

ISSUE 584
SUMMER 2008



the lifeboat

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Silver Medal

A CELEBRATION
OF GALLANTRY

CALL TO ACTION

VOLUNTEER LIFEGUARDS
TO THE RESCUE

PLUS

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PAGE 9

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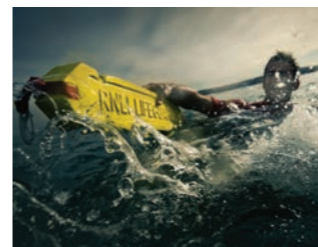


THE RNLI
A charity registered in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution was founded in 1824 as the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck. Today, it provides the 24-hour on-call search and rescue service out to 100 nautical miles from the coast of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland; on the tidal reaches of the River Thames; and on selected inland waterways plus a seasonal lifeguard service on appropriate beaches in England and Wales. The RNLI is independent from Government and continues to rely on voluntary contributions and legacies for its income.
Chairman: Sir Jock Slater CCB LVO DL
Chief Executive: Andrew Freemantle CBE

SUPPORTING THE RNLI
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 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 or write c/o Headquarters address above
 - Legacies team, for finding out about gifts in Wills: telephone 01202 663032, email jmarshall@rnli.org.uk or write to John Marshall c/o Headquarters address
 - Family association, for retired staff and operational volunteers: telephone 01202 662222
 - Lifeboat Enthusiasts' Society, for those passionate about rescue craft: email jfrancis@rnli.org.uk
 - The Editor: telephone 01202 662254, email thelifeboat@rnli.org.uk or write c/o Headquarters address above
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rnli.org.uk



Cover picture: The welcome sight of a lifeguard with rescue tube – but is he paid or a volunteer? See page 6



Dear Reader

How much time do you have to muse on the meaning of life, the Universe and everything? As an RNLI supporter, you'll no doubt have a deep-seated belief that 'life' is precious but I might safely surmise that you have a strong practical bent too. Not for you an introspective otherworldly contemplation but instead a drive for 'something to be done' and a well-based admiration for the lifeboat crews and lifeguards who selflessly get on and do.

You might therefore be surprised to find talk of 'the transcendent' (page 46) and 'another place' (page 34), of art in all its surprising forms (49) and magical moments

communing with Nature (32). But there is nothing incongruous here – the RNLI and its people operate in the ultimate wilderness of the sea and face the real possibility of death everyday (20). The memorial to be built at Headquarters (37) is testament to the mixed emotions of joy, pride, sorrow and respect felt by all involved in the continual endeavour to put Life first (26).

Take a deep breath as you turn the page ...

 **Liz Cook**
Editor

Friends of the RNLI

Some special offers that can benefit you and the RNLI

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the Lifeboat

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Blind and partially sighted readers can choose to receive an audio tape version as well as the magazine – this is a free service.

All recipients of *the Lifeboat* also receive *RNLI Compass* for their region. News in other regions can be viewed at mli.org.uk. Offshore members, and those Governors who opt to, receive *Offshore* too. Members of the children's club Storm Force receive *Storm Force News*. Occasional donors receive *Lifeline*.

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Insight

Photo: Alister MacDonaid



1 WINTER STORMS

Extreme weather in the first weeks of 2008 meant a busy time for several lifeboat stations. Stornoway's Severn class lifeboat *Tom Sanderson* was out in force 11 winds, classed a violent storm, on 1 February. The trawler *Spinningdale* had run aground at the remote St Kilda islands, 40 miles west of the Hebrides. She was taking on water and as the situation worsened the lifeboat increased her speed to 12 knots in very high seas. In the end, a Coastguard helicopter succeeded in winching off the 14 crew, and the lifeboat returned to station, more than 6 hours after launching.

Photo: C Ó Donnchú



2 HOTTING UP

Kinsale lifeboat crew tackled their biggest casualty on 2 February when the relief B class *Walters Lifeboat* brought in the 35-tonne *Paulona*. The 12m fishing vessel was heading for Baltimore when the engine's temperature started to rise and had to be shut down. The rigid inflatable lifeboat was launched to the drifting craft at 8.45am. After being towed for an hour at a steady 5 knots, *Paulona* was skilfully manoeuvred onto the main pier in Kinsale.

3 SPINAL BOARD

When a climber was seriously injured in a fall at Aberdour on 9 February, Kinghorn's Atlantic 75 lifeboat *Frederick Robertson* was on the scene within 15 minutes. The crew requested the help of an RAF helicopter to get the man quickly to hospital without aggravating his injuries. But the tide rose quickly while the volunteers awaited the aircraft so they moved the man above the high water level on a spinal board. When the helicopter arrived he was winched onboard and taken to hospital.



4 HOLIDAY SPIRIT

A local club's sailing session made it a busy Valentine's day for Aberystwyth lifeboat crew. The B class *Spirit of Friendship* was launched when a dinghy was seen capsizing several times, with her two-person crew having more and more trouble righting her. After bringing the tired, cold sailors and their boat ashore, the lifeboat went to check on their clubmates. Assured that all was fine, *Spirit of Friendship* returned to harbour, but was out again minutes later when a solo sailor needed help after capsizing.



Photo: Nicholas Leach

5 DOG TIRED

Word came on 7 April that a dog was in trouble off Dynamite quay, St Ives – and that a man was about to try to rescue it. The tide was rushing out of the estuary, making any such attempt by a swimmer extremely dangerous. When the D class lifeboat *Colin Bramley Parker* reached him, the man had rescued the dog but had then become trapped himself and was clinging to the quay wall. The *Helm* brought the lifeboat close to the wall and the man was able to jump in and return to safety.



Here is just a handful of incidents from around the UK and RoI to give an insight into the thousands of lifeboat rescues carried out each year. See pages 20–29 for indepth reports of rescues from Torbay, Skegness and Flamborough.



6 FERRY FOUNDERS

Blackpool beach gained a startling new attraction when the cargo ferry *Riverdance* developed a list and started to drift. All-weather lifeboats from Fleetwood and Lytham St Annes were launched on 31 January in force 10 winds, arriving on scene at 9.30pm, along with rescue helicopters. The lifeboats' searchlights illuminated the scene and 14 people were winched to safety before the ferry grounded. Lytham's lifeboat then took refuge at Fleetwood due to the wild conditions. Fleetwood's lifeboat was relaunched at 5am, when the remaining *Riverdance* crew issued a Mayday, and stood by during the second helicopter sortie.



CALL TO ACTION

Volunteering has been at the heart of lifeboating for over 180 years. Carol Waterkeyn finds out how this ethos is now influencing the world of lifeguarding

Photo: Nigel Millard

Lifeboat crew members are renowned for mostly being volunteers and they are called to action from their 'day job' by pager alert (see page 14). In contrast, most RNLI lifeguards are paid (usually through local authority funding) as, when someone is already in the water and drowning, it's not minutes but seconds that count. Lifeguards must be on the beach for their whole period of duty, ready to respond immediately.

But the great divide is closing: the RNLI is working closely with grass-roots lifesaving clubs to bring on a new generation of volunteers – volunteer lifeguards. They work alongside the full-timers and must hold the same national standard qualifications but, like their lifeboating counterparts, volunteer lifeguards come from all walks of life.

Vince Timson (pictured top left) is a little unusual. He carried out a record number of volunteer patrol hours last season. This year he is fitting 3 full days a week of volunteering around his work (as UK Manager of a surf travel company) and family life. He's also Captain of Watergate Bay Surf Lifesaving club, an instructor and examiner for the national aquatic rescue standard (NARS) and a British Surfing Association coach.

Vince explains: 'Volunteering for me is what the RNLI is all about. My wife, three sons and daughter and I live 2 minutes from the beach and we all surf. We encourage club members to volunteer for the RNLI and gain valuable experience working alongside professional guards. In 2007, 10 members volunteered.

'I've been involved in numerous rescues myself; major and minor first aid; pulling people from rips. When you're filling out the paperwork with a casualty after an incident and they see you are a volunteer, they are even more grateful. One hot sunny day last year, two elderly members of the public came over and said: "What a great job this must be – and you get paid for it!" I said: "Actually I don't – I am a volunteer for the RNLI." They were totally surprised and said: "We're off to make a donation!"'

Some new recruits are far from at home in the water. Two staff from RNLI Headquarters who are training to become volunteer lifeguards, and their coach, speak for themselves.

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

Contact the Prevention and Lifeguards office by email: lifeguard_volunteers@rnli.org.uk or phone: 01202 663553.



Clare Eynon, Trusts and Grants Fundraiser

'I had an accident while surfing 2 years ago. I got dumped by a wave and my board hit me and fractured my jaw. The experience made me think about safety and

how good it would be to learn lifeguard skills and offer my help.

'I was a club swimmer a long time ago as a child and through the course I have been inspired to get back to swimming after a break of about 8 years. I was nervous to start with. The first time I was in The Lifeboat College survival pool, its high sides made me feel claustrophobic and dizzy. But I got used to it. My technique has got a lot better.'

Kate Cooney, Volunteer Development Coordinator

'In my paid job, I work with lifesaving clubs to increase volunteer participation on RNLI-patrolled beaches, so qualifying myself and volunteering at weekends will increase both my awareness and credibility.

'Training has been challenging. Although I have always enjoyed being in the water, at the beginning of the course I considered myself to be a weak swimmer. I have worked hard on my technique, my breathing and my general fitness and can now swim strongly and with confidence. I hope to take my award this Summer.'



Peter Dawes, Acting Head of Prevention and Lifeguards and staff volunteers' Coach

'Evening and weekend training takes about 6 months. As well as using the survival pool at The Lifeboat College, we go to the

beach for board paddle sessions. Classroom work explains the theory before the practice, including personal safety, first aid and communicating with the public, as up to 95% of lifeguard work is 'preventative'. (That's identifying potential problems before they develop and giving advice and information to beach goers.)

'The participants have to be fit and dedicated, as the training is quite demanding. They practise swimming independently too, twice a week, and by the end they must be able to swim 400m in under 7½ minutes: no mean feat.'

Stay safe this Summer



On the beach is a new safety guide created by the RNLI in partnership with the Eden Project. The guide aims to help beach users stay safe while having fun and covering everything from the meanings of safety flags to the treatment of jellyfish stings via some great beach games.

Actress Caroline Quentin lent her support to *On the beach* in a foreword, saying: 'It will take just a few minutes to read and it could be enough to prevent a day of fun ending in tragedy.'

The booklet is free and available from most

lifeboat stations, RNLI lifeguards, tourist information centres and selected attractions. If you don't see it, email beachsafety@rnli.org.uk or call 0800 328 0600 for a copy.

Following last year's success, the RNLI's Beachwise campaign is back for the Summer with its message: always swim at a lifeguarded beach. Look out for posters, billboards and other promotional activity.

You might also spot a brightly coloured camper van out and about promoting the RNLI's lifeguard awareness and fundraising campaign: Life first.



Louisa Maund and TV's Ben Fogle were 2 of 200 RNLI runners



MARATHON EFFORT

The Flora London Marathon is one of the UK's most breathtaking fundraising events and this year 200 people ran as part of Team RNLI. Their combined and considerable efforts raised approximately £300,000, most of which will go towards crew training.

Father and son team Stewart and Murray Barnett, bakers from Anstruther, both completed the race within 5 hours. Murray, at just 18 one of the youngest competitors, says: 'I wanted to run for the RNLI as I have grown up watching the lifeboat going out helping and saving the lives of many people who have got into trouble in lots of different ways.'

