



Porthdinllaen and the Sea

Porthdinllaen Bay, the beach and the village have a special romance and history to them.

The main attraction in Porthdinllaen is the Tŷ Coch inn on the beach. From there one of the best views is towards the mountains of Mynydd Nefyn and the Eifl at sunset.

J Glyn Davies enjoyed this view very much, and wrote englyn strict metre poetry to describe it

Heulwen ar hyd y glennydd – a haul hwyr

A'i liw ar y mynydd;

Felly Llŷn ar derfyn dydd,

Lle i enaid gael llonydd.

Translated

Sunshine along the shores – and evening sun

Colouring the mountain

This is Llŷn at end of day

Where a soul can find peace

Porthdinllaen was a unique place for J Glyn Davies, and this inspired him to compose his poetry Cerddi Ederm and Cerddi Porthdinllaen that, amongst other things, celebrated the vessel Fflat Huw Puw.

This was a fishing village at first, and there had been a fort on the peninsula many centuries earlier, in the Iron Age. By now the village, Henborth is protected by being owned by the National Trust.

But developers had very different plans early in the C19th. They tried to develop Porthdinllaen to be the main trading port with Ireland. That attempt failed but there are still buildings like the 'Whitehall' there today.

It was very busy as the main trading harbour of northern Llŷn, particularly when it was much easier and quicker to travel by sea than on the rough roads on land. It's a safe bay for ships to shelter in storms, and following on from that it was very popular with smugglers.

Close to the Porthdinllaen peninsula is the lifeboat station with its new, modern boat to cover the rough sea between here, Anglesey and Enlli / Bardsey Island.

The famous Nefyn Golf Course is on the peninsula, and from there we can also get splendid views in all directions. To the south is Garn Fadryn and further along the coast are Cwmistir and Porth Ysgaden. To the right across the sea is Anglesey with South Stack Lighthouse and its flashing light. From time to time the Wicklow Hills in Ireland can be seen, which is a sign there will soon be a break in the weather.



Trade in Porthdinllaen



'Warws Dora'

Before the railway arrived in Pwllheli in 1867 and before the roads of rural Llŷn were improved, the sea was used as the best way of exporting and importing goods into the area. Herring exports from Nefyn were flourishing, and ships carrying coal and lime were regular visitors to the smaller ports. During his visit to Llŷn in the 1770s, Thomas Pennant recorded that corn was produced, over 3,000 black cattle were sold every year, and that the area had excellent grazing land. Oats, barley, butter and cheese were exported.

The most important port for this on the north coast of Llŷn was Porthdinllaen because it was safe and convenient. Other small ports were also used, such as Porth Sgaden, Porth Colmon and Porth Ferin, because landing places and storage facilities had been built there and there was convenient access to get down to the beach.

Cobs were built in Pwllheli harbour, with the intention of developing trade there as well as extending the town and protecting it from floods.

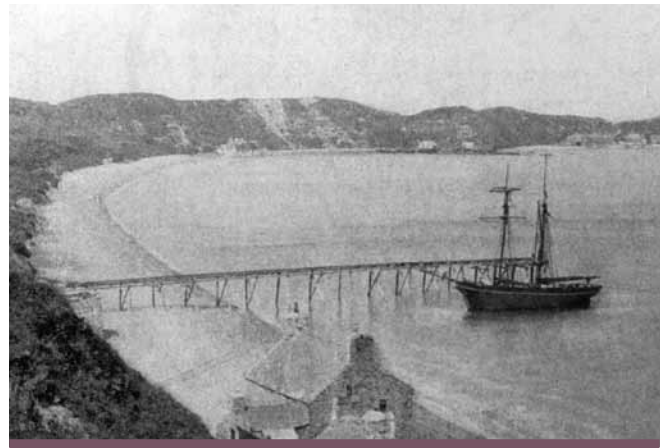
But astute businessmen had been looking at Porthdinllaen, and William Alexander Maddocks in particular wanted to achieve his dream of building Porthmadog cob, a Turnpike road to Porthdinllaen and developing it as the main port linking London and Dublin.

The 'Porthdinllaen Turnpike Trust' and 'Porthdinllaen Harbour Company' were established early in the 1800s. Although they had some success, when it became a competition between Porthdinllaen and Holyhead it was Holyhead that won.

The village of Porthdinllaen developed, that is Henborth (old + harbour) as well as Pen Cei (end of the quay) and the headland of Trwyn Porthdinllaen to the north and Pen Cim and Bwlch to the south.

There was more demand for a service to protect the ships and their crews, and Porthdinllaen Lifeboat Station was established.

