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**The brig *Marthe Andrea*
and Captain Lars Berg:
An account of the
19thc. Norwegian
timber trade in
Cornwall**

*By Julie Tomlinson
and Per Norseng*

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'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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The brig *Marthe Andrea* and Captain Lars Berg: An account of the nineteenth century Norwegian timber trade in Cornwall.

By Julie Tomlinson and Per Norseng

Introduction On Friday 15 July 1859, the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* reported on a coroner's inquest held the previous Monday at Restronguet Passage, Mylor. The body of Lars Berg, a 56-year-old Norwegian ship's captain and half-owner of the brig *Marthe Andrea* had been discovered in the creek.¹ Three to four weeks earlier the ship had arrived at Restronguet from Tønsberg, Norway, laden with deals and battens (processed timber used for housing and ship building).² She became leaky on the voyage, and after the cargo was unloaded, she docked at Restronguet Point to be inspected and caulked. The ship did not lie on an even keel however, and the hull became badly damaged. The *Marthe Andrea* was found to be damaged beyond repair, and as co-owner of the ship, Lars Berg anticipated great financial loss and took his own life:

... after retiring to bed early on Friday night, at his lodgings, he stole out of the house secretly, and, having dressed himself in his old clothes and tied a stone about 10lbs. weight across his chest, he walked down to the water side a little above Great Wood, and committed suicide by drowning himself. On his not coming down for breakfast on Saturday morning, search was made for him, and some parties dredged for him opposite the passage; but in the course of the afternoon two little boys bathing near Great Wood, discovered the body by treading on it. They immediately gave an alarm, and some parties went down and had the body taken up and conveyed to his lodgings.

This report caught the interest of the authors, and a joint venture began to discover what had led to this tragedy. Through an extensive investigation of British and Norwegian archives and newspapers, a tale unfolded of the days of the nineteenth century Norwegian timber trade, when Europe required interminable importation of lumber and timber. This was particularly so in Cornwall where timber was required in vast quantities for the mining and shipbuilding industries.

By exploring the social histories of the *Marthe Andrea* and one of her longest serving captains, Lars Berg, this paper reveals the significance of the timber trade for Norwegian and Cornish maritime communities. The authors explore the political and economic contexts of the time and how these affected the individuals working in this industry. The story begins with the tale of the ship, the *Marthe Andrea*.

Marthe Andrea of Årøysund

Marthe Andrea was built in 1798 in Årøysund, a small hamlet in the rural parish of Nøtterøy, within the customs district of Tønsberg. Årøysund lies within the county of Vestfold in the outer Oslo fjörd region.³ The customs records and ship registers state that the *Marthe Andrea* was registered to Tønsberg, one of Norway's oldest towns and a centre for foreign trade and shipping since the Middle Ages. At that time, Norway was the main exporter of timber for the

¹ *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 15 July 1859

² Ragnhild Hutchison, 'The Norwegian and Baltic timber trade to Britain 1780–1835 and its interconnections', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 37 (2012).

³ Seilskipsregister (med Petter Malmsteins seilskuteregister), 'Marthe Andrea (1798)', (KulturNav, 2023).

British market, supplying 90% of all deals and battens.⁴ This was partly due to Norway's close proximity but mainly because of the abundance of whitewood and in particular, redwood from the Scots fir, *pinus sylvestris* which was particularly resistant to decay.⁵

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most sailors and many ships' captains and owners in the Tønsberg district resided in the surrounding rural seaside parishes and coastal towns, often living on farmsteads, or in cottages with attached land. This was common in Vestfold and elsewhere on the Norwegian Skagerack coast, where despite agricultural resources being somewhat limited, farming supplemented families' incomes. Security was thereby assured for communities who otherwise relied financially upon risky maritime occupations.⁶



Figure 1: Tønsberg, southern Norway c.1834
Source: Unknown

The shipbuilder of the *Marthe Andrea* was a local captain, shipwright, and shipowner Niels Larsen Rønningen (b.1753 - d.1800), who lived on the farmstead *Nordre Sand*.⁷ The ship was built from oak, beech and fir and measured 82.5 lasts, the equivalent of approximately 165 register tons.⁸ This was a fair size for a vessel operating in the Baltic and North Seas at the time. Tønsberg customs records list her as registered with a captain and a crew of eight men in 1801, 1807 and 1814, but by 1815 and 1820 the crew had increased by an additional two men.⁹

⁴ H. S. K. Kent, 'The Anglo-Norwegian Timber Trade in the Eighteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 8 (1955).

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ L. Berg, *Nøtterø. En bygdebok.*, (Kristiana, 1922).pp102-156; H. Paulsen, *Nøtterøy 1800-årene*, (Sandefjord, 1986).pp1-6, 80-136; S Tveite, 'Tjøme i 1800. A most special case?', *Tjøme. Årsskrift Tjøme historielag* (2000).pp43-53; Berg.(1922).pp50-68; F.E. Eliassen, 'Maritime lokalsamfunn i tidlig nytid', *Heimen* 56 (2019).pp185-199; H. Haugland, *I sjøfartens tid. Arendal 1723-1900. Arendal by- og regionhistorie* (Oslo, 2020).

⁷ Paulsen.pp119,127; Berg.p121

⁸ *Den Norske Rigstidende*, 16 January 1838 ; Paulsen.pp123,127

⁹ *Ibid.* pp102,108; Generaltollkammeret, 'Tollregnskaper Tønsberg', (The National Digital Archives, 1801-1820).



Figure 2: 'A skipper's home in Nøtterland' by Jacob Munch. Depiction of Årøysund c.1800-1822 & believed to show the house of Niels Larsen Rønningen

Source: The Hauger Art Museum, Tønsberg, Norway

Niels had ten children with his wife Kari, eight surviving to adulthood. Two of the daughters were Andrea and Marthe Maria and likely inspired the ship's name.¹⁰ In 1800, Niels died, but family ties with the shipping industry continued. His only son, Niels Nielsen, who was 15 years old when his father died, became a sailor and eventually a master mariner. Niels' daughters all married ship's captains, mostly from Nøtterøy or nearby parishes.

It was not until 1811, a decade after Niels' death, that his estate, including ownership of the *Marthe Andrea*, was finally divided between his heirs. Customs records for Tønsberg show that his widow, Kari, inherited substantial ownership of the ship and one other vessel and they remained in Kari's ownership until her death in 1821.¹¹ In Norway at that time, married women had little opportunity for active roles in business, deferring even their own inheritances to their husband's management. Indeed, registers from 1874 Arendal, southern Norway, show only 4.2% of shipowners were women.¹² In comparison, approximately 13% of shipowners in England during 1865 were women, with even higher rates of 28% in Exeter.¹³ However, there were exceptions in Norway, where it was not uncommon for widows to retain undivided estates and run their late husbands' businesses, especially if the children were minors or division of the estate might jeopardise the business.¹⁴

¹⁰ Berg.p147

¹¹ *Ibid.*(1922),p417

¹² Johnsen Berit Eide, 'From Integration to Segregation; Ship Ownership in Agder, Southern Norway, c.1860-1930', in *Financing the Maritime Sector: Proceedings from the Fifth North Sea History Conference*, ed. by Frits R. Looemijer and Morten Hahn-Pedersen Leo M. Akveld (Esbjerg: Fiskeri-og Sofartsmuseet, 2002), pp. 83-84.

