

The Lifeboat House



In 1927, a new Boathouse was built down near to the Harbour, following the demolition of a row of cottages at the end of Middle Street. Around the same time breakwaters were run out from the cliffs on each side of the harbour. In that same year the Lifeboat *Ernest Dresden* arrived in the village. However, times they were changing. The old sailing ships had been replaced by steam power, the coasting trade replaced by the railway. The remaining fishermen fitted engines to their boats and the BBC weather forecasts helped to further reduce the risks at sea. Thus the *Ernest Dresden* remained 'on call' until 1933 but never once went out on service.

And so the Station was closed and the building was sold and became the garage to *The Slipway Hotel*. As Raymond Harris, the Port Isaac Lifeboat Hon Sec said in the Lifeboat Centenary booklet published in 1969: "The lifeboats became redundant. Their story is one of high endeavour against the fury of the sea with none of the things which today we consider essential – no telephone, no radio, no radar, no engines to move the boat in the water or on land – just ten resolute oarsmen with an equally resolute Coxswain who, when seas were sweeping the harbour, then devoid of breakwaters, pulled themselves out through the surf by a rope permanently fastened to a kedge anchor outside the harbour."

But that was not to be the end of the Port Isaac Lifeboat. By the 1960s a new need has arisen as tourism became the village's new industry. Many of the visitors were unaware of the dangers of the sea and others were too arrogant to seek or take advice. There was an urgent need for a fast, easily launched craft capable of assisting bathers, dinghy sailors, cliff climbers and other summer holiday casualties. To cover this need the RNLI introduced Inshore Rescue Boats and in 1967, Port Isaac Lifeboat Station reopened with one of these new boats. A temporary home was found for Port Isaac's new Lifeboat in the Fish Cellars – the doors were widened and this temporary home lasted for 26 years until the RNLI were able to buy back part of *The Slipway Hotel* garage. Port Isaac Lifeboat had come back home to its purpose built home.