

TROZE

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In Search of the *Queen* Transport

By Sue Kruk

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Troze is the journal of the National Maritime Museum Cornwall whose mission is to promote an understanding of small boats and their place in people's lives, and of the maritime history of Cornwall.

'Troze: the sound made by water about the bows of a boat in motion'
From R. Morton Nance, *A Glossary of Cornish Sea Words*

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Sue Kruk

Sue Kruk's childhood home overlooked Falmouth harbour and Trefusis Point. She was educated at Falmouth High School, and gained a BA from London University in 1967, a Diploma in Social Administration from Southampton and, much later, a BA (Hons) Fine Art from Chichester. After 25 years in social and charity work, including research at the London Hospital Medical College, she now divides her leisure time between local and family history, writing and printmaking. She visits Cornwall regularly.

In Search of the *Queen* Transport¹

Sue Kruk

Introduction

After nearly two hundred years, little seemingly remains of the wreck of the *Queen* Transport, which broke up on the rocks of Trefusis Point, Falmouth harbour, in January, 1814. The loss of life was significant; over 200 according to some reports and these included many women and children. The Grade II monument in Mylor Church yard, the best known and best preserved of at least three memorials to the wreck, remembers the ‘Warriors, Women and Children, who on their return from the Coast of Spain, unhappily perished’. As the bicentenary fast approaches, this article examines the wreck and the events surrounding it which had a major impact both locally and nationally. Additionally it seeks to identify the victims and survivors of the wreck and to put their deaths into context. Why was the *Queen* Transport such a significant and memorable news story? Who were the people involved, directly and indirectly? What were the events which led up the wreck? What traces survive? What was the wreck’s legacy?

The disaster was reported widely in 1814, and has been regularly retold ever since with varying degrees of accuracy.² Almost all of these retell it in terms recognizable from the original newspaper descriptions. Wrecks hold a fascination for many, the *Titanic* being the prime example, and there are several popular books on individual wrecks such as the North Devon wreck explored by Jeremy Seal.³ A common view is that most wrecks happen at sea but Adrian Jarvis is one of the few historians to examine the many accidents and wrecks that happened within a port, in his case the busy Port of Liverpool.⁴ As Jarvis points out, most academic historians have concentrated more on the aspects of safety at sea rather than the wrecks themselves.⁵

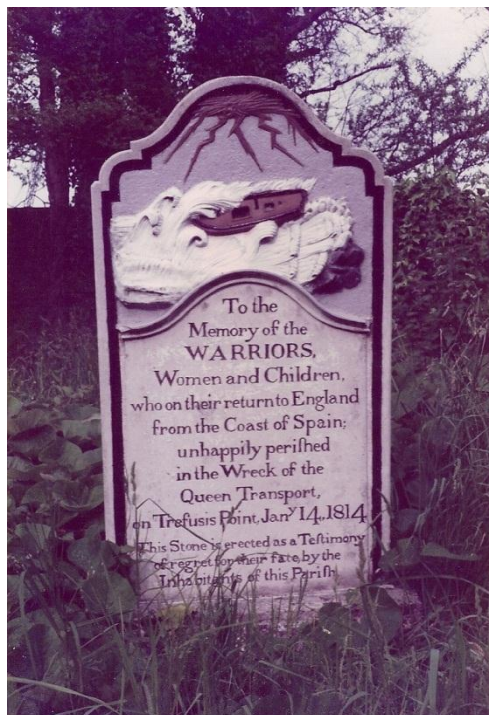


Figure 1: The Warrior Stone in Mylor Churchyard, newly painted c 1990
Source: Photograph by the author

Background

The *Queen* was one of many transport ships bringing home Wellington's troops as the Peninsular War in Spain and Portugal neared its end. She was moored in the apparent safety of Falmouth for some days, when a storm blew up on Thursday 13th January 1814. In the atrocious weather which followed in the early morning of the next day, the *Queen* was driven onto Trefusis Point, in Falmouth's inner harbour, and was totally destroyed in a very short time, with great loss of life.

Falmouth Harbour, on Cornwall's south west coast is one of the best natural harbours in the world, in sharp contrast to the exposed north coast of Cornwall and Devon. The harbour is large, deep and sheltered, except from the south east. Between 1781 and 1939 there have been just eight major losses, including the *Queen*, on the lee shore, facing the open sea between Trefusis Point and Mylor.⁶

As a transport ship, that is a merchant ship with a merchant crew hired by the Government, there were implications regarding the competence and discipline of the crew and her seaworthiness. But although the Merchant Shipping Act of 1786 required that a ship's loss should be officially recorded, it was not until 1854, that the Board of Trade conducted enquiries into shipping losses.⁷ So there is little official information available. What information there is on the disaster has come from a wide range of sources such as newspaper reports, ships logs and contemporary accounts.



