

## The Sloop 'William Skyrme'

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 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 Llawhaden Skyrmes. I was also made aware of an article by Peter Stopp on Island House in Laugharne, a house where a William Skyrme and his family lived in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of the email exchanges, I decided to find more about the 'William Skyrme' the ship, and try and understand its connection to William Skyrme the person.

### Information Sources

Two main sources were to research this article were the *British News Archive* (accessed through FindMyPast) and *Lloyds Register of Shipping*.<sup>2</sup> Some of the newspapers in the newspaper archive were regional (e.g. Cardiff Times) and others national (e.g. Shipping and Mercantile Gazette).

In addition, several academic articles on coastal trade provided some useful background.

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

<sup>2</sup> Accessible at [http://www.lrfoundation.org.uk/public\\_education/reference-library/register-of-ships-online/](http://www.lrfoundation.org.uk/public_education/reference-library/register-of-ships-online/)

### The Sloop

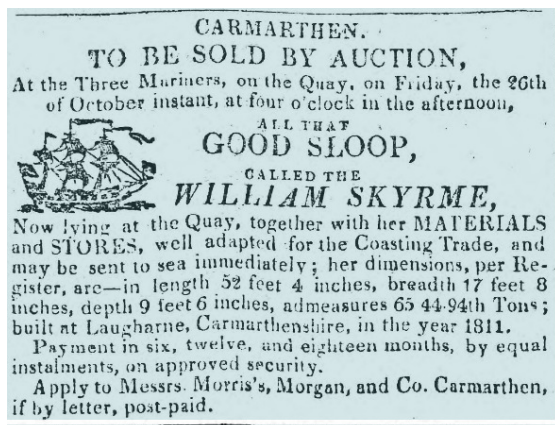
The first reference to the William Skyrme in Lloyds register of Shipping was an entry in the supplement to the 1818 edition where it shown as 7 years old.



The entry gives the following information (explanation after = sign):

- Sl = Sloop
- Richards = name of master
- 65 = weight in tons (entries 1834 and later give its weight as 66 tons)
- SD = single deck
- Wales = where built (some later entries say Carmarthen)
- Morris & Co. = name of owners
- 8 = feet of draught (a few entries say 9)
- Coastr = Intended voyages (coaster)

The registers after 1837 give the actual build year, which is given as 1814. This is wrong, however, since the age given in all the previous registers points to 1810-11. The registers suggest that the sloop was built in Carmarthen, but an advert in *The Cambrian* on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1821 confirms it as Laugharne in 1811 as well as giving more detailed information:



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, and measures 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.

It obviously didn't sell since there was an almost identical advert three weeks later but with the heading "For Sale By Private Contract".

Going through the register entries year by year shows some of the changes the sloop went through during its life:

- 1822 – damage repair
- 1826 – large repair
- 1827 – new upper works
- 1834 – new deck and new top-side
- 1840 – some repairs

Entries from 1826 indicate that it had proved iron cables as well as hemp ropes. For much of its life it was classed as 2<sup>nd</sup> class, but when classifications changed in 1934 it was classified as 1<sup>st</sup> class, 2<sup>nd</sup> description. This meant that it had not been inspected during its build but that it had "passed its prescribed age and not restored to its 1<sup>st</sup> description". It was deemed to be "in a condition for safe conveyancing of dry and perishable goods".

## Coastal Sloops

Coastal trade was brisk in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is not surprising given that the railways had not arrived and the road infrastructure not a patch on what we have today. The port of Carmarthen was at its heyday in the 1840s. So the 'William Skyrme' would have tapped into that demand.

A sloop is a single-masted sailing vessel (not like the sketch in the advert!). The image below is of a sketch by George Chambers 'A Sloop with a view on the coast of Devonshire', c1825, and hence probably similar to that of the 'William Skyrme'.



(Image: low-res image courtesy of The Royal Academy, Creative Commons License)

At any given time in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, hundreds of sailing ships would be hugging the British coast hauling goods from one port to another. In fact various 'shipping intelligence' entries show sometimes over 100 vessels departed from a single port on a single day. Research by others indicate average sailing times of 6-8 days, with as much as 12-15 days in port. A typical coaster might only do 8-10 voyages a year.

One of the intriguing aspects of the 'William Skyrme' was that in 1840 it was reclassified by Lloyds as a schooner. This was a year of "some repairs". A schooner is a two-masted vessel, usually with a smaller fore-mast. So presumably this was done at the time of the repairs.

## Owners and Masters

The Lloyds registers gives the owners from year to year. These were:

- 1818-1822: Morris & Co.
- 1823: Smith & Co.
- 1823-1829: J. Davis
- 1830-1833: Capt. & Co.
- 1834-1844: Edwards & Co.

