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CAPTAIN ROBERT THOMAS
OF LLANDWROG AND LIVERPOOL

1843 - 1903

A collection of papers and photographs relating to Capt. Robert Thomas and his family deposited at the Caernarfon Area Record Office by Mr. R. [REDACTED] Liverpool, currently owned by Mrs. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] Road, [REDACTED], Powys

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For a full transcript of the 'diary'
of Capt. Robert Thomas and of many of
the letters in this collection, see
the Gwynedd Archives Service publication
Ship Master by Aled Eames.

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1. 1883

MEMORIES of Capt. Robert Thomas of Llandwrog written in a Letts's Diary for 1882.

2-19 1874-1902

Correspondence of Capt. Robert Thomas:

2. 1874 July 3

LETTER: [Capt.] Robert Thomas, ship Glentilt, Holyhead Harbour to [Miss Kate] Jameson, apologising for being so long in writing to her. He left Liverpool at midnight on Tuesday in tow of a steamer and arrived at Holyhead after a rough passage after failing to get further. 'This is rather a poor beginning for me in my new capacity, but cant be helped'. Glad she likes Brighton: she seems to like everywhere better than Llandwrog. Glad also to hear of Miss Emily [Wynn]'s forthcoming marriage. It is time more of them around Glyn[llifon] were married.

POSTSCRIPT: He will post this letter tomorrow if possible. Sorry she has no friends at Bristol or Cardiff. Asks her to write to him at 4 Louisa Street, Cardiff; if the wind comes fair, he should be there in about 2 days.

3. 1875 Aug.3

LETTER: [Capt.] Robert Thomas, ship Glentilt Point Lobos, Callao, Peru, South America to [Miss Kate] Jameson, thanking her for her letter with all the news. He is very sorry to learn that she has left Glyn[llifon], and hopes she will be happy in her new home. He will come and see her even to Scotland if the Guano Loading Company will ever give him a load. There is no prospect of getting away from here for some three months longer, so asks her to write again. This place is a new deposit, so they are very backward with the work. There are over 100 vessels here now, most of them empty like the Glentilt. The Welsh here have started a teetotallers' meeting following the example of some Americans and now every Welsh Captain and most of the officers and many of the men have signed the pledge. There are fifteen Welsh ships here. If she does not hear from him from this place again, asks her to write to him at Falmouth, c/o Mr. Toms, tailor and draper, Falmouth. Encloses a programme of the next Temperance meeting on board the ship Malabar. (Capt. Thomas is one of the conductors).

4. 1877 Sept. 2

LETTER: [Capt.] John C. Ferguson, 92 Windsor St., Liverpool to Capt. [Robert] Thomas, acknowledging receipt of his letter. He is glad Capt. Thomas is pleased with the ship: she has cost a deal of money and has a fair prospect to repay it. Capt. Pike will give any help he can: he is to relieve Capt. Williamson on his arrival. Thus Capt. Thomas must do his best to get to know shippers, agents and coast workers and endeavour to get the ship loaded and away. She is to load at East Bute, but he cannot find a second mate to suit. Hopes that the four men Capt. Jones has will give satisfaction. Is sorry about the detention. Advises him to hurry the shippers all he can, to see Mr. Reid, Coal Tips, also the foreman of Glamorgan, Mr. Mews and Mr. Duman. Asks him to keep him informed as to how things work out, prospects, and about the sounding of the pumps as Pike will be busy at the Elbe.

5. 1878 Nov. 7

LETTER: [Hughes & Co.], Kenal Bridge to Capt. [Robert] Thomas, British Princess at [Shields], acknowledging receipt of his letter, and hoping that by now the ship is in discharging berth. They note that he had a good passage from Plymouth to the Goodwins and a hard beat from there to Shields. Ask to know the amount of inward towage incurred. Observations on charges for outward pilotage from Plymouth: the same rules and regulations apply as at Falmouth. The Tyne Dock Co., as Capt. Ferguson will have informed him, take the discharging of the cargo and Capt. Ferguson will have named two or three check clerks who offered their services and advised him which to engage. Ask to be informed of arrangements made. Detailed instructions regarding keeping tally of the cargo and the roles of the check clerk and mate, and the need for keeping a strict watch on the scales. The ship must not 'deliver a single hundred weight of Guano, but what she gets freight paid upon'. Enclose a table of previous discharging of Guano at Hamburg in 1876 for his guidance in checking her present output. Give most particular directions for dealing with any damaged Guano on board. They hope the cargo is free from stones. [Letter incomplete].

6. 1880 Aug. 5 LETTER; William Malcomson, Oswald Mordaunt and Co., shipbuilders, Southampton to Capt. R. Thomas, Penrallt Cottage, Llandwrog, acknowledging receipt of his letter. He is not surprised to learn that he has declined to keep command of the British Princess on the terms he states, but 'the simple fact is the timber trade is such a poor trade at best, that it can neither pay a first class ship or shipmaster'. He has been at Southampton since April superintending ship building and will be here all November, so is out of touch with what is happening in Liverpool. Apologises that there are no openings in their employ at present. They sold the barque Per Ardua recently and the captain is going in this ship [now under construction]. He will let him know if he learns of a suitable situation. Mrs. Malcomson joins with him in sending regards to Mrs. Thomas and baby. Hopes he finds a ship with remuneration more in keeping with his own ideas than the one he is leaving. But he must remember that a second class ship cannot afford to pay a first class salary to a ship master.
7. 1880 Sept. 18 COPY LETTER: Hughes & Co., Menai Bridge to Capt. R. Thomas, stating in reply to his enquiry that he has served in their ships from 1854-1880 as A.M. in the ships John Davies and Disraeli, 3rd mate in the Superior, 2nd mate of the Northumberland and Superior, three voyages as chief mate of the Minnehaha to West Coast South America and during the last six years, master of the ships Glentilt and British Princess. As they are parting with the wooden vessels and replacing them, they can see no prospect of a vacancy and part with him with regret. Should a vacancy occur, they will be happy to give him the appointment.
8. [1886 July 31] LETTER: [Capt.] R[obert] Thomas, Merioneth at sea to his wife [Kate] Thomas, Tanlan Cottage, Segontium Road, Carnarvon, telling her how sad he was at their parting, and how anxious about Brucey. Asks her to write to Mrs. Price to thank her and Miss Price for coming to see him off.
- Ferguson told him to tow only short distances, but he must tow as far as Holyhead as the ship is in such a mess. Asks her to write when he is 60 days out o/c Menzies and Bingham, and to send the weekly Mercury.

9. 1888 Jan.21

LETTER: [Capt.] R[obert] Thomas, Frisco to his wife [Kate] Thomas, informing her with great pleasure of 'this fine passage the best for 10 years of any ship to Frisco'. The Flintshire, which sailed nearly a month ahead of him, has not arrived. The Carnarvonshire is here, but they have beaten her by 3 weeks. He has received no letters yet. Williamson is here after a passage of 153 days. Their own, as she knows, was only 96 days. Tom is well, but he does not think he will have time to write today.

10. 1888 March 27

LETTER: [Capt.] R[obert] Thomas, San Francisco to his wife, [Kate] Thomas, Tanlan Cottage, Carnarvon. He never expected to be here so long or he would not have stopped her writing so soon. He has not had one man yet. He is sending several papers [containing an account of the record breaking voyage of the Merioneth] by the same mail, to themselves also to Barrack, McMillan, William and H. Jones of the Golden Goat, also one a piece to the [family] in Glasgow. He will say nothing of the Welsh present until he receives it.

Asks her to write to Scott at Falmouth asking him to wire his arrival off the Lizard and if his orders are there in case he goes to Falmouth. Pierce and Roberts strongly advise him not to go to Cork. If she possibly can, asks her to bring the children with her. He wishes they were sent to Dublin rather than Liverpool: they would have more time together. He has sent a paper to Mr. Griffith, 5 North Church Street, also to Capt. Evans. He hopes he may have a fine ship to take them with him as he is very lonely without them. He is flying his fine flag every day and it is greatly admired. Wonders whether Brucey could work it with wools and have it framed. He would like to see all the notices from the paper nicely pasted together and framed by the time he gets home. He sends every notice to the clever ones and copies of the Journal of Commerce.

Continued 30 March 1888: Not a sailor shipped yet. It is too bad to be kept here so long after his fine passage. He has no heart to write to the children. He is sending a great lot of papers to Carnarvon by this mail, to T. Thomas, Capt. Parry, Capt. Owens, Mrs. Edwards, R. Jones, Editor of the Observer etc., Lewis Lewis and Mr. De. Winton, also to T.O. Jones.

