

Elwood Mead - a giant at Vazon.

On the morning of Christmas Day 1973, anyone who was living along Vazon or who could see the west coast towards the north, was astonished to see an enormous ship aground on the reef of rocks called Les Grunes. Never had they seen such a huge wreck so close to Guernsey. Soon there was a great crowd of people who were watching what was going on. They heard on the radio that the ship was called *Elwood Mead* and that it had left Australia on November 22nd on its maiden voyage with a cargo of iron ore.

The reports in the Press that week gave out all sorts of details, but it was clear that bad weather at the time and faults in navigation had ended with the wreck of the *Elwood Mead*. It remained there on the Grunes for sixty-one days before it was possible to pull it free from there with tugs from the company Wijsmuller from Holland. The contract between the ship's owners and the salvage company, Wijsmuller, said that if the ship was not salvaged, the company would not receive payment. The salvage crews began their work as soon as they could because the bad weather continued day after day.

Divers went all along the ship to assess the damage and they reported that she was well fixed on rocks and that there was a lot of damage to both sides, but especially to the starboard side where the hull was open from the stern of the vessel to the bow. In the beginning, the crews tried to empty the ship of water and to fill it with air to make it float, but that did not work. The ship was on the pinnacles (of rock) and grounded along all its length. The cargo of iron ore was pumped out of the vessel and the hull repaired and caulked. When all that was finished, the crews placed anchors in front of and at the sides of the ship, and then they began to pump out water to lighten it. With the help of three tugs and the anchors, finally the *Elwood Mead* left the reef, Les Grunes, where she had spent sixty-one days of her maiden voyage. During the salvage operation, helicopters of the Royal Navy transported all heavy equipment that was necessary, even in bad weather.

The *Elwood Mead* cost thirteen million pounds when she was built and she was sold to another company for eight million, two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. This company refitted it in one hundred and fifteen days and renamed it *Good Leader*.