

Mae pob llun yn adrodd stori

Mae llongau ymhlith gwaith llaw pwysicaf y ddynolryw. Adlewyrchir hyn gan y ffaith eu bod, ers y cyfnod cynharaf, yn destunau ar gyfer lluniau - yn lluniau o ganŵau a rafftiau a dynnwyd gan drigolion cynnar yr ogofâu ar y naill law, ac yn baentiad hudolus Turner, y *Fighting Temeraire*, ar y llall. Nid oes

'Thereby hangs a tale'

Ships are one of humankind's most significant creations. This is reflected in the fact that since the earliest times they have been the subject matter of paintings, ranging from depictions of canoes and rafts by cave dwellers, to Turner's evocative portrayal of the *Fighting Temeraire*. There is nothing quite as exotic or valuable amongst the ship portraits that comprise part of the Industry collections, but the 250 19th and early 20th

gennym yr un llun ymhlith y paentiadau o longau yn ein casgliadau diwydiannol sydd mor werthfawr nac mor egsotig â llun Turner, ond serch hynny mae'r 250 o enghreifftiau sydd gennym o'r 19eg ganrif a dechrau'r 20fed ganrif yn archif hynod o werthfawr sy'n adlewyrchu hanes morwrol Cymru.

Ychydig iawn o'r rhain sy'n esiamplau o gelf gain. Mae'r rhan fwyaf ohonynt, yn hytrach, yn waith gan 'baentwyr pen pier' anhysbys gwledydd Môr y Canoldir, arlunwyr ar dasg a fyddai, am ychydig arian, yn cynhyrchu darluniau syml, lliwgar o long i'w pherchennog, ei chapten neu aelodau o'i chriw. Yn wreiddiol, fe'u paentiwyd bob yn bâr, gyda'r llun cyntaf yn dangos y llong ar fôr tawel a'r llall yn ei dangos ar storm. Er nad yw'r lluniau hyn yn rhai uchel eu safon artistig roedd eu cywirdeb technegol a'r dystiolaeth weladwy a gynigient o gysylltiad â llong yr oedd gan y prynwr feddwl ohoni yn gwneud iawn am hynny. O'u prynu, deuai'r lluniau hyn yn destun balchder a theimlad: atgoffent y perchnogion neu'r cyfranddallwyr yng Nghaerdydd neu Lerpwl am eu buddsoddiad tra oedd y llong ei hun yn llwytho nwyddau mewn rhyw borthladd pellennig; atgoffent wraig hiraethus y capten yng Ngheredigion neu Llyn am ei gŵr, yn bennaeth ar long a oedd yn hwylio ar gefnfor unig filoedd o filltiroedd i ffwrdd.

Ym 1998 daeth i feddiant yr amgueddfa baentiad heb ei arwyddo o'r *Breconian* yng nghanol storm. Llong ager oedd y *Breconian*, a adeiladwyd ym 1906 gan y seiri llongau William Doxford a'i Feibion o Sunderland, ar gyfer cwmni John Mathias a'i Feibion o Aberystwyth. Llong anarferol oedd hon, yn yr ystyr y'i hadeiladwyd i'r cynllun rhyfedd ond arloesol hwnnw, y cynllun dec tyred y codwyd patent arno gan Doxfords ym 1891. Yn ôl y cynllun hwn, gosodwyd dec culach o'r enw'r dec tyred am ben corff y llong: ymestynnai o'r naill ben i'r llall. Honnid bod i'r cynllun hwn sawl mantais. Yn y cyfnod hwnnw, codwyd ffioedd porthladd ar sail tunelledd net y llong. Mesur o gyfaint y gofod oedd ar gael i gadw'r cargo oedd hwn, yn hytrach na phwysau'r llong, a chant o droedfeddi ciwbig oedd tunnell yn yr achos hwn (a oedd yn cyfateb i'r gasgen win a adwaenid yn Saesneg wrth yr enw *tun*). Roedd perchennog y llong, ar y llaw arall, yn cael ei incwm ar sail y gyfradd a delid iddo am bob tunnell

century examples nevertheless constitute an invaluable archive of Welsh maritime history.

