

ISSUE 601  
AUTUMN 2012



# the lifeboat



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## Lifeboats

AUTUMN 2012 ISSUE 601

Cover photo: Reconstruction of Exmouth RNLI's Bronze Medal rescue, see page 14. Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard  
Welcome photo: Nick and Rad's cycle route took in the colourful beach huts of Herne Bay, Kent, see page 39. Photo: Pleydell-Bouverie/Hart-George  
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The RNLI was founded in 1824. Today it provides a 24-hour search-and-rescue service out to 100 nautical miles from the coast of the UK, RoI, IoM and CIs; 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 CIs. The RNLI is independent from Government and relies on voluntary contributions and gifts in Wills for its income. It is a charity registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736). Charity number CHY 2678 in the Republic of Ireland.  
**Chairman:** Admiral the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL  
**Chief Executive:** Paul Boissier

### Dear Reader

As we draw into the last quarter of 2012, we can reflect on a year of awards and celebrations.

Our Patron continued her travels around the RNLI (see page 4), we appointed an inspiring new Council member (28), and fundraisers and lifesavers alike achieved new heights (3, 14 and 39).

All of this was against the backdrop of the Olympics, located in the UK but with truly universal meaning. High-minded values of hard work, stamina and courage

were promoted – and welcomed – across cultures and ages. And the RNLI played its part (33 and 48).

We're good at the detail too. How do we operate in an ever-more international environment (6), with ever-more sophisticated technology (24)? Occasionally with some supernatural assistance (36) perhaps!

*Liz*  
Liz Cook, Editor



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### Shannon prototype trials

Trials of the prototype of the Shannon class lifeboat are continuing – and RNLI crews and officials like what they see.

RNLI Skegness tweeted: 'When I say "we like it", we *really* like it! Have never heard the word "phenomenal" used so much at sea. Exciting times.'

The boat passed trials of her hull, pulling power and electronics, before heading to Kent in the Summer for trials with

her launch and recovery system. She is pictured being intentionally beached for recovery.

The first Shannon is due on station next year. At the time of writing, we'd raised just over £3M of our target £5M towards two relief Shannon class lifeboats and their launch and recovery equipment. Find out more, share with your friends and donate at [RNLI.org/newlifeboatappeal](http://RNLI.org/newlifeboatappeal).



### Gold for Yorkshire

2012's been a winning year for Yorkshire, with 11 medals at the Olympics. And while Jessica Ennis and the Brownlee brothers were competing in London, employees and members at Yorkshire, Chelsea and Barnsley Building Society branches around the UK embarked upon their own quest for gold – raising £100,000 for the RNLI.

We are their Charity of the Year for 2012, and the society reached its fundraising target a few months early.

Chief Executive Chris Pilling says: 'I am absolutely thrilled that we have already been able to make a donation of £100,000 to the RNLI. Our people have worked hard throughout the year organising fundraising events from cycle rides, cake sales and raffles to skydives – and we're not done yet!'

'We have another 3 months to keep going with our mission to raise as much money as possible for the RNLI and I hope customers and members of the public will continue to show us their support.'

### Innovation recognised

The RNLI Engineering Department is the winner of the inaugural Maritime Safety Award from the Royal Institute of Naval Architects and Lloyd's Register.

The award recognises the 'innovation and technical excellence' of our engineers and naval architects. The official nomination for the award reads: 'RNLI boats go to sea when others are seeking shelter and therefore enter a hostile, dynamic environment not normally catered for in design criteria for workboats up to 20m in length.'

The RNLI Engineering Department has therefore had to come up with its own safety standards, as those in existence in the commercial world didn't go far enough.

The award recognises:

- the department's development of composite materials capable of enduring the stresses placed upon a lifeboat in extreme conditions
- a focus on crew safety. The boats could withstand the heaviest seas, but could the crews strapped inside? Specially designed seats and a computerised control system help make rescues safer than ever for our volunteers
- the efficiency with which our lifeboats are built – quickly and cost-effectively without compromising on safety and reliability.

### I name this lifeboat ...

Children have been given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to name a lifeboat in a recent competition. As well as choosing the name of a new Shannon class, the winner and their family will be VIP guests at the naming ceremony.

Chris Eves, Project Manager for the Shannon, says: 'This is the first time that we have offered the naming of a lifeboat as a prize. The most exciting part is that the lifeboat could be in service for up to 50 years.'

The competition was exclusive to members of Storm Force, the RNLI's club for young people (see page 41). We'll announce the winner in January.



### Lifesavers honoured

Three lifeboat volunteers from Port Isaac, Cornwall (pictured, above), will be awarded RNLI Medals for Gallantry, after saving a man's life on 8 April.

Helm Damien Bolton will receive the Silver Medal, while Crew Members Nicola-Jane Bradbury and Matthew Main will be awarded Bronze Medals.

Sadly, despite the crew's best efforts, a second man did not survive. We'll give you a full report in the Winter issue of *the Lifeboat*.

Meanwhile, St Abbs Helm Darren Crowe is the recipient of this year's Walter and Elizabeth Groombridge Award. This award is presented annually for the most meritorious rescue carried out by a B class lifeboat crew. Darren saved the life of a fisherman trapped in a flooding cave on 6 June 2011. See a reconstruction of this Bronze Medal-winning rescue at [RNLI.org/stabbsvideo](http://RNLI.org/stabbsvideo).

We're also pleased to congratulate the Porthtowan lifeguard team of 2 November 2011, who are the recipients of the latest Alison Saunders Lifeguarding Award.

Marcus Lascelles, Josh Ward, Chris Lowry, Ben Sowter and Adam Bunt are the named awardees. Marcus saved the life of a bodyboarder on the day, and has already received the Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum. This rescue was featured in our Winter 2011–12 issue.

### Leading the way



Lifesavers from around the world visited RNLI College in August for 2 weeks of intensive tuition on how to run an effective coastal rescue service.

Representatives from Bangladesh, Cameroon, India, Mauritius, Philippines, Senegal, Thailand and Uganda joined us in Poole, Dorset, for the Future Leaders in Lifesaving course.

They studied topics including causes of drowning, the role of a lifeguard, beach risk assessments and how to write a training programme.

The practical side of the course saw the trainees work with RNLI lifeguards on Dorset's Sandbanks Beach. In fact, on 14 August Idrissa Ndiaye from Senegal and Viraj Ramharai from Mauritius helped local

lifeguards rescue a boy who was struggling in the water.

Drowning claims an estimated 1.2M lives around the world every year. We're sharing our knowledge and expertise internationally, in an effort to help reduce this loss of life. Our international work is funded independently of the central RNLI pot.

**Royal opening for Cowes station**

HM The Queen opened the new Cowes Lifeboat Station on 25 July.

The new station is 4 minutes closer to the Solent than the previous building. These 4 minutes could be the difference between life and death in an area like Cowes – popular with the leisure marine community and also busy with commercial shipping.

The Queen, the RNLI's Patron, was presented with a framed record of her support of the institution over the past 60 years, and appeared genuinely touched (pictured).

She was accompanied by her husband, HRH Prince Philip. Cowes lifeboat crew were delighted when the royal pair signed the station's visitor book – with The Queen taking on the role of Coxswain, and the Prince signing in as Mechanic!

We are still raising the £1M needed to offset the cost of the new lifeboat station at Cowes. Please visit [RNLI.org/cowesappeal](http://RNLI.org/cowesappeal).

Meanwhile, RNLI volunteers were well represented in Her Majesty's Birthday



Honours list this year.

Macduff Helm Andrew Findley, Ramsey Lifeboat Operations Manager Kevin Christian and Portrush Fundraiser Eleanor Huston were all awarded the MBE.

Andrew has been on the crew at Macduff since 1987, while Kevin has been with the RNLI 33 years, originally as a member of the seagoing crew.

Staffordshire Fundraiser Edna Weatherby received a British Empire Medal.

Congratulations to all those honoured in our Patron's Diamond Jubilee year.

**Waitrose: Shop and vote**

Do you shop online? Treat yourself to a grocery shop (delivery or collection) from Waitrose, and help raise funds for the RNLI.

From now until the end of November, the RNLI is one of three charities Waitrose's online customers can support through the store's Community Matters scheme. The scheme is based on the in-store green token promotion, in which customers are given a token at the checkout and invited to vote for one of three good causes.

Now, online shoppers are being given the chance to influence how £25,000 will be split among the three charities. The more people vote for the RNLI, the greater the chunk we'll get! Shop now at [waitrose.com](http://waitrose.com).



