

Report by the RNLi inspector for the Eastern District 19-21 October 1922

HDFELYN

19-21.10.1922

On Friday 20th Inst at about 11am I went down to the harbour at Gorleston with the intention of visiting the lifeboat house. I then heard for the first time that the Gorleston No.1 boat was out on service. I proceeded at once to the CG lookout where I obtained the following information from their logbook:

Oct.19th	9.45pm	CG Gorleston observed rockets to NE
	9.48pm	Caister Coxn reported preparing to launch
	9.50pm	Gorleston fired green rockets
	10.29pm	Coxn. Gorleston to Cox. Caister "Is your LS launched yet?"
	10.30pm	Reply "Just in water, will shortly be away."
	10.42pm	Harbourmaster to Hon.Sec. Caister "Please let me know as soon as possible if your boat can get off, otherwise I shall take the Gorleston boat out."
	10.50pm	St.Nicholas LV fired 2 red rockets and one gun; Gorleston answered with green rockets.
	11.00pm	Caister reported "Our boat unable to get away."
	11.03pm	HMT KENNET (lying at VH) reported by WT "wreck breaking up."
	11.10pm	Gorleston No.1 boat launched and proceeded in tow of tug GEORGE JEWSON to wreck.

I subsequently learned from the Coxn. that on arrival at the scene he was unable to do anything until daylight owing to the darkness and terrific seas.

At daylight they approached the wreck, only the amidships portion of which was above water. No sign of life was visible and very heavy seas were sweeping right over. They remained there for about 2 hours, and then, being forced to the conclusion that there were no survivors, the tug and the LB returned to Gorleston arriving there about 9am on Oct 20th.

About a hour afterwards CG Caister reported a flag was being shown from the wreck. Coxn. consulted the temporary Hon. Sec. Mr A D Snell, and returned with tug to the wreck, Mr Snell accompanying them.

Scene of the wreck was at the extreme north end of the North Scroby Sand. The LB had left about ½ hour when I arrived. I remained at the CG Gorleston lookout, being in

Continuous communication with Coister, who at times could see both wreck and LS; they reported to me LS apparently anchored close to wreck.

At about 3.30pm it being 14 and LS apparently still unable to get alongside, I phoned LT calling out the motor LS with instructions to call at Gorleston. Darkness had fallen before we reached the wreck, and we met the tug and LS returning. Stopped there and learnt from Coxn, Gorleston No.1 that he had been unable to get alongside wreck owing to the terrific seas, broken portions of the hull and the remains of an old wreck some 30 to 40 yards off. His boat was apparently damaged by striking heavily on the sands.

I asked him if he would return to the wreck with us, which he immediately volunteered to do, and came on board. We then proceeded. On arrival at the scene it was obvious that nothing could be done that night owing to the intense darkness and very heavy seas. After consulting with Coxn, Sean and Fleming, we decided to return to Gorleston and make a further attempt at daylight, Fleming assuring us that no useful purpose could be served by remaining at sea all night. He further stated that he considered that the only chance of getting alongside the wreck was to tow the Gorleston No.2 boat out to the scene and let her cross the shallow water. Arriving back at Gorleston at 7.30pm and made arrangements, if weather moderated, to tow No.2 boat out at daylight. Five of the LT crew (Masters of fishing craft) returned to LT as they were due to sail the next morning.

I took in 10 gallons of petrol (Shell No.1) as a "standby" in tins on deck, as I was unable to obtain aviation spirit locally. Mr & D Snell arranged food and accommodation for the LT men (10).

At 3.30am Saturday Oct 21st, I mustered the crew of the boats. As the weather had become worse, and as I was assured that the NE gale would force up a big flood, I decided that it was too risky to take the Gorleston No.2 boat out there. I replaced the 5 LT men with 7 Gorleston men, which included the Coxn, 2nd Coxn and Bosmen of the Gorleston No.1 boat.

Left Gorleston at about 4.30am; NE gale and squally, rough sea, very heavy on sands. Arrived at the scene of wreck at daylight; found only bridge and Fiddley casing above water. Fore and aft decks were completely submerged and hull of vessel split down on after part of fore deck, or fore and of after deck, with jagged edges of plates projecting.

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leaving barely the length of LB in which to come alongside. Dropped anchor astern and to windward of wreck, and veered down. Whilst doing this the LB was struck by a terrific sea and almost thrown onto the after deck. Had it not been for the powerful motor fitted in the boat, I do not consider we could have got alongside. Sheered alongside, and shipwrecked crew jumped and slithered down ropes into the LB in about 30 seconds. Steamed ahead to cable, the bight of which had fouled the sunken portion of the wreck, and which with the very heavy seas it was impossible even to make an attempt to clear. This was cut, and almost at the same time the LB was buried by a terrific broadside sea; fortunately no one was washed out, and the LB returned to Gorleston, arriving at 7am. Proceeded up river to YH and landed the shipwrecked crew of 24 (and a black kitten) at Hall Quay where they were sent in charge of Coxn. Fleming to the Sailors' Home.

(Extract from the report of the Eastern District Inspector of the RNLI published in "The Motor Boat" Oct. 27th, 1922 pp383)