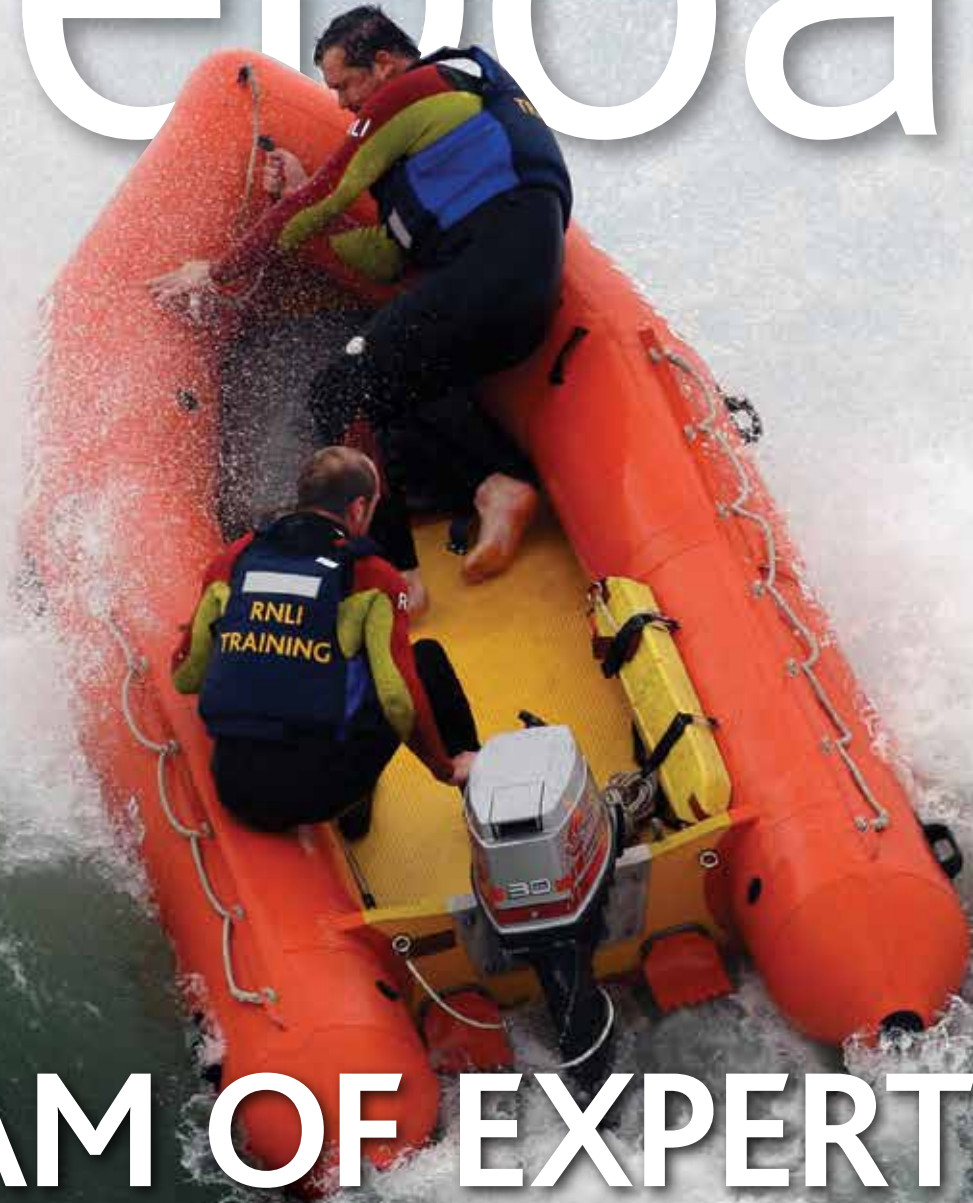


ISSUE 596  
SUMMER 2011



# the lifeboat



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Days 1-2: Fly to Delhi. Leave London on an overnight flight to Delhi. Arrive on Day 2 and transfer to our 5-star hotel.

Day 3: Sightseeing in Delhi. A sightseeing tour, visiting the monuments, ancient streets, and colourful markets of Old Delhi, including India's largest mosque and the imposing Red Fort.

Day 4: To Shimla. Board the *Shatabdi Express* to Kalka, changing to the narrow-gauge *Toy Train*, recently awarded UNESCO World Heritage status, into the Shivalik mountain range to Shimla. Spend three nights at the fabulous 5-star Oberoi Cecil Hotel.

Days 5-6: Explore Shimla. Join a tour to explore this remarkable city, taking in the unique combination of Indian and British Colonial architecture. Day 6 is free to stroll around at your own pace, visiting the bazaar or the fascinating museums.

Day 7: Return to Delhi. Leave by *Toy Train* for the journey back down the mountains through stunning landscapes to Kalka, joining the *Shatabdi Express* to Delhi for another overnight stay.

Day 8: The Taj Mahal and Agra Fort. Join the *Shatabdi Express* to Agra, visiting the imposing Red Fort, built on a hill above Agra by Emperor Shah Jahan, then travel across the city to the Taj Mahal, built as a mausoleum for his wife. Transfer to the 5-star Mughal Sheraton for the night.

Day 9: Fatehpur Sikri. Journey to Fatehpur Sikri, a perfectly preserved ancient sandstone city, then continue north to the Pink City of Jaipur for three nights at the 5-star Sheraton Rajputana Palace.

Days 10-11: Jaipur. Visit to the City Palace - still home to the Maharaja, the astronomical observatory and the colourful market. Day 11 is free for you to further explore Jaipur at your leisure.

Day 12: The Amber Fort then return to Delhi. Into the hills to the Amber Fort, passing the Jal Mahal water palace along the way. Admire the imposing façade, intricate interior and views of the Aravalli mountains then visit the pink sandstone Palace of the Winds. The afternoon is free for you to explore before the evening journey back to Delhi, for a final overnight stay.

Day 13: To London. Transfer to Delhi airport for our return flight to London arriving late afternoon.

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### THE RNLI

A charity registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736). Charity number CHY 2678 in 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 UK, RoI, IoM and Cls; on the tidal reaches of the River Thames; and on selected inland waterways plus a seasonal lifeguard service on appropriate beaches in England, Wales, NI and Cls. The RNLI is independent from Government and continues to rely on voluntary contributions and legacies for its income.

### Chairman:

Admiral the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL  
Chief Executive: Paul Boissier

### SUPPORTING THE RNLI

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

### CONTACT DETAILS

- RNLI Headquarters: telephone 0845 122 6999, email [info@rnli.org.uk](mailto:info@rnli.org.uk) or write to RNLI, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ
- Supporter Care Team, for membership, donations, Lifeboat Lottery enquiries: telephone 0845 121 4999, email [supporter\\_care@rnli.org.uk](mailto:supporter_care@rnli.org.uk) or write c/o Headquarters address above
- Legacies Team, to find out about gifts in Wills: telephone 01202 663032, email [mark\\_allwood@rnli.org.uk](mailto:mark_allwood@rnli.org.uk) or write to him c/o Headquarters address
- Family association, for retired staff and operational volunteers: telephone 01202 662222
- Lifeboat Enthusiasts' Society: email [john\\_francis@rnli.org.uk](mailto:john_francis@rnli.org.uk)
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## Dear Reader

I'm writing this while the RNLI's Patron, HM The Queen, visits the Republic of Ireland – the first UK monarch to do so since independence.

This lifesaving charity has worked across borders and within all kinds of communities for over 185 years. The spirit that unites us can be described with words like courage, selflessness, dependability and trustworthiness – the RNLI values. And pride.

Displayed every day of the year by our lifeboat crews and lifeguards (see pages 18–31) these qualities are also manifest by our Flood Rescue Team (12), our shore crews (34) and our engineers (4).

I needed a little courage recently when I took the spare seat on an Atlantic 85 under test at our

Lifeboat Maintenance Centre (read about refits on page 56) but I knew I could depend on my highly trained colleagues.

All our values were displayed on SOS Day in January (pictured below). This, the RNLI's biggest fundraising day of the year, drew together school and work communities, shoppers and adventurers, in supporting their favourite charity. I'm pleased to announce that, now almost all the pennies and cents have been counted, together we're well on our way to achieving the amazing result of £500,000. Be proud!

  
Liz Cook, Editor



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



Training lifeboat crews and lifeguards keeps them safe too. See pages 4, 12, 20 and 47. Photo: Phil Monckton



Blind and partially sighted readers can choose to receive an audio tape or CD version as well as the magazine – this is a free service. Please contact Tracy Carey on 01202 662254 or email [tracy\\_carey@rnli.org.uk](mailto:tracy_carey@rnli.org.uk).

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[www.GreatRail.com](http://www.GreatRail.com)

Dates and prices are subject to availability. Prices shown are per person based on 2 sharing. Terms and conditions apply. The 2012 itinerary operates a slightly different order, but still includes everything which is shown in the 2011 itinerary.



# the Lifeboat

SUMMER 2011 ISSUE 596  
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### Introducing the Shannon class lifeboat



We're delighted to announce that our next all-weather lifeboat class, due on station in 2013, will be called the Shannon. We've been naming lifeboats after rivers or stretches of water for 45 years, but this is the first time the name of an Irish river has been used.

The Shannon is the longest river in Ireland and, at 240 miles, is longer than any river in the UK. It is home to two lifeboat stations – Kilrush, at the mouth of the Shannon Estuary, and Lough Derg, on one of the river's lakes.

Until the class becomes fully operational, it will still be known by its codename FCB2 (Fast Carriage Boat 2). Then it will gradually replace the Mersey class, which has been in service since 1988.

The Shannon class will be powered by waterjets instead of propellers, making it

more manoeuvrable and safer to operate in shallow waters. This will also reduce the risk of damage to the lifeboat during launch and recovery. The Shannon class will be launched from a tractor-drawn carriage.

Like the Tamar, it will be equipped with SIMS, the System and Information Management System that allows crew members to monitor and operate many of the lifeboat's functions from the safety of their seats. It will have a top speed of 25 knots (the Mersey is capable of 17 knots) and will be self-righting, returning to an upright position in the event of a capsize.

The prototype, designed by the RNLI's in-house marine engineers and numbered 13-01, is currently being built and fitted out. Sea trials will begin later this year.

### Specialist training for new crew, supported by The LRET

With only 1 in 10 joining the RNLI from a professional maritime occupation, training is especially important. Formerly, inshore and all-weather crew were trained separately – now, they are taught the core skills together, increasing both effectiveness and efficiency.

In further good news, The Lloyd's Register Educational Trust (The LRET) has agreed to donate almost £1M to fund the sea survival element of this new course over the next 5 years. The LRET is an independent

charity working to achieve advances in transportation, science, engineering and technology education, training and research worldwide for the benefit of all.

This follows a donation to the RNLI of £625,000 in recent years. Peter Christmas and Michael Franklin (pictured), a Trustee and the Director of The LRET respectively, visited RNLI College to mark this new chapter in our partnership. RNLI Fundraising and Communications Director David Brann

### Appealing for faster Cowes



The RNLI took on the running of Cowes Lifeboat Station on the Isle of Wight in 2008. Based in a small, temporary facility within Shepards Wharf Marina, Cowes lifeboat launched 41 times last year and rescued 49 people.

Now, we are planning to turn the town's old Custom House building into a permanent and much more suitable station. The new station will be nearer the open sea, and the crews will reach casualties in the busy Solent stretch 4 minutes faster – which could be the difference between life and death.

Actress Celia Imrie, star of *Acorn Antiques*, *Nanny McPhee* and *Cranford* launched an appeal to raise the £1M required. She said: 'All the crew are total volunteers, and it is absolutely wonderful to think that they are going to have a new station nearer the Solent.'

Visit [rnli.org.uk/cowesappeal](http://rnli.org.uk/cowesappeal).



says: 'We are extremely grateful to The LRET for such a generous sum. And the huge bonus is that their commitment to a full 5 years of funding will allow us to plan crew training with confidence.'

### What if they don't listen?

For the past 10 years, RNLI lifeguards have carried a 'duty of care' to provide a reasonable level of care to all beach users.