¹³ Helen Doe, 'Waiting for her ship to come in? The female investor in nineteenth-century sailing vessels', *The Economic History Review*, 63 (2010).p92

¹⁴ U.B Gundersen, 'Kvinner i rederinæringene – eierskap og autonomi 1680-1842', (Unpublished MA History thesis, Universitetet I Agder, 2011).pp31-32; H. Sandvik, 'Råderetten over hele boet. Skipperenker og

Following Kari's death, her son-in-law Lars Jacobsen Sand, husband of Marthe Maria, became the principal owner of the *Marthe Andrea*. By 1835 he was one of the wealthiest shipowners in Nøtterøy and when he died in 1843, his widow Marthe Maria would have inherited considerable wealth, including a share of her father's ship.¹⁵ Årøysund remained the ship's home port, where she would usually be moored for winter, although sometimes she would be wintered at other harbours in anticipation of picking up cargoes the following spring. Even with changes in ownership over the years she would generally return home to Årøysund.

Ship ownership in nineteenth century Norwegian society

The importance and privilege of affluent shipowners increased in Norway, so that co-ownership of shipping businesses became even more desirable.¹⁶ This prosperity was not solely the result of inheritance, nor was it limited to the wealthy, as whole families could buy into businesses. Some families had shares in several ships, thereby diversifying their investment. This system enabled ships to be financed, whilst also spreading financial risks between families, at a time when insurance was uncommon.¹⁷ Referring to the 1860s, Vigeland described that '...practically all and sundry were a shipowner. Everyone that had saved some money usually did not give up until they had invested it in a part of a ship'.¹⁸ The co-owners of *Marthe Andrea* were thus archetypal examples of this economic model of nineteenth century rural maritime communities.¹⁹

Classification of the *Marthe Andrea*

Some recorded classifications of the *Marthe Andrea* appear slightly contradictory, nevertheless her history is traceable as there was only one ship with this name during that period. According to the shipping register of the Norwegian Maritime Museum, she was originally a brig, a square-rigged ship with two masts and similar to the image below, but was converted to a barque, implying that a third mast with a triangular mizzen sail or spanker was added.²⁰ This is likely a misunderstanding and the opposite had occurred; she was built as a barque and converted to a brig sometime in the 1840's.²¹ When a ¼ share of the ship was put up for auction in 1821, she was described in a Drammen newspaper as being a brig.²² This was also likely to have been a mistake as later that year she was referred to as a 'skib' (or 'ship') a term generally used to mean a barque (or 'pink'). Between 1824 and the mid 1840's, with the one apparently incorrect

kjøpmannsenker i uskiftet bo', Mennesket og havet- Årbok for Norsk Maritimt Museum 2016, (Oslo: Norwegian Maritime Museum, 2017). pp193-210

¹⁵ Berg.(1922),p417; Paulsen. pp89, 93, 102, 108, 112, 114, 116, 193-210; Ministry of Audit, 'Tønsberg Ingåde tollbook', (Norwegian National Archives, 1815).p174; S Bjørn, *Fortegnelse over de med et særdeles Kjendingstegn eller Signalfag forsynede norske Fartøier*, (Christiania: Opfostringshusets Bogtrykkerie, 1829).p15; S Bjørn, *Fortegnelse over de med et særdeles Kjendingstegn eller Signalfag forsynede norske Fartøier*, 3rd edn (1837).p18; S Bjørn, *Fortegnelse over de med et særdeles Kjendingstegn eller Signalfag forsynede norske Fartøier*, 4th edn (1840).p19; A Ingemann, *Fortegnelse over den Norske Handelsflaade Våren 1842*, (Christiania, 1842).p21; A Ingemann, *Fortegnelse over den Norske Handelsflaade Vaaren 1845*, (Christiania, 1845)., p23.

¹⁶ S. Tenold, 'The Starting Point: A Small Country, but a Major Maritime Nation.', in *Norewegian Shipping in the 20th Century. Palgrave Studies in Maritime Economics*, (Bergen: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019). p14

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp52-53

¹⁸ N.P. Vigeland, *Norsk seilskipsfart erobrer verdenshavene*, (Trondheim: E. Bruns Bokhandels Forlag, 1943).p170; Tenold.p53

¹⁹ Peder Figenbaum, *Verdens fraktemenn. Norsk internasjonal skipsfart gjennom tusen år*, (ABM-utvikling ; Kystverket ; Riksantikvaren ; Fiskeridirektoratet, 2009). pp13-22

²⁰ KulturNav, 'Marthe Andrea (1798)', (2023).; Berg.(1922),pp121,124

²¹ Paulsen. p577

²² *Drammens Tidende*, 8 May 1821

exception in 1821, she was consistently recorded as either a skib or barque in all the ships records and not described as a brig until 1848.²³



Figure 3: Norwegian Brig *Ridde Dare*, 1819. Similar type to *Marthe Andrea*. Illustrated by C. G. Parnemann
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Nevertheless, from the mid 1840's and for the rest of her career the *Marthe Andrea* was described as a brig.²⁴ This all suggests that she was likely built originally as a three-masted barque but in the mid 1840's was re-rigged to a two-mast brig, probably to reduce crew costs. An entry made in the 1844 Tønsberg court records, testifies that the *Marthe Andrea* had been subject to extensive repair in Årøysund between 1839-1840.²⁵ The rigging may have been reduced and the hull rebuilt on that occasion, however if they were, the records were not changed until sometime later. Nevertheless, the ship registers from 1848 onwards state her carrying capacity rose to 107.5 lasts.²⁶

The rise of the Norwegian merchant fleet

Norway, as with the other Scandinavian countries, had geographical advantages for seafaring. From the mid sixteenth century, and especially during the eighteenth century, the Norwegian merchant fleet grew substantially. Overseas expansion, colonial trade, growing urbanisation and mining activities led to deforestation across Western Europe and the British Isles. There were increasing demands for Scandinavian timber and lumber from the Dutch, Scots and later the English and French. At the same time, the introduction of the water-powered

²³ Paulsen. pp93,102,108,114,123,491,502,504; Bjørn.(1829),p15; Bjørn. (1837),p18; Bjørn.(1840),p19; Ingemann.(1842),p21; Ingemann. (1845),p23; P. Norseng and J. Tomlinson, 'Marthe Andrea Database', (2023). This database of voyages, cargoes and news items was compiled from author searches of the British Newspaper archives and Norwegian National library using terms 'Martha Andrea' and 'Marthe Andrea' and is available by contacting the authors; Generaltollkammeret.

²⁴ A Ingemann, *Fortegnelse over den Norske Handelsflaade, Vaaren 1848*, (Christiania, 1848).p25; *The West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser*, 1850.

²⁵ Paulsen.(1986) pp502, 504; Tønsberg byfogd, 'Ekstraretsprotokoll', (Norwegian National Archives, 1838-1845), pp. 259-60.

