



Pwllheli Area and the Sea

For centuries, Pwllheli and the sea had a relationship of using each other, from the time of the small township established at the edge of the Gors marsh up to these days. There was a pool of seawater near the township that gave us the name Pwllheli (pool + brine). About half a mile out to sea there was an island, Carreg yr Imbyll (Gimlet Rock), at that time much bigger than it is now. Sand dunes gradually grew, the Dwnan, with a gap in the dunes where the rivers Penrhos, Rhyd Hir and Erch flowed through into the sea.

At high tide fishermen could sail out to the open sea. Although the community was self-sufficient to all intents and purposes, ships 'from far away' would call in, bringing goods. Llŷn ac Eifonydd people used the opportunity to export produce, and so Pwllheli developed. The residents gained a reputation for welcoming smugglers, and there are reports of people selling cheese and butter to them 'yn afon Porthelly' in 1626.

There was growing demand for transport, and in the past it was much more convenient to do that by sea than land. In the mid C18th and earlier the shipbuilding trade grew

around the town. That happened where the Traeth area is now. This industry developed and over 400 ships were built in the boatyards.

Pwllheli was an important herring fishing port but when fish were scarce in other places other fishermen would come into the bay, men from the Isle of Man and the 'Hoilacs'.

In the early C19th land was gained from the sea with the building of cobs that gave Pwllheli its present shape and greatly extended it. Houses were then built on this land. The harbour was built in the early C20th but it was not successful as a harbour. Interest in sailing grew and Pwllheli became one of the main centres.

In 1993 the marina at Glan y Don peninsula was built, and this is the location of the Welsh National Sailing Academy. By now the lifeboat mainly rescues people from pleasure boats.

It's possible there will be a threat from the sea due to global warming, and a study is happening in Pwllheli on how to prepare for this – one of only three in Wales. If the sea level rose and nothing had been done to prepare for it, a large part of Pwllheli would be underwater and the town would return to being the same size as it was centuries ago.



Trade in Llŷn



There was a demand for cattle from Llŷn and the drovers would take them long distances to the big markets, following the drovers' routes. Animals from Llŷn would be gathered together in Sarn Mellteyrn, Botwnnog, or Llanengan and Llangian, and walked through Rhydyclafdy and Efailnewydd to Y Ffôr, avoiding crossing the marshland at Pwllheli. They would meet others coming from the direction of Nefyn. Cattle would be shod in Efailnewydd to help them walk on the harder roads.

It was often much more convenient to travel by sea. The residents of Enlli / Bardsey would often be more familiar with the city of Liverpool than some nearby areas in Llŷn. There is mention of a girl from Uwchmynydd who would go around the area collecting eggs and take them on a sloop from Aberdaron to sell in Liverpool.

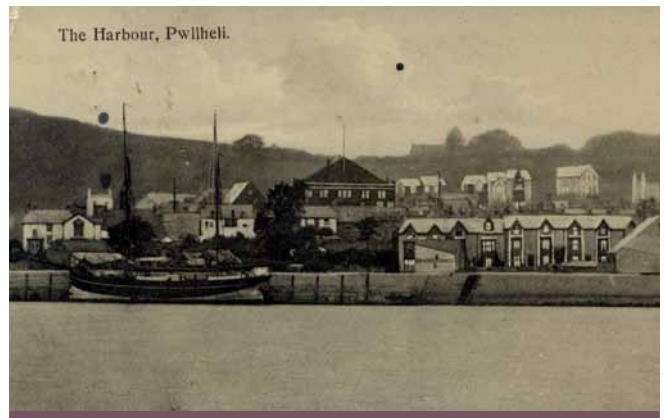
Travelling on land was very difficult before the turnpike roads were built, from Porthdinllaen to Boduan and the branch towards Pwllheli and Porthmadog, in the early C19th. The turnpike road from Llanbedrog to Pwllheli was built in 1824.