Exporting from Porthdinllaen



The main exports over the years were farm produce, although there was also the work associated with Morfa Nefyn brickworks when that was busiest, between 1868 and 1906, with a landing stage built at Bwlch Brudyn (SH 28224084) for the ships.

There is a record from the C17th that butter in tubs, cheese in hundred pound units, wool, skins, herring and cod were exported from here. White herring (salted) and red herring (smoked) were exported to Chester in 1620 on two ships, the 'Mathew' and the 'Mary'. In 1685 there were 50 barrels of white herring, 18 barrels of red herring and 2½ barrels of cod exported to Chester on the 'Richard and Jane'. Hundreds of barrels of herring were transported from Nefyn and Porthdinllaen.

At the beginning of the C19th fertilizer was being exported from here, ashes and bracken ashes, and 25 loads of barley to Caernarfon in 1844.

Slate was an unfamiliar cargo for ships from Llŷn but there was a great demand for ships when the slate industry was at its most successful and strongly built ships were needed to carry it. The Porthdinllaen and Nefyn ships carried from Bangor to Dublin in the mid C17th. There was so much demand for slate that a plan was drawn up to open a railway to take slate from Caernarfon to Porthdinllaen and export from there. One reason for that was the high harbour costs in Caernarfon, and there was the need to pay pilots to lead ships over the bar. But this plan was never put into action.



Importing into Porthdinllaen



Coal Ships

In the C16th the mill at Penyberth, Penrhos needed a new millstone, and Morys Dwyfach (1523-90) wrote 'cywydd' poetry asking that a stone from Anglesey be sent by ship to Porthdinllaen.

That is one of the first records of importing to Porthdinllaen. As the local community came to depend less on local goods and the fashions of the wider world influenced them, there was an increase in the variety of good imported.

In 1623 the ship '*Speedwell*' came to Porthdinllaen, bringing clay pipes, copperas, hops, pepper, logwood, and linen from Chester. The postal service was fairly effective, and shopkeepers would get letters to tell them packages of goods were on their way by ship. People could send personal packages to each other by ship, called 'bwndalïns', such as a pair of socks a father from Llŷn sent to his son in Liverpool, with the captain of the '*Abbey*'.

Developments came, such as the turnpike road from the east and building the landing at Pen Cei (end of the quay) (SH 27744165) with the unsuccessful attempts to develop Porthdinllaen in the early C19th.

In the mid C19th in one year 656 ships landed here. Steamers started carrying goods, the '*Telephone*' and the '*Dora*' became regular visitors and storehouses had to be built on the beach.

***'Ffarwel fo i 'Rebecca', a 'Dora' gwych ei graen,
Fu'n cario am flynyddoedd i leitar Porthdinllaen.'***

Translated

***'Farewell to Rebecca and the Dora so well built.
That carried goods for years to the lighter in
Porthdinllaen'***

The warehouse *Warws Dora* (SH 27644129) is still to be seen these days. The traders and farmers knew when to expect a ship and would hurry to get their carts along the beach first to collect their goods. But there were obvious advantages in having storehouses.

Before the days of the storehouses coal, lime and 'soap waste' would have to be unloaded on the beach at Porthdinllaen and other places, such as Aberdaron and Abersoch where carts could be taken onto the beach.

Unloading on the beach



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 unloaded in Porthdinllaen, Aberdaron, Abersoch and Llanbedrog. 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 ships would be unloaded and the carts ready on the beach to take the goods. Then the ship could leave easily at high tide.

At Porthdinllaen, there were landing stages and storage buildings at Bwlch Brudyn (SH 28224084) and the remains of Abersoch coal yards (SH 31522692) are to be seen on the Golf Course near Traeth Lleferin beach.

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 sold to sweeten the land or prepare mortar. Names like Cae'r Odyn (field of the kiln) as just as common.

The 'soap-waste' that came here 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.

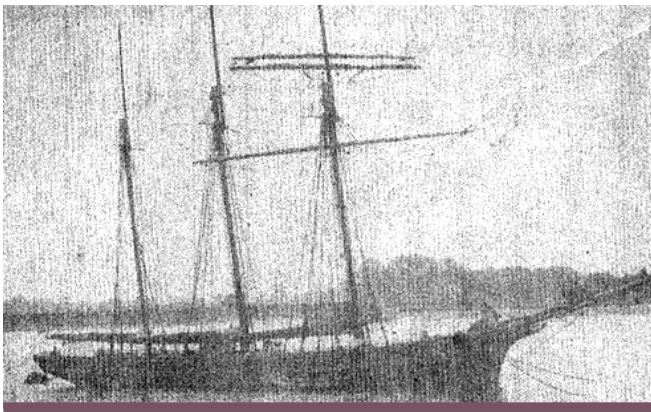
***'A corpulent ship unloading coal
lying dry on the sand
and carts at work in their turn
and more arriving'***

