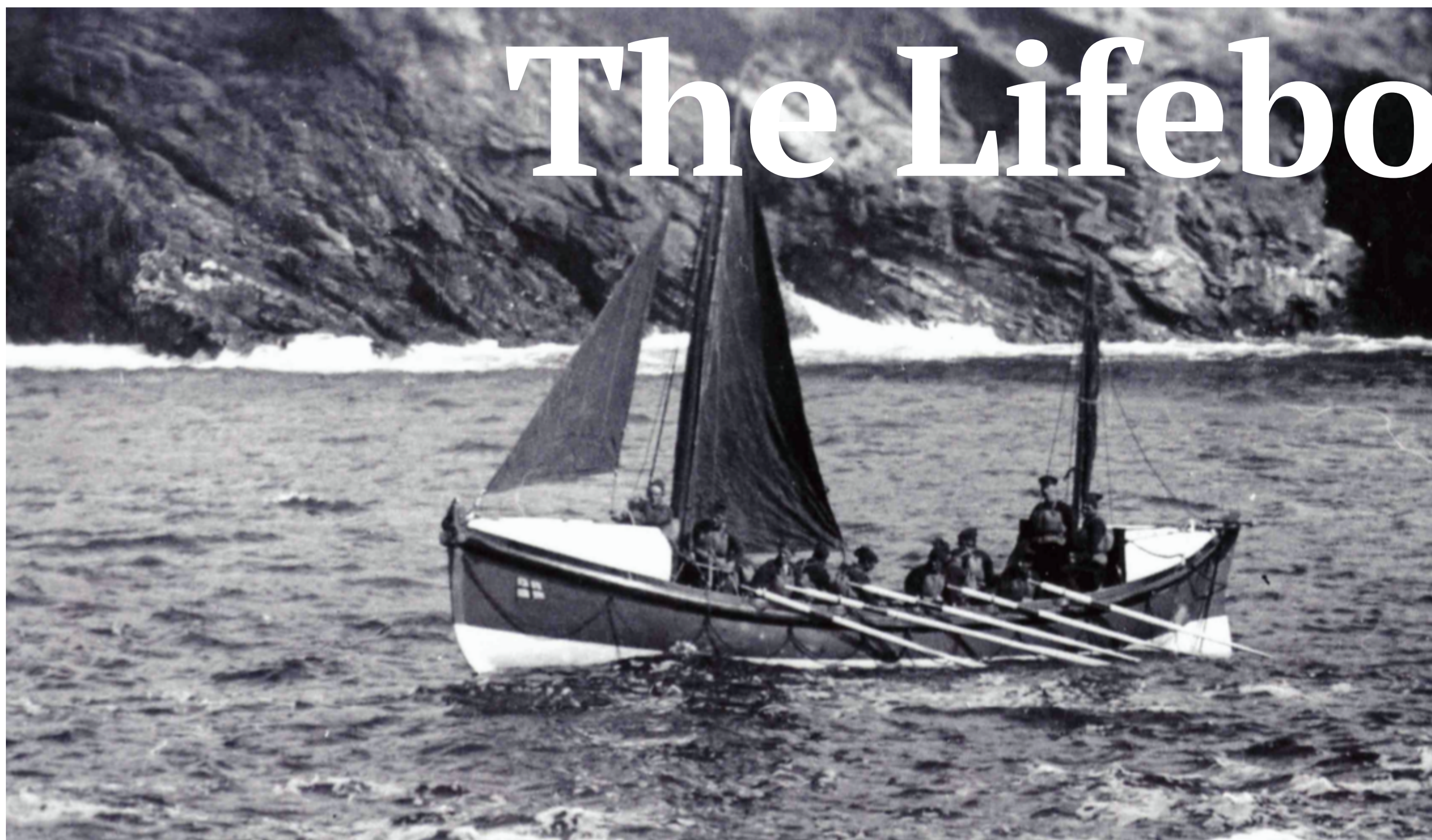


The Lifeboat



Service records show that the first “shout” for the first Port Isaac Lifeboat the *Richard and Sarah* (pictured above) was to the aid of the Brig *Stephano Grosso* of Genoa in 1870. During her service years, 1869 -1887, she undertook six rescues.

Her replacement lifeboat, *Richard and Sarah II* served from 1887 up until 1905. Her final “shout” was on December 9th 1904 when she went out to the aid of three Port Isaac fishing boats and helped them to their moorings.

The *Richard and Sarah III* was on station from 1905-1927 and undertook four rescues.

Next came the *Ernest Dresden*, a 32ft long self-righting boat with ten oars that never went out on a rescue during her years in Port Isaac from 1927 until 1933. She was the first Port Isaac Lifeboat to be housed in the new purpose-built Station at the bottom of the village.



Launching the Lifeboat

The Boathouse, half way up Fore Street (now the *Boathouse Stores*), was not an ideal spot as, when launched, the boat had to be taken down the narrow, steep Fore Street to the harbour.

In places there was less than a foot clearance and on the corner at the bottom of the hill there was barely two inches spare between the boat and the houses.

It was not unusual for the whole of the village to turn out to help (or just watch!) the launch.

A few men were at the front of the boat steering but the majority of the helpers were at the back holding on to ropes and stopping the boat running out of control.

There are still marks left by the ropes on the walls of the building on the bend at the bottom of Fore Street.

