Northampton on the Welsh Coast?
Some Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Sailing Directions

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Those fourteenth-, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century mariners who were literate almost certainly relied much more upon sailing directions than upon charts. A mere glance at some of the earliest surviving charts of areas other than the Mediterranean and the Black Sea will show why, for they amounted to little more than aide-mémoires. They provided a very sketchy idea of coastal outlines, of the relative positions of ports, landmarks and navigational hazards. An article by M.C. Andrews (Andrews 1926) includes outlines of the British Isles on early portolan charts. One by F. J. North (North 1935) deals exclusively with Wales on early maps. Another (North 1941) concentrates mainly on Wales, and both have some comments on the inscriptions on them. By far the best work on portolan charts in general is by the present map curator in the British Library (Campbell 1987).

Sailing directions gave more detailed information than could be fitted on to small-scale charts, concerning the distances and directions between features, the location of landmarks and navigational hazards, tidal flows, and in some cases the nature of the sea bottom. Researchers into place-names in the British Isles have paid remarkably little attention to names in sailing directions or rutters, even though they constitute a mine of fascinating material. Italian (Kretschmer 1962), Low German (Koppmann 1876), French (Waters 1967), Portuguese (Rebello 1903), Dutch (Knudsen 1914), Flemish (Denucé 1936) and English (Waters 1967) rutters have been published, and some editors have provided glossaries to help readers identify difficult names. However, not surprisingly, not one of the glossaries is complete, some of the identifications are dubious, and some definitely wrong. Only very occasionally was any attempt made by the editors to explain the details of the identification problems. Only fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English and Romance language ones are dealt with in this article.

The earliest rutters were made up by individuals, based on their own personal experience, and on whatever information they could obtain from other mariners and from local informants. Much, perhaps most of it, must originally have been obtained by word of mouth. Since there was no standard spelling, there was much variation in how the sounds were written down; there was little or no consistency in the spelling of place-names, or of many other words for that matter. Most names were written down in a roughly phonetic spelling, but what was recorded varied considerably, depending on the language or dialect of the original informant and, of course, that of the writer. A Frenchman’s written version of a name spoken by a Welshman could well vary considerably from that noted by an Englishman or a Spaniard. And, of course, a literate Italian’s attempt to pronounce a name written by a Dutchman would probably sound...
different from that same name pronounced by a Portuguese. Some names, whose meanings were known, or were believed to be known, were sometimes just translated from one language to another. It is certain that some charts were little more than attempts to portray graphically material that was included in sailing directions, while some information in sailing directions, certainly in some seventeenth-century ones, seems to have been little more than a verbal description of material contained on charts.

Incredible changes have occurred to many place-names over the centuries, by natural changes in pronunciation within a given language, by the recording of these changes and, in the case of names recorded on charts, and especially in sailing directions, by the quite remarkable carelessness of scribes and copyists in transcribing them. Virtually no attempt was made to achieve any sort of uniformity; the same name could appear in several different spellings in the same work, even on the same page. Names of foreign origin were particularly liable to weird transformations. Non-Welsh speakers have always found Welsh place-names difficult to pronounce and spell correctly (Morris 1748a, 19-20 and Harley 1982). On charts, not only were names miscopied; they were not infrequently misplaced. A copyist unfamiliar with the area he was dealing with could not tell whether a single name written between two islands, for example, belonged to this one or that. When an attempt was made to combine material from two or more contradictory sources, the copyist was in a quandary. He either had to hazard a guess as to which was most likely to be correct, or somehow hedge his bets, and include more than one representation; this most frequently occurred when very different longitude figures for a given island were provided.

Research into names associated with Wolf Rock off Land's End (Richardson 1992), and those applied to The Smalls, Hats and Barrels, off the Pembrokeshire coast (Richardson 1994), involved close study of several compilations of early manuscript sailing directions and some early printed ones. The surviving copies of the former date from the fifteenth century, but undoubtedly include some much earlier material; the latter, with apparently only one exception published in 1490, date from the early sixteenth century, but are also clearly based on earlier manuscript material.

It is remarkable how many place-names around the Irish coast seem to have been known to cartographers and compilers of sailing directions by the fifteenth century, compared with those around the coasts of Britain. Remarkably little was known about Scotland; it is usually referred to and portrayed as a separate island. Quite a few place-names occur along the English coast from Berwick to Dover, from Dover to Land's End and thence to Bristol. As for Wales, the south coast as far as St David's Head and the offshore rocks and islands are dealt with, but apart from that, Anglesey, Holyhead, and later Beaumaris, are the only other places usually recorded.