Our lifeguards interact with members of the public more than 2M times a year. Most of the time, people are glad to speak to the lifeguards and happy to take their advice. But some people choose to ignore the lifeguards and carry on with dangerous activities.

In these cases, the RNLI now has a 'duty of warning' rather than a 'duty of care' – we must make people aware of the risks on the beaches we patrol but, should they choose to ignore our advice, their safety is no longer our responsibility.

Of course, RNLI lifeguards will still do everything in their power to keep all beach goers safe. This line in the sand simply protects our lifeguards from undue aggression and litigation.



### Shucks! We're Hillsborough's official charity



The RNLI is the official charity of this year's Hillsborough International Oyster Festival.

Seafood lovers will gather in the Co Down town to chow down on a slippery supper, watch the World Oyster Eating Championship and enjoy the live music and festival atmosphere.

Money raised will go towards training lifeboat crews in Northern Ireland.

The festival runs from 1–4 September. Visit [hillsboroughoysterfestival.com](http://hillsboroughoysterfestival.com) to see the full programme of events.



### New for Summer: trendy tees

RNLIshop has teamed up with fresh coastal fashion label Seasalt to launch a new range of lifeguard-themed clothing.

T-shirts and hoodies are available for men, women and children, all made from 100% organic cotton. Prices start at £15 for children's garments and £18 for adults.

RNLI Head of Sales Clare McDermott says: 'We are delighted with our new clothing range and have worked very closely with Seasalt to incorporate everything we love about the sea in a modern and fashionable collection. We hope to see plenty of people adopting a new look this Summer and donating to the RNLI at the same time!'

The range is available in selected RNLIshop retail outlets and at [rnli.org.uk/seasalt](http://rnli.org.uk/seasalt).

### Money for old clothes

Look out for RNLI textile collection bags coming through UK letterboxes this Summer. Fill them up with your unwanted clothes and Local Community Recycling Services Ltd will recycle them on our behalf.

A 5-month pilot and a subsequent year-long trial period have already brought in a staggering £115,000 to help save lives at sea.

Textile recycling is a great way to put unwanted clutter to good use, but there have been some scams in which unscrupulous operators have sent out bogus charity bags. If you receive a bag that looks like the picture below, it is a genuine RNLI collection.

Meanwhile, The Recycling Factory raised £130,000 for the RNLI in 2010 by recycling printer cartridges and mobile phones. Visit [therecyclingfactory.com/rnli.asp](http://therecyclingfactory.com/rnli.asp) or call 0800 091 0696 to find out more.



### Lifesaving savings

Open a savings account with Furness Building Society and support the RNLI.

Furness Building Society has launched an affinity account with the RNLI under a 'You save – we give' banner. The society will make a cash payment each year to the RNLI equal to 1% of the average balance held in all RNLI affinity accounts.

This means the more you save for your own rainy day, the more Furness Building Society donates to the RNLI.

The RNLI affinity account is open to investors throughout the UK. Find out more at [furnessbs.co.uk/savings/affinity](http://furnessbs.co.uk/savings/affinity).



# In celebration of 2010

On 19 May 2011, the RNLI's Annual General Meeting heard about the charity's key activities from 2010, and the Annual Presentation of Awards recognised the outstanding achievements of lifesavers, fundraisers and supporters

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

In 2010 the RNLI experienced one of its most demanding years on record. Our lifeboat crews and lifeguards aided more people than ever, while our fundraisers worked tirelessly to keep the charity afloat in an uncertain economic climate.

Everyone involved in the RNLI showed tremendous commitment to the cause of saving lives at sea – the strong volunteering ethos that underpins the institution's work was once again demonstrated to the full.

Our lifeboats launched 8,713 times from the 235 lifeboat stations around the UK and RoI, rescuing 8,313 people – our busiest ever year in terms of people rescued.



And our lifeguards operated at over 150 beaches in England and Wales, attending 16,664 incidents and aiding 18,779 people.

Our lifesavers are all willing to save lives at sea in challenging conditions, but they are not able to do so without training, equipment, support and facilities. These all come at a considerable cost, especially as kit, lifeboats and buildings have to be repaired, maintained and, occasionally, replaced.

That is why I would like to pay tribute to those who helped to meet the cost of running our sea rescue charity in 2010. Thanks to our fundraisers and supporters, our total income was £153.6M, including legacy income of £90.6M. Our running costs were £145.4M and our capital spend (primarily on new lifeboats and stations) was £37.5M.

For the future, there can be no let up in the pressure to raise the funds that will help us achieve three key aims: to complete the build of our 25-knot all-weather lifeboat fleet, to expand the lifeguard service to all the beaches that need it, and to increase our coastal safety activities, preventing more loss of life at sea through advice and education. But we are currently focused on making significant savings in the coming years, by looking at everything we do to improve our efficiency. That way we can continue to operate at the same high standards at less cost; and make our supporters' donations go even further than ever.

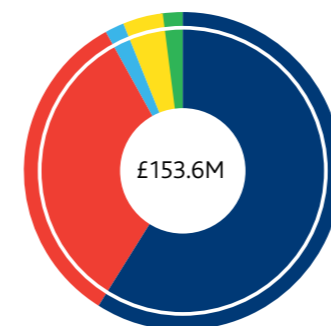
To all those who help us save lives at sea: thank you.  
Admiral the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL  
Chairman, Royal National Lifeboat Institution



## 2010 FINANCIAL YEAR

### INCOME

2010 was again a challenging year for the RNLI's fundraising as the UK and RoI's difficult economic conditions continued. Nevertheless, following the excellent work of our fundraisers, raised voluntary income at £51.5M fell just £0.3M short of 2009. Legacies, too, were down on the prior year by £3.1M at £90.6M. Investment income reduced by £1.6M after investment strategy changes into pooled funds, and net merchandising and other trading was down by £1.0M, but lifeguarding and other income was up by £0.4M. Overall, total net income was down by £5.5M on 2010.

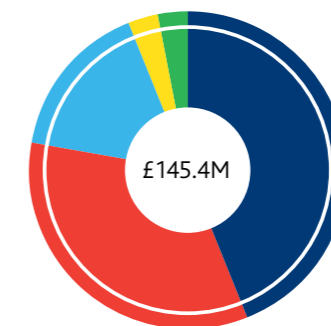


|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| ■ Legacies                            | 59% |
| ■ Raised voluntary income             | 33% |
| ■ Net investment income               | 2%  |
| ■ Net merchandising and other trading | 4%  |
| ■ Lifeguarding and other income       | 2%  |

### REVENUE EXPENDITURE

Overall revenue expenditure at £145.4M was reduced by £2.3M on the prior year, in spite of a small increase of £0.4M in rescue as we continued our expansion of lifeguarding.

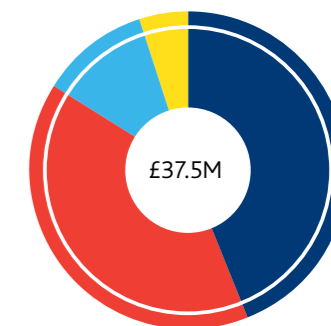
Expenditure was down on 2010 in the cost of generating voluntary income £0.6M, prevention £0.6M, operational maintenance £1.0M and innovation £0.4M, in part following poor weather at the start and end of the year, and also as a result of savings across the board following the launch of the RNLI's Lean programme in May 2010.



|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| ■ Rescue                              | 44% |
| ■ Operational maintenance             | 34% |
| ■ Cost of generating voluntary income | 16% |
| ■ Prevention                          | 3%  |
| ■ Innovation                          | 3%  |

### CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

We continued our programme of replacing and improving our lifeboats and lifeboat stations in 2010 with total capital expenditure of £37.5M, down £5.1M from last year's high levels. Our shoreworks programme was held back by difficulties with planning consents, and the adverse weather conditions at both the beginning and end of the year. We also withdrew £11.6M from our investments during the year to fund this work. In all, we added 4 new Tamar all-weather lifeboats, 22 inshore lifeboats and completed 12 major lifeboat station projects.



|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| ■ Lifeboat stations                 | 44% |
| ■ Lifeboats and launching equipment | 40% |
| ■ Other plant and equipment         | 11% |
| ■ Other operational property        | 5%  |

Income and expenditure is shown net of the cost of merchandising and other trading (£8.7M) and investment fees (£1.2M).

This summary is intended to give an understanding of the overall financial position of the RNLI for 2010 and has been taken from the full audited accounts for the year ended 31 December 2010. Please contact RNLI Headquarters to receive a copy, or download from the website at [rnli.org.uk/2010](http://rnli.org.uk/2010).

### Governors agree to Charter and Bye-Law changes

After 2 years of planning, the AGM saw our Governors vote for changes to our Charter and Bye-Laws by a significant majority.

RNLI Improvement and Governance Manager Anjie Rook, who has had responsibility for steering these improvements, says: 'This is great news. The fundamental reason behind the proposal is the need to modernise our arrangements to reflect recent changes in both charity and company law.

'The changes were largely of a "housekeeping" nature and there are no radical departures from our Objects or

governance arrangements. Instead we believe that the changes will make it easier for Governors and all our supporters to understand fully – and participate in – the work of the RNLI.'

One of the major proposals was to move some governance and administrative processes from the Charter to the Bye-Laws so that they can be updated in the future without recourse to the Privy Council. This gives the RNLI better control and the ability to update these provisions in an easier way.

'We also wanted to develop a set of governing documents that are clearer and

easier to read,' adds Anjie. 'The Plain English Campaign were very helpful with their review of the new Bye-Laws and we have created something that lawyers and the person on the street can understand and work with.'

While approval was given by the Governors, the modernisation can't take place until the Privy Council has approved the developments and this is likely to be in the Autumn. At that point, everyone will be given access to the new Royal Charter and Bye-Laws, either via our website or by paper copies on request.



Lifeboats launched 3,230 times in darkness

Lifeguards carried out 1,958,581 preventative actions



17,320

children learned safety messages in the Beach to City education programme



RNLI shops sold over 7M RNLI Christmas cards and enough rock to cover 131 lengths of an Olympic swimming pool



15 launches on Christmas Day



Lifeboat crews rescued 8,313 people



Our lifeboat volunteers spent 10,758 hours saving lives at sea

## Supporters of the year

Every RNLI supporter helps save lives at sea, but there are some who deserve special recognition. At our Annual Presentation of Awards dozens of dedicated supporters were honoured. Prestigious supporter awards were presented in the following categories:



### Corporate: The co-operative food

The co-operative food (Scotland, Northern Ireland and Isle of Man) set an ambitious fundraising target of £90,000 in 90 days last year, launching on SOS Day. The generosity of staff and customers resulted in an astonishing £190,198 being raised.



### Group: The Maltby Siblings

Three siblings – William Maltby, Caroline Roe and Sophie Ross – sailed and rowed their 3.5m dinghy the full length of the navigable Thames, overcoming all possible challenges en route, raising over £70,000 for the Bembridge Lifeboat Station appeal.



### Media Relations: Sonny Wells

Aged 20, Sonny was left paralysed after jumping from a pier. He has shown enormous courage by sharing his story as part of the RNLI's campaign to highlight the dangers of tombstoning.



### Youth: Tery Connor

Aged 19, Tery knows what motivates young people and, by using his contacts with local youth services, has not only become a very effective presenter but has encouraged other young people to participate as fundraisers in the Perth community.



### Supplier: Crewsaver

Crewsaver has supplied the RNLI's lifejackets for many years, and worked with our Engineering Team on developing a new lifejacket, specifically for search and rescue, that is currently on trial at lifeboat stations. We'll tell you more in a future issue!



### Retail: Queensferry Lifeboat Shop

Miss Rose Ritchie and her team of volunteers doubled their income in 6 years and achieved the third highest turnover in Scotland, with a mobile shop that is wheeled out in all weathers to meet visitors arriving by boat.



### Individual: Mrs Phyl Cleare

Phyl has funded no fewer than four lifeboats, and has always been a much-loved visitor at Weymouth and Swanage lifeboat stations, even joining in when the boats need a polish!



### School: Mersea Island School

This Essex school actively involves the local lifeboat station, crew and Education Team in helping children to learn about the work of the RNLI and staying safe.