Translated from the works of J Glyn Davies

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

J Glyn Davies

Shipbuilding



'Miss Beck' built in Porthdinllaen (1857)

Between 1760 and 1889 123 ships were built in Nefyn and 57 in Porthdinllaen, but only a few were built before the middle of the C18th. The busiest periods were between 1840 and 1870. Most of the Nefyn and Porthdinllaen ships were sloops and schooners, and they were considered to be extremely strong. Of the 137 ships built here, almost half sailed for 30 years, and 19 for over 50 years. Many of them spent years carrying slate. The ships for this work had to be particularly sturdy because the slates would be packed together tightly to avoid any shifting of cargo during the voyage.

Llŷn was a treeless area, but there were oak trees on the Madryn estate, timber was also brought from the Conwy valley, and was imported from the Baltic and Canada. Lack of timber was probably the reason for the smaller number of ships built between 1790 and 1810.

John Thomas, Fron Olau, was considered to be one of the principal early shipbuilders, and the King of Nefyn. The first ship he built was one to transport herring, then he turned his hand to slate carrying ships. He would walk over the Eifl mountains to Caernarfon and back every week to collect wages for his workers.

Robert Thomas, Y Dderwen, Nefyn built 13 ships between 1849 and 1866 and he employed over a hundred carpenters. At the time of the 1861 census, there were about 30 ships' carpenters in Nefyn, so the rest would come from nearby parishes, and there is mention of specific paths they used. There were also makers of ropes, sails and nails, and riggers. There was a rope walk for making ropes, smithies and sail lofts.

The last shipbuilder in Nefyn was Griffith Owen, Dyffryn, Morfa Nefyn.

The day a ship was launched would be an important day in the area, with hordes of people coming to the beach and cliff top to see the ceremony. The ship, its owner and crew would be blessed by the Parson or Nonconformist Minister, and then the festivity and celebration would begin.

There would often be a figurehead of a young woman or mermaid on the ship's bow, to add to her beauty. So it was not only the ship's strength and suitability for the sea that would attract the eyes of the prospective buyer and captain!

Shipwrecks



It's only to be expected that the Llŷn peninsula, extending out into the busy Irish Sea, would have been a problem for ship owners and captains over the years. The coast of northern Llŷn is rocky and dangerous and it's difficult to reach some of the bays to shelter because of their soft



cliffs. But Porthdinllaen was very sheltered in all winds except one from the north-east.

With an increase in worldwide trade and more activity in the port of Liverpool, this area of sea became busier. A report from 1863 says that as many as 206 ships were wrecked in a quarter of a century in the Porthdinllaen area. There was a real need for a lighthouse, like the one on Enlli / Bardsey Island that came there in 1821.

The northern part of Cardigan Bay also became busier when the slate quarries opened in the Ffestiniog area. Ships sailed regularly from Porthmadog, but they could not see the light at Enlli. Because of that, a lighthouse was built on one of the St Tudwal's Islands in 1877.

Another danger in Cardigan Bay is Sarn Badrig – St Patrick's Causeway – and its shallow water, and many ships were also wrecked in Porth Neigwl (Hell's Mouth). But if a storm came up, there was nowhere better than the Roads – the sheltered haven between St. Tudwal's Islands and the mainland. Despite that, ships continued to get into difficulties even in here, and a response was needed.

A lifeboat service came to Penrhyn Du, Abersoch in 1844, Porthdinllaen in 1864 and Pwllheli in 1889. There were also demands for a lifeboat station in Trefor, and in the late C19th with the increase in the export of setts from the Eifl quarries one was set up there. But it did not remain there for long.

Local Shipwrecks



Porthdinllaen has for centuries been a haven for ships during storms, because it's sheltered from all winds except one from the north east. But two or three ships came ashore here in 1859, on the same night as the 'Royal Charter' sank in Anglesey and there is a long list of ships lost in the area. One cove on Porthdinllaen peninsula is called Porth Foriog (moriog = rough sea) which tells us something about the stormy nature of the sea here.

The creek nearest to Abergeirch is Porth Poli, which is called that because a ship named 'Polly' landed there on the beach.

About 2km further along the coast is Rhosgor, where there was a tragedy in 1881. The steamer 'Cyprian' came ashore on rocks there in a tremendous storm. Despite the efforts of some local men, only eight of the 28 crew were saved.