Figure: 2

Falmouth Harbour, 1813

Source:

Trefusis, Mylor, St Gluvias & Budock, from Truro & Falmouth Old Series 204, 1813. © Cassini Publishing Ltd. www.cassinimaps.com. Reproduced with permission

The Loss of Life

Without doubt the death toll, real or perceived, contributed to the lasting memory of the wreck. *Lloyds List* recorded her loss,

The *Queen* Transport, Carr, from Lisbon, was totally lost in Falmouth Harbour on Friday morning last, during a most violent Gale of Wind at S.E. About 360 men, women and children, (the men principally invalids of the Artillery) were on board, and only 110 were saved. The *Queen* was 340 tons, registered in London, Transport No 332.⁸

A few days later, these figures were amended, and again, widely reported:

The late melancholy loss of lives on board the *Queen* Transport, was less than at first feared and reported. An officer who was on board, assures us that the transport consisted of 8 officers, 185 NCOs and privates of artillery and sundry regiments of the line, with 63 women 59 children, of which 3 officers, 109 men and 10 women and children have been saved. This officer adds that a brother officer, who survives, lost his wife 4 (sic) children and the whole of his baggage and other property.

This report does not mention the Master, Carr, or the crew, or whether the informant included himself among the three surviving officers.⁹

The *Queen*'s demise was also newsworthy, simply from the unexpected location of the event. In 1810 Falmouth was deemed a superior place of safety by Captain James Manderson who wrote:

The Winter of 1796-7 was a season of very tempestuous weather, and there were then collected in Falmouth, three ships of the line, six frigates, several sloops of War, eight or ten large East Indiamen, Transports and at least two hundred sail of Merchant Vessels.¹⁰

Manderson continued by quoting other storms and statistics, yet there had been only a small number of casualties due to 'injudicious choice of anchorage'.

The disaster was all the more poignant, because the passengers had reached safety after so many years of danger in war, and a rough passage. The press used this disaster as a reference point, so that it remained in the public consciousness, such as when Her Majesty's Packet *Ranger* was wrecked in 1835 on the same Trefusis headland, in similar weather conditions with one fatality. In 1855 the barque *John*, went down on the Manacles in reasonable weather within hours of leaving Plymouth for Quebec and one hundred and ninety people died. 'So great a loss of life has not been experienced on this coast since the loss of the *Queen* transport in 1814' stated the *Sussex Advertiser*. When the *Cospatrick*, an emigrant ship bound for Auckland was wrecked by fire in 1874 and nearly 500 people perished, the readers were reminded that 'a marine calamity of anything like this magnitude' was the *Queen*.¹¹ Towards the end of the century, lists were compiled of shipping losses, always beginning with the *Queen*'s wreck, erroneously dated as 1800. She had become a by-word, a yard-stick, for maritime disaster.

The Victims

A wreck not only involves lost passengers and crew, but the bereaved families and, in the *Queen*'s case, a whole harbourside community. This included those serving on the many ships in harbour, who witnessed at close quarters, the death and injury sustained by the victims, and who were actively involved in the burial of the dead and the care of the survivors, a process which took months. Falmouth was, (and still is) a small town, and the event would have been a collective trauma.

In the many nineteenth century broadsheets and journals that described wrecks, 'The human elements in the events are down played ... yet in any tragedy it is precisely the human element, when investigated in detail, that awakens the imagination'. This was written by McIntyre, about another troop ship, the *Commerce*, in 1850 who saw her account of a minor episode as promoting the human equation in historical analysis. She saw it as providing an alternative to an official government account, and serving as a simple commemoration.¹² Certainly, the images from the *Queen*'s literature linger in the mind: the officer's lovely wife, in death still clutching her infant, the distraught soldier on deck trying to save his beloved wife, a little child in Boyers Cellars, 'that still had some part of its clothing and a silver whistle with small bells, tied round its neck with a light blue ribbon'.¹³

Events leading up to the Wreck

Contributing to the public response to the wreck, was the fact that the ‘warriors’ were gallant men, for the most part invalided members of the Royal Artillery, and a contingent from the 30th Regiment of Foot, (28-32 strong) under the command of Lieutenant Robert Daniell, returning from the Peninsular War. From the battles of Rolica (1808) and Corunna (1809) to San Sebastian (1813), the war had encompassed 19 pitched battles, innumerable combats, and ten sieges.¹⁴ A small proportion of soldiers’ wives, having drawn lots, followed their men to war, working as cooks, laundry women and seamstresses, and nursing the sick and wounded. Their children went too. It was a life which encompassed hardship, courage, and adventure.¹⁵