The masters were:

- 1818-1819: Richards
- 1820-1822: D. Owens
- 1822-1823: D. Johns
- 1823-1826: S. Phillips
- 1826-1832: T. Lloyd
- 1832-1840: T. Griffiths
- 1840-1844: J. Lloyd

For some years two masters were listed, so they changed during the year as indicated where years are repeated above. For one year, 1835, J. Andersen was listed alongside T. Lloyd. Looking at sailings, the early years to 1818 saw a variety of masters on the sloop's various voyages. The names Hughes, Anthony, Evans, John are interspersed along with Richards.

An attempt has been made to find out more about these individuals. However, register and shipping information mostly simply lists the surname which is not much help when names like Griffiths, Lloyd and Owens are so common. A search of their names in the 1841 and 1851 censuses in Wales yielded hundred of results and using a filter such as "sailor", "mariner", "ship" yielded zero results.

## Sailings

As indicated earlier, newspaper 'shipping intelligence' reports give details of arrivals and departures at different ports around the country. I have been able to find 105 such references to the 'William Skyrme'. No doubt there are more, but many papers have not been digitised and there are also many OCR errors in those that have. Over its 33-year life the William Skyrme may have done over 300 voyages. However, the sample of 105 is sufficient to give a flavour of the routes and cargoes it undertook.

A quick analysis of the sailings shows the following as the main points of departure and arrival:

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, these were the most frequently listed:

- Carmarthen: 27 (all before 1831)
- Milford: 19 (15 before 1831)
- Llanelly: 9 (all before 1831)

Other Welsh ports mentioned were Newport, Pembrey, Cardigan, St Dogmaels. The Irish ports most frequently mentioned were:

- Dublin: 5
- Limerick: 5
- Cork: 3
- Newry: 3

Other ports were Belfast, Downpatrick, Dundalk, Londonderry, Sligo, Strangford, Tralee and Waterford.

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.

Although Carmarthen featured very much in the 1820s, many other ports were visited, and the sailings more varied, including:

- Dundalk to Southampton with oats
- St. Ives to Llanelly with copper ore
- Cardiff to Liverpool with 84 tons bar and bolt iron for Yates and Cox
- Sligo to Liverpool with 71½ tons oats for Sanders & Claxton, 134 firkins butter Bryans, Herd & Co.
- Waterford to Liverpool with 84 tons of wheat for Barnwall & McDermott.
- Gloucester to Pembrey.

The 1830s saw an ongoing presence at Cardiff, with sailings in several directions – to Cork, Glasgow, Bristol and Liverpool. The Irish sailings also increased. Where cargoes are shown (infrequently) it was agricultural products coming in from Ireland and iron and coal leaving South Wales. Another port that featured in this period was Ulverstone in Cumbria (now spelt without the final 'e'). It seems that iron ore was brought to Liverpool and Cardiff..

The 1840s saw service mostly on the Ireland routes, though in 1843 we see the first excursion abroad. Having recently arrived from Limerick the 'William Skyrme' set sail on 3<sup>rd</sup> April from Liverpool for Le Havre and Rouen. In 1844 she did two other trips to Rouen, one from Clyde and the other from Crookhaven (in County Cork).

### **Additional Intelligence**

The normal structure of a shipping report is very terse. A port is listed, e.g. Cardiff, then a heading, e.g. Sailed, then an entry such as:

“Wm Skyrme, Lloyd, Liverpool”.

Occasionally there is additional information. It mostly falls into two categories – the weather, and incidents. An early reference covers both these situations. A report for 26 Oct 1812 at Milford states:

“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.”

The weather is exemplified in this entry of March 1844:

“Crookhaven, The William Skyrme, previously reported, put back today, having experienced rough weather, with wind E.”

Sometimes the weather was obviously favourable as these two examples illustrate:

Newport (Oct 1836): “Outwards .. and 100 vessels with coal.”

Cardigan (Apr 1841): “Sailed a large fleet of coasters for different ports in the Bristol Channel and round land”

Other reports identify particular problems that beset 'William Skyrme':

Milford (Sep 1813): “Very leaky and must discharge her cargo, in order to repair.”

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

Plymouth (Nov 1822): “Put into Plymouth on Tuesday, leaky.”

### Demise of the 'William Skyrme'

Reports in several newspapers describe how on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1844 she sunk. Here is one from Tralee in Ireland:

"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 the sinking off Tralee was her end, e.g. Wikipedia names her in a list of 1844 wrecks. . 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, e.g. from Deal to Limerick in July 1844. The last one located is on 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 1844 from Teignmouth to Glasgow.

