

# The Sloop 'William Skyrme'

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This is an abridged version of a more detailed article published in the library section of *The Skyrme Family History and One-Name Study* website [www.skyrme.info](http://www.skyrme.info).

I was aware of a ship called 'William Skyrme', since when searching newspaper archives for William Skyrme, a person, many entries came back from sections labelled 'Shipping Intelligence'. However, my interest in the ship of that name was piqued when I received an email reminding me of a ship of the same name and indicating that it was one of a number of ships that were based in Laugharne, Carmarthenshire at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

An earlier email from the same correspondent provided me with some new (to me) information about persons named William Skyrme of Laugharne. They were descendants of the wealthy Llawhaden Skyrmes. I was also made aware of an article about Island House in Laugharne, which gives quite a bit of information on a William Skyrme and his family who lived there in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> These emails led to me finding out more about the ship of the same name.

## The Sloop and Its Voyages

My main research sources were the *British News Archive* (accessed through FindMyPast) and archive editions of *Lloyd's Register of Shipping*.<sup>3</sup> The first reference to a ship called 'William Skyrme' was an entry in the supplement of the 1818 edition of the *Lloyd's Register*. This listed the ship as a sloop weighing 65 tons and being 7 years old. Later registers suggest that the sloop was built in Carmarthen about 1814, but an advert in *The Cambrian* on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1821 confirms it as Laugharne in 1811.

CARMARTHEN.  
TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,  
At the Three Mariners, on the Quay, on Friday, the 26th  
of October instant, at four o'clock in the afternoon,  
ALL THAT  
GOOD SLOOP,  
CALLED THE  
WILLIAM SKYRME,  
Now lying at the Quay, together with her MATERIALS  
and STORES, well adapted for the Coasting Trade, and  
may be sent to sea immediately; her dimensions, per Re-  
gister, are—in length 52 feet 4 inches, breadth 17 feet 8  
inches, depth 9 feet 6 inches, admeasures 65 44-94th Tons;  
built at Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, in the year 1811.  
Payment in six, twelve, and eighteen months, by equal  
instalments, on approved security.  
Apply to Messrs. Morris's, Morgan, and Co. Carmarthen,  
if by letter, post-paid.

Checking the register entries year by year shows that it had significant repairs in the 1820s and a new deck and top side in 1834. A sloop is a single-masted vessel, and the William Skyrme would have looked something like that shown in a sketch by George Chambers 'A Sloop with a view on the coast of Devonshire', c1825.

<sup>1</sup> Email from Anne and Phil Rees. Anne's Wikitree mentions William Skyrme of Laugharne.

<sup>2</sup> 'Island House, Luagharne', Peter Stopp, *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, Vol 57, pp41-47 (2017), accessible at [archive.org](http://archive.org)

<sup>3</sup> Accessible at [http://www.lfndation.org.uk/public\\_education/reference-library/register-of-ships-online/](http://www.lfndation.org.uk/public_education/reference-library/register-of-ships-online/)



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The *Lloyd's Register* also gives names of masters and owners. Piecing together details from annual editions gives a timeline of its masters: Richards (1818-1819), D. Owen (1820-1822), D. Johns (1822-1823), S. Phillips (1823-1826), T. Lloyd (1826-1832), T. Griffiths (1832-1840) and J. Lloyd (1840-1844).

Analysis of 'Shipping Intelligence' newspaper entries shows that it mainly plied the coastal waters of Wales, England and Ireland. With poor inland communications, coastal trade was brisk in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The port of Carmarthen was at its heyday in the 1840s. So the 'William Skyrme' would have tapped into that demand. A typical coaster might sail for 6-8 days followed by 12-15 in port, so doing only about 10 voyages a year.

Altogether I have found over 100 entries of port arrivals and departures in newspaper reports from an estimated 300 or so over the sloop's lifetime. The table summarises the ports of arrival and departure,

Port	1811-1820	1821-1830	1831-1840	1841-1843
S. Wales	36	16	5	2
Cardiff	-	4	11	2
Bristol	1	3	3	-
Ireland	3	7	10	8
London	14	6	1	5
Liverpool	-	3	5	2
Bristol	1	3	3	-
Glasgow	3	2	1	1
France	-	-	-	3

Of the South Wales ports, the most frequently listed were Carmarthen: 27 (all before 1831), Milford: 19 (15 before 1831) and Llanelly: 9 (all before 1831). Others were Newport, Pembrey, Cardigan, St Dogmaels. The Irish ports most frequently visited were Dublin, Limerick, and Cork.

In the sloop's early days there were many sailings between Carmarthen and London, taking tin plates on the way out and sundries on the way back. There were also some local coal trips, e.g. Llanelly to Carmarthen. Milford featured throughout the 'William Skyrme's' lifetime, often being a stopping in port on a longer voyage, e.g. Carmarthen to Newry, Carmarthen to Glasgow, Cardiff to Dublin, Newport to Londonderry.

The 1830s saw an ongoing presence at Cardiff, with sailings in several directions – to Cork, Glasgow, Bristol and Liverpool. The Irish sailings also increased. She also made a few trips to France in 1843 and 1844. Where cargoes are shown (infrequently) it was agricultural products coming in from Ireland and iron and coal leaving South Wales.

A typical shipping entry for an arrival or departure at port might just have this information: Wm Skyrme, Lloyd, Liverpool". Sometimes cargo, weather and incidents are added. A couple of those relating to the William Skyrme were:

"Losses and damage at Milford due to a violent storm from SW on Sunday night and Monday morning, viz. Perseverance from Liverpool to Galway driven on shore and went to pieces, most of cargo lost. A dozen ships driven on shore and a dozen lost masts. The William Skyrme, from Carmarthen to Glasgow, lost her bowsprit." (26 Oct 1812)

"Put into Milford on Monday, being leaky in her upper works." (Milford Oct 1818)

### **A Sad Demise**

Reports in several newspapers describe how on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1844 she sunk:

"The William Skyrme of Cardigan, hence to Dublin, sank after running in her anchors 4 inst. In the roads, but was subsequently got afloat, and up to the quay - cargo discharging in a damaged state."

Some sources suggest that this sinking off Tralee was her end. But she did refloat on the 6<sup>th</sup> April. The next report from Tralee dated 24<sup>th</sup> April noted that she sailed for Dublin "after repairing". I have found reports of seven subsequent voyages between Ireland and England, and the latest one I have found is from Teignmouth to Glasgow on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 1844. The *Lloyd's Register* entry for 1844 lists her details just as in the previous year, but with a note in the margin "MISSING". So did she sink or was she scrapped?

### **The Laugharne Connection**

We know that the 'William Skyrme' was built at Laugharne and there is some evidence that it traded from there since Laugharne was a working port. But how did she get her name? William Skyrme, a person, was born in Llawhaden about 1746 and died in Laugharne in 1788. With his wife Jane, they had five children all born in Laugharne, including eldest son William (1778-1823). They lived at Island House.

The family were well connected and William's father was the Portreeve of Laugharne Corporation in 1775 as indeed William himself was in 1801-2 and 1817. Now William married Mary Lewis on 17 May 1811, the same year that the sloop was built. Since Island House was probably quite close to where the sloop was built, it is reasonable to assume that this was a way of recognising William and celebrating the occasion. Of course, it could also be that William paid for it out of his own pocket or that it was a dowry from Mary's parents. An intriguing thought.

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