

SOME NOTES ON SHIPPING AT DEVORAN

The Redruth & Chasewater Railway, based at Devoran, began operating in 1826 and brought copper ore, etc. from the Gwennap mines down to the creekside, as well as taking coal and timber back up to them.

The main shipping trade was with S. Wales, which provided the coal in addition to smelting the ore. Although the journey was around Lands End and therefore much longer than the route from the North Cornish ports, the latter were so difficult for the ships to use and were stormbound for long winter periods. The Railway Company merely provided the rail track, the horses (later engines) and the wharfage - charging for the quantities carried - so there was plenty of scope for commercially minded men to engage in other aspects of trade, notably shipping.

R.M. Sampson lived at Park View, now Killigarth, and had interests in coal, tin and copper. William Tregoning invested in land, mines and railways and Henry Williams of Truro had major connections with smelting. They all needed little temptation to invest in shipping as well. Richard Michell, living at Belmont, and his brother-in-law Sampson were also active in the management of ships (as distinct from owning). The following information is compiled from records held by Carnon Downs Old Cornwall Society and mainly supplied by Mr. P.N. Tregoning who researched his family's history of their partnership with the above.

Many Devoran residents owned shares in ships, always in 64ths as today, which records show that they bought and sold quite frequently. In the main they were sailing ships, schooners and ketches, which traded between Devoran and S. Wales although

although some established trade links wherever they could, from Portugal to the Baltic. Many had been built locally - at Pill or Point Yard and a few at Devoran. Lists are shown of these. In 1830 some 20 of these vessels left Devoran each week. In 1847 the Railway Company provided a steam tug to tow them in and out of the creek but not 'til 1851 is the first cargo steam ship said to have come to the Port.

The crews of these schooners were usually 5 or 6 in number, mostly under 30 years of age but some as young as 13. The voyage to S. Wales averaged 3 to 5 days and the Devoran crews were away from their families for roughly 16 days at a time. Some Devoran-based Captains included Tom Mitchell ("William Henry"), William Mitchell ("Morfa Mawr", later "Kate"), W. Donald ("Marianne"), Hugh Rowe ("Mary Hannah") and Nicholas Olive ("Tremenheere") whilst A. Richards and David Owens skippered "Marianne" and "William Henry" respectively.

In 1866, records show, a mate could be paid £5 a month, senior crew members £3.10 and a boy £1.10. This pay was said to be better than that available for as risky, but less healthy, work in the mines.

Shipwreck was not uncommon. In 1866 the "Marianne" narrowly avoided becoming a total wreck but had to have major repairs; in 1867 the "Morfa Mawr" was run down off Fowey and in 1869 the "Mary Simmons" went down following a collision in Whitsand Bay. The "Tremenheere" foundered on New Years Day 1875 with all hands, as did "Marianne" in 1889. One well documented and most interesting wreck occurred on the night of the 11th. August, 1852 when a small Devoran schooner, managed by Michell, was sailing up the North Cornish coast, bound for Swansea with its usual cargo of copper ore. There was a strong north-easterly gale and she got into such severe trouble off Tintagel that her master, Captain Harris, decided to abandon ship. A pilot

cutter took off Harris, his crew, and a passenger, but for some reason two dogs could not be saved, and had to be left in the cabin. The ship did not sink immediately but was carried up the coast past Boscastle, Cambeak, Dizzard and Bude Bay, eventually crashing onto the rocks below Morwenstow. It goes without saying that the famous Parson Hawker was soon on the scene. Climbing aboard, he forced open the cabin door. The dogs, who had spent a terrifying night, were delighted to see him. By now a group of villagers had also climbed down the cliffs and were standing near the ship, appraising what might be useful. Hawker, a man of considerable presence, was well able to take care of this situation. He addressed them firmly, making it very clear that, if any plunder was done, he would see that the offenders would end up in Bodmin Gaol.

Some hours later Captain Harris arrived from Padstow, where the pilot cutter had landed him. When he looked down on his once-beautiful ship, now lying torn and lifeless on the rocks, he broke down, overcome with grief.

Later, a track was cut down the cliffs and the business of salvage was started. The cargo of copper was carried up in panniers by donkeys. Hawker used his influence to see that these were properly treated, and put up the owners' agent, who was supervising the work, at his Vicarage. After 2 or 3 months the job was finished. The agent presented Hawker with a memento sent by the owners, a collection of mineral specimens from the Cornish mines, mounted in a glass-topped mahogany box. The agent then asked if there was not something more substantial which the owners could do to repay him for all his kindness. Mindful of Captain Harris' grief at the loss of his ship, Hawker then asked if he could be given command of

another vessel. The agent at first demurred, explaining that the owners could hardly remove another Captain from his ship to make way for Harris. "Never mind", said Hawker, "this is the only thing I have asked of you, and this is refused me".

However, in a few days the owners sent word to Hawker that they would solve the problem by building a new ship at once, and Captain Harris would have command. The ship would be named "Morwenna" after the Saint who had originally established a cell at Morwenstow, and to whom the Church was dedicated. So, a year later, Lloyds Register listed the schooner "Morwenna", 51 tons, built at *Point* in 1853, managed by Michell, and commanded by T. Harris.

