

**Lifeboat scared men, court told**

# '£500,000 COCAINE DITCHED'

**AN INQUISITIVE** lifeboat coxswain's change of course to investigate a radar shadow scared three drug smugglers into throwing overboard £500,000 worth of cocaine, a court heard yesterday. They thought Trevor England's flashing blue light off the north Cornish coast was a Customs launch, said Mr. Patrick Hooton, prosecuting, at Bodmin Crown Court.

The drug was carried 4,200 miles from Antigua on the yacht *Trelawny* and one of the three crew was ready with wetsuit to complete delivery of the 5½lb. package to the beach, he alleged.

Despite rope and anchor, however, the package drifted and was amazingly found further along the coast next day by a fisherman.

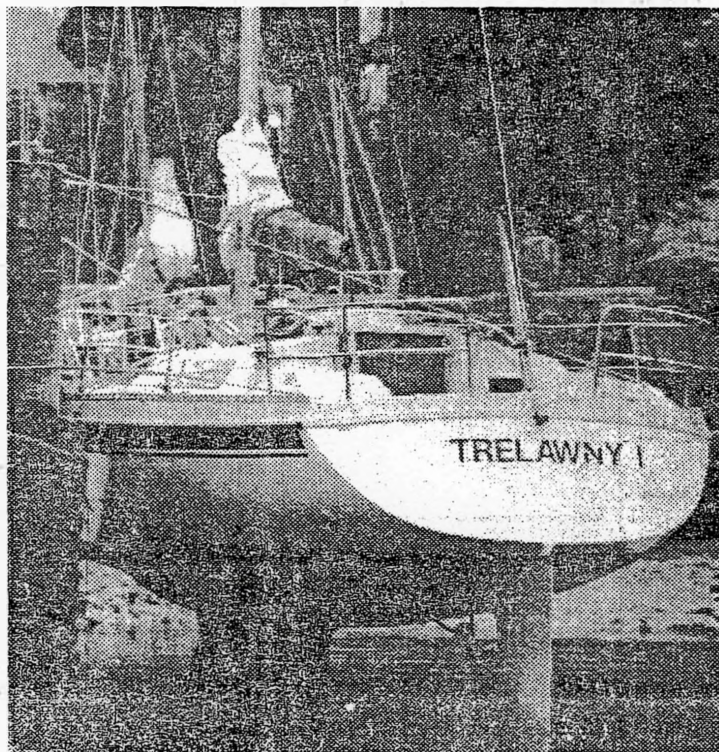
"I don't suppose in his wildest dreams he could then have guessed what his catch really was," added Mr. Hooton.

The jury was told that Newquay jeweller Robert Ward and his crew intended to land the drugs at Polzeath after bringing them across the Atlantic.

But the plan went wrong when Padstow lifeboat, out on a rescue call, spotted the yacht off the Camel Estuary without navigation lights and went to investigate, said Mr. Hooton.

He said that the drugs, sealed in a watertight black box and wrapped in polythene bags, were fished up off Trevoze Head. The box was attached by a length of rope to a yacht's anchor.

Ward, 37, of Cliff Road, Newquay. Marcus Ashley Lloyd, 23, a gardener of Shanklin, Isle of Wight; and Robert Maas-Geesteranus, 22, from Auckland, New Zealand denied attempting illegally to import the cocaine.



**The 34ft. sloop *Trelawny***

Mr. Hooton said Mr. England decided to investigate the shadow when he saw no other navigation lights as he steered past Rumps Point towards Port Quinn Bay.

He was on his way to help a boat having difficulty in rescuing two people trapped on a cliff face,

When he found the *Trelawny*, she had no lights showing. The crew shouted the lights were lost when the 34ft. sloop was "knocked over" in a storm.

On board were Ward, Lloyd and Maas-Geesteranus, alleged Mr. Hooton — and one of them had earlier rented a holiday

caravan near the spot where the cocaine was to be landed.

After the meeting with the lifeboat, the yacht sailed 90 miles to Falmouth where Customs officers searched it.

An officer noticed the absence of an anchor and two plastic bags identical to those holding the cocaine were found aboard.

Mr. Hooton told the jury that before going to Antigua, Lloyd hired the caravan at Polzeath — a few minutes' walk from the sea and near the spot where the lifeboat intercepted the yacht.

"Is that another coincidence, or is it one more piece in this jigsaw?" he asked.

He said Ward, whom the prosecution regarded as an experienced mariner and navigator and clearly the skipper of the operation in every way, had remained cool and non-committal under police questioning.

Neither he nor Lloyd admitted anything more than having been on the yacht since they sailed from Antigua a month earlier.

But after seeing his solicitor, Maas-Geesteranus made a full confession in a written statement Mr. Hooton went on.

## **Return voyage**

The New Zealander said he went to Antigua to visit his brother, met Ward there and agreed to join him as a crewman for the return voyage.