

Do fundo do mar... Sea bottom

Morgan's frigate filmed on ocean bed

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Gareth Morgan, Western Mail

THE ship of a real-life Welsh pirate of the Caribbean has been filmed for the first time after being discovered on the ocean floor.

Harri Morgan's lost frigate HMS Oxford sank off the coast of Haiti in 1669 as the result of an explosion believed to have been ignited by a celebratory pig roast.

The legendary Welsh buccaneer gained a fearsome reputation as a naval strategist and ruthless pirate operating against Britain's enemies, Spain, France and Holland.

The ship has not been seen for over 400 years but a team led by Rick Haupt and Bruce Leeming from specialist company Ocean Discovery Networks (ODN) found HMS Oxford off Isle Vache.

The search was filmed for an S4C documentary, Chwilio am Long Harry Morgan (Looking for Harri Morgan's Ship), presented by Lowri Morgan, who only last year travelled to the depths of the ocean to explore the Titanic.

She said she had heard of her fearsome namesake but did not realise his historical importance.

Lowri said, "In reality, he wasn't a pirate but a buccaneer who later gained the respect of England's King Charles II due to his military and naval prowess."

The 34-gun ship had in fact been sent to Morgan by the king to celebrate his appointment as Admiral in Chief of the Confederacy of Buccaneers and Morgan become Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica, where he died in 1688.

But Lowri says it is easy to see why pirates were drawn to the Caribbean.

"I saw amazing things on my journey under the sea including cannon balls covered in coral.

"There have been so many shipwrecks off the coast of Haiti that the locals believe that the magic of the Voodoo gods attracts vessels to the island."

Paul Calverley, the producer, added, "The discovery of the ship is an event of real historical significance, particularly to the Caribbean."