Surrey student Jennifer Manby, also 18, had a first-hand reason to run for the RNLI: 'When I was 14, I was out with my school sailing off Chichester harbour. The wind really picked up, many of us were capsized and we had to call the lifeboat. I managed to right my boat but some of my friends were taken aboard – we were all really grateful to see that orange boat come to our aid.' Jennifer's marathon achievement is made even more remarkable by the fact that she has recovered from a serious back injury.

RNLI Divisional Inspector for the south of England Simon Pryce remembers: 'The last 4 miles were absolute hell but I thought about the amazing volunteers who run our lifeboat stations and who will benefit from this challenge. I know they'll enjoy the thought of me in pain!'

The RNLI Events team is always on the look out for runners to take part in various events. They are now planning this Christmas's Reindeer runs and Santa saunters, which are planned for Dorset, Merseyside, Hertfordshire, Port Talbot and central Scotland. Visit rnli.org.uk/reindeer for information.



ISLAY VELLUM

Islay Coxswain David MacLennan was awarded Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum for his part in the 18-hour rescue of the fishing vessel *Niamh Áine* on 4 January in gale force conditions. David received his award from outgoing RNLI Chairman Sir Jock Slater at the charity's Scottish annual meeting in June.

A SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Sir Jock Slater presented the RNLI's *Annual Review and Report and Accounts* at his last AGM as Chairman, on 22 May. A few unexpectedly high legacies, and growth in raised voluntary, merchandising and lottery income, brought a total of £167M and, after expenditure of £134M, a surplus of £33M. Sir Jock explained that several large capital projects could be progressed as a result, especially 'shoreworks', but emphasised that a whole new year of fundraising lay ahead.

ANNUAL AWARDS

The RNLI's Annual Presentation of Awards was held in London's Barbican Centre on 22 May with guest of honour HRH The Duchess of Cornwall. She presented the RNLI's Silver Medal for Gallantry to Torbay Coxswain Mark Criddle for his part in rescuing eight men from *Ice Prince* on 13 January. (See more on page 20.)

Dedicated RNLI supporters were also honoured at the ceremony. Eric Cass was named Individual supporter of the year in recognition of his and his wife's efforts over the past 17 years. (See more about the Cassettes on page 49.)

The Campaign for Real Ale, whose fundraising since 1989 has paid for three lifeboats, won in the Group category. St Nicolas in Dowlunderry, Cornwall, was the School supporter of the year, while Euan Foster from London was the Individual youth winner.



Irish journalist Joe O'Shea was named the winner in the Media relations category and the RNLI Henry Blogg museum shop took the Retail title. The HBOS Foundation was Corporate supporter of the year, while csma with LV=Frizzell were presented with the Lifetime achievement award. Dozens of grass-roots supporters were also recognised, as reported in some issues of *Compass*.

The Duchess witnessed for herself the work of the RNLI at Anstruther lifeboat station in May 2007. During her visit, one of the station's lifeboats was called out on a shout. She said: 'Seeing them pull on their kit and launch the lifeboat into pretty rough seas was quite a sight, and I couldn't help but be enormously impressed with their courage, efficiency and skill.'

Contact Supporter Care or visit rnli.org.uk for copies of the *Annual Review* and *Annual Report and Accounts*.

Cash from the College

Since its opening in 2004, The Lifeboat College has become firmly established as the home of RNLI training. Crew and lifeguard training is the College's most important purpose, but it has also been doing a fine job fundraising. Last year alone, the College generated over £1M for the RNLI, through hosting conferences, team-building events and even film shoots.

In January, television channel Paramount Comedy filmed part of an advert for the new series of hit American comedy *Two and a half men* in the survival pool. The dramatic 'weather' effects that can be generated by this specialist facility were just what the film crew needed

to create the desired atmosphere of a stormy Atlantic. (See paramountcomedy.com/biggestcrossing). This booking alone raised over £8,000 to help the RNLI save lives at sea. Paramount was not the first company to pay the RNLI for the privilege of using the pool – the BBC and the Discovery Channel have also filmed there.

College Principal and Head of Training Sue Hennessy retires in July after 6 years in charge – she will be a hard act to follow!

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In with the new ...



A sense of new beginnings makes Spring a good season for the naming ceremonies of new lifeboats and this year was no exception.

Namings included D class lifeboats for Fowey, Redcar, Clifden, Aldeburgh and the relief fleet and Wales's first Atlantic 85 inshore lifeboat was named in Aberystwyth. (See page 41 and *Compass* for more stations and details.)

Enniskillen said goodbye to the last two Atlantic 21 lifeboats in the on-station fleet

In March. The first of the RNLI's series of rigid inflatable lifeboats, the 21 was also the first to be built from scratch at the Inshore Lifeboat Centre in Cowes, in 1970. Enniskillen now has an Atlantic 75 on both the upper and lower Lough Erne.

... and out with the old

As more advanced lifeboats go on station around the UK and RoI to help the RNLI's

volunteer crews carry out rescues in safer and more effective ways, what happens to the older craft they replace? Fifty-six lifeboats were released from RNLI service and sold last year. Priority was given to members of the International Maritime Rescue Federation and other rescue services. Nine were sold to the China Rescue and Salvage Bureau, five to Iceland's Ice-SAR and three to the KNRM in the Netherlands.

THE POWER OF THE SEA

Dunbar's Trent class all-weather lifeboat *Sir Ronald Pechell Bt* parted the ground chain of her moorings and was repeatedly thrown against rocks in ferocious conditions of up to storm force 10 in the early hours of Easter Sunday.

The lifeboat was refloated on the next high tide and she was lifted out onto the dockside by mid-afternoon. Crew,

station helpers, volunteer coastguards and staff from Torness power station, Lafarge cement works, Coastal Marine and Bernard Hunter all worked tirelessly over the Easter weekend to recover the lifeboat, to remove equipment for reuse and to prevent environmental damage.

She was then removed from Torness to a boatyard for detailed inspection, and a relief boat placed on service on a new set of moorings. Unfortunately, the extent of the damage to the hull of the lifeboat is so severe that she is beyond economic repair. *John Neville Taylor* has been reallocated from the relief fleet to Dunbar and an investigation into the failure of the mooring is underway.

The Spring 2008 issue of *the Lifeboat* reported the grounding of the Portrush Severn class lifeboat *Katie Hannan* during a rescue effort in January. Sadly, after a detailed inspection and investigation, it has been found that she too is beyond economic repair but that there was no negligence whatsoever on the part of her crew that night. The station has now been allocated a Severn class lifeboat from the relief fleet, *William Gordon Burr*.



History laid to rest

The Lifeboat Support Centre at RNLI Headquarters houses Engineering and Supply, Finance and the Sales company but, during building work in 2003, an 18th-century Baptist burial ground was unearthed here. Analysis of the excavated remains has since shown a diet low in protein, but badly decayed teeth suggest high sugar, meaning relative affluence.

Shards of Venetian glass and French and Spanish ware hint at Poole's history as a major port. One bone fragment came from a green monkey, native to west Africa, which probably came to Poole onboard a slave ship. Poole was one of the first ports to call for the abolition of slavery, as early as 1792.

The human remains were reburied at a local cemetery in April this year in the presence of RNLI staff and present-day Baptist churchgoers.

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NEVER ON HOLIDAY

RNLI lifeguards save lives on beaches around the UK and sometimes 'Down Under', but their skills can be called into practice in far more unusual locations.

Kirstin Prisk was 7 hours into a flight from London to New York when he noticed something amiss with the woman in the seat next to him. She had lost consciousness and her skin was grey and clammy. Her breathing was shallow. Kirstin asked a stewardess for oxygen while checking the woman's bag for medication or other clues as to what the problem might be.

He was still giving first aid to the woman when the plane hit severe turbulence and the pilot had to take it into a nosedive. Kirstin says: 'It was full on. Some of the

other passengers were screaming but my training and experience as an RNLI lifeguard paid off and I was able to keep calm and focus on the casualty. In fact I was thankful I had something to take my mind off the plane dropping out of the sky!'

Eventually he felt a faint squeeze on his hand in response to his questions, and the woman began to come round. He advised the pilot it was safe to continue to their planned destination where paramedics were ready to give further treatment.



Twin saints

Lifeboats from the Channel Islands often cooperate with their French counterparts – rescue boats from the Société Nationale de Sauvetage en Mer (SNSM). The special relationship between the RNLI station at St Helier and the SNSM station at St Malo was formalised on 5 April when the two were twinned.

St Helier Coxswain Andy Hibbs and members of his volunteer crew set out from the Jersey port at 6am, after being given special permission to take the station's Tyne class lifeboat *Alexander Coutanche* to St Malo for the ceremony. A relief lifeboat provided cover back home.

SNSM Deputy Chief Executive, Vice-Admiral Henri Arino, said: 'It is essential that

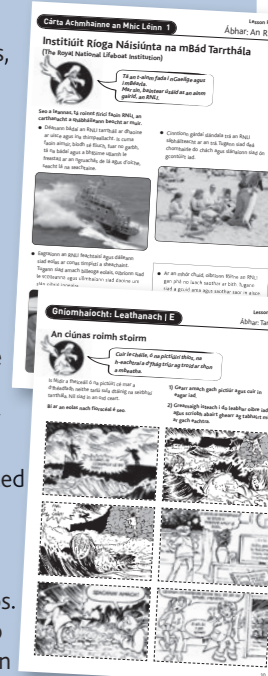
our organisations work together in the closest possible cooperation to deliver a seamless service across our zone. This means excellent communications and effective joint training exercises. The RNLI at St Helier and the SNSM at St Malo commit to develop links of friendship and exchanges of know how in the techniques of saving lives at sea.'

St Helier Lifeboat Operations Manager Bob Vezier and St Malo Deputy Mayor Henri-Jean Lebeau also spoke, before the twinning agreement was signed and the crews and dignitaries celebrated in true French style with champagne and canapés.



CLASS ACTS

RNLI Education's team of volunteers, who speak at schools and youth groups and help organise station visits for young people, continues to grow, as does the number of classroom resources available to teachers. The *All aboard* and *Get onboard* schools' packs were produced to help Citizenship teachers promote water safety and the volunteer ethos. Now they can also be used as an aid in the teaching of our native Celtic languages, with Welsh and Irish versions available for download at rnli.org.uk/shorething.



SAFETY AWARDS

The RNLI has won a prestigious award from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The gold award was given in recognition of the Institution's commitment to protecting the health and safety of its volunteers and crew. To achieve this, the charity had to demonstrate the effective health and safety systems it has put in place in an environment where risk is naturally present. The award was presented at the National Health and Safety Awards in Birmingham in May.



BEHIND THE BLEEP BLEEP BLEEP

It's time to run – the pager's gone off, calling the dedicated volunteer from their work or bed. Mairéad Dwane discovers the technology behind the drama

RNLI crew members, shore helpers, launching authorities, medical advisers and even some press officers carry pagers to alert them to an emergency. This communications nervous system connects lifeboat stations to the waistbands of more than 4,000 volunteers, and the heart of Yorkshire to your computer desktop.

The RNLI has used pagers to alert its people for more than 20 years, using a wide variety of systems run by different operators in diverse locations. In 1998 the charity decided that a single, RNLI-dedicated paging system was required for consistency and reliability. The main contractor was ntl, now called Arqiva. It worked with Hampshire-based Multitone, which had had great success with similar systems for the fire service, to develop the project. After an unexpected delay caused by the disastrous foot and mouth epidemic, and the all-too-expected delays of planning applications, the system was finally set up for an initial cost of £10M, and that same system is still in use today.