Awardees received one of these elegant bronze sculptures to mark their dedicated support



Words: Mairéad Dwane

Photos: RNLI/(Tim Ash, Nigel Millard, Spencer Gammond, Nathan Williams, Eleanor Driscoll, Hamish Campbell), Jon Stokes, Paul Edwards, Andrew Filipinski

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Departs 11<sup>th</sup> Aug 2011 – 16 nights  
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Prices from £1,371pp

Dover, *Qaqortoq* (Greenland), *Narsarsuaq* (Greenland), *Nanortalik* (Greenland), *Isafjordur* (Iceland), on board stay overnight in *Reykjavik* (Iceland), Dover

FREE £100\* On Board Spend per cabin

### St Petersburg & the Baltic

Departs 18<sup>th</sup> Aug 2011 – 14 nights  
From Southampton – *Balmoral* – L1113

Prices from £1,424pp

Southampton, *Cruise Kiel Canal*, *Saaremaa* (Estonia), *Tallinn* (Estonia), *Helsinki* (Finland), on board stay two-nights in *St Petersburg* (Russia), *Copenhagen* (Denmark), *Ålborg* (Denmark), Southampton

FREE £100 On Board Spend per cabin

### Dublin & Around the UK

Departs 1<sup>st</sup> Sep 2011 – 9 nights  
From Rosyth – *Boudicca* – D1118

Prices from £843pp

Rosyth, *Kirkwall* (Orkney Isles), *Belfast* (N. Ireland), *Dublin* (Ireland), *Milford Haven* (Wales), *St Peter Port* (Guernsey), *Portsmouth* (England), Rosyth

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During Exercise Watermark, members of the RNLI Flood Rescue Team train, and forge close working relationships, with crews from other specialist agencies

# Dry run

While the prospect of warmer Summers may seem appealing, the reality of global warming may be more severe flooding

In March this year, 70 members of the RNLI Flood Rescue Team helped test whether England and Wales are prepared to deal with the threat of inland flooding when they participated in Britain's largest-ever civil emergency exercise. Known as Exercise Watermark, this 4-day event simulated catastrophic floods like those seen in 1953 when 307 people lost their lives in the UK.

In all, 10,000 people participated in the exercise that involved 10 Government departments, emergency responders, utility companies, hospitals and schools. The rehearsal came as the result of a recommendation by Sir Michael Pitt who conducted a wide-ranging report following flooding in Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire in the Summer of 2007.

The event, which was organised by the Environment Agency on behalf of DEFRA and the Welsh Assembly, took place over 4 days in early March at Bala in north Wales, Tattershall Lake in Lincolnshire and Ardleigh Reservoir in Essex. One of its main aims was to improve communications between the

different bodies involved in flood relief.

There are numerous agencies that assist with flood rescue, making planning and logistics extremely complicated. When a flood is imminent in England or Wales, calls for help will be made to rescue organisations, the largest of which is the RNLI. Rescue operations are then coordinated by the Police but on-the-scene operations are run by the Fire and Rescue service.

The RNLI has flood teams throughout the UK and RoI but because of regional government

devolution similar flood exercises are so far only planned in England and Wales. However, RNLI teams from the RoI, NI and Scotland are listed as available and would also be deployed wherever they were needed.

The RNLI has been involved in international flood rescue work since 1970 but a dedicated domestic team was only established in 2009 after several call outs showed that standard training was not enough to prepare volunteers for the hazards of flood water.

During Exercise Watermark, RNLI volunteers got the opportunity to work alongside crews from Fire and Rescue, the RAF, MCA, RSPCA, British Red Cross, Mountain Rescue and specialist ambulance crews. Rescue scenarios included a semi-submerged caravan with three people trapped inside, and casualties needing to be evacuated from the rooftops of submerged houses, cars and from fast flowing water.

RNLI volunteer Paul Filby, who took part in the exercises in north Wales says: 'It was really worthwhile training. It was good to see how people from different organisations work. It forged some great working relationships and friendships between the different organisations and brought down a lot of barriers. I think that any subsequent rescues will be much better because of this working relationship.'

Robin Goodlad, RNLI Flood Response Manager says: 'The event was extremely well run, and as close as you can get to a real flood. It was good to test the infrastructure and showed we had the ability to cope. It gave the RNLI teams a really good opportunity to work with all the organisations that they would be working with in a real flood incident.'

Robin has been involved in flood-rescue work for the RNLI for the past 10 years. He explained how vital it is that volunteers are trained to understand the many unseen hazards that lurk beneath and within flood water.

'Even in really shallow water, if it's fast flowing you can't stand up if it's more than calf deep. If a person's foot becomes trapped in an unseen hole they can be pulled down and held under the water.'

'Fast flowing water often traps people against what are known as 'strainers', such as fences, through

## RNLI FLOOD RESCUE TEAM (FRT)

- 6 divisions and 16 boat teams
- 300 members in the UK and RoI
- 60 members eligible for international service (pictured below in Guyana in 2005)

The RNLI relies on voluntary donations for the funding of its UK flood-relief work but recently gained a one-off grant to buy equipment required by new DEFRA regulations. The FRT is also receiving sponsorship from Toolstation until 2013.







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» and around which water is flowing. Once pinned against such a barrier it can become impossible to get away. Flood water also carries sewage and pollutants and further risks arise from wet electrical equipment.'

This was graphically demonstrated during one incident in Lewes, East Sussex, in 2000, when an RNLI boat was sucked down beneath the water after being pinned alongside a bridge. All the crew members survived unharmed, but only just. The last man onboard narrowly escaped being pulled under the bridge where wire and debris meant he would have stood no hope of surviving. Today, anyone involved in flood-relief work for the RNLI will be a certified swift-water technician, with a thorough understanding of the distinct dangers of flood waters.

The devastating flooding of 1953 was caused by a combination of high spring tides and a severe windstorm resulting in a tidal surge down the North Sea. Water levels reached 5.6m above average, overwhelming sea defences in the Netherlands, Belgium and on the east coast of England. The international death toll is thought to have been 2,400.

Today, according to the Environment Agency, one in six homes in England and Wales is at risk of flooding and the annual bill from flood damage in these two countries alone is £1.2B. Rising sea levels and increasingly severe and frequent rain storms caused by climate change mean that this situation is only likely to get worse.

In 2009, Paul Filby was part of the rescue operation in Cumbria. A lifeboat crew member at Criccieth in Wales for 27 years, he described the situation they faced: 'The water was running through the town and buildings at such a fast pace. It was absolute carnage; I'd never seen anything like it.'

'Lifeboat calls at sea can be over in an hour or so. With flood-rescue work we know we are going to be away for several days and don't quite know what is going to happen. There is fear, shock and excitement all rolled into one.'

'With flood rescue, the RNLI is extending the boundaries. I'm just so happy and proud to be part of it.'

Words: Jo Roche

Photos: Robin Goodlad

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# RESCUE

## 1 ISLAND FIRE

Baltimore's Tyne class lifeboat *Hilda Jarrett* was called into action on 18 March, when a fire broke out on Cape Clear Island. Fire crews from Skibbereen were needed on the island, home to around 100 people, and in an emergency the best way to get there is by lifeboat. *Hilda Jarrett* and her crew launched at 5.58pm, landing the firefighters on Cape Clear at 6.25pm. The blaze was soon under control.



## 2 18 IN 1 DAY

Tynemouth lifeboat crew rescued 18 people on one busy Saturday, 26 March. First, three trawlermen needed a tow home to Blyth after their vessel suffered an engine fire. Both Tynemouth lifeboats, along with RNLI colleagues from Cullercoats and Sunderland, spent 3 hours in the afternoon searching for a vessel in distress, which turned out to be a false alarm. Then the all-weather lifeboat was called out for another tow due to mechanical failure, this time of the 21m sail training yacht *James Cook*, with 15 school-age trainees onboard.

## 5 BARGE DISASTER AVERTED

Chiswick lifeboat crew were on exercise on 22 March when they were tasked to a barge drifting beam-on towards Hammersmith Bridge. The barge's engine had stalled and would not restart, and she couldn't deploy her anchor. The lifeboat took the barge, which at 36 tonnes was 10 times the lifeboat's weight, under tow to her mooring. Chiswick Station Manager Wayne Bellamy says: 'The barge was floating towards Putney with many rowers and other river users out on the water on a fine day. If the lifeboat had not halted her progress speedily, the incident could have become grave.'

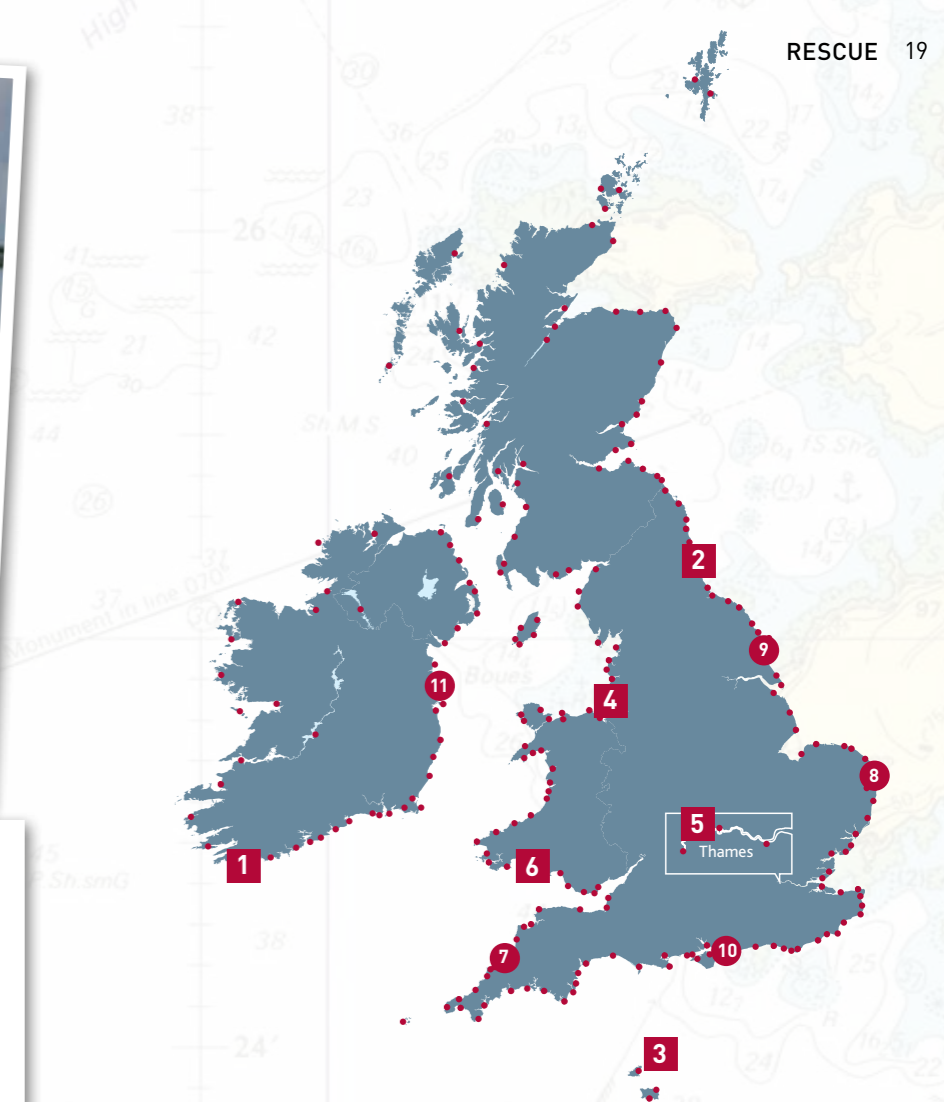
## 3 ABANDONED SHIP

Five French fishermen took to their liferaft in the early hours of Tuesday 8 March when their 17m trawler *Cap Lizard* ran aground half a mile from Alderney. The island's Trent class lifeboat *Roy Barker I* launched at 1.45am, arrived on scene 10 minutes later, and had the fishermen and their liferaft safely aboard by 2.10am.