In Llŷn, there would only be footpaths and tracks for donkey carts, but there wasn't much need to wander far because there were fairs in Aberdaron, Sarn, Nefyn and Pwllheli. At the fairs, farm produce would be sold, farmhands and maids would be hired, and stalls selling crockery and sweets would be popular.

The biggest trading ships would come to the port of Pwllheli which was the main port on the southern coast of Llŷn. Porthdinllaen harbour developed on the north coast. Ships could bring coal and limestone, unloading on the beaches in Abersoch and Llanbedrog just as they did on other beaches. Local traders, carriers and farmers would meet them on the shore.

But the smaller ports were also busy, for example Porth Ysgaden, Porth Colmon and Porth Ferin.

Pwllheli – Imports



Llŷn was self-sufficient to a considerable extent and at one time only goods such as tobacco, wine, pepper, sugar and salt would be imported.

There's mention of wine being imported to Pwllheli in 1378, when two ships arrived. Two ships from France brought wine from Portugal to 'Porth Helly' in 1520-1 and Morris Dwyfach composed cywydd poetry to praise the wine. Cargoes of malt and coal came from Tenby at the end of that century. Although the farmers of Llŷn were usually able to export produce, wheat and rye had to be imported to Pwllheli from Fishguard in 1593.

Illegal goods also came ashore, and early in the C17th the people of Pwllheli were accused of 'sponsoring and assisting pirates'

The shipbuilding industry developed and so the demand for timber, particularly oak, increased and it had to be imported from Meirionnydd and later from Quebec. Carpenters would also import timber for their own businesses.

The main imports in the autumn would be coal and culm. Culm was coal dust mixed with clay, used as a cheap fuel or mixed with lime to sweeten the soil. There was a lime kiln on the Traeth and lime would be brought here as ballast. In 1680 a load of cattle came here from Dublin.

Ships would bring mixed cargoes of iron, millstones, pottery, soap and tobacco, calling at other ports in Cardigan Bay on the way.

As the import trade grew, there were also developments in businesses, fairs, markets, and craftsmen of all kinds increased as a result of it.

Pwllheli was considered one of the four main ports of Wales in 1792. Before the railway arrived in Pwllheli and roads were improved, the community depended on the sea. Afterwards the imports by sea declined. As competition developed, goods needed to get to market quickly and it would be easier to do that by land.



Exporting from Pwllheli



*Isabie Stone from the Rock Quarry, Aberdaron on its way
from Pwllheli*

The main exports from Pwllheli, as from every other port in Llŷn, were farm produce including butter, eggs, chickens, cheese, bacon, wool and hides. In 1541 four packs of tweed were also exported from here.

Hyde-Hall says that marketing in Pwllheli was in better order than anywhere else in Caernarfonshire in the early C19th.

Some farmers would try to export their produce, even when there were shortages. The ship 'Blackbird' tried to leave the port in 1751 with a cargo of oats, rye and potatoes when a crowd of starving people from the town attacked it.

There were times during the C18th when exporting herring both red and white ones, contributed substantially to the local economy. Shoals of them would come into the bay from time to time but it was difficult to plan for that and make sure there was enough salt available for preserving them. In the early C19th lead ore) was exported from Penrhyn Du to Pwllheli but that trade did not flourish.

In the late C19th and the early C20th setts were exported from Gimlet Rock Quarry in ships that took them as far as the United States of America.

Although Porthmadog was the main port for exporting slate, many of its ships were built in Pwllheli and it was sailors from Pwllheli who sailed them. In fact, the sailors of Pwllheli and Barmouth were pioneering in slate exports before Porthmadog existed.

Unloading on the Beach



Coal and lime would be unloaded on the beach at Llanbedrog and Abersoch.

It was a great advantage for farmers and coal traders in the area to be able to take their carts onto the beach to collect their loads. This was how ships were also unloaded in Porthdinllaen and Aberdaron.