**For sale: Land Rover for under £6?**

The RNLI Flood Rescue Team Land Rover is now available as a Corgi model, along with its very own trailer and lifeboat.

With a recent run of wet Summers, specially trained RNLI volunteers have rescued hundreds of people from inland floods. Now, you can run your very own flood rescue service – in miniature!

The models are available priced £5.49 from Toolstation, with £1.43 from every model sold coming to the RNLI. Toolstation

hopes to raise £50,000 through their sale.

Toolstation has been supporting our Flood Rescue Team since 2010. Managing Director Neil Carroll says: 'My big hope is that this promotion will help spread awareness of the Flood Rescue Team. It's going to be very popular, and I am delighted!'

So start your Christmas shopping now and get this special stocking filler at one of Toolstation's 115 branches or online at [toolstation.com](http://toolstation.com).



**Hero squad**

CBBC's new TV show *Hero Squad* is essential viewing for children who dream of going to the rescue one day. Three of the episodes focus on what it's like to be an RNLI lifesaver.

A group of 12–14-year-olds came to RNLI College in April, along with Presenter Rav Wilding. They were the youngest people ever to go through lifeboat capsizing training in our survival pool. They also had lifeguard training on the beach and went aboard a Severn class lifeboat for a rescue simulation exercise.

To be sure not to miss this and other programmes featuring the RNLI, go to [RNLI.org](http://RNLI.org) and sign up for *RNLI on TV* email alerts.

Words: Mairéad Dwane  
Photos: RNLI/Nathan Williams,  
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# Who rules the waves?

Over 70% of our planet's surface is water but who is in charge of traffic on this vast highway and how has maritime law evolved?

This year sees the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic*, one of the most dramatic maritime tragedies the world has seen in peacetime. The disaster outraged the public at the time and has captured our imagination ever since. It has also had an enduring legacy: sweeping changes were introduced to shipping regulations as a result of that night in the North Atlantic. Subsequent incidents, including the capsizing of the *Herald of Free Enterprise* and, most recently, *Concordia* have effected more change. In 1914 the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) was established and, with amendments over the years, these regulations still govern maritime safety today.

## Working on an international scale

The primary agency for overseeing the SOLAS regulations is the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which has its headquarters in London. The IMO consists of representatives of 170 international states and has the task of regulating maritime safety and pollution from shipping, and tackling piracy and terrorism. Once its treaties are adopted it is up to the governments of the countries that sign up to make the rules part of their own national law. So in the UK and RoI, you will find the text of SOLAS as part of the *Merchant Shipping Acts*.

For UK territorial waters, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) works on behalf of the UK Government to enforce the regulations and in the RoI it is the Marine Survey Office (MSO) that works on behalf of the Irish Government.

## Commercial or leisure?

All craft must abide by the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, known as the COLREGs, and laws relating to Marine Pollution (MARPOL) as well as the latest SOLAS regulations, SOLAS V. These cover important areas like voyage planning, carrying radar reflectors, the correct use of lifesaving signals, danger and distress messages. After that, there are specific areas of law that apply to different craft in different situations.

Commercial craft are classified depending on the size of vessel, the number of passengers carried and

the area of commercial operation, from supertanker to charter cruiser – even to lifeboat. They must be inspected by the MCA or MSO against the relevant code to ensure that they are fit for purpose and have the proper safety equipment onboard. In practice, this means that if you pay for a skipper to take you out on a fishing trip, for example, you should check that he has the appropriate Code of Practice Certificate to do so.

To take out a pleasure vessel in the UK or RoI you do not need an inspection or licence but in most other European countries an International Certificate of Competence (ICC) is required. For foreign cruising, rules such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) become relevant with regard to territorial waters and freedom of navigation. For cruising pleasurecraft less than 13.7m in length there are no statutory requirements to carry safety equipment but it would be foolhardy not to do so. >>

The varied traffic that shares the territorial waters of the UK and RoI is subject to international regulation, including RNLI lifeboats





### Influencing the future

In 1994 the ferry *Estonia* sank in the Baltic with the loss of 852 lives. This was a modern ship in one of the world's busiest shipping areas and again provided many valuable lessons, including developing the concept of mass rescue.

Michael Vlasto is Operations Director at the RNLI and is also Chairman of the IMRF. This body is being particularly creative and looking beyond mere evacuation methods. It's looking at making cruise ships more capable of rescuing others. 'Quite often the nearest vessel to one in distress is another large vessel that is not necessarily a rescue vessel but could still possibly aid in getting people out of the water. The IMRF is exploring ways that this can be done,' explains Michael. Part of the thinking is that when it is too rough for a ship to launch its lifeboats to people in the water, some relatively simple adaptations might enable them to retrieve another vessel's liferafts. 'Cruise liners are going to more and more remote places like the Antarctic and Arctic but some of them are not designed to navigate icy waters,' adds Michael.

'A suggestion of the IMRF is that they cruise in pairs so that if one gets into difficulty, help is close at hand.'

### One exception

There is one area of maritime law that the RNLI chooses not to exploit – salvage. In theory, as soon as an RNLI coxswain gives a tow to another vessel he could make a salvage claim. But, as Michael Vlasto concludes: 'People would stop asking for help if they thought that the RNLI was going to claim salvage. We do not want to bring money into the RNLI at the risk of losing lives. We are first and foremost a lifesaving charity.'

Words: David Parker and Liz Cook  
Photos: RNLI/Nigel Millard, IMO



Above:  
The IMO also works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships

Opposite: Preventing acts of piracy requires international effort and is a concern of the International Maritime Organization

Left: The International Maritime Rescue Federation is exploring ways in which ships can retrieve as well as launch lifeboats

### » Racing rules

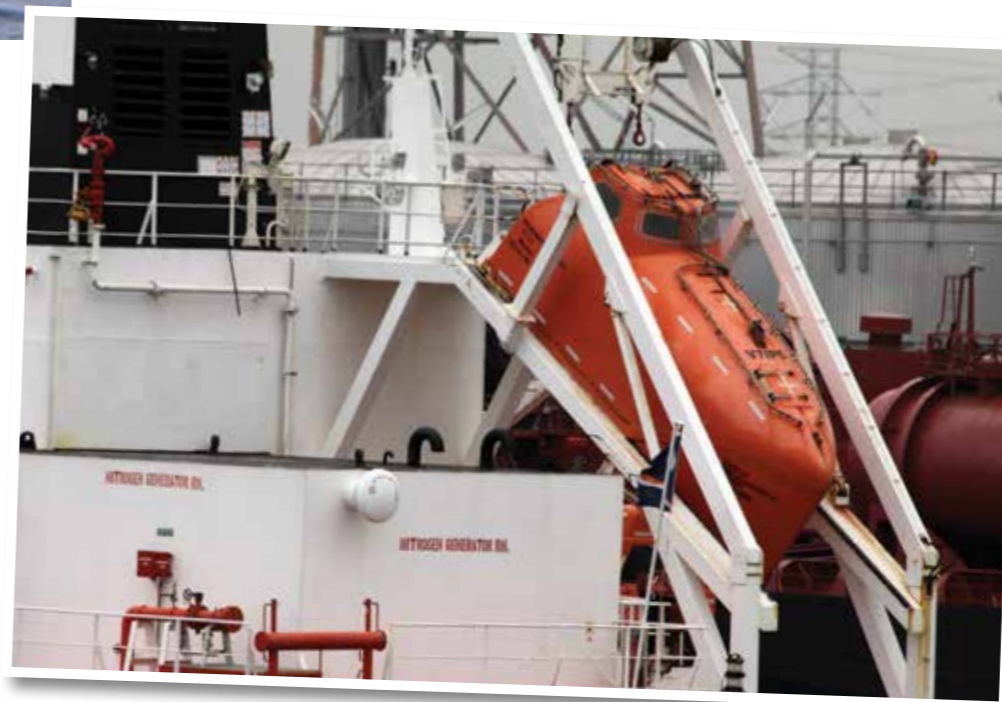
If a boat is racing then it will have to carry the safety equipment specified for the class and event concerned by organisations such as the International Sailing Federation (ISAF). It was, sadly, another disaster that triggered improved legislation and equipment in offshore racing. In 1979 the Fastnet Race was hit by a freak storm and the mountainous seas that resulted triggered a massive rescue operation involving the RNLI, Her Majesty's Coastguard and military. The storm decimated the fleet – of the 303 starters only 86 boats finished and 24 were abandoned. There were 15 fatalities. The official inquiry led to a detailed report into the safety of small craft and covered everything from the stability and seaworthiness of yachts, to how batteries are stored, to the design of deck harnesses.