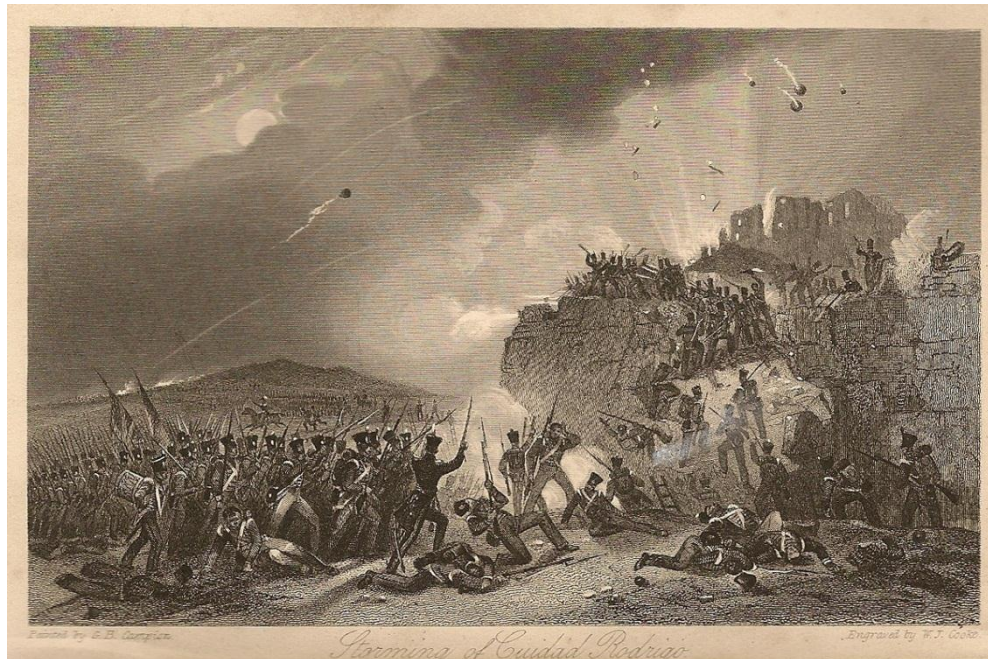


Figure 3: Storming of Ciudad Rodrigo
Source: *Life of the Duke of Wellington* by An Old Soldier (1852)

The *Queen* was reported as sailing from Lisbon, just after Christmas 1813, in convoy, with the *Latham*, *Ocean*, *Henry*, *Fame*, *Inclination*, *Ceres*, *Burton* and *Apollo*, under the protection of the 38-gun HMS. *Melpomene*, Captain Robert Rowley. Details of the voyage survive in the *Melpomene*'s log books.

Captain Rowley noted mooring in the Tagus on 7th December; making signals for all masters of the convoy for instruction on 26th December; ‘Lizard, 90 leagues’, on 1st January, ‘9 sails of convoy in sight’; and arrival in Falmouth with 8 sail of convoy on 7th. On the 13th, Rowley noted ‘fresh breezes’ and took down sail. On the 14th he ‘observed the *Queen* Transport No 332 on shore and a complete wreck. Fresh gales and squally.’ The *Melpomene*'s Master noted, ‘one of the Transports on Shore. No 332’.¹⁶

The date of arrival of the *Queen* is confused. The logs correspond with the newspaper reports of the convoy’s arrival on the 7th January, but that the *Queen* was separated from the rest, and arrived on 10th (or on the 14th). The *West Briton* reads, she ‘put into Falmouth on Monday se’nnight and brought up in Carrick Roads where she remained at a single anchor until the Thursday following’.

The Wreck and its Cause

Accounts of the event itself and its possible cause, not surprisingly, differ in the details. Less familiar than most, is the account given by John Bechervaise, in one of his two books of memoirs, *Thirty Six Years of a Seafaring Life by an Old Quarter Master*, written some years after the event.¹⁷ He described the *Queen* anchoring about half a cable's length astern of him, on 13th, after arriving from Pusages, after the Battle of San Sebastian and he mentions his own precautions for the safety of his ship knowing that a storm was imminent. He heard the minute guns in the Carrick Roads announcing danger and describes the intense anxiety, the snow and the 'dismal darkness' and two other vessels breaking adrift. He claimed that the *Queen* had fired guns from 11pm onwards, was drifting and in a squall at about 5 am and was driven across a rock about 40 yards from the shore.

The Times and the *Exeter Flying Post* reported the *Queen* was 'well moored', the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, a Truro based newspaper, reported 'only one cable and anchor out', while Bechervaise mentions the *Queen* parted from one and then the other of her cables, but is damning of others' seamanship.¹⁸

Forbid it heaven that I should cast reflections on men of superior abilities and years, but the event justifies me when I say that had some in charge of vessels acted exactly as I did, many valuable lives might have been spared.¹⁹

The recently established radical newspaper, *West Briton*, rival of the *Gazette*, was the most critical of all. It was also printed in Truro by John Heard, who had Falmouth connections, having worked with the printer William Penaluna, at Fish Strand and Market Street.

We have already stated, that the *Queen* rode at single anchor, and we learn that the scope of cable to this was not above thirty-five fathoms;- it should have been at least ninety or an hundred. On Thursday night it blew a heavy gale, and the appearance of the sky indicated an approaching storm:- that a vessel situated as the *Queen* was, should be left at such a time, depending upon the strength of a single cable, is truly astonishing ... There was another anchor over her bows, but no range of cable, a circumstance which rendered the anchor useless. A bad look out, or rather, no look out at all must have been kept by the watch, as no alarm was given until the vessel had parted her cable and was fast drifting ... We state these particulars on the best authority.²⁰

If the contemporary reports tell a confused story, there is modern confusion over the surviving crew with a relatively recent survey of wrecks indicating they all perished.²¹ The early news reports stated that the Master, Joseph Carr, and all the crew, except the bosun and cabin boy, survived. This is confirmed by Bechervaise,