Launch request

At the first sign of someone in trouble on the water, the Coastguard sends a message to the appropriate station's lifeboat operations manager (LOM) or deputy launching authority (DLA) requesting assistance. The LOM or DLA phones back to discuss the situation and, if a lifeboat launch is required, pages the crew. He or she can do this by entering a two-digit code over the telephone or from a computer, or by pressing a button on the system's base unit if they happen to be at the lifeboat station. The station's transmitter broadcasts to its general area, where it is picked up by a more powerful transmitter on a 'hilltop' site. This is not necessarily actually on a hill – Kilkeel's site is on the roof of a bakery, while Poole's is atop the RNLI's Headquarters building.

The signal from the hilltop site will be picked up by pager bearers all over the lifeboat station's catchment area. Depending on what code their LOM or DLA has keyed in, they will see on the display: 'LAUNCH ALB', 'LAUNCH ILB', or 'ASSEMBLE AT STATION', accompanied by an urgent, high-pitched tone. Guaranteed to catch a crew member's attention this also lets their colleagues know why they are legging it out of work without a time-consuming explanation! (Crews can also be sent less urgent messages, such as the cancellation of a training session, through their pagers, accompanied by a deeper, less demanding tone in the newest model.)

Some locations need an extra boost to their transmissions to ensure everyone gets the message. Topography, geology and building

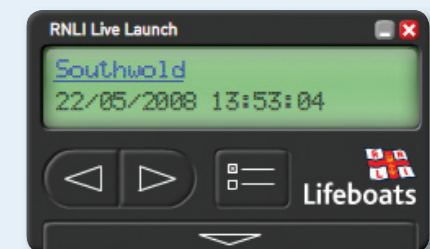
materials play a part – the system hates granite. Repeaters (transmitters about the size of a box file that can be plugged into a regular socket) are used to target such black spots. Particularly difficult terrain in the Exmouth area requires two repeaters – one on the Royal Marines' rifle range and one at the local croquet club. RNLI kit can also be found on a golf course in Tobermory, in a castle in Glamorgan (pictured), and at a nursing home in Lyme Regis. →



GET YOURSELF CONNECTED

The RNLI computer-desktop pager allows you to keep an eye on your favourite lifeboat stations. When one of the crews is paged, a pop-up message lets you know, after about 20 minutes of the original page. Rarely, a crew is already on exercise or assembled at the station so the desktop pager will not alert you to the lifeboat launch, but overall the pager is an excellent indication of the general activity of RNLI lifeboats.

The in-house-designed programme works with computer operating systems up to and including Windows XP and Mac OS X. The RNLI is now working on a version for Windows Vista, as well as making the service available through SMS text messages to mobile phones. Thousands of people have already downloaded the desktop pager since its launch last year. Get yours at rnli.org.uk/pager.



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Address _____

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Please tick if you would prefer NOT to receive product/service information



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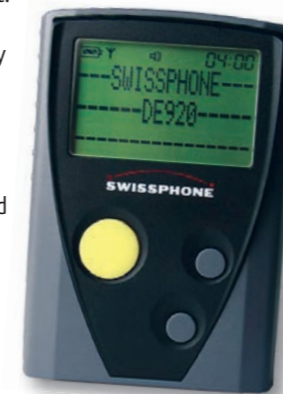
→ Texting back up

The pager message's journey doesn't end with the bleep. The signal is also carried to Arqiva's centre in Emley Moor, Yorkshire, home of Europe's tallest unsupported mast. From here, a cable carries the message to the Vodafone centre in Leeds, where it can be turned into an SMS text message. A text can be sent, for example, to a LOM who is out of reach of the local transmitter. The DLA can be handling the launch, but the LOM will be kept in the know wherever they are. It is also from Emley Moor that the RNLI website's desktop pager receives its information (see panel on page 15). Arqiva runs a daily check on every RNLI lifeboat station in the UK and RoI to make sure everything is still connected, and a 24-hour hotline is available for any station with problems or concerns. The package of infrastructure and support costs about £1.5M a year.

System upgrade

In 2007, the RNLI formally reviewed the situation and found it had proved reliable and user-friendly but that the pagers themselves could be improved. Some crew members were finding them uncomfortable to wear, especially those who work in physically demanding jobs, such as fishing or construction. The message screens were too susceptible to damage and the pagers seemed to be constantly chirruping for new batteries. After asking the crews themselves what they wanted in a pager and trialling a couple of options, the RNLI is now replacing its Multitone pagers with new kit from Swissphone.

The new pager is slightly smaller than its predecessor, less cumbersome and more robust. It is also rechargeable like a mobile phone. This has already brought huge savings in time, money, materials and waste. All stations across the North division have the new pagers, as do most in Scotland, Ireland and Wales and West Mercia. Rollout to the South and East divisions will begin shortly.



Flick of a switch

The pager system is not limited to messages – practically any electrical switch can be flipped remotely with the right code. For example, some crews must negotiate cliff-face steps on their way to a launch. These are illuminated by sodium lights, which take a few minutes to warm up and get going. Now the lights can be turned on as the crews are paged, so that everything is bright and safe by the time they arrive.

LOMs can open gates, boost heating and turn off alarms at their stations without leaving their homes or places of work. The possibilities of the system are nearly endless. The only thing the pager lacks is a snooze button!

(See page 49 for news of a pager pioneer.)

LIVING ON THE EDGE

Life can be unpredictable with a pager ...

'The trouble with pagers is that your mind suddenly switches off whatever you were doing and goes totally into lifeboat mode. This was the case when driving my taxi along Brighton seafront at 2am with a chap in the back who had fallen asleep. The lifeboat call was a long one. It was after putting our boat away and a few cups of coffee that one very amused crew member noticed my customer still fast asleep. His normal £3.50 taxi fare was still ticking over at £28!'

Former Brighton Helmsman Richard Pearce, now the station's Deputy Launching Authority. (First published in *Riblines*, the newsletter of the British Inflatable Boat Owners' Association.) Richard charged the passenger £3.50



'We have a scroll board and sirens that go off with the pagers. The scroll board displays the same message as the crew's pagers giving our boathouse attendants a chance to escort any visitors out before the crew arrive. Before, I've been the first to the station, opened the back door and promptly fallen over a pack of Brownies who were having a talk!'

Swanage Deputy Second Coxswain John Gilmour, from his blog at lifeboatscrapbook.blogspot.com



'I couldn't sleep for several nights after I got my pager. For someone who has every lunch hour and evening planned for the next month, the hardest thing about being on call is not knowing when it may happen. There's one way to fight a phobia – in at the deep end. I simply had to be paged and at the station in time. As soon as I'd done my first shout I'd be released from my anxiety.'

Former Poole Crew Member Ali Panes



Sheerness all-weather lifeboat *George and Ivy Swanson* hosted a wedding blessing. Second Emergency Mechanic Eamonn French and his wife Jill, friends and family, gathered but as the ceremony began the unthinkable happened. The crew pagers beeped and it was action stations! It was a call for the inshore lifeboat and, after a breath of relief, the ceremony went without a hitch. Later the happy couple held a reception at their home but the bleppers went off again and the groom and other crew members present had to race back to the station.'

As reported in *the Lifeboat* Autumn 1998





A light in the darkness

Tonnes of timber were heaped along the English south coast last Winter – but what became of the cargo ship's crew? Carol Waterkeyn hears the full story of *Ice Prince*, the men who went to her aid, and the RNLI's first Silver Medal for 3 years

As the sinking *Ice Prince* rolled, Torbay's volunteers strained to reach her remaining crew
Reconstruction photo: Chris Slack

On 13 January, severe gale force winds changed a routine passage into a nightmare for the huge *Ice Prince* and her 20 crew. They were 34 miles south east of Berry Head, Devon, when her cargo shifted, causing the Greek vessel to list dangerously. With one crewman injured (a suspected broken leg) and the weather showing no sign of abating, a worried ship's Master radioed Brixham Coastguard for help.

Coastguard helicopter *India Juliet* was tasked to recover the casualty and 11 of his comrades while Torbay and Salcombe lifeboats were requested to stand by at the scene. HMS *Cumberland* was in the vicinity and also offered to take up position.

Torbay's Coxswain Mark Criddle recalls: 'I was down at the marina that Sunday night, watching darts on the TV and drying some clothes. When we got the call, with the weather we'd had all day, I knew it was going to be a big incident. Thirteen volunteers turned up and I had to pick just six to take with me. I was looking for the most appropriate people for that job – it was going to be a long night.' The team launched at 7.44 pm.

The situation was worsening rapidly for *Ice Prince*: 'We left harbour at around 15 knots into a southerly wind. Over the radio from the ship, we heard that they had lost their engine and were drifting beam onto the weather and heeling over badly. Soon after that their generator went down.

'We increased our speed to 20 knots, put the bow of the lifeboat down low into the water and harnessed ourselves in. It was a very rough and uncomfortable passage but I knew that, this way, I could take 15–20 minutes off our estimated 2-hour journey.' The less powerful Salcombe Tyne class followed.

Abandon ship!

From about 4 miles off, the helicopter's lights could be seen and the shape of the *Ice Prince* loomed through the darkness. Mark left the shelter of the wheelhouse for the flying bridge of the Severn class. He could hear *India Juliet*'s difficulties, and was keen to assist. 'In the 35–45-knot winds, heavy swell and occasional rain squalls, they took as many of the men as they could – 12,' he explains. In fact, the helicopter's hi-lines kept getting snagged and had to be cut free to avoid catastrophe.

The lifeboat now asked *Ice Prince*'s Master what his intentions were. 'He said: "to abandon ship!" You could tell from his voice it was very stressful with all that cargo shifting about. I wouldn't have wanted to stay on there. It looked like she was going to roll over.'

The Torbay crew got themselves ready. Volunteer Darryll Farley joined Mark on the flying bridge to help with steering.

They made several test approaches and then asked for the ship's crew to come one by one to the point where they could jump across when the lifeboat was near enough. But first, each man had to climb over two

anchor winches and the ship's flagpole across a deck that was now at 45°.

Crew Member and Doctor Alex Rowe describes the scene: 'It was very difficult for us to communicate with the casualties because of the noise and the language barrier. *Ice Prince* was unstable and they were in a precarious position. They only had about a 1-second opportunity to make the movement across to the lifeboat. Four of us were on the foredeck. The first ship's crew member jumped across and said: "Thank you for saving my life!" He was one of the younger guys. Some were older. One chap looked grey and sweaty and unwell. They had a few bruises and sore ribs but were amazingly well considering.'

But the fourth man was too frightened so the lifeboat tried to get nearer – until the two vessels collided and the man fell into the water. Miraculously he was swept back up by a wave and managed to get back onto the ship.

Second Coxswain Roger Good was on the lifeboat's foredeck: 'It was eerie to see a big ship like that leaning over so far. It was scooping up tonnes of water. We knew these last five guys were not going to jump; we were going to have to grab them.' But to manoeuvre even closer would be risky for lifeboat and crew. A large portion of the ship was now submerged, threatening hidden hazards, while loose timber littered the water around them.

If at first ...

Harnessed to the lifeboat as she made her approaches, the volunteers leaned out to

'The number of lives we'd saved began to sink in on the return journey. I have been on the crew for 26 years and this is the best job I have done.'

catch hold of the men, dragging them bodily onto the lifeboat. It took over an hour and a quarter and around 50 approaches to pull the men to safety – the Master was the last to leave. All this while the ship increased her list, rolling uncontrollably, and the wind howled. Only the lifeboat's searchlight, controlled by Darryll, pierced the pitch-black night. It was a terrifying state of affairs.

Second Mechanic Nigel Coulton took the survivors down below: 'They were all in shock

and glad to be off *Ice Prince*. They were glad of a drink of water but sickness set in once they relaxed, took in their situation, and felt the unfamiliar movement of the lifeboat.