One set of French sailing directions (1521) by Pierre Garcia does mention there being trois bons havres ('three good harbours') between reneze (Ramsey) and Olle (Holyhead, elsewhere in the same work rendered howlyphet), namely Cardigan, an interesting slip, elsewhere correctly rendered Cardigan, St David, presumably Porth-mawr (Whitesands Bay) and prmaint (Waters 1967, 328). It is worth noting that the first two are not given in location order. Neither in sailing directions, nor even on charts, can one always rely on a consecutive order of names being given. One outstanding example is provided
by the placement of names along the south coast of England by the mid-sixteenth-century Spanish cartographer, Alonso de Santa Cruz, whose portrayal of the south coast of England has several misplaced inscriptions, Beachy Head appearing in two different locations (Santa Cruz 1545, f.62r; 1918, pl. 20) (Fig. 1). No obvious identification for primant springs to mind. It does not even vaguely resemble the modern name of any port between Ramsey and Holyhead. Roger Barlow, writing about 1540, provides the earliest English list of ports along that stretch of coast that I am aware of. From Rhmsney (or Ramsey), sent daves heade and the site of sent davides, he lists ‘many propre townes with smal havens as fyskard, newport, cardigan and aberistwith’ and goes on: ‘To aberistwith ther cometh a river called rydol [Rheidol] and his begynnyn is in the mountayne of Snowdon’ (Barlow 1929, 48). There follows a half-folio blank, presumably intended for the later insertion of a description of the rest of Wales and the west coast of England as far as the Scottish border, but it never got inserted. Nathaniel Cutler, in his A General Coasting Pilot (1728), remarks: ‘In this Bay [Cardigan Bay] are several little Tide-Havens and Places only fit for small Vessels and barr’d too, scarce worth naming, for here is neither Trade, or Sea-Port for Trade, such as Kings Chapel [New Quay], Aberarth [Aberarth], Llanrysted [Llanrhystud], Aberystwyth, Aberdovey, Barmouth, Lundanog [Llandanwg], Places hardly heard of by Seamen, yet needful to be named too’ (Cutler 1728, 17). It is interesting to note the absence from his list of Fishguard, Newport, Cardigan, and New Quay, unless the last is recorded as King’s Chapel. His chart of St George’s Channel (Fig. 2) however, includes many more names, though Fishguard is still inexplicably absent.

One would presume that primant, in the above-mentioned French rutter, is a rendering of a Welsh name. Although not a Welsh speaker, the writer does have some experience of the many sorts of mistranscriptions and inter-language corruption of place-names occurring on early charts and in early sailing directions, so perhaps may hazard a few comments regarding its possible identity. Suggestions or observations from native Welsh-speakers will, of course, be most gratefully received. Two Welsh words which might conceivably have given rise to it are byn (‘hill’) and nant (‘stream’). But even if this phonetic hypothesis is correct, its meaning would seem an unlikely name for a port. Another combination of Welsh words that might well have led to primant is byn (‘hill’) and mawr (‘big’). Had these two words been originally recorded phonetically by a Frenchman as prit mawr, or pré mawr, it could easily have subsequently been mis-transcribed as primant. The ignorant or careless omission of the abbreviating tilde (‘’ was

Figure 1. Part of a map of England, Scotland and Wales by Alonso de Santa Cruz (1545). Note the faulty positioning of names along the south coast of England, especially S. elena (St. Helen’s) transferred from the Isle of Wight to the south coast between the two representations of a bechebe (Beachy Head), portuna (Portsmouth) west of antona (Southampton), cidad (The Owers, off Selsey Bill, as a mainland feature), and amandel (Arundel), cunam (Shoreham) and saperida (Seaford) all east of the most easterly version of Beachy Head; note also the peculiar outline of the Welsh coast.

Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid; MS Res. 38, f. 62r.
Figure 2. Wales on a chart of the Irish Sea in Nathaniel Cutler's *A General Coasting Pilot*, 1728. Note the Skerries as Scars, the absence of Fishguard, even the Cow and Calf just off it are given, and what is presumably New Quay as Kings Chappel.

*Courtesy of the British Library; Maps 31.c.4.*
a very common copyist's error, while the confusion in the copying of letters made by minims, especially in the case of n and M, was probably the commonest copying error of all. The rendering of some types of manuscript r by t is readily understandable. But even if that hypothetical derivation of *primant* were correct, one would still be left wondering what port it could have indicated. If the port concerned had happened to have a large hill behind it, this could well have been a case where the feature indicated by a questioner's pointed finger was misinterpreted by his informant, so that the name of the hill rather than the name of the port was given. Such misunderstandings must have occurred by no means infrequently. It is conceivable that *primant* may be the result of some corrupted and abbreviated rendering of *porth mawr*, such a *pr° mawr*. If so, it would apparently be a duplicate indication of Whitesand Bay, for that is presumably the 'port' called *Sawet dawid*.

