *Lord Ogilby*, when on homeward passage from Chile on 31st July 1858, latitude 16° North, longitude 28° West. Two sons followed, Gwynne Austen Roberts born 7th October 1861, who became manager of Midland Bank Fishguard, and Stanley, born 1869, who was for 30 years Professor of History at Aberystwyth University until his retirement in 1935.

In 1864 homeward bound for Swansea, Roberts encountered a sinking Union American Ship, the Frank Pierce. He rescued all aboard and returned to the Falkland Isles to land the passengers and obtain more stores.

This event had two results: The first unfavourable, because the ship owners blamed him for not returning on time and claimed damages from him. The second was much more favourable, because his action of saving the American crew and passengers resulted in the award of an inscribed gold watch from President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln. The inscription reads "The President of the USA to Capt. Thos. Roberts for the rescue of the crew of the American ship Frank Pierce in 1864".

Sadly, on 28th February 1869 off the coast of Chile an accident resulted in the loss overboard of an apprentice seaman and Capt. Roberts.

The crew brought the ship safely back to Swansea and in spite of the ship owners efforts returned the Captains personal possessions to Mrs Roberts, including the watch inscribed by Lincoln. These items remain family possessions to-day. Thomas Roberts' wife and daughter are buried in St Nicholas Church cemetery.

Transcription from the letter from Captain Thomas Roberts, dated June 1864.

*His Excellency Captain James George Mackenzie, Governor and
Commander in Chief of the Falkland Islands and the Dependencies thereof.*

Port Stanley

Falkland Islands

June 1864

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit for your Excellency's information, a detailed account from my Log Book of the circumstances relative to the wreck of the American Ship, Frank Pierce, and the rescuing of the Crew.

On June 5th, I was in the Latitude of 55.30 deg. South, Longitude 64 deg. West, I discerned a vessel bearing South, the appearance of which led me to suppose that she was in a state of utter distress; seeing this, I tacked ship, and bent up toward her. At 4 pm was alongside and found my suppositions verified. I hove the main top sail to the mast under her side. A boat came off from the wreck and asked if I would take them off on board my vessel, as the vessel was a complete wreck. The ship then being on her beam under, and all the masts gone, I told them to come on board as soon as they could, as it was going to blow at this time. They had two boats of their own. The second time the boat came off they brought the master's wife and one boy. I told them again to hasten as much as possible as the wind was increasing. Having tacked and come alongside and seeing no sign of boats, I hailed; they answered with saying that both boats were smashed under the bulwarks. By this time the gale had considerably increased insomuch that I was unable to get my boat out. I again hailed and told them to do all they could to lighten the ship, and would wait by them, as the night came on, the gale increased with a very heavy sea.

Monday 6th, still blowing a heavy gale from the S.W. Kept close to ship as near as the gale would allow me. My ship being heavily laden and the sea washing over her and crew nearly exhausted. I ran by the wreck and asked if they were all right, and could hold out a little longer; they replied 'yes', as the

ship was then settling a little, and the men were employed in throwing coals overboard and pumping.

Tuesday June 7th at 10 a.m., I passed close to, the wind being a little more moderate, but a heavy sea running. I again hailed them and asked if all was right; they again replied 'yes'. I then told them that by the afternoon the storm would abate and allow them to get on board my ship from the wreck; they still having a third boat on deck which had been stoved by, the foremast going overboard. I hailed them and bid them repair the boat as well as possible by nailing canvases around the bottom stern, in case my own should get stove by getting her out. At 12 o'clock at noon weather then moderate. Kept close to the wreck and was preparing to put out the boat and they on the wreck were preparing their boat to launch. I waited to see if they would be able to launch their boat safe first as the ship was completely on her beam ends, and was very difficult to launch into the sea even after being temporarily repaired. At 2 pm they succeeded in launching her safely and all came on board my vessel in two or three journeys from wreck to ship. They were unable to save anything from the wreck and had the greatest difficulty to get into the boat themselves on account of the position of the wreck and heavy sea. As soon as all was on board which was about 4 p.m. the wreck having drifted from Sunday to Lat. 54 and Long. 57 W. I let their boat go and proceeded with the captain, Officers and Crew to the Falkland Islands. Some of the crew were dissatisfied, others worn out, and one killed or drowned when the boats were smashed.