## 4 PRECARIOUS POSITION

New Brighton's B class lifeboat *Charles Dibdin* and hovercraft *Hurley Spirit* were called out on Friday 25 March when a yacht crewed by experienced local sailors got stuck in mud. The yacht was leaning at an acute angle and the tide was not due in for 11 hours. The lifeboat got as close as possible, the hovercraft was brought alongside the yacht, and the yacht made safe by putting out anchors. The sailors were brought by the hovercraft to the lifeboat, which took them to the lifeboat station. They were reunited with their yacht in the early hours of the morning, in time to refloat.



## 6 STRANDED TEENS

Eight teenagers tried to walk from Pembrey Country Park to Burry Port Railway Station on 19 March and became stranded. One called a parent and was advised to stay put and wait for rescue. The parent dialled 999 and soon police, coastguards and Burry Port's D class lifeboat *The Young Watsons* were searching the area. After a lengthy search, a lifeboat crew member found the group south of Pembrey Harbour. They were brought aboard the lifeboat and back to the station, where they were given hot drinks and wrapped in blankets. They were cold and embarrassed but otherwise unharmed.

The RNLI's lifeboats and lifeguards carry out thousands of rescues every year (see Launches on page 50). Here are just a few caught on camera and see the list below for more in-depth reports.

- 7 Polzeath, pages 20–21
- 8 Great Yarmouth and Gorleston, pages 23–25
- 9 Bridlington, pages 26–27
- 10 Hayling Island, pages 28–29
- 11 Skerries, page 31

Words: Mairéad Dwane  
Photos: RNLI/ (Sheelagh Broderick, Hugh Owen), Adrian Don, Nigel Shaw, Michael Topham, Bob Warwick

# Punching waves

With skill, courage and brute strength, two RNLI lifeguards fought through heavy surf and high winds to reach surfers in peril

Days before the end of a busy lifeguard season, on the morning of 29 October 2010, Senior Lifeguard Jamie Rowlands and Lifeguard Andy Waterfield were patrolling the water's edge of the beach at Polzeath, Cornwall. With force 6 winds, the conditions that day were challenging even for experienced surfers. Jamie describes the scene: 'It was quite a messy day. The wind was cross-shore with waves of 2–3m.'

The lifeguards spotted three surfers 200m away entering the sea from the rocks, near a notorious rip current, north of the bay.

One of the three surfers soon realised he was out of his depth. Andy recalls: 'He was being hit by breaking waves and smashed into the rocks, but he managed to scramble to safety.' Andy raced to a vantage point up on the cliff and saw the other two surfers in trouble.

Jamie was already getting the inshore rescue boat ready. Andy joined him, radioing for their fellow

lifeguard to take over patrolling at the water's edge. They launched in just 1 minute.

Meanwhile, members of the public on the cliff top called for help and the Coastguard Rescue Team was quickly on scene. RNLI Lifeguard Supervisor Chris Rowlands (Jamie's brother) also arrived and monitored communications from the lifeguard unit.

At the helm, Jamie faced the surf head on. His seamanship was tested and he admits:

'We had a few close calls. It was hard to get out there without flipping the boat.'

It was Andy's job to spot the casualty, make navigation decisions and keep a lookout for hazards. He helped Jamie keep the boat from capsizing by using his body weight towards the bow when riding the waves.

With two surfers still in danger Jamie quickly chose who to rescue first. One was being swept out of the bay, but his friend was in more urgent need,

Below: Jamie and Andy refresh their training for the start of the 2011 season

Right: During the rescue in October, the pair are engulfed by waves, seconds after hauling the casualty onboard



being pushed closer to the rocks at alarming speed and bombarded by large waves. The Coastguard Rescue Team on top of the cliff helped pinpoint the man. Andy reflects:

'The wind was such a factor that day, affecting the driving of the boat and moving the casualties so quickly in the water.'

Approaching the casualty the lifeguards shouted to him to 'lose the board'. Andy later explained why: 'We had to grab him and move quickly before the next wave hit. With the wind whipping through, the last thing we wanted was a surfboard catching the wind and getting in the way.'

But metres from the surfer Jamie pulled the boat back, as the waves were too close together to complete the rescue. The helmsman kept his nerve and seconds later, in a longer lull between two waves, he drove right up to the man. Andy heaved the casualty into the boat, just before the next wave engulfed them all (pictured above).

The men and the boat survived the pounding, surfaced and whizzed back to the shore. By the time they'd dropped the first casualty back to land the second surfer had moved another 20m further out. But the lifeguards were up to the challenge. Andy had already planned the route to the second surfer when saving the first. They went via a channel with fewer 'waves to punch'.

More support arrived with Rock inshore lifeboat on scene but the lifeguards were well on their way. The lifeboat stayed in the area as back up and watched the lifeguards in action.

The audience was also growing on the cliffs and the lifeguards even spotted a seal hanging around, with a front-row seat! They all watched as the pair picked up the remaining casualty and whisked him back safely to the beach.

Jamie recalls: 'I was buzzing afterwards. The three friends were reunited – no one got hurt. The guy even got his board back.'

Once the Coastguard had had a chat to the surfers, the survivors made a point of talking to the lifeguards. Andy remembers: 'They came over to say thank you and were sorry. I was just glad they were all fine; no broken bones.' All three men continued to surf that day, but this time between the black and white flags.

'We had a few close calls. It was hard to get out there without flipping the boat.'

For his seamanship, judgement and decision-making in extremely testing surf, Jamie received a Framed Letter of Thanks from the RNLI Chairman. Andy's significant contribution was recognised with a letter from the RNLI Chief Executive. In August, Jamie and Andy will also be presented with the Alison Saunders' Lifeguarding Award, honouring the most meritorious RNLI lifeguard rescue of the 2010 season.

Jamie comments: 'It means a lot, but we don't do it for the recognition – I've been a member of a surf club since I was 8. And it definitely made the longer lifeguarding season worthwhile.' In 1996 when lifeguards didn't cover Polzeath Beach in October, two other surfers lost their lives in similar conditions. Thanks to these RNLI lifeguards, history didn't repeat itself.

Words: Bethany Hope

Photos: Phil Monckton, Shane Hallett

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Photo: Chris Walker

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# Ice, wind and snow

When two holidaymakers in a hired cruiser started sinking in sub-zero waters, there was no time to lose ...

Breydon Water, an estuary in Norfolk where the Rivers Yare, Bure and Waveney converge, is usually calm. But 1 December 2010 was no ordinary day: an easterly force 8 gale was driving sleet and snow across it and, with wind over tide, the estuary was a churning mass of 2.5m waves.

'Although it's an inland waterway, Breydon Water is unlike any other part of the Broads. It's 5km long and, in places, 1.5km wide: in those conditions it's as bad as the sea can be,' says Great Yarmouth and Gorleston Lifeboat Operations Manager Neal Duffield.

At 9.55am he received the call for help: the cruiser *Fair Regent 1* and two crew were dangerously close to mudflats where the combination of tide and wind would smash the boat.

'I was concerned for the couple's safety. Turning from a sheltered position they had met the full force of the wind and tide. It would have been impossible for them to turn around.'

Although the couple were doing their best to keep to the navigation channel, their hire boat, known locally as a 'floating pig', didn't have the power and manoeuvrability to conquer the wind and outgoing tide. Waves were crashing over the bows, water cascading into the cabin.

### Very, very slick

Working as a paramedic in the air and on land has earned RNLI Helmsman Rod Wells the nickname 'Land, sea and air'. Even though he'd just got into bed after a night shift, the severe weather meant he was half expecting his pager to go off.

While Rod was heading towards his car, Mechanic Paddy Lee and Crew Members Jason Smith and Alan Churchman were launching the relief inshore lifeboat *Jack and Joyce Burcombe*.

'The process is very, very slick: they had started the boat and switched on the lights while I was fastening >>

Great Yarmouth and Gorleston crew aboard the relief lifeboat on a slightly warmer day!



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» my drysuit. Paddy was on to the Coastguard finding the location of the *Fair Regent 1*. Crew Members Matt Chilvers, Jason Edmonds and I just got on and went! From the Coastguard's call to launch took just 3 minutes.

Rod recalls: 'If I'd tried to stay close to shore we would have been bashed to bits.' So, keeping the sea behind him, Rod headed into the icy spray and wind. Huddled behind Rod, Matt remembers: 'With wind against tide it was very rough: the worst conditions I have seen on that water – and certainly the coldest.'

### Airborne cruiser

As they turned the corner into Breydon Water the crew saw just the hull of the boat. 'We were all very shocked to see the cruiser clearing half a metre off each wave,' remembers Matt. 'Every time the chap tried to turn the boat head into sea he was swamped.'

The receding tide meant the safe, deeper water channel was rapidly diminishing and the wind was blowing the cruiser ever closer to the mudflats: if she ran aground she would capsize.

Rod used the lifeboat to nudge the cruiser safely into the channel. Although the lifeboat is around 4m shorter and 2 tonnes lighter, its twin 75hp engines enabled it to shunt the heavier vessel.

The next step was to get a lifeboat crew member onboard to assess the situation. With the movement of the boats and a 2.5m swell it was going to be challenging to pull safely alongside and for someone to climb half a metre onto the deck. Even with 20 years' service behind him, the wind, the tide and the banking of the cruiser made Rod's task virtually impossible. Twice he had to pull out but on the third attempt he succeeded.

### The big freeze

Less than 30 minutes earlier Jason Edmonds had been on leave, sitting at home – warm and toasty. Now he found himself, with the help of Matt Chilvers, clambering from one bucking deck to another, the wind lashing his visor and sub-zero waters below him.

As soon as Jason placed one foot on the cruiser's deck, he slipped: the spray had frozen, turning the deck into a skating rink. He says: 'It's salt water – it's not supposed to freeze! The only thing to do was to grip the handrail and try desperately to stay on my feet.'

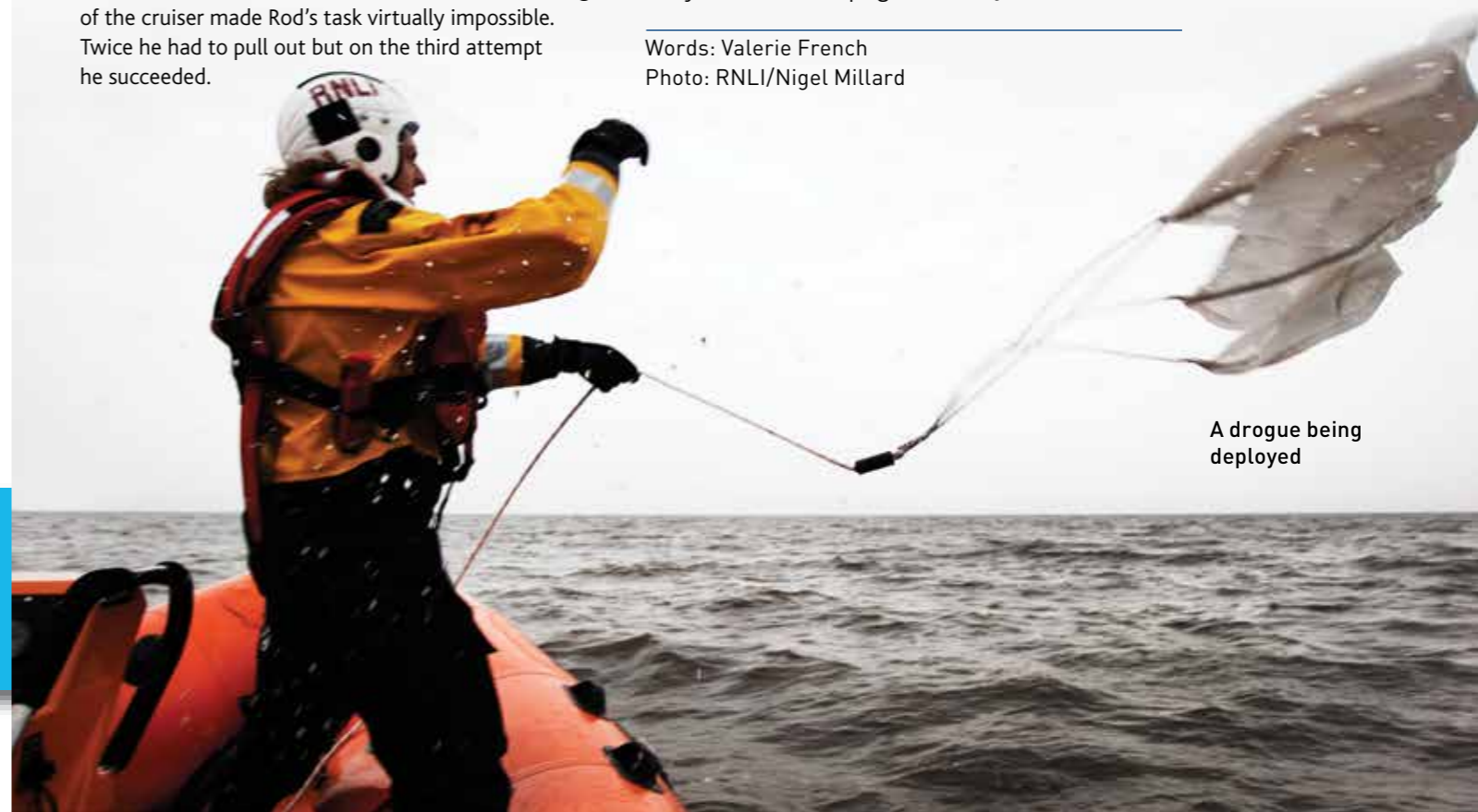
Water was gushing into the cabin through a door vent and the couple were doing their best with a mop and bucket. 'I shuffled along to the bow and tried to make light of the situation,' recalls Jason.

