



The Great Storm of 1859

*I*n late October, in 1859, the weather had been unsettled, the skies grey and brooding. Then, at around midday on 25 October it began to rain, first in Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion on the west coast of Wales.

Nearly **150** ships were wrecked that night, most of them caught against an unforgiving coast, whilst dozens more were so severely damaged that their owners had little option other than to scrap them.

Well over **800** people died in the storm, **459** of them on the steamer Royal Charter which was driven onto the rocks at Point Lynas near Moelfre on the west coast of Ynys Môn. The ship was returning from Australia, many of the passengers being prospectors from the recently discovered gold fields in Australia.

Clearly, then, it was not just ships that suffered. There were dozens of casualties, injuries and deaths right across Wales.

Many of these were caused by falling rocks and masonry as the wind surged inland. Houses were damaged, slates ripped off roofs as if they were just pieces of paper and nobody ventured outside unless it was vital.

Trees were uprooted and, in the minds and opinions of many, the topography of the coastal area drastically changed. It is alleged - although unproven - that the huge pebble bank at the back of Newgale beach in Pembrokeshire was created by the storm, when the pebbles and rocks were thrown up there during the course of the long and dreadful night.



Safety at sea

During the great storm there wasn't any weather forecasting so from much prompting from Robert Fitzroy storm warnings were eventually improved.

Equipment has also improved greatly over the years, such as; life jackets, life boats, etc.

Two images to show the differences between life jackets.



Then



Now