June 13th arrived at Port Stanley and immediately had an interview with the Consul of the United States of America to whom I related all the circumstances of the catastrophe, and in whose charge the Captain, Officers and Crew are all left. The ship being a merchant vessel of the United States called the 'Frank Pierce' of New Hampshire, of (Portsmouth). The Captain, Officers and Crew consisted of 23, and Mate's wife, saved in all 23 souls.

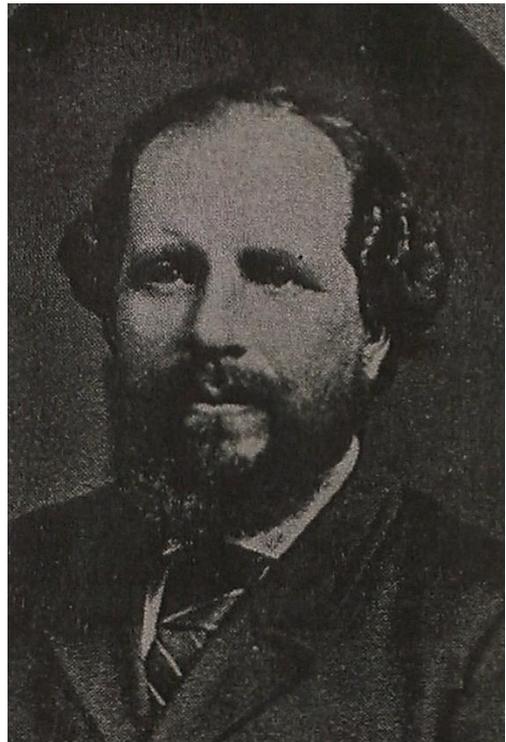
I have the honour to be Sir, your very obedient servant

Thomas Roberts, Master of the Barque 'Charles Lambert'

James Llewelin Lewis (1839 – 1880)

James Llewelin Lewis was born in Goodwick in 1839 into a seafaring family. His grandfather, James Llewelin, along with three of his grandfather's sons were all master mariners.

One son Henry Llewelin was Master of *Gwaun Maid* built in Fishguard in 1846, weighing 250 tons she was the last ship built in Fishguard. In 1851, James LI Lewis was apprenticed to Henry Llewelin, although by 1861, he was in command of his own sailing cutter in Port Caroline, South Australia. Henry Llewelin died in Gibraltar in 1870. *Gwaun Maid* was sailed home and sold to Irish owners.



It is believed that James LI Lewis arrived in Australia about 1857 and at first sailed out of Melbourne.

In 1865, Lewis married Annie Crafer from Brighton, South Australia. The couple lived in Adelaide and had 6 sons. In 1879, he bought the sailing ketch *Prima Donna*. She was built in Tasmania in 1870, 50 tons, 69ft long, 18ft beam, and depth of 5.5ft.

In August 1880, a cargo of potatoes was loaded at Port MacDonnell bound for Adelaide. During this voyage, *Prima Donna* was lost at sea with no survivors.

This left Annie Lewis with 6 sons, a mortgage for the lost *Prima Donna* and no means of support. The local community raised £516 to support the family and enable a new start in to their lives to begin.

The Lewis sons became mariners, shipping agents, and hoteliers, and family descendants remain in Australia and New Zealand today.

Benjamin Williams (1839 – 1884)

Benjamin Williams was born at Goodwick Bridge on 10th October 1839. By 1855 he was an Able Seaman joining *Merlin* at Milford that year. After 9 years he was First Mate and a further 5 years a Master Mariner.

In 1869 he married Mary Jane Lewis, a niece of Captain Henry Llewelin, owner of *Gwaun Maid*, the last ship built at Fishguard. Captain Williams worked for the firm W J Myers and Co. on various ships: *Andes*, *Swordfish*, *Cormorant*, *Cape Clear* and *Pizarro*. Voyages were to USA and Australia. In 1881, he took command of *Pizarro*, a vessel built in Belfast by Harland and Wolff in 1876.



