

Celebrations after crew survive hit

FEATURE

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The crew of the Boston Neptune took to bars and clubs in Fleetwood on December 14, 1959, to celebrate a very lucky escape.

The trawler earlier returned to the port with her 18ft starboard lifeboat smashed to pieces, and half-inch wheelhouse windows broken after the 328-ton ship was tossed around by an enormous wave.

The 16-strong crew returned to tell the tale of their miracle escape from the wave, which struck the ship over her stern, some 50 miles from the Shetlands in the North Atlantic.

The wave pushed the ship on her side until the wheelhouse was touching the sea.

And it kept her there for three or four minutes as the

crew gave up hope she would right herself.

Crew members were thrown off their feet or from their bunks, across cabins and the mess decks.

It left the diesel trawler's deck a heap of jumbled chaos, smashing a lifebuoy to pieces, and washing the trawl over the side.

Raising a glass, engine room greaser John Haggerty, 32, said: "From below it sounded like a bomb had hit us.

"We rolled around the (mess)deck. I caught my leg on the table leg and haven't been able to move it properly since.

"It was a miracle the ship ever came back. I gave up hope.

"A coal-burning ship would never have managed it. Her coal would have shifted."

Deckhands Jim Armitage, 25, Leven Avenue, Robert Martin, 17, of Ribble Road, and bosun John Morris, 34, of Elm Street, all Fleetwood,

were on the bridge.

Robert said: "The wave took us by surprise from a direction we never expected. I was thrown over the wheel."

Jim added: "I was thrown between the radar and telescope – the floor was the side.

"I rang full steam ahead and had the window open ready to go through if she went under."

Skipper John Drenna, 54, of Cornwall Avenue, North Shore, was reading when the wave struck.

He said: "I was forced against a cupboard and saw the cabin carpets swept up in a heap. Two or three steps took me into the wheelhouse – I found it 2ft deep in water.

"I grabbed the wheel and hoped she would respond to the engines."

The skipper added that the luckiest escape of all was that the trawl didn't foul the propeller as it was washed over the side – or power to bring the ship up would have been lost.



The crew of the Boston Neptune had a lucky escape after being hit by a huge wave