

LIVES PUT AT RISK BY FOOLHARDY 'SAILORS'

That's what lifeboats are for, rescuers told

The lives of a number of people were put at risk recently by two young men who put to sea in bad weather in inland type boats and had to be rescued.

The Port Isaac R.N.L.I. rescue boat and various members of the coastguard and cliff rescue teams were involved in an extremely hazardous operation and afterwards a relative of one of the rescued men shrugged it off with the comment, "that's what lifeboats are for!"

It was an extremely dirty night, the wind rustling, raining, with severe squalls at times, reducing the visibility almost to nil.

A call had been received at the Coastguard Station stating that two small sailing craft were in trouble and one had been seen to capsize close inshore in the area of Port Quin-Lundy Bay. The coastguard alerted the Inshore Rescue boat and the R.A.F. at Chivenor and then the mobile team was sent to the scene.

Difficult decision

The decision whether to launch the Inshore Rescue boat was a difficult one and probably had the person who had to make this decision not been a member of the team, he would have refused because of the weather. Being an experienced member of the crew he decided the boat could go, and went himself as coxswain.

Although there is a breakwater to the harbour, the waves were breaking over it on this occasion, being a high spring tide and almost high water. Most of the total of 16 of the Inshore Rescue boat crew had turned out in addition to the three that manned the boat. Some helped to launch it, getting soaked to the waist.

Others joined the auxiliary coastguards and went to various places in the neighbourhood where it might be possible to help. After half an hour the number of people involved on this was very considerable. In addition to the Inshore Rescue boat crew of three there were the launchers of the boat,

coastguards — both the Mobile Station and the Station itself; a helicopter arrived from Chivenor; the cliff-climbing team.

Second rescue

Eventually one boat was found by the Inshore Rescue boat which proceeded to tow it under very difficult conditions to a small harbour, Port Quin. The survivor had been in the water long enough to be very exhausted and it was several minutes before he could tell his rescuers that there was another boat in trouble.

The other survivor was found on the rocks and was assisted to safety by members of the Cliff Rescue Team.

The type of sailing vessel in question was more suited to the Esperantine or even the round pond than the Atlantic on a night like this. However, when one of the rescuers, a retired Inspector of Police and an experienced fisherman, criticised them for going to sea under such conditions, the remark was made: "That's what lifeboats are for."

At the end of the story one can understand the indignation of many of the rescuers when it was discovered that one of the survivors had been rescued under similar conditions last year by the same Inshore Rescue Boat.