### Nurturing best practice

Maritime law means nothing if rules are ignored or bypassed, or the resources aren't available to obey them. Some nations apply laws with less rigour than others, and 'flags of convenience' aid and abet merchant shipping owners in maintaining poor practice. Most of all, though, it is in the developing

world that lack of regulation and/or its enforcement leads to frequent, heavy loss of life. As founder member of the International Lifeboat Federation, now the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF), the RNLI has led best practice internationally for more than a century. Our latest work is with countries that are struggling to set up or run any kind of search and rescue capability.

'We work at grass-roots level in some countries where there is very little legislation,' explains International Development Manager Steve Wills. 'Ferries capsizing or sinking because they are massively overcrowded are a common occurrence. Not only are there issues like a lack of safety equipment onboard but there is a lack of coordinating the few assets that do exist to assist in the aftermath of a disaster.' And the value assigned by the world's media to the lives lost through such routine accident, migration and war is low. For example, in 2011 more than 1,500 people died attempting to flee Libya by sea, as many as lost from *Titanic*, but this went largely unreported. Steve stresses that the aim is not for the RNLI to start running services in other countries but to assist in planning how local people can put sustainable systems in place. (See more on page 5.)



More detail is available in standard texts such as *The Mariner's Handbook* and nautical almanacs. Get free sea safety advice and resources at [RNLI.org/seasafety](http://RNLI.org/seasafety).



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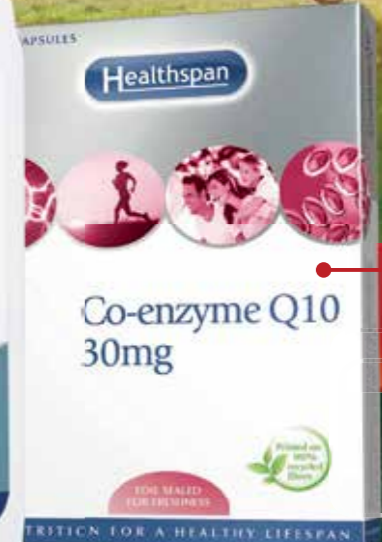


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# RESCUE

## 1 DIVE BOAT IN DANGER

**2 June:** Moelfre's Tyne class lifeboat *Robert and Violet* was launched as a dive boat was pushed towards rocks in a strong north-easterly wind and rough sea. The boat's engine had failed with three people onboard, including a 4-year-old girl. Moelfre RNLI volunteer Dave Massey says: 'Thanks to the training the crew regularly undertake, they were able to rapidly establish a tow and haul the vessel away from the threatening rocks to safety. They then educated the dive boat party in the importance of wearing lifejackets at all times when onboard boats.'



## 2 LIFEGUARDS RESCUE BOATERS

**5 August:** Lifeguards on Castlerock Beach, Co Antrim, rescued a man and woman from the water after their boat sank. The boaters had sent out a mayday call and the lifeguards, closest to the scene, were quick to respond. Jenny Thompson and Charlie Boyle took off on their rescue watercraft and had the two people onboard within 6 minutes of the initial call.



## 3 TEENS ADRIFT

**12 July:** Four teenagers and an adult found themselves powerless when their angling boat's engine failed. They were drifting towards rocks near Ardnamurchan Point, the most westerly part of the British mainland. Tobermory's Severn class lifeboat *Elizabeth Fairlie Ramsey* launched, to find that another pleasurecraft had come to the drifters' aid, towing them clear of danger. The lifeboat took over the tow and brought the boat and her occupants to nearby Kilchoan. Watch the action at: [RNLI.org/tobermoryvid](http://RNLI.org/tobermoryvid).



## 4 QUADRUPLE LAUNCH TO STUCK YACHT

**19 June:** When this eye-catching yacht ran aground with one person aboard, Aldeburgh's D class lifeboat *Christine* and Mersey class lifeboat *Freddie Cooper* had a job to do. It was just after midnight. The yacht was stuck fast, and the lifeboat crew decided to try freeing her later in the day at high tide, taking the sailor back to shore to wait. The lifeboats relaunched at 10.30am and, after several attempts, towed the yacht clear of the riverbank.



## 5 SWAMPED IN ROUGH SEAS

**3 June:** In high winds and rough seas, a dismasted yacht drifted towards the dangerous cliffs and tidal race of St Alban's Head, Dorset. The yacht had been swamped and her cockpit filled with water. Swanage's Mersey class lifeboat was quickly on scene and, with some difficulty, set up a tow. Once in more sheltered waters, two lifeboat crew members jumped onboard the yacht, cut away her broken rigging and set up a more secure tow for the trip to Poole Harbour, where Poole lifeboat took over.

## 6 ANGLERS BROUGHT TO SAFETY

**27 June:** St Agnes's D class lifeboat *Blue Peter IV* is pictured towing an angling boat to safety. The vessel had lost power from both engines 4 miles off St Agnes Beach.



The RNLI's lifeboats and lifeguards carry out thousands of rescues every year (see Launches on page 42). Here are just a few caught on camera and see the list below for more in-depth reports.

- 7 Exmouth, pages 14–16
- 8 Polzeath, pages 18–19
- 9 Lowestoft, page 21
- 10 Whitby, pages 22–23

Words: Mairéad Dwane  
Photos: RNLI/(Aldeburgh, Mark Jamieson, Dr John Julian, Andrew McHaffie, Moelfre, Swanage)



# Beyond the limit

Exmouth Helmsman Roger Jackson thought he would never launch a lifeboat again. But now four young men owe him their lives

Main: Reconstruction shot of one of the casualties about to be pulled aboard Exmouth lifeboat

Right: Exmouth crew launching surf through breaking surf on the actual rescue



Exmouth is a popular seaside destination but on the afternoon of 23 October 2011 the Exe Estuary was no place for swimmers or leisurecraft. Near gale onshore winds and an ebbing tide made for an awesome sight. Helmsman Roger Jackson watched from Exmouth Lifeboat Station with some fellow crew members. 'We were talking about how difficult

it would have been to launch our inshore lifeboat – if we got a call, how would we get through the surf?' recalls Roger. 'We agreed we'd need extra help to steady the D class in the waves as the tractor reversed her into the sea. That's how rough it was.'

It wasn't long before the volunteer crew had to put their theory to the test. They saw a rigid inflatable boat (RIB) heading out to sea. 'We assumed they would realise how rough it was and turn back,' says Roger. The RIB had not long disappeared from view when someone shouted through the window. A member of the public had noticed that it had overturned. As Roger and the crew dashed outside, their pagers rang out – someone else had alerted the Coastguard. Roger knew that the sea conditions were so challenging that launching would push the D class to its operational limits and possibly beyond. But he also knew a boat had overturned and lives were at risk. Together with fellow volunteers Andy Williams and Mark Champion, he grabbed his lifejacket.

That Roger is still able to serve as a crew member is, in his own words, 'very lucky'. Just over 10 years

ago he severely damaged his feet and legs in a paragliding accident. 'I was in hospital and the staff called my mum and dad and said I was probably going to have both legs amputated,' says Roger. 'But after extreme amounts of surgery, over more than 2 years, they were saved. When you are critically ill like that, you have to have goals to get you through. Mine was to get back on the lifeboat crew.'

A decade on, Roger faced another challenge of a lifetime – helming a 5m inflatable lifeboat through huge breaking waves to rescue an overboard crew. As he, Andy and Mark prepared for launch, the station Coxswain/Mechanic, Tim Mock, arrived. Tim paged more lifeboat crew for a launch of the station's all-weather lifeboat, to offer support. Meanwhile, the D class was pushed into the sea on its carriage by tractor, using the technique the crew had discussed and Roger powered her from her carriage.

'The waves were huge,' says Roger. 'Andy and Mark were brilliant because they had to work so hard at putting all their weight at the front of the lifeboat as we climbed. The RIB had gone over because it was climbing such steep waves and flipped. We'd have done the same if my crew hadn't done such a good job.'

Launching and negotiating the surf were difficult and dangerous enough but the lifeboat crew hadn't reached the casualties yet. The waves were getting bigger – in the main part of the channel, they were steep and up to 3m high. It was difficult to see much and to hear the radio so Roger didn't know exactly where the upturned RIB was.