10. (continued)

He has made Tom a boatswain as it will give him experience of commanding sailors for when he gets to be second mate. Mr. Stewart has sent her address to his cousin in Queenstown who will wire her when the ship is off the port. Pierce is being loaded very quickly, so will probably be away the same time as them. He will most likely send her some photographs of the [Merioneth] before he leaves: he thinks she will admire them, especially the group photograph. Is planning a picnic at Dinas Dinlle for when he returns home. Is busy making a hencoop for the fowls. He is getting very fat.

11. 1888 March 31

LETTER: [Capt.] R[obert] Thomas, San Francisco to his wife [Kate] Thomas, telling her that he still has only two men which is very annoying. The Dolbadarn Castle arrived yesterday, 144 days. The young ~~man~~ from Dublin, who at Capt. Thomas's recommendation was made third mate of the Dolbadarn Castle was killed on the voyage when he fell off the crosstree to the deck. He has at last received the stick and it is quite beautiful with a gold and gold quartz handle. Thomas Wood is very ill, but seems to be on the turn to recovery. Hopes they have a nice discharging port where they can all live on board more comfortably than in lodgings.

POSTSCRIPT: he has got 5 men today and now requires only one more. He sails on Tuesday morning.

Appended:

2 NEWSPAPER CUTTINGS re the presentation to Capt. Thomas of the ship Merioneth by Prof. Thomas Price at his assay office corner of Sacramento and Leidesdorff Streets, of a quartz gold headed cane in recognition of Capt. Thomas's record breaking passage from Cardiff to San Francisco in 96 days.

12. [1888 April]

LETTER: [Capt.] Bob Thomas, ship Merioneth 300 miles off Falmouth to his daughters Brucey [Catherine Bruce] and Celia [Cecilia Ruth] Thomas, Tanlan Cottage, Carnarvon. He expects to get in about Saturday. Tells them that he thinks of them constantly. Tells them all about the antics of Ned, Dick and Joe the three little cocks on board (the bantam hens being all dead). He finishes this letter at Falmouth where he has just received Celia's letter.

12. (continued)

Appended:

LETTER: John Thomas (Llannor) at [Falmouth] to Cellia [Cecilia Ruth Thomas], saying that he was very pleased that she had written such a nice welcome letter to her father. They are both together again as they were in Cardiff, and have hopes of being ordered to the same port again. Pleased to hear that she is studying so well. Sorry to hear that her mother has been so poorly, also Baby and Brucey. Capt. Thomas was very pleased to receive Brucey's letter. Asks her to tell Mrs. Thomas that he is quite well.

13. 1889 Jan.13

LETTER: [Capt.] R[obert] Thomas, Bombay to his daughter Brucey [Catherine Bruce] Thomas, Tanlan Cottage, Carnarvon, thanking her for her letters, and the Christmas cards from them all. He is glad to hear that she is studying history. Gives his personal opinion of the achievements of all of the British monarchs from William the Conqueror to George III.

He is very worried about them all in Carnarvon with the fever about. Is glad she enjoyed herself at Glasgow and that the Exhibition was enlightening. It has been a very noisy Sunday in Bombay, deckfuls of natives, barbers with their razors, shoemakers repairing shoes on deck, tailors mending clothes, jugglers with charmed snakes, crepe shawl vendors and ostrich feather sellers. He is afraid his wife will complain he has wasted his money on overpriced items. Is glad to hear that she is kind to baby Isabella. Misses them all greatly. He is getting very thin, this hot weather is very unhealthy.

14. 1889 Jan.26

LETTER: [Capt.] R[obert] Thomas, Bombay, to his daughter Brucey [Catherine Bruce] Thomas, Tanlan Cottage, Carnarvon. He was very disappointed not to receive a letter from her with the last mail. He wants her to write often so that she will learn to spell. Emphasizes the importance of correct grammar and spelling. Thought he was going to sail to Akyab next week. All the crew are well.

14. (continued)

Yesterday he went to watch the ascent of a balloon: there was a crowd of thousands present. Asks her whether she knew that Bombay is the second largest city in the British empire.

He wishes they were all with him: it is a very lonely life in his old cabin all alone all day. Tells her how important her education is: she must try to grow up to be a clever young woman. She will also have to help at home as they will not be able to afford a servant when she is grown up. This letter is meant for Celia as well as herself. He has some very pretty presents for them.

15. 1889 Feb.24

LETTER: [Capt.] R[obert] Thomas, Bay of Bengal to his daughter Cellia [Cecilia Ruth] Thomas, saying that he hasn't received a letter from her. There is no news as they are making a long passage and the weather is so hot. He is longing for a letter from home as he is worried about Baby as she was so ill when he heard last. He has very nice presents for her which he will send home from Falmouth. If he goes to the continent, only Baby is to come with Mama, and Cellia and Brucey must go to stay with Uncle Tom at Tanygroeslon.

Continued 10 March 1889: Has arrived at Bassein after a passage of 30 days from Bombay to Akyab and 48 hours from Akyab to Bassein River. He received no letters at Akyab, but one from Mama and Brucey at Bassein. When he comes home they must have Dafydd Caellywarch for two days and go to Bethesda, Snowdon and Beddgelert and ask Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, Davy and Bertie and Mr. and Mrs. Prichard to go with them to Dinas Dinlle. Asks to be remembered to Ritchie and the Stanfields and Atkinsons.

16. 1889 Feb.25

LETTER: [Capt.] R[obert] Thomas, Bay of Bengal to his daughter Brucey [Catherine Bruce] Thomas, Tanlan Cottage, Carnarvon. He has no news to give her but hopes to receive a good long letter from her when he arrives at Akyab. Tells her all about the history of Britain from the time of the Roman occupation to the reign of King John, and the importance of Magna Carta, the foundation of the British Constitution.

16. (continued)

Continued 26 Feb. 1889: He was exceedingly pleased with her letter, it was well written. She is very good to look after Baby. Thinks that her being kept at school until 5.30 is too long. Glad to hear that Jennie is with them again. He is very lonely. He is sorry but cannot write to Cellia until she writes to him. All their cargo is out and so he will be away in two days time. She will get the next letter from Akyab, hopefully in less than a month after this one. Asks her to write to her grandmother at Tanlan, [Llandwrog] and her grandmother at Glasgow to say that he is sailing for Akyab.

17. 1891 July 31

LETTER: H.R. Davies, Hughes & Co., Menai Bridge to Capt. [Robert] Thomas, Merioneth, offering him the command of a new ship of about 2000 tons which will be completed in 6 or 7 months time. They would not require his services until she begins to rig out in 4 or 5 months time. Asks him on what terms he would be prepared to stop at home for this period.

18. 1891 Sept. 28

LETTER: H.R. Davies, Hughes & Co., Menai Bridge to Capt. [Robert] Thomas, informing him that according to a report received from Messrs. Stephens the Builders, the Afon Alaw is likely to be completed and delivered in $2\frac{1}{2}$ months from date. Therefore it is likely that Capt. Thomas will be required in Glasgow in less than the 2 months previously indicated to look after sundry matters, particularly the setting up of rigging. Asks him in the meantime to find out how other ships are fitted up, so that when he arrives at Glasgow, he will know how best to fit out their vessel.

19. 1902 Dec.

LETTER: [Capt. Robert Thomas], San Francisco to Messrs. Hughes & Co., reporting his safe arrival after a terrible long passage. Had a good passage from Swansea to the River Plate passing Rio in 38 days, and about 50 days to the Plate where they met a fearful gale which threw the ship on her beam end on account of the shifting of the cargo. Coal from Swansea was as usual not half trimmed. There are a lot of holes in the lower hold and he does not think that there are 200 tons on the tween decks and the ship has been rolling terribly as a result. Gives a graphic account of the storm, the ice burgs and the snow blizzards around

19. (continued)

Cape Horn. 'I have come round C. Horn to the westwards 28 times and it's no exaggeration to state that I never had such weather as this'. He came without cook or steward on this journey, but never will again as 'there has been no end of growling about the food'. He intended this letter for the owners, but is sending them a better one.

Attached:

NEWSPAPER CUTTING from a San Francisco paper with details of shipping intelligence. Gives an account of the voyage of the Afon Alaw from Swansea to San Francisco through terrible stormy weather (as described in letter above).

(This letter is in an envelope addressed to Mrs. Thomas, 27 Berkley Street, Liverpool, England).

20-23 1888

Newspaper reports of the record breaking passage of the Merioneth, Capt. Robert Thomas, from Cardiff to San Francisco in 96 days, 1887/88:

20. [1888 Jan.]

NEWSPAPER CUTTING being a record of the passage of the Merioneth from Cardiff to [San Francisco] in 97 [sic] days.

21. [1888 Jan.]