²⁶ Ingemann.(1848), p25; A Ingemann, *Fortegnelse over den Norske Handelsflaade, Vaaren 1850*, (Christiania, 1850).p25; Brevik port records, 'Fortegnelse over de til den Norske Assuranceforening henhørende Skibe den 15de September 1852', (1852).p17

sawmill in Norway from c.1500 dramatically increased productivity and facilitated expansion of timber exports. The British Navigation Acts of the seventeenth century were designed to protect the self-sufficiency of the British shipping industry and assure profit for colonial countries. The Acts restricted importation of foreign goods (particularly colonial) to solely British-owned vessels or by shipping goods from their country of origin. Whilst this had a negative impact on Dutch freight trade, it unintendedly benefited Norwegian shipping.²⁷

Amidst repeated European wars of the eighteenth century, the unified countries of Denmark-Norway remained neutral enabling the Norwegian merchant fleet to thrive and expand. This situation continued into the Napoleonic Wars and further boosted the maritime economy.²⁸ One of those profiting mariners was Niels Larsen Rønningen who is known to have sailed to England in the 1790s as master on another of his ships prior to building the *Marthe Andrea*.²⁹ Clearly, he was correct in anticipating that investing in shipbuilding would bring prosperity.

Little is known about the *Marthe Andrea*'s activities before 1815, but according to Tønsberg customs records she was captained in 1801 by A. Andersen, in 1807 by Lars Jacobsen Sand (the late Niels Larsen's son-in-law) and in 1814 by Niels Nielsen (Niels Larsen's only son).³⁰ Nøtterøy and the Tønsberg area had little to offer in terms of exports, hence the registers for Tønsberg customs district have limited information on the activities of the *Marthe Andrea* and her masters in this period. Nevertheless, we can assume she began transporting timber from elsewhere in the Oslo fjörd region and south-eastern Norway to Denmark, the continent or likely to England, as with many other ships from Nøtterøy and Vestfold at that time. This is supported by Tønsberg customs registers for 1807, which state that she was moored over winter at Drammen (known for timber exports) some 50 kilometres north of Tønsberg, where she was likely to pick up a cargo in the spring.³¹



Figures 4 & 5: Nineteenth Century Norwegian loggers
Source: Berg-Kragerø Museum

²⁷ Sven-Erik Åström, 'The English navigation laws and the Baltic trade, 1660–1700', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 8 (1960).

²⁸ Figenbaum.pp7-10; Berg.(1922), pp115-127

²⁹ Generaltollkammeret, 'Tollregnskaper Tønsberg,' (The National Digital Archives, 1794).

³⁰ KulturNav.; Paulsen.p102

³¹ Customs accounts: Tønsberg Tollbook, (Digital Archive, 1807).pp161-162; Paulsen.p94



Figure 6: Nineteenth century Norwegian timber ponds. Seasoning timber whilst awaiting transportation.

Source: Berg-Kragerø Museum

However, the Norwegian shipping industry took a downturn. When the British attacked Copenhagen in 1807, Denmark-Norway retaliated by joining Napoleon and declaring war on Britain. For the rest of the war, Norwegian shipping suffered from the British blockade. If they sailed, they risked having ships and cargoes confiscated, and crews arrested and imprisoned. Unable to sail, there were severe economic losses resulting in poverty and famine. From 1809 the blockade was somewhat alleviated by licences granted by both parties in the war. Britain allowed importation of timber and, for a while, exportation of grain. Nevertheless, repercussions for the merchant fleet in Nøtterøy and elsewhere in Norway were considerable. Losses of bigger ships, whose purpose was international trade, were especially great. It has been estimated that the local fleet was reduced by some 40%.³² Furthermore, The Act of 1810 doubled duties on foreign timber, making Norwegian imports unprofitable.³³

The troubles for Norwegian shipping did not end with the war. Norway's secession from the union with Denmark and the new enforced union with Sweden in 1814, created different problems. Norwegian trade encountered customs barriers with Denmark and despite new privileged customs rates until 1827 when trading with Sweden, this did not compensate Norway adequately. Moreover, as a consequence of the war, Britain's customs policies favoured importation of Canadian and Baltic timber. Only with expanding world trade from c.1830 and growing economic liberalism did the growth of the Norwegian merchant fleet regain momentum.³⁴

Nevertheless, *Marthe Andrea* survived these difficulties, and almost every year from 1815 to 1859 her movements can be traced. The customs records for Tønsberg tell only a fraction of her story, partly because of missing information in the archives, and partly because she would have called at other Norwegian and foreign harbours. However, digitised Norwegian and British newspapers help to fill the gaps. Using search terms "*Marthe Andrea*" and "*Martha Andrea*" over 400 newspaper and archival references were found.³⁵

³² Figenbaum.p10; Berg. (1922), pp127-130; Paulsen. pp 1-46, 86, 91-101.

³³ Kent.

³⁴ Figenbaum.pp10-11

³⁵ Norseng and Tomlinson ; J.S. Worm-Müller, "*Skipsnavn*", *den Norske sjøfarts historie fra de ældste tider til vore dage* (Oslo, 1950).pp144-150

Voyages of the *Marthe Andrea*

From what we know of *Marthe Andrea*'s career, her voyages began where they ended, sailing from Drammen to Cornwall. The industrial revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to vast increases in the importation of essential goods for Britain. Deforestation had been a problem for centuries and by the early and mid-1800's had led to severe shortages of timber. Britain became the most important import market. According to *Lloyd's List*, on 15 April 1815, *Marthe Andrea* arrived in Truro under Captain Nielsen (misspelt "Neilson"), the son of the late Niels Larsen.³⁶ Although newspaper ship lists rarely identified cargoes, Drammen was such a major exporter of timber and lumber that we can assume this was likely the cargo brought to Cornwall in the spring of 1815 and in the numerous subsequent visits.

Marthe Andrea made her next appearance in Cornwall during the summer. On 24 June 1815, she was reported in Grangemouth, having apparently arrived from Kristiansand, on the south coast of Norway. But three days later she arrived at Falmouth, records this time stating she had arrived from Drammen.³⁷ The next year one trip is reported, from Drammen to Falmouth, with the same captain.³⁸ From 1818 to 1827 numerous voyages between Drammen and Falmouth or Truro are recorded with Niels Nielsen as master, eventually also with another captain named Gundersen. All her reported trips throughout this decade were from Drammen, and except for a few trips to Gravesend, London and Dutch harbours, the destination was Cornwall.



Figure 7: Drammen, Southern Norway c. 1817
Source: Unknown

In 1828, this pattern abruptly changed, corresponding to a replacement of captain with Morten Mikkelsen Øre. He was a brother-in-law of the principal owner, Lars Jacobsen Sand, having married a daughter of Niels Larsen.³⁹ Records show that whilst the *Marthe Andrea* was still generally sailing from Drammen (although occasionally from other harbours in south-eastern Norway), she appears to have stopped calling at Cornish and other British harbours including Cornwall. Instead, *Lloyd's* lists almost exclusively list her as exporting to the Netherlands. The reason for this change was probably a financial decision made by Morten

³⁶ *Lloyd's List*, 18 April 1815; *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 19 May 1821

³⁷ *Lloyd's List*, 4 July, 7 July

³⁸ *Lloyd's List*, 16 April 1816

³⁹ Berg.(1822) p417; Bjørn.(1829) p15; Bjørn.(1837) p18; Paulsen.(1986) p115

Mikkelsen Øre, who was becoming a successful local shipping magnate in Nøtterøy.

