Her route would take *Royal Charter* and her 490 passengers and crew northward around the Welsh island of Anglesey, and from there to turn right to a southeasterly heading, to Liverpool, for what should be an 18-hour run in good weather.

Yet, Captain Taylor ignored dire signs of an impending storm that seasoned navigators in other nearby ships heeded, by turning the other way. They were distancing themselves from the “whirlwind” nature of storms that had impressed them with the wisdom that sailors run before the wind of a strengthening storm, rather than head into it. We’ll never know why Captain Taylor did as he did. Perhaps he put too much faith in the power of his steam engine. Or perhaps his eagerness to arrive home overrode his good judgment.
For a while, *Royal Charter* appeared to have a chance, grounded on sandy bottom. But the tide and storm waves continued to rise, and she was driven onto the rocks, and soon split wide open, like a “hammered walnut.”
James Rogers was a Maltese seaman who volunteered to swim ashore with a rope around him to erect a bosun’s chair with which to save one person at a time.
As depicted in a painting by Winslow Homer, this is how most of some 40 survivors of the Royal Charter disaster made it ashore alive.
Here, again, a map depicting the route and the scene of the *Royal Charter* disaster. Once she turned east, the storm had her trapped against the shore at the village of Moelfre.
A contemporary illustration of the wreck after the October storm, and after most of the bodies and flotsam had been removed.
Here’s a modern photograph of the rocks on which the ship broke up, with outskirts of Moelfre visible in the background. This appalling wreck, loss of life, and public cost must have raised public outcries comparable to those of a school shooting in the 21st century in the U.S.

Its consequences also begot (begat?) legends, including one repeated by Peter Moore’s (2015) book.

The Legend goes:
“Isaac Lewis was a lad from the village of Moelfre, Anglesey who worked as a sailor aboard the Royal Charter. The ship was so close to shore that according to legend he was able to see his father on the headland and cried out in Welsh-"O 'nhad, dwi wedi dod adra i farw." ('Oh father, I have come home to die’). The ship broke up and Isaac Lewis lost his life. After travelling half way around the world, he died within a stone's throw of his home.”

“In the last moments of his life he was able to see his father on the headland, and legend says to shout “Oh father, I have come home to die”. Three days after the storm cleared the body of Isaac Lewis washed ashore in Wales, landing less than 100 yards from his father’s front door…”
FitzRoy’s office issued this interpretive hour-by-hour map of the British Isles and depicting progress of the 1859 “Royal Charter Storm,” with the ship’s course superimposed in the dashed red line. This is a retrospective analysis of real data from the Met Office, or what today we might call a “hindcast” of the storm. At this scale, it is pretty obscure, and at any scale I suspect that it is hard to interpret. Today’s analog might be an interpretive storm track map for Hurricane “Katrina” or Superstorm “Sandy”
Here’s a non-Northern bonus: Consider Robert FitzRoy, who commanded the H.M.S. *Beagle*, often considered a scoundrel. One of FitzRoy’s contemporaries and arch detractors, is a man whom I would gladly nominate for scoundrel-hood.

FitzRoy’s severest critic and detractor was none other than Francis Galton a brilliant grandson of Erasmus Darwin (as was Charles Darwin). Galton, moreover, was intolerant of FitzRoy, because Galton and FitzRoy held to and published competing theories to explain storms. While FitzRoy looked at the cyclonic nature of storms as caused by boundaries between warm and cold air masses in western Europe, Galton perceived that both the cyclonic and anticyclonic systems coexisted, necessarily consisting of upward-and downward-swinging columns of atmosphere. FitzRoy’s visual depictions of the *Royal Charter* storm may have described wind directions accurately (as in the preceding image from his *Weather Book*) but failed to explain quantitative aspects of their severity. Galton, by contrast, could almost have drawn this modern weather map, in which a high pressure cell SW of Iceland sheds air downward in the air column in a clockwise spiral pattern. That shed air pours especially forcefully into a nearby low pressure trough, and by turning left (in the Northern Hemisphere) it joins a cyclone, like the one shown here, near the path of the cyclone that caused the *Royal Charter* disaster.

Francis Galton, moreover, went on to become a corrupter of Darwin’s theories by championing early forms of advocating “eugenics” as part of social Darwinism.
Here, in summary form are highlights of FitzRoy’s turbulent career and the end of his life.