A fisherman called John moored his boat beside his neighbour's, also called John. The two Johns usually traded between Polperro and Plymouth, but on this particular night, there wasn't enough wind to go far so John went home to bed. Woken in the night he heard someone shouting up to his window. They were warning him of a sudden gale and the urgency to tie his boat to Rundle's with an extra rope. All his fishing gear was in that boat, he threw on his clothes and went out into the night.

As John walked down to the harbour, his head was full of the loss of his boat but when he got there all was calm and he realised this must be some practical joke. Turning back toward home, he saw a boat on the beach. All about the boat were little people and they seemed to be holding out their hats. John crept closer to better see what they were up to. One of them was doling out gold coins equally amongst the hats. Thinking he would very much like some of that gold himself, John snuck his own hat unnoticed into the ring. After a while he slipped it out again, the piskies seemed to see only the gold.

Laughing now, John started off home, then he realised he was being pursued and began to run. As he closed his door, the piskies threw themselves against it angrily and just in time John stuffed a coin in the keyhole. He caught his coat tail in the door, so the piskies were left clutching a piece of John's coat tail. Lucky John, safe inside, was left with a hat full of piskey gold.

retold by Anna Chorlton

Reference: 'The History of Polperro' Johnathan Couch