As the lifeboat crew headed further offshore in search of the casualties, waves with breaking crests reached 4m. Roger had to use full power to climb the face of each wave, punch through its crest as it broke over the crew, and drop sharply into a trough, again and again. 'It was all about training and timing,' says Roger. Then, through the wind-driven spray, the lifeboat crew saw the RIB. Upside down, it was being tossed around mercilessly. Its crew, four young men in wetsuits, were desperately clinging on to keep themselves afloat. They were in danger of becoming separated from their vessel and each other, which could have been fatal given the sea state. They only had one lifejacket between them.



'When you are critically ill, you have to have goals. Mine was to get back on the lifeboat crew.'



» Roger and his crew needed to get the men aboard urgently, but they faced a new obstacle. 'There were fenders, ropes and buckets floating around. If we'd got any of that tangled up in our propellers we would have gone over too, because it was engine power that was keeping us stable,' explains Roger. Going alongside and helping the casualties off directly was therefore too dangerous. So Roger managed to get within 5m of the upturned craft while Andy and Mark shouted instructions to the four men. 'The plan was for the lads to swim out to us one by one, and I'd take us close enough to pick them up,' says Roger. As the inshore lifeboat crew worked away, the Exmouth all-weather lifeboat stood by in case the plan went wrong.

Roger expertly brought the lifeboat close enough again and again. Andy and Mark worked hard to pull each casualty from the water before returning to their 'trimming' duties: keeping the lifeboat stable with their weight. The casualties were suffering from cold and shock, and the lifeboat crew were keen to get them to shore for medical attention. Despite seven men being onboard now, Roger skilfully dodged and rode the waves towards the beach, while Andy and Mark constantly trimmed the weight distribution to keep the lifeboat stable. As the beach came into view, Roger knew that trying to get the lifeboat back onto

a carriage would be difficult, time-consuming and dangerous. He decided to deliberately run her aground.

'I had to get those casualties to shore quickly. So I found a set of waves, got on top of one, and rode it in as it was breaking. We landed right up on the beach in front of over 100 people who were watching. They gave us a round of applause! It was a great moment for Exmouth Lifeboat Station as a whole and, of course for the casualties – because they survived. We'd only been out for 20 minutes or so, but we were physically and mentally drained.'

Roger has been awarded the Bronze Medal for Gallantry for his exemplary command and leadership, boathandling and tenacity. Mark and Andy received the Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum for their key part in the rescue. 'It is a great team here,' concludes Roger. 'Without the support of the crew and the RNLI's staff after my accident, I would not have had the determination to get back on the lifeboat. And so to have carried out a rescue like that, after everything, makes me very proud.'

Words: Rory Stamp

Photos: RNLI/(NigelMillard, Exmouth)

Top: Helmsman Roger Jackson considers himself very lucky to be back on the lifeboat following a serious paragliding accident

Above: Huge waves wrecked the casualty boat, shown here recovered

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# From the brink

When hearing-impaired surfer Isabella Denyer went out alone at Polzeath Beach, she soon became overpowered by waves. Here's what happened, in her own words

On a family holiday in Polzeath, North Cornwall, I'd decided to try my hand at surfing. After a week of lessons, I hired a board and practised.

It was a gloomy, grey day on 26 August 2011 when I went surfing one last time before our departure. Carrying my longboard out into the chilly sea, facing the oncoming rain and waves that were mounting steadily, I began my accustomed paddle out towards where the waves were beginning to break.

Before I realised it, I was far away from the other surfers, out in the deep water with nothing except my board to keep me afloat. Little did I know how powerful the ocean can be and how powerless you can be if you're a weak swimmer and inexperienced surfer.

Despite my efforts to keep my board pointing nose forward towards the shore, ploughing through the onslaught of wave upon wave, I was hindered by a rip current. After struggling for about 20 minutes I began to swallow water and the gritty sand that had been caught up in the swirls of the waves.

There was a sense of darkness beginning to descend – a slow, frightening awareness that I no longer understood where top or bottom was. I was being tossed among the waves, my body becoming limp with the effort to keep afloat. I swallowed so much water that I could no longer catch my breath. I couldn't breathe, I couldn't see, I couldn't call. I felt myself sinking, succumbing to the darkness that completely overcame me.

## Terror and timing

Suddenly, I felt a hand gripping me around the middle, before I was hoisted over a shoulder. I could feel myself moving, being jogged along and the distant, far-away call of shouts. Without my hearing-aids, my world has very little sound; but never has it felt more unreal or silent than it was in that moment.

The urge to throw up was more wretched than any kind of sick bug in my life. I unsuccessfully attempted to rid my lungs of water and sand. The sensation of being unable to breathe alone was terrifying. The blackness came again.

When I came round once more, there were lots of people and I was very frightened. I still found

it incredibly hard to breathe. I looked up into the reassuring face of a lifeguard, who was slowly pumping air into my lungs.

Even at that stage of my rescue when I was so unstable, somehow in the back of my consciousness I knew that it was going to be alright. The lifeguards knew what they were doing and understood my condition. They had acted quickly and skilfully to get me breathing again and had managed to get me to a place of safety. I dread to think what might have happened had they not been there or been so well trained.

I needed to get to hospital very quickly. The timing alone is testament to the speed and skill of the lifeguard team on Polzeath Beach that day – within the space of time from getting me out of the water to assessing my condition, the rescue helicopter had been called.

I was extremely lucky. As a novice surfer and a very weak swimmer I should never have gone out on my own. Having been treated further in hospital, I made a full recovery.

I want to say "thank-you" to the RNLI for what they did for me; but more than that, I want to say "you saved my life".

## Debt of gratitude

On 17 June 2012, I hiked 40 miles down the north coast of Cornwall, from Bude to Polzeath to raise money for RNLI lifeguards. Since my accident I have realised the importance of knowing how to swim efficiently, so I've taken lessons and I aim to swim a mile to complete my fundraising mission.

If you would like to help me raise money for the RNLI, please search online for Isabella Denyer on Virgin Money Giving.

Lifeguards Nathan Groves, Mike Jones and Luke Whitnall worked together quickly to revive Isabella. Surf school instructor Kelly O'Toole spotted her struggling and reached her just in time.

Mike knows that much of his job is patrolling and prevention, but when he tells people he's an RNLI lifeguard they often ask if he's ever saved a life. Proudly, Mike now answers: 'Isabella Denyer.'

Words: Isabella Denyer and Bethany Hope  
Photo: Dominic Evans, Evansshoots

'I couldn't breathe, I couldn't see, I couldn't call. I felt myself sinking, succumbing to the darkness.'



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CARLB/10/12

# Sunday service

What do you do when your boat starts to sink – so fast you don't even have time to make a distress call? You hope there's a lifeboat nearby ...

It was a typical Sunday morning for the crew of Lowestoft lifeboat. A nice lie-in, a browse through the papers, then off out to sea at 10am for their regular training exercise.

But for the 11 people onboard the dive boat *Storm Petrel*, the afternoon's events were anything but routine. Returning to harbour at 12.10pm, with a slight sea state and in force 4 winds, the 10m vessel was swamped by a couple of large waves and started to take on water. The crew desperately tried to bale out the ingress, but *Storm Petrel* was sinking fast – without even the time to put out a mayday call. It was high time for a stroke of luck.

As it happened, Lowestoft lifeboat was also returning to shore at the time, and the ever-vigilant crew spotted something awry. Coxswain John Fox says: 'We actually saw the dive boat as it left,

and as we were coming back we saw the boat again. It looked like he was coming in, but was in a bit of trouble. Next thing, it was down at the stern and they were baling out. We could see four of the guys in the wheelhouse, with their faces by the glass. They must have been terrified.'

### Trapped

As the lifeboat approached, *Storm Petrel* went under, stern-first. The lifeboat crew shouted at those on deck, some of whom didn't have lifejackets, to get off the vessel. Meanwhile, those trapped inside the wheelhouse struggled to escape. They managed to slide open a window under the water level, remove their lifejackets, dive down and swim out of the sinking boat.

The lifeboat crew used a lifebuoy, heaving line and Jason's

cradle (a device like a stiffened scramble net) to recover all 11 survivors from the choppy water. Once ashore, four had to be taken to hospital and treated for diesel ingestion.

John says: 'I have been on the lifeboat for nearly 20 years and I have never had to rescue that many people in one go. I would like to pay tribute to my crew, who included trainees. Also, the guys in the water stayed calm and it seems their diver training helped them.'

'There was no mayday call – it was sheer luck that we were there at the time. If they had been further offshore it could have been a different story.'