NEWSPAPER CUTTING re the record breaking voyage of the ship Merioneth with a cargo consigned to J.D. Spreckels & Co., from Cardiff to San Francisco in 96 days.

22. 1888 March 2

EDITION of the Daily Journal of Commerce of San Francisco containing a report on the record breaking voyage of the Merioneth, Capt. Robert Thomas, from Cardiff to San Francisco in 96 days.

23. [1888 March]

NEWSPAPER CUTTING re the presentation by Mr. J.D. Spreckels of the firm of J.D. Spreckels & Bro., to the British ship Merioneth of a flag in recognition of her passage of 96 days from Cardiff [to San Francisco], the quickest ever recorded. The flag is of white material, 15 x 20 feet and in the upper left hand corner is the Union Jack and in the one beneath it is the Spreckels' house flag. Diagonally through the centre is a blue arrow with the word 'Merioneth' above and '96 days' below. The ship is owned by Hughes & Co., of North Wales.

24-34 1903

March -
May

Letters written and telegrams received by Miss Catherine Bruce Thomas, eldest daughter of Capt. Robert Thomas, after she had travelled to San Francisco to be with her father during his last illness:

24, 1903

March 4

LETTER: C[atherine] B[ruce] Thomas, Ship Afon Alaw Martinez, California to Capt. Malcomson. She has arrived at her journey's end after travelling for 15 days. She describes the Bay of Martinez, 35 to 40 miles from the sea coast and a considerable distance from San Francisco, the Italian town of Venecia on one side of the bay and the small settlement of Martinez which has a mixed population of Irish and Italians. The bay is a freshwater one and on the hills around there are groups of tall Californian trees and in the valleys and shaded spots orchards of fruit trees, all in bloom. Salmon is caught in the bay by Italian fishermen.

Freight for ships at the present time is only 14s. but there are good prospects for a prosperous harvest and a good freight home. The smallest vessel in the harbour is a 12,00 ton barque, which together with another full rigged ship, belongs to Crawford of Glasgow. A fine four masted ship has been lying idle here 14 months because of the drop in freight. It is a matter of great satisfaction to the owners of the various ships that the sailors have nearly all deserted. They themselves have only 9 men on board including officers, and 2 of these are young boys and 2 others acting cook and steward. But they are able to work the anchor chain by using a donkey engine; the other ships have to borrow men to do so. They are now painting the inside of the hold; the paint has been bought locally and is expensive.

Papa's eyesight is improving, but his general health is very poor. He has been living on milk foods and beef tea only for two months. They heard that several ships during this bad weather turned back at the Horn and went round the Cape of Good Hope, among which was the Pegasus which arrived here after all hope had been abandoned. She hopes to arrive home in a few months.

25. 1903

March 13

LETTER: 'Ratty' [Catherine Bruce Thomas], Martinez, Contra Costa County, California to her sister Cecilia, relating the history of a trip she made with her father and Gen. Thompson to San Francisco. They travelled around in a dilapidated buggy belonging to Llewellyn Davies, rigger to all the sailing ships, and met many fine captains including the captain of the Pegassus, a very old friend of Papa's. Papa is improving though still only taking invalid food. General Thompson treated them to dinner and being worn out with tramping for hours to the hospital and the Doctors, were invited to spend the night with Mr. and Mrs. Jones, Bryn Caws at their luxurious Californian home. Mr. Jones is a relation of 'Tenby Hotel' and a fine and rich elderly gentleman. She does not care much for San Francisco - it is such a hectic and expensive place to live. They returned to Martinez this evening and were met by Gen. Thompson, his second officer, 'Our Dick' and 2 from the half deck, Johns the carpenter of Anglesea etc. Tells her sister about the two other women in the bay, a Captain's wife who is very strong minded and religious and not much liked and another very young wife. She herself has been playing and singing at 2 or 3 of their tradespeople's houses. Their butcher, greengrocer and barber are all Italian and their grocer Irish. There are no cake shops, drapers or stationers here as in England. Talks about the local children. She has got Cecilia some nice things.

26. 1903

March 26

LETTER: 'Ratty' [Catherine Bruce Thomas], Martinez to her sister 'House' [Roberta Isabel], saying that she is sorry to hear of her being so poorly. They are all interested to hear of her confirmation. Papa has been very weak today 'scarce able to lift his head' after having some strong medicine yesterday. A doctor from Martinez called yesterday, but could recommend no better treatment. This afternoon, General Thompson brought Capt. Murchie of the Lady Wentworth to visit: his ship is larger than theirs but 'there is no craft in the harbour to compare with the Afon Alaw for model'. Capt. Murchie is a Scotsman and his family live at Androssan. There was a social at the Mission Hall here yesterday to which she was invited, but declined to go on account of having to leave Papa. The young members of the crew went to a Circus, in the village last night, but were very disappointed by it. The Captain's wife of the Cawdor, the largest ship here, has started to travel here from Orkney after

26. (continued)

delaying 7 months for fear of the journey. Everyone lives aft here as they do on most of the ships. The last of the Anglesea's crew, the nigger cook, ran away last week, so there are only the officers left, including a young Spaniard and Paton's nephew. Paton has been sent on board for a week to help out.

27. [1903 April]

LETTER: 'Ratty' [Catherine Bruce Thomas], No. 325 San Jose Avenue, San Francisco, California to her mother, giving an account of their leaving the ship and travelling to San Francisco. Papa is now settled at St. Lukes and she herself in a room at San Jose Avenue. They had a very affectionate farewell from the crew of the ship and from Capt. Murchie and Capt. McMillan of the Neville. Mrs. Prosser has been extremely kind. They were met by Capt. and Mrs. Colville at the hospital gates and together they saw Papa settled in a nice sunny room. Capt. Rowlands came to see them. Capt. Thompson is making a fool of himself over a woman. She thinks that they did the best thing bringing Papa to the hospital. The doctor gave him another examination this evening and says there is no need to worry as to his heart, but that there is a great general weakness. The hospital is expensive, costing £2.10s. per week, but it would have cost more to remain on board ship and pay for the doctor to come to the ship and buy expensive invalid food and medicine in Martinez.

She has a lot of business to do tomorrow at J. & J. Moore but Capt. Rowlands is coming with her. The owners realize what a terrible passage Papa had and write very kindly about his health. She is grieved about little 'Mouse' [her sister Roberta Isabel] - asks that she be given gas to extract her teeth and that she has the best advice about her throat.

She wishes that they lived in California. Hopes they liked her photographs.

28. 1903 April 11

LETTER [Catherine Bruce Thomas], 572 San Jose Avenue, Mission Dolores, San Francisco to her sisters 'Mousie' [Roberta Isabel] and Cecilia. She is staying in a nice grey wooden bungalow just outside the hospital grounds, and only has a short walk over the garden and through part of the hospital to visit Papa in his room there. Cakes are very cheap here and she has bought some for her tea to eat in her room as she is frightened of going out at night as it is very countrified and dark. She has a mid-day meal out, a very good one for 20 cents.

The houses here are full of Japanese Ornaments and wickerwork. The Japanese influence is very strong here. Thanks her family for the beautiful blouse patterns. She was very grieved to hear that 'Mousie' has to have some teeth extracted. She misses her family very much. Tells of a ride she had with Frank Prosser in his smart new buggy drawn by his racer 'Flying Liz': they went 10 miles in 35 minutes. On Thursday, they had 10 visitors on board the ship including Arthur Prosser, General Thompson and his second mate (who has tea with Hewitt every afternoon), Mr. and Mrs. Warren of the Mission with their baby, Capt. and Mrs. MacMillian in the afternoon and Capt. Murchie and Capt. Williams of the Port Crawford in the evening. The whole burden of entertaining the visitors fell on Steward, Mr. Hewitt and herself as Papa was in bed. Papa is very weak, but his liver is improved. Tells them not to write to San Jose Avenue as she expects to be in Martinez in a fortnight.

29. 1903 April 25 CABLE: [Mrs. Thomas], Liverpool to [Catherine Bruce] Thomas, Saint Lukes Sanatorium, San Francisco, California, telling her to spare no expense and praying that God be with her.

[Capt. Robert Thomas died 28 April 1903]

30. 1903 April 29 CABLE [Mrs. Thomas], Liverpool to [Catherine Bruce] Thomas, Cliffmoore, San Francisco, saying that she is heartbroken, that she would like a Welsh funeral, and is anxious regarding her daughter.