***A corpulent ship unloading coal
lying dry on the sand
and carts at work in their turn
and more arriving***

Translated from the works of J Glynn Davies

***'Llong gestog yn dadlwytho glo
yn sych ar dywod,
a throliau wrthi yn eu tro
a mwy yn dyfod.'***

It would have to be timed carefully, to make sure the sailing ships brought their loads in at high tide. On some beaches, there would be 'Carreg y Ring' – The Ring Stone – a rock with a metal loop fitted in it, like the one on Aberdaron beach, for tying the ship to. At low tide, the ship would be unloaded and the carts ready on the beach to take the goods. Then the ship could leave easily at high tide.

The remains of Abersoch coal yards (SH 31522693) are to be seen on the Golf Course near Traeth Lleferin beach. At Porthdinllaen, there were landing stages and storage buildings at Bwlch (SH 28224084).

At Porth Ysgaden, Porth Colmon and Porth Ferin there were storage yards near the shore that the ships could get close to.

Imports of coal increased when the tax on coal was removed in 1813. Ships came regularly from the coalfields and the 'Maggie Purvis' and the 'Tryfan' continued to carry coal until the beginning of the Second World War, to Porthdinllaen and Porth Ysgaden.



There are remains of lime kilns in a number of places on the coast, showing that lime was valuable to sweeten the land or prepare mortar. Names like Cae'r Odyn (field of the kiln) are just as common. There was one in Llanbedrog at the northern end of the beach, close to Plas Glyn y Weddw.

The 'soap-waste' that came here as ballast from Ireland was an effective fertilizer for the land, and popular with farmers. The waste from the shops of Dublin would be mixed with it, and children would dig in to look for treasures.

Fishing



Fishing was important in Pwllheli for centuries. In the C13th there were more nets than boats here, which suggests people fished by pulling nets along the beach as well as using boats.

The herring shoals came into Pwllheli bay from time to time. One day in November 1848 over 8,000 herring were caught by one boat.

In summer, the fish to catch would be mackerel but they also only came here from time to time. In 1860 there were too many of them and the fishermen had to give them away. But in 1878 there was a poor season and a fund had to be opened in the town to support the families who were suffering.

There was great demand for Pwllheli oysters and in the mid C19th there were 17 boats busy catching them. Then the fishermen of Jersey got to know about them and came to Cardigan Bay to fish. But the oysters were difficult to lift from the sea bed; it was much easier to wait for a storm that would wash them ashore.

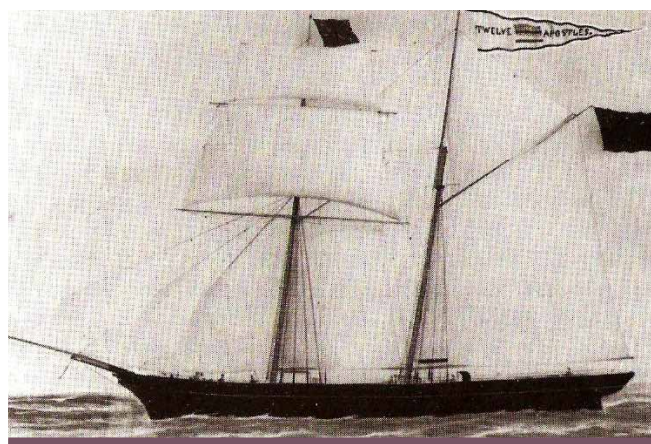
When a great demand for fish developed in the large towns of the north of England in the mid C19th, boats from Wirral began to visit the bay and there would be conflict with them as they took the livelihood of local fishermen. At that time there were about 15 boats in Pwllheli. They were small and unsuitable for venturing out into a stormy sea,

so very different to the big boats from Hoylake with their experienced fishermen.

Men from the Isle of Man would come here, and in 1880 there were 400 of them in Pwllheli. They were very religious. They would never fish on a Sunday and would visit Abererch church to pay tribute to one of their heroes, Rhydderch Hael, who was king of the Old North in the C6th.