However, *primant* may have been an early, now superseded name, for some port along that stretch of coast, but which? Or could some version of Barmouth have resulted in *primant*? It seems a possibility, quite divorced from the previous suggestions. In itself it is a fascinating name, popularly presumed to be derived from two English words, *bar* and *mouth*, quite logically, since the town is situated beside the bar at the mouth of a river. Nevertheless, it really derives from two Welsh words, *aiber* ('mouth') and *Mawrdd*, the name of the river, the *-ach* of *Mawddach* being a diminutive suffix. One stage in this change is recorded in 1410 in the spelling *Abermowth*. It was the regular, but in this case incorrect stressing of the penultimate syllable that eventually led to the dropping of the initial *a* (Field 1990, 29-30; Nicolaisen, Gelling and Richards, 1970, 46). In several languages, unvoiced and voiced consonants frequently changed places with one another, thus *p/t/d, c(k)/g, f/v* etc. Bearing that in mind, together with the common scribal *n/s* confusion and the susceptibility of the letter *r* to metathesis, it is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that *primant* may be the end result, after several copyings, of a Frenchman's attempt to record Barmouth as *(a)bermowd*. The last letter could have stood for the Old English letter *ð* (eth), as happened in numerous place-names, such as *dertemoude* (Dartmouth), *pleymoude* (Plymouth), *woumoude* (Weymouth) etc. in sailing directions. Of the four suggested derivations of *primant*, *(a)bermowd* must seem the most satisfactory. It does indicate a specific port, and is not, like the Porth Mawr suggestion, a duplicate indication of a port. If the manuscript, and not just the printed, rendering had survived, it might have provided conclusive evidence.

One early set of sailing directions with references to the Welsh coast contains one short passage which has not been satisfactorily examined (Fig. 3). The work is an Italian compilation—published by Bernardino Rizo in Venice, and dated 6 November 1490 (Rizo 1490 and Kretschmer 1962, 420-552). It has been attributed to Alvise da Cadamosto (Kretschmer 1962, 221) and must certainly be one of the earliest sets to be printed. The relevant part of the text is evidently from a different source from those which deal with some other parts of the British Isles, including some of the south-west coast of Wales (Kretschmer 1962, 428, §15 and 432, §25). The German scholar Konrad Kretschmer, who republished the Rizo compilation, originally in 1909, also published in the same volume several other sets of Italian fifteenth-century manuscript sailing directions. He produced a glossary in which he tried to identify the names included in...
Deuox amptum alosér per ponente mia.
Belosert a torentand tra ponente e garbin.mia.
Betorentand al licola de aman per mairstro mia.
Betorentand per rivera de licola dingeltterra per fina al cauo de
queales per penabzotara oftro e galbin mia.
Be penabzota saluer fra oftro e siroco mia.
Be saluer al cauo de pulcebaise e al cauo calcher chie el cauo de mi
ra forda tra oftro e siroco mia.
Edeclaram fina alacita de miraforda per canal mia.
Becauo calcher alacita de bristo chie in cauo del colso e valse per
moltisfogli e molteseche fra grego e leuan mia.
Be la cita de briso a licola de londei tra ponente e garbin e toca
pui del garbin mia.
Belondei a patuotol vardase a gregoe garbin mia.
Be patuotol al cauo longaneo tra oftro e garbin mia.
Be longaneo al cauo lisert fra leuan e siroco mia.

Figure 3. The bottom of f. 6v and the top of f. 7r dealing with the Welsh coast from
a set of Italian sailing directions published by Bernardino Rizo in Venice (1490).
Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nazionale di San Marco, Venice; incunabuli V. 706.
them. A glossary of difficult Italian maritime terminology in these sailing directions was published after the reprint of Kretschmer's book, but it does not attempt to deal with the place-names (Kabane 1967). The apparent appearance of 'the city of Northampton' on the Welsh coast not surprisingly puzzled Kretschmer, so much so that it seems to have caused him to give up in despair, for with the exception of miniforda, obviously Milford (Haven), with the common phonetic confusion between l and r, and aman (the Isle of Man), his glossary fails to include any names from this Welsh section (Kretschmer 1962, 564). An appreciation of the difficulties involved may best be obtained by the reader if an attempt is made to identify the places mentioned in the Rizo text before proceeding further (Fig. 3). For the benefit of anyone who does so, Fig. 4 indicates the meanings of the Italian compass directions, based on the names of the corresponding winds in the Mediterranean.

The section of the text reproduced in Fig. 3 (Rizo 1490, 6v-7r; Kretschmer 1962, 428, §15-16) starts with a general paragraph which reads literally: 'England is a very large island and is next to the island of Scotland, and between one and the other [there is a] little strait which, when the tide is low, is only one and a half feet of water [deep], and around these two islands together [there are] 2440 miles and England on its own is very beautiful and [the] island does not have [a] large mountain around [it measures] 1500 miles'. The carelessness in the text is obvious, and it is not untypical of many rutters.

