

ISSUE 590  
WINTER 2009-10



# the lifeline boat

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Meet the rest of the team

## Olympic support

Flying the flag in Vancouver

## Medal rescue

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**Chairman:** Admiral the Lord Boyce CCB OBE DL  
**Chief Executive:** Paul Boissier

### SUPPORTING THE RNLI

If you're not already a subscriber, you can help save lives from the beach to the open sea by becoming a regular supporter of the RNLI. Find out more from the Supporter Care Team.

### CONTACT DETAILS

- RNLI Headquarters: telephone 0845 122 6999, email [info@rnli.org.uk](mailto:info@rnli.org.uk) or write to RNLI, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ
- Supporter Care Team, for membership, donations, Lifeboat Lottery enquiries: telephone 0845 121 4999, email [supporter\\_care@rnli.org.uk](mailto:supporter_care@rnli.org.uk) or write c/o Headquarters address above
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Cover picture: Young recruit Grace Wadsworth from Lyme Regis. Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard

## Dear Reader

As the year turns, we look forward to new opportunities and new challenges, not least, here in the pages of *the Lifeboat*.

Founded more than 185 years ago, the RNLI was more than just a dream for Sir William Hillary (see page 34) – he made it a reality. The endeavour of a modern-day Manx resident demonstrates courage, commitment and a willingness to risk everything, not just for personal glory (page 46). And throughout the five nations and more served by the RNLI (meet the charity's new Chief Executive on page 12), stories abound of selfless bravery (4, 24–30 and 50).

Such timeless attributes are channelled equally through the more hidden, backroom

roles – architect (48), fundraiser (56) and statistician (16) – and shared with the various charitable and Government-run organisations that work alongside the RNLI (18).

In this complicated world, the simple draw of saving lives at sea is still felt by young people (6) in contrast with the bad press often received. With such hope for the future, why not throw off those Winter blues and celebrate on SOS Day?

Liz Cook, Editor

PS If you're looking for our regular 'Friends of the RNLI' panel, it's moved from this page to the start of the Classified on page 43, so you can find all goods and services in one place. And if you'd prefer an audio version of *the Lifeboat* – see page 2 for details.





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Photo: RNLI/Robin Goodlad



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Photo: Pacemaker Press, Mark Jamieson



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Photo: zqchill.com



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Photo: RNLI/Arthroath

# the Lifeboat

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Photo: RNLI/Alex Maddrell

# Insight

## 1 MAN AND CAT SAVED IN GALE

Engine failure combined with force 7–8 winds to put a sailor and his cat Sukie in danger 4 miles off the Mull of Kintyre on 3 September. Campbeltown's Severn class lifeboat, *Ernest and Mary Shaw*, launched to help. The 7m yacht was rolling violently, and conditions were so poor that transferring the man and his pet to the lifeboat was the only option. The transfer was made on the second attempt. A crude tow was then set up using a grappling hook, with a stronger connection being made when calmer waters were reached and conditions allowed.



## 2 GRAPPLING WITH GREMLINS

On 17 September, the trawler *Dorothy May* ran out of fuel, having been using it at a faster rate than usual. A further fault meant that her battery hadn't charged and she lost electrical power, rendering her radio useless. The fisherman used his mobile phone to call another local boat, whose skipper was able to radio the Coastguard. Tynemouth's Severn class lifeboat *Spirit of Northumberland* was soon on scene, and towed the trawler home to North Shields fish quay. The skipper later brought a large bag of fresh prawns to the lifeboat station, to say thank you.



## 3 HERE BE DRAGONS

Tower is the RNLI's busiest lifeboat station, and its crew were really in demand on 5 September, rescuing 106 people in 2 hours. This large number of casualties were taking part in a popular race, in which dragon boats, crewed by 18 a piece, row 22 miles along the Thames. Wind over tide created large waves, swamping many of the boats. The E class lifeboat *The Legacy* attended to eight dragon boats that were either sinking or had already sunk, a race rescue boat that had suffered engine failure, and a crowd stranded on a beach. [\[Watch this on rnli.org.uk/towerdragon.\]](http://www.rnli.org.uk/towerdragon)



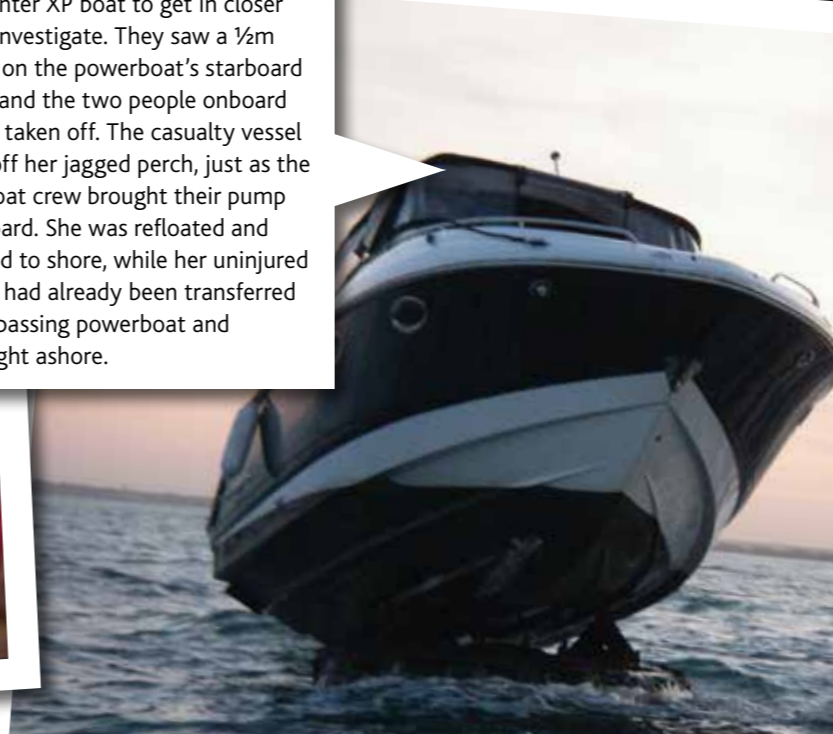
## 4 DRIFTING IN THE DARK

Two 13-year-olds found themselves drifting out to sea in the dark on the evening of 7 September. Wearing only Summer clothes, they thought they had secured their inflatable dinghy close to the shore near Hove but later realised they were lost. One of the teenagers phoned his parents and was told to call the Coastguard, so they could find their position by mobile signal. Shoreham Harbour's D class lifeboat *Barry Lazell* went out and found the dinghy within 9 minutes. Its occupants were cold, wet, scared and disorientated, and hypothermia soon set in. They were given first aid onboard and brought to hospital by ambulance, recovering well enough to visit the crew and say thank you within a week (pictured).



## 5 AGROUND AND HOLED

Howth's Trent class lifeboat *Roy Barker III* was called out on 10 September when a large powerboat ran aground just off Lambay Island. At the rocky scene, the lifeboat crew launched their daughter XP boat to get in closer and investigate. They saw a ½m gash on the powerboat's starboard hull, and the two people onboard were taken off. The casualty vessel slid off her jagged perch, just as the lifeboat crew brought their pump onboard. She was refloated and towed to shore, while her uninjured crew had already been transferred to a passing powerboat and brought ashore.



## 6 SERENDIPITOUS SIGHTING

Three sailors whose flares were seen off the coast of Pembrokeshire on 5 September were very glad that vigilant onlookers called the Coastguard. Their boat had capsized, and Fishguard's inshore lifeboat, battling force 5–6 winds and challenging seas, found two men clinging to the 5m vessel, while a third had decided to swim for it. The volunteers had soon got all three out of the water and onboard the Fishguard all-weather lifeboat, which brought them ashore to paramedics, before heading back out to tow in the practically submerged sailboat. The sailors made a quick recovery.



The RNLI's lifeboat crews and lifeguards carry out thousands of rescues every year (see page 40). Here are just a few caught on camera and see pages 24–30 for more in-depth reports from Portrush, Portreath and Whitstable.



# The next generation

How do young volunteers get involved in the RNLI of the 21st century? Life is not as simple as it used to be but the charity has a solution



Top: Fleetwood's Tyne class all-weather, D class inshore and Future Crew training boat

Above: Happy participant Simon Eccles

Opposite: Learning the ropes on a tall ship

Page 9: Future Crew training in their kit specially supplied by Crewsaver

Historically lifeboat stations were able to casually welcome enthusiastic teenagers into their boathouses, nurturing a lifelong relationship that took the young volunteer from helper to crew, to coxswain, to station management. But times have changed.

The RNLI cannot always depend on the stability of communities that saw a lifetime's commitment to a particular station or an inevitable father-to-son progression. Further, there are real hazards to contend with inside a lifeboat station: a 30-tonne lifeboat perched on a steep slipway, or stores of pyrotechnics and chemicals.

Young recruits need close supervision and proper training – as well as the application of best practice in child protection. So, while the RNLI is acutely aware of the importance of making the right connection at the right age, this changed world has posed something of a challenge.

### Recruit, retain and rehearse

The charity already engages with thousands of young people every year through school and youth group visits, the Hit the Surf and Beach to City programmes, Storm Force child membership, and more. It also participates

in the Duke of Edinburgh's and President's Award schemes. However, to truly capture hearts, hone skills and nurture long-term support, the RNLI needed a scheme that allows deeper involvement.

And so was born Future Crew: the RNLI's Youth Activity scheme. Designed and led by former teacher and fundraiser Tim Robertson, it's a 3-year course that allows entry at age 14. To be accepted, participants must:

- express a clear interest in serving the charity as a lifeguard, crew member or supporter
- prove an existing connection and commitment through Storm Force or parental membership, fundraising or similar
- commit to attend regularly
- be able to swim 50m and be confident in open waters.

Completion of the course prepares the young person in the skills required of inshore crew. Tim explains: 'This means they are trained and ready to go sooner after they hit 17 – the minimum age for becoming a crew member or lifeguard. Future Crew allows experienced crew and youth to develop a relationship as happened so successfully in previous generations.'

### The scheme in action

Future Crew is hosted and run by lifeboat volunteers. Recognising the inevitable extra demands on their time, interested stations were asked to come forward without any obligation, before pilot 'clusters' in the north west of England and Highlands of Scotland were selected to take up to four young people per station.

Tim explains: 'The clusters provide a supportive network for the stations but each is free to work to their strengths. For example, Fleetwood crew members have taken advantage of their close ties to a maritime college to use their sea survival training pool.'

Each term involves 3 weeks or so of shore-based theory followed by a practical exercise. 'Learning on a lifeboat would be like learning to drive in a Ferrari!' says

Tim. 'So we use small, modestly powered inflatables that have been modified for us by the RNLI's Inshore Lifeboat Centre on the Isle of Wight.'

Avoiding the poor conditions of January–March, practical training moves indoors to local swimming pools and concentrates on lifesaving skills. Over 3 years, participants can gain the STA Bronze, Silver then Gold Cross Lifesaving Awards. Throughout, to prevent any confusion with operational crew, the participants' kit has been deliberately chosen not to look too 'RNLI'.

As someone with a 30-year involvement with the Scouts, Morecambe Crew Member Colin Midwinter was immediately struck by the 'superb potential' of Future Crew. He swiftly volunteered to be a coordinator, balancing his roles of crew member and trainer: 'We are

careful to ensure Future Crew doesn't clash with our primary purpose as a rescue service. A couple of times I've had to abandon the training for a shout but that's valuable learning too.'