From the account given by Mr. C- the master some days afterwards in my hearing, it appears that during the night the sheet cable had been ranged along the decks, and was intended to be let go in the event of her drifting, of which there did not appear to be much fear as the ship rode easy: but that the moment the men who had the watch called out that the ship was driving on the rocks, men, women and children rushed up the hatchway and so completely filled the range, that to have let go the anchor must have crushed nearly all those in the range to death; and before they were removed, the ship was on the rocks. In such a case scarce anything could have justified the anchor being let go.²²

Fifty years later, Polsue describes the port, and continues, 'that serious disasters have occurred to shipping in the harbour cannot be denied: but that have invariably been the results of bad seamanship or drunkenness.' And then cites the *Queen*. On Thursday, 13th:

... a gale commenced at E.S.E, which continued with increasing violence, accompanied with a fall of snow until Friday morning: yet no attempt was made to meet the gale, and the master was on shore. Of the crew only two were lost.²³

The italics were Polsue's, but no source given. However, an earlier publication, 'A *Panorama of Falmouth*' printed by and for J.Philp in 1827, gives the game away:- 'Being at single anchor, *the Commander and many of the Crew intoxicated, and no precautions taken, she parted her Cable*'.²⁴ Philp concludes, 'Thus in the safest harbour the Vessel and so many lives were lost, when with sobriety and common care no danger could ensue.' Philp is a credible witness as he had worked in Falmouth at the time as a printer. He later produced the *Falmouth Packet* from 1826 to 1829.²⁵

Interestingly, the Bodleian copy of this book, is annotated 'Gough, Cornw.adds' and has been censored, including the words 'the Commander and' crossed thickly through in black ink. It perhaps reflects a secondary concern over libel.²⁶

The incompetence of the crew remained a theme. In 1855, when the *John* went down, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* cited other Cornish wrecks with great loss of life, the *Dispatch* transport and the sloop *Primrose* in 1806 at the Manacles, comparing the reasons. The two ships at the Manacles

... owed their destruction to the very heavy gales:but the *Queen* was sacrificed by gross mismanagement ... With every prospect of a heavy gale the ship was left riding at single anchor. The Captain was on shore. With order and good management, most if not all could have been saved, but there was none to command, and it was every man for himself.²⁷

Whatever Carr's failings, it was also an exceptionally wild moonless night: a hurricane; and low water, neaps, at 5 am, just about the time the cable broke. Although there had been lightning, during the last fatal squall, visibility was virtually nil, due to the snow. Perhaps this too was a reason why the *Queen* had not attempted to run up either side of the harbour, as other ships had done, without serious consequences.²⁸ Newspapers described the ferocity of the storm, and the speed with which the ship was reduced to pieces.²⁹ Bechervaise, recalled that by the 17th,

The ship in two parts was laying as nearly as possible on her broadside, her hull, in parts, resting on her own spars, rigging and gear of all sorts. Strewed about the beach lay casks of provisions, cases, chests, arms etc and here and there a dead body whose hand or whose face only was visible amid the ruins of the wreck.³⁰

Identifying the Victims

The many differing reports provide a real challenge in identifying who survived and who perished on board. The parish registers of burials make for sombre reading. Mylor, St Gluvias (Penryn), Budock and Falmouth recorded multiple burials, over several weeks, and even St Anthony in Meneage, across the bay, buried one woman, confusing the *Queen* with the *Queen Charlotte*, from Falmouth, which sank near Lisbon in the same storm system.³¹

On board the *Queen* were men from several regiments, their families and some French prisoners. These included men from the 30th Regiment of Foot. They had embarked for Portugal in March 1809 and had served at Fuentes de Onoro, Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca and Burgos,³² All except five men survived the wreck. The dead were named as Privates Philip Grant, Philip Garrett, Josh Hunt, George Rowden, and James Waters, although there has to be some doubt about Rowden, since a soldier with his name claimed a medal in 1847.³³ One of the lost soldiers, unnamed, died from his wounds and was buried at Mylor. In the Regiment's Muster rolls in 1814, some names, including those above, are marked 'Wrecked off Falmouth date not notified: Brady, Cunningham, Finlay, Gerrard, Grant, Hodgson, James and Joshua Hunt, Matthews, Walsh, Ward, and Waters'. But the names do not entirely match with evidence from other Musters.³⁴

No. 43.	Eighty three dead bodies - Men Women & Children	Perished on the wreck of the Queen Transport off the coast of Portugal on 4 th Jan 1814	Jan 4 th 16	Clifton Curate
No. 44.	None dead bodies Men Women & Children	Washed ashore from the wreck of the Queen Transport above ship	Jan 4 th 17	Clifton Curate
No. 45.	Catherine wife of Daniel of the 36 th Regt	Perished on the wreck of the Queen Transport	Jan 4 th 19	Clifton Curate
No. 46.	Two corpses a Boy & Girl supposed to be the children of Daniel of the 36 th Regt	Washed ashore from the wreck of the Queen Transport	Jan 4 th 18	Clifton Curate
No. 47.	Five dead bodies	Washed on shore from the above wreck	Jan 4 th 19	Clifton Curate
No. 48.				