There is a story of a stowaway who was saved but the captain was drowned, and a number of ballads were written about that. Some of those who died were buried in Edern cemetery. There was considerable criticism of Porthdinllaen lifeboat at the time for not going to help them.

An inquest some years earlier had been just as critical of the Llanddwyn lifeboat service when the ship 'Monk' sank. It had set off from Porthdinllaen in stormy weather in January 1843 with a cargo of pigs, butter and cattle as well as passengers. It intended crossing the Caernarfon bar but almost everything was lost.

In 1991 ten sailors drowned when the oil tanker 'Kimya' got into difficulties off the coast near Tudweiliog. Porthdinllaen and Holyhead lifeboats went to assist her and two sailors were rescued. The tanker sank and rested on the sea bed near Llanddwyn, Anglesey. The cargo was sunflower oil and there was concern for the environment. Contrary to what was expected, the main damage was to mussels in the area.

Losing the 'Monk'



The 'Monk' set off from Porthdinllaen for Liverpool on a stormy afternoon in January 1843. She was a paddle steamer – old and overloaded according to what was said. She carried 140 pigs, £600 worth of butter, two fat cows and 26 passengers – some of them looking after their animals, and nine crew.

The captain, Henry Hughes decided not to sail around Anglesey and instead go over Caernarfon bar and through the Menai Strait. Things went wrong about five in the afternoon – the wind rose, the rudder chain broke, the pumps failed to cope with the water coming in and the ship struck the bar. Four of the crew managed to get away to look for help.



Llanddwyn lifeboat failed to get to it because the boat was in Caernarfon, and by midnight the Monk's back had broken. The next morning the lifeboat got out to them but there was not much that could be done. Five people were rescued and six pigs and one cow managed to swim ashore.

The inquest was very critical of the lifeboat service, although there was evidence it was much too stormy to launch the boat. The 'Monk' was criticized because it was a river vessel and unsuited to the sea.

There are a number of ballads telling this story, as was usual at that time.

The 'Cyprian'



The grave in Edern

The steamer *Cyprian* was going from Liverpool to Genoa in October 1881 with a mixed cargo. It ship sailed towards Anglesey and according to the bard Pererin Môn:

'Hwy aethant heibio Amlwch

A phen Caergybi'n glir,

Ond yr oedd gwynt gorllewin

Yn rhuthro tua'r tir.

Fe ffrwydrodd tiwb yr ager

A'r llong a gollai'r llyw;

Pryd hynny roedd pawb ohonynt

Yn ofni na chaent fyw.'

'They got past Amlwch, and clear past Holyhead, but the westerly wind was rushing towards the land. A boiler tube burst and the steering gear broke; then everyone on board thought this was the end.'

The westerly wind took her off her course and the people of Nefyn and Morfa Nefyn saw her getting closer to land.

As the bard Cynan described it:

Gyrrwyd y llong fel tegan brau

O'i chwrs ar greigiau Llŷn,

Mor ddiymadferth â phetai

Y gwynt a'r tonnau'n un

'The ship was driven off course like a fragile toy, onto the rocks of Llŷn. As helpless as if wind and waves were combined.'

The *Cyprian* went onto rocks at Rhosgor and the crew had to escape to safety. The last of them to leave the ship was Captain Strachan, and just as he was about to go:

'canfod wnaeth y Cabden

fod ganddo stow-away.

Y Cabden wnaeth drugaredd

Â'r bachgen bach dinam.

Rhoes dorch y bywyd iddo

I'w gadw'n fyw i'w fam.'

'The Captain found he had a stowaway. The Captain took pity on the boy and gave him his lifebelt to keep him safe to go home to his mother.'

The boy got ashore safely. The captain was drowned and his body and the bodies of other sailors taken to the *Cefnamwlch Arms* in Edern to be identified. A policeman was there to guard them from the press. According to the *Daily Post* two bodies came ashore at Bryn Ogo Lwyd and another one near Bryn Gŵydd. What happened after that?

'O'r wyth dyn ar hugain gychwynnodd mewn parch

Wyth enaid achubwyd fel gynt yn yr arch.

Yr ugain a drengodd, yn gorwedd maent hwy

Mewn un bedd yn Edeyrn, hen fynwent y plwy.'

'Of the twenty eight men who set off in good order, eight souls were rescued as in the ark. The twenty who died, they now lie in one grave in Edern, in the old parish cemetery.'

(Dafydd Davies, Caehelyg, Penllech)

The captain's body was taken to Liverpool for burial.

There were a number of events following on from this incident.