The fishing industry declined, partly because of overfishing by foreign boats. By now there are very few full time fishermen.

Pwllheli Ships



'Twelve Apostles'

At one time, Pwllheli was an important centre for shipbuilding. Between 1759 and 1878 over 400 ships were built here, ranging from schooners, brigs, smacks and barques. They were very capable of taking loads of tightly packed slate to ports in Europe and bringing wood, cod or phosphate from distant corners of the world.

One of the graceful sailing ships, that was also very capable of carrying slate, was the Theda, a three masted schooner of 150 tons built in 1876. On one voyage she set off from Porthmadog with a cargo of slate for Harburg, on the river Elbe. She then continued on a long journey between Europe and North America, carrying salt, cod, maize and beans. What was special about this voyage in 1889 was that it set a record which still stands to this day, for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic by a sailing ship, taking 12 days from Newfoundland to Gibraltar.

The Gwen Evans was launched from Gadlys in 1842 and advertised as a luxury vessel that could carry emigrants, and the Ancient Briton was one that sailed to Australia. The sailors of Pwllheli would be familiar with places in all parts of the world, and the ports of distant lands would be a natural part of children's conversations in the area.

The Twelve Apostles had the Apostle Paul as its figurehead, and it carried slate for forty years. It was returning from



carrying slate in 1898 and entered Cardigan Bay during a massive storm. As dawn broke, the captain realized they were heading for Porth Neigwl – Hell's Mouth. All they could do was try to run ashore on the beach, to save the crew and the ship. It came ashore and was wrecked but the crew were saved.

In the mid C19th Insurance Clubs were formed locally. Nefyn was very prominent in this development and one of them was called the Pwllheli and Nefyn Mutual Marine Insurance Society. The directors would be ship owners, ships' captains, local businessmen and farmers and these enterprises were a great help to the shipping industry.

Pwllheli's biggest sailing ship was built in 1862. It was 693 tons and owned by Hugh Pugh the banker. It was named Margaret Pugh after his wife. This ship made a number of voyages to San Francisco, Rangoon and Bombay.

During the second half of the C19th, there was not as much demand for sailing ships as they were replaced by steam ships. Then the railway arrived in Pwllheli and the standard of the roads improved. Shipbuilding came to an end and the new harbour was never fully used.

Captains and Sailors



Boys growing up in Pwllheli would have an ambition to 'go to sea' and they would go, as cooks on local ships at 13 years old without being aware of the dangers facing them. Many managed to improve themselves and even become captains, without any formal qualifications, only experience, and they had little formal knowledge of seamanship. But in the mid C18th ambitious sailors were expected to attend a School of Seamanship and gain a certificate or 'captain's ticket'. In fact the Insurance Clubs wouldn't accept a ship unless the captain had a recognized certificate.

The sailors on the coastal ships would be paid more than those sailing the high seas. The coastal work would be harder – loading and unloading the ship more often, although there would be more opportunity to spend

their money on shore and they would have less time off on leave. There were numerous dangers, and shipwrecks happened more often in the coastal trade than on the high seas. On the other hand, the sailors on the high seas would be away from home for months on end and if anything went wrong they wouldn't have much hope of being rescued.

In Deneio cemetery there are the gravestones of captains lost at sea or who died of illness in foreign lands. Only a few gravestones commemorate ordinary sailors because many families couldn't afford that. There was a kind of life insurance available to cover captains but nothing for the sailors' families.

Many of the captains were very religious and it was usual to have a service or Sunday School on board the ship when it was in dock. Captain Hugh Hughes, Gellidara, Penrhos did this habitually on his ship *Eagle*. He would raise the 'Bethel Flag' to show that. In 1843 there were over 50 ships from Wales in Falmouth harbour at the same time and over 300 sailors went to hear Captain Hugh Hughes preaching. After retiring from the sea he became a Minister and insisted the new chapel in Penrhos be called Bethel.