Most early rutters including England and Wales start either from Dover, or from the Scilly Isles or Land's End, or from Berwick. The section following the above introductory paragraph, however, starts with North Wales. Some of the place-names do not appear to figure at all in any other early rutter, or, so far as I can tell, on any surviving early chart, unless they are so corrupt as to not be readily identifiable. The names in the Italian text are: lo caso de gualas da la parte de tramontana, lizola de aman d'jou, la cita de norzamp, lose'r and losert, tossentand, lizola de aman, (lo) caso de gualas per penabrot, saluer, (lo) caso de pulicais, (lo) caso calcher chi e caso de miniforda, darian, and la cita de miniforda. A French translation of this work gives the same names, though capitalising the initial letters. The only spelling differences are North Amptum and Minforde (Cadamosto 1577, 15). The apparent appearance of Northampton on the coast of Wales was so peculiar that its identification seemed crucial, for there seemed to be no reason why Northampton, being in England and miles from any coast, should figure in any sailing directions. It is at least clear from the text that part of it deals with the Welsh coast from its northern extremity, lo caso de gualas dela parte de tramontana (lit. 'the cape of Wales on the northern side'), southwards as far as the caso de gualas per penabrot (lit. 'the cape of Wales by Pembroke'). The most northerly point of Wales usually indicated on early charts and in early sailing directions is Holyhead. Here, as we shall see, the reference is to another headland. The most southerly cape here mentioned must be St David's Head. It is rather surprising, however, to find neither St David's (Head), nor Ramsey mentioned by their names, for both frequently feature on charts and in rutters. The latter is mentioned as lizola de romasei in another section of this rutter, evidently from a different source, dealing with the Bristol Channel (Rizo 1490, 9r, and Kretschmer 1962, 432 §25). If one bears in mind the small scale of most surviving fourteenth- and fifteenth-century charts, and that the rutter could well be at least partially derived from a chart,
Figure 4. Italian compass directions named after the winds in the Mediterranean as spelled in the Rizo sailing directions. (Courtesy of Jens Smith). N.B. (i) Compass bearings between places, following the words se varda a (lit. 'one steers to'), are often given in both directions, thus: leuante e ponente (E/W), ostro e tramontana (S/N), grego e garbin (NE/SW) etc. (ii) Other bearings were given in the form quarta de ponente vers lo maestro (W by N).
then pensabri could well be the nearest name to St David's Head. At any rate, from that headland the rutter goes on as far as (lo) cauo calchier die el cauo de miafórda ('cape calchier which is the cape of Milford Haven'), mentions the distance of dasam from la cita de miafórda, and then jumps 90 miles to the cita de bristo ('city of Bristol'). It has already been pointed out that on early maps and charts there is no guarantee that names will always appear in their correct order. The same applies in runters.

Having established that Lo cauo de guales da la parte de tramentana indicates a cape in North Wales, what is the meaning of per mezo lőxola de amanà d' fora? Rather than being a reference to the Isle of Man, it appears to be to Môn (Anglesey). Does it mean that the northern cape of Wales is half way along its north coast from the outer extremity of Anglesey? If lőxola de amanà is Anglesey, then clearly the 10 mile wide (long?) channel must be Menai Strait; (mna is obviously a wrongly divided minim misprint for mia 'mile'). One wonders whether largo 'wide' is the result of a misreading of a manuscript lungo 'long'. If el (lo) chanal is Menai Strait, what is la cita de nortampton which is stated to be in it? The inscriptions on charts and the names mentioned in sailing directions are, of course, primarily those of significance to mariners. Since the chanal (Menai Strait) is stated to be dry at low tide, it seemed probable that la cita de nortampton was at one end of it, and not strictly speaking in it. The most prominent landmark on the North Wales coast is Great Orme's Head. The Admiralty pilot book states that 'it is a promontory; it is one of the best landmarks on this stretch of coast. The N face of the promontory is a steep bold limestone cliff, and its highest point ... attains an elevation of 203 m (667 ft)' (Hydrographer 1974, 119 §8.2). Its Welsh name is Pen-y-Gogarth ('terraced headland') (Thomas 1987, II, 1435). \(^5\) The name nortampton seems to be composed of three elements, Old English norð ('north'), Old Norse orn ('snake' or 'dragon')\(^6\) and Old English ðun ('hill'). The last element is frequently confused with Old English þun ('enclosure, village, farm'). Thus nortampton must represent an English speaker's rendering of some pronunciation of nor-orn-dún, which was confused with the name of the city or town of Northampton. It seems very unlikely that the reference to the cita indicates either Conway or Llandudno, neither of which seem to have been of any particular maritime significance in the late fifteenth century.

A feature named lose'r or lossert is stated to be 30 miles west of nortampton, and torentand is stated to be 20 miles WSW of lose'r/lossert. But what is torentand? The name looks a bit like Torrington, the Domesday Book versions of which were Torintona and Terintone, but the locations of places bearing that name, in Devon and Lincolnshire, clearly ruled them out (Ekwall 1960, 478). The Isle of Man (lőxola de amanà) is stated to be 90 miles NW of it, clear evidence of the confusion between Man and Môn. The cauo de guales per pensabri (presumably St David's Head) is 90 miles SSW of torentand. If the compass bearings and distances were reasonably correct, it seemed that torentand must be some feature on Anglesey. The only feature on Anglesey commonly included on early charts and in early sailing directions, is Holyhead. It seemed clear that torentand could be a corruption of a Welsh name, and trúyn sant ('holy headland') was the obvious name. It only required the metathesis of r, the common t/d change, a minor vowel sound change, and one copying error, t for s, to transform one into the other. I should admit that I know of no other instance of Holyhead being known as trúyn sant. However,
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trwyn is still attached to a number of headlands, rather than pen. Some twenty are listed in the relevant pilot book, and the name of one of them, at the entrance to Holyhead Harbour of Refuge, is given as Trwyn Clipenau (Hydrographer 1974, 233 and 108, §7.18).