31. 1903 May 6 LETTER: Brucey [Catherine Bruce Thomas], 572 San Jose Avenue, San Francisco to her mother and Auntie Ann with an account of her father's funeral. Papa's body was brought from the hospital by kind friends headed by Capt. Colville. The room where he lay was very beautiful and full of flowers. Mrs. Mason has been so good, and she suggests that her Mother send her a pair of good gloves. Together with Capt. and Mrs. Colville, Mr. Thomas Rowlands (blacksmith) and Capt. Rowlands, she went to Cypress Lawn Cemetery and chose a single grave, cost £6, in a beautiful position beside a grove of tall gum trees, close to the hedge which separates Cypress Lawn from the Jewish Cemetery and near the grave of

Mr. Thomas Rowlands's wife (who was buried 3 weeks since). Describes the lovely countryside around, and its proximity to the Pacific Ocean. She chose a handsome light oak coffin lined with cream satin, and purchased a handsome and suitable cream serge shroud with quilted satin sleeve cuffs and front. The Colvilles treated them to a meal at an expensive French restaurant afterwards.

Mrs. Prosser came all the way from Martinez to stay the night and keep her company, and help entertain the continual stream of visitors.

Next day, Capt. Rowlands and Hewitt went round doing the business and Mrs. Prosser, Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Colville came with her to buy mourning. She purchased a becoming little black straw hat with a trim of pleated tulle. Mrs. Colville then treated them to another expensive meal. On the last night before the funeral, Mrs. Mason went with her to take a last farewell of Papa. As is the custom here, the body had been embalmed. He looked very peaceful. Her mother, Auntie Ann and Auntie Jane and all would have been proud of the 'handsome appointments and the great funeral'.

On the morning of the funeral, the place was crowded with Captains and crowds of sailors arrived about 10 o'clock. Mr. Karney and Mr. Warren took all the men to view the coffin and all the Captains were taken by Capt. Rowlands. Every ship in the place was well represented. Billy Williams and 'our own men and boys' were very much affected, while Capt. Jones of the Bukeley, and old friend of Papa's for 25 years who only heard the news that morning broke down and cried. A service was read by the pastor, Mr. Karney and a Union Flag from the Anglesea (which Paton had been holding) was placed over the coffin and the flowers were given to the men of the Merioneth, their ship [the Afon Alaw], the Achmesie [Achnashie] and Lady Wentworth. The pall bearers were Hewitt, Paton, the mate of the Merioneth, the mate of the Anglesea, the second mate of the Afon Alaw and the steward of the Afon Alaw. The chief mourners were Capt. Rowlands, Capt. Thompson, the Colvilles and the Prossers, Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Capt. Longmuir. There was only one carriage as they only had a few yards to go, and in this travelled Mrs. Capt. Longmuir, Mrs. Prosser, Mrs. Colville and Mrs. Mason with Capt. Rowlands and Catherine Bruce Thomas herself. Behind the hearse walked the pastor and pallbearers and the sailors with the flowers, then the carriage and behind came all the women

31. (continued)

and friends in a great line, and following these the captains headed by Capt. Murchie, Capt. Thompson and Capt. MacMillan, in all 178 people.

At the station the electric cars were waiting to take them to the Cemetery. The grave was lined with Cypress branches and white Marguerites and ivy. The burial service was read by the pastor, and the sailors placed the wreaths and anchors as in the photograph [which she sends]. She shook hands with all the Captains and thanked them, and everyone thanked Capt. Rowlands and Tom Rowlands (blacksmith) for their splendid efforts. The chief mourners returned and had tea with their own officers [of the Afon Alaw] and the household here. Mrs. Mason has been very kind throughout. Hopes her mother will write letters to the people on the list she encloses.

32. 1903 May 14

LETTER: [Catherine Bruce Thomas], Ship Achnashie, Martinez Bay, California to her mother stating that she received her letter and Cecilia's yesterday. She had been waiting anxiously to hear from her as she was afraid of how the bad news might have affected her.

She gives an account of the last days of her father's life. They will be thankful to know that he did not suffer and was unconscious for most of the time from the Wednesday until the following Tuesday morning. She was with him holding his hand for those four days. He had been improving during his first week at the hospital, but suffered a stroke on the Wednesday of the second week which paralyzed his right side entirely. He was well looked after in hospital though.

She left San Francisco on Monday afternoon: Capt. Rowlands came to fetch her, and Mrs. Mason to see her off, while Dick met her at the ferry to take her to Martinez. She was met at the station by a crowd of people including Capt. Longmuir, his second mate, Mr. Hewitt, the Prossers, Wilcox and Watkins, Capt. Murchie and many apprentices. She is staying with Capt. and Mrs. Longmuir on their ship the Achnashie, a bigger ship than the Afon Alaw and very luxurious. Capt. and Mrs. Longmuir are very kind. Every day Hewitt comes with Dick to collect her in the boat which has now been converted into a sailing yacht, and they go on shore. She has a long letter to send about her arrival in the dear old cabin of the Afon Alaw.

Enclosed:

ACCOUNT of disposal of effects [of Capt. Robert Thomas] by mate, Martinez, May 15 1903.

LETTER: C[atherine] B[ruce] Thomas, Ship Achnashie, Martinez, California to 'Mousie' [her sister Roberta], hoping that she is feeling better and standing by Mama in thier great trouble. Hopes Mama is feeling better: she would be glad to see by her letter that she had so many friends to escort her when she went up to St. Lukes on Good Friday. She will never forget Mr. & Mrs. Prosser's kindness. Asks her family without fail to purchase gloves from Hendersons for Mrs. Prosser, also for Mrs. Mason. She is staying with Capt. and Mrs. Longmuir on their fine ship [the Achnashie]. Capt. & Mrs. Longmuir have a house at Saltcoats, and their little boy is at school in Edinburgh. They know Aunt Jane's family well and Capt. McGill, Liverpool. Trusts Mama will have received Mrs. Longmuir's letter by now, and that she answers her well with thanks for her kindness.

As soon as she returns home Mama and Roberta are to go for a fortnight's holiday to Hoylake. She is thinking of starting home on Monday 31 May or on the previous Friday. Everyone here says the owners will surely give her a passage home on the Dominion Line boats from Montreal or Halifax, Nova Scotia, but if she doesn't hear from them she will come home the cheapest way, and will send a cable to say by which ship she is sailing so they can find out when and where she will arrive.

She has been twice on board the Afon Alaw. Hewitt had cleared the cabin of all medicines, while Dick had placed a bunch of fresh roses on the table. With Hewitt and Mrs. Longmuir she went through Papa's papers, and found a small book which she is sending on. The Cabin is now ready for anyone coming. On their first visit, they entertained Capt. Longmuir and his second mate and Capt. Roberts of the Mayfield to tea.

She tells of a bad accident which occurred in the bay on Sunday when the mate of the London Hill and two boys went down with their yacht which capsized in a sudden squall alongside the Afon Alaw. They were rescued by men from the Afon Alaw, and Capt. Boyd of their own ship while Capt. Murchie rowed ashore for Dr. Brown. All were saved but the poor mate was unconscious for 4 hours.

She went yacht racing on Thursday with Capt. Longmuir and his second mate and beat the Lady Wentworth's boat, to Capt. Murchie's annoyance. She has promised never to go in a boat other than their own again however, as Hewitt was so worried about her. They had a terrible night: their ship nearly smashed the

33. (continued)

Anglesea to pieces. The Afon Alaw was unaffected being in a more sheltered position.

34. 1903 May 27

LETTER: 'Ratty' [Catherine Bruce Thomas], 572 San Jose Avenue, San [Francisco] to her mother, She is now back in San Francisco, and hopes to settle everything and start for home at the end of next week or the beginning of the week after. They have a discount of 85 dollars off Levy, the tailor's bill. These tailors are very wealthy Jews and have invited Capt. Rowlands and herself to dinner next week. Some Jewish friends of theirs, Mr. and Mrs. Hatch, are touring Europe at present and will be in Liverpool soon. Asks her mother, on receiving Mr. Levy's letter of introduction, to entertain them kindly at their home. Also to look after for a few days a bull dog pup which the Hatches are bringing back from New Brighton for young Levy.

She has got a good commission from the ships doctor and the undertaker which brings the whole to 92 dollars (£18.10), which however will all have to go on small bills. There are also heavy bills for best brandy, whiskey and champagne bought for her father during his illness. Money goes terribly in this country, a dollar is only like a shilling. She is very tired of the hectic city life. All the afternoon she has been with Rowlands and Capt. Jones (Kilmenev) and had tea at their favourite cafe in California Street.

Tells of the news which Hewitt calls their 'deathblow', that Davies Lord Cairns comes to the Afon Alaw tomorrow. She returns to Martinez on Monday to the Achnashie. Will write them by what route she will be returning home and wire them the name of the steamer from Montreal or New York. The gentlemen of the Pacific Stevedoring Company are very interested in her journey and one of the heads wants her to go to Vancouver and across Canada to join the Dominion Line at Montreal, and another wants her to go by 'Eurlington' route via Colorado and the Rocky Mountains. The owners have written [Capt.] Thompson to pay her passage and all funeral expenses.