Figure 4: Entries in Mylor Parish Register

Source: Cornwall Record Office ref no:P161/1/9 Reproduced with permission

At Mylor, Lieutenant Robert Daniell's entire family - his wife Catherine, and five children, Margaret, Eleanor, William, Robert and Edward Alexander, were apparently remembered on a separate monument. It is shown on a 1994 graveyard plan, but no trace now survives.³⁵ Daniell had risen through the ranks, his career charted by the Army lists. After surviving the *Queen's* wreck, he fought at Waterloo, as did some of the other survivors, and was slightly wounded. In 1819, he married Harriett Dundee. By 1841 the Daniells were living in Brighton, and in 1851, London. He died in 1852. His will suggests he had no more children, and his memorial in Kensal Green Cemetery, has worn smooth, giving no name, and no further information.³⁶

Also on board were soldiers of the Royal Artillery and they are harder to find as there were at least fourteen companies of Artillery in the Peninsular in late 1813.³⁷ Dipping into the Muster rolls and paylists of the Corps of Drivers, provides hundreds of names, just waiting to be digitised. Wading through them is a lengthy business, even though they contain gems - a list of wives here, a court martial there, and, so far, one Robert Howarth, as mentioned below. As for the ten, or possibly six, French officers on board, Abell and Chamberlain describe the complexities of prisoners of war captivity and so tracing these men has not proved fruitful.³⁸

Also on board, was a party from the Royal Miners and Sappers, consisting of Sergeant Richard Mackenzie, with six invalids and their wives and children. They had embarked at Lisbon, in late December, 1813. Crew and passengers clung to the gunwale and rigging, until a longboat was eventually launched. Sergeant Mackenzie was about to enter it, but pushed 'a poor orphan boy' into the vessel first. The boat capsized, and two sappers, three women and children from their party were drowned. Private James McCarthy, who had reached land safely, plunged back into the sea, and 'perished in a heroic attempt to save the life of a comrade's wife'.³⁹ In 1817, now a colour sergeant, Mackenzie was discharged from the army for health reasons, to return to Edinburgh with his wife and three children. He appears on the Peninsular Medal Roll, issued in 1847, for fighting at Badajoz.⁴⁰

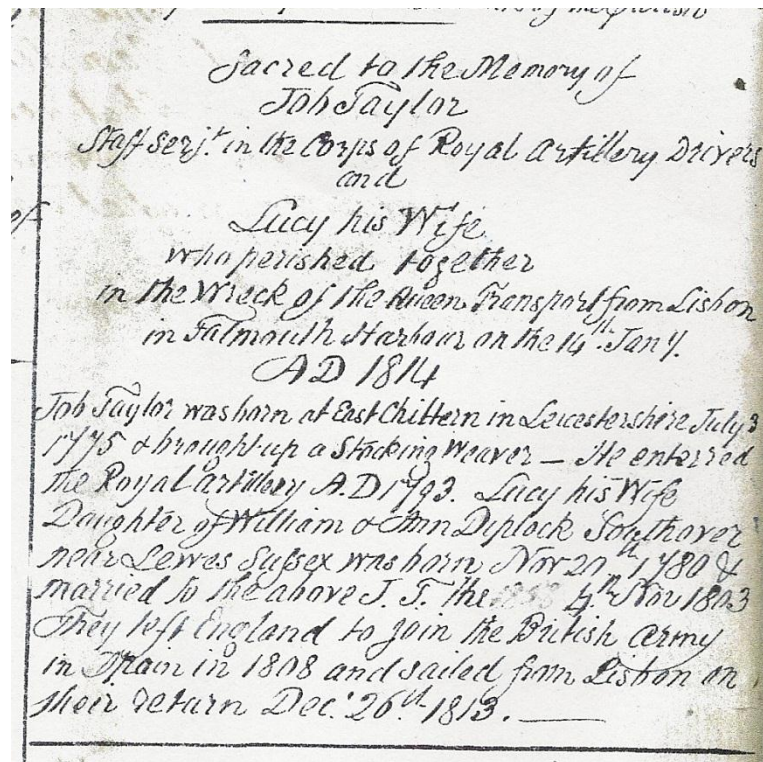


Figure 5: Extract from James Dixon, *History of St Mawes Castle and St Mawes*, 1842.

Source: Cornwall Record Office Ref No: AD1830. Reproduced with permission

Budock's parish register notes the burial, on 15th January, of Mrs White, Mrs Chambers, Mrs Fraser, Mrs Ross, Macarthy, an Artificer and Job and Lucy Taylor. A later legal case over the legacy left by Job Taylor reveals further wreck victims' names. Job, a Leicestershire man, had married Lucy Diplock at St Nicholas, Brighton, in November 1803. They sailed to Spain in 1808, and Job wrote his will in Lisbon in 1812. Lucy was described as a woman of 'very robust constitution', in the habit of enduring 'great fatigue by her management of the officers' mess'. Job suffered badly from asthma, yet went below for a plaid cloak to keep Lucy warm, and offered a reward to anyone saving his wife, probably as mentioned in the press. Job and Lucy's bodies were found close together, and a fine memorial to them both was raised, at Budock, its epitaph transcribed around 1842, by James Dixon, master gunner.⁴¹

