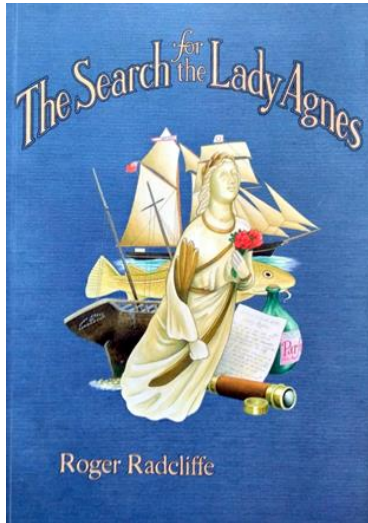


The TCA and its role in the search for the figurehead from the *Lady Agnes*



Lady Agnes of St Agnes, Cornwall, UK

The fourth and last vessel to be built at St. Agnes was the *Lady Agnes*, a two-masted schooner of 91 tons register, launched on 5th September 1877, for Mr. M.T. Hitchens and registered at Hayle. In her early years, she was engaged in the foreign and coasting trade and sailed to many Mediterranean ports including Cadiz, Messina, Valletta, and Gallipoli as well as crossing the Atlantic to St Johns, Newfoundland and Fogo island.

Upon the death of Martin Hitchens, D.W. Bain, Thomas Hitchens and John Hitchens became joint owners, as was the case of the other three vessels. On 25th August 1891, the *Lady Agnes* was sold to Biggleston Spray, of Hayle, who on 10th March 1894, sold her to R.J. Hockin, of Newquay, who was also Master. In October 1896 on her way from Newquay to Ellesmere Port, in the hands of Captain Cocks of Newquay (his first voyage in that capacity), the *Lady Agnes* was caught in a gale and attempted to run for a sandy shore. She eventually ran aground in the Conway Bay near Gogarth Abbey. Thousands lined the cliffs to watch the spectacle, there being great fears for the safety of her crew. At length, the four ship-wrecked mariners were hauled safely ashore through the surf, but the *Lady Agnes* was later declared a wreck and the Hayle register closed. On 28th

May 1897, she was re-registered at Beaumaris, Stephen Dunphy, the salvor, successfully towing her off and giving her a new lease of life. On 30th June 1899 the *Lady Agnes* was sold to Richard Jones and registered at Aberystwyth. On 1st May 1905 the vessel was again sold, this time to Joseph Williams of Portmadoc, and in 1911 she was registered at Caernarfon. On 25th June 1917, she was sold to the Channel Shipping Co., of Cardiff, who on 30th April 1919, returned her to her home county when she was sold to T.W. Crouch, of Pentewan, near St. Austell. About 1924 she was given a ketch-rig and fitted with roller-reefing gear.

It was during this phase of her life that her figurehead (a three-quarter scale full length carving of a woman in a long flowing dress) was passed to her one-time skipper, Captain Cocks of Newquay where she was proudly displayed in his garden.

On 30th May 1935, the *Lady Agnes* was sold to Margaret Bernston and others, of Portmadoc; it was here that the vessel was to end her days. In 1937, when outward bound with a cargo of slate, the *Lady Agnes* ran aground and broke her back. The cargo was discharged, and the vessel returned to Portmadoc. On 27th March 1938 Margaret Bernston became sole owner. The *Lady Agnes* was sold for the last time on 4th November 1941 to Walter White, of Croydon, but did not go to sea again. Registry was closed on 27th September 1948, when the vessel was broken up.

By 1955, the figurehead of the *Lady Agnes* had been bought by an antique dealer of Fowey where she was used as an external decoration above the shop door. Later brought inside the shop and displayed in the window, she was eventually sold for £25 when the shop ceased trading in 1963. Her whereabouts remained a mystery until 1989 when she appeared in an auction catalogue produced by Christie's of London.

A Canadian collector had purchased her as an unknown 19th century figurehead and transported her to Toronto where she stayed until bought in the summer of 2001 by the St. Agnes Museum Trust. The *Lady Agnes* figurehead is now on display at the St. Agnes Museum, Cornwall, UK.



Photo by Liz Radcliffe.

In a message from Roger Radcliffe of the St. Agnes Museum in 2002:

St. Agnes Museum Trust would like to express its thanks to the City of Toronto Museums and Heritage Services and to Elizabeth Joy for her kindness in producing an inspection report which served as the starting point for the acquisition of the Lady Agnes figurehead by St. Agnes Museum.



TCA President Bob Radcliffe presents the Lady Agnes picture to Elisabeth Joy,



Elisabeth Joy receives a copy of the book.

Later, at a TCA meeting, Elisabeth Joy was presented with a framed photo of 'The Lady Agnes' which Liz Radcliffe brought back from Cornwall having met Roger Radcliffe. The photo of The Lady Agnes is a gift to the City from the St Agnes Museum Trust. Elisabeth helped the Trust in its negotiations with the Toronto owner of the Lady Agnes figurehead. The TCA donated to the Trust to be used towards their cost of purchasing the figurehead.