Words: Mairéad Dwane

Photo: James Bass/  
*Eastern Daily Press*

### DETAIL

**THE LIFEBOAT:**  
ON-1132 Tyne class  
*Spirit of Lowestoft*  
Funded by an appeal in the *Lowestoft Journal*

**THE CREW:**  
Full-time Coxswain/Mechanic John Fox  
Second Coxswain David Schonhut (Energy Company Marine Controller)  
Karl Jackson (Rig Manager)  
Trainee Colin Canham (Procurement Supervisor)  
Trainee Stuart Littleton (Cash Machine Installer)  
Trainee James Tacon (Supermarket Worker)



# Kayaker on a knife edge

On an apparently ordinary day at the beach last Summer, a near tragedy was unfolding



Left: A sea kayaker in conditions similar to those that Mike started out in on 30 August 2011

Opposite: RNLI Lifeguard Supervisor Pat Messruther

#### THE DETAIL

**LIFEGUARDS:**  
Pat Messruther, 40  
Daniel Wordsworth, 22  
Calum Norman, 18

**LIFEBOAT CREW:**  
Hugh Ramsden, 47  
Stephen Boocock, 31  
Jamie White, 30

**D CLASS LIFEBOAT:**  
D-674 OEM Stone III

It was just before midday on 30 August 2011 and a lone kayaker was enjoying the water off Sandsend, near Whitby, North Yorkshire. The weather was overcast and the surf had been building, reaching 3–4m in height. Meanwhile a powerful rip current was running along the beach and out to sea, creating an undertow.

As the conditions worsened and now in dumping waves, Mike struggled to keep afloat. His kayak was being tossed around like an empty plastic bottle. Onlookers worried for his safety rang 999. Back on the beach, the kayaker's wife was becoming increasingly concerned, sensing that her partner was in trouble.

At 12.18pm the Coastguard requested the launch of the Whitby inshore lifeboat, with the Whitby RNLI lifeguards alerted a few minutes later. The incident was over 2.5 miles from the lifeboat station and 1.5 miles from the lifeguard unit.

## The kayak was being tossed around like an empty plastic bottle

As soon as he heard of Mike's plight, Lifeguard Calum Norman closed the patrol zone at Whitby, leaving two lifeguards in place in case of other incidents. Then Lifeguard Daniel Wordsworth collected Calum and Lifeguard Supervisor Pat Messruther in the patrol vehicle and quickly drove them all along the beach towards Sandsend. When they arrived, Calum took charge of communications with the Coastguard and Whitby Lifeguard Unit, while Pat, with no hesitation, grabbed a rescue board, entering the water in just his shorts. There was no time to don a wetsuit – he could see that things were becoming critical for Mike.

Pat bravely fought his way through increasingly large waves to the kayaker, 100m from the shore. Although he was wearing a wetsuit and buoyancy

aid, Mike had struggled to keep his head above water. He was now unresponsive, barely conscious and had taken in a lot of water. As he was also tall and of large build, he posed a significant challenge for just one man to handle.

Pat got off his board and grappled with Mike while 2–3m waves broke over them. The sea was very rough, the man was facing the wrong way and unable to respond. Using all of his strength and skills, somehow Pat managed to turn him, got him onto the board and was finally able to climb up himself and paddle shorewards.

At 12.31pm the lifeboat arrived. Because of the conditions, it took three attempts for her crew to get close enough to recover Mike, but eventually they were successful. Pat paddled speedily back to shore while the lifeboat crew beached the boat. Once back on land, Pat took charge of the lifeguard team once again. They checked the man's condition and gave him oxygen. The casualty was then transferred to the lifeguard patrol vehicle and sped to the slipway, where he was handed over to paramedics.

Rescue over, an exhausted Pat and the other lifeguards returned to their area and resumed normal patrols. The inshore lifeboat crew relaunched from the beach and conditions were still bad. Hitting several large swells, they almost capsized and one of the crew was thrown to the stern. They still managed to motor back to their station, thankfully suffering only minor injuries.

Darren Lewis, Lifeguard Inspector, comments: 'Pat played down his actions but very few people would have been able to do what Pat did that day.' In fact his actions resulted in him being awarded the Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum – a highly prestigious award for Gallantry.

Words: Carol Waterkeyn

Photos: RNLI, *Whitby Gazette*, Joe McCarthy



## Remarkable advances in technology mean that sailors are no longer isolated from the rest of the world while at sea

Throughout history sailors would have to go many months without news from home but satellite technology now enables today's seafarers to be in constant contact.

Fire was the first method of signalling between land and sea and the earliest known lighthouse using a fire beacon was built around 280BC in Alexandria, Egypt. This tower, now listed as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, is said to have stood 140m tall.

### Lighthouses

In Britain the Eddystone Lighthouse, completed in 1698, was the first offshore lighthouse. It was built 13 miles off Plymouth to warn sailors of a treacherous group of rocks in the approach to the English Channel.

Today, the fourth incarnation of the Eddystone Lighthouse still signals to ships using its unique pattern of flashing lights and sounds. Each lighthouse has a different pattern of flashes, known as its character, to help sailors distinguish it from other lighthouses as well as a distinct sound pattern produced by its foghorn.

Lamps and lanterns have also been used on ships for many years to send signals and were a particularly important method of communication for ships in convoys during the Second World War. Vessels could send messages to one another even if they were out of sight by bouncing light off low clouds.

### Flags

One of the earliest flag systems was developed by a French naval officer, Mahé de La Bourdonnais in 1736. His system consisted of coloured flags representing the numbers 1 to 10 and combinations allowed almost 1,000 different signals to be made.

At the end of the 18th century, two British Admirals, Lord Richard Howe and Sir Home Popham developed their own flag codes. Popham's code became known as Trafalgar Code after it was used in the battle by Admiral Nelson when he sent out the famous message: 'England that expects every man will do his duty.'

However, it was yet another set of flags developed by the novelist and naval man Captain Frederick Marryat that became most widely used in the 19th century. Marryat's *A Code of Signals for the Merchant Service*, published in 1817, was quickly adopted by seafarers and translated into other languages.

Marryat explained the urgent need for an effective system of communication: 'The Master of a merchant vessel who sees another steering into danger, has at present no means to warn her of it, but must endure the agonising sensation of following her with his eye, till she is dashed to pieces on the rocks; and many a vessel that has sprung a leak, or met with some serious accident, within sight of another, sinks during the night; when had she been able to communicate the particulars of her distress ... the crew at least, if not the vessel, might have been saved.'

### Subtle signals

Signals listed in Marryat's code book make interesting reading today, illustrating the many problems facing sailors. Some messages conveyed navigational details such as longitude or that an entrance was narrow. Others illustrated the problems of health, such as: 'Has the plague ceased?' and 'Was the port you left healthy?' Some warned of pirates while others dealt with more mundane matters such as: 'Can you lend us your newspapers?'

Marryat also made provision for signalling at night with a system of four vertical lights coloured red or white to indicate different numbers to correlate with the flag system. Light signals are still used at night.

Marryat's code remained in use for much of the century but was eventually superseded by *The Commercial Code of Signals for the Use of All Nations* in 1857. This flag system later became the *International Code of Signals* and is still in use today and remains the primary method of communication in certain situations.

### Radio

In the 1890s, with early radio communications, Morse code began to be used – the rapid succession of short and long pulses represented on paper as dots or dashes.

When *Titanic* set sail in April 1912, she carried the latest technology of her time. She received ice warnings and, after the fateful collision, her radio officers sent out CQD messages. CQ or sécu is taken from the French word sécurité and, in this context, meant that important safety information was to follow; while D was for distress. So, contrary to popular belief, CQD is not an acronym for Come Quick Danger!

This disaster led to the first meeting of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) in London on 12 November 1913. See more about SOLAS regulations and IMO on page 6.

The convention ruled that all radios must be permanently manned so as not to miss distress calls, and formalised the use of red flares as a distress signal after *Titanic's* flares were not recognised as such by the freighter *SS Californian*.



An RNLB shore helper signals to Boulmer's pulling and sailing lifeboat using flag semaphore in 1930



An RNLB lifeguard practises his rescue signals from the shore at Cromer in 2008

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	
m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	
											y	z

*International Code of Signals:*  
You can use this table of signalling flags to decode the title of our feature



» **Automatic systems**

Modern-day radio communication is by VHF radio and these are generally Digital Selective Calling (DSC) enabled. This means that in an emergency a distress call can be made at the press of a button that will carry a boat's identification number and position.

DSC radios form part of the Global Maritime Distress Safety System known as GMDSS. This international system uses satellite technology and radio systems to ensure rapid automated alerts to shore-based rescue services and other ships in the vicinity.

