

## The Cost of Fish

*'The seaside town of Looe keeps visitors entertained all year around. For children, a safe sandy beach with rockpools beside it, hours of free fun.'*

Christopher loved to crab. As he got older, he loved to fish. I remember as a schoolboy the excitement when he returned one hot afternoon, covered in engine oil, announcing that he had a job on the motorboats for the summer. Michael our younger son, sulked that he was too young to go out alone.

The fishermen of Looe were more than a team, they were family. They showed the youngsters how to fish and how to behave. There were of course the odd words of profanity, but Charlie and I didn't mind that too much; what was more important was that our son was learning and growing into a confident, happy young man.

As Chris's experience grew, he was asked to help repair an old mackerel boat, 'Do It Again'. It was 30' long and not strong enough to go out in stormy weather, but still a very useful vessel. A new winch was fitted and in January 1979 they were finally satisfied that she was ready for sea trials.

Johnny Haines was the skipper, just nineteen years old. We had known him since he was a toddler. Christopher was seventeen. They set out on the afternoon tide in the fresh wind, no storms were expected. They planned to journey a couple of miles offshore, for two hours. That was all they needed to check that everything was in good working order.

Jack Jolliffe, a retired fisherman, was walking the cliffs that afternoon. He saw the boat hauling her gear. He became concerned when she suddenly disappeared from sight. He carried on walking with an uneasy feeling that he couldn't lose.

Around the same time, Bill Cowan, the Polperro skipper of 'Westward' heard a frantic call on the airways "HELP! DO IT AGAIN" then the line went quiet. He tried over and over to make contact, but there was nothing, just silence.

As night fell the families became gravely concerned. The life crews were called out and many boats joined the search. They were out all night but found nothing. Jack Jolliffe had been the only witness from the cliff, yet he had no idea of the drama that was unfolding.

By dawn word had spread, and dozens of boats joined the search. Eventually John's body was spotted floating on the surface. It was assumed that Chris's body was trapped in the cabin.

It was many days before they found the sunken trawler. No reason for the accident was ever found. Everything looked in good shape.

Six months later our son revealed his body, 11 miles from where the boat sank.

We didn't recover. Charlie and I stuck together to help Michael, who sought out destructive ways to cope with the loss of his big brother.

Do not complain about the cost of your fish, for it cost us our family.

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*In memory of Christopher (Charlie) Tregenna*