'The number of lives we'd saved began to sink in on the return journey. I have been on the crew for 26 years and this is the best job I have done. It was good to know that the Salcombe lifeboat and her crew were there to back us up.'

Marco Brimacombe was Coxswain of the Salcombe lifeboat that night. He explains: 'Our role on the night was to position ourselves aft of Torbay lifeboat's port quarter to give assistance should anyone fall into the water during the transfers. We were also helping to illuminate the scene.'

Looking back

Ken James, Deputy Launching Authority at Torbay, had taken the initial call from the Coastguard. 'I paged the crew for an immediate launch and later rang their partners to tell them not to expect their men back till the early hours of the morning ... I stood and proudly watched the boat come back in and tie up alongside. All the survivors were talking excitedly about their ordeal.'

One, Peprakis Pamagiokis, expressed his gratitude: 'From me and the other crew, one big thanks to the persons who rescued us.' Two from the ship were transferred to a waiting ambulance. The others went to the boathouse with the lifeboatmen for Ken's breakfast of tea and bacon sandwiches.

The next day, Mark watched the helicopter's film footage of the event: 'It made me feel quite ill. At the time I was

purely focusing on no one getting hurt. The massive stern anchor had got very close to our guys and we could have lost them.

'That rescue was the ultimate test of my career. As a coxswain, I am extremely pleased with how the lifeboat performed and the crew were just marvellous. I remember looking out from the flying bridge and seeing the crew stretching out their arms to these complete strangers to get them off. It is an image I will never forget ...'

THE DETAIL

TORBAY LIFEBOAT

All-weather Severn class lifeboat ON-1255 (17-28)
Alec and Christina Dykes
Funded by legacies of Helen C Dykes and Robert Buchanan with other gifts and legacies

TORBAY CREW

Full-time Coxswain Mark Criddle (40) (pictured)
Second Coxswain Roger Good (46, Marine Engineer)
Deputy Second Coxswain John Ashford (55, Paramedic)
Full-time Mechanic Mathew Tyler (33)
Second Mechanic Nigel Coulton (56, Photographer)
Crew Members Darryll Farley (31, Outward Bound Instructor)
Alex Rowe (38, Doctor)

For his courage, leadership, seamanship, initiative and determination in this service, Mark Criddle was awarded the RNLI's Silver Medal for Gallantry (also see page 8). For their courage, determination and initiative his crew each received the Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum

SALCOMBE LIFEBOAT

All-weather Tyne class lifeboat ON-1130 (47-022)
Baltic Exchange II
Funded by The Baltic Exchange with other gifts and legacies

SALCOMBE CREW

Full-time Coxswain Marco Brimacombe (44)
Second Mechanic Richard Whitfield (41, Marine Engineer)
Crew Members Andrew Arthur (44, Bespoke Furniture Maker), Symon Cater (24, Sailing and Powerboat Instructor), James Fern (25, Electrical Engineer), Crew Member Josh Dornom (17, Barman)

For their valuable part in this long and arduous lifesaving service, Salcombe lifeboat crew received a collective Letter of Appreciation from the RNLI's Chief Executive, Andrew Freemantle

COASTGUARD HELICOPTER

India Juliet

For their courage and determination in this rescue, Captain Kevin Balls and crew received a collective Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum



Photo: Nigel Millard



Extraordinary people

Each year, thousands of remarkable people provide voluntary donations that enable the RNLI to carry out its work. Many have no direct connection with the sea or maritime history, but simply have responded to our call and the bravery of our crews.

Quite naturally, we also lose some of these supporters each year, though a great many are kind enough to arrange for collections to be made at their final ceremonies.

To mark the magnificent contribution made by these donors we have set up a special website that celebrates their lives in words and pictures. The website also features crew members and other RNLI personnel, who served us on land or sea.

Each person's web page has the facilities for visitors to add their memories and make further donations direct to us, which means our friends can continue to serve our cause.

If you would like to include a member of your family, or a friend, now passed away, on this website, please go to rnli.org.uk/rememeralovedone or contact Nina Stubbs on 01202 663591 or email nstubbs@rnli.org.uk.

PRIVILEGED VIEW

Regional Fundraising Manager Mark Spruce finds out how the money he helps to raise is spent



Photo: Ivor Hughes



On Monday 22 October 2007 I accepted an invitation from Skegness Coxswain John Irving to join some training. By 5.30pm the waterproof tractor was attached to the carriage and the Mersey class lifeboat *The Lincolnshire Poacher* was towed out of the boathouse and across the sand to the waterline. The four securing chains were released and the boat slipped into the waves with we crew onboard and a crowd of people watching. The inshore *Leicester Fox II* D class launched too.

We had barely been at sea 5 minutes when we were informed of a yacht in trouble. *Kegger* was a 9m single-masted wooden boat crewed by a lone but experienced yachtsman, Mike. Struggling with engine and battery failure, he had been up since 3am.

We drew alongside for Crew Members Ian and Wiggy to fix the engine. Fenders were used between the vessels

but a hand or foot could easily be crushed in a moment's lack of concentration. We towed *Kegger* parallel to the shore to reduce the pitching in the swell. The *Poacher* and her charge kept in radio contact while the D class ferried equipment. The light was fading fast but we continued like this for 2½ hours.

Eventually Ian and Wiggy removed the fuel filters, which were blocked. The heavy seas had shaken up sediment in the tank – such a little thing but the consequences were serious. By 9pm, the engine was still dead and Mike prepared to anchor offshore for the night. He was not in immediate danger but was absolutely exhausted. I was really struck by the efforts made. John instructed Mike to ring his mobile if needed. Ian and Wiggy were covered in diesel. I think one of them must have swallowed some, as he was sick over the side.

The evening had not finished yet, though, as the two lifeboats had to be recovered and several more volunteers were there to assist. The tractor dragged

Poacher right out of the water, hauled her over skids and then up onto the carriage. Once secure, she was driven back up the beach to be washed down and refuelled. But the mission was not over.

The crew suggested I see the whole shout through. This was too good an opportunity to miss. By now it was nearly 10pm and I decided not to drive home but to stop in Skegness. I was very glad to sleep in a bed that night and not be out in the cold North Sea swaying 30° from side to side.

Tuesday was bright and sunny. Among the crew were the manager of a holiday centre, a police officer, a joiner and a window cleaner. Six were giving up a day's wages to finish this job. Some had been up early to get their own work done. I wondered how many people would be prepared to put themselves out in such a way to help others.

I was the observer on this trip and such a unique opportunity should not be wasted. If I could do anything useful it was to record and pass on the story to volunteers inland to give them an insight into what really happens on a shout.

Once alongside *Kegger*, two of the newer crew, Lee and Billy, were transferred to secure the tow rope. They would remain on the yacht for the long tow to Grimsby. A couple of bacon butties were passed to Mike with a 'there you go, me duck'. At around 10am, the *Kegger's* anchor chain was recovered, the tow rope attached and the *Poacher's* engines roared at a steady 6–7 knots.

For the less experienced crew there was no time to relax. In the wheelhouse an array of gauges and screens gave them all the information they could need. It just reinforced how much these volunteers must learn. Two were given extended navigation training: plotting a course, setting a heading, range and bearing. Everything was backed up and hand drawn onto a chart with pencil, compass and ruler so that, should equipment fail, they

could cope the traditional way.

I started to think about the cost of what we were doing. I overheard the Coxswain radioing the station to get 2,000 litres of diesel delivered. It takes an exceptional coffee morning to raise that amount of money!

North of Mablethorpe is the offshore bombing range at Donna Nook. It was active that day so we took a 3–4 mile detour. Gradually we got closer to the mouth of the Humber estuary, and some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world.

Huge tankers stood waiting and pilot boats zipped across the water. We passed from the coordination of the Yarmouth Coastguard to Humber and I could hear other languages coming over the airwaves. Everything is coordinated via the Humber Vessel Traffic Service, like an air traffic controller. Eventually we drew in through the lock gates.

I witnessed a flurry of activity as *Kegger* was brought alongside and lashed to our starboard side. We motored very slowly into the dock. I was so impressed with the 'reverse parallel parking' as *Kegger* was gently edged into her mooring and

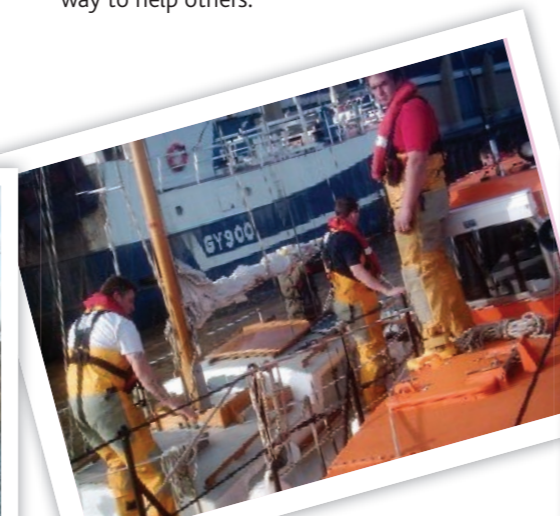
secured at last. It was handshakes all round from Mike, a very grateful mariner.

At 3.30pm we were heading back at 16 knots, trailing a thrashing wake. The Sun was starting to sink and the temperature to drop. Salt spray was thrown right over the *Poacher* and the crew were all in the wheelhouse. The navigation training was continuing when John asked if I wanted to have a go at steering.

Trying to maintain a constant course when rising waves and an incoming tide are constantly pushing you off is not that straightforward. The windscreen wipers kept my view clear and I did my best. After 40 minutes I handed back the wheel and noticed just how tense my shoulders had been and how much concentration it had taken. We arrived back at Skegness at 5.40pm. Once again the army of shore helpers was ready.

What I had witnessed was something done not for financial or personal gain but because it was the right thing to do. At the station nobody makes a song and dance about it but it made me very proud. We can fundraise for boats, equipment and training but you cannot buy courage and commitment. Was it all worth it? Just ask Mike from Sunderland.

Names of the casualty boat and skipper have been changed for privacy





Vital statistics

RNLI lifeguards are now on duty in Norfolk and Pembrokeshire.
Liz Cook reports on the charity's drive to put life first on ever more beaches

RNLI LIFEBOATS, LIFEGUARDS LIFE FIRST

2007 was a breakthrough year for the RNLI. Its lifeguarding service, already firmly established on 70-plus beaches in Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, broke out of south west England and was welcomed to East Anglia's Sheringham, Cromer, Mundesley and Sea Palling. Town councillors were pleased that their local communities, and the thousands of holidaymakers who visit them each year, would now benefit from the expertise of the RNLI's lifeguards alongside that of its lifeboat crews.

A watchful presence

From May to October, approximately 93,000 people used these beaches so the lifeguards had their hands full. Applying the principle that prevention is better than cure, they took over 3,700 precautionary actions. Advising

beachgoers on tidal movements and the locations of rip currents, calling in swimmers venturing beyond the flags or monitoring the use of inflatables: none of these moments was dramatic but all interrupted the chain of events that can lead to a drowning.

However, records show that there were 361 incidents that involved some kind of active intervention on land or in the sea. The lifeguards' mountain bikes, quad bikes and four-wheel-drive vehicles were only involved a handful of times but their basic 'tools of the trade', the rescue board and rescue tube, featured more strongly. The rescue boat and rescue watercraft (the motorbike of the waves) were used mainly for proactive patrols.