The cruiser was being blown everywhere so the crew decided to use the lifeboat's sea anchor to act as a drogue to gain some control. 'A drogue creates a dragging effect that helps keep a vessel straight and stop it swinging from side to side,' says Neal Duffield. 'It's basically like a canvas bag.'

Jason slid and shuffled aft and threw the drogue. The lifeboat crew established a tow. Within 15 minutes, the RNLI volunteers had handed the relieved holidaymakers over to the coastguard rescue officers at Great Yarmouth Yacht Station.

The crew arrived back at the lifeboat station frozen. 'The cold was the main factor – the spray was freezing as it hit the sponsons. But the minute you get back you wash down the boat, clean up ready for the next launch and you soon warm up again,' insists Jason.

Words: Valerie French  
Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard



A drogue being deployed

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# STRETCHED TO BREAKING POINT

In near gale force winds, a large crabbing boat lost engine power and was drifting close to an offshore gas rig. Unable to anchor, due to underwater pipelines, she needed a tow to safety



Just as the volunteer crew of Bridlington lifeboat were returning home from their day jobs, on 23 November last year, the shout came. It would take 4 attempts and 10 hours at sea before they were able to bring the local fishermen and their boat *Novantae* back to safety.

Bridlington has two lifeboats, an inshore and an all-weather, kept at two separate stations. Their usual all-weather Mersey *Marine Engineer* was away undergoing her refit. Her stand in was another Mersey, *Lifetime Care*. To reach the sea, the all-weather boats are pulled by tractor along a main road and down across the beach.

Second Mechanic Chris Brompton says: 'Launching off the carriage in rough weather can be a bit treacherous.' His Coxswain Stewart McKie explains further: 'We have had one occasion when the launch went bad on us in heavy weather. As we launched we got hit by a heavy wave and got picked up and turned right round and were driven onto the beach.'

Luckily on this occasion, although it was blowing a near gale with wintry sleet showers, the wind direction meant that the beach was protected from the worst of the weather by Flamborough Head. Once out at sea

it took the lifeboat just under 2 hours to cover the 28 miles to the stricken vessel.

During this time the 55-ton beam trawler had drifted about 4.5 miles and was in clear sight of the platform above Easington Gas Field. 'The guard ship that keeps people away from the platform was getting a bit concerned,' says Stewart. The fishing boat was unable to anchor as they were also close to the main Dimlington to Ravenspurn gas pipe.

Once close enough, the crew passed a rope to the *Novantae* and were able to start towing her to safety. 'The weather was lousy. It was on our beam and that slowed us down. It made life awkward because the boats kept spinning around and broaching. The rope was tight and then slack and tight and then slack, putting extra strain on it,' explains Stewart.

During calmer conditions the tow rope would be kept taut at all times but with rough, confused seas this was not possible. It was only 10 minutes before the first tow rope snapped. It was to break a further three times.

On the first couple of attempts the crew of the fishing boat wrapped carpet around the rope where

it came aboard at the fairlead to stop it from chafing and wearing through, but this didn't work. Each time the rope snapped, *Novantae* was pushed back by the wind and tide losing any headway they had made.

Hauling the rope back onboard in the stormy conditions became extremely exhausting for the lifeboat crew. After the tow rope snapped for the third time, the Coxswain realised they would have to come up with another strategy if they were ever going to get *Novantae* home.

'The relief boat had two hoses so I took one of them out of the rack and took the end off with a knife. I then cut off about 1.5m so that when the tow rope snapped once more, I was able to feed it through the hose so that it had a sheath of rubber to protect it,' explains the Coxswain.

The rope was then passed back to the fishing vessel whose crew made sure that the section with the hose was placed within the fairlead. This time the tow was successful and the crews were able to proceed on their way back to Bridlington. Strong winds and tide meant that they could only make a steady 4 knots.

It was 3.40am when the boats finally returned. Asked how they felt when they made it home the Coxswain says: 'We were tired but generally when you get back you are on a bit of an adrenalin run.' Chris Brompton, Second Mechanic, says: 'It was a long job, but nothing more than we would be trained for and know what to do.'

Chris did admit that it had been difficult since they had all had a long day working at their normal jobs before being called out to work overnight in rough conditions, only getting back in the early hours of the morning. Once ashore some of the crew were back to their day jobs a couple of hours later.

Bridlington has one of the largest shellfish fleets in the country. The town's lifeboat crew often experience long call outs to vessels that fish far out at sea.

## THE DETAIL

**THE LIFEBOAT**  
Mersey class ON-1148  
*Lifetime Care*

**ON STATION**  
Relief fleet 1989–present, funded by Volvo Concessionaires Ltd

**THE CREW**  
Full-time Coxswain/Mechanic Stewart McKie (52)  
Second Mechanic Chris Brompton (37, Tiler)  
Assistant Coxswain Steve Emmerson (50, Sales Manager)  
Crew Member Matt Mason (27, Builder/Plasterer)  
Crew Member Grant Walkington (38, Manufacturing Technician)  
Crew Member Andrew Webber (25, DJ)



Words: Jo Roche  
Photos: RNLI/Nigel Millard, Tim Stevens, fishermanDave89

# Vertical take off

The volunteers aboard an inshore lifeboat faced nearly overwhelming conditions one day last March ...



The shipping and inshore waters forecast at 5.20am warned of the impending weather:

'SOUTH/SOUTH EAST 5-7 ... VEERING WEST/SOUTH WEST 7-SEVERE GALE 9, PERHAPS STORM 10 LATER ...'

With low pressure forecast to move slowly across the UK, yacht *Doxy's* skipper and his daughter thought they could get from Brighton to Cowes before conditions worsened. Their 7.3m craft had been described in a yachting magazine as a 'tough little battleship', taking 'most conditions in her stride'.

So they left at 6am, heading into the approaching weather. But nearly 11 hours later, just before 5pm, they were off Chichester and had only covered 25 miles. *Doxy* was struggling to make headway.

Overwhelmed by the conditions the skipper called Solent Coastguard on his mobile as their hand-held VHF wasn't powerful enough. Contacting Hayling Island's Lifeboat Operations Manager Nigel Roper, they requested the launch of their Atlantic 85 *Derrick Battle*. Nigel had been working on the harbourside all day: 'I was aware of the conditions but knew the

lifeboat could cope even with force 7 winds gusting to severe gale 9.'

The crew were paged at 4.56pm and 8 minutes later, with Peter Hanscombe at the helm, they launched into the teeth of the gale. Immediately they took on water ballast to add weight as they encountered heavy breaking seas crossing Chichester Bar.

Although they could see the casualty from the station, Peter couldn't steer a direct course as the rolling waves were beam (side) on. They encountered an unusually large wave, estimated at 8-9m, lifting them vertically, despite the full ballast tanks, which Peter says was 'quite emotional!' As the vessel fell back again, the stern was buried in a foaming mass, immersing Crew Member Jasper Graham-Jones on the fourth crew seat.

Crew Member Kevin Hoskins remembers the piercing klaxon of the man-overboard alarm and for one brief second thought the worst. Thankfully Jasper was still on the boat but the violent movement had triggered the alarm and reduced the engines' power to fail-safe mode for over a minute. Peter points out: 'We had waves like blocks of flats coming at us. I had to work the throttles to restore full power quickly!'

At 5.12pm, the Atlantic came alongside *Doxy*. The two casualties were cold, tired and a little frightened, drained by the relentless pitching and rolling of the yacht.

With no sail up and the engine running, *Doxy* couldn't point into the wind and pounding seas so the Helmsman transferred Jasper, skilfully bringing the lifeboat alongside at the first attempt (pictured below). Jasper then secured a tow rope around three cleats to spread the load.

Helmsman Hanscombe knew that going back across the Bar was too dangerous so opted to tow *Doxy* to the south west first, gaining some shelter from the Isle of Wight before heading towards Gosport Marina. With winds now at gale force, Peter requested that Bembridge all-weather lifeboat assist them.

The carriage-launched Mersey *Peggy and Alex Caird* trundled half a mile across the beach before launching at 5.35pm. Coxswain Steve Simmonds and his crew thought 'it might be a bit sporty' in the heavy seas and, rendezvousing at the Dean Tail wreck buoy 20 minutes later, the Coxswain and Helm decided the Mersey should take the tow.

The crews worked quickly and confidently. Jasper moved to the bow of the yacht to release Hayling's tow and Steve manoeuvred the Mersey stern first to the yacht before passing their tow rope to Jasper to secure at 5.59pm.

Unfortunately, as Jasper had 'eaten his own body weight in carvery less than an hour before', he had become violently seasick. He was also getting very cold so

was transferred from the yacht to the Atlantic (with Crew Member Jamie Stickler taking his place) and then to the Mersey. In their wheelhouse they monitored him but, although he warmed up a bit, it did not cure his seasickness, as crew on the upper steering position testified!

Progress, at 4 knots, to Portsmouth Harbour was slow but once inside, Bembridge released the tow and Hayling escorted *Doxy* under her own power to Gosport Marina.

Safely alongside, with warm drinks all round, Peter reflects: 'When navigating the Looe Channel off Selsey Bill the casualties had a "life-changing experience" as conditions deteriorated and they were driven towards East Pole Sands. They were very grateful to see Hayling lifeboat and eventually dry land.'

Jasper returned to station by car and was replaced by Craig Elsdon. By 8pm, conditions had eased – winds at 26 knots from 36, and sea state slight as the tide had turned. The Atlantic travelled back unescorted, arriving 30 minutes later, and once Bembridge knew they were safe they rehoused by 9.10pm.

Helmsman Peter Hanscombe, who was awarded a Framed Letter of Thanks from the RNLI's Chairman, says modestly: 'This was a challenging service but the Hayling and Bembridge lifeboat crews worked well together with a successful outcome.'

