



For those in peril on the sea ...

This image is taken from an original painting donated to Port Isaac RNLI by the highly respected Havant based marine artist Les Henson.

Here we see Port Isaac Lifeboat ***Richard and Sarah III*** on her first service since coming on Station in 1905. Cox'n Joe Honey is at the helm with his hardy crew of ten local men battling through a winter storm on December 7th 1911. They were called to service shortly before noon by the local Coastguard who had sighted a Schooner laying to her anchors in fearsome ground seas a mile or so West of Port Isaac. He reported that one of her anchor cables appeared to have parted and the vessel was in imminent danger of being overwhelmed and cast ashore on the iron bound coast. A cry to launch was made. The Lifeboat prepared and with 50 or so helpers guiding the 3-ton lifeboat on her 31/2 ton carriage down through the tortuous bends of Fore Street, she was launched into the teeth of the gale, there being no breakwaters at that time to moderate the power of the seas crashing into the harbour.

Following a yeoman effort by the Lifeboat crew and helmsman, ***Richard and Sarah III*** was brought alongside the schooner, the ***Berthe Marie*** from the French port of Brest. Despite the terrible battering she was taking the Master refused to leave his ship. No doubt he would have had some shares in ownership and she was fully laden with cargo bound up channel to Bristol so to lose her would represent financial ruin. However, the four man crew were not prepared to stay and quickly elected to accept the offer to save their souls from the hardy Port Isaac lifeboatmen standing by.

Facing an equally hazardous passage back to Port Isaac through mountainous seas our Lifeboat crew and the their four rescued Frenchmen eventually made it safe ashore where they were cared for by the villagers, all of whom had turned out to welcome their menfolk safely home

Fortunately for the Master of ***Berthe Marie*** her anchors had held throughout the night and with the weather moderating by the following morning the Lifeboatmen once again set off to return the rescued Frenchmen to their ship. However, once back on board the French sailors were unable to raise the anchors, so deeply were they set in the sea bed, so the lifeboatmen went on board to help lift them before returning to Port Isaac so enabling ***Berthe Marie*** to continue her passage up Channel.