Follow on to the 'Cyprian' story



'Cyprian's' bell

There is a gravestone in the cemetery in Edern in memory of the 19 sailors drowned in the wreck of the steamship *Cyprian* on Penrhyn Cwmistir, 14 October 1881. It was put there by the Community Council in 1942.

Local residents were rewarded for their efforts to save the crew of the *Cyprian*. Thsquire of Nanhoron gave them a sovereign each at a party he held for them. An article in *Cymru a'r Môr* (volume 4), says that Seth Hughes of Benbryn Glas, Nefyn saved the boy and that he was also rewarded.

In *Meistri'r Moroedd* there is reference to the adventures of Captain William Roberts, Yr Ochor, Llanengan. His ship sank near the Azores and he and his crew were taken to Liverpool on board the *Highland Watch*. They were amazed to discover that the chief officer of that ship had been the stowaway on the *Cyprian*! When they landed it was the time of the National Eisteddfod of Wales, being held at Birkenhead in 1917 and Captain William Roberts visited it on the day of the chairing of the bard, when the chair was won by Hedd Wyn.

A woman in Henley-on-Thames heard the news of the wreck of the *Cyprian* and she gave £800 to the Lifeboat Association. As a result a lifeboat was purchased and stationed in Trefor. It was called the Llanaelhaearn Lifeboat and named the 'Cyprian'.

As well as ballads about the story, the Religious Essays Association *Cymdeithas y Traethodau Crefyddol* published a pamphlet in Welsh on 'The Captain of the *Cyprian*'.

A bell and some other artefacts were raised from the wreck of the 'Cyprian' by J Harold Morris, Porthmadog and his fellow divers. The bell is now kept safe and there was an exhibition on the 'Cyprian' in summer 2013 by Llŷn Archaeological Association.

Smuggling



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 good 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.

There would be detailed preparations for landing the goods, hiding and then distributing them. It was said there was more smuggling going on in Llŷn than anywhere else, and there are tales of smuggling involved with every port and inlet in Llŷn.

Smuggling in Porthdinllaen



Porth Gwylan – a typical sheltered cove for the smugglers

It was easy to bring illegal goods through Porthdinllaen with all the activity that was going on there. The sailors would be very difficult for the Excise Officers to deal with. In the C18th one smuggler challenged the Officers by saying he had fifteen men armed with guns on his ship. This was a lie, but the Officers believed it.

On another ship, the Officers were imprisoned in a cabin for five hours while the tobacco and gin were unloaded, then the ship sailed off, and by then the goods were well hidden.

When a large group of local people came to unload brandy off the *Marie Therese* from Bordeaux, there was nothing the Officers could do but watch from a distance.

In 1792, again the Officers could only watch as four smugglers' ships arrived together. There were 14 coal ships in Porthdinllaen at the same time, waiting to be unloaded. There was a conflict between the ships' crews and David Wilson, the Excise Officer, and they had to unload in other ports after the argument had gone on for days.

When the officers managed to catch a ship it would be sold at auction, but often the smugglers' friends would buy those ships. Later ships like these had to be destroyed.

The nobility were also involved in smuggling and piracy. Huw Gruffudd (? – 1603), son of the squire of Cefnamwlch was the captain of the '*Pendragon*', a ship he used to carry arms and plunder. He was helped by William Jones of Castellmarch, who became chief justice of Ireland.

The Cefnamwlch family had a small ship that unloaded on Enlli / Bardsey and St. Tudwal's Islands and according to tradition there was a tunnel running from the garden in Cefnamwlch to Gwindy farm. Another tunnel extended from Tyddyn Isaf, Tudweiliog to the sea cliffs.

In the graveyard of Ederne Church there is a gravestone with skull and crossbones on it. But although it seems romantic, it's not the grave of a pirate – it was usual to put this on gravestones.

Porthdinllaen Lifeboat Station (SH 278419)



The Porthdinllaen Lifeboat Station and 'John D Spicer' (2014)

Directions: From the National Trust car park (SH 28154066) in Morfa Nefyn, walk along Porthdinllaen Beach and to the peninsula at the northern end, or walk along Nefyn Golf Course to Porthdinllaen Peninsula.

In the early C19th there was a great deal of commercial shipping activity on the Irish Sea, and in stormy weather ships would shelter in Porthdinllaen Bay. Thomas Rogers, who was one of the leading men in Porthdinllaen Harbour Company, said there was an increase in shipwrecks.



He referred specifically to the 'Nanny', on a voyage from Belfast to London in 1803 with a cargo of linen worth £45,000. It got into difficulties but most of the cargo was saved from the sea.