In 1840 Niels Mortensen Øre, son of Morten Mikkelsen Øre, is listed as captain in the newspapers and Norwegian ship register.⁴⁰ The next couple of years both father and son appear to have shared the captaincy. In 1840 and 1842 the son, Niels was registered master but often the records only list the captain's surname, making it sometimes impossible to identify father from son.⁴¹

In 1841, after a 10-year break, once again, the *Marthe Andrea* began exporting from Drammen to Britain. Destinations included Leith, Hull, Falmouth and Truro. As demand for timber increased, trade was incentivised by the lifting of trade restrictions and a reduction in British trade tariffs in 1842, increasing the profits for Norwegian shipping. In 1842 and 1843 *Marthe Andrea* also made several trips from Drammen to Le Havre in Western France.⁴² However, the supply of Norwegian timber was unable to keep pace with rapidly growing demand.

The market precipitated a change in *Marthe Andrea*'s operations once again, and she began to export timber from the Baltic. On at least one occasion in autumn 1843, captained by Niels Mikkelsen Øre, she brought deals from Riga in Latvia to Le Havre.⁴³



Figure 8: Map illustrating ports visited by *Marthe Andrea* including the outlier, Quebec

Source: Authors

By 1844, having regularly captained *Marthe Andrea* for over a decade, the written sources list Morten Mikkelsen Øre as co-owner with a new captain, Lars Berg.⁴⁴ From this point onwards, the *Marthe Andrea*, mastered by Lars Berg, exported Baltic timber with frequent visits to Sundsvall, Umeå, Hudiksvall and other Swedish ports in the Gulf of Bothnia. She continued transporting cargoes from Drammen, which remained one of the main ports exporting timber to Britain and Cornwall, until the early 1870's.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Bjørn.(1840), p19; *Norsk Handels Tidende*, 28 August 1841 * here his initials appear to have been misspelt; Berg.(1822) p311

⁴¹ Bjørn.(1840), p19; Ingemann.(1842), p21; Norseng and Tomlinson

⁴² *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, 18 August 1842; *Norsk Handels Tidende*, 21 July 1842, 5 August, 8 August; *Norsk Handels Tidende*, 6 -7 June 1843, 27 July.

⁴³ Norseng and Tomlinson.; *Norsk Handels-Tidene*, (17 October and 7 November 1843

⁴⁴ Tønsberg byfogd.(1838-1845) pp259-260; Berg.(1822), p311

⁴⁵ F. Sejersted, *Fra Linderud til Eidsvold Værk 1792-1895*, (Oslo: Dreyer, 1979).pp237-245; E.F. Söderlund, 'Norwegian Timber exports in the Nineteen Century. Book review.', *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, 29 (2011).pp161-163



Figure 9: Sundsvall harbour, Sweden c. 1870
Source: Unknown

This diversification into Baltic timber export was consistent with the development of the Norwegian merchant fleet from c.1830 onwards. With the union of Norway with Sweden, Norwegian ships could carry cargoes from Swedish ports to Britain and elsewhere without incurring extra duties from third countries. As restrictions for international trade and shipping eased, Norwegian ships no longer depended predominantly on exporting Norwegian commodities such as timber, and they began to ship different cargoes between countries in Europe and beyond. Between 1835 and 1878 the fleet grew by 1000%, and Norwegian ships and sailors became known as the ‘freighters of the world’. The economic shift was facilitated by the lifting of the British Navigation Acts in 1849 and similar legislation in other countries. Other factors such as the rapid growth in world trade and the virtual withdrawal from international shipping of the growing North American economies (related to the Westward movement, the building of railways, infrastructure and new industries) resulted in the Norwegian fleet refocusing on trade with Britain and the continent.⁴⁶

Lars Berg and the *Marthe Andrea*

Lars Andersen Berg was born in 1802 on the small farmstead of *Veien*, in Stokke parish, west of Nøtterøy.⁴⁷ His father, Anders Larsen Berg, had previously moved to Stokke and made a career as a sailor and captain. In 1800, Anders bought the farmstead *Veien*, and the next year he married Helene Matea Schøyen, a girl from the nearby maritime hamlet of Bogen, populated by sailors, masters, shipbuilders and ship-owners.⁴⁸ Lars Berg followed in his father’s footsteps, becoming captain and principal co-owner of a brig measuring 66.5 lasts and named *Den Gode Hensigt* (The Good Intent). He kept her until at least 1842 and by 1845 he was no longer listed as either co-owner or captain.⁴⁹

The merchant fleet offered young men the opportunity for social mobility in those days. Even boys from humble backgrounds could become master mariners in their mid-20s, often progressing to co-ownership of the vessels they captained. Nevertheless, it was clearly an advantage to be well-connected through family

⁴⁶ Figenbaum. pp11-13

⁴⁷ L. Berg, *Stokke. En bygdebok.*, (Oslo, 1928). pp52, 288; N.S. Christensen and O Hagelund, *Stokke bygdebok*, (Stokke: Stokke kommune, 1983).p27; Bjørn.p17; Ingemann.p19; Ingemann.p23.

⁴⁸ Berg.(1928), pp288, 301

⁴⁹ Christensen and Hagelund.(1983), p27; Bjørn.(1837),p17; Bjørn.(1840),p19; Ingemann.(1842),p19; Ingemann.(1845),p22; Berg.(1928), p52

and marriage. We do not know the circumstances of how Lars Berg acquired a share in *Den Gode Hensigt*, but his later position as captain and principal co-owner of the larger *Marthe Andrea* may have been connected to his marriage.

In February 1838, at the age of 36, Berg married pregnant 21-year-old Gjertine Bull Schøyen in Stokke parish church. Gjertine's surname suggests she may have been related to his mother Helene Matea. Significantly, Gjertine was the daughter of Niels Larsen's recently deceased daughter Helvig, and Helvig's late husband Gjert Bull Schøyen, who was also a successful master and shipowner in Bogen. That same month, Helvig's and Gjert's estate was divided, and a 7/24th share of the ship was auctioned with other ship parts.⁵⁰ Five months after marrying, Lars' and Gjertine's first child, Henriette, was born.⁵¹

By 1844, Lars Berg was Captain of *Marthe Andrea*. The following year, the widow of Lars Jacobsen Sand was listed as an owner, but by 1848 Berg had acquired a substantial share of the ship and was both captain and likely the principal owner. As far as the newspapers report, with few exceptions between 1844 to 1854, Lars Berg was her only captain. Although the *Marthe Andrea's* operational network grew, she continued to export timber to Britain. On two occasions that we are aware of however, Captain Berg explored new opportunities.

Since the early 1820s a trade in natural ice from Norway to the British Isles and the continent had been emerging, to cater for growing demands for ice used to produce ice cream and sorbet, and for the preservation of fish and other fresh foods. Until the late 1840s this market was modest, mostly limited to years with exceptionally mild winters, so that ice harvests in Britain and elsewhere required Norwegian imports. One particularly lean year was 1846.⁵² In the early spring, 12 Norwegian ships were chartered to carry ice to England; one of these was the *Marthe Andrea*. Under Lars Berg's command, she arrived in London with her precious cargo on April 11th, 1846.⁵³ As far as we know, ice importation was not repeated by the *Marthe Andrea*. Indeed, only in the 1850s did the North Sea ice-trade become regular business, and from the 1860s became an important industry for Norway, with Britain, especially London and the east coast fishing harbours, their most important market.⁵⁴

In 1850, Lars Berg sailed the *Marthe Andrea* on perhaps her greatest adventure. On 19 May 1850, she arrived in Quebec, Canada, from Tønsberg. One month later she left Quebec for Falmouth, arriving on 5 August and two days later in Truro. Her cargo of Canadian prime red and yellow pine, oak, elm, pipe staves and hogsheads staves, was discharged and sold off at Restronguet. This appears to have been a rather speculative venture, made possible by the abolition of the British Navigation Acts on 1 January 1850. The success of this voyage would no doubt depend on the prices her cargo of timber could fetch in Cornwall.

