



IC WALES – April 2004

Divers locate pirate Morgan's lost ship

David Williamson, The Western Mail

AN international dive team shivered in excitement when they spied the timbers of a wreck belonging to one of the most famous buccaneers of all time. They discovered the remains of Welshman Captain Henry Morgan's lost frigate, HMS Oxford, off the coast of Haiti. Oxford sank in 1669 as the result of an explosion believed to have been ignited by a celebratory pig roast. The 34-gun ship had been sent to Morgan by King Charles II following his appointment as Admiral in Chief of the Confederacy of Buccaneers. Having previously gained a fearsome reputation as a naval strategist and ruthless pirate operating against Britain's enemies, Spain, France and Holland, Morgan eventually become Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica. He died there in 1688. Rick Haupt and Bruce Leeming of Ocean Discovery Network led the team that discovered HMS Oxford, lying in 12 feet of water. The team found another of Morgan's ships, the Jamaica Merchant, in 1999 and this led them to search for Oxford. Finding the 150ft-long ship took painstaking research. They looked closely at the island of Isle a Vache near Haiti, where Oxford was moored alongside two other warships from a 10-strong flotilla before the accident. Then they eliminated areas which would have been unsuitable for such a large fleet. Research and funding came in part from the co-producers of the one-hour documentary on the discovery, ITV1 Wales, S4C and S4C International. The programme will be broadcast later this year. A full archaeological survey of the site is due to take place, while Ocean Discovery Network plans to lobby the United Nations to declare the wreck a World Heritage Site. Programme producer, Paul Calverley, said, "The discovery of HMS Oxford is an event of real historical significance, particularly to the Caribbean. It's also one of the greatest finds a diver could have. "We don't expect to find any treasure but there are a large number of artifacts such as cannons, drawer handles, muskets, musket balls and powder barrels."