The modern Welsh name for Holyhead, Cyfri (St Cybi's fort), is of very ancient origin (Charles 1958, 235–6), so trwyn sant was presumably a literal Welsh rendering of the English name. If of the form Sant, thus identifying Holyhead, it is difficult to suggest any other logical identification.

The distance figures and compass bearings given for llose'r (loser), 30 miles west of nortumethun (Great Orme's Head) and 20 miles ENE of tor(t)ientand (Holyhead), if reasonably accurate, indicate its approximate location. The name almost certainly identifies the dangerous rocks now known as The Skerries. It will be observed from the text that the masculine definite article lo was sometimes prefixed to the following noun. If one removes the prefix lo in this case, one is left with se'r or seir. The Old Norse word from which 'skerry' is derived was sker. It is just possible that the apostrophe in the llose'r version is a printer's misinterpretation of a manuscript abbreviation (a tilde), indicating the omission of the k, or more likely a c (the letter k was not used in Italian), even though it is apparently misplaced. In the form em-sker, almost certainly formed, through the misreading of three adjacent minims, from Old Welsh ens (modern Welsh enys), and Old Norse sker, the name is that of the rock, otherwise known as South Bishop, with its prominent lighthouse, at the southern extremity of Bishops and Clerks, off St David's Head. The Skerries, with their lighthouse, lie just 1/2 miles NW of Carmel Head, the most northerly tip of Anglesey. They figure as the scaris in an English mid-fifteenth-century manuscript rutter (Waters 1967, 1.94), and as Skars on Nathaniel Cutler's chart of the Irish Sea (Cutler 1728) (Fig. 2). The fact that llose'r does not appear in the plural is of no great moment. The Skerries appear both as Skerries and Scary on Greenville Collins's charts (Collins 1693, charts 26 & 27), as Skerry I. on Lewis Morris's chart of the Bristol Channel coast of Wales (Morris 1748b), and in an atlas of 1840 (Pigot 1840, endpaper map); and the rocks now called The Smalls, west of Grassholm, were always referred to in some spelling without a final s until about 1600 (Richardson 1994, 78). The Welsh name for The Skerries, Ynysoged y Moelhioniad, appears in the singular as Inys Meyloniad ('Seal Island') on Saxton's map of the area (Saxton 1992, 98).

We have seen that the location of the cau de guiles per penobrot, given as being 90 miles SSW of tor(t)ientand (Holyhead), almost certainly means that it is a reference to St David's Head, which is not mentioned by any version of its modern name in this rutter. The location of saluer is given as 15 miles SSE of penobrot which, from the context, would seem to be a shorthand reference to the cau de guiles per penobrot (St David's Head). The form of the name saluer tempts one to think it might be a reference to the little port of Solva, early forms of which include Solfych and Sołych (Charles 1992, 1. 342-3). However, the direction given is wrong, and Solva does not seem to figure on any early charts, or in any other early sailing directions. The direction and distance given point to saluer being the island now called Skomer. The name Skomer derives from Old Norse skalm ('doven') and ey ('island'); two inlets almost cut the island in half. Early recorded versions of the name include Schalme, Stadme, Skalme, Skawme, Scomer (Collins 1693, chart 26). The modern form would appear to be
the result of the vocalisation of the \( l \), thus producing *skauney*, while the final *r* is evidently due to a scribe’s misreading of a manuscript *y* or undotted *i*. The Italian sailing directions’ *salter* would appear to be *skahney* or *sahney* (Skomer), with the same change of *y* or undotted *i*, to *r*, and the omission of *k*, or more likely *c*, as we saw in the case of *lose*r / *losett*, and one minim of the *m* to produce *n*.

The cape named (lo) *canoe de pukebais* presents real difficulties. It appears to be somewhere between *salter* (Skomer) and the *canoe calcher chele* el *canoe de miraforda* (‘Cape calcher which is the cape of Milford’). The latter is stated to be 30 miles SSE of *salter*. There is no cape with a name resembling *calcher* in the immediate vicinity of Milford Haven, but it looks as though it is a corruption of some spelling of *Caldey*, and the distance given would tend to confirm this. We have already seen a final *y* transcribed as an *r*. The manuscript combinations *el* and *ch* quite frequently resulted in the letter *d* and vice versa. The *canoe calcher* reference is presumably either to Caldey itself, mistakenly identified as a cape, rather than an island, or to St Govan’s Head, which is seldom named on early charts, or Stackpole Head, which sometimes is. Stackpole appeared several times in forms such as *seopolo*, which suggest that its initial *sr* was believed to be an abbreviation for ‘saint’ (Lat. *sanctio*), so perhaps ‘St Paul’. However, the appearance elsewhere of the words *canoe chaldei* (Rizo 1490, 9r, and Kretzschmer 1962, 432 [§25]) seems to confirm that Caldey was thought to be a cape. In the same place, Milford appears to be referred to as the *isola de miraforda* (‘island of Milford’), though perhaps the reference is to Skokholm, thus ‘the island off Milford’ (Rizo 1490, 9r, and Kretzschmer 1962, 432 [§25]). On a small-scale chart, the name of the island, Caldey, could easily be presumed to be that of an adjacent major headland. Whichever cape is meant, it clearly was believed to be one close to Milford Haven. All three features would be rather nearer SE of Skomer, than SSE of it.