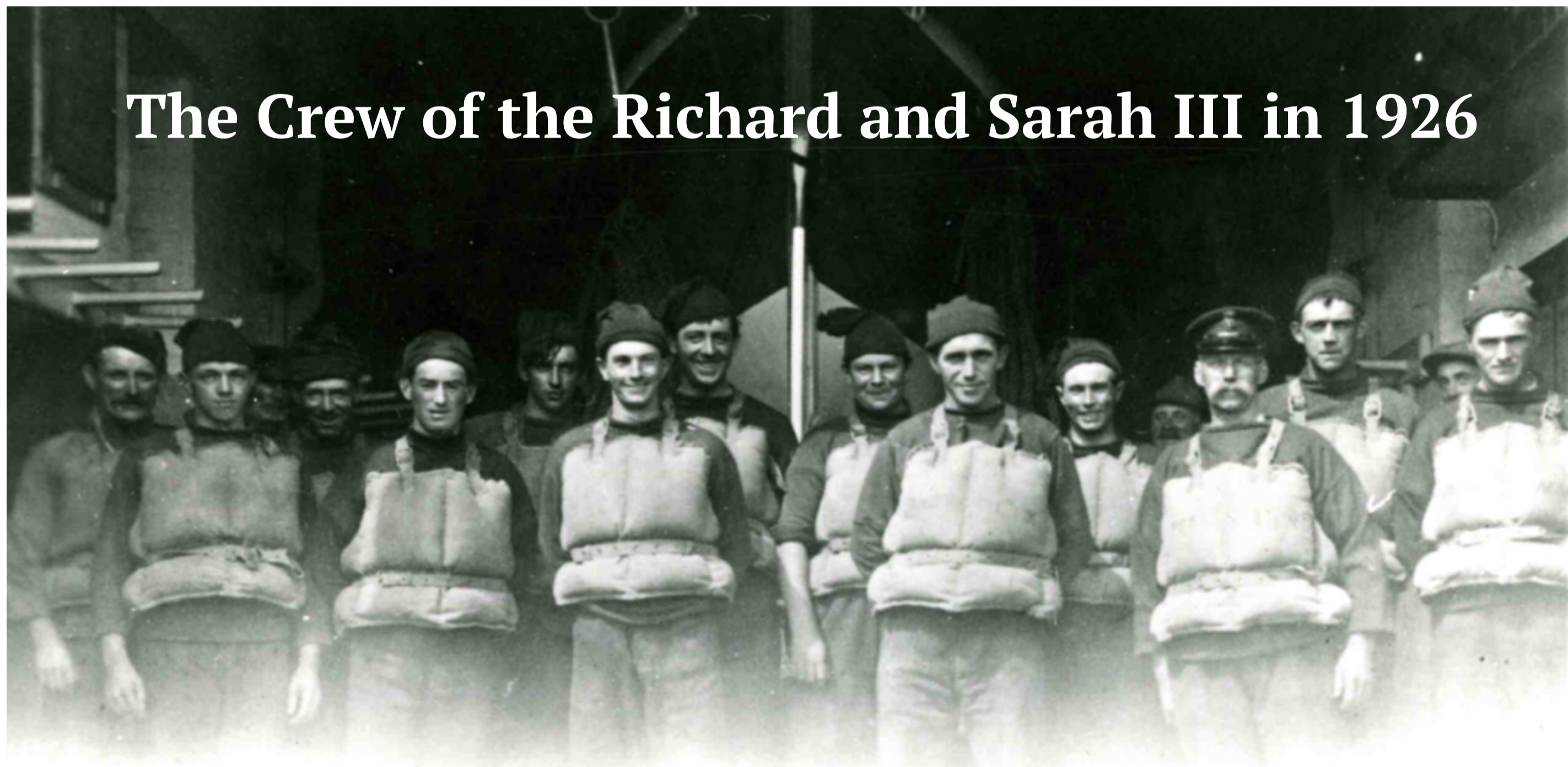


“Back in the 1940s, I remember my grandparents at Atlantic View giving emergency accommodation to a man from a shipwreck. I think his boat had gone down somewhere off Varley. He had a thick, brown, bushy beard and was well tanned. Grandma Castle produced some old sweaters and trousers from a special bag in the airing cupboard, and he had a good meal, stayed the night and phoned his family in Glasgow (I think). I think I heard the family say that other men from the ship were staying in other Port Isaac homes!”

Peter Larkin

taken from *THE REAL VOICES OF PORT ISAAC*

The Crew of the Richard and Sarah III in 1926



Back row, left to right: Jack Hosken, Jim May, Ross Cann, Fred Honey, John Honey, Capt Jack Provis, Walter Glover, Carveth Brown

Front row, left to right: Jess Steer, Sam Bate, Tinker Brown, Jordan Honey, Will Steer (Coxswain), Len Collings

Lack of space down near the harbour meant that the first Lifeboat Boathouse (today *The Boathouse Stores*) had to be built on a level piece of ground half way up Fore Street that was provided by Lord Robartes of Lanhydrock. It was not until 1927 that a new Boathouse was built down near to the harbour, following the demolition of a row of cottages at the end of Middle Street.

But times were changing and the old sailing ships were replaced by steam power and the coasting trade replaced by the railway. The fishermen fitted engines to their boats and the BBC weather forecasts helped to further reduce the risks at sea. And so, when the *Ernest Dresden* ended service, the Station was closed and the building sold to become 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 ...