Plas Heli Shipwrecks



The south coast of Llŷn is sandy with soft cliffs and sand dunes, which is very different to the north coast. Ships getting into difficulties would run up onto the beaches and often they would lose their anchors after going to shelter in the 'Roads' between Saint Tudwal's Islands and the mainland. That was what happened when the wind turned and blew three ships onto Abererch beach in 1843.

In the same storm, the captain of the ship Mary Elizabeth from Pwllheli decided to turn back from his voyage to Fishguard and shelter in the 'Roads'. It was a terrible storm, the crew of four became completely worn out and all four died. There was no shelter anywhere. The only person remaining was Captain David Morris and all he could do



was tie himself to the mast and leave the ship at the mercy of the wind. She was blown eastwards and somehow or other landed on the beach at Dyffryn Ardudwy. The ship suffered only a small amount of damage and was taken back with her load of slate to Rhiwbryfdir Quay, Porthmadog where she had been loaded earlier.

The northern part of Cardigan Bay became busier when the slate quarries opened in the Ffestiniog area. Ships sailed regularly from Porthmadog but they couldn't see the light from Enlli/Bardsey. Because of that a lighthouse was built on Saint Tudwal's Island in 1877.

Men from Pwllheli, led by Hugh Williams of Penmount, were praised for their heroism in bringing the barque *Lady Douglas* to safety on Abererch beach in 1834. The adventure of the *Lady Douglas* had begun days earlier when John Williams (Brenin Enlli – the King of Bardsey) and other rowers noticed the ship was in trouble. John Williams went on board and sailed her into the safety of the Roads. But her captain refused to recognize the knowledge and experience of local sailors and admit that he had been in any difficulty. She then came loose in the Roads and local men had to be allowed to sail her to safety.

The big problem for ships out in the bay is Sarn Badrig / Saint Patrick's Causeway, with its shallow water at low tide. Over 30 ships have been wrecked on its rocks and Pwllheli lifeboat was often called out to assist them.

Local Smuggling



Smugglers would be very welcome in Pwllheli. Businesses would gain from them by getting supplies of iron, spices, spirits, tobacco and salt. The produce would have been unloaded in remote creeks in Llŷn.

In 1783/4 an officer said that smugglers had sold as much as £16,000 worth of tea, brandy, wine and gin in a year in the area. According to some, the people of Pwllheli in the C17th were 'sponsoring and assisting pirates'. A Revenue Cutter was sent there – a small fast ship to protect

the ships against smugglers in Pwllheli. But according to the Squire of Nanhoron '*She is as much use as if she was stationed at Charing Cross*', after a schooner from Guernsey had unloaded a cargo of gin, brandy, silk and tea in Porth Neigwl. In 1751 as many as 18 smugglers landed in Pwllheli.

It wasn't only rare and expensive goods that were brought ashore illegally but also necessities like salt and coal. In 1763 an officer in the town saw a cart taking a load of coal along the street in the middle of the night. Later the captain of the 'Peggy' confessed that he was responsible for carrying it from his ship to Thomas Samuel's coal yard.

In 1796 eighteen smugglers landed and were allowed to do as they wanted in the town. Soldiers on horseback were sent, but they were often very reluctant to intervene because the smugglers were better armed and more numerous.

Revenue officers tried to control them but the smugglers were often too cunning. In 1791 the officers boarded a ship in the harbour to inspect it but very soon they were imprisoned in a cabin and left there for hours. By the time they were released the smugglers had unloaded the cargo of tobacco and gin and the buyers and their carts were long gone.

Ships could land more or less where they wished in the Pwllheli area. About the middle of the C18th ships would land near where Pen Cob is now and the lower end of Stryd Penlan (Penlan Street), where a custom house was built. That's why the English name of the area is Custom House Square.

Smuggling



With all the inlets that were available, this part of the coast of Llŷn was ideal for smugglers and there are a number of interesting tales of the adventures of the area's residents.