The Norfolk lifeguards gave direct assistance to 378 people, including 15 who had to be

rescued. Almost three quarters received some kind of first aid – over 200 had lacerations, contusions or a fracture, while fortunately only a few exhibited heart problems, epilepsy or other collapse. Many suffered jellyfish, weever fish and wasp stings. As qualified 'first responders' the lifeguards were able to provide everything from oxygen therapy through to plasters and reassurance as appropriate. They also played a key role in searching for reported 'missing' adults and children.

2008 and beyond

This year is another milestone for the RNLI. More beaches in south west and east England have been added to the fold, as have the first in Pembrokeshire. Volunteers are also beginning to swell the ranks of RNLI

lifeguards, continuing the fine tradition established by their lifeboating counterparts (see page 6).

These dramatic steps are only the first in a plan to provide lifeguards on every beach that needs them. The RNLI is working to raise awareness of the importance of lifeguarding and thence to encourage even more local authorities to partner the charity in putting life first. The Life first campaign was launched officially by Chairman Sir Jock Slater at the RNLI's AGM. It's aimed at the charity's potential partners but also the two thirds of ordinary members of the public who will visit a beach this season. If they are to make a wise choice of leisure destination, the option of a lifeguarded beach needs to be available in the first place.

The cost of the service

Out of a total running cost for the whole of the RNLI of £134M, its lifeguard service accounted for less than £5M last year, largely thanks to the generosity of the councils that fund full-time lifeguard wages. But this is still a huge income to find – and to build on if major expansion is to go ahead.

The Life first campaign therefore also has a fundraising role. Just as lifeboat stations must be built and lifeboat crews equipped and trained, lifeguards require a parallel infrastructure (see page 52 for news of a major development at Fistril).

This gives a similar range of opportunities for support, although a lifeguard rescue boat naming ceremony is a rather more casual affair than that for a lifeboat!



Celebrity Zoë Ball is publicly supporting the RNLI's campaign to raise awareness of the importance of lifeguards:

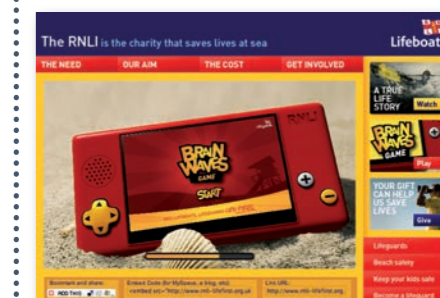
'If you have trouble packing your bag when you go to the beach, spare a thought for the RNLI lifeguards. As well as sunglasses and suncream, they need flags, rescue tubes, whistles, first aid kits – loads of stuff – not forgetting the rescue watercraft and boats too. And they have to be trained to use it all. It costs £450 to equip and £900 to train a lifeguard but the RNLI is a charity, so it needs help from people like you to meet these costs. It doesn't come cheap, but what you get in return is priceless: an expert rescue service that puts life first.'

You can find out how *you* can support the campaign at rnli.org.uk/lifefirst or calling the RNLI Supporter Care team on 0845 121 4999.

Do you have the skills?

The RNLI has created a bit of fun on its website to help promote the Life first campaign, especially among young people. The suitably named Brainwave game incorporates the campaign's key messages in a challenge for supporters and their families and friends – who will hopefully enjoy themselves and learn a thing or two along the way.

Try it out for yourself at rnli.org.uk/lifefirst.



SAFE LANDINGS?

High Summer always draws swimmers to the sea, but only the toughest would brave the weather buffeting Flamborough Head on the afternoon of 22 August 2007. As Elizabeth Paine reports, one such soul tested a new lifeboat and her crew in a race to save his life

THE DETAIL

The Lifeboat:
FLAMBOROUGH LIFEBOAT STATION
B class Atlantic 85 lifeboat
B-820 *Elizabeth Jane Palmer*
On station: 13 August 2007

Funding: Bill and Anne Wraith in memory of their daughter
Crew: Helmsman Darren Pollard (37, Groundworks Contractor),
Crew Members Danny Major (37, Fisherman) and Alistair Docherty (31)

Humber Coastguard raised the alert and Darren Pollard took Flamborough's Atlantic 85 out at full 35-knot speed, one crew member short of the usual complement, such was the urgency of the situation. South of the headland, the lifeboat station is relatively sheltered, but the crew knew they would be heading into worsening waters.

Sure enough, the B class was hit by near-gale force northerly winds opposing a southerly swell of 4m – Helmsman Pollard had to ease back to prevent the lifeboat taking to the air despite her full ballast tanks. Crew Member Danny Major's local fishing experience told him that these conditions would endanger the lifeboat if they ventured too close to shore but, even with an RAF rescue helicopter on the way, all onboard agreed to press on. Every minute might count.

As they rounded the headland, the three volunteers were blinded by spray. The ebbing tide was fighting against the swell, and the waves nearing the cliffs grew closer together, rising 8m. Struggling to make headway, Darren pulled out again until they were abreast of the swimmer's last known location near Breil Nook. Then, picking a course with care, he ran the lifeboat in across the waves.

Anxious cliff-top onlookers pointed the volunteers towards the swimmer as they approached North Landing. Then Crew Member Alistair Docherty spotted him far off. The man was being pushed rapidly eastward, clear of the cliffs – but further on lay rocks. He was drifting so fast that the safest option was to approach stern first, keeping the lifeboat's bow head to sea.

The ebbing tide was fighting against the swell and the waves grew closer, rising 8m

But as Darren turned the craft, a reflected wave knocked her hard to port just as a breaking 5m swell hit. Driven out almost beam on, the lifeboat tipped to 60° and was swamped to seat height – but no one was lost overboard and Darren powered them out. He repositioned straightaway for another attempt and this time used the swell to their advantage.

Reversing in close, the crew knew they were in dangerously shallow water now. Snatching the casualty, Danny and Alistair held him to the side of the lifeboat while Darren drove seaward again until, clear by a good 200m, they were able to haul the cold and exhausted swimmer onboard.

Darren considered a helicopter winch too dangerous so the largely unharmed swimmer was returned to a waiting ambulance at the lifeboat station on South Landing. The whole operation took just 32 minutes, despite the terrible conditions – and it was only the second service for the *Elizabeth Jane Palmer*, on station for just 9 days. All three crew voiced their admiration for the new lifeboat, which had served them so well.

Helmsman Darren Pollard's 'leadership, exemplary boathandling skill and cool-headed decision making' earned him the Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum, while Vellum Service Certificates were awarded to Crew Members Danny Major and Alistair Docherty.

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BOOKS

This quarter, four amazing stories – three of which are true!

Souls of the sea

by Damien Tiernan

Review by Peter Bradley

Souls of the Sea relates the horrifying, true story of the sinking of the *Pere Charles*, *Honey Dew II* and *Renegade* fishing vessels off the south coast of Ireland. It must have been a difficult book to write in view of the ongoing sensitivities surrounding the loss of seven lives in January 2007. The author documents the actions and thoughts of many people who were involved, directly or indirectly, making an interesting and emotional read for those who know or can identify with those mentioned. (I can say that with some certainty having been Inspector of Lifeboats for Ireland during the early 90s.)

It is also interesting and important that the author brings to mind the far-reaching questions arising from these fishing accidents. Fishing quotas, the decline of the fishing industry in Ireland and across Europe, the rise of employment of a new generation of EU nationals within the industry: all involve very difficult questions that deserve answers.

The author does justice to the factual record of events and is clever to balance the documentary with the personal stories of the people left behind, reporting each individual's recollections and emotions. There are only occasional slips. For example a professional mariner would refer to a boat or ship as 'she' and not 'it'.

The search and rescue response is well documented here and successfully brings home that, inevitably in smaller maritime communities, the ones who are lost at sea are often connected to those involved in their search. An obvious conclusion but one that brings home the close connectivity of those who go to sea and the fears that surely prey on the minds of the search and rescue services when looking for close friends or family.

All in all a very complex but worthwhile read that will, perhaps, go a long way to stir the consciences of the decision makers.

Published by Hodder Headline Ireland
ISBN 9780340952511
Price: £12.99 paperback

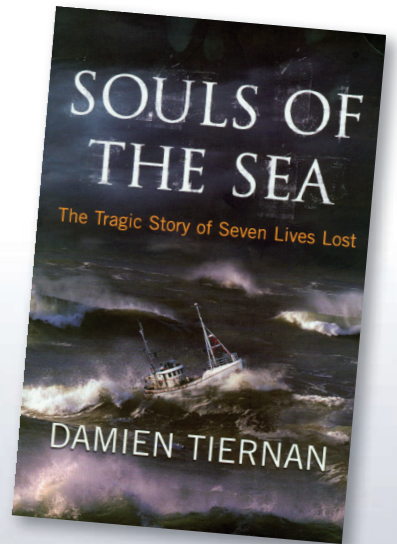
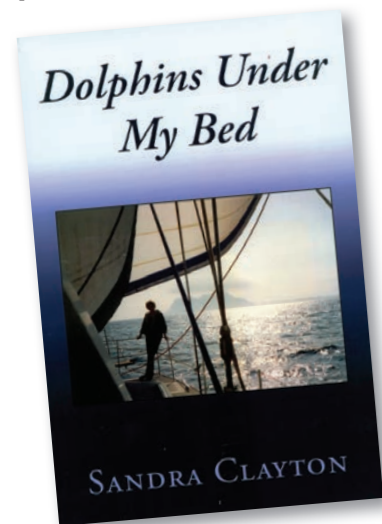


Photo: Laura Wiltshire



Dolphins under my bed

by Sandra Clayton

Review by Carol Waterkeyn

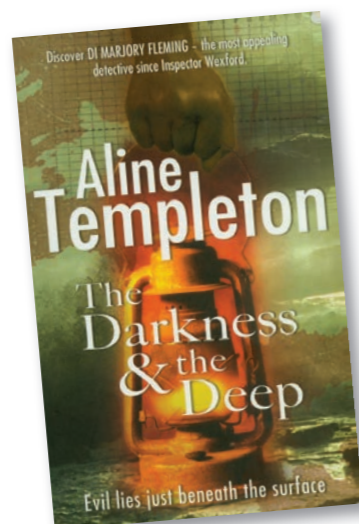
At some stage you might have asked yourself what life would be like if you gave up work, packed up your home and went abroad on an adventure. For most people it is a dream that never materialises, but for Sandra Clayton and her husband the dream became reality.

Fed up with cold, dark English Winters, the stress of work and feeling unwell, the 50-something Claytons took sailing lessons, sold their house, bought a catamaran and sailed to the Mediterranean. This book evolved from Sandra's journal of the trip, and details their joys, triumphs and occasional dark hours on passage from Chichester Harbour to France, Spain, Portugal, Gibraltar and the Balearic Islands.

What I particularly liked about this book was Sandra's enthusiasm for a simpler way of life, the couple's personal view of the places they visited, each with its idiosyncrasies, and their own transformation from novice sailors.

Dolphins would appeal to both experienced boaters and those who have never been on the water. It is free of complicated or technical terminology and is a most charming read.

Published by Wheatmark
ISBN 9781587368165
Price: £13.99 paperback



The darkness and the deep

by Aline Templeton

Review by Mairéad Dwane

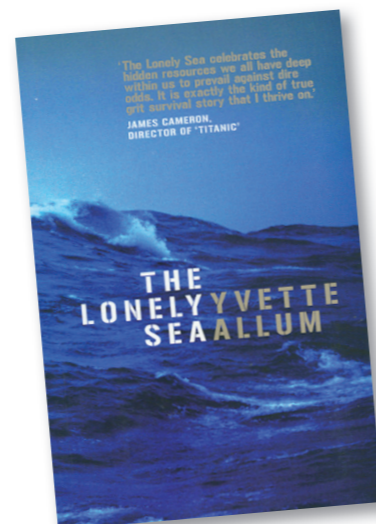
A murder investigation begins after a Scottish town's lifeboat is deliberately wrecked when returning from a shout. So whodunit: the greedy property developer; the buxom town gossip; the over-protective mother of a cuckolded widower?