### A direction in life

The value of this scheme for participants has proved far reaching. As Fleetwood Lifeboat Operations Manager Dave Eccles, also a Future Crew coordinator, explains: 'The benefits are social as well as practical. This is about a group of youths learning not only skills but also the ethos and rewards of charity work.'

Feedback from participants' parents has praised the wider skills offered. One mum, Kirsty, sums up: 'Future Crew shows teenagers how to

**'Future Crew's given my son confidence, ambition, maturity and a direction in life.'**

communicate effectively, be a team player and act in a responsible manner.' Another, Debra, credits the scheme with a transformative power on behaviour and attitude: 'Future Crew's given my son confidence, ambition, maturity and a direction in life.'



### FUTURE CREW TRAINING TOPICS INCLUDE:

- distress and emergencies
- hull shapes
- hypothermia
- International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea
- knots
- launch and recovery
- navigation
- personal protective equipment
- rough-weather handling
- tides
- towing.

# RNLI SOS

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Whatever you do to support SOS Day, thank you!

[rnli.org.uk/sos](http://rnli.org.uk/sos)



➔ One of the chance-of-a-lifetime experiences offered is the Summer residential. In 2009, 10 Future Crew members spent 9 nights onboard a tall ship sailing from Bristol to Cardiff, Dun Laoghaire, Peel and Greenock. The adventure took them out of their cluster comfort zone, mixed them with people from all over the UK and taught them the transferable nature of their training.

Ten of the youth members also spent 5 days living aboard the RNLI's two unbranded crew training boats. As well as learning boating skills directly applicable to crewing

an all-weather lifeboat, they were given full responsibility – from maintenance and navigation to food shopping on a budget and cooking. Unsurprisingly, these experiences proved a massive hit:

'I would never have thought that I'd do anything like this or learn so much,' enthuses participant Ryan. 'This has opened up a lot of opportunities for me.'

Coordinator Colin speaks highly of the positive attitude and ability of the budding crew members in his area: 'Here we have 14-year-old twins Marcus and Christopher who are locals, and 16-year-old Hannah who travels 20 miles to attend. They are treated as part of the team and given real responsibility. We all check each other's kit before we go out and they help us check the boat. All three are determined to join the crew and they're so proud of their Future Crew T-shirts they probably sleep in them!'

**'I would never have thought that I'd do anything like this or learn so much'**

### Mutual benefits

Scheme Manager Tim is convinced of the advantages to the RNLI too: 'We know life is more geographically fluid nowadays. Some of our scheme members will move away but this training will never go to waste. They can choose to be near another lifeboat station and go along to volunteer there.' And if they move inland? 'Then they'll be supporting us in other ways such as fundraising.'

These sentiments are shared by Colin: 'Future Crew has a double benefit – we get these great kids, from a wide background, and they pass on their enthusiasm for the RNLI to others and out into the wider community. We are already seeing its effect. For example, we competed to be our local Sainsbury's Charity of the Year. I'm convinced our involvement in Future Crew was the deciding factor.'

He continues: 'Marcus, Christopher and Hannah have got involved in everything. We even took them to meet Prince Charles at Buckingham Palace and they really did us proud. There's no doubt that having young people around is good for us crew too and our preparation for teaching a subject gives us revision.'

The pilot also won over an unexpected champion, as Tim explains: 'The swimming tutor we hired in Inverness, Sue Bitmead, was so impressed with the project that she offered to donate her future time for nothing. She also gave us resuscitation

training kit to the value of the fee she had already received.'

### Looking ahead

Having successfully completed its pilot, Future Crew is on extended trial for the next 5 years. There are currently 18 young people involved, a number that looks set to increase to 24 by the end of the year, possibly expanding to 45 stations and reaching a total of 140 young people by 2014.

In keeping with the great tradition of the RNLI, the scheme depends upon the commitment of volunteers to deliver sessions locally but of course it's not free. However, in its first 8 months, the scheme received £10,000 in funding from a charitable trust and £10,000 in gifts in kind from Crewsaver, supplier to and supporter of Future Crew. Now, more trusts and companies are being approached to help finance the expansion of the scheme and assure the long-term future of the RNLI's next generation of lifesavers.

Words: Claire Vandvik  
Photos: RNLI/(Tim Robertson, Robert Baines, Fleetwood)

If you would like to find out more about:

- Future Crew, contact Tim Robertson at [tim\\_robertson@rnli.org.uk](mailto:tim_robertson@rnli.org.uk) or phone 01202 663374
- the RNLI's wider work with schools and youth groups, contact Nathan Palmer at [education@rnli.org.uk](mailto:education@rnli.org.uk) or phone 01202 663495
- Storm Force, the RNLI's membership for children, contact Supporter Care at [supporter\\_care@rnli.org.uk](mailto:supporter_care@rnli.org.uk) or phone 0845 121 4999
- The RNLI's Lad or Lout? project, see YouTube.



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# Station milestones

2010 is a big birthday year for a number of lifeboat stations around the UK and RoI. Humber, East Yorkshire (pictured), celebrates its 200th anniversary, while Donaghadee, Co Down, is 100 years old and Beaumaris, Anglesey, celebrates 100

years' service. This year also sees 150th anniversaries for Buckie, Morayshire; Margate, Kent; Portrush, Co Antrim; and Thurso, Caithness.

Find out more about the origins of the RNLI on page 34.

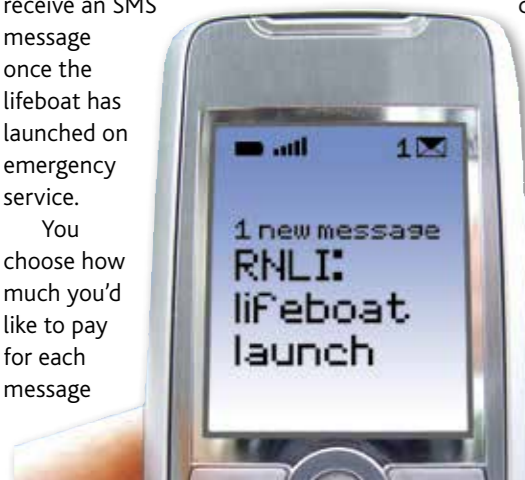


## Lifeboat launches on your mobile

RNLI supporters in the UK can now stay connected with lifeboat launches on their mobile phones.

Choose your favourite stations and receive an SMS message once the lifeboat has launched on emergency service.

You choose how much you'd like to pay for each message



received. A portion of the fee will come to the RNLI, so not only are you kept in the know, you are also contributing to the real cost of the lifeboat launch. The amount donated depends on your mobile operator.

The SMS alerts are triggered by the crew pager system so, shortly after they get the call, you do too. However, unlike our volunteer crews, you can choose what time of day you'd like to receive alerts and set a limit on how many messages you receive. You can also pause the service for a while, for example if you're going abroad on holiday. To sign up, visit [rnli.org.uk/sms-launch-alerts](http://rnli.org.uk/sms-launch-alerts).

Unfortunately, it would be too costly for the RNLI to set a similar service up in the RoI at this time.



## New man at helm

The RNLI's new Chief Executive Paul Boissier has been in post since September 2009. He tells *the Lifeboat*:

'This job is all about stewardship. In time I'll need to hand over the charity in as good a shape as it is today. We must get through the recession, but also position ourselves so that in 2 or 3 years' time we're able to take the next step forward.'

'The RNLI is a vibrant organisation. It's about people and a shared belief that what you're doing is genuinely worthwhile. There's not anyone whose job isn't essential to achieving the right results on the water.'

'Going out in waves taller than a house isn't the place for second-rate equipment or a couple of defects waiting to be fixed. I've met the people responsible for making sure everything is just right – and the people who inspire the public to support us. Our fundraisers have enthusiasm, charm and wonderful persistence.'

'Here at Headquarters, small cells of extraordinarily competent people are engaged in the management of our 24/7 operation. This breathtaking sense of excellence is one of the crown jewels of the RNLI. We will have to maintain that, even in tough times.'

'The RNLI works across five countries and two nations. But we have such clarity of purpose and a standard of selflessness that we can be the bedrock of all those communities who go the extra mile to offer help to others. I'm proud to be part of such an extraordinary team.'

# Tying the knot

Jenny and Paul Jobling became the first couple to celebrate their wedding at the Lifeboat College on Saturday 17 October.

The college has been granted a licence to hold marriage and civil partnership ceremonies, and can also offer wedding breakfasts for parties of various sizes.

Your party will enjoy the best locally sourced food in a contemporary waterside setting with great facilities – and perfect views for those all-important photographs.

We wish Paul and Jenny every happiness for their future together. To find out what the college can offer for your special day, see [rnli.org.uk/weddings](http://rnli.org.uk/weddings). If you can't make it to Poole, why not ask for donations to the RNLI in lieu of gifts?



# Local lifesavers for Scilly

RNLI lifeguards spent a week on the Isles of Scilly in September, training a group of locals in surf lifesaving.

The group of 12 can now provide safety cover at the sea-based events that are at the heart of Scillonian life.

At the end of the week, the trainees were put through their paces, and 11 of the 12 qualified as surf lifesavers. The other participant, local Guesthouse Manager Nick Lishman, went one better, gaining a beach lifeguard qualification after swimming 400m in 7½ minutes and running 200m on sand in 40 seconds. (Surf lifesavers must be able to complete the swim in 9 minutes and the run in 1 minute.)



The newly qualified surf lifesavers were then able to support the Inter-Island Charity Walk on 28 September. The event, which benefits charities including the RNLI, takes walkers around the isles at extremely low tide, when it is possible to walk, wade or paddle from one island to another.

Event Organiser Clare Lewis says: 'It is a unique opportunity to see the islands from a completely different vantage in a safe and enjoyable way, which only happens once or twice a year depending on the tidal systems being favourable.' In previous years, Clare had to invite lifeguards from Cornwall to cover the walk, but now island residents will be able to keep participants safe.

RNLI Divisional Lifeguard Manager Greg Spray, who was one of the training team, says: 'Training local residents gives the Scillonians the opportunity to set up their own surf lifesaving club, where they can train their own lifeguards and continue to grow the pool of qualified people who can provide safety cover at all sorts of water-based events in the future.'

Lifeboat cover around the Isles of Scilly is provided by a Severn class lifeboat, *The Whiteheads*, stationed at St Mary's.

## RNLI goes to Chile

RNLI Operations Director Michael Vlasto recently attended an International Maritime Rescue Federation meeting to address global lifesaving issues.

The Chilean lifeboat service in Valparaiso hosted the event and took the opportunity to demonstrate its rescue capabilities. Michael spotted a few ex-RNLI lifeboats and, during a trip afloat, was invited to take the helm of the former Port St Mary Arun class. South America continues its interest in buying ex-RNLI lifeboats and work is afoot to reduce transport costs so that these craft can save more lives overseas.

Michael says: 'These meetings are a vital part in forming strong relationships and sharing knowledge between lifesaving organisations. This has been our first foray into South America and I'm very impressed with what I have seen.'

## Cruisers launch lifeboat



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines has achieved its latest fundraising target of £150,000. The money will be used to fund a new Atlantic 85 lifeboat for Kyle of Lochalsh, due on service in 2011. It was raised through passenger collections and other fundraising events. This year, Fred. Olsen will donate 10% of the price of selected cruises booked by an RNLI supporter to the RNLI. See the inside front cover to find out more.