Very few could be defined as fine art. Most are rather the work of jobbing Mediterranean 'pierhead painters' (many of whom remain anonymous) who, for a small sum, would produce simple, colourful portrayals of a vessel for owner, captain and crew members. Originally, they were painted in pairs, one painting portraying the vessel on a calm sea and the other in a storm. What these paintings lack in

artistic quality is more than compensated for, however, by their technical accuracy and the tangible visual evidence that they provided of an association with a vessel of which the patron was justly proud. For once acquired, these paintings became objects of pride and sentiment: to owners or shareholders in Cardiff or Liverpool, a reminder of their investment when the vessel was loading in a distant port; to a

captain's wife in Ceredigion or Llyn, a poignant evocation of her husband in command of the vessel on a lonely expanse of ocean thousands of miles away.

In 1998 the Museum acquired an unsigned storm-scene painting of the *Breconian*, a steamship completed in 1906 by shipbuilders William Doxford & Sons of Sunderland, for John Mathias & Sons of Aberystwyth. She was unusual in that she had been constructed to the peculiar yet

innovative turret-deck arrangement patented by Doxfords in 1891, in which a narrower deck, termed the turret deck, was superimposed upon the vessel's hull, extending from stem to stern. Numerous advantages were claimed for the design. Port charges at that time were levied upon the vessel's nett tonnage, this being a measurement, not of weight, but of the volume of the cargo-carrying space, in which a ton equalled a hundred cubic feet (the equivalent of the wine barrel known as a tun).

The shipowner, however, derived his income from the rate per *avoirdupois* ton that he received on the actual weight of the cargo - the deadweight tonnage - and the turret arrangement allowed an enhanced deadweight capacity in relation to nett tonnage that was as much as ten percent greater than a conventional cargo steamer of the day. Or to put it simply, it made the vessel more profitable! It was further claimed that the turret increased longitudinal strength, whilst also providing a feeder from which cargoes like coal and grain could settle lower in the hold without adversely affecting the vessel's stability. The design



Y *Breconian* yn disgwyl i ddadlwytho grawn yn Rotterdam, 1907
The *Breconian* waiting to discharge her grain cargo at Rotterdam, 1907

avoirdupois ar sail pwysau go iawn y cargo - y tunelledd llwyth. Golygai'r cynllun tyred bod mwy o le i gadw llwyth mewn perthynas â'r tunelledd net - gymaint â deg y cant yn fwy na llong ager cludo-cargo gonfensiynol y cyfnod. Neu, a bod yn blaen, golygai fod y llong yn fwy proffidiol! Honnid hefyd bod y tyred yn cynyddu cryfder y llong ar ei hyd, ac yn gweithredu hefyd fel llwythwr, a olygai y gallai llwythi fel glo a grawn orwedd yn is yn yr howld heb effeithio'n andwyol ar sefydlogrwydd y llong. Cafodd y cynllun lwyddiant mawr tros gyfnod o ddau ddegawd nes y daeth datblygiadau newydd ym maes adeiladu llongau i'r fei; adeiladwyd 429 o llongau dec tyred i gyd rhwng 1892 a 1911.

Cychwynnwyd y cwmni a oedd biau'r *Breconian* ym 1869, pan benderfynodd John Mathias, groser uchelgeisiol o Aberystwyth, roi cynnig ar fod yn berchennog llongau trwy brynu'r sgwner *Miss Evans*. Ym 1883 newidiodd o llongau hwyliu i llongau ager, gan ffurfio'r Glanrheidol Steamship Co. Ltd. i brynu'r stemar newydd-ei-hadeiladu. A hithau'n rhy fawr i fynd i mewn i'r harbwr yn Aberystwyth, bwriedid y llong, fel ei chwiorydd yn ddiweddarach, ar gyfer y fasnach lo o borthladd Caerdydd. Erbyn 1897, roedd Richard, mab Mathias, wedi agor swyddfa yng Nghaerdydd (er mai yn Aberystwyth y bu swyddfa gofrestrdig y cwmni gydol yr adeg) ac ym 1900 roedd chwe stemar yn fflyd llongau Mathias. Erbyn i'r *Breconian* ymuno â hi, cawsai'r fenter yr enw newydd crand The Cambrian Steam Navigation Co. Ltd., ac enwyd y saith llong, yn amhriodol braidd, ar ôl ysgolion bonedd. 'The College Line' oedd enw morwyr Caerdydd ar y cwmni, felly. Y *Breconian*, a enwid ar ôl Coleg Crist yn Aberhonddu, oedd yr unig long i'w galw ar ôl ysgol yng Nghymru; mae tarddiad *Etonian*, *Harrovian* a *Rugbeian*, ayb oll yn amlwg ddigon!