She will lend Capt. Davies the chronometer on the passage home if he wants it, as she cannot get a buyer for it here. Went to the apprentices tea party last Sunday with Mr. Hewitt and Mr. Dunn, Chief Officer of the Achnashie and joined Capt. and Mrs. Longmuir

34. (continued) there. Asks her mother to write to Mr. Warren, Seaman's Institute, Port Costa, San Francisco to thank him for his kindness at the time of the funeral. No news from owners yet about money at the bank. Capt. Davies and Rowlands will make up the account next week and send it on.
- 35-44 1876-
1903 (and n.d.) Miscellaneous papers of Capt. Robert Thomas and his family:
35. 1876 Dec. 4 CARGO ACCOUNT: The Captain and owners of the ship British Princess to the Captain and owners of the British Princess for the sum of £525 received by Simpson, cashier, Callao in respect of coals and insurance charges.
36. 1877 Aug. 14 MARRIAGE LICENCE granted by the Bishop of Bangor to Robert Thomas of pa. Llandwrog bachelor and Catherine Jameson of pa. Llandwrog, spinster for the solemnization of their marriage at the parish church of Llandwrog.
37. 1884 Sept. 2 GRANT OF RIGHT OF BURIAL in grave space (X6) at the lower cemetery, Llandwrog, Llandwrog and St. Thomas Burial Board to Mr. Robert Thomas, Tanlan Cottage, Segontium Road, Caernarvon, in consideration of the sum of £3.
Enclosed:
RECEIPT for the sum of £3 as above.
COVERING LETTER: (3 Sept. 1884) J. Henry Thomas, Clerk to the Llandwrog and St. Thomas Burial Board, Caernarvon, to Capt. [Robert] Thomas.
38. 1890 March 7 LETTER: Dr. A. Wallace, 64 Harley St., London to Mrs. Capt. Thomas, Tanlan Cottage, Segontium Road, Carnarvon, requesting settlement of an account of £4.4s in respect of professional services rendered at Glasgow in the autumn of 1884.

39. 1893 Dec. ENVELOPE addressed to Mrs. Captain Thomas, 27 Berkley Street, Princess Park, Liverpool (Glasgow postmark).
40. 18[94] May 11 NEWSPAPER CUTTING from a South Wales paper containing an item on the Afon Alaw, a magnificent sailing vessel which has been lying at the North Dock Basin and still forms a feature of admiration at the Central Graving Dock, Swansea, where she is undergoing slight repairs. The ship built in 1891 by Messrs. Stevens & Sons of Glasgow is a credit to her master, Capt. Thomas. The Afon Alaw will probably leave the dry dock on Saturday and be loaded with a cargo of anthracite coal by the well known local shipbroker, Mr. Pascoe.
41. [1903 May] NEWSPAPER CUTTING containing a notice of the death of Capt. Robert Thomas of the British ship Afon Alaw on 28 April at San Francisco, Capt. Thomas aged 60 was the husband of Catherine Thomas and the father of Catherine B. Thomas, Roberta Thomas and Cecilia R. Froom. He was a native of Carnarvon. The funeral will be held at 11 o'clock at 572 San Jose Avenue, Internment at Cypress Lawn Cemetery.
42. n.d. ENVELOPE addressed to Mr. Liddledale, ship Merioneth, Sausalito, Nr. San Francisco.
43. n.d. NEWSPAPER CUTTING containing an article on 'Sea-going Cats' by G. Bruce Thomas.
44. n.d. NEWSPAPER CUTTING containing a notice re the death of Capt. Richard Lloyd Hughes of 13 Queensdale Road, Allerton, Liverpool. Capt. Hughes was born in Holyhead in 1880 and served his apprenticeship with Hughes & Co., Menai Bridge on the sailing ship Afon Alaw. Later he joined the Lancashire Shipping Company. During the war he was awarded an M.B.E. for his services on convoy duties to Russia. (Capt. Hughes was the husband of Capt. Robert Thomas's youngest daughter Roberta).

45-49 1851-
1960's

Papers relating to Capt. James Jameson,
father-in-law of Capt. Robert Thomas.

45-47 1851-
1853

Correspondence of Capt. James James:

45 1851

Jan.1

LETTER: Catherine Jameson to her husband, Capt. James Jameson, Junior, c/o Capt. James Jameson, No. 222 Bedford St., Liverpool, with news of the health of herself and the children. Tells him of the death of Mrs. Read's daughter. Mr. Angnew [sic] is presumed missing - swept over the wharf at Portland. Mr. Furness has been offered £1000 for the schooner, but being English built, he could not sell her. Mr. and Mrs. Furness and Mr. and Mrs. Malcolmson wish to be remembered to him. Asks him to find out whether Miss Larkin is still alive. She has not written to Sheatland as she did not know what his plans were to be.

46. 1852

June 3

LETTER: [Capt.] James Jameson, Liverpool to his wife Catherine, Camperdown, [Sandwich, Lerwick]. He has no good news to tell her. He is still walking about Liverpool looking for a situation but finding none. Several people have promised to try and get him a ship, but he holds out little hope. He was offered a barque last night to go around the west coast, but the owner was so poor and could not afford to give him half pay that he turned the offer down. Yesterday he went to ? school to get through this troublesome examination without which no-one has a chance of getting a ship now. He has considered going out to Australia in the Lady Head, but could not bear to be separated from his family for so long. Asks her to write giving her advice. He has had her ? desk mended and will send it with some other things next week.

47. 1853

Feb.17

LETTER: [Capt.] James Jameson, ship Larne, New Granada, Panama to his wife Cathrine. He arrived in Panama on 13th inst. after a very disagreeable passage of 175 days. They were very short of water, and he had to call at Calcho [? Callao] with only half of a small cask left. He took in 16 passengers there for Panama which will help to pay expenses. The voyage from Calcho took 25 days and 'as far as I can see of this place I wish I was out of it again'. There is much sickness and disease, and it is exceedingly hot.

47.(continued)

He received her two letters on arrival and was very glad to hear that his wife, children and friends were well. He has had a deal of worries: he does not know when he will start to discharge as the Pacifick [sic] Steam Company is overstocked and has no place to put his cargo. They care nothing about the damage but tell him they will pay for whatever damage may be in the ship. About half of his crew deserted last night. This is a very bad place for keeping a crew: they all get the 'California fever' when they come here.

His major trouble has been the lack of chief mate: the young man whom he took on in London turned out to be good for nothing. Tells of the hardships he suffered on his voyage around the Horn, the worst passage he has ever had. They came around the Cape in the middle of summer, but he never experienced such heavy gales of wind and snow in all the times he has been to North America in the winter season. He cannot say what time he will be home, as he will probably be kept here for two or three months, but he does not think it will be before December as he has to load a cargo of guano and return to Calleho to clear out first.

Pleased to hear that Mr. Wishard is so punctual in sending her the half pay: it is well that she got her money from that Irish thief Graves. If he is spared to come home, he will give him more trouble yet.

(Also transcript of the letter, with a note recording that Capt. Jameson died in the following April).

48-49 1851-
1960's

Miscellaneous:

48 1851 Dec. 9

COPY TESTIMONIAL to Capt. Jameson and officers of the ship Glenlyon given by the passengers as a token of their gratitude for the kindness and care received during their passage from New Ross to Savanna.

49. 1960's

NOTES compiled on the family of Capt. James Jameson, who married Catherine Bruce Malcolmson at St. James Church, Toxteth Park, Liverpool, 22 April 1845.

50-57 1930-
1975

Correspondence of Mr. R. Reginald Froom,
grandson of Capt. Robert Thomas.

50 1930

July 31

LETTER: [Capt.] Walter F. Lee, Musgrave Street, Largo Bay, South Australia to Mr. [R.R.] Froom, thanking him for lending him the photograph of the Merioneth, also for having the photographs of ships (in his aunt's possession) photographed. It's odd that Mrs. Cockell cannot find the negative and print which Capt. Cockell received from Mr. Froom. Should she find the negative and return it, he would like to have a print, or if Mr. Froom's aunt were willing, he would like to borrow and copy her print.