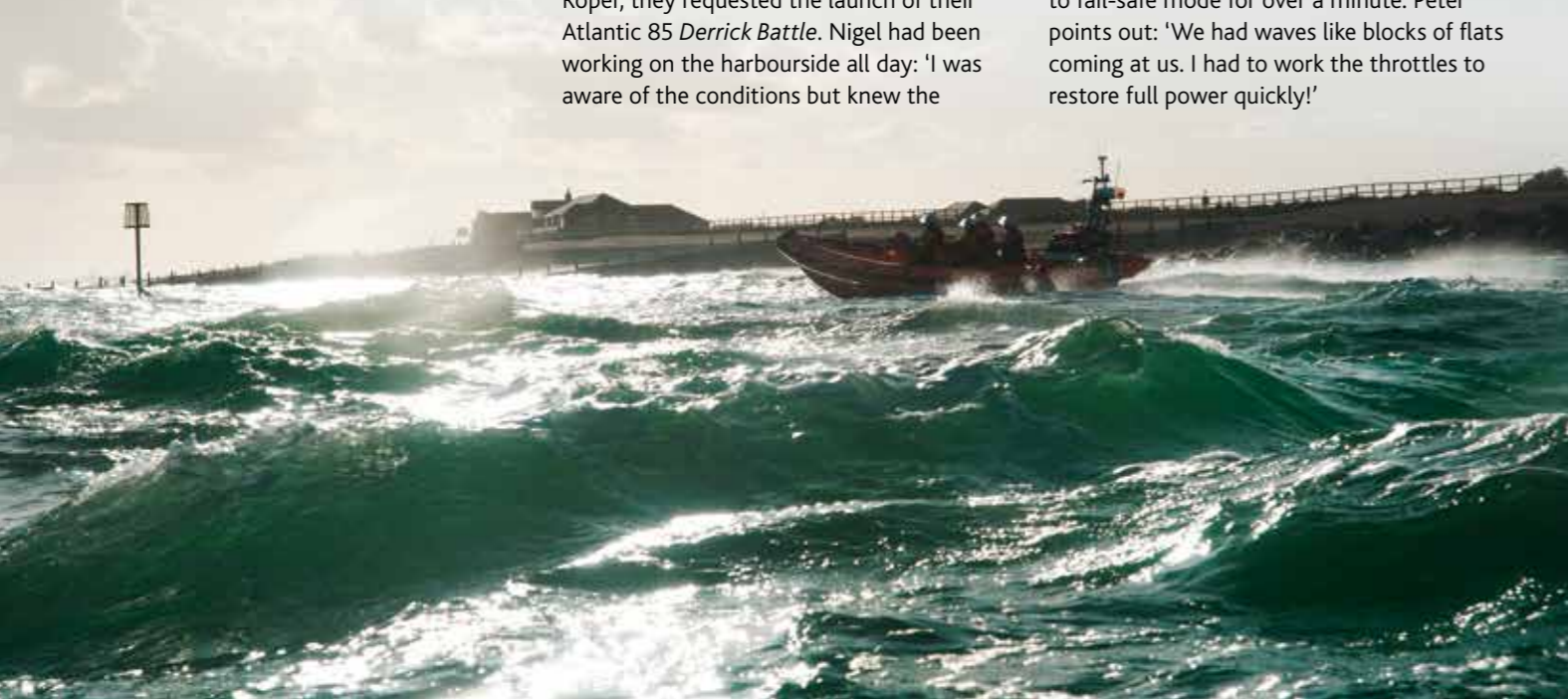
Words: Anne Millman  
Photos: RNLI/Nigel Millard



Above: The crew filled the water tanks to add weight to their Atlantic 85. Without this extra stability, she could have flipped completely in the heavy breaking seas

Far left: Popular with windsurfers, the waters around Hayling Island are often choppy

Below: Images from the onboard video camera during the dramatic rescue





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# 'We waited and hoped'

On the evening of 1 April, Skerries lifeboat crew members were requested to search for two missing fishermen from the Co Dublin town

Along with RNLI lifeboat crews from Clogher Head and Howth, the volunteers searched for 7 days until David Gilsean and Ronan Browne's bodies were found. Skerries volunteer Lifeboat Press Officer Mary Courtney reflected on an emotional week:

'Pagers came to life all over Skerries town. The boathouse doors were cranked open, the tractor engine was revved into life. The volunteer crew members arrived and were told that the search was underway for Ronan and David. Many of the crew knew the lads and their families. Ronan or David had helped them fix engines, given advice and lent tools. It's a small community, and the fishing community within it is even smaller.

'The volunteer crew put to sea in record time. Once the families started to arrive at the station, those crew members who had not gone to sea did what they could to reassure people. Kettles were boiled, sandwiches made and questions answered, where possible. The volunteers closed the boathall doors and stood guard, casually, around the building. Anyone who wasn't known was gently asked to give the family space.

'As the hours wore on the search was called off for the night. The crew stayed with the family members all night.

'Before first light on Saturday 2 April, the lifeboat crew put to sea again. As I was land bound, I spent a lot of time hovering by the radios in the lifeboat station.

I drew great comfort from the calm and assured tones coming from the RNLI Howth lifeboat as they took command of the search at sea. I also drew comfort from the fact that so many other craft, along with our flanking station lifeboats, were out there supporting the search. We waited and we hoped. The fishing boat was found. The men were not.

'The week wore on but the volunteer crew continued to search from first to last light. Those who could take time off work covered the day shifts and those who couldn't came to the station after work to do the evening shifts - or assisted by getting gear ready for the next day. The crew's families supported them and understood.

'The news came on Saturday 9 April, in the quiet stillness, well before first light. Ronan and David had been found. Clogher Head lifeboat went to assist *The Guiding Light* fishing trawler, which had discovered the two lads. Clogher Head volunteers carried Ronan and David back to land and to their families.

'Now is a very sad time. The Skerries volunteer crew will go about their daily business, they'll keep their thoughts to themselves and only their families will know how it affects them. Every crew member will, however, always be ready to put to sea again as soon as their pagers go off.'

Words and photo: Mary Courtney

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# REVIEW

## Spanish Gold

by David Cordingly  
Review by Kevin Hill



During the late 16th and early 17th centuries, ships and harbours were targets for daring attacks by buccaneers and pirates.

The signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, declaring an uneasy peace between the major seafaring nations, saw many sailors out of work and turning to piracy. The number of raids increased dramatically and became more daring.

The merchants of London commissioned Captain Woodes Rogers, a former buccaneer himself, to 'drive the pirates from their lodgements'. His capture, trial and execution of 10 men accused of piracy signalled a change in the fortunes of merchants and pirates alike. Attacks declined considerably with notorious Captains Blackbeard, 'Calico' Jack and Charles Vane all hanged.

As Keeper of Pictures and Head of Exhibitions at the National Maritime Museum, David Cordingly has access to many of the original diaries and writings of the day. Using first-hand accounts he has produced an excellent tale of life and adventure on the high seas.

Hardback book  
Published by Bloomsbury  
ISBN 9781408822920  
Price: £20

## Rescues in the Surf

– the story of the Shields lifeboats 1789–1939



by Stephen Landells  
Review by Carol Waterkeyn

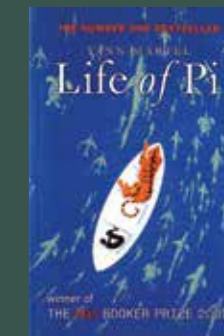
Author Stephen Landells has been a member of South Shields Volunteer Life Brigade for 18 years. This prompted him to record the story of the North Shields, South Shields and Tynemouth lifeboats, gathering an astonishing amount of material in his research for this book. It begins in 1789 when a competition was held to design the first purpose-built lifeboat, to the start of the Second World War in 1939.

There is some controversy surrounding the true inventor of the lifeboat, but we read about William Wouldhave and Henry Greathead's entries into the lifeboat design competition. The first lifeboat on service was known as the *Original* and served at South Shields, saving 200 lives in its first 7 years. We read of daring rescues, of the development of the lifeboat service, of tragedy, and of triumph over adversity. Interestingly, to recognise the borough as the birthplace of the lifeboat, the words 'Always Ready', the lifeboat crews' motto, was adopted by the borough and is included in the coat of arms.

Paperback book  
Published by Tyne Bridge Publishing  
ISBN 9781857951493  
Price £12.99

## Life of Pi

by Yann Martel  
Review by Liz Cook



Sixteen-year-old Pi, named not after the mathematical constant but a swimming pool, is one of only a handful of survivors when the cargo ship *Tsimtsum* sinks in the Pacific. Only he and four strays from his father's zoo remain, sharing a small wooden lifeboat.

Slowly the penny drops. A cleverly quirky and entertaining tale of growing up in India in the 1960s and 70s, related in the voice of a bright and observant child, has metamorphosed at the near-100-page mark into a thrilling, and often chilling, fantasy. Yet the gore that must result from such an improbable combination of orang-utan, zebra, hyena, tiger and boy is vivid in its realism.

You will need a strong stomach to proceed. I wavered ... but do persevere. You will not only learn practical techniques for surviving at sea but also be caught up in an increasingly fairytale meditation with a near-mystical ending – if it is an end. You'll want to return immediately to the not-so plausible Author's Note at the start!

Paperback book  
(E-reader and audio formats also available)  
Published by Canongate Books  
ISBN: 9781841953922  
Price: £7.99



The Review section is compiled by Carol Waterkeyn

### How to order:

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the RNLI website at [rnli.org.uk/amazon](http://rnli.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.)

# Action stations!

Ever wondered what happens behind the scenes in the minutes before the rescues described in this magazine? Here's the answer

Just imagine – it's night. The wind is howling outside but you are tucked up in bed sleeping soundly. Suddenly an alarm wakes you. You look at the clock. It is 2am. You roll over and go back to sleep. But for our thousands of volunteer lifeboat and shore crew, when their pagers go off, they know they are needed and time is of the essence. There's no chance of a cup of tea or a wash. They'll throw on some clothes, race for the door and drive, run or cycle to the station. They have just a few minutes to put their kit on, get briefed and launch the lifeboat – every second counts when someone is in trouble at sea.

## Help!

The call for help has usually been made via emergency telephone numbers 999 or 112, as a mayday over DSC (digital selective calling) or VHF radio on Channel 16, or from an automated emergency personal locator beacon. It goes first to HM Coastguard or the Irish Coast Guard, who decide which search and rescue assets to draw on.

If the RNLI is needed, the station's volunteer Lifeboat Operations Manager (LOM) or Deputy Launching Authority (DLA) is paged. They ascertain the exact nature of the 'shout', if possible consult the Coxswain or Helm, who has responsibility for the safety of the crew and lifeboat at sea and, in most cases, authorise the launch of the lifeboat. They can refuse, for example, if they deem the wind too strong for an inshore boat to operate or the sea too rough to launch safely but this rarely happens.

Having accepted the mission, the LOM or DLA pages lifeboat and shore crews – and in homes and work places all around, family members and employees drop everything. Meanwhile, more details will come through from the Coastguard.

## 'Man' the lifeboat!

As the lifeboat and shore crew arrive, how is the decision made to select which crew should go out? >>

RNLI volunteers at Dunbar (this page), Lyminster (page 36) and Berwick-upon-Tweed (37) race against the clock



» For an all-weather lifeboat there is always a coxswain, mechanic and up to five others. On an inshore lifeboat there will be three or four crew including the helm.

The choice depends on who turns up first when the pagers go off while still ensuring a core of experienced crew. Sometimes a person will be chosen for their particular skills to fit the nature of the shout, for example in a medical emergency. At other times a fairly new crew member might be taken to gain experience. This needs to be a split-second decision, though, as there is no time to waste.

The crew grab their kit: drysuits or all-weather gear, lifejackets, helmets, boots and anything else they will need, often dressing while running to the boat to save a few precious seconds. Depending on the class of lifeboat and how it is housed, various methods and equipment are employed to bring it to the water, engines are started, important checks are completed and off they go.

The RNLI's Concept of Operations states that the charity provides a strategically located fleet of all-weather lifeboats available at all times and tactically placed inshore craft (which are subject to weather limitations) around the UK, RoI, IoM and CIs. And our Strategic Performance Standards are to achieve an average launch time from receipt of call to launch of 10 minutes. When you consider the remote locations of some of our lifeboat stations and the complex demands on our thousands of operational volunteers, this is no mean feat.

**Ways and means**

Padstow Lifeboat Station, Cornwall, is perched high on the cliffs at Trevoze Head. It is 5 miles from the fishing town of Padstow where most of the crew live. In spite of this, their average time from pagers to getting the all-weather lifeboat out of the boathouse, down the slipway and into the water is 11 minutes and always within 15 minutes. Mike England, Mechanic at Padstow, explains how this is achieved:

'The two caravan parks near the station have crew pagers, so they know when we've been called. They do a good job of making sure that the road (a narrow country lane) is clear for us. We also have an RNLI 4x4 vehicle in the town, and use flashing lights to help us get through but we still have to drive safely, obviously.