Despite the clichéd cast, *The darkness and the deep* is very readable, with Templeton serving up plenty of possible killers and motives, keeping the reader guessing until the end. A growing body count also keeps those pages turning.

There are a few lifeboating inaccuracies, such as the presence of a coxswain on an inshore lifeboat, but overall this is a well-paced crime novel with an appealing central character in Detective Inspector Marjory Fleming.

Published by Hodder and Stoughton
ISBN 9780340838587
Price: £6.99 paperback

Unless other ordering details are stated, all books reviewed in *the Lifeboat* are available from good bookshops and online from Amazon via the RNLI website at 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). Offshore members can find further book reviews in their supplement.



The lonely sea

by Yvette Allum

Review by Carol Waterkeyn

James Cameron, Director of the film *Titanic*, is quoted on the cover of this book and sums it up rather well: '*The lonely sea* celebrates the hidden resources we all have deep within us to prevail against dire odds. It is exactly the kind of true grit survival story that I thrive on.'

Sue Dockar's real-life fight for survival begins as she is swept away into the rough, shark-infested seas off Queensland, Australia, during a spear-fishing contest. This rather unusual hobby is fascinating in itself but we meet more 'characters' in the book: the rough and tough men Sue befriends through this pastime, and the love of her life, husband Greg, who never gives up hope that she will be found alive.

Please excuse the pun if I say I was totally hooked by this book. As a novel, this story would be rather unbelievable. As a true story, one wonders where Sue found the strength and determination to survive.

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IRON MEN

Loved or loathed, sculpture punctuates our coastline, from 'installations' to traditional statues. Bethany Hope unveils what impact they have on coastal communities and lifesaving

Contemporary art often inspires diverse and strong opinions, particularly when in a public space. The Eiffel Tower once ignited protest and disdain, but Parisians have grown to love it. Where our beautiful coastline is concerned, people tend to be even more protective. Recent controversial creations include faceless figures near Liverpool, a concrete and glass tower at Portsmouth and plans for a skeleton steel church off Essex.

Shock of the new

The first, Antony Gormley's *Another place* on Crosby beach, Merseyside, comprises 80-plus life-size statues looking out to sea, scattered over a mile of beach, stretching half a mile into the water. They transform the scene. Gormley is passionate about his work, placing something unexpected and removed from daily life in a public space. Created from casts of his own body, the intimate sculptures stand exposed on this public beach and people respond to this on an emotional level.

Locals walk their dogs in among the iron men and visitors come from all over the world to see them. Some view the installation from a distance, in the setting of the coast, while others are drawn to individual figures, touching them and climbing on them, posing for photos. Others come just to see what all the fuss was about. And there was a huge fuss.

Local and national media reported the raging debate. Were objectors against the statues on a purely aesthetic front? Locals, seagoers and nature lovers alike are bound to have strong opinions about an expansive installation altering the seascape. But some simply hated the look of the contemporary sculpture and wanted their beach back the way it always had been.

Others feared that they themselves would be out of pocket. When Portsmouth's Spinnaker Tower opened in 2005 after repeated delays and spiralling costs, council tax payers were left with a bill for millions of pounds. It's harder to appreciate the elegance of the stylised sail when you're paying for it on a daily basis. Supporters argued that the landmark will attract millions of visitors over the years, of long-term financial benefit to the community.

The Gormley figures were intended to be temporary, having previously been shown in Germany, Norway and Belgium. Those who did not like the artwork were placated by the promise of a short stay. But the artist believes Crosby to be the best location for the statues and was determined to 'not let bureaucracy triumph over art'.

Eventually, in 2007, Sefton council granted permanent planning permission for the installation, and Crosby beach has never been so popular. Visitors come in coach loads in all weathers, not just for a few weeks in the Summer. This boosts the local economy and helps raise the profile of Liverpool internationally as a centre of modern art. →

Another place on Crosby beach can evoke mixed emotions

Photo: Simon Clitheroe



Photo: Simon Clitheroe

→ Public safety

Does the popularity of the Crosby installation mean an increase in accidents and lifeboat callouts? As part of the local community themselves, lifeboat crew had their own private opinions, but the RNLI was primarily concerned with any risk to public safety. Tony Clare was the Lifeboat Operations Manager at New Brighton at the time of the permanent planning permission debate. Tony stresses that: 'The RNLI wanted to make it as safe as possible for everyone. The Institution assessed the risks objectively.'

With its rip tides, Crosby beach has always been unsuitable for swimming. Safety signage warns walkers of the dangers and recommends viewing the installation from the promenade. Fears that dozens of people will foolishly walk out to the further men at low tide and get caught out by the tide have not been well founded. Tony reflects: 'Some people will always walk too far out whether there is art there or not. And if they get stuck in the mud, the RNLI will save them whether they are art lovers or not.'

Any 1.8m-high structure sticking out of the shore is a 'potential hazard' to seagoers, according to the RNLI. Some anglers and watersports enthusiasts objected to the installation on this basis. At times, some statues are just 20cm under the water and most satellite navigation systems aren't accurate enough to pinpoint the location of individual statues. Yet, so far, common sea sense has prevailed. Seagoers have kept clear of the sculptures, just as they would avoid other hazards such as rocks, sandbanks and sewage outfalls.

Both the RNLI and Coastguard expressed a specific concern about access at the mouth of the River Alt, used frequently by smaller vessels – and by the New Brighton lifeboat when towing stricken vessels to safety. Gormley listened to the safety concerns and removed 13 statues from the rear of the installation. Also, following RNLI recommendations, marker lights were added to make it safer for vessels.

Despite these sensible precautions, the RNLI knows accidents can still happen and the charity is well equipped and prepared to come to the rescue. The New Brighton hovercraft is an ideal vessel for the area, able to manoeuvre around the visible statues easily and safe from damage by any submerged statues. The station holds regular exercises in the area, with the Atlantic 75 lifeboat, the hovercraft and Hoylake's Mersey class, so they can get used to the hazards

and practise safety measures. Tony Clare stresses the installation has been 'no problem so far'.

The RSPB also objected to some of the statues, those permanently sited in known bird-feeding areas. John Clare (no relation), RSPB Media Officer, says that of course the birds don't mind the statues themselves – 'they're not art critics' – but stresses that the increased numbers of visitors in the formerly quieter area has led to 'a drop in bird numbers on that part of the beach'. The statues that have been removed to keep sailors safe may well be relocated here, at a further cost to birds and bird lovers.

Tradition celebrated

In contrast, a single statue by Sam Holland was unveiled at Moelfre, Anglesey, in late 2004. This more traditional bronze statue depicts double RNLI Gold Medal awardee Dic Evans and was very well received by the local community. Unlike the static Gormley images, the Moelfre statue is lifelike and animated, set at an angle as Dic grapples at the helm. It is clear that this artist had a real empathy for her subject. She had family connections with Moelfre that were only discovered once the work was commissioned: her grandfather was a good friend of Dic Evans. The young sculptor lives on a barge in the Medway and enthuses: 'The sea's in our blood.'

RNLI Second Coxswain Mike Williams is related to Dic Evans and, as one of five in the Moelfre Partnership, organised and raised money for the artwork. When Mike first saw the statue as it took shape in clay, he said that it was so lifelike: 'A shiver went down my spine. It was my Uncle Dic.'

Unveiled by HRH The Prince of Wales, the Moelfre statue has a fine view across the picturesque bay towards the mountains and can be seen from the sea. Some sailors even use this landmark to guide them safely back into harbour. Sam loves the idea that Dic Evans is 'still saving people'. It has wider appeal too – many lifeboating people find it an inspirational focal point for celebrating all their comrades, not just Dic.



'It was so lifelike, a shiver went down my spine. It was my Uncle Dic'

While the unveiling of the Dic Evans sculpture was less controversial than the larger Gormley sculpture, it was not without its detractors. Some people are concerned that the money should have been spent elsewhere, typically on local schools and hospitals rather than art. But the £40,000 cost was raised by the Moelfre Partnership specifically for the statue. Individuals and companies were inspired by the project and gave generously, funding it in just 6 months.

Art is rarely universally applauded. But the vast majority do admire the Moelfre statue and believe it draws people to the village throughout the year. Mike Williams states proudly: 'It's put us back on the map.'

Regeneration

Controversy is now raging over a planned installation off the coast of north Essex, billed as the *Angel of the north* for the east coast. The idea by German architects Anne Niemann and Johannes Ingrisch is to rebuild the



lost church of medieval Walton, lost to the sea through coastal erosion. The 'church', to be constructed by 2012, will be made of stainless steel poles reaching towards the sky, half a mile from the coast.

Roger Evans of The Walton Forum, a voluntary community organisation for the regeneration of Walton, enthuses: 'The project will bring economic revival to an area with some pockets of severe deprivation and will give people a different view of north Essex from the one generally held.' He stresses that the money will not come out of the public purse.

Local opinions are predictably split on the bold plans for the *Lost church*. Ex-RNLI Crew Member John Fletcher, now a lifeboat training coordinator, was initially against the project but, following a presentation by the architects, now supports the project wholeheartedly.

From a sea safety perspective, John stresses that there should be no added danger to vessels as no yachts should come into such shallows and any radar would pick up the massive steel structure anyway. John admires the plans artistically and he too thinks it will revitalise the area: 'This town needs something to make it as popular as it was in the 50s and 60s.'

Time will tell, but it appears unlikely that the sculptures explored on these pages pose a significant threat to public safety. They certainly give great joy and inspiration to thousands and bring much to their local communities. Contemporary art will always antagonise a minority, and intrusions into the natural environment of the sea rile many more but, at best, sculpture adds successfully to the beauty and diversity of our coastline.

A celebration

Many monuments commemorate lifeboating heroes but none records every individual who has died in the RNLI's service trying to save others. This omission is to be corrected with a sculpture at RNLI Headquarters in Poole. After stiff competition, a design by Sam Holland has been chosen. The final stainless steel structure, modelled here, will comprise a 2.4m figure, vulnerable to the elements in a small boat, yet taking the hand of a drowning other: a memorial and celebration.

Funds for this project are being raised through the RNLI Heritage Trust. Phone 0845 121 4999 to find out how you can help make this dream a reality.

Top left: New Brighton's RNLI hovercraft negotiates the artwork at Crosby

Photo: Simon Clitheroe

Bottom left: Sam Holland's remarkable likeness of Gold Medal awardee Dic Evans

Above: Her winning design for the RNLI memorial at Headquarters

Photo: Studio 11

Bottom right: An impression of the proposed *Lost church*

LIFEBOAT LOTTERY



Spring 2008 winners

1st prize: Citroen C2 Cool, Mrs J McKinney, Hampshire (pictured)

2nd prize: Generously donated by P&O Cruises, 7-night French cruise, Mr HC Masters, Kent

3rd prize: £500, Mrs FG Parrington, Oxfordshire

4th prize: £250, Mrs JM Jeavons, Gwynedd

Five prizes: £100 each, Mr ER Colledge, Warwickshire; Prof. HM Purdue, London; Mrs V Glen, Dundee; Mr SP Keeley, Cornwall; Miss A Stubbs, Cheshire.



Autumn prizes

First prize in the Autumn 2008 Lifeboat Lottery is a Peugeot 107 Urban Move three-door hatchback. Second prize is a 7-night cruise to France and the Iberian peninsula with P&O Cruises.