He has no photographs of the Glentilt or British Princess, but has one of the Afon Alaw if Mr. Froom would like a copy. His Chief Officer Mr. Richards was a seaman in this vessel in 1907-1908. Capt. Jones was then in command and a Mr. Jones, the Chief Officer. Capt. Jones took over from Capt. Davies about 1906, and it was Capt. Davies who probably succeeded Mr. Froom's grandfather [Capt. Robert Thomas]. He has no record of the ship's ultimate end, but in 1915, she was afloat and belonged to W. Thomas and Sons, Capt. Jones still the master. Interested to hear that Mr. Froom's uncle is in command of M.S. Thurland Castle. He knew most of the sailing ships belonging to Chambers & Co., and has photographs of Naworth Castle, Pendragon Castle, Lowther Castle, Wray Castle and Lancaster Castle. He asks whether Mr. Froom's uncle knows where he could get copies of the Muncaster Castle and Gregstoke Castle. Of the Cambrian Line, W. Thomas & Co., he has photographs of Cambrian Chieftain, Duchess, Princess, Queen and Monarch. He is wanting Cambrian King, Prince, Warrior and Hills.

The ship Carmarthenshire was owned by D.J. Jenkins & Co., London. Asks Mr. Froom to let him know if he would like copies of any of the photographs in his possession. He returns the photograph of the Merioneth and photographs of other well known ships which may be of interest.

51. n.d. [?1938-39]

DRAFT LETTER: R. Reginald Froom to the Editor, Sea Breezes, commenting on an article by Mr. N. Kiernander which appeared in the June issue, in which he wrote of the arrival of the famous ship the Merioneth at Falmouth Harbour in 1889 flying the large silk flag presented by the Welsh residents of San Francisco for the record breaking passage, 96 days out, 95 days home.

His grandfather, Capt. Robert Thomas, was then the master of the Merioneth, and his friend Capt. G.E. Stewart of Birkenhead was chief officer on that voyage. He encloses a sketch of the flag which was handed over with the ship to her Italian buyers years later.

In addition to the flag, Capt. Thomas was given a handsome gold handled walking stick which is now in Mr. Froom's possession. The Merioneth belonged to the fleet of Messrs. Hughes & Co., Menai Bridge. In his article on this company's ships in the October issue, Capt. E.A. Woods omits the Afon Alaw, their largest 4 masted barque, sister ship to the ill fated Afon Cefni. His grandfather Capt. Thomas commanded her from her launch for 12 years until his death in San Francisco in 1903, after one of the most severe passages round the Horn ever experienced. The Afon Alaw was later sold to Messrs. W. Thomas & Co. It was his grandfather's old friend Capt. Andreas Evans, late of the Cambrian Prince, who then sailed her to Norway on her last voyage under the British flag.

Capt. Stewart in the December issue rightly mentions the Minnehaha and the British Princess in his account of his apprenticeship and command of the various ships of Messrs. Hughes & Co. The Minnehaha was wrecked on the Scilly Isles, his grandfather being chief officer. Capt. R. Thomas was later master of the old Glen Tilt and British Princess.

52. 1946 Jan. 16

LETTER: John Edwards Jones, quarry agent, Gernant, Carnarvon to his nephew Reg[inald] Froom] reporting on his efforts to find Capt. Ellis Roberts. He has heard that Capt. Roberts has sold his house in Liverpool and will be sailing for America in March. He has therefore posted the letter c/o his sisters at Bronallt, St. David's Road, Caernarvon.

Hopes that Ruth is well. Was sorry to hear that Mr. Froom's father is so poorly, also his aunt Bertha. Glad to hear that Aunt Brucy is so much better.

53. 1947 March 8 LETTER: George Tregarnett, 76 St. Lawrence Avenue, Worthing, Sussex to Mr. R.R. Froom, 19 South Highville Road, Childwall, Liverpool, thanking him for his letter with all the interesting material. Hopes to return the papers and photographs, with the exception of the photograph of Mr. Froom's grandfather, his crew and a photograph of the Merioneth, in about a week.
54. 1947 March 24 LETTER: George Tregarnett, 76 St. Lawrence Avenue, Worthing, Sussex to Mr. R.R. Froom, 19 South Highville Road, Childwall, Liverpool, returning photographs and papers relating to Capt. [Robert] Thomas and the ships Merioneth and Afon Alaw (gives detailed list). Some items he has retained for copying.
55. 1947 Nov.11 LETTER: George Tregarnett, 35 Bulkington Avenue, Worthing, Sussex to Mr. R.R. Froom, 19 South Highville Road, Childwall, Liverpool, asking whether he might retain the book a while longer in order to make extracts. He has heard of the death of Capt. Ellis Roberts in New York.
56. n.d. [pre 1957] LETTER: [Catherine Bruce Thomas] to Reg[inald Froom], enclosing the account which she has made as concise as possible. She has had to write it out as the typewriter is broken. She has the old picture of the Minnehaha if he wants it. She thinks it better if the article came from him rather than her. He must decide about lending the picture of the Merioneth, but she thinks a sketch of the flag would do.
- POSTSCRIPT: She asks that Ruth copy out the article in her copper plate or has it typed. Says Kiernander is wrong in giving the date as 1892, as it was earlier. The Afon Alaw was built and launched in the winter of 1890-1891. Also Capt. Stewart is wrong about the Minnehaha. He can have the old picture of the crew of the Merioneth and caption it 'The Record Breakers' if they publish it, also the one of the Minnehaha. Nan Nan [her mother] spent her honeymoon on the British Princess in Cardiff in 1877, and at 2 years old, she herself was aboard her for 3 months in Saint Nazaire, Brittany. Myfanwy's father was master of the Derbyshire and Etta.

57. 1975 Sept. 17 LETTER: Reg[inald] Froom, 19 South Highville Road, Liverpool to Aled [Eames], with information relating to family photographs included in the Gwynedd Archives Service publication Ship Master.
- 58-61 1876-
1932 (and n.d.) Miscellaneous:
58. 1876 Nov.25 COPY LETTER: [Capt.] Richard Edwards, master of the ship True Briton to Noel Hest, manager of the P.S.N. Co., protesting that the company is charging his vessel with the value of 35 tons of coal short of the amount specified in the bill of lading as all coals which belonged to the company were delivered as per certificate given by Capt. Jacques, and the bill of lading signed under protest. If the company persists in making him pay, he will enforce his right to make their claim for compensation against whom it may concern.
59. [1932 Jan.] NEWSPAPER CUTTING containing an obituary of the late Hon. F.G. Wynn, Glynllifon, aged 79.
60. n.d. VERSES entitled 'A Shipowner's Dream' about a certain shipowner who dreamed that he had died, and was refused admittance not only to heaven but also to hell because of his wickedness.
61. n.d. NEWSPAPER CUTTING containing an article on the duties of a mother to her children.

Photographs re Capt. Robert Thomas of
Llandwrog and Liverpool:

1-14

Capt. Robert Thomas and family:

- 1 Robert Thomas in his early days at sea, apprentice to Thomas Hobley, Caernarfon. Capt. Thomas had the original of this photograph reprinted by Elite Photographic Studio, 838 Market Street, opp. Fourth, San Francisco, on one of his visits.
- 2 Capt. Robert Thomas, master of the Merioneth, photographed at the Elite Photographic Studio, 838 Market Street, opposite Fourth, San Francisco, probably at the time of the record breaking passage 1887/8.
3. Capt. Robert Thomas, photographed at the Elite Studio, 838 Market Street, San Francisco.
4. Capt. Robert Thomas (standing) and his lifelong friend, Capt. Andreas Evans, both of Llandwrog, photographed at the studio of T.H. Wilton, San Francisco. This was probably taken sometime between October and December 1901 on Capt. Thomas's penultimate voyage in the Afon Alaw; Capt. Andreas Evans, who was seven years younger than Capt. Thomas, was master of the Cambrian Hills at the time of this photograph, but later commanded the Afon Alaw before she was sold by William Thomas to Norwegian owners.
5. Mrs. Ruth Thomas, Tan Lan, Llandwrog, mother of Capt. Robert Thomas.
6. The daughters of Capt. and Mrs. Robert Thomas: (from left to right) Cecilia Ruth, born Caernarfon 1882, Catherine Bruce, born Glasgow 1878 and Roberta Isabel, born Caernarfon 1888.
7. Miss Catherine Bruce Thomas, 1878-1957, daughter of Capt. Robert Thomas.

Capt. Richard Lloyd Hughes, M.B.E., Mrs. Roberta Lloyd Hughes (daughter of Robert Thomas) and daughter Phyllis Anita, taken in one of the Lancashire Shipping Co. Ltd.'s ships which he commanded for many years.