It is unknown whether *Marthe Andrea* carried a cargo from Norway to Quebec on that voyage. It is possible that she may have taken Norwegian immigrants to Canada as from 1850-1875, Quebec became the most frequent destination port for Norwegian settlers headed for the North American mid-west. Not only did it offer easy access for migrants heading to Chicago, Milwaukee and Minnesota, it provided opportunities to export Canadian timber to the European

⁵⁰ Berg.(1922), p288; Den Norske Rigstidende.(1838), eighteenth January & 20th January

⁵¹ Stokke kirkebøker, 'Baptism records (digitalised)', (Norwegian National Archive, 1838).December 30th

⁵² Per G. Norseng, 'The 'Last Ice Age' in maritime history: An introduction', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 34 (2022). pp101-112

⁵³ Morgenbladet, (1846).; Norseng and Tomlinson.

⁵⁴ B.B. Blain, 'Melting Markets: The Rise and Decline of the Anglo-Norwegian Ice Trade, 1850-1920', in *Working Papers of the Global Economic History Network (GEHN)* (Department of Economic History, London School of Economics, 2006).; Norseng.

market. Passenger fares therefore remained relatively low and were attractive for migrants. A total of 114,852 Norwegians emigrated to Quebec during this period.⁵⁵ Whether the *Marthe Andrea* was involved has not yet been established, however her somewhat unusual Atlantic crossing was never repeated. Instead, Captain Berg and his ship reverted to the traditional exportation of Norwegian and Baltic timber to the British Isles and Western Europe. Between 1836-1841, the volume of Norwegian timber imported to Truro and Falmouth and the duties paid was substantial and remained significantly higher than the importation of colonial timber (see Appendix, Pages 25-27, Tables 1-3). With frequent visits to the Falmouth/Truro/Restronguet area, *Marthe Andrea*, Lars Berg and indeed numerous other Norwegian ships and their sailors, must have been a familiar sight in the area.

Although specific cargoes are often not mentioned in sources, based upon the usual export harbours and destination ports, it is likely that timber was *Marthe Andrea*'s usual cargo. It is unknown whether she would generally have a return cargo, although occasionally she sailed home in ballast, and in November 1850 when Lars Berg was sailing back from Truro to Rødtangen (near Drammen), she carried "some merchandise" in addition to ballast.⁵⁶ This may have been the case frequently but would need further investigation. When the ice trade expanded from the 1860s, ice ships would often return with coal to Norway, profiting further on the return trip.⁵⁷ However, in Norway the introduction of steamships, railways, gas works and modern industries occurred later than elsewhere and so the demand for imported coal would not have been high when the *Marthe Andrea* was sailing.

Lars Berg captained the *Marthe Andrea* throughout 1854, and in 1855 he was listed as master and owner.⁵⁸ He continued to export timber from Eastern Norway, especially Drammen, and from the Gulf of Bothnia, sailing to Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Although he sailed her once to Plymouth in 1854, and once to Fowey during 1856, there were no recorded visits to Falmouth, Truro or Restronguet during this time.⁵⁹

From 1855 through to 1858, whilst Lars Berg remained principal owner, co-owner Niels Mortensen Øhre, became the main captain. The ship continued to over-winter at Årøysund where she spent her final winter in 1858-1859, close to Ekenes, Øhre's farm. Lars Berg did not appear to have captained the *Marthe Andrea* again, until the summer of 1859 when he once more undertook his familiar journey from Tønsberg to Restronguet, on what would be their final voyage.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ J.S. Worm-Müller, "Emigrant- og Kanadafarten", *den Norske sjøfarts historie* (Oslo, 1935).p547-635; Fredrik Larsen, 'Hundrevis av nordmenn mistet livet på vei til Québec. De som kom frem, reiste videre med én gang.', in *Aftenposten: historie*, (2022).

⁵⁶ Christiania-posten, 22 November 1850

⁵⁷ Blain.pp28-29; P.G. Norseng, 'Fersk pils og kald fisk i 'den siste istid'. Om naturisens rolle i kystøkonomien og det moderne gjennombruddet i Norge', *Heimen*, 56 (2019).; M Freeman, *Ice blocks from Norway: The importation of Natural Ice to Britain, Circa 1870-1925*, (Oslo: Cappelen Damn Akademisk/ NOASP (Nordic Open Access Scholarly Publishing), 2023).p119

⁵⁸ A Ingemann, *Fortegnelse over den Norske Handelsflaade, Vaaren 1855*, (Christiania, 1855).p28

⁵⁹ See search terms 'Marthe Andrea' and 'Martha Andrea' in the Norwegian and British digitized newspaper archives for 1854 to 1858.

⁶⁰ A Ingemann, *Fortegnelse over den Norske Handelsflaade, Vaaren 1856*, (Christiania, 1856).p27; Brevik port records, *Fortegnelse over de til den første Norske Assuranceforening henhørende skibe den 7de Juli 1856*, (1856).p17; Brevik port records, *Fortegnelse over de til den første Norske Assuranceforening henhørende skibe den 30te August 1858*, (1858).p27.

Marthe Andrea in rough waters

During her 60-year career, the *Marthe Andrea* and her crew would have encountered some rough crossings, especially sailing the 1,045 nautical miles across the North Sea from Drammen to Falmouth. In mid-October 1829, with Morten Mikkelsen Øre as captain, she was amongst several Norwegian ships reported to have endured a heavy, 'hurricane-like' storm at Vlie on the coast of Holland. Later, with Lars Berg as captain, she experienced a near catastrophic incident on September 26th, 1853, off the north coast of Kent, when there were unusually strong equinoctial gales across Britain. The near hurricane force winds caused devastation both on land and at sea. What happened to the *Marthe Andrea* on this occasion attracted much attention and was reported in numerous newspapers:

Near Reculver, while heading back from London to Tønsberg, *Marthe Andrea*, broke free from her anchorage in strong winds and went ashore. She took a considerable volume of water in the hold, causing the ballast to shift and requiring the ship to be abandoned off Warden Point. Fortunately, the crew all safely landed on the nearby Isle of Sheppey. The following morning around 5 am, a lieutenant and a crew from the coastguard at Leydown Station spotted the 'fine brig'. Assisted by crew from the local ship *Sydney*, they boarded the *Marthe Andrea* and brought her back to the bay. There she was fitted with a new anchor and cable, pending being taken to a place of safety.

The various newspaper reports differ somewhat on the role of Captain Berg and his crew in the ship's rescue, but eventually they were able to board the *Marthe Andrea* again. Some newspapers refer to discussions between Lars Berg and the Coast guard concerning the rescue, and an inquiry seems to have taken place. Over the next two or three weeks she was repaired at Whitstable, and by 16 October, she was ready to return to Norway on the next tide. Captain Berg, his crew and the ship survived what must have been a harrowing experience. Presumably, some or all the costs of making *Marthe Andrea* seaworthy again, were covered on this occasion by insurance.