## RNLI plan

The *RNLI plan 2010-14* is now available to view online, at [rnli.org.uk/fiveyearplan](http://rnli.org.uk/fiveyearplan). The plan sets out clearly how the RNLI intends to carry on its proud tradition while addressing potentially difficult times ahead. See page 53 for news of the charity's annual review, report and accounts.



# Without legacies, six of these boats would never launch



It's that simple. Six out of ten lifeboat launches are only possible thanks to legacies left to the RNLI. Put another way, over half of those rescued owe their life to people who have left a gift to the charity in their Will. Whether it's a father brought home to his children or the crew of a fishing vessel safely returned to harbour, more often than not, it's legacies that make the difference. They help train our volunteer crews or purchase the kind of specialist equipment they need to go out in some of the most treacherous conditions imaginable.

We realise that leaving a gift in your Will – of whatever size – is a huge decision, and one that you'll want to think through very carefully. But should you wish to discuss it or receive our free legacy information pack, please don't hesitate to call Mark Allwood on **01202 663032** or email [mark\\_allwood@rnli.org.uk](mailto:mark_allwood@rnli.org.uk). Alternatively, fill in the coupon below.



Please send me a legacy information pack. Please complete and return this form to: Mark Allwood, Legacy Enquiries Manager, RNLI, FREEPOST BH173, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1XF.

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Your details will be used only by the RNLI and passed to RNLI trading companies only. If you do not want to receive information about other ways to support the RNLI, please tick here.  DPA

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## ENERGETIC £300K

Scottish and Southern Energy has committed to donating £100,000 a year to the RNLI for the next 3 years. The money will be spent on crew training at Aldeburgh, Harwich, Lowestoft and Southwold lifeboat stations. Scottish and Southern Energy has a particular interest in Suffolk coastal life, as it is involved in the construction of an offshore windfarm on the Gabbard and Galloper sandbanks. Julian Reeves, the company's Head of Corporate Relations, says: 'Supporting the RNLI's Train one, save many campaign allows us to give something back to the communities that use the waters where we are working.'



### FASTER LAUNCHES

The RNLI has bought the Custom House in Cowes, Isle of Wight, which will now be assessed and renovated before becoming home to the town's B class lifeboat. Cowes is the RNLI's newest lifeboat station – the charity took on responsibility for the previously independent station in 2008. The Custom House will be the base for much faster launches into the busy waters of the Solent, compared with the lifeboat's current berth in Shepard's Wharf Marina. The Island Sailing Club made a significant contribution to the purchase price of £850,000 and an appeal to local supporters will also be made.



Runaway Coast sells luxury fabrics and household goods inspired by the Suffolk shoreline. As a company with strong links to the sea, and the county's four RNLI lifeboat stations, it has chosen to donate 5% of all sales to the RNLI – great if you're redecorating this Spring! For contact details, see page 43.



Photos: Adrian Don, RNLI Nigel Millard, Emrys Rhys Williams, Chris Walker, JP Tenenque, Paul Ellery, Tony Watson, Nicholas Leach



# Bronze Medal award

Portrush Mechanic Anthony Chambers is to be awarded the RNLI's Bronze Medal for Gallantry, for his part in saving the lives of two boys who got trapped in a cave with the tide rising.

Anthony risked his life swimming in and out of the swamped cave twice, through powerful swell and backwash, bringing the boys to the safety of the lifeboat.

Read a full account of this dramatic rescue on page 24.



## Forever by the Sea

RNLI Forever by the Sea funds are a positive and powerful way to honour the life of someone special who has passed away. By setting up a fund in the name of your loved one, you can give practical support for courageous volunteer lifeboat crews in their memory.

At a time of loss there can be a real need to celebrate a friend or loved one no longer with us. Seeing a Forever by the Sea fund flourish can give a feeling of shared commitment among friends and family, and a fulfilling reflection of that life's value.

Tribute Fund Coordinator Gemma Spencer says: 'You can choose to give single donations or monthly gifts by direct debit. Some people like to send gifts on anniversaries, birthdays and special occasions. Others set up a whole range of

enjoyable fundraising events and sponsored activities – whatever seems the right way of remembering your loved one. To date, our fund holders have raised over £41,000 to help us continue to save lives at sea.

'We will send you updates twice a year and we also hold a remembrance service each December for fund holders.

'I am so proud to work for the RNLI. My job allows me to help our supporters who have lost a loved one, to turn their grief into something lifegiving.

'A tribute fund is extremely simple to set up and we handle all the administration – just give me a call on 01202 663504, email me at [gemma\\_spencer@rnli.org.uk](mailto:gemma_spencer@rnli.org.uk) or visit [rnli.org.uk/inmemory](http://rnli.org.uk/inmemory) for more information.'



Photo: RNLI/Chris Walker



# Wind power in Shetland

The RNLI has installed its first station wind turbine, at Aith, Shetland – the charity's most northerly lifeboat station. The turbine, a 20kW Westwind unit, was switched on in the Autumn of 2009 and should generate around 40,000kWh a year.

Standing 15m tall on the breakwater that protects the station's all-weather lifeboat berth, it is expected to be worth about £11,000 a year to the RNLI, by powering the station and through selling excess electricity to the grid. This will add up to more than £250,000 over the turbine's 25-year life, simply by harvesting the power of the wind – a resource in plentiful supply in Shetland.

The RNLI received about 90% of the

turbine's cost from grants, so payback on capital expenditure will take only a matter of months.

Aith is just one RNLI site with great potential for wind energy, and more are being assessed. Meanwhile, other renewable energy sources are also being considered to reduce the charity's carbon footprint, while saving precious pounds and euros. Solar panels are a standard fitting to mobile lifeguard units. Several ground-source heat pumps are already in use, for example at the RNLI Grace Darling Museum in Northumberland, and these are being included in all new projects where practical (see page 48 for another example).

Jennifer Nicolson and Patrick Ross-Smith from Community Energy Scotland stand between Coxswain Hylton Henry (left) and lifeboat mechanic Kevin Henry in front of the RNLI's first wind turbine

# Planning ahead ... together

At the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents' Water Safety Congress in November, a new UK-wide database was launched that will allow the RNLI to share information easily with agencies including the Ambulance, Police, Fire and Mountain Rescue services, local authorities, HM Coastguard, the Marine Accident Investigation Branch and the Royal Yachting Association.

WAID, the Water-related Accident and Incident Database, will be a powerful web-based resource for every organisation involved in water safety in the UK. It aims to help all members of the forum to develop strategies and policies based on statistics, analysis and research.

Every lifeboat station and lifeguard unit sends detailed records of every incident to RNLI Headquarters. This information is vital when it comes to planning operational coverage, shoreworks, public education, training and prevention messages, as well as providing fundraising resources and an historical archive.

Provisional figures for the Summer 2009 lifeguarding and lifeboating season can be found in your issue of *RNLI Compass*. Final figures for the year will be reported in our next issue of *the Lifeboat* and at the RNLI's AGM (see page 53).

See page 18 for more on the RNLI's work with other search and rescue organisations.

# Foresters support SOS

The financial solutions company Foresters is lending a helping hand to this year's SOS Day by sponsoring fundraising material for schools. Mailings, SOS champion packs for Storm Force members and a host of online downloads hope to encourage schools around the UK and RoI to raise £125,000 for SOS Day 2010.

As well as providing financial advice and products, Foresters also helps communities by raising funds for charities and local projects, and helping its own members who need support.

Do you know a School Of Style or a class willing to Sample Our Sweets? SOS fundraising ideas and information about the day can be found at [rnli.org.uk/sos](http://rnli.org.uk/sos) on the Do something page.



Words: Mairéad Dwane

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# RING OF SAFETY

There's no mistaking an RNLI lifeboat – but what are all those other craft in the lifesaving team?

When RNLI lifeboat volunteers answer the call for help, they are launching to the front line in a battle to save lives – but a lifeboat is never completely on its own. A host of state and independent bodies is ready in support.

In the UK, it's usually HM Coastguard (part of the Government's Maritime and Coastguard Agency, or MCA) that requests the charity's lifeboats launch and coordinates the operation. It might draw in other search and rescue (SAR) organisations or even passing shipping. And, often, the MCA's involvement doesn't end there – it has a variety of 'assets' of its own that it can deploy.

RNLI lifeboats are designed to have excellent pulling power but some stricken

vessels are simply too heavy to tow to safety quickly. That's where the MCA's emergency towing vessels come in: four tugs strategically placed near busy shipping lanes to assist oil tankers and other large vessels.

Back on the shore, there are volunteer coastguard rescue teams trained to investigate, survey and report maritime emergencies. They're often involved in shore searches and some teams specialise in cliff and mud rescues. Bob Bradfield, the RNLI's Senior Engineering Designer, has been a Coastguard volunteer for 26 years. 'We are the eyes on the scene, reporting back to our division – in our case Portland Coastguard – and if necessary we can request a helicopter or lifeboat, although

most of the time lifeboats get called the same time as us,' he explains. 'The Government provides our uniforms and wet-weather protection as well as training – which includes driving instruction both on and off road and first aid. I find it really interesting, and I think of it like being a very grown-up boy scout!'

Sometimes, lifeboat crews and Coastguard teams need a little help from above. The MCA operates four SAR helicopters and can request the launch of eight others operated by the UK military. In the right conditions, an aerial search can be invaluable and casualty evacuation swift. Of the thousands of rescues lifeboat crews carry out each year, about a tenth have some sort of SAR helicopter involvement.

As its slogan 'Safer lives, safer ships, cleaner seas' suggests, the MCA's responsibilities go beyond SAR – they also include enforcing international safety standards for craft and protecting the marine environment. Its fleet of rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) enable boarding of ships for inspection, and two counter-pollution aircraft are used for surveillance of, for example, oil spills and to spray dispersant.

## Sea defences

Another aircraft surveying UK waters is the RAF's SAR Nimrod. This huge aeroplane can fly 800 nautical miles from her base at Kinloss in Morayshire and search for up to 5 hours. Kinloss is also home to the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre, which handles all UK military SAR assets. These include six RAF helicopters based at Boulmer,

Chivenor, Leconfield, Valley and Wattisham, and two Royal Navy helicopters at Culdrose and Prestwick.

Naval ships, too, can help save lives at sea. In May 2009, Brixham Coastguard requested that both the Salcombe RNLI lifeboat and HMS *Mersey* – an offshore fishery protection patrol vessel – go to the aid of a yacht off south Devon. Naval personnel found that a mooring rope from a fishing float had fouled the yacht's propeller. They tended to the seasick couple onboard, cut the yacht free and helped attach a tow rope from the lifeboat.

## Taking flight

In the Rol, the Irish Coast Guard (IRCG) has a similar role to its UK counterpart: providing SAR response, enforcing safety standards and controlling pollution and salvage. Its volunteer coastal units are trained to search the shoreline and carry out coast and cliff rescue. The IRCG also operates four SAR helicopters.

In September 2009, the IRCG helicopter based at Dublin Airport joined forces with Dun Laoghaire RNLI inshore lifeboat to rescue two kitesurfers. They were stranded on a rocky breakwater and the helicopter winchman was lowered to them. He checked that they were uninjured and helped to transfer them to the lifeboat, which took all three to safety.

On the Channel Islands, which are Crown dependencies but not part of the UK, maritime rescue coordination centres are managed by the States of Jersey and Guernsey and work with the UK and French Coastguards. Operations often involve the RNLI lifeboats from St Helier, St Peter Port, St Catherine or Alderney, and the Jersey-based fixed-wing SAR aircraft *The Islander*. This aeroplane is run by the charity Channel Islands Air Search, which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary.