Tickets will be available to supporters on 14 July and earlier to fundraising branches. If you don't usually receive tickets and would like to, please call 0845 121 4999 or email lottery@rnli.org.uk. (Please note that, due to differing tax and gaming laws, lottery tickets are not available in the Rol or Northern Ireland.)

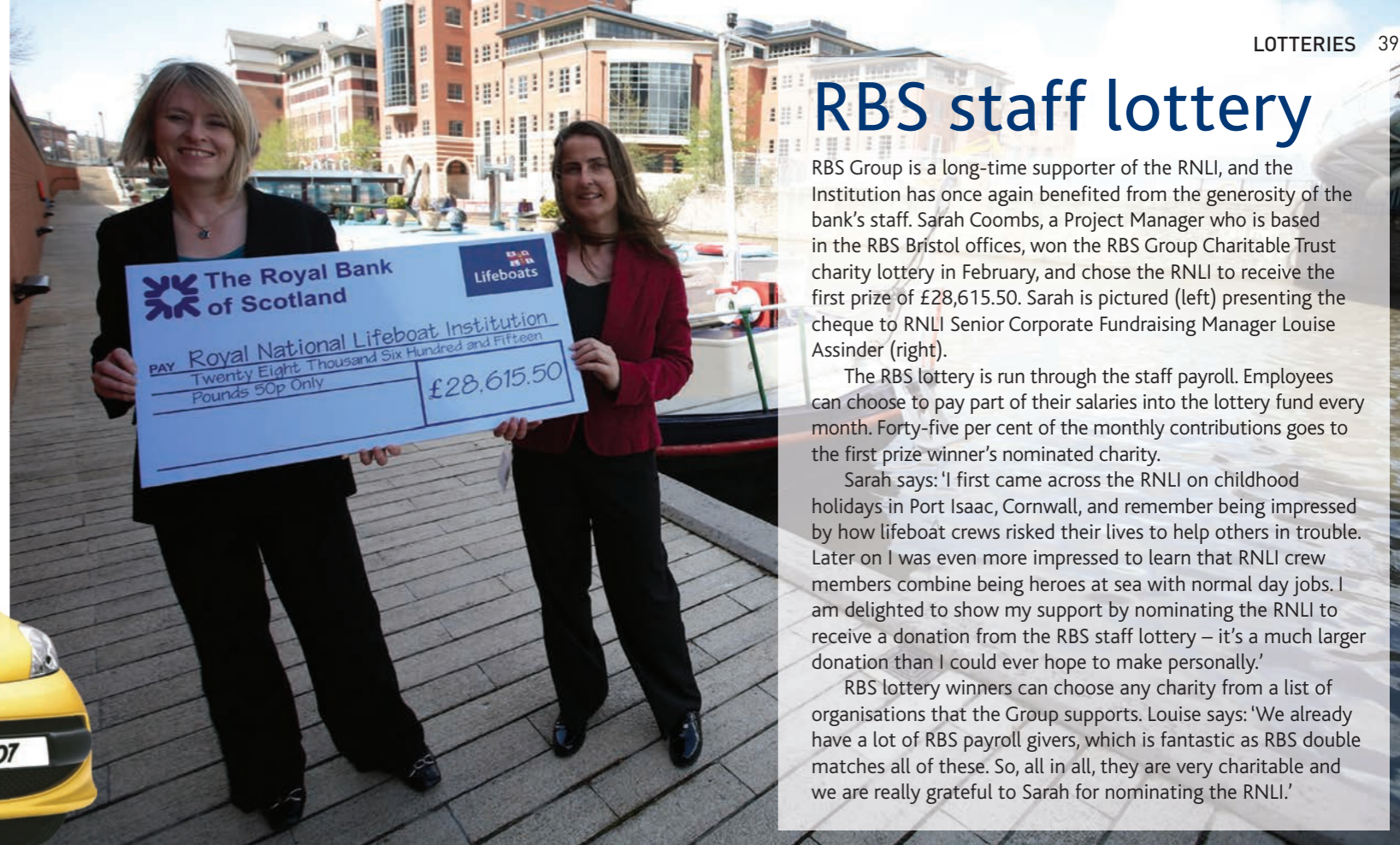
RBS staff lottery

RBS Group is a long-time supporter of the RNLI, and the Institution has once again benefited from the generosity of the bank's staff. Sarah Coombs, a Project Manager who is based in the RBS Bristol offices, won the RBS Group Charitable Trust charity lottery in February, and chose the RNLI to receive the first prize of £28,615.50. Sarah is pictured (left) presenting the cheque to RNLI Senior Corporate Fundraising Manager Louise Assinder (right).

The RBS lottery is run through the staff payroll. Employees can choose to pay part of their salaries into the lottery fund every month. Forty-five per cent of the monthly contributions goes to the first prize winner's nominated charity.

Sarah says: 'I first came across the RNLI on childhood holidays in Port Isaac, Cornwall, and remember being impressed by how lifeboat crews risked their lives to help others in trouble. Later on I was even more impressed to learn that RNLI crew members combine being heroes at sea with normal day jobs. I am delighted to show my support by nominating the RNLI to receive a donation from the RBS staff lottery – it's a much larger donation than I could ever hope to make personally.'

RBS lottery winners can choose any charity from a list of organisations that the Group supports. Louise says: 'We already have a lot of RBS payroll givers, which is fantastic as RBS double matches all of these. So, all in all, they are very charitable and we are really grateful to Sarah for nominating the RNLI.'



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Photos: Getty Images

And all shall be well

Writer, broadcaster and former RNLI PR adviser Libby Purves has glimpsed the transcendent. Now she explains to Liz Cook how a maritime nation might rediscover its soul



'It was Jane Austen who wrote about every family in England having a sailor,' remarks this literary woman. 'But we have become sea blind. The Government, the BBC – no one seems to think the sea is important any more! Yet the *Napoli* grounding and revealing her cargo last year ... that was a real eye opener for a lot of people.'

Libby Purves is known to millions but her audiences occupy varied worlds. Thirty years of presenting on Radio 4 (including *Today*, *Midweek* and *The learning curve*) was joined by fiction writing (her 11th novel is *Love songs and lies*). Both now sit alongside columns in the *Times Educational Supplement* and *Yachting Monthly* and a blog, which allow Libby to share her own opinions. She has strong opinions.

'To suggest that Government fund the RNLI is bonkers – they'd destroy it!' she declares. 'It's the most democratic of the emergency services: funded by the people, run by the people, for the people. That's why, when you rattle a tin, it's such a positive message – no ghastly guilt-inducing images, just the brave volunteers to support.'

It is often the RNLI, she thinks, that reminds us all of something that used to be engrained in the British psyche: the sea. 'Maritime terms are hardwired into our language, like "taken aback" or "bitter end", but our relationship is now more one of looking at the sea than living with it.'

Libby traces this marginalisation: 'Gone are the local riverside harbours, replaced by fenced-off plants in the estuaries, their business unseen. Travelling abroad by plane, we pass over the sea, not on it. Sea pursuits are considered elitist, but most craft are worth less than a moped and thousands of people are quietly seagoing all round the country and bother no one.'

This is the voice of experience – Libby classes herself as a 'very inexperienced' sailor but has proven herself to be overly modest. She can enjoy the lone challenge of a 'brisk' sail in her dinghy on the River Ore at home in Suffolk or thrill in the team effort of square rigger sailing on the high seas. Her account of a family voyage around Britain, *One Summer's grace*, reveals admirable skills and fortitude in the face of startling adversity.

Sharing the adventure 20 years ago were husband Paul Heiney and children Nicholas, then aged 5, and Rose, then 3. 'Rose has her feet firmly on dry land now,' smiles Libby, 'and that's fine. But Nick would come out on deck and gaze up at the stars for hours. He grew to love sailing, especially with Tall Ships, eventually crossing the Atlantic and more.'

Nicholas's diaries are meticulously recorded and annotated in *The silence at the song's end*, published

by his mother after his suicide in 2006. 'I'm so proud of his attitude and the work he did, mentoring younger crew, ensuring the best footholds for those who would follow him into the rigging. At this very moment, someone is safe because of his careful attention to detail. Who knows, if he'd lived, he just might have become a lifeboatman ...'

The profound but hidden depression that carried off her son was something that even the sea could not assuage. For Libby, though, sailing is therapeutic, if sometimes terrifying: 'I'm an absolute wuss at sea – I get very anxious, and have nightmares before setting out.' She denies any masochism though: 'Stepping off dry land and engaging in 3D chess with the wind and waves is the antidote to all of life's problems. You're working for survival so anything extraneous just drops away. It's far more effective than a hedonistic "de-stress" at a spa, where there is no escape!'

Encountering the power of the sea first hand is an 'eternal quest into the unknown' through which she faces both 'glory and doom', even a 'glimpse of the transcendent'. But, as this lapsed Catholic explains in her autobiographical *Holy smoke*, she agrees with 14th century mystic Mother Julian of Norwich that ultimately 'all shall be well.'

She observes: 'People will be safer if they have respect for the sea. Lifeboat crew clearly do – they don't triumph over it, like macho mountaineers

'I'm an absolute wuss at sea – I get very anxious, and have nightmares before setting out'

"taking" a peak, but manage to pluck a casualty from its grip and know it could so easily have been a different outcome.' Libby is cautious about increasing safety legislation. 'It's a slippery slope to regulate against the Captain Calamities of this world – if we adopt a tick box culture we can feel safe when we're not because it's "official".'

'Take the lifejacket rules in Ireland – I can swim out to my boat on a nice warm day without anyone batting an eyelid but if I get in my dinghy without a buoyancy aid I could be arrested. That's just daft!'

The answer is to 'rediscover that instinct we've lost,' asserts Libby. 'Our children should be experiencing the sea for themselves from as young as possible. I'm a supporter of the Parliamentary campaign for adventure, countering the fear of litigation that stands in the way of experiencing life to the full. The RNLI has such a marvellous attitude, not hectoring or whining at seagoers and its free SEA Check scheme is so practical and sensible.'

What of the day when she might need rescuing herself? She knows: 'It can happen to anyone. But I donate to the RNLI in the firm knowledge that my family are rubbish at investments so we will never get "value for money" – with luck!'

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Charlotte by Albert Irvin

Art lover Eric Cass has some rather bright and bold work in his collection and, as Rory Stamp discovers, one of his favourite purchases is a large orange and blue piece ...

Vibrant inspiration

'I love art because it gives you a different way of looking at the world,' says Eric Cass, gazing at his garden. While some people plump for gnomes, sundials and a rockery in their back yards, a multi-coloured cow, wire mesh rhinoceros and bronze running man inhabit the land surrounding Eric's Virginia Water home. It's more of a miniature sculpture park than a garden, while the house doubles as an art gallery. Every space is adorned with 20th and 21st century paintings, ceramics and other objets d'art.

'You never find yourself looking at a blank wall here,' smiles Eric, who was born in Berlin in 1922. He came to England as a child, went on to work as a sound engineer, and later set up a communications technology firm, the success of which helped to fuel

They were presented to Eric and Jean to thank them for a particularly generous 'commission'.

In the early 1990s, the Casses developed a new passion in addition to their love of art: supporting the RNLI. They had long been thinking about building a relationship with a suitable charity when Jean saw a television programme featuring a woman who had donated a lifeboat to the RNLI. She told Eric about it and, following some research, they decided to buy a lifeboat too. 'It was just right, because we love the sea – we go on a lot of cruises – and we wanted to do something where we could get involved,' explains Eric.