The reason for smuggling was to avoid taxes by buying goods cheaply. It was at its busiest in the 18th and 19th



centuries, when the English Crown and its fleet were extending the boundaries of the British Empire. The government raised money by putting unreasonably high taxes on goods: on spices, spirits and tobacco for the rich and salt, soap and candles for ordinary families.

Salt was essential before the days of freezers, to preserve meat, butter and herrings. In the early C19th, salt cost a penny a pound in Ireland but over here it had an additional three pence in tax on it. It would be smuggled to Llŷn and sold tax free for two pence.

The taxes in the ports of Porthdinllaen and Pwllheli were collected by Officers (the 'seismyn' as Excise Officers were called). Officers would ride between these ports, looking for any signs of smuggling. There are examples of conflicts between officers and smugglers, and the smugglers would very often be helped by the local community. People who ended up in court were severely punished.

To be successful, smuggling depended on cooperation between the sailors and people on shore in Llŷn. The goods would be brought from other countries in large ships and transferred, usually to warehouses in Ireland and the Isle of Man, and collected from there in smaller ships. The goods would reach Llŷn in vessels that could be sailed easily in and out of inlets, or goods would arrive hidden amongst legal cargoes on trading ships. The men on shore knew when to expect a ship, and the captain would send a message to them with a special lamp when it was within reach.

Pwllheli Lifeboat – The Early Days



Directions: Lifeboat Station (SH 38453440). Follow the signs from the town centre.

Go along the Cob from Pen Cob then turn left and follow the road through Morfa'r Garreg housing estate.

Carreg yr Imbyll (Gimlet Rock) was a good mark that ships could aim for when they sailed in Cardigan Bay. After they

came round it and into the harbour there was shelter from the south-west wind. There are few rocks on this part of the southern coast of Llŷn and the sand dunes are soft if a ship were to run into them.

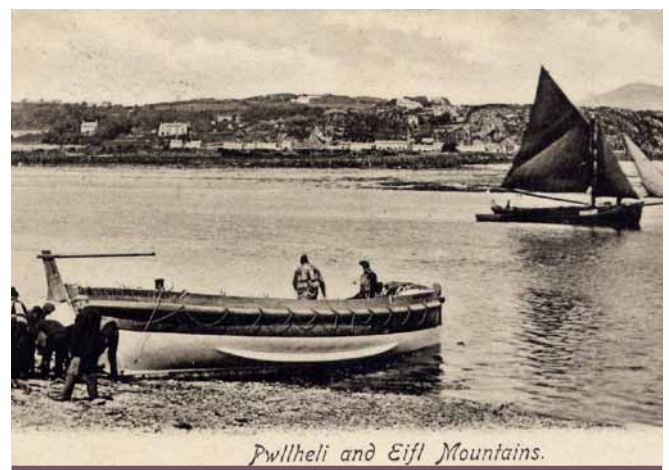
Shipwrecks did happen, as in 1843 when three ships lost their anchors when they were sheltering in the 'Roads' near Ynysoedd Tudwal (Saint Tudwal's Islands) and came ashore on Abererch beach. Ten years earlier two brigs came ashore in Pwllheli and both ships and their crews were lost. Then in October 1881 there were losses as the 'Cyprian' broke up on the rocks of north Llŷn and five ships on Abererch beach. It was only because of the efforts of local men that the sailors' lives were saved.

Following considerable pressure from local residents the RNLI decided to open a lifeboat station in Pwllheli (SH 38453441). A shed was built on land belonging to Pwllheli Corporation at Tocyn Brwyn, not far from Carreg yr Imbyll.

The station cost £480 and was opened in 1891. The same shed is still used these days.

The first boat was called the '*Caroline Richardson*' and it had been bought with part of the £5,000 from the will of H T Richardson of Bala. But the crew soon realized it was not suited to Cardigan Bay and it went to Rhyl; there had been a similar boat in Rhyl before and it was very popular there.

