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Dublin Core

Title

An RNLI Gold Medal Rescue | Medal Aur yr RNLI am Achub

Subject

RNLI

Anglesey

Lifeboats

Creator

Aled Lewis Jones

Publisher

Ports, Past and Present Project

Date

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Relation

<https://perma.cc/CJQ3-59PY>

Format

Curatescape story

Language

English

Welsh

Coverage

53.31427341022938, -4.6891374414993665

Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

Lede

This story is one of a continuing series to showcase some of the special objects we have in the museum's collection. The Gold Medal we feature was awarded over a hundred years ago to William Owen, Coxswain of the Holyhead Lifeboat. It is a story of absolute bravery in the face of a raging sea to save the crew of 9 on the little steamer, the SS Harold. It is also the story of the RNLI's first steam driven lifeboat.

Lede (Welsh)

Mae'r stori hon yn un mewn cyfres barhaus i arddangos rhai o'r gwrthrychau arbennig sydd gennym yng nghasgliad yr amgueddfa. Dyfarnwyd y Fedal Aur yn y stori hon dros gan mlynedd yn ôl i William Owen, Cocs Bad Achub Caergybi. Mae'n stori am ddewrder llwyr yn wyneb môr tymhestlog i achub y criw o naw ar fwrdd stemar bach, yr SS Harold. Dyma hefyd stori bad achub stêm cyntaf yr RNLI.

Story

The Duke of Northumberland lifeboat was revolutionary in that she used water jets instead of propellers. Water was drawn in through the forward section of hull and forced out at great pressure through the vents in the side of the boat. This made it a lot more maneuverable than other lifeboats. Not having a propeller she was also less likely to become tangled in ships rigging. She was built in 1886 and first went into service at Harwich in September 1890. The lifeboat's first period at Holyhead was from 1892 to 1893 and she returned to service in the port in 1897.

In late February 1908, the steam vessel *Harold* was carrying china clay from Teignmouth to Liverpool. In foul weather her engines broke down and becoming unmanageable she anchored between the south and north stacks off Holyhead, but she started drifting and became dangerously close to rocks between the two headlands.

At 2pm on February 22, 1908 *The Duke of Northumberland* was called upon to give assistance and was launched into very rough seas. In gale force winds which were near hurricane force she took two hours to reach the ill-fated Liverpool steamer. Despite mountainous seas, the able work of the coxswain maneuvered the lifeboat near enough to the *Harold* to enable six men to be taken off the stricken vessel by line. The last three men were able to jump aboard the rescuer. All the crew were saved but the *Harold* foundered the next day.

Due to his skill and courage during the rescue, Coxswain William Owen was presented with the RNLI's Gold Medal and the rest of the crew (including Owen's son) were presented with Silver Medals. This is one of four Gold Medals awarded to the Holyhead Lifeboat Station. Coxswain Owen had previously been awarded the Institute's Silver Medal and the Silver Medal of the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society for the rescue of three of the crew of the *Tenby Castle* in December 1889.

William Owen was presented with his Gold Medal by the Prince of Wales at Marlborough House, London on Monday 4 May 1908. Owen served as Coxswain from 1899 to 1915. He

was also a Trinity House Pilot for 45 years. His obituary on his death in 1921 described him with these words, "*He was as fearless as a lion, and was ever in the midst of the perils which beset the vast deep*".

Story (Welsh)

Roedd bad achub *The Duke of Northumberland* yn chwyldroadol gan ei fod yn defnyddio jetiau dŵr yn lle sgriwiau. Câi'r dŵr ei dynnu i mewn drwy ran flaen corff y llong a'i orfodi allan dan bwysedd mawr drwy fentiau yn ochr y bad. Roedd hyn yn ei wneud yn llawer haws i'w symud na badau achub eraill. Am nad oedd ganddo sgriw, roedd hefyd yn llai tebygol o gael ei ddal yn rhaffau llongau eraill. Cafodd ei adeiladu ym 1886 ac aeth i wasanaeth am y tro cyntaf yn Harwich ym mis Medi 1890. Cyfnod cyntaf y bad achub yng Nghaergybi oedd rhwng 1892 a 1893 a dychwelodd i wasanaethu yn y porthladd ym 1897.

Ar ddiwedd Chwefror 1908, roedd y llong *stêm Harold* yn cario clai llestri o Teignmouth i Lerpwl. Mewn tywydd mawr, methodd ei pheiriannau ac aeth yn amhosibl ei rheoli. Angorodd rhwng Ynys Arw ac Ynys Lawd oddi ar Gaergybi, ond dechreuodd ddrifftio ac aeth yn beryglus o agos at y creigiau rhwng y ddau bentir.

Am 2pm ar 22 Chwefror 1908, galwyd ar *The Duke of Northumberland* i roi cymorth ac fe'i lanswyd ar fôr garw iawn. Mewn gwyntoedd a oedd yn agos at rym corwynt, cymerodd ddwy awr i gyrraedd y stemar anffodus o Lerpwl. Er gwaethaf y tonnau anferth, llwyddodd gwaith deheuig y cocs i fynd â'r bad achub yn ddigon agos i'r *Harold* i alluogi chwech o ddynion i gael eu tynnu oddi ar y llong fethedig â rhaffau. Llwyddodd y tri dyn olaf i neidio i'r bad achub. Cafodd y criw i gyd eu hachub ond drannoeth fe suddodd yr *Harold*.

Oherwydd ei fedr a'i ddewrder yn ystod yr achubiad, cyflwynwyd Medal Aur yr RNLI i'r Cocs William Owen a chyflwynwyd Medalau Arian i weddill y criw (gan gynnwys mab Owen). Dyma un o bedair Medal Aur a ddyfarnwyd i Orsaf Bad Achub Caergybi. Cyn hynny roedd Owen wedi ennill Medal Arian y Sefydliad a Medal Arian Cymdeithas Llongddrylliadau a Dyngarol Lerpwl am achub tri o griw'r *Tenby Castle* ym mis Rhagfyr 1889.

Cafodd y Fedal Aur ei chyflwyno i William Owen gan Dywysog Cymru yn Nhŷ Marlborough, Llundain ddydd Llun 4 Mai 1908. Bu Owen yn gwasanaethu fel Cocs rhwng 1899 a 1915. Bu hefyd yn Beilot Trinity House am 45 mlynedd. Yn y deyrnged iddo pan fu farw ym 1921, cafodd ei ddisgrifio â'r geiriau hyn: "*He was as fearless as a lion, and was ever in the midst of the perils which beset the vast deep*".

Factoid

Related Resources

Holyhead Maritime Museum, 'RNLI Gold Medal Rescue', Holyhead: Stories of a Port, 1 August, 2020, archived at <https://perma.cc/Y5BT-P86H>.

Official Website

<https://holyheadstoriesofaport.com/2020/08/01/rnli-gold-medal-rescue/>