In one day in 1844 ten ships were blown ashore, and between 1839 and 1863 there were 206 ships wrecked in Caernarfon Bay. 37 people lost their lives and others were never found.

By 1840 there were three lifeboats in Anglesey and people wanted a lifeboat station in Porthdinllaen. All the efforts failed until 1864, and what probably happened was that the authorities changed their mind because of the tremendous storm in 1863. In December of that year, ships were washed ashore after dragging their anchors in rough seas.

Robert Rees of Morfa Nefyn went to the beach with four other men, he tied a rope around his waist, ventured out into the raging waves and managed to save 28 lives. He was given a medal for his bravery and the other men holding on to the end of the rope were given £3 each.

After this, the Lifeboat Association decided to establish a station in Porthdinllaen, and in October 1864 the 'Cotton Sheppard' arrived. It was carried on a L. & N.W. train to Caernarfon and sailed from there to Porthdinllaen. The shed and slip cost £140 and a crew and officers came to run the station.

The 'Cotton Sheppard' and the two 'George Moore'



Directions: From the National Trust car park (SH 28154070) in Morfa Nefyn, walk along the beach to the peninsula at the northern end or walk along Nefyn Golf Course to Porthdinllaen peninsula.

The 'Cotton Sheppard' came by train to Caernarfon and was then sailed to Porthdinllaen where it was very welcome. This boat was almost 11m long (36 feet), the helmsman was Hugh Hughes and it needed 14 men to row it.

During its twelve years of service it saved over forty lives. But it wasn't called out to the 'Sorrento' in Porth Tŷ Mawr, Llangwnnadr in 1870 because the messages took so long to travel in those days that the ship's crew got ashore at low tide.

A new boat came to Porthdinllaen later and the 'Cotton Sheppard' was sold and was a roof on a hen house in Cae Coch, Morfa Nefyn for years.

The new boat that arrived in 1877 was the 'George Moore', of the same design as the 'Cotton Sheppard'. It was here for ten years and went out 27 times. The biggest event in its history was in 1881 when the 'Cyprian' broke up on rocks at Rhosgor, Edern. At an inquiry it was asked why the boat was not launched and ten experienced captains from the area testified successfully that it was not possible to launch any boat under those circumstances. The Porthdinllaen Secretary, the Rector of Boduan, Rev. O Lloyd Williams, was a prominent representative on behalf of the crew.

The second 'George Moore' came to Porthdinllaen in 1888. It cost £410 and a new shed and slip had to be built for it, costing £1,200. It served until 1902 when the 'Barbara Flemming' arrived. That was like the previous ones, with 12 oars, but it also had red sails. Things changed greatly in 1928 when a motor boat arrived.

Porthdinllaen Lifeboat – Motor Boats



M.O.Y.E. (1926 - 49)



Directions: From the National Trust car park (SH 28154070) in Morfa Nefyn, walk along Porthdinllaen Beach to the peninsula at the northern end, or walk along Nefyn Golf Course to Porthdinllaen peninsula.

The boat 'M.O.Y.E.' was the next one to come to Porthdinllaen, after it had been exhibited in Wembley at the British Empire Exhibition in 1925. This was a 45 foot (13.7m) boat of Watson design, with a cabin, driven by a diesel engine. This was a significant development and it was expected to serve the area from Ynys Enlli / Bardsey to Rhosneigr and to Caernarfon. Because of that, the stations at Rhoscolyn and Rhosneigr were closed. The name 'M.O.Y.E.' uses the initials of the names of those who funded it.

By then, the vessels being helped were steamers, and soon the Second World War came and the boat went out 38 times, often to cases when aeroplanes had fallen into the sea.

There was a further development in 1949 when they got a boat with a diesel engine, a radio for communication and enough room for 90 people in rough weather. This was the 'Charles Henry Ashley' and it served until 1979.

This was a time of change in the kind of boats that got into difficulties – fewer commercial ships and more leisure boats.

The 'Kathleen Mary' served until 1987, when the 'Hetty Rampton' arrived to take its place. This was twice as fast and also twice as expensive as its predecessor. Griffith Jones retired, after serving as captain of the lifeboat for 16 years. Caban Griff in Porthdinllaen was named to commemorate him.

They went out in stormy seas in January 1991 to assist a tanker, the 'Kimya' which was off Tudweiliog. Unfortunately, by the time they reached it the ship and two of its lifeboats had capsized. Two of the crew were rescued but ten lost their lives.

The 'Hetty Rampton' served for 25 years until the 'John D Spicer' arrived here in 2012. This new boat cost £2.7 million, which was five times as much as its predecessor. It has all the latest technology, and is much faster and larger. Because of its size, a new shed had to be built for it.