The pair agreed to meet the cost of a Mersey class lifeboat to be placed on service at Dungeness, the nearest lifeboat station to Virginia Water. She was named *Pride and Spirit* after the cruise ships on which Eric and Jean often travel. Since then the Casses have befriended lifeboat and volunteers alike, paying for maintenance and a new launching tractor, attending fundraising events and hosting social gatherings. Eric describes the draw: 'I think the Dungeness crew are wonderful because they are a family. You have 6 people in the lifeboat, but 30 people involved. They are totally devoted.'

Eric is more than familiar with the electronic system that alerts volunteers in an emergency, as he is credited with introducing fax and pager technology to the UK. This also explains the unusual name of Eric and Jean's house: Bleep!

It's been a life of proud moments for Eric, the latest of which was accepting an RNLI Supporter Award at the charity's annual ceremony in May, in recognition of his generosity.

'I'm just glad we could help,' he says. 'The power of the sea is awesome. We've seen waves push ships up and down in all directions. And yet these people at Dungeness voluntarily launch into it, to save lives!'



Painting: Helen Taylor

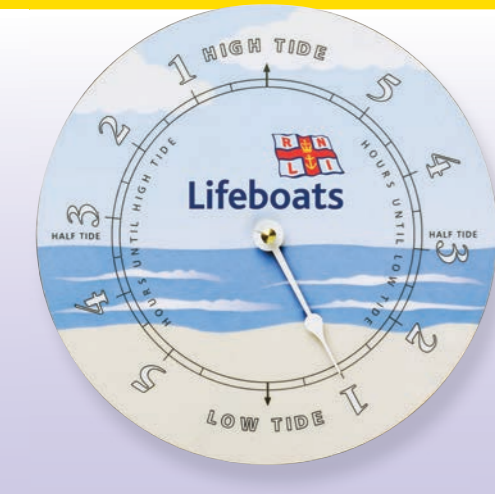
the passion for art that he shares with his wife, Jean. Their collection, acquired since their marriage in the early 1970s, is rich and varied. Eric enthuses: 'Every wall has got something different on it ... different shapes, different colours. It looks different every day.'

An hour spent browsing this vast array, indoors and out, reveals works by relatively unknown artists sitting alongside pieces by the likes of LS Lowry and Elisabeth Frink. Only three items – a scale model, painting and plate – seem to share a theme: an all-weather lifeboat.



Eric Cass is passionate about art, electronics and lifeboats

(For more on the Annual Presentation of Awards see page 8, the crew pager system, page 14, and some coastal sculpture, page 34.)



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Lifeboats

YOUR shout

Dear Editor

My husband and I had quite a chuckle over Ken Aldred's letter in the Spring 2008 issue suggesting what would happen should the RNLI become Government funded. We can only thank God that the RNLI is not funded by the bureaucrats and that brave men and women are prepared to risk their lives as they do.

I am especially interested in the young people who involve themselves in this work. Such a welcome contrast to the gangs I saw street fighting on the news today. Thank you one and all.

Kind regards
Jennifer Ramsden
Glasgow



Dear Editor

As a new supporter of the RNLI, the visit my diving friends and I made recently to Skegness lifeboat station helped us realise what an incredible duty to the public these dedicated volunteers provide.

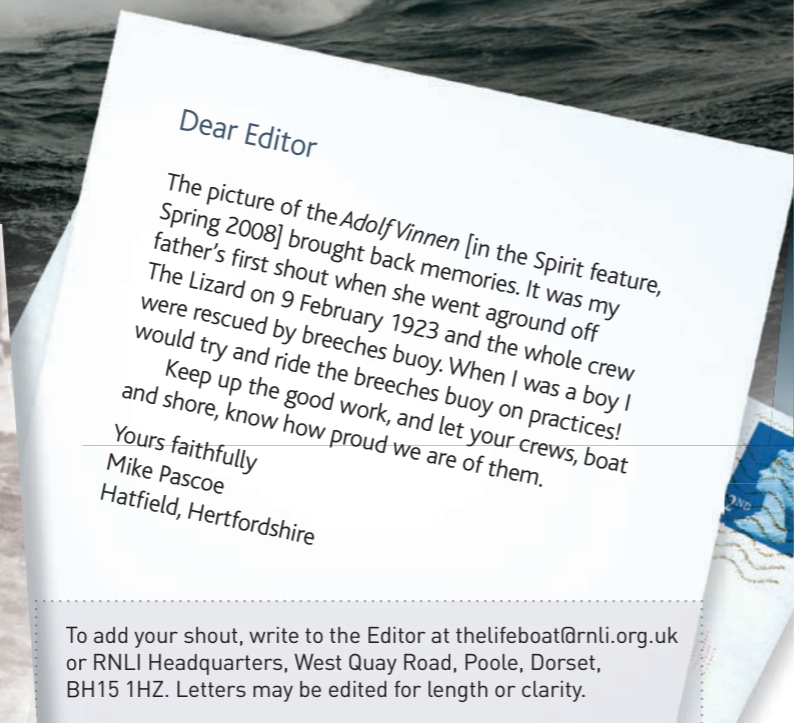
To see the lifeboats' onboard technology, handled by skilled crew members so unfazed by the extreme conditions that a 'shout' could take them into, was awesome. Their training and teamwork were a lesson.

As enthusiastic divers we are trained to be prepared, and encouraged to respect the sea, but things can go wrong. I hope I will never have to call on the service, but it fills me with confidence knowing that it's there.

I support 100% Ken's sentiment that it needs to remain independent of the state and I have no doubt that we sea-loving folk will help keep it afloat for many years to come.

With gratitude
Sarah Blanchard
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire

The Editor comments: These are just two of several such responses to Ken. Also see Libby Purves's opinion on page 46 and more on Skegness station on page 24.



Dear Editor

The picture of the *Adolf Vinnen* [in the Spirit feature, Spring 2008] brought back memories. It was my father's first shout when she went aground off the Lizard on 9 February 1923 and the whole crew were rescued by breeches buoy. When I was a boy I would try and ride the breeches buoy on practices! Keep up the good work, and let your crews, boat and shore, know how proud we are of them.

Yours faithfully
Mike Pascoe
Hatfield, Hertfordshire

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



Dear Editor

Your Spring article 'Out on a shout' mentioned the sinking of two landing craft off Milford Haven in 1943. I was there, serving on HMS *Rosemary* ...

At 6.05pm we sighted distress flares ... but one of the craft capsized and sank leaving 30 men in the sea. Our daughter boat launched

into the gathering gloom, without me in charge, as the Captain required me on the bridge. We were having difficulties in the heavy seas and the shipwrecked men had drifted into too shallow water for us to get to them so we were ordered to return to harbour ... For the last 2 hours we had been operating in water full of enemy mines ...

At 2.15am the wind registered 102mph and both anchor chains snapped. We had no time to dress and turned in our nightclothes, finally reaching safety at 3.20am.

Later that morning we learnt that all the crew of the landing craft and our boat's crew had been lost. The second craft and crew had also been lost excepting two who were washed ashore and the man rescued by the St Davids lifeboat (not Angle as reported), which had made the epic 20 miles down the coast in severe storm force winds ...

I was so impressed by the bravery of the lifeboat crew that in 1952 I joined the Swanage lifeboat and served as Second Coxswain and Coxswain for 26 years.

Yours sincerely
RJ Hardy
Swanage, Dorset

Dear Editor

Further to your article querying the origin of the term 'shout', the first reference that I found is in volume XLVII, issue 475, Spring 1981. A Mr David Hunter, ex-retained fireman, quotes his son's reaction to seeing a lifeboat service: 'Gosh, Dad, what a shout!' The term crept into the lifeboat vocabulary after that.

I still prefer 'call out' – that often had me running to the lifeboat station at Valentia [as Coxswain, now retired].

Best wishes,
Dick Robinson
Ennis, Co. Clare

Dear Editor

'Shout' is also used by the Fire service – it may have come from people shouting 'fire, fire'.

Fran, by email

Dear Editor

St Davids city is about 1 mile from the sea. In the past, coastguards had lookout posts on good viewpoints around the peninsula and, before radios, if they spotted trouble they would hurry into the city on horseback, shouting: 'Call out the lifeboat!' And so a service call became a shout.

Yours sincerely
Dr George Middleton
St Davids, Pembrokeshire



Dear Editor

I was pleased to see your article regarding the official reopening of the RNLI Grace Darling museum in Northumberland. The interior looks very impressive. I am a descendent of Grace Darling's brother and look forward to visiting the museum again. I was a lighthouse keeper's daughter myself and have written a book *Last of the line*. I give talks locally about lighthouses, keepers and their families and, as a Governor of the RNLI, the gratuities I receive I send to the RNLI.

Best wishes
Patricia Gumbrell
Swanage, Dorset

Dear Editor

Shortly after reading your report of the Grace Darling museum, I decided to visit.

Your article does not do it justice. Although it seems to be an expensive refurbishment, judging from the comments of other visitors young and old, it is very much appreciated. After the short visual display, two young ladies actually burst into applause. The viewing balcony gives spectacular views across to Lindisfarne and was worth the visit alone.

Hopefully many more visitors will be inspired to take advantage of the facilities and further the good work of the Institution.

Yours faithfully
Lesley Jameson
Driffield, East Yorkshire

Correction:
RNLI Chairman Sir Jock Slater opened the rebuilt Grace Darling museum, not Trustee Ron Neil as misreported in the last issue.



At Nature's mercy

Bembridge's first lifeboat station was built in 1867 and the lifeboat was launched off a horse-drawn carriage and powered by oar and sail. New lifeboats followed, notably a motor-powered craft in 1922. To launch directly into deep water meant building the boathouse, slipway and walkway that are largely still in existence today. Adaptations were made for subsequent new lifeboats including in 1987 the Tyne class *Max Aitken III*, soon to be retired. Despite extensive repairs, the whole site is now suffering from concrete rot and falling apart but the station has been chosen to receive a new Tamar class lifeboat – so a radical rebuild is planned.

Building, maintaining and replacing lifeboat stations has always been one of the charity's most costly activities, as noted by the RNLI's Chairman Sir Jock Slater during his 2008 Annual General Meeting speech in May: 'Many [lifeboat stations] are sited in exposed and sometimes remote locations and are inevitably very costly to build and maintain; they are expected to last for at least 50 years. Our new stations must also incorporate equipment and facilities that were often not provided in the past: changing rooms, crew training space and so on.'

Sir Jock added that the RNLI Estates department doesn't just deal with lifeboat stations – it has also

been busy planning lifeguard facilities. The expansion of the RNLI lifeguard service to Norfolk in 2007 and Pembrokeshire this Summer has required the provision of new lifeguard area support centres (offices where small management teams run the area's lifeguard operations).

Lifeguard units, which act as beach bases for lifeguard patrols, also need building and updating. Many current units are simply lock-ups or old huts, but the RNLI is keen to provide purpose-built cabins and towers. These are designed to house and protect essential lifesaving equipment, with room for first aid treatment, changing space and observation areas, while conforming to rigorous planning guidelines.

Thanks to the RNLI's supporters, a new lifeguard unit is due to be built at one of the most popular seaside destinations in Cornwall: Fistral beach. It will provide much-needed patrol facilities for Fistral's RNLI lifeguards, who went to the aid of 426 people in 2007. With work starting on the new facility this year, they'll be equipped to save lives for many years to come.



Top: Bembridge lifeboat station is certainly due for renewal
Bottom: RNLI lifeguards need the best facilities too – including this unit planned for Fistral Beach, Cornwall

Illustration: Poynton Bradbury Wynter Cole architects

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'Twas a dark and stormy night

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6 December 2008

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