The form of *canoe de pukebais* looks suspiciously like Welsh *pull* (‘pool’) and *cemais* (‘river bend’). There is a Cemaes Head at the entrance to Port Cardigan, and a Cemaes Bay on the north coast of Anglesey, but neither, of course, is remotely near Skomer or Caldey. Bearing in mind the meaning of the two Welsh words suggested as potential elements, one wonders whether *pukebais* could not once have been a Welsh name for part of Milford Haven, for the estuary does have a very large bend in it. It can hardly be the name of the estuary itself, for the Welsh name for it, Aberdaugledydd, can be traced back at least to the twelfth century (Charles 1992, II. 23 and 6-7). The name *pull cemais* could well mean the ‘pool’ (i.e. ‘bay’ or ‘harbour’) by the bend in the river Cleddau, indicating either the harbour at Dale, or possibly, both in view of its position and its name, the one at Angle (Charles 1992, II. 672 and I. 25). Both are just inside the entrance to Milford Haven, but Angle Bay is just around the sharp bend in the estuary. A Portuguese writer mentions both *miraforda* and, elsewhere on the same page, *a data* (lit. ‘the dale’) (Rebello 1903, 96), while on a chart by Pietro Vesconte of c. 1325 (Fig. 5) *dala* appears, but misplaced, apparently as an island, off a headland named *canoe de la dala*, presumably intended to be either St David’s Head or St Ann’s Head. A comparison of that chart with another, of 1318, by the same cartographer (Fig. 6), reveals what progress had been made in only some seven years, for the earlier one shows virtually no idea of the shape of any of Wales, and only has two place-names in its
Figure 5. Part of a chart by Pietro Vesconte (c. 1325). The Bristol Channel is portrayed, but there is still little idea of the west and north coasts of Wales. The Isle of Man (man) is shown off the coast of Galles (Wales). North Wales (norgales) appears to be where Galloway is in Scotland. This probably merely reveals ignorance of the bounds of Wales, but could also just conceivably be partially due to name confusion. The cauo de la dala (Cape of Dale) could represent either St. David's Head or St. Ann's Head, while dala (Dale itself) is shown as an offshore island. The other named places on the south coast of Wales are milfori (Milford Haven), lentich (Tenby), pêruxi? (Penarth misplaced?) and ornol (Worm's Head), with Guisfo de briste and briste beyond.

*Courtesy of the British Library, Add. MS 27376.*
Figure 6. Chart by Pietro Vesconte (1318). Note the almost non-existent knowledge of the coastline of what presumably represents Wales, with only two inscriptions on it, costa / bristo (Bristol coast) with cop'to (Chepstow) north of it.

*Courtesy of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna; Cod. 594, ff. 9-10.*
approximate location, costa bristo (Bristol coast) and cefesto (Chepstow). If the identification of pulsebais as Dale Roads or Angle Bay is correct, then presumably the caso de pulsebais would identify what is now known as St Ann’s Head. The earliest surviving recordings of that name as applied to that cape and the chapel after which it was named appear to date from the very late sixteenth century. It was by no means unusual for compilers of sailing directions to get completely different names for the same place from different languages without being aware of the fact. We have seen from tori(en)tand (i.e. Men / Mên confusion), that at least one informant was a Welsh speaker. It therefore looks very much as though two capes are given as marking the entrance to Milford Haven, one being caso de pulsebais (i.e. cape púll tesais, or St Ann’s Head) and the other, caso calcher (Caldey), St Govan’s Head presumably. If the location of caso de pulsebais between Skomer and caso calcher is correct, and the name is derived as suggested, then it is difficult to suggest any identity other than St Ann’s Head.

Another interesting case of confusion in this area occurs in some sailing directions compiled for the Spanish Armada, apparently without emendation, from commercial sources. They are dated 30 March 1588. In English the text reads:

‘If you are unable to make Mirafurda because of insufficient wind to fill your sails, know that 4 leagues from the Cabo [Cape] de Mirafurda to the east there is an Island which is called Caldey within the Manga [Channel] de Bristol where you can anchor in 7 or 8 fathoms keeping the Island on your port side, and you will give the point a berth of as much as two cables, on account of a shoal that lies east west with the Island, and the sea breaks on it ... it is called the shoal of la Española [it is still known as Spanish Shoal] ... And if in Caldey you cannot get a pilot, set course 5 leagues to the east up the [Bristol] Channel to Comba, which is a port for small vessels, and there you will find a pilot. The land of Comba is high, and you will see a hermitage on a hill overlooking the sea which is called sancta Catalina ...’ (Alvarez 1588, 11v-12r).

