

### *The Prosperity.*

On January 16<sup>th</sup> 1974, the harbourmaster at St. Peter Port received a message at the White Rock station that a ship was in danger close to Guernsey. What followed was one of the worst disasters around the coast of the island during the 1970's. At ten minutes to four on that afternoon it was blowing a gale. The message gave the position of the ship – she was between twenty and twenty-five miles to the west of the Hanois (lighthouse). The lifeboat *Sir William Arnold* left the harbour at that time, but at eleven o'clock the coxswain in charge, John Petit, sent a message which said that the storm was so strong – force 11- that it was impossible to see anything because of the excessive spray and the rollers which were twenty-five feet high.

The next day, the lifeboat tried again to find the ship in danger. It left the harbour at six-thirty in the morning and it went to search along the south coast until it was sent towards La Conchée, a rock near Perelle. There the crew saw the ship *Prosperity* aground on the reef of rocks. She had been lost with all on board in full view of land and the enormous ship *Elwood Mead* which had struck Les Grunes outside Vazon on Christmas day.

The *Sir William Arnold* found seven bodies in the sea about a mile from Pleinmont and transferred another four from a German steamer which had found them. Sixteen bodies were found, one was the young wife of the captain, but Captain Geoggiou Kastellorizias and the boatswain Uzoglan Ibrahim were never found. Later the authorities found out that the ship had been en route from Finland to the Mediterranean. She carried a cargo of wood. Because of the bad weather, the ship broke in two and her cargo of wood was thrown into the water. A lot of this wood floated along the coast and was collected from the beaches and from the bottom of the cliffs by the Guernsey people. The police guarded some great piles of wood on the beaches but it had been announced that people could collect the wood until midday. There were hundreds who went with their lorries and even wheelbarrows to gather what they could. The beaches and rocks were covered with wood. Later, the authorities said that the announcement was not correct and all the wood should be handed to the police. The greater part of it was returned.

Th police sent the bodies of five men to Greece to be buried in their country; the other members of the crew were buried at the Foulon (Cemetery), those who were Muslim were buried according to the last rites of their religion.

A fund was begun to build a monument to the memory of those who had been drowned during that terrible night, and it was built at L'Erée in sight of La Conchée. At low tide it is possible to see a part of her engine – that is all that is left of the *Prosperity*.

It is a tragedy that, if the sailors had stayed on board, perhaps they might have been able to climb on to the reef of La Conchée at low water.