Fel y rhan fwyaf o llongau cargo'r cyfnod, byddai'r *Breconian* wedi hwylio'n bennaf yn y fasnach 'glo mâs, grawn mewn' fel y'i gelwid, gan gymryd glo o dde Cymru i wahanol borthladdoedd ym Môr y Canoldir a dychwelyd gyda grawn o'r Môr Du, neu gymryd glo i Frasil neu'r Ariannin a dychwelyd gyda grawn o borthladdoedd yr Afon Plate fel Rosario. Morwyr o Gymry a weithiai arni'n bennaf; ym 1911 David Jones o Aberystwyth oedd ei chaptan a deuai ugain o blith ei chriw o wyth ar hugain o drefi a phentrefi arfordir Cymru.

Ym 1917, gwerthwyd y *Breconian* i'r Tyneside Line Ltd. o Newcastle ac ym 1926 fe'i gwerthwyd eto i berchennog llongau o Genoa, Giovanni Bozzo, a ail-enwodd y llong yn *Lorenzo Bozzo*, ar ôl ei fab. Chwe blynedd yn ddiweddarach, fe'i malwyd, ddegawd wedi i'r cwmni y'i hadeiladwyd hi ar ei gyfer werthu ei long olaf. Heddiw, dim ond y darlun a erys i'n hatgoffa ni am un agwedd ar fywyd morwrol cyfoethog Cymru gynt a'r llongwyr o Gymry a hwyliai'r *Breconian* ar draws foroedd y byd, ac enw porthladd ei chofrestru, 'Aberystwyth', i'w weld yn eofn amlwg ar ei starn.

David Jenkins, Uwch Guradur,
Adran Ddiwydiant, 126 Bute Street, Caerdydd

enjoyed great success over two decades until superseded by subsequent developments in ship construction; in all, 429 turret-deckers were built between 1892 and 1911.

The company that owned the *Breconian* had its origins in 1869 when John Mathias, an ambitious Aberystwyth grocer, decided to venture into shipowning, purchasing the schooner *Miss Evans*. In 1883 he moved from sail to steam, forming the Glanrheidol Steamship Co. Ltd. to acquire the newly-built steamer of that name. Too big to enter the harbour at Aberystwyth, the vessel, like all her subsequent sisters, was intended for the coal trade out of Cardiff. By 1897, Mathias's son Richard had opened an office in Cardiff (though the firm's registered office never left Aberystwyth) and in 1900 the fleet comprised six steamers. By the time that the *Breconian* joined the Mathias fleet, the enterprise had been grandly renamed the Cambrian Steam Navigation Co. Ltd., with the seven ships being named somewhat incongruously after public schools. This practice led to the company being nicknamed 'the College line' amongst seamen at Cardiff. The *Breconian*, named after Christ College, Brecon, was the only vessel named after a Welsh school; *Etonian*, *Harrovian* and *Rugbeian*, etc., are all self-explanatory!

Like most tramp steamers of the period, the *Breconian* would have sailed chiefly in the so-called 'coal out, grain home' trades, either taking coal from south Wales to various destinations in the Mediterranean and returning with cereals from the Black Sea, or taking coal to Brazil or Argentina and returning with cereals from River Plate ports such as Rosario. She was manned predominantly by Welshmen; in 1911, her master was Captain David Jones of Aberystwyth and twenty of her crew of twenty-eight came from Welsh coastal towns and villages.

In 1917, the *Breconian* was sold to the Tyneside Line Ltd. of Newcastle and in 1926 she was sold on to a Genoese shipowner, Giovanni Bozzo, who renamed her *Lorenzo Bozzo*, after his son. Six years later, she was broken up, a decade after the company for whom she was built sold their last ship. Today, only the painting remains to remind us of just one aspect of once-flourishing Welsh maritime enterprise and the capable Welsh seamen who sailed the turret-decked *Breconian*, with her port of registry 'Aberystwyth' emblazoned across her stern, across the world's oceans.

David Jenkins, Senior Curator, Maritime Collections,
Department of Industry, 126 Bute Street, Cardiff