The Two *Mary Platts*



Directions: Lifeboat Station (SH 38453440). Follow the signs from the town centre.

Go along the Cob from Pen Cob then turn left and follow the road through Morfa'r Garreg housing estate.

The 'Margaret Platt of Stalybridge' lifeboat came to replace the Caroline Richardson in 1892. This was a modern boat that could be righted on its keel if it capsized at sea. It came to Pwllheli from Cowes, and was transported all the way.



Four months later it was called to a ship in difficulties on Sarn Badrig / Saint Patrick's Causeway. That was the *Glendarroch* – a steamer carrying 800 tons of cement to Liverpool. The Barmouth lifeboat was called out but there was no hope of saving the ship. Six of the crew were rescued by the Barmouth boat and 11 by the Pwllheli boat.

It also went out to Saint Patrick's Causeway in January 1895. There a schooner, the

'*Alnwick*' was on the causeway. Three were saved from it and the lifeboat returned the next day and towed the schooner to safety.

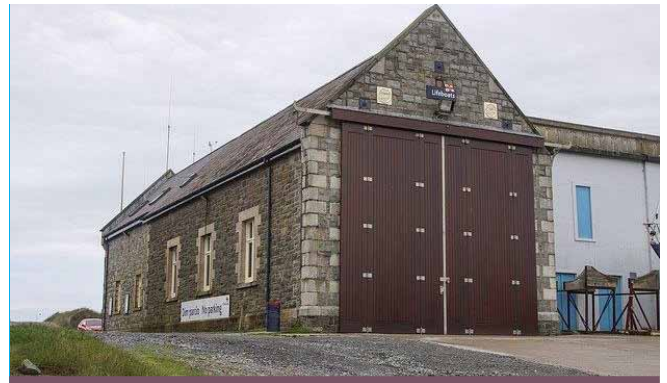
In August of that year, on a fine day with a fresh wind from the north west, it was called back to Saint Patrick's Causeway. A barque from Norway with a mixed cargo from the USA and bound for Manchester had landed on the causeway. The *Margaret Platt* was launched at 9.00am and reached the causeway at 1.00 pm. They managed to pull the barque, the *Kragero* to deeper water and guide it to safety in the 'Roads'. The crew were given £175 for saving the ship and its valuable cargo.

The next lifeboat here, in 1898 and of 'Watson' design was the *Margaret Platt (the second)* but it was not called out for four years. When that did happen it went to help a schooner from the Isle of Man, the *Snaefell*. That was dragging its anchor half a mile out from Carreg yr Imbyll (Gimlet Rock). The lifeboat managed to rescue eight crew from her as well as the captain's wife and four children. The captain refused to leave the ship, and fortunately the wind turned and reduced the strain on her.

In 1910 the Cricieth lifeboat was launched to offer help to two smacks, the 'Venus' and the 'Helena' on Porthmadog bar. The following morning the Cricieth lifeboat had not returned and one of the two smacks had sunk, so Pwllheli lifeboat was called. It was blowing a gale and after rowing into severe wind for eight miles it reached the 'Venus' and took four people off it, two of them crew from the 'Helena'. Some of the lifeboat men went on board the 'Venus' and took it to Pwllheli. They saw Cricieth lifeboat; it had come ashore at the mouth of afon Dwyfor – a mile west of Cricieth.

On Christmas Eve 1925 a call for help came from a ship taking a cargo of coal from Runcorn to Falmouth. It was in difficulties near Carreg yr Imbyll, with its sails cut to ribbons and having lost the boom. The lifeboat took seven of the exhausted crew ashore and then returned to the ship. It was towed into harbour with the help of two motor boats.

Motor Boats



Directions: Lifeboat Station (SH 38453440). Follow the signs from the town centre.

Go along the Cob from Pen Cob then turn left and follow the road through Morfa'r Garreg housing estate.