In the 1700s and early 1800s, Norwegian shipping insurance mostly covered the cargoes and relatively rarely covered the ships. Insurance with foreign companies was expensive, but in 1837 the first successful Norwegian mutual assurance association was established. Insurance quickly became popular with Norwegian shipowners as the fleet expanded. By 1850, 75% of ships in the Norwegian merchant fleet, including the *Marthe Andrea* were insured.⁶¹ Unfortunately, as on her final voyage, it appears the insurance policies did not cover all eventualities.

⁶¹ H Espeli, 'Fortropper for gjensidig skadeforsikring i Norge. Skipsforsikringsforeningene og brannkassenes gjennombrudd på 1800-tallet: Likheter og forskjeller', *Årbok Norsk Maritimt Museum 2010*, (2010).pp49-90; Første norske Assuranceforening (First Norwegian Assurance Association), 'Fortegnelse over de til den første norske Assuranceforening henhørende Skibe den 15de September 1850 med nogle tilføjede tabellariske Oversigter : Uddrag og andre Efterretninger angaaende Foreningens Virksomhed', (Porsgrund 1850).

Norwegian timber importation to Perran Wharf and Restronguet Creek, Cornwall

Generally, it took less than eight days to sail cargoes of timber from Norway to Cornwall, often destined for Restronguet Creek. At the creek's upper reaches was Perran Wharf Foundry, situated at Perran-ar-worthal along the turnpike road between Truro and Falmouth.⁶² This was one of three major iron foundries in Cornwall, producing steam pumping machines for draining local tin and copper mines.⁶³ It is quite possible that some of the timber brought from the *Marthe Andrea* ended up here, as large volumes of Norwegian timber were being offloaded at Perran Wharf, some of which was required by the foundry pattern shops to produce castings.⁶⁴ The foundry was one of the business ventures of the influential Fox family of Falmouth, wealthy merchants and shipping agents. Author Walter White visited the area in 1854, and in his book vividly described the scene as industrialised and yet beautiful:

(...) at the head of Restronguett Creek, where the village of Perran Wharf, and its noisy foundry, occupy the bottom of a shady hollow, which might be taken for a broad glade of forest. You will perhaps be as much surprised to find that industry need not always be associated with ugliness, as by the beauty of the place itself. Piles of manufactured iron lie about, and heaps of coal and refuse, and vessels are loading and unloading at the wharf; but the scene is romantic, and the woods of Carclew, Sir Charles Lemon's domain, come sweeping down in masses of foliage that triumph over smoke, and the roar of bellows and furnaces, and shelter one of the finest arboretums in the kingdom.⁶⁵



Figure 10: The Norway Inn (on right) with boats sailing towards Perran Foundry c.1830.

Source: Original Source: Kershaw and Son Ltd, London

Arriving in Cornwall, the timber was offloaded and floated into place where the creek was shallow, then secured with chains and spikes. Over several months the timber was seasoned in these timber ponds or pickling ponds, by allowing the tide to wash over them twice daily.⁶⁶

⁶² Unknown, 'Annual Report', (Truro: Royal Institution of Cornwall, 1851), pp. 45-46.

⁶³ S. Barson, 'The Perran Foundry, Perranworthal, Cornwall. An Historical Report and Assessment of a late eighteenth-century iron foundry and steam engine manufactory.', (English Heritage, 2002).

⁶⁴ C. Burton, *The Story of Perran Foundry and Perranarworthal. A Victorian Industrial Settlement within the Cornish World Heritage Site.*, (Norfolk, 2011), p22-23

⁶⁵ W. White, *A Londoner's walk to Land's End and a trip to the Scilly Isles*, 3rd edn (London: Chapman and Hall, 1879), p141

⁶⁶ Burton, pp11-12



Figure 11: Timber ponds at Perran Wharf
Source: Unknown

Civil engineer Richard Thomas' book on Falmouth recounted Restronguet Creek as it was in 1827, with the remains of Carnon Streamworks and the new railroad that stretched from Point to Redruth to transport goods to and from the mines:

...at the entrance of the creek is Restronguet Pool, an excellent and well sheltered anchorage having four to six fathoms in depth at low water. Here many Norwegian vessels discharge their cargoes of timber.⁶⁷



Figure 12: Aerial photograph of Carrick Roads Estuary of the River Fal
Source: Wikimedia Commons

⁶⁷ R. Thomas, *The History of Falmouth*, (Falmouth: J. Trathen, 1827), pp47-52

The downturn of mining in the 1870's caused Perran foundry to close in 1879 with a loss of some 400 jobs and it later became a flour mill. The large, sheltered, natural harbour of Restronguet Creek was no longer dredged to allow lighters and cargo ships to reach Perran Wharf and it silted up, as did the neighbouring River Kennall which issued into the Creek.⁶⁸ Today the Creek is impassable up to Perran Wharf by even the smallest of trading vessels. The only reminder of the busy shipping history is the Inn opposite the old wharf, which continues to honour its past by flying the Norwegian flag on its forecourt.

In the early nineteenth century, Restronguet had a tin streaming mining works where detrital tin was painstakingly excavated. After the removal of overlying mud and silt by shovel and wheelbarrow, men would wash, crush and rinse the gravel, sorting it to extract the tin (a process known as 'buddling'). As tin supplies dwindled, and with increased mechanisation, it became possible and economically worthwhile to mine underground.



Figure 13: Restronguet Creek Tin Works, c.1874 by T. May
Source: By Kind permission from the Collections of Royal Cornwall Museum

In 1824, the Carnon Stream Mine (later the Carnon Mine) erected an engine house and sank and timbered a shaft below. This led out across Restronguet Creek, where an island was built and a further shaft sunk below the creek, using cast iron cylinders made at Perran Foundry. Although this mine was profitable, it was closed a few years later as it became an obstacle to passing ships. Nevertheless, over the following five decades, further mining of Restronguet Creek was undertaken, by again sinking iron cylinders deeper into the bedrock, averaging two feet each tide. Barton's description illustrates the necessity for a constant supply of good quality timber to support the mines:

... heavy and close timbering at all the gravel levels was necessary (...) sets were positioned every 2.5 feet, the width between the legs (of 8" square timber) 4.5 feet at the bottom and 2 feet at the top using a 10" cap piece. The space between each set was covered with "laths" made of half logs with a 1.5-inch-thick planking securing the sides. Even with timbering such as this, crushing was a constant problem and sets had constantly to be replaced.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Grace's Guide, 'Perran Foundry', in *Grace's Guide to British Industrial History*, (2022).