A grim and dramatically described wreck was of the "J.S.T." on 18th. November, 1864. Sir George Stucley of Hartland Abbey, N.Devon, wrote to the Receiver of Wrecks:- "Colonel Stucley and I witnessed a scene yesterday which I shall never forget. A fine tops'l schooner, at about 11.30 am on Friday, was off Hartland Quay under close-reefed mains'l and reefed inner jib. The sea was very heavy, the wind blowing in strong gusts. We rode onto Hartland Point, feeling anxious about her. About 12.12 pm a tremendous sea burst with a foaming crest over her, and I expected to see her come up in the wind, supposing no man or thing could remain on deck; but she held on her course, and there must have been some living hand to guide her. She shipped two or three seas, holding on until about 12.30 pm when in Hartland Race, about two miles from the shore, she fell over on her beam ends, and in one moment all had vanished....." Captain Mitchell had sailed from Llanelly with a crew of six and 200 tons of coal for Bremen. "He was a brave fellow" wrote R.M. Sampson "and there is complete gloom all over the place".

From 1870 trade was sharply reduced and by 1879 the Railway Company was in Receivership although it continued in operation until 1915. The gradual takeover of sail by steamships went on from mid century and the latter were a regular sight in the creek in the first decade of this century, especially the two steamers, both locally owned, the "Erimus" and "Trefusis", as well as smaller ships such as the "Danesgate" and "Friargate". The schooners continued in business, but constantly declining in numbers until the First World War, and a few until the second. The "William Henry" was eventually lost off Anglesey in 1915 and the "Alice Williams", locally owned but not based in Devoran, struck a rock off Milford Haven in 1928. Her crew abandoned ship, but she drifted on, sails still set, until she struck the island of Skokholm in the Bristol Channel. There Ronald Lockley, tenant of the island, bought her from the underwriters for £5. Her timber and fittings found many uses ; - her cargo of coal kept him warm for many months, one of her topmasts was mounted as a flagpole, and her figurehead was bolted to the cliff above the landing place. This figurehead, continuously painted, was still there some years ago, and may still be. If so, it is the one surviving relic of the schooners managed by Williams, Sampson and Michell.

Devoran saw no commercial maritime trade, apart from local barge traffic, from 1916. The channels silted up quickly and the quay buildings fell into disrepair, although a few were used as coal stores between the Wars.

Anyone wishing to see Mr. Tregoning's original notes and lists of ships and individual owners can do so on application to:- Mrs. J. Irwin (Tel. 863015).

SOME EXAMPLES OF LOCAL SHIPBUILDING

AT POINT (YARD)

<u>Builder</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Ship's name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Tonnage</u>
Ferris, Thos.	1851	Clipper	Schooner	114
"	1853	Morwenna	"	51
"	1854	William Henry	"	102
"	1855	Jane & Catherine	"	99
"	1856	Symmetry	Cutter	30
Ferris, Peter	1819	William Thomas	Barge	37
"	1834	Amelia	Smack	49
"	1855	Ariel	Schooner	24
"	1858	J.S.T.	"	127
"	1862	Deerfoot	"	129
Martin, Wm. Sara	1861	Cordelia Williams	"	76
Stephens, John	1859	Primus	"	59
"	1865	Kate	Sloop	19
"	1868	Rhoda Mary	Schooner	130
"	1869	North Star	Steam Tug	29
"	1870	Nelly	Schooner	105
"	1871	J.W.T.	"	75
"	1875	Bessie	"	116
"	1875	Gleaner	Smack	42
"	1877	Hetty	Schooner	100

AT DEVORAN

?	1869	Enterprise	Smack	53
?	1870	Annie	Sloop	15
?	1875	Mary	Smack	25

AT PILL

Ford, John and	}	1875	Reaper	Schooner	94
Hitchins, James		1877	J.W.T.	"	100
		1879	Lizzie Edith	"	90

The above records appear to cover the early years only as there were at least two more major local shipbuilders towards the end of the century: William (foreman) Ferris who built at Yard and Hugh Eddy Stephens who built at Narabo Quay (in the inlet between what is now known as Devoran Quay and the long timber pond), eg. He built the "Mary and Julia", 148 tons, here in 1878.

FAMILIES WITH LARGE INVESTMENTS IN SHIPPING

Brown, W.M. & Philip J. Devoran	Shares in 9 ships	(1854-69)
Chellew, Wm.	Shares in 10 ships	(1856-90)
Cock, James, Wm, & W.R. Feöck	Shares in 7 ships	(1834-1928)
Hodge, Wm. & Wm. Fredk..Devoran	Shares in 8 ships	(1846-72)
Mitchell, Thos., Rchd. & Rbt. "	Shares in 19 ships	(1847-1906)
Michell, Sampson, Tregoning & Co.	Shares in 9 ships	(1851-74)
Stephens family (shipbuilders)	Shares in 20 ships	(1839-89)
Whitburn, Harris & James	Shares in 7 ships	(1840-91)