There's also a purpose-built floating ambulance that serves the islands, operated by the St John Ambulance and Rescue Service of Guernsey. The *Flying Christine III*

is used to attend to casualties on ships and the smaller islands such as Sark and Herm and take them to Guernsey for transfer to hospital.

Although not designed specifically for sea rescue, air ambulances (usually helicopters) can be vital in getting casualties to hospital quickly once they've been rescued. The Scottish National Health Service provides an air ambulance, while the Wales Air Ambulance and English regional services are funded by charities. As *the Lifeboat* went to press, the Rol remained the only country in the European Union without a dedicated air ambulance. However, the All Ireland Air Ambulance Service has announced plans to have two helicopters operational by 1 March.

Coastal air ambulance crews often work with RNLI lifeguards. On 18 September 2009, two RNLI lifeguards on patrol at Gyllyngvase beach near Falmouth, Cornwall, spotted a swimmer struggling to return to shore through breaking waves. The lifeguards rescued her, began first aid and requested the Cornwall Air Ambulance helicopter, which arrived and took the woman to Treliske Hospital.

Helping the RNLI lifeguards clear a safe landing area that day was Melissa Reed, Junior Coach at the local surf lifesaving club. There are many such clubs around the UK, promoting the skills, fitness and safety knowledge required to save lives on the beach. Most are affiliated with the Surf Life Saving Association of Great Britain (SLSGB) and the Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS).

Since the RNLI introduced its lifeguarding service in 2001, a strong partnership has developed between SLSGB and the institution. Many club members go on to become RNLI lifeguards, and the help of clubs has been invaluable in encouraging people with beach safety and rescue skills to give their time and expertise for free. Volunteers from all walks of life gave more than 3,500 hours of their time to supplement lifeguard cover in the UK last Summer. (See page 13 for more.)



# Winter breaks

For special breaks at the Lifeboat College including Burns Night and Valentines weekends, visit [rnli.org.uk/tlc\\_offers](http://rnli.org.uk/tlc_offers) or call 0870 833 2000

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## → 999 afloat

Another strong lifesaving relationship has developed between the RNLI and police forces in Pembrokeshire, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. As part of the Beach Beat initiative, some police community support officers have been trained to RNLI lifeguard standard. They can deal with issues that often fall to lifeguards – such as lost property and missing children – and enforce local by-laws, which lifeguards don't have the power to do. Beach Beat officers also have the skills to provide beach safety advice and carry out rescues. (See page 27.)

Some police forces venture beyond the surf, and their boats may look rather familiar.

Kent Police bought the RNLI's prototype Tamar class lifeboat in 2007, rebranding it for high-visibility patrols alongside the force's two RIBs. Similarly, two of Dorset Police's patrol RIBs are Atlantic 75 lifeboats leased from the charity. 'This is a huge benefit to the force and the marine community,' says Dorset Police Spokesman Paul Chick. 'The RNLI is regarded as a world leader in building and maintaining craft.'

Fire and rescue services with areas of coastline on their patch also have an offshore remit. Created in 2006, the Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG) comprises teams from 15 fire and rescue services trained to respond to fire, chemical

hazard or other specialist rescue at sea.

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service's MIRG team was called into action for the first time in February 2009 in an operation that also involved the Humber RNLI lifeboat and an RAF SAR helicopter. The helicopter winched the firefighters aboard a cargo vessel to tackle a blaze that had broken out in the engine room, while Humber's Severn class prepared for any evacuation – fortunately not needed.

In exchange, the charity's rescuers have also worked alongside fire crews inland, in the guise of the RNLI Flood Rescue Team (FRT) sponsored by Goodyear. 'We're passionate about safety, so we're very



Volunteers from HM Coastguard cliff rescue train with the RNLI's inshore lifeboat crews

→ proud to support the FRT,' says Goodyear's Michelle Fisher. 'We have donated £50,000 for the team's training and equipment over 2009-10.'

The infamous North Sea tidal surge of January 1953, with the resulting loss of 2,100 lives in the UK, Belgium and the Netherlands, is yet to be repeated but lifesaving organisations across northern Europe know it's only a matter of time. That's why, last Autumn, the RNLI FRT joined fire and rescue teams from the UK, Poland, Germany, Sweden, Estonia and the Netherlands in a mass training exercise: FloodEx09.

Members of the team used their high standard of training for real in November, when record-breaking rainfall swamped Cockermouth and Keswick in Cumbria (pictured). RNLI volunteers and staff travelled to Cumbria from Swanage and Poole in the south of England, Stockton-on-Tees, Scarborough, Redcar, Staithes and

Runswick, Silloth, Morcambe, Hartlepool and Blyth in the north of England, and Criccieth, Conwy, Llandudno, Moelfre, Rhyl, Flint, Beaumaris and Pwllheli in Wales.

Sarah Nimmo-Scott, RNLI Deputy Divisional Inspector North, was leading one of the teams in Cockermouth. She says: 'The situation was dreadful. It was dark and windy and we were dealing with deep, fast flowing, turbulent water and generally awful conditions. But the RNLI Flood Rescue Team is specially trained to deal with these situations and coped brilliantly. The RNLI evacuated dozens of people.'

Saving lives inland is also the aim of a maritime rescue charity that's even older than the RNLI. The Glasgow Humane Society, which was founded in 1790, rescues people from the River Clyde and other city waterways. Its lifeboat is one of several small independent services that share the RNLI's ethos.

Taken together, the many Government and charitable SAR organisations described provide a formidable ring of safety around the British Isles, with the RNLI the one constant presence throughout. See page 24 for a prime example of cross-border multiagency work – and a gallantry medal.

Words: Rory Stamp  
Photos: RNLI/(Howard Fields, Nigel Millard), Richard Hughes



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# 'He risked his life to get us out'

When two young people found themselves trapped in a cave facing a surging, rising tide, would anyone be able to find them – and get them to safety?



**Above: Rhys is passed from the Portrush D class to the Severn**  
**Opposite: Matthew (left) and Rhys know they owe their lives to lifeboat Mechanic Anthony Chambers**  
**Right: The route into the cave**

The afternoon of 5 August started as a fun adventure for teenagers Matthew Forsythe and Rhys Sufferin. They were holidaying in the Castlerock Downhill area of Northern Ireland, and set off to explore the rock pools. But by 3.45pm their parents had grown concerned.

They began to look for their sons, working their way westwards along the shoreline. At 5.19pm, with their progress cut off by the tide and the boys nowhere in sight, they dialled 999 and asked for the Coastguard. High water was 2½ hours away.

Belfast Coastguard asked Portrush RNLI to search for the boys. The crew members launched both lifeboats – the inshore D class and all-weather Severn – at 5.30pm. There was no way of knowing whether the boys had climbed the cliffs, entered a cave, or were even in the sea.

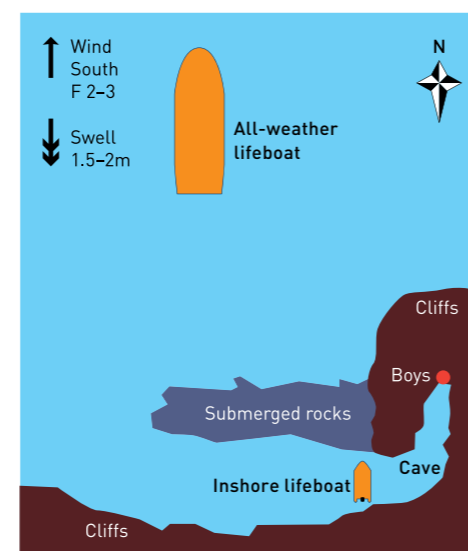
With such a large search area to cover, the Coastguard also tasked its own teams from Coleraine and Ballycastle, local police officers and the Irish Coast Guard helicopter. 'We just automatically thought: "We're never going to see them again!"' recalls Rhys's mother Gillian. 'It was just pure devastation.'

After scouring the shoreline without success, the two lifeboat crews decided to focus their efforts on a large cave. But getting inside would be hazardous. All-weather lifeboat Coxswain William McAuley and inshore lifeboat Helmsman Gerard Bradley agreed a plan. The all-weather lifeboat crew duly launched their daughter Y boat as back-up to the D class, which Gerard prepared to reverse towards the cave using the anchor (veering down).

At the same time, a Coastguard cliff team member was suspended above the mouth of the cave in an attempt to spot the boys. As he was lowered, he heard them calling for help from the back of the cave. While the boys' location was now certain, how they could be rescued was far from clear.

Trapped at the back of the flooded cave, they could only be accessed via the water – and the passage was too narrow for any lifeboat. Inshore lifeboat Crew Member Karl O'Neill volunteered to attempt to swim inside. But, after entering the water, he struggled to make headway in the powerful swell and backwash from the cave. He tired quickly and his fellow crew members pulled him back aboard the inshore lifeboat.

All was not lost, though. Anthony Chambers, the Portrush all-weather lifeboat Mechanic, suggested he access the cave



via an area of partially submerged rocks, to minimise the swimming, and that he adapt his lifejacket, to make him less buoyant and more stable. William agreed and Anthony donned a thermal undersuit and drysuit. With a helmet and lifejacket over his arm, Anthony entered the water from the stern of the inshore lifeboat, carefully avoiding the propeller. Half crawling, half swimming, he managed to reach the mouth of the cave.

Inside, Anthony pinned himself to the cave wall, releasing his grip with each wave in the hope that he'd be propelled inward. It took him 5 minutes to travel 7m into the cave, to the point where it bent to the left. Then, swimming with another surge, Anthony was pushed onto the far wall of the cave, where he held on tight. When he opened his eyes, he could make out two frightened faces in the dark. Matthew and Rhys were 5m away still, chest-high in water and shivering.

Reaching the pair and reassuring them, Anthony fitted the helmet and lifejacket to Rhys and told him to hang on, promising Matthew that he'd be back shortly. By timing his movements with the cave's

backwash, Anthony led Rhys out of the cave and into the confused seas outside. The inshore lifeboat was waiting nearby and the coastguard suspended overhead still.

Gerard could only get close enough to throw a heaving line, which Anthony grabbed, making sure not to lose the boy in the process. The lifeboat pulled the pair to safer water, Rhys was hauled aboard and Anthony – who was still in the water – was handed another lifejacket and helmet. The helmsman then towed his fellow volunteer back for the second foray.

At 7.45pm, Anthony reentered the cave. Meanwhile, the inshore lifeboat crew transferred Rhys to the all-weather lifeboat, where he was wrapped in blankets. Gerard then powered the D class back to the cave. Inside, Anthony retraced his route through the cave and successfully brought out Matthew. It was 7.54pm.

This time, Gerard managed to get close enough to go alongside the pair. They were pulled aboard and transferred to the all-weather lifeboat. The Coast Guard helicopter crew swiftly winched up the boys and flew them to Coleraine Hospital, where they

were treated for shock and hypothermia. Meanwhile, Anthony's crew mates checked him over. He was completely exhausted and had vomited but was recovering from his ordeal quickly.

'It was brave of Anthony to go in and get us,' remarks Rhys. 'He risked his life to get us out,' adds Matthew. 'It was pretty scary, and dark. We thought no one would come and we wouldn't get out.' Gillian was full of gratitude: 'I could not thank those people enough,' she says. 'They all put their lives at risk to save our boys. What they do on a voluntary basis is unbelievable.'

The bravery and skill of all involved is to be recognised at the RNLI's Annual Presentation of Awards in May. (See page 15 and 53 for details and how to get tickets.)