⁶⁹ D.B. Barton, *Essays in Cornish Mining History*, (Penzance: Wordens of Cornwall Limited, 1971),p167



Figure 14: Carnon Valley Alluvial Tin Mining nineteenth Century
Source: Penhallurick, 1986

The timber needed to be of large enough size to provide the strength required to prop up underwater mine shafts. The following extract, written by Sir Charles Lemon in 1838, demonstrates the age of the trees and sheer volume of timber required to do this:

It is a matter of some interest to ascertain the average age of the Norwegian timber used in the mines; and the rings, marking the annual growth, have been counted in what appeared to be ten average trees. They exhibit rings, 140, 114, 120, 100, 60, 121, 98, 120, 140, 162, averaging 117.5 rings. Six other trees averaged 124 rings. The average may be taken at 120 years' growth. Now the consumption in 1836 was 36,207 loads of timber, which at four trees to a load, is equal to 144,828 trees. If these trees grew fifteen feet apart, they would cover 750 acres of ground; and if they were 120 years old, it would require the produce of 140 square miles of Norwegian forest to supply the mines of Cornwall.⁷⁰



Figure 15: Pit Props in a nineteenth Century Cornish mine
Source: J.C. Burrows c. 1890

⁷⁰ C. Lemon, 'The Statistics of the Copper Mines of Cornwall', *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 1 (1838).

Despite this industrialised picture in the 1850's, only one public building stood at Restronguet hamlet, the recently re-named *Pandora Inn*. Inn keeper Harriet Loban had been widowed in 1848 and since then had been assisted by one of her nieces Amelia Cock (wife of a mariner). Subsequently the assistant role was taken on by another of Harriet's nieces, Blanche Ferris, widow of William, a local shipbuilder. Together, Harriet and her nieces ran the inn and the small passage service which took people from Restronguet Passage to Feock on the opposite shore.⁷¹ Customers at the Inn would have undoubtedly included both local men and foreign mariners including the Norwegians whose cargoes were being offloaded and reloaded at the wharves in Restronguet and Point.

It is hard to envisage nineteenth century Restronguet Creek having such an industrial past. Yet the scene would have been one of busy maritime traffic, the unloading of large ships, noise from the tin mine engine houses, occasional gunpowder blasts that echoed down the creek and smoke bellowing from engine house chimneys.

Final voyage for Captain Berg and the *Marthe Andrea*

The aftermath of the Crimean War had a significant impact on international trade and shipping. Despite the continued expansion of the Norwegian merchant fleet, freight remained low, and many ships were temporarily laid off especially in 1857 and 1858.⁷² According to the British Newspaper records, there appears to have been a decline in the number of voyages undertaken by the *Marthe Andrea*, suggesting business may have diminished. Captain Berg, now in his mid 50's, decided to retire from the physically demanding role of captain and to sell his share of the business.

In late January and early February 1859 Lars Berg put his half share of the *Marthe Andrea* up for sale in the Christiania newspaper *Morgenbladet*.⁷³ She could be inspected at Årøysund by appointment with Captain Øhre, and was described as well-equipped and insured for 5,500 speciedaler (approximately £2,000). Even after 60 years of sailing, *Marthe Andrea* was rated in class B1, indicating that she was well-kept and fit for carrying general cargo in the North Sea. However, his share remained unsold, and in the late spring of 1859 Berg once more boarded the *Marthe Andrea* as captain and co-owner, sailing the 40 nautical miles north to Drammen to pick up a cargo of timber. On 14 May and for the last time, she departed Drammen headed for Cornwall.⁷⁴ By 14 June she was at Restronguet, the cargo of deals and batons had been unloaded, and she had been hauled ashore at Truro Point in Restronguet Creek to clean and caulk the hull. After becoming further damaged while in dock, she was surveyed and condemned on June eighteenth, having been found to be damaged beyond repair. Lars Berg must have realised that he would not receive adequate financial compensation through the underwriters. The catastrophic structural damage to the ship had occurred when she was in dock and not at sea, possibly meaning that the insurance would be invalid. Financial ruin for him would have been considered shameful in Norway at that time and he would have been devastated. On 8 July, Lars Berg took his own life, while the insurance settlement was still pending.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Tomlinson, J. *The history of the Pandora Inn* (forthcoming).

⁷² J.S. Worm-Müller, "Krimkrigen og den første verdenskrise", in *Den Norske sjøfarts historie fra de ældste tider til vore dage* ed. by Jacob S Worm-Müller (Oslo: Det Steenske forlag, 1935).pp410-546

⁷³ *Morgenbladet*, 30 January , 2 February 1859

⁷⁴ *Drammens Tidende*, 14 May 1859

⁷⁵ *Liverpool Shipping Telegraph and Daily Commercial Advertiser*, 13 July 1859

The inquest, burial and auction

According to the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* the inquest was held in Restronguet Passage on 11 July 1859. It is probable that it took place at the only public building in Restronguet at the time, the *Pandora Inn*. The coroner was Dr John Carlyon, who in 1837, became the first in a long line of Carlyons to hold this position. His verdict of ‘Temporary Insanity’, was becoming more common in the 1850’s when suicide was beginning to be considered an act of unsound mind rather than one of sin and immorality and therefore carried less stigma.⁷⁶ Considering Captain Berg’s situation, this seems to have been an empathic judgement.

Lars Berg was buried in Mylor on 12 July 1859, by Rev. Edward Hoblyn, the vicar of Mylor and Mabe. The parish records over-estimated his age to be 60 years and by his name was the notation: ‘Coroned. Drowned’.⁷⁷ There is no record of where he was buried. However, within the unlisted plots, two are solitary and situated at the outer edge of the graveyard furthest from the church. Although it is not possible to confirm, Captain Berg may have been buried there.

In 1859, whilst public perceptions of suicide were changing, the Burial Act 1823 would still have been current. Prior to 1823, anyone who committed a criminal act of suicide *felo de se* would have been buried at a crossroad with a stake through their heart. However, the 1823 act allowed for a private interment in a churchyard within 24 hours of an inquest providing it took place between 9pm and midnight without any religious rites.⁷⁸ Berg would have therefore been laid to rest in Mylor churchyard without ceremony or mourners and under the cover of dark. It was not until The Interments (*felo de se*) Act 1882 that a person whose death was ‘criminal suicide’ could be buried at any time of day and with religious rites.⁷⁹

In September 1859, two advertisements were placed by Olver and Sons in the *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, announcing an auction on Monday 12 September in Restronguet, to sell the hull of the *Marthe Andrea*, ‘as she now lies, together with her masts and bowsprit’.⁸⁰ Various lots including spars, rigging, sails, large and small anchors, chain cables and an ‘excellent caboose’ were to be auctioned separately. Many items were in new or in very good condition, having been replaced in the previous one to two years. The timber from the hull realised £40 with a further £124 achieved for the remaining items.⁸¹

These auction adverts, the newspaper report on the outcome of the auction, the insurance rating of class B1 and the sales advertisements placed by Captain Berg the preceding winter, all suggest that the *Marthe Andrea* had recently benefitted from significant investment, despite her age and the economic downturn. She was in excellent condition when embarking on her final voyage, making her loss all the more difficult for her shareholders.

The aftermath for

News of Captain Berg’s tragic suicide and the condemnation and auction of the *Marthe Andrea* reached his family. In the deaths and burials register for Stokke

⁷⁶ B.T. Gates, 'Chapter one: Verdicts', in *Victorian Suicide: Mad crimes and sad histories: A Victorian web book*, (National University of Singapore, 2009).

⁷⁷ Mylor parish burial records, 'Register of Burials, in the parish of Mylor', (London: Shaw and sons, 1858-9), p. 9.

⁷⁸ The Statute Law Committee, *The Statutes: Revised edition*, (London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1877).

⁷⁹ 'Suicide Act', (England and Wales, 1961).