Mobile phones are notoriously unreliable at sea and satellite phone use has, until now, been limited because of price. However, both the size and price of satellite phones have reduced significantly in recent years. Sailors taking part in round-the-world races post regular blogs with photos and videos and receive messages of support from around the globe.

From 2004 the International Maritime Organization (IMO) required that all ships over 300 tonnes carry automatic identification systems (AIS). This system provides information about the vessel and its destination to other ships and coastal authorities by way of electronic charts pinpointing the position of each boat and its heading.

The RNLI is currently fitting AIS to its entire all-weather fleet and Thames lifeboats. This will enable the Coastguard to track the progress of lifeboats and lifeboat crew to monitor vessels around them.

Words: Jo Roche  
Photos: RNLI/(Nigel Millard, Dave Riley), Photopress



Above: Fastnet lighthouse, midpoint of one of the world's classic offshore yacht races, produces powerful flashes, horn blasts and radar signals to warn vessels of the rock

Left: Poole all-weather lifeboat showing on an automatic identification system as it was towing a yacht back into harbour



# THE SIGNS OF THE SEA RANGE

by designer Nick Munro



The RNLI has teamed up with British designer Nick Munro for their latest sea-inspired range. Available from September in retail shops and from the RNLI's online shop, the nautically themed collaboration will be a first for both Nick and the charity.

## Inspired and inspiring

Inspired by his passion for sailing, Nick has created a contemporary collection, which pays homage to maritime traditions – the signs of the sea.

The use of flags to send messages at sea has a long history. Just hours before the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, Lord Nelson used a flag code called the *Telegraphic Signal of Marine Vocabulary* to send the most famous message in British naval history. By 1855 this system had evolved into the International Code of Signals or flag signs created 'for the use of all nations' that is still used today.

Nick says: 'My personal connection with the RNLI goes right back to boyhood, collecting buttons and bottle-tops for the

*Blue Peter* lifeboat appeals. Later, I would visit the lifeboat station at Tenby with my dad. I remember being fascinated by the engineering of the boats. When I started sailing myself, I began to understand the risks involved – brought home by the Fastnet Race of 1979. Today, sailing with my two boys off the coast of Anglesey, I'm aware that if the worst does happen, there are people prepared to risk their lives to save others.

'To me, the RNLI is a great institution that deserves appreciation and help from everyone, and I'm delighted to be designing for them. The income from these products will make an invaluable contribution to their lifesaving work.'

*Nick Munro*



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**RNLIshop**

**Lifeboats**

# A celebration of life

Geoff Holt was a teenage sailor with vast potential when an accident changed his life. But his love of the sea and spirit of adventure have no bounds

There were no lifeguards on duty to warn Geoff Holt about the dangers of swimming in the bay that day. Diving forwards into the warm tropical sea, he hit his head on a sand bar, the weight of his body forcing his head downward, snapping his spine between the shoulder blades, immediately rendering him quadriplegic, paralysed from the chest down, for the rest of his life.

The date was September 1984. The bay was Cane Garden Bay on the island of Tortola in the British Virgin Islands. He was just 18 years old.

In the 2 years between leaving school and his accident, Geoff had sailed in excess of 30,000 miles including three transatlantic crossings, two of which when he was just 16 years old. He was destined for great things in the yachting industry. The accident changed the course of his life but, although he did not know it at the time, his life would help to inspire countless others who have followed his story.

## Readjusting

Twenty eight years on from that accident, Geoff's adventures continue to push boundaries and, in his own words: 'It's not about coping with disability; it's about finding the reserves we all have to achieve our goals in spite of it.'

A year in hospital equipped Geoff with the skills he needed for a life in a

wheelchair. It also equipped him with his wife Elaine who had been his nurse! The couple celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary this year. 'It was worth paying my National Health Insurance contributions,' he jokes.

Retraining in computing, he secured a job with a firm of accountants in their marketing department. Within a few years, Geoff had been promoted to regional Marketing Manager for the firm Deloitte.

He continued his passion for sailing and was one of the inaugural trustees of the newly founded charity RYA Sailability in 1995, a charity he was to be Chairman of for 6 years, working tirelessly to encourage people with disabilities to get afloat. Disabled sailors in the UK now number more than 30,000 at more than 150 designated sites throughout the UK.

## Personal Everest

Geoff first appeared on the radar screens of the international media in 2007 when he embarked on his Personal Everest. It was the name he gave his plan to become the first disabled person to sail single-handed around the UK.

On Monday 14 May 2007, he set off on his adventure. Geoff states: 'The journey itself was, and will remain, the most amazing thing I have ever done in my life. I put together a team of eight volunteers to

help me. It was to last 109 days. In a series of day-sails and overnights in a motorhome, we visited 51 harbours around the UK and I sailed my little 4.5m trimaran dinghy 1,500 miles.'

## The RNLI family

It was during this circumnavigation that the reach of the RNLI and how the charity is interwoven into coastal communities really struck him: 'In every one of those 51 destinations we were helped or given advice by at least one member of the RNLI. That Summer my son Tim was the luckiest 5-year-old in the country.'

'I lost count of the number of evenings I would arrive at a new harbour after a dozen or more hours at sea, tired, cold and hungry. But my spirits were always lifted when I would see my son, coming out on a lifeboat, to escort me into harbour.'

Geoff has since become a loyal supporter and close friend of the RNLI. This year he joined the RNLI Council.

## Nightmare and dream

Keen to relive his teenage memories, Geoff set about his next challenge. In December 2009, accompanied only by a nurse to help with his medical needs and a BBC cameraman, neither of whom could assist in any aspect of the sailing, Geoff set sail from Lanzarote in the Canary Islands to cross the Atlantic Ocean again.

The 18m catamaran *Impossible Dream* was designed to be sailed by a wheelchair user; all sails and navigation instruments controlled with push-button technology. Four weeks and 3,000 miles later, Geoff dropped anchor in Cane Garden Bay, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

'There could be no other destination could there?' he asks with a wry smile. It was here that Geoff had his accident. He explains: 'The beach may have taken away my ability to walk but it couldn't take away my spirit or my determination.'

'The crossing was never about "closure" or exorcising demons: it was a celebration of life. Had I not had my accident I would not have met my wife and we would not have had our son. I wouldn't change a thing.'







'It's not about coping with disability; it's about finding the reserves we all have to achieve our goals in spite of it.'

# NAUTICAL SKILLS WEEKEND

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Refreshments, lunch and, on Saturday, a three-course dinner with guest speaker are all included in the price of £350, with optional B&B package available.

### >> An unstoppable force

Geoff's a busy man – just this year he took a formal part in both Jubilee and Olympic celebrations. And he runs his new, wheelchair accessible powerboat *Wetwheels* out off Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth.

'I have personally witnessed many thousands of disabled people access the water, and it is being on the water that gives the greatest pleasure, regardless of whether that be on a sailing or motor boat.

'Every single person we have taken out on *Wetwheels*, disabled or non-disabled, leaves the boat with the biggest grin on their face. If you need to know why I do what I do, then look no further than the smiles. That is my reward.'

So what next? Well, there can only be one other item on Geoff's 'To do' list – to sail around the world. Fulfilling this ambition goes hand in hand with helping others: 'We are now actively looking for a sponsor. If we can find that partner, it will be a great way to raise the profile of, and funds for, the RNLI.'

Having achieved his Personal Everest, Geoff was inspired to write his autobiography, *Walking on Water*, which went on to become a bestseller. Follow Geoff's adventures at [geoffholt.com](http://geoffholt.com).

Words: Geoff Holt and Bethany Hope  
Photos: Steve Reid/*The News* (Portsmouth), Holt family album

### Geoff's milestones

- RYA Sailability Founding Chairman, 1995–2004
- World Disabled Multihull Championships Bronze Medallist, 1996 and 1997
- First disabled person to sail single-handed around Great Britain, 2007
- First disabled person to sail unassisted across the Atlantic Ocean, 2009–10
- Presented Yachtsman of the Year by Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, 2010
- Awarded MBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours, 2011
- Participant in the Thames Jubilee Pageant flotilla, 2012
- Nominated Olympic Torchbearer by Dame Ellen MacArthur, 2012
- Selector for the Paralympic Sailing Team GB, 2012
- Appointed to RNLI Council, 2012

**RNLI Council**  
The Council is the RNLI's general committee of the board that advises on and assists with broad policy and strategy. Its members are ambassadors for the charity and are also responsible for electing and appointing Trustees to the Board.