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 that is the last we hear of her. But how, exactly did she meet her end? Did she finish up in a breaker's yard in Glasgow? If so she started her life in South Wales, plied her trade between the four parts of the kingdom - Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland, and ended her life in Scotland.

### The Laugharne Connection

As the 1821 advertisements indicate, 'William Skyrme' was built at Laugharne. There is some evidence that the sloop traded from Laugharne which was a working port. However, none of the newspaper extracts lists Laugharne as a destination port. In its first decade the 'William Skyrme' was a frequent visitor to Carmarthen. It is possible that this may include Laugharne, since the account books of the Port of Carmarthen cover Laugharne, Burry and Llanelli as well. But newspaper reports do list these as separate

destination ports, rather than subsuming them under Carmarthen. Further research is needed to try and resolve this conundrum, not currently easy with the closure of Carmarthen Archives.

What we do know is that a William Skyrme 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). His burial record and later census records for his daughter Mary show the family as living at Island House, overlooking the River Taf. A good history of Island House and its Skyrme family occupants will be found in the article by Peter Stopp (see below).

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, i.e. William was an important local dignitary. 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.

### Additional Sources

'Cardigan & St. Dogmaels Ships and Captains', Glen Johnson (<http://www.glen-johnson.co.uk/cardigan-st-dogmaels-ships-and-captains/>)

*The Vital Spark: British Coastal Shipping 1700-1930*, John Armstrong, Oxford University Press (2017)

'Island House, Luagharne', Peter Stopp, *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, Vol 57, pp41-47 (2017).

**Appendix – Reported Sailings of the 'William Skyrme'**

Date	Port	Captain	Status	From	To / For
Jul-1811	Llanelly	Hughes	Arrived	Milford	
13-Jul-1811	Carmarthen	Richards	Arrived	Llanelly	
Nov-1811	Milford	Hughes	Sailed		Glasgow
Jun-1812	Llanelly	Richards	Arrived	Bristol	
Jun-1812	Llanelly	Richards	Cleared out		Cork
26-Oct-1812	Milford	Richards	Damaged	Carmarthen	Glasgow
8-Sep-1813	Milford	Evans	Arrived	Carmarthen	London
Dec-1813	Carmarthen	Evans	Arrived	London	
Apr-1814	Carmarthen	Evans	Arrived	London	
May-1814	Newport	Anthony	Arrived	Cork	
May-1814	Milford	Evans	Cleared out		Glasgow
May-1815	Llanelly	Hughes	Evans	London	
Dec-1816	Carmarthen	Treharne	Cleared out		London
Oct-1817	Carmarthen	Anthony	Arrived	London	
Jan-1818	Newport	Anthony	Cleared out		Carmarthen
9-Oct-1818	Milford	Richards	Put into	Carmarthen	London
14-Oct-1818	Milford	Richards	Sailed	Carmarthen	London
Dec-1818	Carmarthen	Richards	Cleared out		London
May-1819	Carmarthen	Owens	Cleared out		London
Jul-1819	Carmarthen	Owens	Arrived	London	
Jul-1819	Carmarthen	Owens	Cleared out	London	
Feb-1820	Carmarthen	John	Cleared out	London	
12-Apr-1820	Milford	Owens	Arrived	Carmarthen	Newry
Apr-1820	Carmarthen	John	Cleared out	London	
Apr-1820	Carmarthen	Owen	Cleared out	London	
11-Oct-1820	Scilly	Birkin	Put into	London	Carmarthen
Dec-1820	Carmarthen	John	Cleared out	London	
28-Dec-1820	Milford	John	Arrived	Carmarthen	
Mar-1821	Bristol	Johns	Coaster came in	London	
Mar-1821	Camarthen	Johns	Arrived	London	
26-Apr-1821	Milford	John	Arrived and sailed	Carmarthen	Glasgow
Apr-1822	Carmarthen		Cleared out	London	
Sep-1822	Milfod	Jhn	Sailed	London	Carmarthen
31-Oct-1822	St. Ives	John	Arrived	Carmarthen	
8-Nov-1822	Plymouth	John	Put into	Carmarthen	London
13-Nov-1822	St. Ives	John	Sailed		London
8-Feb-1823	Llanelly	John	Arrived	Truro	
Feb-1823	Llanelly	John	Cleared out	Carmarthen	
Feb-1823	Carmarthen	John	Arrived	Llanelly	
Mar-1823	Carmarthen	John	Arrived	Llanelly	
May-1823	Milford	Phillips	Arrived	Cardiff	Dublin
Sep-1823	Southampton	Phillips	Arrived	Dundalk	