In 1881, Captain William and *Pizarro* sailed from London on May 8th and in 85 days on August 7th arrived at Dunedin, New Zealand.

In December 1882 he left Sydney as shown in his letter to Mary Jane.

While off the coast of Queensland on 1st April 1884, *Pizarro* was wrecked with no survivors. His widow Mary Jane wrote these words.

“We cannot weep beside his grave, He lies in the secret sea, and not one gentle whispering wave will tell the place to me, But though unseen by mortal eyes, The place we know it not, His father knoweth where he lies, And angels guard the spot.”

William Bewan (1845 – 1913)

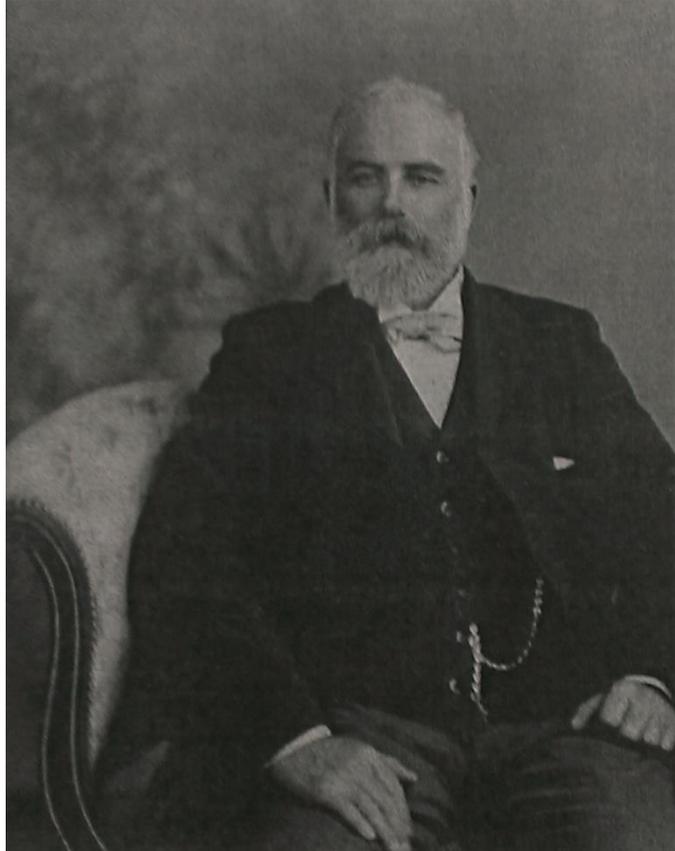
William Bewan was born in 1845 at Llanwnda, Pencaer, and buried in Hamony Chapel Cemetery. The 1851 census records the family at Crincoed or Carcoed Llanwnda, with William the youngest of 3 children.

In 1881 the census records William as Mariner (Chief Officer), living at Chapel House.

In 1896 he is known to have married Mary Jane Williams, widow of Benjamin Williams, Master of *Pizarro*, who drowned off Queensland in 1884.

From 1879 to 1900 he held positions either as Mate or Master of various ships. For 4 years, 1896 to 1900, he is listed as Master of *Ben Cruachan*, a long distance sailing clipper trading across the Atlantic, 255 ft long and weighing 1486 tons.

His wife Mary Jane died in 1909 and William in 1913.



Ivor Acraman (1868 – 1917)

Captain Acraman and his wife are buried in St Nicholas Church yard. He had a long sea-going career rising from apprentice to Master of steam ships under the Manchester Liners for 7 years, and from 1909 as Assistant Dock Master and Canal Superintendent of Manchester Ship Canal Company.

Among the ships he commanded were *S.S. Manchester Port*, *S.S. Manchester Engineer* and *S.S. Manchester City*.

He died in October 1917.

The Charles Holmes

The Charles Holmes was an American-built ship, launched in 1851. The vessel was lost in 1859 with all hands off Aberbach beach

Among the graves in Granston cemetery is that of Captain Master of the Charles Holmes.

Further reading

<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/273346/details/charles-holmes>