Job left a fortune of £4,000. On March 5th, his brother-in-law, Thomas Stanford, advertised for the return of property, bank notes, papers, jewellery, and the will, to the bank, Joseph Banfield & Co, or to Mr Robert Crowgey, Merchant. A reward was offered.⁴² Presumably the papers were handed in, because the will of Job Taylor, staff sergeant in the corps of Royal Artillery drivers, was later contested in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.⁴³

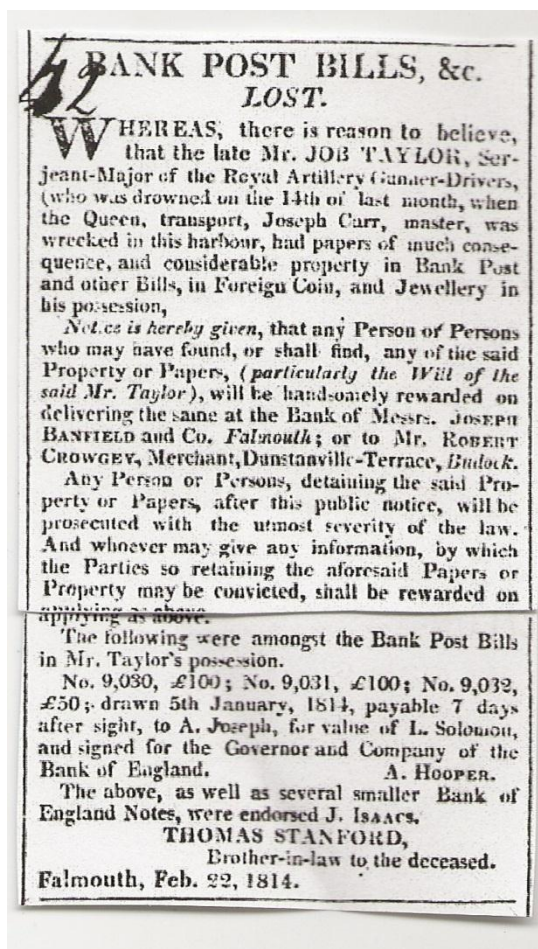


Figure 6: *Royal Cornwall Gazette* 5th March 1814

Among the court papers are further names of survivors from the Royal Artillery. Witnesses were Privates Jeremiah Barham, Joseph Minshull, John Daniells, John Ratcliffe, Patrick Mulrannen, and Sergeant Robert Howarth, all of the corps of Royal Artillery drivers, and Private James Roe, and Lieutenant John Dicker, of the Artillery. George Parlett, another Artillery Driver, died at Budock, but was buried in Falmouth on 24th January.⁴⁴ Further information about some of these men can be gleaned from Army service records. Robert Howarth, for example, born 1782 in Haslington, attested in 1800, in the Corps of RA Drivers, under Lieutenant General Douglas, and later fought at Waterloo, in Captain G. H. Grimes' 'D' Troop. Described as a labourer, 5'10" tall, with brown hair, a fresh complexion and hazel eyes, upon discharge he received £3/3/10½ marching allowance for his wife and two children to return to Blackburn.⁴⁵

Looting and Salvage

A few seamen and soldiers were reported as plundering the baggage rather than attempting to rescue the screaming victims. 'A sergeant rendered himself conspicuous by his activity in breaking open the trunks and chests as they came on shore, nor could he be persuaded to desist'.⁴⁶ He and others were identified, reported to officers and courts martial were promised. Kendall McDonald mentions in two 1970s books that 'some research carried out into this report by Colonel Bob Curtis in the Ministry of Defence Library in the old War Office building in Whitehall failed to substantiate the looting story'.⁴⁷ Enquiries so far have failed to trace these documents.

Opportunistic looting by soldiers was not uncommon. Some of the *Queen*'s warriors had been at Badajoz, in 1812, the scene of three days of plunder and

pillage, 'one of the worst orgies of military indiscipline in British military history'.⁴⁸ The battle of Vittoria, in June 1813, was followed by 'looting that dwarfed what had happened at Badajoz'.⁴⁹ Wellington himself was ambivalent, seeing the spoils of war as compensation for men who were badly paid.

Some of the goods from the *Queen* were returned to their rightful owners. Much was 'secreted away'.⁵⁰ Mr. Ellis, Broker and Auctioneer, sold the salvage, consisting of 'copper, lead, anchors, sails, cable, rope, hawsers, buoy, rigging, junk, stove, blocks, etc on 15th February 1814, at Mr Broad's Cellars on Falmouth Quay, for the benefit of the Underwriters'.⁵¹ It was a freezing winter, so no doubt some of the drift wood was used as fuel. The *Queen* sank in shallow water making it more easily accessible to the salvage teams.⁵²