Ports of Llŷn



The coast of Llŷn has remarkable variety. It has wide sandy beaches and bays, ports and creeks with easy access to them, and steep, inaccessible rocky cliffs. In other places, such as Porth Neigwl (Hell's Mouth) the waves are constantly eating away at the land and fields are lost to the sea. The Pwllheli area is part of a project studying the dangers that can come from global warming as the sea level rises and threatens to permanently flood the town.

No one can be far from the sea in Llŷn and it has been a great influence on the lives of the inhabitants all through the centuries. Indeed, it would have been easier to bring goods in by ship than by cart. The drovers were probably the only ones who saw a need for better roads. The railway reached Pwllheli in 1867 and a variety of goods could come in with it. There was then a great reduction in trade through the ports, and that intervened in traditions that had continued for centuries.

In a document dated 1524, we can see that the names of ports where it was possible to land:

The bay of Dynlley betweene karrek y llan and the barre of carn'

The bay between Karrek y llam and penrhyn Dynllayn

The Crik of abergyerch

The Crik of porth yskadan

The Crik of porth y Gwylen

The Crik of porth ychen

The Crik of porth penllegh

The Crik of porth Colmon

The Crik of porth Veryn

The Crik of porth Yeagowe

The Crik of porthor and the lle of Bardsey

The Crik of porth Muduy

The bay of Aberdaron

The bay of Nygull

The Roode of the two llonder of Stidwall

The Crik of Aber Soigh

The bay of Castellmarch

The baye of stydwalles to the geist

The haven of pullele in the myddes of the said baye

We can easily recognise them, and can see that the coastal names of Llŷn are centuries old.

Wherever the coast is rocky there are many names, but there are far fewer for sandy bays and beaches.



The names were given to them by people who went fishing or catching crabs, and they are still in daily use now. There is a story behind every name, be it a description of a rock, who discovered a particular hole where crabs could be caught, or names could refer to people or events, some long forgotten by now.

The Llŷn Coast Path is these days part of the Wales Coast Path and everyone has the opportunity to appreciate the beauty by going from port to beach, on a route that almost never leaves the shore.

Abergeirch (SH 26704045)



Directions: You can get there by following the Wales Coast Path along Nefyn Golf Course near Porthdinllaen, or from the other direction from Porth Bryn Gŵydd, Edern (SH 25944000). You can also take a path to the sea shore from the bridge at Edern on the B4417.

Afon Geirch flows from Cors Geirch (marsh + oats) through Nant y Gledrydd and the village of Edern, and to the sea at Abergeirch.

Aber Geirch was one of J. Glyn Davies's favourite places:

*'At bwll y cefnro'n Abergeirch,
rhu'r môr ar glybod,
a'r tonnau'n hyrddio i mewn fel meirch,
– mil mwy i ddyfod.
Ond tawel iawn oedd bwthyn Sian
cyn mynd yn furddun
Hen Sian a'i hieir, cath, barcud, brân,
holl deulu'r llecyn.*

He describes the noisy sea roaring into to the gravel of Abergeirch, the waves hurling themselves in like horses – with a thousand more to come.

But the cottage, now ruined, was once Sian's quiet home, living there when the only other inhabitants were her chickens, a cat and the wildlife, a hawk, a crow.

A phone cable once ran from Aber Geirch, linking Britain and Ireland. It was a thick cable about 75mm in diameter and lying on the sea bed. Soldiers protected it during the First World War, and it was used for many years after that until better means of communication came to replace it.

To the south west there are inlets – Porth Tŷ Mawr and Porth Poli, Porth Bryn Gŵydd and Porth Bryn Ogo. Then there is the headland of Trwyn Cwmistir (SH 24903970).

Traeth Tywyn (SH 23103755)



Directions: Turn towards the sea off the B4417 (Nefyn – Aberdaron) 0.5km north of Tudweiliog. Follow the narrow road until you get to Tywyn farm. The beach may be shown as Porth Tywyn on maps.

This is a very attractive sandy beach sheltered by high soil cliffs. In the direction of Porthdinllaen from here, towards the headland of Trwyn Cwmistir are the coves of Porth Cae Coch, Porth Pengallt, Porth y Big, Porth Mynachdy and Porth Pant Gwyn, one after the other. They are named after the land belonging to those farms, which extends down to the shore.

At the southern end of Tywyn beach there is a rock in the sand. This is the Ebol – the foal – and it has a mark like a foal's hoof on it. There was a belief that market prices would be low when the sand covered this mark, but much better when the sand level was lower. Farmers used to remove sand from the rock, to ensure that market prices went up!

