



VENTNOR & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Barque *Catalina* aground at St. Lawrence – March 1874



Over the last few centuries, many ships have been driven aground by storms along the south coast of the Island, mostly between Blackgang and the Needles. Probably the most famous of these was the *Clarendon* which came to grief at 6am on October 11th 1836, en route from the West Indies. There were 17 crew, 11 passengers and a cargo of sugar, molasses & rum. Such was the scale of the disaster, it prompted the construction of a new lighthouse at St. Catherine's Point which was completed and first used in 1840. However, not all wrecks have been to the west of Blackgang – some vessels have run aground to the east, notably the *Underley* which foundered off Luccombe in September 1871 during a violent south-easterly gale and became a total loss.

The sailing barque *Catalina* ran aground at Binnel Bay, St. Lawrence, on March 23rd 1874 but, unlike the *Underley*, she survived her ordeal and was re-floated on the next high tide and towed to Portsmouth Harbour for repairs, after which she continued trading successfully for a further nineteen years. The photograph appears to be 'the morning after the night before' with a small dinghy resting on the rocks and several men standing around, possibly some of the crew, or maybe some locals who had come down to the Bay. The sea state is quite calm and there doesn't appear to be much damage to the ship. (Incidentally, a 'barque' is a sailing vessel with three masts, in which the foremast and the mainmast are square-rigged and the mizzenmast is rigged fore and aft).

Catalina was launched from the Pallion yard of William Droxford & Sons Ltd on the river Wear in North West Sunderland on November 14th 1868 and was of iron construction, with a displacement of 515 tons and a length of 150 feet. Apart from her sails, she had no other means of propulsion. She was originally built for the Spanish company Yturriaga & Co of Bilbao and first registered in Spain. In later years she had British and German owners. What turned out to be her last voyage was from Bowling, on the River Clyde, to Cardiff with a cargo of pig-iron. During a storm in the Irish Sea on February 14th 1893, she was wrecked 4 miles north of the Mull of Galway becoming a total loss.

Ventnor & District Local History Society. Colin Beavis, photograph from the author's personal collection.



Ventnor & District Local History Society is a registered charity, working to preserve and record the history of our area and make it available to the public in the Ventnor Heritage Centre.

The Society and Heritage Centre are run and managed by volunteers.

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