9 Capt. James Jameson, father-in-law of Capt. Robert Thomas.

10 Mrs. Jameson, wife of Capt. James Jameson, mother-in-law of Capt. Robert Thomas.

11 Mrs. Jameson, wife of Capt. James Jameson, with her children and ?mother.

12 Pupils in the classroom at Conway Infants' school, c. 1910-11. The headteacher is Miss Roberta Thomas.

13 A lady -unidentified, member of the Thomas family.

14 Two young children - unidentified - members of the Thomas family.

15-21 Photographs of the Minnehaha, the Merioneth and the Afon Alaw, ships on which Capt. Robert Thomas served as mate and master;

15 The wreck of the Minnehaha, one of the early photographs by the Gibson family of the Scilly Isles. Capt. Thomas has written on the back of the photograph 'Wreck of the ship "Minnehaha" of Liverpool on St. Marys Scilly, January 18th 1874 on her passage from Falmouth to Dublin by which ten hands were lost and ten saved'. Capt. Thomas was mate on board the Minnehaha when she was lost on this voyage.

Photographs re the ship Merioneth, Capt.
Robert Thomas, Master:

- 16 The ship Merioneth, Capt. Robert Thomas, master
- 17 The Merioneth at San Francisco (undated).
The coal cargo has been discharged and the crew are on the foc'sle head, possibly about to weigh anchor preparatory to shifting berth for loading the return cargo for Europe.
- 18 The crew of the Merioneth at San Francisco after the record passage from Cardiff in 1887/8. Captain Thomas is standing back row, extreme left. Next to him stands Captain W. Roberts, master of another Davies ship, the Carnarvonshire, then (left to right) in back row: Mr. G.E. Stewart, Mate; Mr. A.G. Thorndike, Second Mate; Mr. Cooper, Third Mate; Others identified in the photograph include Thomas Paton, the sailmaker, on extreme right of second row (bearded with hat on knee), and immediately behind him, Howells, the cook and Jules, the Steward. Thomas Wood Roberts is seated in the centre of the second row, and on his right is John Roberts. Tom Jones is the second from the left in the front row.
- 19-21 Photographs re the ship Afon Alaw, Capt.
Robert Thomas, Master:
- 19 Crew of the Afon Alaw, photographed by T.H. Wilton, Elite Studio, 838 Market Street, San Francisco, 26 July 1896.
- 20 Members of the crew of the Afon Alaw at San Francisco, 1897. On the back of the photograph is a note 'Ship "Afon Alaw", Frisco to Queenstown 163 days 16th September /97-27th Feb. /98, Howell mate, Roberts 2nd mate, orders Hull-Swansea'. Capt. Thomas is standing third from right. Next to him, on his right, is probably the mate, Howell and on the extreme right is John Roberts who had served with Capt. Thomas in the Merioneth. The man standing on the extreme left is probably Tom Paton, the sailmaker.

Postcard of the Afon Alaw

On dorse: NOTE: Paton, Sunridge, Priory Hill, Milford Haven to Miss Thomas apologising for not coming to see her before he came home. He will be coming to Liverpool before the ship sails so will come and see her then. Regards to Mrs. Thomas and her two sisters, his nephew is going back in the old ship and he will be coming to see him off. (Dated 1 Aug. but no year given).

22-29

Photographs taken at San Francisco after the death there of Captain Robert Thomas, 28 April 1903. They mostly feature Miss Catherine Bruce Thomas who went out to look after her father during his last days:

22

Miss Catherine Bruce Thomas on Board the Afon Alaw after her father's death. In the photograph are: L. to R. Mr. Watkins, a Bristol man, Richard Lloyd Hughes (who later married Miss Thomas's sister Roberta Isabel), Miss C.B. Thomas, Mrs. Mason and Hugh Williams, the bosun, from Holyhead. Standing behind Miss Thomas is the mate Mr. Hewitt. The boy seated on the deck is one of Mrs. Mason's boys.

23

Miss Catherine Bruce Thomas on board the Afon Alaw after her father's death. In the photograph are:
Watkins (holding chain), Richard Lloyd Hughes, Miss C.B. Thomas, Mr. Hewitt (the mate), Mrs. Mason, with one of her sons behind her, holding chain, and Hugh Williams of Holyhead, the bosun.

24.

Group aboard the Afon Alaw. In the photograph are Mr. Ledley, 2nd mate on the Anglesey standing behind Mr. Frank Prosser (an American). Next to him is Steward and 'Peter' the cat. Captain Thompson is standing directly in front of the main mast and next to him is Richard Lloyd Hughes, acting third mate. Mr. Hewitt the mate is on the right (wearing straw hat).
(Capt. Richard Lloyd Hughes, M.B.E., who was third officer on the Afon Alaw, later went into the service of James Chambers & Co., Lancashire Shipping Co. until his retirement in 1938. Most of his service was from New York to the Far East.

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Miss Catherine Bruce Thomas on board the
Afon Alaw.

26

Group aboard the Afon Alaw.

27

Group on board the Afon Alaw (negative only).

28

Photograph taken aboard the Anglesey - possibly
the Captain, his wife and a member of the crew.

29

Photograph taken by T.H. Wilton, Elite Studio,
San Francisco of Capt. Thomas's grave at Cypress
Lawns, San Francisco, sent by Miss Catherine
Bruce Thomas to her mother, 3 May 1903.

30

Miscellaneous:

30

Village and church, Llandwrog.
Captain Robert Thomas was a native of Llandwrog.

**Captain Robert Thomas of
Llandwrog and Liverpool
1843-1903**

**Further papers and photographs relating
to Capt. Robert Thomas and his family**

Catalogued by Anne Venables, Assistant Archivist

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Thomas, daughter of Capt. Robert Thomas)

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Correspondence including letters and telegrams about the illness and death of Captain Robert Thomas:

- 62 1878 Sept.20 LETTER: Francis A. Kelly, British Consular Agent, Pabellon de Pica [nr. Iquique, Chile] to Messrs. Davies and Co., Menai Bridge, enclosing a Bill of Health for their ship the British Princess which sailed from the port on 30 July. The Bill of Health was not handed to the master with the other papers but was paid for. He trusted that Captain Thomas would have a good and safe passage.
- 63 1882 Dec.23 CHRISTMAS CARD sent by R. Thomas at Liverpool to his wife.
- 64 1882 Dec.23 NEW YEAR'S CARD sent by R. Thomas to his wife.
- 65 [1901 Dec. - CHRISTMAS CARD sent by Robert Thomas to his wife, 27 Berkley St., Liverpool. In envelope.
date from envelope which may not belong]
- 66 1903 March 2 TELEGRAM from Martinez, California to Lionel Liverpool - 'safe papa crew waiting'.
- 67 1903 April 25 TELEGRAM from San Francisco via Anglo to 'Athlete', Liverpool informing the recipient that [Robert Thomas] was failing mentally and was seeing a specialist daily.

Appended:

NOTE that the Western Union closed at 10 a.m. on Sunday morning and then opened from 5 - 6 p.m. and were then closed until 5 a.m. on the Monday.

- 68 1903 April 27 TELEGRAM from San Francisco to 'Athlete',
Liverpool stating that everything possible
had been done but that [Robert Thomas] was
sinking and paralysis had set in.
- Appended:
NOTE 'Cliffmore, 418 California St.,
San Francisco'.
- 69 1903 April 29 TELEGRAM from Rowlands Hewitt Paton,
San Francisco to Thomas, 27 Berkley St.,
Liverpool informing the recipient that
Captain Thomas had passed away peacefully
surrounded by friends.
- 70 1903 April 30 TELEGRAM from Brucey, Colville, San
Francisco via 'Anglo' to Thomas, 27 Berkeley
St., Liverpool informing the recipient that
the remains of [Captain Robert Thomas] had
been laid at Jose Avenue and that there was
a large 'marine' funeral that day.
- 71 [1903 April] ENVELOPE of the Anglo-American Telegraph
Company Limited addressed to Thomas,
27 Berkeley St., [Liverpool].
- 72 1903 May 1 LETTER: Brucey [Thomas] 572 San Jose Ave.,
San Francisco, to her mother [Catherine
Bruce] Thomas, 27 Berkley St., Liverpool,
telling the recipient of her sympathy and
informing her that her father had died
peacefully and painlessly in her arms
at 11 o'clock on Tuesday morning. The sender
was thankful that she had been there for
3 days and nights to comfort him. From the
Wednesday afternoon until the end her
father was only conscious at times. The
doctors had told her that it was hopeless
but she had not believed them. Creeping
paralysis or softening of the brain had
been coming on for years and had slowly
affected the whole of her father's body.
Friends came to see her father all the time
and no one in the hospital could ever have
been as well looked after or had so many friends.