Words: Rory Stamp  
 Photos: Pacemaker Press, Mark Jamieson



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# HIGH STAKES

For generations, people have been tombstoning off cliffs. On 22 July last year, five boys ignored warnings and jumped into treacherous waters

Towards the end of a long day's work on Portreath Beach, Cornwall, Senior Lifeguard Channy Richards and Beach Beat Officer Paul Richards (a police community support officer, PCSO, trained in lifeguarding, and no relation) spotted some boys jump more than 15m from the cliff beyond. Paul frequently warns people of the dangers of tombstoning, but some don't listen.

When three boys came sprinting up along the cliff top to raise the alarm, Paul and Channy (pictured) were already on their way to help. Lying on their rescue boards they paddled swiftly around the pier towards the cliffs, a full 600m.

Below the cliff, two boys were being bombarded by waves and swept along by fierce, unpredictable currents. One of them went under repeatedly as they were dragged along into a cove known as 'the quarry'. They scrambled up onto a rock, but the tide was rising rapidly. There was no means of escape.

The lifeguards found the young teenagers and Channy recalls: 'One was waving frantically and the other was a small guy, skinny, in a baggy wetsuit, sitting with

his head between his legs.' They couldn't hear one another across the crashing waves, but the lifeguards got a 'thumbs down' from the boys.

A helicopter was on its way but, with the tide rising, the lifeguards chose to act immediately. Paul explains the urgency: 'In another few minutes we'd have been looking for bodies.' Confident in his and Channy's exceptional swimming ability, Paul decided to go to the boys while his colleague paddled off to get the rescue ring tethered to the harbour wall.

Paul had to judge when to make his approach, just behind a wave: 'If I'd mistimed it, I'd have been smashed into the cliff.' In the swell, it took all Paul's strength to reach the children, who were 'very scared' – and ready to obey.

Paul first snatched onto his board the weaker one, who was vomiting repeatedly, then Channy took over so Paul could return quickly for the second child. Within minutes, both boys were back on dry land.

In a perfect example of inter-agency working coordinated by the Coastguard, the



lifeguard and PCSO handed the boys over to ambulance paramedics and then the Royal Navy rescue helicopter took the smaller boy to Treliske Hospital, to be treated for suspected secondary drowning (water in the lungs that can suddenly kill after the event) and hypothermia.

Paul and Channy are pragmatic about the fact that people continue to jump. 'Even before we'd gone home that day, another group of boys were up there, tombstoning,' Paul recalls. But at least one child has learned his lesson: the smaller boy has been seen up on the cliff with friends – but he hasn't jumped since.

Meanwhile, the RNLI's Education and Beach Safety teams are working with other organisations to tackle this kind of behaviour among young people.

Words: Bethany Hope  
Photo: RNLI/Dickon Berriman



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# Man overboard

The launch was one of their toughest – what would the lifeboat volunteers find when they reached the casualty, dragging in the water?

It was a bright and breezy morning on 4 September 2009 when a man and woman from London left for Ramsgate in their 9m sailing cruiser. However, once out of the shelter of the Thames Estuary they hit bad weather and, in search of calmer waters, diverted into the Swale, a strip of sea separating north Kent from the Isle of Sheppey.

The wind was now near-gale force and there was no let up in the rough seas – shockingly, the man was knocked overboard. In case of just such an incident, he was tethered to the craft by safety lines but he struggled in vain to get back aboard. His wife was unable to help him and, worried for his safety, put out a mayday.

Whitstable Lifeboat Station got the call from Thames Coastguard just after 1.30pm. Minutes later, the B class *Oxford Town and Gown* launched into breaking seas with Jon Carter at the helm and Crew Members Tony Martin and Henry Thomson. Henry remembers it well: 'It was nasty. One of the roughest days we've had in a long time and one of our toughest launches.'

Launching Tractor Driver Mike Young remembers it too: 'No sooner had the lifeboat left the trailer than a wave crashed over her and she was gone from sight.' Jon is a little more sanguine: 'It was windy. We were near the operational limits for this class of lifeboat but I wasn't nervous – I knew her capabilities and knew I could rely on my crew.'

The yacht was reported to be 2 miles from Whitstable, north east of the Pollard Spit buoy. The sea state meant that progress was slower than usual, taking all Jon's boathandling skills and local knowledge to ensure the volunteers got there safely and in the best possible time. When they arrived, the yacht was drifting in the wind and tide and dragging the man under the waves at the stern.

Things were further complicated by the yacht's inflatable tender, which was tethered to the stern alongside trailing lines and a lifebuoy. 'All I could see were things floating around and this poor chap going under,' says Jon. Henry concurs grimly: 'He was getting smashed to pieces.'

Jon placed the nose of the 7.4m lifeboat close to the yacht's cabin. Tony chose his moment and jumped aboard to find the woman in great distress. He caught hold of one lifeline and tried to drag the man onboard but he had become a deadweight. Tony worked to keep him as far out of the water and as near to the yacht as possible until the lifeboat could adjust position.

Jon took the Atlantic around and held her near the yacht's stern so that Henry could grab the casualty while Tony reboarded. Jon explains: 'The boats were both pitching and we had to get the casualty clear without crushing him.' In a joint effort, Henry and Tony grabbed him, cut away his tangled lines and lifted him aboard.

The yachtsman had swallowed a lot of seawater and the crew knew he needed urgent attention. Henry remembers: 'He was not in a good way, going in and out of consciousness, and getting worse. We were worried about secondary drowning.' He sums up: 'The last time I saw someone that colour they were dead.'

Should they bring the man's wife aboard too? Accept helicopter assistance? Jon describes his thinking: 'It's all about making quick and sensible decisions. An extra person aboard would have meant that Tony and Henry couldn't have concentrated on caring for the man and the lady wasn't in any immediate danger. A helicopter transfer wouldn't have done him any favours either!'

Jon shouted over to the woman that someone would be back for her, turned the lifeboat around and headed back to station



Whitstable volunteers faced conditions like this

'I was worried about all the things that could go wrong, that my husband's body could not take it.'

Survivor's wife

through force 6–7 winds. The man was now being sick and Tony and Henry wrapped him in blankets, administered oxygen and talked to him constantly to keep him awake. Jon says: 'They did a great job. It meant I could concentrate on getting us back in one piece.'



By radio, Jon and the shore crew made arrangements for the *Oxford Town and Gown's* return. They decided to recover the lifeboat up the shingle beach by net, rather than attempting to reverse her onto the launch trailer. Jon was pleased: 'It worked really smoothly; I'd done it in training before but this was my first time for real. As a crew, it was our first net recovery with a casualty too.'

Meanwhile, Sheerness all-weather lifeboat had launched to bring in the stricken yacht, which had drifted east of Whitstable. Alone onboard, the woman was desperately worried and starting to suffer

from seasickness and the cold. With limited berthing options, the all-weather crew took the yacht in tow and set a course for Queenborough, 2 miles south of Sheerness.

By then, volunteers had refuelled Whitstable lifeboat and made her ready for relaunch. Henry stayed behind to help at the station while Crew Member Martin Easton joined Jon and Tony as a fresh pair of hands to rendezvous with Sheerness lifeboat and their charge. The inshore team would be speedier in transferring the woman to shore.

By 7pm Sheerness crew had secured the yacht and, remarkably, the man was released from hospital later the same evening. 'It was

a good result, and all thanks to a fantastic team effort,' says Jon. 'Shore helpers, tractor drivers and station officials all play a vital part in a rescue like this. And when you make a difference, actually saving a life, everyone feels good about it.'

## THE DETAIL

**THE LIFEBOAT:**  
B class Atlantic 75, B-764 *Oxford Town and Gown*  
On station at Whitstable 5 July 2000  
Funded by the Oxford Lifeboat appeal

**THE CREW:**  
Helmsman Jon Carter (38, Education Consultant)  
Tony Martin (25, Surveyor), Martin Easton,  
Henry Thomson (26, Sales Representative)







L-R: Lifesavers Henry Thompson, Jon Carter and Tony Martin



17-year-old Vinnie may follow in his mother's footsteps

## The meaning of teamwork

Assistant Editor and Writer Jon Jones gives a personal footnote to his visit to Whitstable

'I was already soaked through and cold by the time I reached Whitstable. It had been raining pretty much all afternoon and the station was eerily quiet, bar the distant clink of boat rigging. I was soon lifted out of my gloom by Chris Davey, the station's

volunteer Press Officer. He opened up the station and spoke enthusiastically during my guided tour. I was looking forward to meeting Jon, Tony and Henry.

'It wasn't long before they appeared and Chris left us to chat in the crew room upstairs. I didn't want to keep them long as they had training that evening. Lifeboat crew tend to be a modest bunch and it took some gentle prodding to get an idea of just how intense the rescue had been.

'Jon grinned and said: "I'm surprised we've not had a shout yet – we've had one on our last two training nights ..." No sooner

had he finished his sentence, the pagers went off. Someone called out: 'Sorry mate, got to go!' as they disappeared downstairs. I wasn't sure if they were pulling my leg.

'By the time I had packed up, put on my jacket and made my way downstairs, cars

**'No sooner had he finished, the pagers went off. Someone called out: "Sorry mate, got to go!"'**

were pulling up and the three lifeboatmen were suited, booted and ready to go. The following couple of minutes saw the station transform into a hive of activity. Crew members, shore helpers, tractor drivers and the Lifeboat Operations Manager had all appeared and were going about their duties.

'Jon called out that they had a report of a boat in trouble off the Isle of Sheppey. He climbed



aboard the lifeboat, joined once again by Tony and Henry. The boathouse door opened and the tractor took them down the beach and into the sea.

'As all this was going on I was also talking with Vinnie Litchfield, who told me he was looking forward to his crew training. He was 17 if he was a day. Vinnie's mum, Kellie, is the lifeboat's volunteer mechanic and also on the crew so Vinnie'd been in and around the station ever since he was a little boy. I got the feeling we'd all see him on that lifeboat one day.

'I stood and watched in the dark and rain as the lifeboat disappeared from view. Someone said that the mobile Coastguard unit was out to verify the details of the report. All these people had dropped everything and were working together – in this disgusting weather. Somehow, it didn't seem appropriate for me to moan about my wet clothes.'

Words: Jon Jones  
Photos: RNLI/Chris Davey, Natalie Perry

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# REVIEW

## Photography at Sea – techniques for capturing amazing photographs afloat



by Patrick Roach and Fred Barter  
Review by Tony Roddam

Patrick Roach learned his craft in the swinging sixties at the side of one of fashion photography's greats, Terence Donovan, but quickly left behind the frills of the catwalk for the spills of maritime photography.

In his book *Photography at sea – techniques for capturing amazing photographs afloat* Roach offers an insight into the peculiar challenges of snapping the maritime community, from yacht racing to sleepy anchorages.

Laced with useful, common-sense advice (including wearing a lifejacket), Roach's approach is reassuringly straightforward and encouraging: keep it simple, understand the basics, pay attention to composing the picture, and simply be there with a camera in your hand – the last being the traditional mantra of Fleet Street snappers.

Roach is strong on technical tips – I warmed to him for his aperture priority advice (read the book!), which this reviewer considers the secret to most successful photography – and the writing is clear but the dry style does not engage the reader.

His photos are the book's great strength and weakness. Roach is a superb photographer but the notes reveal most were taken with professional lenses and cameras, rather than the everyday compact cameras talked about at the start of the book and used by the majority of his target audience.