The RNLI decided that Pwllheli lifeboat station should be the one to cover the northern part of Cardigan Bay, using a 40 foot Weston class motor boat. The '*Maria*' came there and later in 1931 the '*William Macpherson*', a boat built in 1912 and having served in Campbeltown, Scotland.

It served in Pwllheli for about ten years for what was generally a quiet time. In 1938 it was called to a ship in difficulties near Cricieth. This was the schooner 'Solway Lass' on a voyage from Belfast to Porthmadog and carrying potatoes. By the time the '*William Macpherson*' reached her the captain had died and another member of the crew was suffering from the effect of gases from the engine. The captain was left on the ship and the other two crew members taken ashore. The lifeboat then returned to the schooner and towed it to Pwllheli with the captain's body still on board.

The lifeboat was needed during the Second World War to help when planes had fallen into the sea. It wasn't possible to fire maroons during wartime to summon the crew, so a messenger had to go to their homes. A lifeboat called the 'C. & S.' was there for a while at that time, and the '*Manchester and Salford XXIX*' followed it in 1943; this was a motor boat with two propellers and a cabin.

The shallow water in the river mouth at low tide caused difficulties for boats. So a lighter one had to be used, that could be hauled over the dunes and launched directly into the sea. That was named the '*Katherine and Virgo Buckland*' and was there from 1956 till 1972.



The All-Weather and Inshore Lifeboats



Directions: Lifeboat Station (SH 38453440). Follow the signs from the town centre.

Go along the Cob from Pen Cob then turn left and follow the road through Morfa'r Garreg housing estate.

By now the schooners and slate ships have gone and the ones needing help these days are leisure boats, swimmers and sometimes fishing boats. That's why a second lifeboat came here in 1964, a rubber one, much smaller but very fast. The two lifeboats in Pwllheli work together effectively, the larger one covering the open sea from the mouth of afon Dwyrdd to Ynys Enlli / Bardsey Island.

The smaller inshore lifeboat can respond quickly, is easy to launch and very fast at sea. The Cricieth lifeboat station offers a similar service to the east of Pwllheli, and Abersoch to the west.

The larger all-weather lifeboat has continued in use, such as in 1972 when it worked with Abersoch lifeboat to rescue two sailors from the rocks on Trwyn Cilan. This was a risky action and oil had to be put on the water to calm the waves. Two of the Pwllheli crew and one from Abersoch were awarded for their heroism.

The all-weather boat here from 1972 to 1979 was the 'Robert Henry Marshall' and then 'The Royal Thames', which was of Oakley class.

Pwllheli got a new all-weather boat in 1991. This was the 'Lilly & Vincent Anthony', Mersey class, twice as fast as 'The Royal Thames' and costing £445,000.

The lifeboats of the Cardigan Bay stations cooperate with each other and travel far when needed. In September 2002 the boats from Cei Newydd (Newquay), Aberystwyth, Abermaw (Barmouth) and Pwllheli searched for two people in a speedboat out at sea from Aberystwyth and found them. On a sad occasion in 2004 the helmsman of Barmouth lifeboat was lost and the Pwllheli boat spent 24 hours looking for him.

In the autumn of 2011 the lifeboat had to go out in a 10 knot wind to assist Porthdinllaen lifeboat with the ship 'Swanland'. It was in difficulties 30 miles off the north-west coast of Llŷn, carrying a cargo from Llanddulas quarry. The ship broke in two and despite the unyielding efforts of the lifeboat crew seven Russian crewmen from the ship lost their lives but two were rescued.

The 'Lilly & Vincent Anthony' is by now over twenty years old but well worth seeing in the lifeboat shed. Behind her in the shed is the powerful tractor used to take her down to the river or over the dunes to the open sea at low tide. That's also where the inshore boat is kept, ready to answer any calls.



Follow the Story...

Find out more about the area's industrial past by visiting Porth y Swnt, Aberdaron – Learn more about at the heritage and development of the area in the National Trust's interpretation centre.