*The Sloop 'William Skyrme'*

Jun-1824	Llanelly	Phillips	Arrived	St Ives	
1825	St Dogmaels	Thomas Lloyd			
Jan-1826	Liverpool	T. Lloyd	In George's Dock	Cardiff	
Aug-1826	Liverpool	T. Lloyd	Arrived	Sligo	
Sep-1826	Waterford	Lloyd	At		
Oct-1826	Liverpool	T. Lloyd	Arrived In George's Dock	Waterford	
Aug-1827	Cardiff	Lloyd	Arrived	Dublin	
Jul-1828	Milford	Lloyd	Arrived	Glasgow	
Jul-1828	Milford	Lloyd	Sailed		Cardigan
Feb-1829	Milford	Lloyd	Arrived	Newport	Londonderry
May-1829	Pembrey	Lloyd	Arrived	Bristol	
Mar-1830	Cardiff		Arrived	Bristol	
May-1830	Pembrey	Lloyd	Arrived	Gloucester	
Jun-1830	London	Lloyd	In the river	Londonderry	
Feb-1831	Cardiff	Lloyd	Sailed		Glasgow
Nov-1831	Cardiff	Lloyd	Sailed		Cork
22-May-1832	Ulverstone	Lloyd	Inwards	Liverpool	
Jun-1832	Cardiff	Lloyd	Sailed	Liverpool	
14-Jul-1832	Ulverstone	Lloyd	Outwards		Cardiff
Aug-1832	Cardiff	Griffiths	Sailed		Downpatrick
Nov-1832	Bristol	Griffiths	Imported	Newry	
Dec-1832	Cardiff	Griffiths	Arrived	Bristol	
Nov-1834	Cardiff	Griffiths	Irish outwards		Dublin
Jan-1835	Newport	Griffiths	Outwards		
19-Oct-1835	Dublin	Griffiths	Arrived	London	
18-Nov-1835	Poole	Griffiths	Arrived	Portsmouth	
Dec-1835	Cardiff	Griffiths	Coaster outwards		Shoreham
Jan-1836	Newport	Griffiths	Outwards		
Jun-1836	Milford	Griffiths	Arrived	Newport	
Jun-1836	Milford	Griffiths	Outwards		
27-Aug-1836	Liverpool	Griffiths	Arrived	Cardiff	
Oct-1836	Cardiff	Griffiths	Coaster outwards		Newport
Oct-1836	Newport	Griffiths	Outwards		
29-Jan-1837	Cork	Griffiths	Arrivals	Chester	
Mar-1837	Cardiff	Griffiths	Coaster inwards	Ulverstone	
Sep-1837	Cardiff	Griffiths	Inwards	Liverpool	Limerick
Oct-1837	Bristol		Arrived	Limerick	
Oct-1837	Bristol		Arrived	Newry	
12-Mar-1838	Liverpool	Griffiths	Arrived	Tralee	
7-Apr-1838	Holyhead	Griffiths	Put in and remain	Liverpool	Pwllheli
Feb-1839	Southampton	Griffiths	Sailing		Glasgow
22-Jul-1839	Strangford	Lloyd	Put in	Belfast	Southampton
1840		John Lloyd			
9-May-1840	Carlisle	Lloyd	Arrived	Ulverstone	

*The Sloop 'William Skyrme'*

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Jun-1840	Milford	Lloyd	Arrived	Cardiff	Dublin
30-Apr-1841	Cardigan	Lloyd	Arrived	London	Liverpool
4-May-1841	Cardigan	Lloyd	Arrived	London	Londonderry
Mar-1842	Milford	Lloyd	Arrived	London	Newry
14-Mar-1843	Liverpool	Lloyd	Arrived	Limerick	
3-Apr-1843	Liverpool	Lloyd	Entered for loading		Le Havre and Rouen
21-May-1843	Rouen	Lloyd	At		
19-Jan-1844	Le Havre	Lloyd	Arrived	Clyde	
6-Mar-1844	Falmouth	Lloyd	Sailed		Limerick
10-Mar-1844	Crookhaven	Lloyd	Put in	Rouen	
19-Mar-1844	Crookhaven	Lloyd	Put back		
6-Apr-1844	Tralee		Sunk		
24-Apr-1844	Tralee	Lloyd	Sailed		Dublin
23-May-1844	Cardiff	Lloyd	Arrived	Dublin	
4-Jun-1844	Limerick	Lloyd	Arrived	Cardiff	
19-Jun-1844	Limerick	Lloyd	Sailed	London	
9-Jul-1844	Deal	Lloyd	Arrived	Limerick	
12-Jul-1844	London	Lloyd	Entered inwards	Limerick	
26-Jul-1844	London		Outwards		Westport
30-Sep-1844	Teignmouth	Lloyde	Sailed		Glasgow