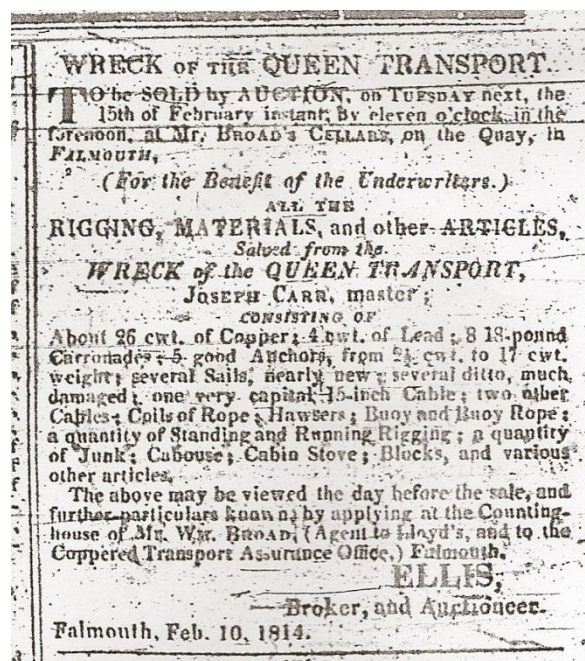


Figure 7: Advertisement shown in *West Briton*, 11th February 1814 and *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 12th February 1814

The Community Response

In contrast to the stories of looting and suspicions of incompetence, the compassion of the Fal community was overwhelming. Not only did the local inhabitants risk their own lives rescuing the survivors, but all, whatever their own means, gave shelter to the survivors. The survivors stayed in the area for a considerable time, as the weather remained freezing, and roads were impassable. George Croker Fox, in particular, of the prominent Cornish Quaker family and John Plomer, a farmer, were praised for their humanity and strenuous efforts, in rescuing, housing and clothing the victims.⁵³ William Williams of Penryn gave his house for the shelter of the deceased. Three 'poor but upright men' of Penryn, Bray, Rundle and Champion, handed over to William Cock the luggage they had saved. Others commended for their care were Mr Vigurs, the surgeon from Church Street, Captain Slade, resident Agent for Transports, and Mr Allen, surgeon, both of HMS *Experiment*. The master of the *Experiment*, Joseph Jelliff, recorded the violence of the gales, the wreck and 'loss of 200 persons'. On the 15th, he noted 'PM. Fresh breezes, Employed with the boats from the Ship of War Transports and Packetts in carrying the persons on shore to Miler [sic] to be entered'.⁵⁴

Local parish records are incomplete, but there is mention of provision for a Mrs Calder, and funds for the burial of three deceased.⁵⁵

What remains today?

When the *Earl of Abergavenny*, an East India Company's ship, sank in Weymouth Bay in 1805, with the loss of 260 people, including her captain, John Wordsworth, the event received publicity and had an impact similar to the *Queen*'s. Alethea Hayter's reconstruction of the tragedy, in which she considers 'the relation between catastrophe and great art'⁵⁶, traces the complex emotional responses of John's family, which resulted eventually in brother William Wordsworth's poem, *Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont*. After the *Queen*'s loss, the local papers promptly printed poetry on the theme of shipwreck and Faulkner's 'A Shipwreck; a poem, in three cantos' was re-published by James Trathan, in Falmouth in 1815.

Until an 1808 Act brought in by Davies Gilbert, MP for Bodmin, supported by Helston MP Mr Grylls, shipwrecked victims were either buried on the beach or cliff-top, or left to the sea. The Act allowed them to be buried in consecrated ground. Only five years after this Act, the people of the three local parishes built fine memorials, all very different in style.⁵⁷ Mylor's Warrior Stone, is the most dramatic of the three and is similar to, but more naïve than the monument to the Transport Ship *Dispatch* at St Keverne.⁵⁸ The little ships in both are reminiscent of an illustration in the *Naval Chronicle* of 1814 - perhaps as much a visual convention as the predictable language used to report these events.

At one time the *Queen*'s dead were also marked 'by the vast mound which covers their remains', mentioned in the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* in 1855. The mound was still there in 1874, when a visitor reported 'I am told that between two & three hundred were buried in one grave, and that after some time the effluvia arising therefrom obliged them to heap some loads of earth on the place so that there remains to is day a most unsightly mound about three or four feet high'.⁵⁹

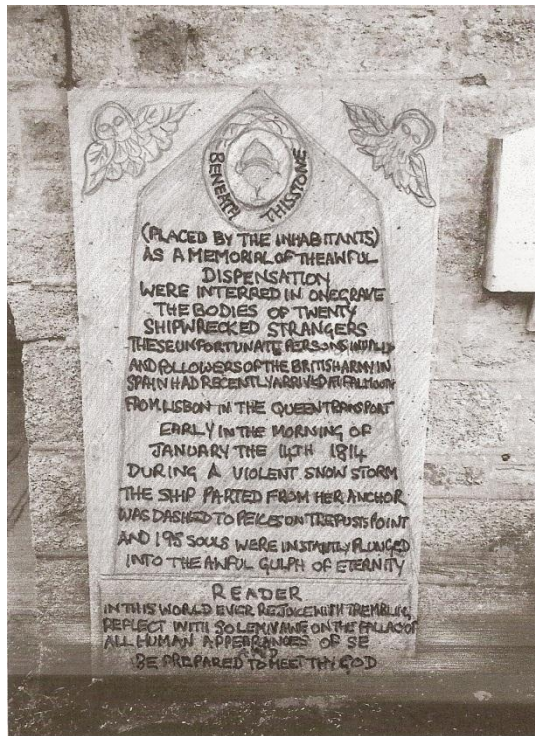


Figure 8: St Gluvias, Penryn: an artist's impression of the *Queen* monument, by the lych gate, the stone now eroded