This is the main challenge for the reader – essentially Roach has written two books: a simple everyman's digital camera guide interwoven with a frequently sophisticated look at yacht photography. For this reviewer it was an uneasy mix.

Paperback book  
Published by Adlard Coles Nautical  
ISBN 9781408112021  
Price: £19.99

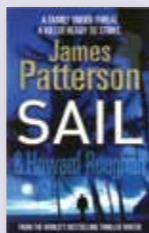
### How to order:

Unless other details are stated, all products reviewed in *the Lifeboat* are available from good bookshops and online from Amazon via the RNLI website at [rnl.org.uk/amazon](http://rnl.org.uk/amazon). (Amazon will donate a minimum of 5% of the value of all such orders to the RNLI but you must access Amazon via the RNLI website and not go direct.)

Books selected and reviews compiled by Carol Waterkeyn

## Sail

by James Patterson and Howard Roughan  
Review by Carol Waterkeyn



American best-selling author James Patterson has teamed up for the second time with fellow countryman and writer Howard Roughan for this latest thriller.

Katherine Dunne, a 45-year-old heart surgeon who lost her husband in a scuba diving accident 4 years ago, has remarried. Her new husband is lawyer Peter Carlyle, but all is not well in the household and Katherine's relationship with her three children has suffered. So Peter is left behind while she takes Carrie, Mark and Ernie on a sailing adventure with her former brother-in-law.

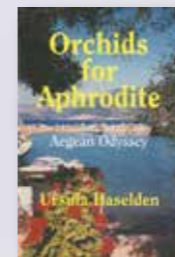
What starts as a leisurely trip to cement family bonds, ends as a fight for survival after a desperate catalogue of disasters. US Coast Guard Andrew Tatem cannot understand why there is no trace of the yacht or the family. Something just isn't right.

This is a real page-turner, written in a sparse style but with lots of action and some sexual references.

Paperback book  
Published by Arrow Books  
ISBN 9780099538882  
Price: £7.99

## Orchids for Aphrodite – Aegean odyssey

by Ursula Haselden  
Review by Tracy Carey



Having taken many holidays in Turkey and Greece myself, this book appealed immediately.

This is the true story of Ursula, who had never sailed before, and Bob who leave behind their homes in England to sail the Aegean seas, fulfilling Ursula's life-long dream.

This account records the dramas of restoring their boat, *Cappelle*, ready for the 'odyssey', and the troubles encountered along their way. It's crammed with stories of the many islands and people that the pair meet on their journey and I especially warmed to the Greek live-aboard cat Wacky!

I admire this lady for her energy and determination – and her most fascinating book.

Hardback book  
Published by Seashell  
ISBN 9780955629105  
Price: £16.99

## Race to the Pole

by James Cracknell and Ben Fogle  
Review by Charlie Cash



After conquering the perils of the Atlantic Ocean in an open boat, most people would wallow in the achievement – but not Fogle and Cracknell. Looking for their next challenge, they decided to face -45°C temperatures, whiteouts and near-starvation to enter the race to the South Pole. This book documents the two men's physical and emotional journey with Bristol Doctor Ed Coats: from training in giant freezers and pulling tyres across beaches, to facing the harsh realities of crossing 500 miles of one of the planet's most hostile environments.

Despite their struggling together for 16 hours a day, the adventurers' individual stories are from surprisingly polar-opposite perspectives. The extreme physical challenge is graphically documented but it is the tears, tantrums and triumphs that make this such an engaging book, often leaving you feeling that you have shared the journey with them – but without the risk of frostbite.

Hardback book  
Published by Macmillan  
ISBN 9780230739444  
Price: £18.99

## Skegness lifeboats – an illustrated history

by Nicholas Leach  
Review by Rory Stamp



Take a walk today along the beach at Skegness, Lincolnshire, and there are plenty of signs of the times on view: an RNLI lifeguard hut, a towering rollercoaster and an offshore windfarm. But you might also come across the lifeboat crew launching – and that's been part of local life since the early 1800s.

As we discover in this comprehensive book, there have been many chapters in the story of the Skegness lifeboats. There are tales of 19th-century volunteers rowing wooden lifeboats to shipwrecks. There are stories of crews launching Skegness's first motor lifeboat through minefields to downed Second World War aircraft. There are accounts of the inshore lifeboats – introduced in the 1960s – heading out to drifting airbeds, exhausted swimmers and capsized sailing dinghies. And today's Mersey class all-weather lifeboat, *The Lincolnshire Poacher*, features heavily: she's been operating at Skegness since 1990.

While the book focuses on the types of lifeboat launched and their activities, it serves as a fascinating case study of how the RNLI has responded to changing patterns of sea use since it was formed. It's also interesting to read of the generations of volunteers involved, particularly as some surnames crop up again across the centuries.

If you like the look of this book, the author has written many more its kind.

Paperback book  
Published by Landmark  
ISBN 9781843064237  
Price: £9.99



# Manx tales

The Isle of Man is an unusual location whose community is inextricably linked to the sea – and the RNLI

Set in the midst of the Irish Sea, encircled by all five nations of the UK and RoI, the Isle of Man (IoM) is actually a collection of islands. Man itself is 33 miles long and 13 miles wide and has just over 80,000 inhabitants. The much smaller Calf of Man has only two permanent residents while St Patrick's and St Michael's are uninhabited.

The IoM's unique physical situation, flora and fauna are mirrored by its unusual legal status. It is a Crown dependency but not part of the UK or EU. Its head of state, titled the Lord of Mann, is an hereditary position held by the British monarch. With its own government, currency and postage stamps, the Isle is independent of UK involvement other than in matters such as foreign affairs, citizenship and defence.

The islands' parliament is the Tynwald and dates back over 1,000 years to when the region was attacked, and then settled, by Vikings. Each July, a festival is held to commemorate these roots. Denmark directly ruled this territory for a period, but the official languages of the IoM are Manx Gaelic and English, not Danish, reflecting the influence of subsequent migrations. Famously, the Isle's emblem is the ancient triskelion or three legs.

Legends abound here. Even today the IoM is said to be inhabited by fairies, known as the little folk or 'themselves', while the Moddey Dhoo, the ghost of a black dog, is said to wander Peel Castle. An old Irish fable tells how the IoM was formed when the giant Finn McCool grabbed some earth and threw it into the sea. However, the origin of the Isle's name is possibly Manannan, the Celtic sea god. A less fearsome creature is the Manx cat. This tailless domestic feline can be traced back over 300 years.

## Tax, TT and Trent class

Traditional Manx industries are fishing, farming, brewing, tourism, and smuggling – the latter taking advantage of the IoM's tax laws. Low levels of corporate and personal tax, including no capital gains or inheritance tax, benefit equally the ordinary locals and the many wealthy celebrities who move here. But this system is only affordable thanks to a special arrangement with the UK Government to share VAT (purchase tax) revenue, which is now set to change. →

→ An unusual community formed by less willing migrants during the Second World War comprised 'enemy aliens' held behind barbed wire in former bed and breakfast accommodation. Today, the IoM population temporarily and joyfully soars each year thanks to the TT Races. Following the Gordon Bennett Car Trials of 1904, the Auto Cycle Club approached the authorities about running a motorcycle race and, in 1907, the TT was born. This is an important date in the RNLI's calendar too as sales of the charity's merchandise flourish. For 2 weeks every Summer, motorcyclists and fans flock to the Isle and the 37¾ miles of public roads that form the infamously perilous circuit.

recently RNLI Divisional Inspector for the area, explains: 'Ferries and commercial ships cross the Irish Sea past the IoM and every day. Fishing is not so prevalent. But sailing is being actively promoted with the development of a number of marinas – plenty of yachts stop here on passage.'

Andy continues: 'It's quite a strategic location for the RNLI, with the islands acting like a large aircraft carrier for lifeboats. All the Manx lifeboats have been involved in major searches, including the *Solway Harvester* fishing disaster of 2000, but rescue scenarios are so diverse that crews need to be trained to deal with every eventuality.'

**Preservation of life**

A certain Sir William Hillary came to the Isle of Man from England in 1808 following the break-up of his first marriage. A lifeboat station had already been established at Douglas in 1802 with a lifeboat built by Henry Greathead and funded by the Duke of Atholl. But Sir William was shocked to witness HMS *Vigilant* foundering on Conister Rock in 1822 and attempted his first rescue with two rowing boats crewed by volunteers.

Sir William imagined a *national* lifeboat service. Through some very influential contacts, including King George IV and antislavery campaigner William Wilberforce, his dream became a reality. He went on to establish the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck in 1824, later to become the RNLI. His voluntary ethos lives on today.

Every January there is a remembrance service to commemorate Sir William's death in 1847 and he is buried in St George's Churchyard in Douglas. Amanda Barton's statue of Sir William overlooks Douglas Bay and there are two memorials to him. The Tower of Refuge built for shipwrecked sailors in Douglas Bay in 1832 was also thanks to his efforts.

Although Sir William was heroic in both the Army (earning his title) and lifeboat service (earning two Gold Medals for Gallantry) he was less so in his private life, which was scandalous then and remains intriguing today. But whatever tribulation occurred at home, he is remembered most for his remarkable vision as the founder of a world-leading lifesaving charity.



**David (Richie) Richards, Port St Mary Coxswain**

'I have been researching my ancestors and have a substantial tree with Manxmen hanging from every branch – literally in one case.

The last man to be hanged on the IoM was my first cousin, four times removed! It gives me a tremendous feeling of belonging to live and work in the same place as my forebears and a sense of pride that I am Manx with these ancestral anchors holding fast in the sands of time.

'My great grandfather, Willie Clucas of Rushen (pictured below), was one of the founder crew members of Port St Mary lifeboat station, which opened in 1896. Willie was a third generation sailmaker when he volunteered on the *James Stevens No.1*, provided from the legacy of a Birmingham man. Willie continued serving until 1914 when the advent of steam began to bring the commercial sailmaking industry to a close. He became Master of several local trading schooners, and then a rigger for the IoM Steam Packet Company.

'I was born in 1958 and Willie died in 1960 and I am assured by my aunt that he saw me regularly during those 2 years. This gives me a feeling of such continuity whenever I am at sea in the current lifeboat. It is remarkable to realise that he would have passed the same headlands and bays over 100 years ago for the same reasons I do today. I wonder what he would make of our Trent class!

'It is a great comfort to have the support of my other half when I'm at sea. I am extremely lucky to have an understanding partner who can put up with me leaving at short notice and, mostly, still seems pleased to have me back! Throughout the Institution, partners assist in various capacities and I would like to thank fundraisers and supporters everywhere for their indefatigable assistance in helping to provide crews with the best possible equipment and training.'