⁸⁰ *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 2, 9 September 1859

⁸¹ *Shipping and Merchantine Gazette*, 'Maritime Extracts', (14 September 1859; *Drammens Tidende*, 1 October 1859

the Berg family

parish for 1859, Lars Berg of Veien was listed as 'dead' in Falmouth on 8 July, with the comment 'drowned himself'.⁸²

Lars Berg left behind a widow and eight children (four daughters and four sons between the ages of 5-21 years) at his farmstead in Stokke. Both his suicide and the financial loss would have had great repercussions for them, far beyond the associated social stigma. According to local Norwegian court records, he left his family an inheritance of only 655 speciedaler – about 1/8th of the insurance value of the *Marthe Andrea* in 1859, and not very impressive for a captain and principal co-owner of a ship. The farmstead Veien must have been the main asset when the ship was gone and his widow, Gjertine, was subsequently granted the right to retain undivided possession of the estate.⁸³



Figure 16: Gjertine, widow of Lars Berg
Source: Stokke. *En bygdebok*, 1928

The 1865 census for Stokke parish records Gjertine as head of the household at Veien, living with seven of her unmarried children, a maid and a seamstress who presumably was a lodger. The three adult sons followed in their father's footsteps: Anders (aged 24) became a ship's captain, Gjert (aged 20) a second mate and Lars (aged 19) a sailor. The only child missing from the census was the eldest daughter Henriette (aged 27). The second eldest daughter, Hanna Maria, was managing the household for her mother, whilst the youngest daughters Gjertine (aged 17) and Hanna Caroline (aged 14) and their little brother Niels (aged 12) were not yet working.⁸⁴

⁸² Stokke kirkebøker, 'Parish register (digitalised)', (Norwegian National Archives, 1859).

⁸³ Stokke kirkebøker, 'Dødsfallsprotokoller', (Norwegian National Archives, 1859).

⁸⁴ Stokke parish records, 'Folketelling', (Norwegian National Archives, 1865).



Figure 17: Anders Berg, son of Lars Berg
Source: Stokke. *En bygdebok*, 1928

As the children grew up, the small farmstead alone could not support such a large family. Three of the sons were making additional income at sea. In 1866, Hanna Maria married sailor Ola Hansen Melsom,⁸⁵ and he moved in with his wife's family at Veien, which would have provided financial assistance.

By 1875, Gjertine was still head of household and continued to have help from a maid. Two sons, Lars and Gjert, had moved out, but unmarried Henriette remained at the farm with the rest of Gjertine's children. Anders had become a ship's captain, and Niels a ship's mate, contributing to the household income. The three unmarried daughters all played their part, working as seamstresses. The only married daughter, Hanna Marie, and her husband Ola continued to live at Veien with their children. He had risen to ship's captain and owner.⁸⁶

Despite the loss of her husband and the main source of family income, Gjertine kept her family together through a difficult period of significant financial hardship. She continued to live at Veien until her own death, almost 32 years later. Stokke parish death register states that she died from chronic rheumatic fever on 4 May 1891, aged 74 years.⁸⁷ Ola Melsom, himself now a widower, since Hanna Maria's death, became head of the household and continued to live at Veien with three of his four children, his spinster sister-in-law Henriette and a maid.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Berg.(1928), p288

⁸⁶ Stokke parish records, 'Folketelling', (Norwegian National Archives, 1875).; Stokke parish records, 'Folketelling', (Norwegian National Archives, 1891).

⁸⁷ Stokke kirkebøker, 'Dødsfallsprotokoller', (1891).

⁸⁸ Stokke parish records.1891.

Concluding remarks

The nineteenth century Norwegian timber trade was crucial for Britain and Western Europe whose need for lumber and timber increased exponentially with industrialisation. Cornwall in particular needed constant supplies for its ship-building and mining industries. Norwegian communities also relied heavily upon the shipping economy, some making their fortunes in the timber trade, but they were also vulnerable to changing political and economic circumstances, such as occurred around the times of the Napoleonic and Crimean wars.

By following the career of the *Marthe Andrea* and one of her longest serving captains and owners, Lars Berg, this micro-history approach has shed light on many general developments in Norwegian shipping and of close trade relations between Norway and Cornwall.

Whilst evidence of the timber trade era has all but disappeared in Cornwall, a few reminders are left, most notably at Perran-ar-worthal where there is a memorial to the large Norwegian ships that sailed up the River Kennall, a tributary of Restronguet Creek. The *Norway Inn* (previously the *Norway Hotel*, built 1828-1829) evokes images of when large ships once sailed past, laden with wooden pit props headed upstream for Perran Wharf. The nearby river frontage, still known as Timber ponds, marks the area where the timber was offloaded to season.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the days of the wooden brig, the glory years both of the Norwegian timber trade and the era of Cornish tin mining were all coming to an end. Yet despite this, the legacy of the trading relations between Norway and Britain live on, in their shared maritime histories and the retention of close Anglo-Norwegian relations.

Appendix Timber Returns 1836-1841

TIMBER RETURNS 1836-1838												
NORWEGIAN	1836			1837			1838			Deals		
	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)
PORT												
TRURO	15,075	2	41,456/9/2	6,445	26	17,725/2/6	11,260	27	30,966/9/7	2,879/1/10		
FALMOUTH	1,034	4	2,843/14/5	479	49	1,319/18/10	965	15	2,654/11/6	160/2/11		
COLONIAL												
PORT												
TRURO	4,114	8	2,057/1/9	3,254	1	1,627/1/2	2,073	10	1,036/17/6	204/14/-		
FALMOUTH	1,405	45	702/19/-	954	10	477/2/-	1244	26	622/5/3	28/-2		

Table 1: Timber Returns for Truro and Falmouth 1836-1838
Source: Kresen Kernow Archives ref. Fox/B/24/8

TIMBER RETURNS 1839-1841												
NORWEGIAN	1839			1840			1841			Deals	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	
	Fir	Deals	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Fir	Deals	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Fir	Deals	Amount of duty (£/S/d)			
	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)
PORT												
TRURO	7,800	34	21,451/17/8	9,602	19	26,812/14/1	7,414	26	20,945/19/1			2,056/13/7
FALMOUTH	891	33	2,452/1/3	833	19	2,332/8/11	867	6	2,449/8/3			117/19/1
COLONIAL												
	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)	Loads	Length (feet)	Amount of duty (£/S/d)
PORT												
TRURO	3,294	15	1,647/2/11	1,660	45	925/10/4	1,359	4	781/9/4			154/12/2
FALMOUTH	347	12	173/12/5	1,194	3	668/11/9	712	37	409/16/6			73/5/8

Table 2: Timber Returns for Truro and Falmouth 1839-1841
 Source: Kresen Kernow Archives ref. Fox/B/24/8

TOTAL DUTY ON TIMBER 1836-1841		
NORWEGIAN	Fir (£/S/d)	Deals, Battens and Ends (£/S/d)
TRURO	159,358/13/1	12,711/7/7
FALMOUTH	14,072/3/2	851/10/8
COLONIAL	Fir	Deals, Battens and Ends
TRURO	8,075/2/-	1,319/1/1
FALMOUTH	3,072/6/11	325/9/-

Table 3: Total Duty on Timber 1836-1841 for Truro and Falmouth
Source: Kresen Kernow Archives ref. Fox/B/24/8