

Pull for the Shore ...Sailor... pull for the shore.

When I was a small lad and attending my junior school, this during the period 1930. I well recall assembly held in the school hall where about 75 or so youngsters joined together to sing hymns.

Although many years ago, I remember quite clearly that one of the hymns included the words which head this story. And continued “heed not the rolling waves but pull for the shore”. My impressionable mind at this time conjured up a picture of mountainous seas with an open boat in great danger of sinking.



I visualised several exhausted men heaving away at large wooden oars as they attempted to reach the safety of the nearby beach, but little did I realise that this picture in my mind would in fact be experienced at a future date whilst I was a serving police officer.

From those earlier days at junior school we move on to Thursday 13th September 1962 and to the lovely Gower bay of Langland. Apart from being a copper I was captain of the police Life Saving team and in addition a volunteer Life Guard at Langland. Several other officers were also members of the Langland life saving club, including PC 161 Ellery and PC 173 Lewis. I had acquired a clinker built Norwegian pram dinghy which I used for beach safety purposes as well as the occasional fishing trip down the coast.

At 7.0pm on this date I arrived at the bay together with my brother in law, Oliver Harrison. Oliver was very keen on fishing but he was a non-swimmer and in fact had quite a fear of the sea. As we prepared the dinghy for launching I observed that the tide was full in but just about to ebb. In addition there was a stiff breeze making the sea surface choppy, nevertheless I had full confidence in the sea-worthiness of my craft. I was of course

very familiar with local tidal peculiarities because of my years of swimming activities as life guard.

At this time the Lifeguard Club house was manned by Mr Arthur Goss, known within the club as Uncle Arthur. Arthur had many years of experience and a deep knowledge of tidal factors.

I had a chat with Arthur and he wished me good luck with my fishing but pointed out the fast deteriorating sea conditions and several approaching heavy black clouds.



I duly launched my craft with Oliver seated mid-ships holding onto the fishing gear whilst I controlled the outboard motor . Owing to its little power just about 5 knots of speed was available. It was after we had travelled some one mile or so into the Bristol Channel that I first observed a distress signal displayed from a large motor launch. I could see a man

frantically waving both arms whilst he stood on top of the vessels superstructure.

I changed direction and headed toward the problem craft.

Even at our slow speed, within minutes we reached the proximity of the launch which was some 25 feet in length with a very powerful motor attached which had broken down and was of no use whatsoever. Its anchor had fouled on the sea bed and consequently waves were breaking over the seaboard and water was flooding the craft and likely to sink it.

To sum up - There were major problems, with the added facts that both men on board were non swimmers and in a state of hysteria. I circled the vessel and advised both men to calm down whilst at the same time Oliver tossed my towing rope to the launch. I instructed the men to cut adrift their anchor so that I might be able to tow the vessel to safety.

What I was not aware of at this time was that Arthur Goss had

observed the situation with the use of binoculars. Another factor was that large groups of cliff walkers had gathered on the coastal path and were shouting words of encouragement towards us as we attempted our rescue activities.

Arthur Goss became so concerned that he telephoned the CPS to explain the situation. The officer receiving the call was PC Ken Owen's. It was 7.28pm when the message was received in the communication department and as a result at 7.38pm, Coastal Officer Gwyther, on duty at "The Tutt coastal station at Bracelet



Bay was informed and his action was to call out Mumbles Lifeboat also requesting assistance from the helicopter services. To complete the actions an ambulance was dispatched to Mumbles head area. A Doctor Hudson was also standing by to offer medical attention when needed. Police action included the attendance of PS Bill Gordge from Sketty.

Back at the scene of the drama, by now some two miles off Snapple Point I began the task of towing the heavy launch in the direction of Llangland Bay but I was some considerable distance west of the bay and the strong ebb tide was pulling us towards Caswell and my small outboard motor was just far too weak to tow against the currents. I saw that the two men, one named Gilbert Green, the other Paul Usher, were again becoming hysterical with fear.

I duly considered the situation and decided to go with the tidal flow to Caswell Bay. I shouted out my intention to the two men and changed direction westerly. By this time, darkness had fallen and we were moving into a dangerous location near the coastal rocks, the sound of crashing waves was very audible indeed and this made me ever more intent to reach the safety of Caswell Bay.

As I entered the relatively calm area I saw the lights of what was

the Caswell Bay Hotel on the hillside which gave me a direction to the sandy beach. At this very same time the Mumbles Lifeboat appeared as well as the large rescue helicopter which was flooding the water with a strong search light beam. Loud hailers were in use asking me whether I required assistance but by now I was very nearly beached.

After beaching both vessels I ran to the nearby police box and telephoned the news of my completed task which led to PS Bill Gorge arriving in a patrol car. The Caswell Bay area returned to a peaceful one when both Helicopter and life boat departed. Fortunately, apart from shock no physical injury was sustained and the two non-swimmers Green and Usher were both delighted to stand on the sandy beach after what could well have been a double fatality.

What had started off as a fishing trip proved eventually to be a dramatic event. The following evening, full coverage of the Drama appeared on TV News as well as radio and newspapers National and local. The then Chief Constable, D.V. Turner commended me officially as well as sending through the post congratulations of my Brother in Lay.

Although minus any fish we felt that the efforts had led to a most satisfactory conclusion and the words of that inspiring hymn/song "Pull for the Shore" came flooding back to me from that school assembly hall.

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