**Patrick Crowe, RNLI Senior Corporate Fundraising Manager**

'I now live in Bournemouth, Dorset, but the IoM was a wonderful place to grow up and still holds a very special place in my heart. My parents live there and I go back at least once a year. My Manx heritage even runs to my

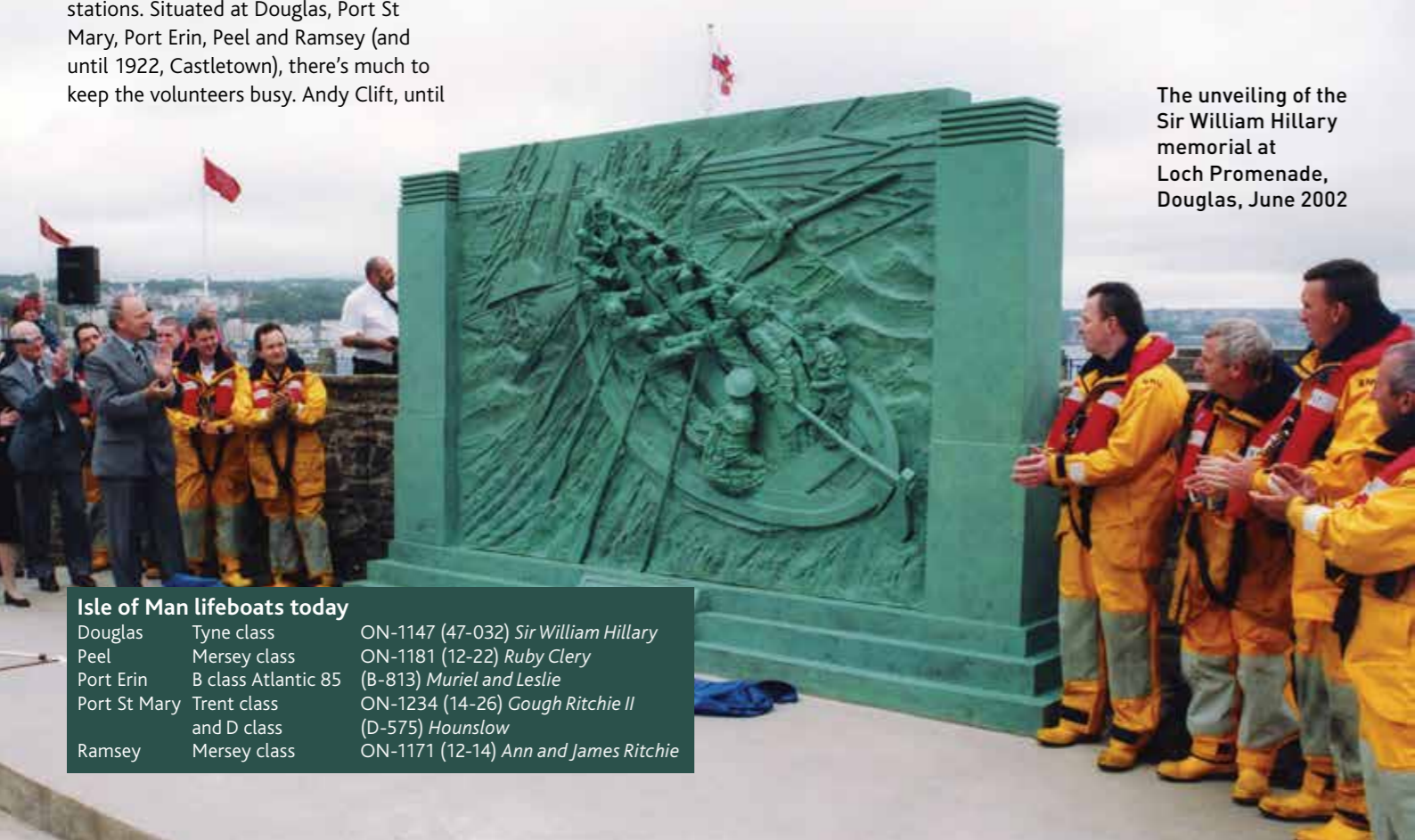
baby boy: he is called Finlo, a fine Manx name.

'One of my proudest moments was being able to tell my parents that I had got the job at the RNLI. The charity was such a big part of the community when I was growing up and my sisters and I were frequently drafted in to fundraise. I am hugely proud of the contribution my father, Neil, has made to the RNLI. He was Treasurer of the Port St Mary Branch for 10 years and since 1991 has served as Chairman of the Gough Ritchie Trust, which funded the lifeboat there.

'I have a slightly more embarrassing connection with the current Second Coxswain, Mick Kneale. In my early teens, I was crewing for my friend, Fergus, in the local regatta, in a Mirror dinghy called *Thor's Thunderbolt*. We hit and holed Mick's beautiful National 18, *Maid Mary*. We were called all sorts of specialist nautical terms, as our boat shouldn't have been where it was. Unfortunately Mick had just sold his boat to none other than my friend Fergus's father!

'I have always been in awe of the courage shown by RNLI crews – my grandparents lived next to Sir William Hillary's house, Fort Anne, on Douglas Head and my grandfather would tell me how Hillary built the Tower of Refuge after the *St George* was wrecked. Those stories and hearing the maroons going up through my childhood inspire me as much today as they did then.'

Words: Carol Waterkeyn  
Photos: RNLI/(Roger Oram, Patrick Crowe, Alex Maddrell)



**The unveiling of the Sir William Hillary memorial at Loch Promenade, Douglas, June 2002**

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Photo: Mike Lang

Lifeboat Operations Manager Ricky Holmes presents a photo of Burnham on Sea's lifeboats to Autumn Lottery Winner Jean Beecham as a memento of her visit to the station in November.

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# Going for cold

Vancouver's icy slopes are a long way from the Isle of Man but a world-class snowboarder won't forget home when she competes at the Winter Olympics



Zoe Gillings is full of anticipation as she waits for the start gate to open. Suddenly, it slams down, and she uses all her upper body strength to propel herself and her snowboard forward. It's a situation she's faced on snow-covered slopes all over the world but, today, Zoe's not at the top of a mountain or even a dry ski slope – she's in a sports hall on the outskirts of Bath.

The 24-year-old glides to the end of a white carpet, signalling the end of a day's training that has also involved pumping weights and pedalling an exercise bike. Unclipping the boots that are attached

to her £300 snowboard, she takes a well-earned swig of water. Zoe's looking forward to showing her snowboarding talents to the world at the 2010 Winter Olympics, which take place in Vancouver in February. If all goes to plan, she'll be on the list when the Great Britain team is announced this month. And when the gate slams down for real, Zoe will be aiming for Gold.

So how did Zoe first discover she was any good at this young, growing sport? 'We used to go skiing as a family every year. I got a bit bored of it but, when I was 10, my brother showed me how to snowboard,'

she explains, adding that she won her first women's competition at the tender age of 13. Since then, she's become the best female snowboarder in the land and enjoyed several international podium finishes.

'I just loved the speeds I could achieve on snow and preferred that to sailing,' she recalls. 'I was never good enough at sailing to reach much speed before I capsized the dinghy! I guess it helps that I don't scare easily – I'm not frightened of heights and the injuries I've had haven't put me off.' One such injury affected Zoe's preparation for the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, when she shattered her foot. 'I was doing jumps for a photoshoot and landed awkwardly,' she remembers.

'The surgeon told me I'd never snowboard again, but I didn't believe him and managed to come back.' She made it to Turin after all, but finished a disappointing 15th – something she puts down to a combination of bad luck and her injury. 'But I'm glad I went,' she says, 'because now I know what to expect. I won't be as nervous about the pressure and media attention this time.'

Determined to prepare as best she can for Vancouver, Zoe's been hard at work at the University of Bath's sports training centre as well as on the slopes of the Alps. Her particular discipline, snowboard cross, involves racing three other competitors across a short course of tough terrain. A quick start and high level of fitness are essential if she's to succeed.

'I've been practising my starts on the machine, building up my general fitness and improving my leg strength,' says Zoe. 'You turn and generate speed by bending your legs at the right time, which is very tiring. And your legs need to take the impact of landings.'

When not competing and training around the globe, Zoe still finds time to return to the place she calls home: the Isle of Man. While some people grow up without understanding the RNLI's work, Zoe says that lifeboating is part of Manx life. 'I just remember the RNLI always being there. I learned to sail at Port St Mary – there's a lifeboat there, and one of the volunteers is a family friend. You're surrounded by water on the Isle of Man, so you have to be aware of the sea and you respect the lifeboat crews.'

That respect increased when Zoe had a taste of what it's like to be rescued when promoting the RNLI's SOS Day last year. 'My agent and mum came with me for a

**'I just remember the RNLI always being there.'**

training session on the Port St Mary lifeboat and they were both seasick. It was pretty choppy,' says Zoe. 'The crew put me on a rock, disappeared and then came back and "rescued" me. It gave me an idea of how frightening it must be to be stranded at sea – and what a relief it is to see a lifeboat come to the rescue.'

Zoe also witnessed the RNLI's skills during a surfing trip to north Devon. 'One of my friends got swept out by a rip current off Croyde Beach, and he was too exhausted to paddle against it. A lifeguard went out and pulled him in, so my friend was really grateful. We all were.' And presumably Zoe's

a dab hand at surfing, given her board skills? 'I thought I'd find surfing easy because it's a similar stance. But then, when I tried to turn, I realised my feet weren't attached to the board – unlike snowboarding – and I fell off,' she laughs.

While she can chuckle about her mishaps on surf and snow, Zoe is serious about safety. 'My advice to anyone taking up snowboarding would be to get a helmet, because concussions are not fun. I've had four. It doesn't put me off – I still love snowboarding. But always with a helmet!'

And if Zoe performs on snowsport's biggest stage in Vancouver, anyone following her progress may spot a very distinctive logo and a reminder of home on her headwear: the RNLI flag.

(See page 34 for more Isle of Man connections with the RNLI.)

Words: Rory Stamp  
Photos: zgchill.com and  
RNLI/Alex Maddrell

# Form and function

They must be practical, versatile and tough enough to take a pounding, yet still live in harmony with their communities. Architect Mark Roberts explains just some of the challenges of designing lifeboat stations



'Lifeboat stations are built with pride and follow a long tradition of serving the local people,' says Mark, as he reflects on his firm's latest RNLI project.

'They are almost like churches, built to withstand the test of ages.'

The Bazeley Partnership, one of several architectural firms to work with the RNLI, has been involved in many such projects over the years. It designed the new lifeboat station for Exmouth, Devon, to house an inshore and all weather lifeboat, improved crew facilities, a public viewing gallery and a shop. 'It was an amazing project,' says Mark.

'I was lucky enough to get involved just as I was finishing my training so it became my case study. There were some real challenges along the way so it was great to see it go fully operational in November.' The new boathouse at Exmouth not only takes away the headache of coordinating operations over a split site – it enhances RNLI cover in the area.

The all-weather lifeboat used to be moored near Exmouth Dock and could

not cross the sand bar at the mouth of the River Exe at low water. This meant it was impeded for 3 hours on an average of 8 days per month. Meanwhile, the inshore lifeboat was housed nearly a mile away from the all-weather crew base – a pair of cramped portable cabins. The architects had not only the RNLI's operational requirements to consider but also planning and building regulations. And the local authority wanted a quality landmark – all in a constrained, awkward-to-access and complex site.

'In one sense,' explains Mark, 'lifeboat stations are just functional sheds but they have to meet many special needs. They must provide a safe and secure housing for the lifeboat rig that's ready to go 24/7, an operational and training base for the volunteer crew and helpers, a refuge for survivors and their friends and relations, and they must also act as an educational and fundraising shop window for the RNLI. They need to do all of this in an exposed and hostile environment and within strict budget limits.'

The RNLI's Shoreworks Department oversees the whole process – from feasibility, through design, planning and right down to the nuts and bolts. 'They have high expectations, and rightly so,' says Mark. 'A lot is expected of lifeboat volunteers so it's only right that we provide them with the best we can. We liaise directly with the crew to find out exactly what they need. Designing how to get the lifeboat from the house into the water presents an additional set of puzzles.'