The reference to Seta Catalina, St Catherine’s hermitage, makes clear that Comba is Tenby, which is not 5 leagues east of Caldey but is very approximately 5 leagues to the east of Milford Haven. Such errors seem to arise either through careless copying, or as a result of editorial problems arising when information was compiled from two or more sources.

Some names in rutters are extremely difficult to identify if neither compass bearings nor distances are provided. The latter, when given in figures in manuscript, were very liable to be miscopied. The miscopying of compass directions was more frequent than one would imagine; north for south, east for west, etc., is by no means uncommon. In Portuguese there was a variant form of sudoeste (‘south-west’), namely sudeste, which in Spanish actually means ‘south-east’ (Leitão 1974, 492). The possibilities for error when crews were of mixed nationalities is obvious. Directional miscopying was much less likely to occur in the case of the Italian system (Fig. 4), as the names were sufficiently different from one another for them not to be confused. The lack of any directional clue,
or any feature-identifying word, such as ixola, cano or cita, in the case of claram, does not help in its identification. It is merely stated to be 75 miles from la cita de minoforda per caual ('via the channel'). Which channel is meant? St George's or the Bristol Channel? The following sentence states literally: 'From cano calcher [which the text has previously identified as el cano de minoforda] to la cita de brisio [Bristol] which is at the head of the gulf [Bristol Channel - see Fig. 5] and one passes many reefs and shallows cast-north-east 90 miles'; it then goes on to list and locate two features on the south side of the Bristol Channel, ixola de londei (Lundy), patustol (Patstow) and one just beyond Cape Cornwall, cano longaneo (Cape Longships) or Land's End, from the Longships rocks which lie just off it. There seems to be no feature along the coast of South Wales, or on the coast opposite it, with a name even vaguely resembling claram. One is therefore bound to consider some other solution to its identity.

The most southerly headland on the coast of Ireland, to the west of St George's Channel, is Cape Clear, and it figures prominently on charts and in sailing directions, especially Italian, Portuguese and Spanish ones, since it was the first point of Ireland that mariners from those countries were likely to sight. It so happens that it is at the southern extremity of an island, approximately 175 miles from Milford Haven. The Irish section of the Rizo rutter, in contexts which leave no room for doubt, such as its relationship to chamo vechio (the Old Head of Kinsale), gives its name as chamo de chlana and chamo de claram (Rizo 1490, 6r, and Kretschmer 1962, 427 [§12-13]). This must therefore be a case where the initial figure of a number was carelessly omitted, as well as the compass bearing. The figure still appeared incorrectly as 75 in the French translation (Cadamosto 1577, 15).

It is interesting that in the same Irish section, some 60 miles quarto de ponente ver maestro (W by N) of Cape Clare, there is a name closely resembling the lose'r (loser) name we examined earlier. It appears in three guises, as Lixola de l'oser and, on that same island, as a cape, cano l osert or chamo del oser. However, it has nothing whatsoever to do with the word sker ('skerry'). Kretschmer, presumably from its position alone, suggested that it might be a headland on Valenta Island (Kretschmer 1962, 568). The linguistic evidence provides a different identification. In Romance languages, definite articles, as we have seen in the case of ixola, for example, and words meaning 'of' and 'of the', were frequently written attached to the following noun. In consequence, foreign places whose names began with d were liable to have that letter removed by Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards and Frenchmen, under the impression that it was an abridgement of de etc. Thus, for example, one regularly finds Dartmouth as armuna or armuna (see Figs. 5 and 6). These above three renderings of a name which appears to be osert are, in fact, versions of what are now called Dursey Island and Dursey Head, the most southwesterly point of Ireland. The initial d has been removed, the r omitted, and the final y or undotted i mistranscribed as an r, just as we saw in the cases of lose'r(s), sauter and calcher. In Portuguese sailing directions we have o cabo de dorsey ('the Cape of Dursey') and A Iilha de dorsey ('the Island of Dursey'), where the y/r mistranscription has not occurred and the initial d has been retained (Rebello 1903, 96).

Names, distances and compass directions in all rutters must always be regarded with a healthy degree of scepticism. However, in the particular section of the Rizo rutter we
have been dealing with, though some of the names presented considerable problems, the distances and compass directions given were very helpful. In the case of datan, it was the absence of any compass bearing and the omission of one figure from the mileage between it and la c.ita de minafonda that presented a location problem. A recent article (Richardson 1997) shows how difficult identification can be when compass directions and distances were not provided, or were incorrect, and the text was very corrupt. Who would suspect, for example, that the hay wode was Plymouth, or Magynikes the Isle of Man, even if one knew that the first was somewhere in the English Channel and the second somewhere in the Irish Sea?

The variant duplication of material on certain areas in the Rizo rutter shows clearly that it is a compilation from a number of different sources, which the compiler was, not surprisingly, unable to edit into a unified, logical whole. One cannot but wonder how much of the text we have examined, and others like it, would have been understood by Italian mariners, and whether corrupt sailing directions did not present mariners with hazards almost as great as isolated rocks and hidden shoals.