Within a week of the wreck, the people of Penryn had 'resolved to erect a monument in commemoration of the late awful event'.⁶⁰ By 1882, when plans for the restoration of St Gluvias were afoot, there was mention of 'several monuments

that might be rendered somewhat cleaner than they are at present and their inscriptions made more legible,' among them, the *Queen*'s monument.⁶¹ This, and Budock's are less well known today, perhaps because their inscriptions are now almost illegible. St Gluvias' monument, in particular, has suffered from the elements. Fortunately, the epitaphs were recorded by Master Gunner, James Dixon; by Lake; and by Olivey. The names of Budock's 'principal inhabitants' are to be read in the Vestry minutes of that time.⁶²



Figure 9: Memorial in *Budock Churchyard*
 Illegible inscription. Plaque probably missing from oval. Screw marks, and signs of previous restoration. 'Here lie interred the Bodies of 6 men, 11 Women & 9 children who on their return from the British Army in Spain lost their lives by the wreck of the *Queen* Transport on Trefusis Point Falmouth Harbour on the 14th January 1814. To record the awful event when 82 men 54 women and 1 child only were saved, this stone is erected by a subscription of the principle Inhabitants of the parish.'

Source: Cornwall Record Office: AD 18/30

Little if anything remains of the wreck itself. Although a few items have been recovered that are said to have come from the wreck, such as two huge brass pintles, a cannon ball and copper nails. Little else remains. The *Queen* has been picked clean.⁶³

The *Queen*'s Legacy

As mentioned, safety at sea has always been a key issue in the large amount of literature on shipwrecks.⁶⁴ Probert has described the countrywide evolution of rescue systems in the first half of the nineteenth century, in response to the suffering of seafarers. This resulted, eventually, in inquiries and acts of parliament, in 1836, 1839, 1843 and 1854, and finally, in 1874, to a system of life saving across the country.⁶⁵ This system relied upon equipment developed by dedicated individuals; Manby, Trengrouse, Dennett, Carte and Boxer.

Although only one of so many wrecks, the *Queen*, made her contribution to these improvements. Trengrouse, in Cornwall, had witnessed the wreck of the *Anson*, in 1807, and was prompted by this experience to embark on his life long vocation. The wreck of the *Queen* seven years later prompted many letters

promoting lifesaving apparatus. The *Royal Cornwall Gazette* mentioned ‘no Life Preservers were on board the *Queen* at the time of the accident’. ‘Philanthropos’ in a letter to *The Times* in February, compared the recent saving of life on the brig *Venus*, which used Captain Manby’s apparatus (shooting a line from shore to ship), to the losses experienced on the *Queen*, and proposed that a similar device be carried by all ships, to fire ashore or to another vessel. ‘Spectator’, in 1816 wrote to the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, exhorting the superiority of Trengrouse’s apparatus, over Manby’s. And ‘Senex Nauticus’ sent a long letter to *The Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal* in 1821 cataloguing Trengrouse’s rocket and other safety measures. He added ‘I may also add my own testimony of the *Queen* Transport ... only a short distance from land, yet upward of 200 persons perished’.⁶⁶

Trengrouse published a book in 1817, in which he advocates his rocket invention, and gives the history of several shipwrecks, including the *Queen*. He believed his apparatus could have saved her passengers. ‘There cannot be a question about this’.⁶⁷ Both Manby and Trengrouse persevered with their inventions, yet Trengrouse in particular experienced great difficulty in convincing the authorities of their worth. In 1818, Trengrouse found a supporter in London, Admiral Sir Charles Rowley, who was impressed by a demonstration of the invention, and recommended its use to the government.⁶⁸

Summary

The loss of the *Queen* Transport was a major tragedy which clearly made a deep and lasting impression on the community, resonating throughout the nineteenth century. It is unfortunate that not all those involved can be traced as yet. The mass graves of the *Queen*’s dead give no names. Yet information ‘even more extraordinary than the fiction of Bernard Cornwell’s *Sharpe*’.⁶⁹ may still come to light.

Although the *Queen* was only one of countless lost ships, the wreck was significant due to the great loss of life and the involvement of Wellington’s troops and families. It was additionally poignant that they had returned from the rigours of the Peninsular War to lose their lives so close to shore. The ship was wrecked in a supposedly safe harbour, through negligence, and thus highlighted the need to enquire and analyse reasons for such losses. The wreck was witnessed at close quarters by the local inhabitants and a harbour full of seafarers; a community already attuned to the dangers of the sea. As such, the *Queen*’s sad fate contributed to Cornish endeavours to improve safety at sea.

The rising power of a more local press also contributed to these debates. The individuals involved, the printers and the Quakers, living cheek by jowl in a small town, would have known each other, and together created a spirit of philanthropic enquiry. As Jarvis suggested of most literature on wrecks, this particular story raises issues of class and gender, of social, financial and technological hubris, and of heroism and neglect.⁷⁰

Notes

¹ My thanks are due to many, mentioned in footnotes, and including Carol Divall, Rodney M Bennett, Hilary Watson, Budock, Ian Maxted, and many librarians and archivists in Cornwall & South England.

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