

# The Capsize of the Richard and Sarah 1

On March 25<sup>th</sup> 1880, Port Isaac's Lifeboat, Richard and Sarah 1 capsized whilst out at sea on exercise in a moderate gale. This near disaster prompted a visit of the Institution's Divisional Inspector to the Station to investigate.

This is a transcript of the Inspector's report taken from the original document in the RNLI Central Records. It starts with two earlier reports briefly detailing Station visits that would have been standard operating procedures at that time.

"February 17<sup>th</sup> 1879 – Lieut Mouteith, RN Inspector, visited Station and took the Lifeboat afloat in moderate weather with good crew. The Station was in very good order.

November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1879 – Commander Laprimaudaye, RN District Inspector, visited Station and found everything in excellent order. He took the Lifeboat afloat, the exercise was satisfactory. There was no local Committee. The Hon Sec had long managed the affairs of the Branch. The financial condition of the Branch was satisfactory.

March 31<sup>st</sup> 1880 – Investigation and Report by District Inspector Commander Laprimaudaye, RN, into the capsizing of Port Isaac Lifeboat Richard and Sarah 1

District Inspector visited Station to enquire into circumstances attending the capsizing of the Lifeboat while out for exercise on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, and held an enquiry in the presence of the Chairman and Hon Sec.

The cause of the Lifeboat upsetting was that she was in a wind on the starboard tack in a strong wind blowing about a moderate gale off shore.

The boat was sailed with her lee gunwall from six inches to one foot under water with a large quantity of water settled on the lee side, all the men sitting up to windward and the sheets being occasionally eased to the puffs. A squall heavier than the rest struck her and though the sheets and halliards were let go it was too late and the boat capsized. In fact, the Coxswain and crew were trying to see what their boat would do. When she capsized the crew were thrown out to leeward except two who went round in her. She went completely round until her keel was about two feet from the water with her masts and sails laying nearly horizontal and remained a short time, perhaps three minutes, in that position, unable to lift the sails out of the water. These were unhooked but the boat was righted by the men weighing down on her keel and bilge wale. As soon as the masts and sails were lifted out of the water she came right round with a swing and the eight men immediately endeavoured to climb on board while she was full of water so that she again came over on top of them and again went completely round, this time without any check as the sails, which were unhooked, had freed themselves when she first assumed an upright position.

They then, by the Coxswain's directions, gave the boat time to empty herself, which she quickly did and they all got safely on board again and returned ashore. The whole of the affair occupied only about ten minutes.

The Inspector took the Lifeboat afloat in a fresh breeze and did not find her sails – a dipping lug and mizzen – at all too large. The same crew who were in the boat had not in any way suffered or lost confidence in her, she having really deserved an increase in trust in her good qualities.

The Coxswain was to blame for carrying on beyond all reason and the Inspector drew his attention to the inability and danger of sailing Lifeboats when half full of water and with the gunwall buried. The boat had not in any way suffered and no gear had been lost."

*From RNLI N Folio 297*

# LIFE BOAT.

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