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Days 17-19: Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco

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**Days 4-5: Washington.** Travel to Washington for a two night stay with a tour of the city's famous landmarks.

**Day 6: To Chicago.** Leave by overnight sleeper train for Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

**Days 7-8: Chicago.** Arrive in Chicago and take a city tour, including the site of Al Capone's headquarters and the Willis Tower. Next day depart on the *California Zephyr* overnight train into Iowa and Nebraska.

**Days 9-10: Denver.** Spend a day in Denver, then a day exploring the Rocky Mountain National Park and Estes Park.

**Day 11: Denver and Rio Grande Railroad.** Travel along the route of the USA's most scenic train, the *Denver and Rio Grande Railroad*, past dramatic peaks and deep ravines, for an overnight stay at Grand Junction.

**Day 12: Durango.** Visit Silverton, then take a breathtaking ride on the historic *Durango and Silverton*

*Railroad* to the Wild West town of Durango.

**Day 13: Monument Valley.** Explore the rugged landscape of Monument Valley, one of the USA's most famous locations before continuing to stay two nights in Flagstaff.

**Day 14: Flagstaff.** Free day, perhaps to enjoy the fabulous setting of Flagstaff.

**Day 15: Grand Canyon.** Travel in vintage carriages to the majestic Grand Canyon, one of the world's most awe-inspiring sights, before travelling by overnight train to Los Angeles.

**Day 16: Los Angeles.** Explore Los Angeles and spend a night on board the *RMS Queen Mary*, formerly a famous ocean liner.

**Days 17-19: San Francisco.** Take the *Coast Starlight* along the Pacific coast, past pristine beaches and through the wine country of San Luis Obispo, to San Francisco for a three night stay and sightseeing tour, including the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz.

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# REVIEW

**For Better, For Worse**  
by Damian and Siobhan Horner  
Review by Carol Waterkeyn

Damian and Siobhan leave behind their old life in London and set off on a new chapter with their two small children on their lovingly restored boat, *Friendship*. This could be fiction, yet this is what the stressed advertising man and now full-time mum really do. They have no formal agenda, just a vague plan to motor down the canals of France. This very honest account of their trip is written from their two viewpoints.

From the start they seriously wonder whether they have been foolhardy in putting their faith in such an old, wooden, fishing boat. But they are rewarded with rich experiences; beautiful, and not quite as beautiful, views; a variety of interesting characters, including the Dover lifeboat Coxswain; and an enhanced understanding of each other, their children and their boat. An old retired RNLI lifeboat gets a mention too.

This is one of the most inspiring books I have read, describing a true example of having the courage to take the road (waterways) less travelled.

Paperback book, also available for Kindle  
Published by Orion Books  
ISBN 9780753823224  
Price: £7.99



**Rhymes from an Ancient Mariner**  
by Norman H McConochie  
Review by Mairead Dwane

Coleridge's epic *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is a gothic tall tale in which the title character is forever cursed for shooting an albatross. It seems strange that Norman H McConochie chooses to characterise his beloved father Herbert as the Ancient Mariner – particularly when Herbert retired aged 61 (hardly ancient!) and 'was a softie when it came to animals'.

Herbert Arthur McConochie spent more than 30 years at sea as an engineer. Son Norman has compiled a selection of the poetry his father wrote on those long voyages to the Arctic, Far East and India.

'Engineering and poetry make strange bedfellows,' says Norman. But why shouldn't an engineer write poetry? Herbert's verses are certainly carefully constructed, with perfect rhythms and rhymes. This is poetry for people who think a good poem rhymes, but imagery doesn't suffer. In *While Watching a Storm*, he hears 'Heav'ns mighty guns' and is struck by 'huge ice-cold shards of rain'.

I enjoyed the poetry but felt at times it was interrupted by the snippets of family history that might have worked better in an introduction.

Paperback book  
Published by Appin Press  
ISBN 9781906205874  
Price: £5.99



**If Not Now, When?**  
by Greg Searle  
Review by Paul Cullen

From an early admission that it was his brother's success in rowing that inspired Greg Searle to take up the sport, a strong sense of authenticity is sustained in *If Not Now, When?*

It was success they were to share, winning gold in the coxed pairs, at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992, and bronze at Atlanta in 1996.

The book, however, does not only talk about success. Greg provides a candid appraisal of mistakes that he has made, times when stubbornness and ego have been misplaced, and how a perception of him as a legend motivated him to come out of retirement to follow the road to London 2012.

Determined to prove that age would not be a barrier to becoming part of Team GB, he provides in this book a compelling insight into the effort and sacrifices required to be in contention one final time for an Olympic medal.

Hardback book  
Published by Macmillan  
ISBN 9780230763531  
Price: £18.99



Photo: Vault cc by sa 3.0



The Eiffel Tower – just one of the breathtaking views Damian and Siobhan Horner took in during their adventure

### How to order:

Unless other details are stated, all items reviewed here are available from good bookshops and online from Amazon via RNLI.org/amazon.

(Amazon will donate to the RNLI a minimum of 5% of the value of all such orders but only if you use this link and don't go direct.)

The Review section is compiled by Carol Waterkeyn



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- The perfect solution at a fraction of the price of walk-in baths

# LIFEBOAT LOTTERY

The Lifeboat Lottery supports all of the RNLI's work, including the Flood Rescue Team. Volunteers are shown undergoing specialist training, which fully prepares them for real-life situations, such as this year's Aberystwyth floods

#### SUMMER 2012

Congratulations to Martin Rhodes-Schofield of Essex who scooped the £5,000 first prize in the Summer Lifeboat Lottery. Martin is planning to celebrate his win with a VIP trip to a local RNLI station later this month.

The other cash prize winners were:

2nd prize: £2,000; Mr H Oldham, Cheshire  
3rd prize: £500; Mr CC Evans, Oxfordshire  
4th prize: £250; Mr RF Whinnett, Cheshire  
Five prizes of £100 each: Doctor AS Martin, Clackmannanshire; Mr JE Stennett, Middlesex; Mrs C Simmons, Cheshire; Canon GN Pearce, North Yorkshire; and Mr A Walsham, Cheshire.

#### WINTER 2012

What would you do with £5,000? You could go on a cruise, buy a new kitchen, invest it or even share your prize with loved ones. Our other eight cash prizes might come in handy too – so why not try your luck with the Lifeboat Lottery this Winter? It's easy to take part and you'll be helping to save lives at sea.

Tickets will be mailed to supporters on 22 October. 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).

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



Photo: RNLI/Rebin Goodlad

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# MAGIC MOMENTS

They have helped Harry Potter out of a few scrapes on the big screen – but what real lifesaving antics have cinema’s favourite twins been getting up to?

Filmgoers have been under Harry Potter’s spell for years – the film franchise has smashed box office records around the globe. Two faces particularly familiar to fans of the magical movies are the real-life twin brothers James and Oliver Phelps, who played Fred and George Weasley in all seven instalments. Between acting commitments, James and Oliver set out on some enchanting adventures of their own: they have whizzed across Europe in a car rally, tackled towering mountains, and sailed racing yachts around the Isle of Wight. As well as being in the name of fun, it’s also been in aid of the RNLI.

‘I think a lot of people our age and younger assume things like lifeboats and lifeguards are funded by the Government, and that the RNLI and the Coastguard are all in the same boat, as it were,’ says James, 26 (pictured far right), his brother (pictured on the left) nodding enthusiastically. ‘But when we realised, “no, it’s a charity”, you want to (a) tell other people and (b) give your support.’

That’s exactly what the Phelps twins have done since 2009, when the sailing novices stepped aboard a racing yacht with Sir Robin Knox-Johnston and competed in a Cowes Regatta race in aid of the RNLI. ‘There was no wind so we had periods of not being able to do much,’ recalls James. ‘So Sir Robin was telling us stories about sailing the globe, which was phenomenal.’ In the following year, the twins entered the same race with Steve White, another celebrated solo global sailor. ‘I think we must be a jinx, because we ended up nearer France than the Isle of Wight at one point,’ laughs Oliver.

Whether treading the boards with sailing greats or Hollywood stars, James and Oliver have always found their feet quickly. They had no professional acting experience before they were cast as Fred and George Weasley 12 years ago.

‘We weren’t at drama school or anything – we were just doing a few plays at comprehensive school. And then we heard about these open auditions for the film where they needed twins around our age. And they liked us,’ grins Oliver. The then 14-year-olds were transported into a new world: they were sharing scenes with celebrated actors such as Ralph Fiennes, Helena Bonham Carter, Julie Walters and Michael Gambon. ‘We learned a lot,’ adds Oliver. ‘You’d find yourself

asking Gary Oldman how to act in a certain situation, and he’d show you.’