'Then, while the crew are getting their kit on and boarding the boat, I'll be getting the boat ready and the shore crew prepare the slipway for launch. The big doors are opened and the winch started. The boat tips on its cradle, the winch cable is paid out and the boat is lowered outside the doors, where the masts are raised. It's then released. If we need a quicker launch we can launch directly from inside the boathouse but not in rough weather. The whole process takes just a few minutes.'

At Southend-on-Sea in Essex, the lifeboat station is positioned at the end of a long pier, necessitating a golf-type buggy for the crew to get to the lifeboat station quickly. Their inshore lifeboat is launched from the pier by davit (a kind of crane) before they

climb aboard. At Kinsale, Co Cork, the crew need to be sitting in the boat before it is gently lowered onto the water – not so easy on a windy day!

In holiday resorts such as Lymington, Hampshire, and Fowey, Cornwall, crew have to contend with traffic congestion to get to the station. Meanwhile, in Dungeness, Kent, the Mersey class lifeboat is taken by tractor-propelled carriage from the boathouse across a huge shingle beach down a steep incline to the water's edge. And shore crew at Bridlington, East Yorkshire, take their Mersey across a busy road.

Portree, Isle of Skye, is one of 26 stations whose lifeboat lies afloat on a mooring buoy. Second Coxswain Hamish Corrigan says: 'I live 1 mile from the station. We have to get into the station, get kitted up, go to our ex-D class lifeboat and take her to the Trent class lifeboat and get *her* started – then we're off. All this takes about 10 minutes.'

**Listen out**

In previous centuries, the firing of a maroon (a high-explosive rocket) would call the crew to action at about 60% of stations, a job now successfully done

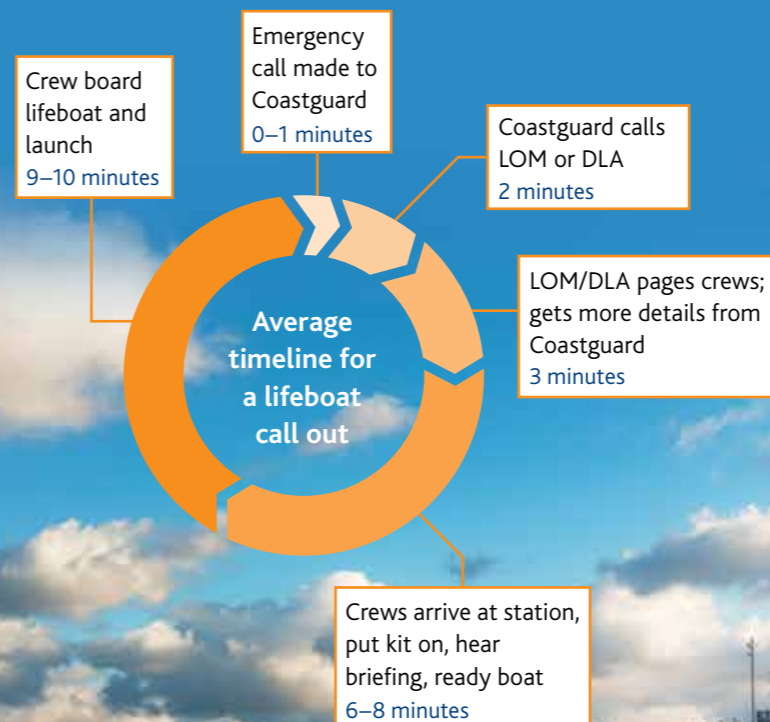
by the pager system. In the last 3 years the RNLI has conducted a feasibility study of bird scaring equipment, to find out if it would help in warning the local community to clear the route at the same time.

An array of sirens is being tested, tailored to various locations. Fleet Operations Manager Rob Aggas is involved in the trial and explains: 'The siren is intended as a local area notification device for up to 1 mile from the station, to assist with access and to let other boat users know the lifeboat is about to launch.'

While the decisions over sirens are yet to be made, there will certainly be no delays to our lifesaving service that is needed now more than ever, whatever the location, and however challenging the environment. Our crews will still have interrupted sleep, half-eaten meals left on the table and be running down to the lifeboat station while getting dressed, to get to the lifeboat on time and rescue those in trouble at sea.

Words: Carol Waterkeyn

Photos: RNLI/Nigel Millard, Graham Wilding



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# Lifeboat Lottery

## AUTUMN 2011

Why not try your luck with the Lifeboat Lottery this Autumn? You can help save lives at sea and be in with a chance of winning one of nine cash prizes – including first prize of £5,000!

Tickets will be mailed to supporters on 14 July 2011. If you don't usually receive tickets and would like to, please call 0845 121 4999 or email [lottery@rnli.org.uk](mailto:lottery@rnli.org.uk).

## SPRING 2011

Ms J Dunnington of West Yorkshire scooped the £5,000 first prize in the Spring Lifeboat Lottery.

The other cash prize winners were:  
2nd prize: £2,000; Miss U Mogan, Merseyside  
3rd prize: £500; Mr TJ Tocher, Dorset  
4th prize: £250; Mr WLF Matthews, Wiltshire  
Five prizes of £100 each; Mr KR Banyard, Northumberland; Mr KJ Chalk, Suffolk; Mr J Haworth, Lancashire; Mrs A Sanderson, Essex; Mr AD Mitchell, East Sussex.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Each quarterly Lifeboat Lottery raises over £1M through ticket sales and donations.
- The Lifeboat Lottery raised over £5,036,000 in 2010.
- All profits go to saving lives at sea.



Appledore's Tamar class  
lifeboat *Mollie Hunt* in action  
Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard



Please note that due to differing tax and gaming laws, Lifeboat Lottery tickets are only available in England, Scotland and Wales. For full details (including terms and conditions) please visit [rnli.org.uk/lottery](http://rnli.org.uk/lottery) or see your Lottery letter.



# Come visit us!

Ice cream and face paints. Barbecues and bunting. There's something very traditional about a lifeboat station open day, but there's also a definite 21st-century edge

In the pages of *the Lifeboat*, we try to bring you as close to the action as possible. But nothing compares to the live show. Many RNLI supporters tell us that they hope never to need the rescue services of our lifeboat crews, but there is another way to get up close and personal – at your local lifeboat station Come Visit Us day.



### What is a Come Visit Us day?

They're known in various places around the UK and RoI as station open days, lifeboat days – or in some particularly energetic and enthusiastic locations as open weekends or lifeboat weeks.

Held all around the UK and RoI during the Summer, a Come Visit Us day is a chance for an RNLI crew to show off their station and beloved boat, a chance for the general public to get an insider's view of our rescue

service, and an excuse for a party! It's also an excellent fundraising opportunity.

RNLI Station Support Manager Keith Horrocks says: 'This year, nearly 130

'Next year I will have to cook double the amount of cakes and gingerbread men, as they were so popular!'

Sue Lough, Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton Guild

stations will be holding a Come Visit Us day. 'From the feedback we receive every year, we know that thousands of people enjoy their visits and, of course, they get a chance to talk to our crews and see our lifeboats.'

### Still on call

A Come Visit Us day is a special occasion, but in one important way it is the same as any other day – the lifeboat crew are still on call and ready to save lives. Many an open day has been disrupted by the sounds of pagers and the slick industry of a lifeboat launch.

On Monday 30 August 2010, Eastbourne Lifeboat Station's Come Visit Us day was interrupted by an emergency call. Visitors who were being given a tour of the all-weather lifeboat were ushered ashore, and the lifeboat crew rushed from their various activities to get kitted up, jump onboard and launch to the rescue of a listing 8m trimaran. Horton and Port Eynon's Open Day on 15 August saw a launch to a capsized kayak and a search for missing children. Troon lifeboat crew were called away from their event, on 17 July, to help a woman in the water, while Southend-on-Sea lifeboat crews were called out five times to real emergencies during last year's Open Weekend.

### What can you expect?

The RNLI's lifeboat service is made up of 235 distinct communities – from Valentia to Lowestoft, Wick to St Helier, every local lifeboat celebration will have its own character. Here are some common themes, but we can't guarantee all Come Visit Us days will feature all of the below:

- **Station tour**  
Let the crew give you the grand tour of their second home! See the kit room, training facilities, mechanic's workshop and auxiliary equipment.
- **Lifeboat tour**  
Explore the station's all-weather or inshore lifeboat, or both. At some stations, you can also get hands on with a hovercraft or a rescue watercraft!



# RNLI COLLEGE

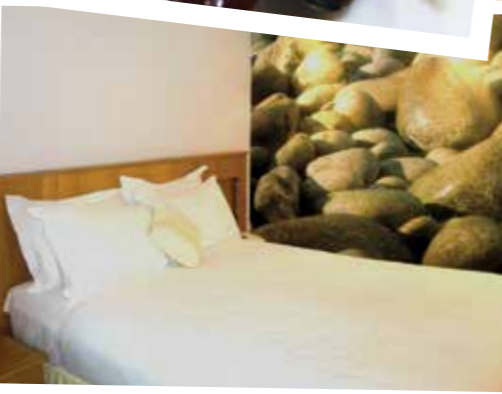


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Remember! Every £1 you spend at RNLI College helps the RNLI save lives at sea.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ  
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### » Refreshments

Usually, the local lifeboat branch or guild will have been baking up a storm in the lead up to a Come Visit Us day. If cakes and buns are not to your taste, there's often an ice cream or burger van on hand, as well as copious amounts of tea and soft drinks.



### • Get Your Kit On!

In one of the RNLI's most popular games, competitors try to get into full crew kit as fast as possible, as if lives depend on their speed.

### • Stormy Stan

RNLI mascot Stormy Stan is now one of our most famous crew members, and definitely our most sociable! Despite the name, Stormy loves a bit of fun in the sun, and is a regular visitor to open days around the UK and RoI. Unfortunately, he is but one man, so can't make them all ...

### • Family fun

... but there is plenty more to keep the kids amused! You want to keep them entertained over the long Summer holidays, and we want to get them excited about saving lives at sea. Of course, what they want to do is eat ice cream, have their faces painted, see cool machines and get the chance to win prizes. So it's win-win-win!

### • Rescue demonstrations

A real rescue is exciting for visitors, but we don't want anyone to get into serious trouble at sea. Rescue



### How to attend

See [rnli.org.uk/opendays](http://rnli.org.uk/opendays) for a list of lifeboat station open days near where you live or holiday. If your local station's open day has been and gone, you could call the station and try to arrange a visit. Or why not come along to our Headquarters Open Weekend in Poole, Dorset, on 9–10 July? We'd love to welcome you here!

### Could you help?

If you'd like to get more involved with the RNLI where you live, and possibly help out at open days, street collections and other events, register as an RNLI deck hand at [rnli.org.uk/deckhands](http://rnli.org.uk/deckhands) and we'll let you know when volunteering opportunities come up.



demonstrations are common on Come Visit Us days – they show the crowd what the boats and their crews are capable of, while also serving as good training exercises for the crew themselves. And sometimes it's not just the lifeboats that are out there – RNLI crews are joined by their colleagues in other search and rescue agencies, such as the Coastguard or RAF, as well as RNLI lifeguards if there are any on patrol nearby.

### • Souvenirs

You just can't leave a special occasion without a souvenir and, if you think you can, our dedicated RNLIshop volunteers will prove you wrong! From toys to tea towels, fridge magnets to lifeboat-shaped jellies, they'll have something for you!

### • Fundraising

If you're reading *the Lifeboat*, you're probably already a committed RNLI supporter – thank you. All members of the public are welcome at Come Visit Us days, so you will probably see a collection box or a face-to-face fundraising team.

### • Safety advice

RNLI Sea Safety and/or Beach Safety Teams should be on hand, giving out quality booklets and free advice to all.

### • Sunshine

Well, we're always optimistic!