There was a tale that people could walk across on dry land from Llŷn to Ireland in the past. It was said the parson from Tudweiliog would ride there on his horse, called Weiliog, between tides. He would try to get back before the tide came in again but he almost failed once. He encouraged his horse onwards by calling 'Tyd, Weiliog!' ('Come on, Weiliog'). And that's how, according to the story, Tudweiliog got its name.



The rock Cerrig Delysg can be seen at low tide, and an edible seaweed called 'delysg' in Welsh lives on it (Latin – *Fucus palmatus*)

About 2.5km north east along the shore from Tywyn are the rocks at Rhosgor (SH 24303940) where the 'Cyprian' was wrecked in October 1881.

To the west of Tywyn there is Porth Sglaig, and near Penrhyn Crydd the river Afon Felin (Afon Cwyfan previously) flows into the sea. The well of Ffynnon Cwyfan is on the bank of that river, near the sea. Tudweiliog church was established by Cwyfan. There are particular coastal names here such as Llety'r Eilchion, Porth Lydan (cove + wide), Penrhyn Copor (headland + copper) and Porth Cychod (cove + boats).

Porth Cychod (SH 22073754)



Directions: (As for Porth Ysgaden) Turn towards the sea and onto a narrow road off the B4417 (Nefyn – Aberdaron) about 1km south of Tudweiliog. Go right at the first junction, which is on a bend. Then go on to the next junction and keep left. Then onto a track that leads directly to the sea. (A distance of 2km from the o B4417). Then walk northwards to Porth Cychod

Porth Cychod (cove + boats) is where some of the fishermen of Tudweiliog and Penllech kept their boats.

On the headland there is a small stone walled shed. This originally had only three walls and was a shelter used by people from the manor house when they visited the shore in summer. The Cefnamwlch estate owns much of the land in the parishes of Tudweiliog and Penllech.

In 1933, two lads went off on an adventure when they went out in a boat from here to attend to lobster pots. They lost the oars and there was nothing they could do, and were driven north by the wind and tide. They continued like this for 35 hours but were eventually fortunate enough to land safely in Kilkeel, Northern Ireland. Their families and the whole community were very worried about them, but a message came to say they were safe, and words cannot describe the joy that brought.

It's a strange coincidence that the cousins of one of them, three brothers from Tir Dyrys, Rhoshirwaun were drowned three months later after setting off in a boat from Porth Widlin (Porth Fesyg)

Porth Ysgaden (SH 219333743)



Directions: Turn towards the sea, onto a narrow road off the B4417 (Nefyn – Aberdaron) about 1km south of Tudweiliog. Go right at the first junction, which is on a bend. Then go on to the next junction and keep left. Then turn right onto a track, that will take you directly to the port. (A distance of 2km from the B4417.)

Porth Ysgaden (cove + herring) is small port was very busy a century and more ago, when small ships visited about six times a year. They would bring a variety of goods such as crockery, leather, iron, pitch, tar, tobacco, snuff, tea, coffee, wine, sugar and oranges. They would carry the waste from Dublin's shops as ballast, to be spread as a fertilizer on fields, and also carry wax candles, cloth, and empty barrels to hold herring. In August 1759 five dozen felt hats were brought from Caernarfon to Porth Ysgaden. In the early nineteenth century farm produce would be exported – goods such as butter and cheese.

The Cefnamwlch estate owns most of the properties in Tudweiliog parish, as well as Porth Ysgaden.

The residents would fish for herring from here, and farmers depended a great deal on them, to sell and for salting. The tenants of the Cefnamwlch estate used to pay their rents twice a year, in early May and early November, but it would be deferred until Christmas to allow them to use the money from herring to pay the rent.

Limestone was imported and burnt in the kiln at the top of the cliff. The lime would then be ready for farmers to collect, to spread on the land. Because the kiln was warm, women from the area would come here to chat and to knit.

Nearby is the gable end of the house where a boat builder lived. They would light a lamp and put it in the window of the house to warn ships – like a lighthouse, or to lead smugglers' ships into the harbour.



Ein Treftadaeth
Our Heritage

The Sea *continued*



The Coast Path heading east leads to Porth Cychod (SH 22073754) and on to Traeth Tywyn (Porth Tywyn on OS map) or west to Porth Gwylan (cove + gull) (SH 21633685) and Porth Ychain (cove + oxen) (SH 21063600).



Follow the Story

Find out more about the area's industrial past by visiting the Llŷn Maritime Museum, Nefyn – Learn more about Llŷn's maritime heritage by visiting the museum housed in St Mary's Church.