In her last letter she had told her mother that he was changing, could not speak and wanted to be left alone to sleep. She had a special nurse at £1 a day who never closed her eyes day or night until the morning her father died when she broke down. They had 2 other nurses and 3 doctors regularly for the last 10 days and on the last day they had the bonesetter doctor of the hospital who simply came out of kind feelings for the sender as they could do nothing but inject medicine for the heart to keep him up and coax him to take some strong nourishment. She could not describe the scene then but would send a full account later. Her father knew her most of the time and on the previous Wednesday when he had had another stroke the nurse and she had put him to sleep like a baby and she had told her father that they would go home to Tanlan as 'nine' had got dinner ready. Her father was like a child. Rowlands, Paton, Hewitt and she with the night nurse, who was one of the best women she had ever met and the special nurse were with him on the last night and morning. She held him most tenderly and if all the loving words, prayers and exhortations he received could have saved him they would. The last thing he said, on the Wednesday, was 'Brucey bach'. As her father dropped into his last exhaustion she had begged him to speak and had suggested sending a letter to the recipient with his love and he had said 'yes', with eyes full of affection, and had then relapsed into unconsciousness. So many tears were shed over him, she had kept repeating 'My Isea Grist' and he had not let go of her hand which had to be rubbed to bring back the circulation. Most of the time she was almost fainting from loss of sleep for 4 nights and the cramp of holding him. She had been given strong brandy, rum, black coffee and black tea hour after hour so she was able to continue. She could not speak too highly of the kindness and attention of the hospital and asks her mother to write to or cable thanks to Captain Rowlands and Mrs. Mason who had opened her house to them. Her mother could not have wished for a nicer room than the one where her father lay and Hewitt, Paton and the men of all the ships were beyond praise.

She had been very busy since and her nerves were quite shattered but she was amongst the kindest of friends and Captain Rowlands spent all his time with her. Her sorrow for her father had been beyond description. She wished that her mother had seen the beautiful funeral and known the kindness and respect of the 178 people who attended it, and the effort and skill which went into trying to save him, although Dr. Burnham said it was beyond the skill of anyone to avoid the paralysis. Her father had known her at 2 a.m. on the morning of his death, and she had never let go of him. The parting between her father and Paton was too pathetic to speak and write of although her father was not conscious of his danger and only recognised Paton as though he was on board ship. Paton was ill after the funeral. Captain Rowlands was doing everything. She hoped that God would help her mother, Bertha and Cecilia.

Enclosed:

LIST of some of the Captains who attended the funeral.

NEWSPAPER CUTTING: Obituary of Captain Thomas
In envelope

[1903] May 4 .

LETTER: Thomas Paton, Ship Afon Alaw, Martinez, to Mrs. Thomas [27 Berkeley St., Liverpool] expressing sympathy at the loss of her husband and his best friend. Everyone at Martinez sent their sympathy. It was a very nice funeral with representatives of nearly every business connected with shipping and almost all the Ship Masters in port as well as many of Captain Thomas' friends. There were many flowers sent from the ships and from persons ashore. He was with Captain Thomas for the last twenty hours before his death. The burial ground was beautiful. He missed Captain Thomas after being with him for so many years; the old ship seemed very strange. Miss Thomas was very fortunate in getting lodgings with Mrs. Mason as she was an nice Christian woman. Wick and his nephew went down to see the grave with Miss Thomas as they had been unable to go to the funeral.

Enclosed:

NEWSPAPER CUTTING: Obituary and account of the funeral of Captain Robert Thomas.

74

1903

May 5

ENVELOPE addressed to Mrs. R. Thomas, 27 Berkley St., Liverpool, from [Paton] Martinez, California.

Appended:

NOTE: 'First to answe[er] Paton'.

75

1903

May 5

LETTER: C.B.Thomas, 572 San Jose Ave., San Francisco, to the Pacific Stevedoring Co., San Francisco, thanking them for the floral tribute to her father's funeral, it would be a great comfort to her mother in England to know that her father had many kind friends around to show their sympathy and respect. She wishes she could thank everyone personally.

Copy.

Appended:

NOTE from Brucey] T[homas] that the above was a specimen of the many letters she had written. [?This was sent to her sister] David had sent to the Welsh papers, this was the only thing she had allowed him to do in connection with the funeral. Captain Rowlands was with her all day composing letters, particularly to the Bridge, and settling things, especially the bank money. She assures the recipient that she would do the best she could but states that she was afraid that there would be little left out of the year's wages. She asks if the recipient had got the account of the last year's wages, she believed it was due from the previous April. They were going to settle the undertaker's bill and other items the next day and she would send the recipient the account. In time all would be settled. She would not leave for a month in order to try to dispose of things to the next captain and would wait for the reply from the Bridge re the 'bank bother'. She was well and happy and must devote herself to getting all she could for the recipient and 'little mouse'. She was sending all the cards from the flowers which were so beautiful, particularly the one from shipmasters at Martinez which was a 5 foot high anchor in white and green. In the photograph she sent there was the anchor of tea roses and pansies which she believed were Mama's favourite flowers and those which Miss Catherine [?Wynn of Glynllifon] always sent to her friends. She also draws attention to the beautiful harp with 'Rest'

75 (contd.....

on it, which was sent from Livy the tailors. Captain Rowlands had arranged for her to get 20 dollars commission due to her father which would cover her mourning bill. She also draws attention to the wreaths of autumn leaves and pink roses sent from the Afon Alaw. She was sending a little box of flowers from the grave and a magazine about the beautiful cemetery.

76 1903 May 6

LETTER: John T. Rowlands, Merioneth, Sansalito, San Francisco, to Mrs. Captain Thomas, 27 Berkley St., Liverpool, sending his condolences. He hopes that her loss was eased by the easy way Captain Thomas passed away and the fine attention and attendance he had received from his daughter and all the nurses and all the sympathy and kindness after his death. At Robert Thomas' funeral there were some of the most noted of the merchants and shipping men of the town. The grave was in beautiful surroundings. In envelope.

Appended:

NOTE: 'Rowlands, 2nd'.

77 1903 June 2

LETTER: H. Hewitt, Afon Alaw, Martiney, to Mrs. Frone [Cecilia Ruth, daughter of Robert Thomas] thanking her for her letter. He feels that she had overrated what he had done. He asks her to thank her mother for her trust regarding the disposal of effects. If all goes well her sister [Catherine Bruce] would leave the following day and would be able to explain. He had tried his best to comfort her sister and would miss her when she returned to England. He would be pleased when the ship was chartered and they were returning home as it was monotonous and dreary lying there after a month. The new captain seemed to be alright but it was too early to form a proper opinion. He hopes to see the recipient when he was in Liverpool.

- 84 n.d. COPY DRAFT TYPESCRIPT of a story by [Gladys Bruce Thomas] about a welshman and Unlan Scouts during the [First World] War.
- Document defective:
Only pages 7-13.
- 85 n.d. GALLEY PROOF of a story by G. Bruce Thomas entitled 'headed off: a drama of love and outlawry' set in a fishing township of California.
- 86 n.d. GALLEY PROOFS of a story by G. Bruce Thomas entitled 'With the dawn' set on the waterfront at Old San Francisco.

Miscellaneous papers:

87 1860 Jan.10 LETTER: Charles Dickens, Office of All the Year Round, a weekly journal conducted by Charles Dickens, 11 Wellington St., North Strand, London, W.C., to the Rev. Stephen Roose Hughes asking for the return of a proof of his article about his visit [after the wreck of the Royal Charter] as it had to go to press for publication in England and America. He feels that it was not accurate in the report of the number buried in the churchyard and the greatest number who were in the church, and asks for corrections. He asks for the correction of any other inaccuracies and hopes that the recipient and his family will not find anything in the article to be displeasing. He had written the article 'out of the honest convictions of his heart and hoped that it would soften the distress of many people'. His daughters were very interested in all he had to tell them and particularly in Mrs. Hughes' idea of coming to London in the summer. The sender hoped to see them both at his Kentish house on the top of Shakespeare's Gad's Hill, about an hour's railway ride from town. The sender is also returning some documents which were lent to him.

Photocopy

88 1924 BOOKLET: 'Survivors of a Glorious Era. Notable sailing-ships which are still afloat'.

89 1925 BOOKLET: 'More Survivors of a Glorious Era. The story of further famous sailing-ships which are still afloat'.

90 1928 BOOKLET: 'Yet More Survivors of a Glorious Era - the continued story of further famous sailing ships which are still engaged in ocean service.'

Photographs:

- 31 post 1880 PHOTOGRAPHS: Captain Robert Thomas, master of the Merioneth at San Francisco.
[This is slightly different from XS/2326/2 and XS/2349/2].

Endorsed:

NOTE by [Robert Thomas]'a present from Father to his beloved child Brucey for being a good little girl and kind to both Nains'.

- 32 [1880-1891] PHOTOGRAPH of the ship Merioneth owned by Hughes and Co., Menai Bridge, at San Francisco.

2 copies.

- 33 [c.1880-1891] PHOTOGRAPH: ?Merioneth