But how does an architect decide on the look of a station and what it will be built of? 'The sites are often in sensitive areas so the more "poetic" part of our job comes into play. We tend to use a lot of traditional materials. Not only do they look good, they function better and are easier to maintain. Exmouth station has heavy masonry walls faced in local stone so they look as though



they are a natural feature of the landscape, and the copper roof mimics a stormy sea.' And what about the systems inside?

'We installed ground-source heat pumps to reduce the carbon footprint of the building operation and to minimise energy consumption. Cold water is circulated through 80m deep boreholes where it is warmed by the ground. The energy gained is extracted by a heat pump and fed into the underfloor heating system. It's a bit like a fridge in reverse and achieves four times the energy put into it. So there are real environmental and financial benefits to such "green" technology.'

So what's next? 'I'm really excited to be involved with the design of a new lifeguard storage facility at Bude. It's function will be different from a lifeboat

station of course but the design will still carry the RNLI's strong sense of pride and tradition. Built to last, right at the heart of the community.'

Crew Member Robert Thompson says: 'To have both boats housed under one roof is so much better. We used to return to the old station, cold and wet from a rescue in the middle of the night, faced with locked public toilets and no changing facilities. Now we can have showers and make hot drinks – a lot more comfortable, not just for us but for anyone we rescue too.'

A huge number of people helped to raise the money for this ambitious project. Trusts, businesses, clubs, groups and individual donors all supported the appeal.

Exmouth Coxswain Tim Mock says: 'I have the greatest respect for everyone who has supported us. All gifts, big and small, have played a vital part in helping us reach our fundraising target so I say thank you on behalf of all the crew.'

The date of the official opening of the boathouse will be announced later this year.

Find out more at [exmouth-lifeboat.org.uk](http://exmouth-lifeboat.org.uk).

Words: Jon Jones

Photos: Bill Davies, Bazeley Partnership RNLI/Exmouth



# YOUR shout

Here are just a few of the many warm communications received in response to our issue featuring the new RNLI memorial to those who have lost their lives attempting to save lives at sea:

**M**y interest in lifeboats began when I was 7 or 8 and, since I am now 70, that is a long time! I still vividly remember the old lifeboat at Aldeburgh and how it was dragged down the beach and launched. The coxswain was Reuben Wood. He was my twin sister's 'Adonis' and she regarded him as her hero. To my mind everyone who crews a lifeboat is a hero.

I used to run the lifeboat collection in my village and am delighted to now be a governor of your marvellous organisation. Donations in memory of my father, a lifelong sailor, amounted to over £700 and I have requested any donations made at my own funeral be given to the RNLI.

To have 235 lifeboat stations operational at one time is a terrific achievement. The work the RNLI does with no Government support is amazing.

I wish you all the luck in the world  
Jeremy Norton, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset

**I** am not a sailor and the nearest I get to water is an occasional cruise now or a paddle as a child. I hope my small monthly contribution helps to support all those brave men and women who keep our beaches, shoreline and coastal areas safe for those who need help. It always amazes me that there are people prepared to give of their time in dangerous circumstances to rescue those in peril.

God bless them all  
John Sutton, by email

**I**t was an absolute pleasure and honour to have been involved in the RNLI memorial project. Working with the institution and being present at the memorial opening ceremony has proved to be very thought-provoking and inspiring.

My family and I also visited the RNLI Headquarters Open Day and we all thoroughly enjoyed the event. We have decided to make the RNLI our charity of choice and will do all we can to support it in the future. The work carried out nationwide and the enthusiasm of all those concerned is second to none and worthy of all commendations.

Kind regards  
Jerry Redman, Sycamore Process Engineering Ltd, Yeovil, Somerset

**I** saw the model of the new memorial and, to be truthful, didn't care for it. However, I recently visited the finished memorial and thought it was awesome.

It brings back so many memories, and makes one humble at the price paid by these fallen heroes. I and many more are the lucky ones whose career in lifeboats ended without mishap, but: 'There but for the grace of God ...'

To see displayed the names of friends and colleagues is very poignant. These people gave their all, and deserve such a fitting memorial to remind not just the public but also the lifeboatmen and women of today, who ought to, and I'm sure will, uphold the traditions set by these fallen.

My father (a second coxswain at Sunderland) was my yardstick, and he advised me: 'Always be a little afraid, for a man who goes to sea and never admits to being afraid, is one of three things. He is a liar, he is a fool, or he is both!'

Best wishes to you, yours, and your colleagues, from a bitterly cold and snow-covered Engure!

Billy Dent, Latvija

**A**s a happy honeymoon couple, we sat on our balcony, watching the early evening storm out in the bay. Impressive and beautiful, sinister and disturbing, a wall of water was pouring from the sky while countless bolts of lightning struck the turbulent seas. We watched transfixed.

Then, from behind the harbour wall, a lone boat with blue flashing light emerged. The boat headed direct towards the storm, now only a mile or so offshore. We watched hoping it would divert round it, but within minutes it hit the wall of water and disappeared from view. Within seconds a lightning bolt hit the sea near to where we had last seen her lights; our hearts stopped. The consequences for those onboard and for those they were going to aid ...

Within minutes the storm made landfall: the wind was immense, blowing latched windows open and hurling huge waves over the harbour wall. Giant raindrops fell from the sky and flooded everywhere in seconds, lightning continued all around us. The storm continued for hours and our thoughts kept returning to the crew and their fate. We awoke in the morning to a clear sky and, to our relief, found the lifeboat safely moored in the harbour.

All this happened on 21 September in Corsica, France, and seems to demonstrate the selfless dedication of lifeboat crews the world over. I have always held those crewing and launching lifeboats in the highest regard, especially those of the RNLI, but having seen the terrifying conditions into which that crew put themselves with no chance of any back up or support I was deeply moved.

Regards Phil Pearce, by email

**I** have just been browsing through the latest RNLI gifts catalogue and was astonished to read that it costs around £5,800 to launch a lifeboat! Can someone explain how such a large sum has been arrived at?

(*The Lifeboat* is a great mag, which I always enjoy reading – cover to cover. Keep-up the good work.)

Rodney G Scull,  
by email

### The Editor replies:

The direct costs of launching lifeboats are relatively small as you expected. But, no matter how many times a lifeboat launches, the volunteer crews still need to be trained, lifeboat stations to be maintained, and lifeboats to be ready on station 24/7 all of which costs a huge amount.

So, depreciation aside, by calculating the cost of all this and considering it against the average number of launches each year, the RNLI estimates that the cost of launching an all-weather lifeboat is around £5,880 and the cost of launching an inshore lifeboat is around £2,200.

There are other hidden 'costs' to consider too, such as the time given by employers of RNLI volunteers, or self-employed volunteers themselves, each time they respond to their pager. Or the family get-together that has to be missed because the crew member is running to the station.

### Corrections

On page 3 of the Autumn issue of *the Lifeboat*, a photograph of two kayakers was incorrectly credited to Gareth Davies Photography. The picture was actually by Jonathan Glyn-Smith who also took the Cordon Rouge shot on page 15. On page 12, we stated that Rhyl Coxswain Peter Robinson was pictured meeting HM The Queen. The accompanying photograph actually shows Her Majesty meeting volunteers at Eyemouth Lifeboat Station. We also stated that the picture on page 36 showed a Tamar lifeboat under construction in Lymington. It was actually being fitted out at Devonport Dockyard in Plymouth. Apologies for these errors.



The **RNLI Memorial DVD** tells the story behind the memorial, and features interviews and highlights of the ceremony of dedication. It is available to buy priced £10 (€10). Please make cheques payable to 'RNLI (Enterprises)' in the UK and 'RNLI' in the RoI and send orders to Film and Image Department, RNLI, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ

To add *your shout*, write to the Editor at [thelifeboat@rnli.org.uk](mailto:thelifeboat@rnli.org.uk) or RNLI Headquarters, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ. Letters may be edited for length or clarity.

Photo: RNLI/Nigal Millard

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**The Annual Presentation of Awards at 2.30pm**  
and the Annual General Meeting at 11.30am  
at the Barbican Hall, London  
27 May 2010

Join us for a truly inspiring, emotive and joyous occasion. Come and celebrate the outstanding dedication and skill of our voluntary crew and supporters. Our annual award ceremony applauds the endeavours of all who help save lives at sea and make the RNLI an exceptional charity – and tickets are free.

Our 2010 medallists include Portrush Mechanic Anthony Chambers and Dunbar Coxswain Gary Fairbairn who will both receive the RNLI's Bronze Medal for Gallantry (see page 24 of this and the Autumn 2009 issue to find out more about their lifesaving rescues). The ceremony also includes guest speakers, a host of supporter awards and our *Review of the year 2009* film.

The Annual General Meeting allows you to learn more about the RNLI's year in detail. It also gives our governors the opportunity to take an active role in the organisation's decision-making. (Call 0845 121 4999 for to find out more about becoming a governor.)

RSVP  
You are welcome at either or both events but places are limited so please complete the form overleaf to apply for tickets and return it to us by 26 March 2010. Tickets are free and will be dispatched to you in early April.

We look forward to seeing you on 27 May.



2009 Silver Medallist Torbay Coxswain Mark Criddle



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I/We wish to attend the Annual Presentation of Awards on Thursday 27 May 2010 at 2.30pm

Please indicate number of tickets required \_\_\_\_\_

I/We wish to attend the Annual General Meeting on Thursday 27 May 2010 at 11.30am

Please indicate number of tickets required:

by governors \_\_\_\_\_

by non-governors \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Review, Report and Accounts

I/We would like to receive a copy of the *Annual Review 2009*, and *Report and Accounts 2009* in advance of the AGM

NB It will save the RNLI money if you can collect your copy at the meeting

I/We cannot attend either meeting but would like to receive a copy of the *Annual Review 2009* and *Report and Accounts 2009*

(NB both documents will also be available online at [rnli.org.uk](http://rnli.org.uk))

### Buy the Review of the year 2009 film

I would like to purchase  DVD(s) of the extended review of the year film, to be sent to me after the ceremony whether I attend or not. I enclose a cheque for £10 (€10) per copy, including postage and packing.

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# Old friends in the Fund



Volunteers in New Brighton, Wirral, became the proud owners of a new inshore lifeboat in November 2009. This Summer, the B class will be given a special name, marking her place in a long line of lifeboats provided by The Lifeboat Fund.

The Fund is the RNLI's longest-standing supporter, starting from humble beginnings in 1866 when a group of UK civil servants appealed to fellow workers to raise £300 for a new lifeboat. Founding member Charles Dibdin had such passion for the cause that the Fund had provided a second lifeboat just a few years later. The craft bore his name as a tribute and he later gave up his pension to become RNLI Secretary.

The Fund continued to provide the RNLI with lifeboats throughout the next century. Today, the Fund is stronger than ever and its main activity continues to be regular appeals to serving and retired civil servants – and employees of the Royal Mail and BT (despite their separation from the Civil Service).

Those Victorian men who got together to buy just one lifeboat would be amazed to see their fund providing an astonishing 50 lifeboats so far, saving over 4,700 lives. It's fitting, therefore, that the 51st lifeboat funded by such old friends should bear the name Charles Dibdin.

Words: Jon Jones  
Photos: RNLI



The state-of-the-art Atlantic 85 lifeboat B-837 will be named after Victorian civil servant Charles Dibdin

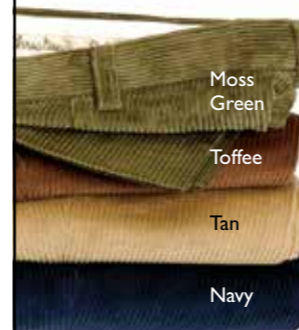
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