

November weather ... and the herrings

“During Saturday night’s boisterous weather, a tragedy took place on the North Cornish Coast in the neighbourhood of Padstow and Port Isaac, the first intimation to residents being the washing in of bodies and wreckage. Evidently, a ship had gone down with all hands during the night.”

Cornish & Devon Post, November 12th 1921

“On November 16th 1963, fishing vessel Dawn was hauling pots north of Tintagel Head when the weather deteriorated with a NW gale and heavy swell. There was concern that the Dawn was overdue as all the other boats had returned to the harbour.

Padstow lifeboat, Joseph Hiram Chadwick, was at the time on exercise in the Camel Estuary and was tasked by the Port Isaac Coastguard to search for the Dawn. The lifeboat located her making her way across Port Isaac bay in heavy conditions and escorted her safely back to harbour.

The Dawn was crewed by Jack and Cyril Spry with David Castle jnr (aged 12). David said that it was not until they saw the Padstow Lifeboat - which was twice the length of the Dawn - being tossed about by the heavy swell that they realised how much the weather had worsened.”

David Castle

November 11th 1911

“Catches of herrings at Port Isaac and Port Gaverne on Thursday, it is reported, ranged from 7000 down to 300. The Bonibell (Mr Arthur Hill) and the Valkyrie (Mr Blakes) had the largest catches. Mr Joseph Honey and Mr Carveth Brown were unlucky, the former getting a 12ft long man-eating shark in his net; and Mr Brown caught a tremendous bottle-nosed shark.”

“It was a wonderful sight to see the herring shaken out – by the light of a flare fastened to a mast – like a silver carpet glistening. Being mostly night fishing, the living was very precarious. I remember Father could hear the changes in the weather in the chimney and he would be off to join others trying to locate the positions of the herring boats from their lights – “up in the bay or down by varley” ... No-one would go to bed until all the boats were in.”

Jennie Hills



Tending nets on Port Isaac beach, c1925

School Logs

Monday 13th to Friday 17th November 1883 - Very small school this week - early part of the week very stormy - country children kept home on account of the weather. Latter part - large catches of herrings - several children assisting their parents.

Monday November 9th 1885 - Attendance very slack this week. Large catches of herrings. Several of the upper children, especially the boys, employed either at home (curing) or on the beach amongst the boats assisting their relatives.

November 4th 1904 - Fishing certificates granted to five boys, they have made the required number of attendances - 300 - exempting them from attending school until after Xmas according to the by-laws.

taken from *THE REAL VOICES OF PORT ISAAC*