Words: Mairéad Dwane

Photos: RNLI/(Queensferry, Hayling Island, Carol Carter, Nigel Millard, Tony Roddam, Rye Harbour)

# Soap and water

When he's not in the middle of an East End drama, lifelong RNLI supporter Steve McFadden heads west for coastal adventure

What does a soap star treat himself to on his 50th birthday? The latest electronic gadget? A big night out in the city? A luxury cruise? Not Steve McFadden, the *EastEnders* actor of some 20 years. He decided to swim a mile across open water in aid of his favourite charity.

'It was a great moment for me,' remembers Steve, who first swam across the River Fal in Cornwall in Summer 2009. It was his perfect celebration – the right place, the right event, the right cause. 'I reached the other side before my family and friends arrived by boat and sat on the beach, looking out at the water. It gave me time to look back at how far I'd come.'

The actor's father was evacuated from London to Cornwall in the Second World War, and brought Steve there as a child on holiday. 'I learned how to catch mackerel, and from that I fell in love with boating,' explains Steve, who continued to visit Cornwall in his teenage years. His passion for boating later led to work as a skipper, taking yachts to the Mediterranean for wealthy clients. 'Sailing abroad helped me to realise that the RNLI is unique. There's nothing else like it in the world.'

After putting his travelling days behind him, Steve returned to London in the 1980s and trained as an actor. He had several TV and film roles before landing a part in *EastEnders* in 1990. 'As I got a good regular income, I bought myself a boat or two. But I found that, the more money I spent, the further I was getting away from the water. I realised I wasn't enjoying it as much,' says Steve. 'I want to feel the spray on my face and be near to the water, not be worrying about whether the air conditioning is working or changing a bulb in the forward cabin. I want to engage with the sea.'

That determination to stay close to the water led Steve to structure his spare evenings, weekends and holidays around boating: he has small, simple craft on the Thames, at Falmouth and in Mallorca. And it was one weekend fishing trip in Cornwall that led to him getting even closer.

'I was motoring out of Falmouth Marina and, about 50m out, we saw a yacht aground with the tide coming out. So we gave the sailor a tow off, and she waved in thanks. Me and my mate were patting ourselves on the back when this police boat comes up to us at the harbour mouth, and we got told to slow down because there were swimmers in the water. They were swimming from Pendennis Castle to St Mawes Castle, across the river. That stretch of water seemed like the whole ocean to me when I was 6 years old. And I said to my mate: "What a great thing that'd be to do one day."'

In May 2009, that day came. Steve tackled his first open-water swim, crossing the River Fal in an RNLI fundraising event in aid of the South West Lifeguard appeal. 'It was quite choppy with a swell running and it made the going tough,' recalls Steve, who was one of the 38 swimmers who completed the mile-long swim. He repeated the feat a year later, this time joining 230 others and helping to raise more than £10,000 for the RNLI.

Now Steve swims a mile every night, and is looking forward to more open water events. 'It's not about conquering the sea, it's about getting in it, and respecting it, integrating with it. It's about spending time in a coastal community, and it's about helping to make a difference. We should cherish and nurture the RNLI, because something like that could disappear – it's so good for young people to see the behaviour of volunteers who are professional, and passionate, and courageous. It's taken lifetimes for it to develop, and it'd be a terrible thing if it evaporated.'

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If you would like to take on a challenge and fundraise in aid of the RNLI, see [rnli.org.uk/inaidof](http://rnli.org.uk/inaidof).

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Words: Rory Stamp  
Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard



What brings this BBC TV actor aboard an RNLI lifeboat?



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# Flying doctor

Medical student and RNLI Crew Member Stuart Braithwaite took to the Alaska skies with the US Coast Guard last year – training and undertaking medical research

Stuart (31) is Second Mechanic at Aberdeen Lifeboat Station, and on the inshore lifeboat crew at Kessock (he does some of his training in nearby Inverness). But he swapped lifeboats for helicopters for 2 months on a placement at Sitka Air Base, Alaska.

'I first got involved with the RNLI about 8 years ago,' he says. 'I've always loved being around water and had huge respect for what the RNLI does. To become part of the crew was just great. Before retiring, my dad worked at the harbour in Aberdeen and so this made for an even stronger connection.'

The RNLI has a close relationship with the US Coast Guard and, when it came to choosing a project as part of his medical degree, Stuart grabbed the opportunity to do some research with our international search and rescue colleagues. The project involved studying the use of medical equipment onboard search and rescue helicopters.

The hospitality extended to Stuart in Alaska last Autumn is even more remarkable in the light of a sad event that shook the station a few weeks before his arrival – one of the helicopters was lost, and three of its four-person crew killed.

'I spent many hours on training and patrol flights in the Jayhawks [US Coast Guard helicopters],' he says. 'I also managed to get involved with a commercial medevac service, Guardian Flight, who were a great

bunch of guys and would phone me at any time of the day or night when they got a call. I ended up doing 40 or 50 fixed-wing medevacs with them, covering huge amounts of Alaska. My record was 10 different airports in 36 hours! This certainly supplemented my medical training. I also learned many things that are relevant to my work in the RNLI.'

One service stands out in his mind: 'We transported a man who had been involved in a mid-air collision between two small aircraft, flying him from a small village to one of the big hospitals. He had significant trauma, including multiple fractures to his legs. The transport was successful, despite a bumpy journey.'

'I spent a long time explaining how things are done within the RNLI and we discussed many search and rescue stories from our own experience. The concept of a charity-funded voluntary search and rescue organisation as large and professional as the RNLI was a constant wonder to my friends in the US Coast Guard.'

So what's next for Stuart after all that adventure and academia? 'This amazing experience has simply fuelled my passion for pre-hospital medicine and I think my career will head that way. Basically though, as long as I'm near a lifeboat I'll be just fine ...'

Words: Mairéad Dwane  
Photo: US Coast Guard

# RNLI shop



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# Your shout

I just felt I had to put pen to paper after reading the recent article on Storm Force membership for children. It referred to the young man who won a competition 20 years ago by creating Stormy Stan the lifeboatman – well, I happen to be that man, although a little older now!

I'm so glad that Stormy Stan is still helping to raise money and hope that the relaunch is a great success for you. Storm Force certainly helped me when I first took an interest in the RNLI. Many thanks for all the enjoyment you've provided me and here's to another 25 years of Storm Force!

Peter Cunningham, Lancashire



Above: Peter's creation  
 Below: Stan and friends today



I always look forward to *the Lifeboat* dropping through the letterbox. Could I suggest an article for a future edition? I often see RNLI lorries out on motorways transporting lifeboats and would like to know more about these 'knights of the road'.

Although a 'landlubber' from Manchester, I support the work of the RNLI in memory of my uncles, who were all seamen. Very best regards.

David Kellock

**The Editor comments:**  
 I'm pleased to add Mr Kellock's idea to our 'future features' file and I always welcome hearing from readers about what you'd like the Lifeboat team to report on.

We sometimes get requests for more technical detail about rescues from supporters who are active water users themselves and want to learn lessons from survivors. We produce *Offshore*, a supplement to *the Lifeboat*, for people just like you. To receive *Offshore*, you need to be an *Offshore* member or an RNLI Governor – contact Supporter Care to find out more.

I read with interest the article on face-to-face fundraising in the Spring issue of *the Lifeboat*. My active support for the RNLI began almost 2 years ago as a result of the efforts of the fundraising team at Sennen Cove, Cornwall.

I had been a passive supporter for many years, but the enthusiasm with which the fundraisers engaged in their work persuaded me to sign a direct debit form. It never occurred to me that they were anything other than full-time RNLI employees, such was their knowledge and expertise.

Every time I come into contact with the RNLI, I feel proud to be a supporter and think of the moment I decided to sign up. Keep up the good work!

Philip Green, Hertfordshire

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



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# Close inspection

Keeping a fleet of 330 lifeboats and their associated kit in tip-top condition is no mean feat

Above: Surveying damage to Sennen Cove's Rother class in 1981 following a Silver Medal rescue are (L-R) the late John Chadwick and Les Vipond.

Right: Present-day Mechanic Dave Turnbull in his Swanage lifeboat station workshop

With the safety of the lifeboat and the shore crews always paramount, the RNLI has rightly had a zealous approach to the maintenance of its fleet. Until recently, every lifeboat had a major refit according to a calendar-based schedule and things were fixed when they broke. This often meant going to 'lifeboat hospital' in third-party boatyards at considerable expense.

As RNLI Principal Construction and Maintenance Manager Liam McKenna explains, this has now been reviewed: 'The modern approach to maintenance needs to be condition-based, not calendar-based.'

One of our Severn class lifeboats may be moored afloat in an exposed location, getting shouts every other day. She'll take a real battering compared to one housed in a sheltered bay, responding to a handful of shouts each year. They're made up of the same bits of kit but applying the same maintenance is not necessary.'

'It's about making sure that equipment is fit for the job, with the maximum reliability – safe, efficient and at the right price. We took the Severn fleet and examined each component, everything from the main structure to the propulsion system, the windscreen wipers to the hot water boiler. We looked at how it would be used, its potential failures, what the risks were and how we could overcome them.'

'Smaller, frequent checks and smarter data capture means we can build a detailed picture of each boat in the fleet,' says Liam. 'And intervening earlier means reduced refits and longer periods between major works.'

Thanks to new materials and inspection methods, this move to condition-based maintenance for the Severn fleet alone could save the RNLI around £800,000 a year – and bigger savings are expected as it is rolled out across the fleet. So, expect our lifeboats to attend regular well-woman clinics in the future instead of invasive surgery!

Words: Jon Jones

Photos: Andrew Besley, RNLI/Eleanor Driscoll

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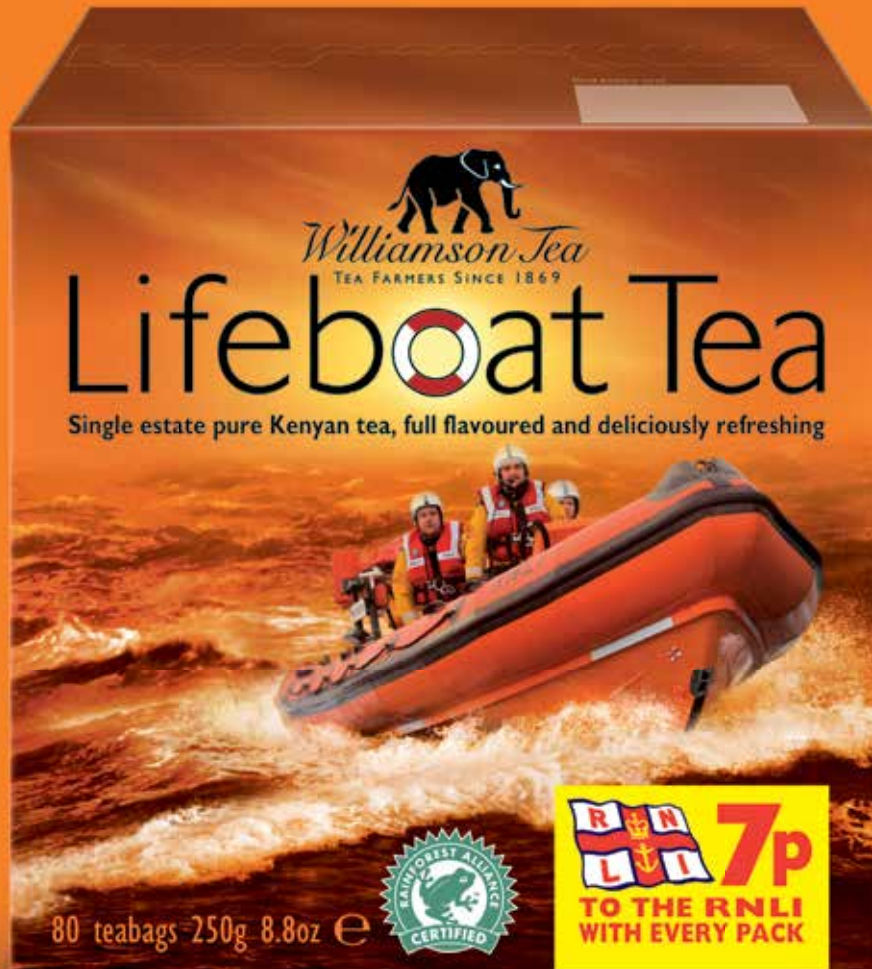
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