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1. A similar slip occurred in Copland’s The Rutter of the Sea, where his translation mentions Pennarke (Pointe de Penmar’ch, off the SW coast of Brittany) correctly several times, but once, erroneously, gives Penbroke, a similar, but more familiar word (Waters 1967, 87). Another similar slip occurs in the French translation of the Rizo rutter, where Brési is given in one place where Bristo was meant (Cadmosto 1577, 16).

2. The identity of King’s Chap(p)eel appears somewhat of a mystery. From its position on Cutler’s Irish Sea chart, between ‘Lanranock’ and ‘Abereth’ it looks as though it indicates the vicinity of the harbour now called Cei Newydd (New Quay). The name ‘Capel Christ’ appears in that vicinity on Saxton’s 1578 map of ‘Radnor Breknok Cardigan et Caermarden’ and on John Speed’s 1610 map of ‘Cardigan Shyre’. Can a miscopying of this name at some stage have given rise to King’s Chapel? The idea of ‘Christ the King’ seems somewhat unlikely connection. Local information, kindly gleaned by Gareth Alban Davies, says that Capel C(h)rist, which no longer exists, stood right above the sea a short way north of New Quay. This would seem to confirm the New Quay location. For details, see the Very Reverend Canon James Cunane, ‘Ceridigion and the Old Faith’. Ceridigion: J. Ceridigion Antiq. Society, XII (1994), no. 2, 3–34.

3. A possible case is perhaps to be found in some early Portuguese sailing directions (Rebello 1903, 111). The name of a port between ilizarte (the Lizard) and filanua (Falmouth) is given as chorta. It can only indicate the Helford River estuary, and perhaps Porth Navas within it. It seems quite possible that a Portuguese pointed to the place and asked its name; his English informant, misunderstanding the question, replied ‘seaport’, which is quite accurately rendered phonetically in Portuguese by chorta, the h not being pronounced in Portuguese; it would have only required the unvoiced p and d to be replaced by their voiced equivalents b and t, and the a added, since no Portuguese words end in a t. Admittedly, the word chorta could well be some version of Helford, but one would have to hypothesise a rendering such as (l)hebord having been transformed by the omission of the h, the e being misread as a e, the l as a dotted i, and the v as a b, as well as by the d/t change and the addition of the final a. It is by no means impossible, but it does require a remarkable number of changes for one name.
4. In Italian there was still fluctuation in the use of ‘lo and ‘el with masculine nouns, as in this text before both *chanal* and *cano*.

5. See Thomas, *et al.*, *Gëriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, vol. II (1987), 1435, under both *gogarth* and *gogerdol*, both deriving from *go + cedd*. In *gogarth*, the cedd (‘ledge’, ‘terrace’ etc.) element was modified under the influence of *garth* (‘yard’ etc).

6. Cutler, p. 17, gives a typical example of popular etymology in a recording of this name as ‘Armhead, or Ormhead Point (Cutler 1728, 17). The name *Worm’s Head*, on the south coast of Wales, is derived from the cognate Old English term *wyrm* (‘snake’ or ‘dragon’).

7. Elsewhere in this rutter (Kretschmer 1962, 429, §18/19), the harbour of Helford on the south coast of Cornwall, appears as *alberd*, *alberch* and *libert*, The omission of the letter *h*, especially initially, by Romance language scribes, was very common since it was not normally pronounced in those languages. Also, of course, many native English speakers did not and do not pronounce that letter either. The letter *b*, where even the earliest English forms had an *f* (e.g. *Helleford*), is probably evidence of the unvoiced *f* being voiced *v* in several Romance languages, and in Spanish, as they are usually pronounced identically, many native speakers confuse them when writing. Moreover, in early handwriting, *b* and *v* were often very similar in form.

8. For the real derivation of Stackpole see Charles 1992, II. 756-7 and 739.

9. Charles opts for the Middle English *angle* (‘angle’ etc.), rather than the Old Norse *gongull* (‘fish-hook’), as the derivation of the name. But both suggested derivations, and mine that *pukebais* is a misrendering of *pull cemais* (‘pool’ or ‘bay’ by the ‘river bend’), and indicates *Angle* Bay, would seem, from the shape, to be mutually confirmatory.

10. The earliest surviving reference to the chapel that I am aware of, *St. Ann chap.*, is on Saxton’s map of PENBROK (1578) (Saxton 1992, 92). In sailing directions for the Spanish Armada it is given as the mark for identifying Milford Haven, *una Iglesia blanca que se llama Santa Ana‘ a white church called St Ann*, (Alvarez 1588, f. 11v). It was described as ‘decayed’ in 1602. The earliest mention of the cape by that name is by George Owen in 1595 (Charles, vol. II, p. 586). The date of the chapel’s construction seems to be unknown, but the cape on which it stands must have had some name before the chapel was built, and *cano pull cemais* would seem a quite appropriate one.

11. Sometimes the opposite occurs, and *d* or *D* becomes attached to the following word if it begins with a vowel. Thus, in the Spanish Armada sailing directions, one finds the Isle of Wight as *Isla Duyque*, *Isla Duych*, and *Isla daych* (Alvarez 1588, ff. 4r, 5r and 9v).