The twins formed a close friendship with Rupert Grint, who played their on-screen brother, Ron – and he joined them for another RNLI adventure: the Wacky Rally. Their mission was to buy and equip a car for less than £250 and take it to Barcelona, raising RNLI awareness and sponsorship along the way. ‘I managed to get a 1992 Vauxhall Carlton for £60 and then painted it to look like a lifeboat,’ explains Oliver. ‘And that was one of the times when I realised how the RNLI affects so many people. I went to this firm in the Midlands to get some vinyl stickers for the car. And when the guy there found out what cause we were doing it for, he said there was no charge, because the RNLI had saved his life when he was 5.’

Having sailed and motored in aid of the RNLI, last year Oliver prepared for a triple challenge entirely under his own steam. The Three Peaks Challenge involves scaling the highest mountains of England, Wales and Scotland in 24 hours: Scafell Pike, Snowdon and Ben Nevis. James joined Oliver for the journey, raising funds for Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity. After 23 hours and very little sleep, the twins reached the summit of Scafell. ‘That was a great moment. It was tough at times, but the thought of the people who were supporting us online and the good work the money would do really kept me going,’ says Oliver.

Thousands of pounds have been raised to equip and train RNLI lifesavers thanks to Oliver and James. And you can’t put a price on the way they have promoted the charity to young people. They have an army of fans who have followed their fundraising exploits – thousands of people who may otherwise not appreciate the RNLI’s work. The RNLI even gets a mention in an extra featurette on one of the *Harry Potter* DVDs – a product purchased by millions. ‘It’s really good to get the message across, because it’s still something that I’m in awe of,’ says James. ‘We’ve met lifeboat crew in Dover and Cowes, lifeguards in Cornwall, and they are all unsung heroes. Everyone should know about what they do.’

Words: Rory Stamp

Photo: PA



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\*At least 5% of the purchase price of each holiday purchased will be paid in support of the RNLI. Payments are made to RNLI (Enterprises) Ltd (which pays all its taxable profits to the RNLI, a charity registered in England and Wales (No. 209603) and in Scotland (No. SC037736). Charity number CHY 2678 in the Republic of Ireland.

# Life cycle

Each Summer, Londoners Nick Pleydell-Bouverie and Rad Hart-George swap their suits for cyclists' Lycra and head off on the next stage of their RNLI Tour of Britain

The ambitious idea was dreamed up in the pub. Childhood friends Nick and Rad committed to cycling around every coastal RNLI lifeboat station in Britain and raising £25,000 for the charity.

Nick (29), who grew up in Hampshire near the sea, says: 'We've known for a long time about what the RNLI does and we have huge admiration for the crews. Putting their whole lives, wherever they might be, on hold whenever they're needed is enormously admirable. There's no real reward, no financial gain.'

They split the journey into legs to fit around their hectic London lives. Three Summers, 85 stations and innumerable energy-packed Eccles cakes later, they're still as enthusiastic as ever.

Nick recalls his highlights so far: 'Exmoor was incredible, and parts of the Cornish coast are amazing, like the Lizard Peninsula with its crystal clear waters. More of a surprise was the Kent and Sussex coast – I thought we'd want to get our heads down and cycle through but it was really, really stunning.'

Rad (also 29) adds: 'The trip gives us a great excuse to meet people, too, and have real conversations straight away. Lifeboat volunteers are the nicest guys, so you go somewhere, you meet these people who offer you a cup of tea, and then go out in the evening and hear about what life's like in that part of the country.'



Left: Nick and Rad are pictured on a typical working day. Nick works at a Baker Street estate agent, while Rad works for a nearby energy company

Right: On their epic journey

It's not all pretty views and curries with the crews, though. Our pedalling pair have faced uphill climbs of 25% gradient, taken on the wettest regions during the wettest Summer on record, inadvertently bumped into local criminals, and got their collection buckets out on crowded beaches. They've been lost in forests and chased by bees. And they've learned a lot about life, themselves and each other.

Rad says: 'There was a moment, in St Agnes, when we arrived at the lifeboat station just as a bunch of the local community were meeting for an evening swim. We looked at each other and thought: "They go out for an evening swim; we meet up in a dingy pub in the city. They've got the right idea. This is what life should be about."'

Read Nick and Rad's highly entertaining blog, and donate to the cause, at [thernlitourofbrtaintain.blogspot.co.uk](http://thernlitourofbrtaintain.blogspot.co.uk). Nick's employer Knight Frank has kindly sponsored the RNLI Tour of Britain. If you'd like to see your company's logo on Nick and Rad's shirts for the next leg of the trip, you can get in touch via the blog.

Words: Mairéad Dwane  
Photos: Mairéad Dwane, Nick Pleydell-Bouverie



Key:  
Journey so far ———  
Journey yet to do - - - - -

### Lifeboat of the future

Rad's first involvement with the RNLI was as a Storm Force member. In 1994, he won a children's competition to design the lifeboat of the future (pictured). Rad's space-age lifeboat was powered by a wind turbine – and he went on to work in renewable energy!



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**M**y husband and I were on Newgale Beach, Pembrokeshire, on Tuesday 17 July.

We climbed to the top of the shingle bank and saw two surfers in trouble. Along with others, we stood watching the absolutely heroic and courageous rescue, unable to leave the scene until we knew that the pair and their rescuers were safe.

[Ed's comment: RNLI lifeguards, Little and Broad Haven lifeboat crew and a Coastguard team worked together to save a man and woman who had been caught in a rip current and become stranded on rocks.]

I can't tell you how impressed we were by the bravery of the rescuers in the tremendously difficult conditions they faced. At one point it looked as if they were in trouble and, although not a conventionally religious person, it was then I started to pray.

The rescue was such a moving experience; I would have liked to thank the people on scene, but was too overcome to speak.

I do hope that the rescuers didn't think we were all thrill-seekers. We all felt extremely thankful for a successful outcome. I regret not clapping to show our feelings. Instead, we all breathed a sigh of relief and quietly walked away.

Having just arrived home, I simply had to check out the report online and write to you, to say how brave these young men are.

Ann

You too can read our latest rescue reports at [RNLI.org](http://RNLI.org) or follow us at [twitter.com/RNLI](https://twitter.com/RNLI)

**M**y son joined Storm Force at the beginning of this year and he really enjoys his magazine.

Although we don't live near the coast, we are excited about the Storm Force event at Drayton Manor as it's only about 20 minutes away. Then we are heading to the Isle of Wight and we are hoping to see The Queen open the new lifeboat station at Cowes.

My boys are over the moon, given we live in landlocked countryside and suddenly we are getting lots of contact with the RNLI. My son's membership is the best thing I've ever bought him.

Abi Culley  
Fillongley, Warwickshire

If you know someone aged 7-11 who would like to follow the exploits of Stormy Stan, Lifeguard Sandy and their crew of animals, for the princely sum of £7.50 a year, see the leaflet included with this magazine or contact Supporter Care on 0845 121 4999 or email [supporter\\_care@rnli.org.uk](mailto:supporter_care@rnli.org.uk).

To add your shout, especially any stories that might fit our Then and Now section (see page 48), write to the Editor at [thelifeboat@rnli.org.uk](mailto:thelifeboat@rnli.org.uk) or RNLI Headquarters, West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ. Please supply your full name and address. Letters may be edited for length or clarity.

Photo: Owen Howells







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'It was an honour to provide safety cover for world-class athletes.'



# Rings of safety

Olympic duty is not a new thing for the RNLI. Volunteer crew from around the UK and ROI gave vital support to Olympians taking part in the 2012 Games. Three extra lifeboats were used as safety cover during the sailing events, while Weymouth lifeboat and lifeguards ramped up their usual cover to cope with the extra visitors.

Lifeboats raced to the aid of two spectators who were injured after falling on rocks below Nothe Fort in Weymouth. Our crews provided casualty care, marshalled the crowds and secured the scene so that the pair could be airlifted to hospital.

RNLI lifeguards also provided cover for the triathlon and marathon swim events on the Serpentine in Hyde Park, during which they helped one exhausted competitor. Meanwhile, lifeboats on the Thames were on full alert for the inevitable peaks of activity in the heart of the capital. Our direct involvement with the Games was funded by LOCOG but it's your support and generosity that helped the RNLI build this safety infrastructure in the first place.

The UK has been privileged to be the only country to host the games three times and we've been fortunate to have the RNLI's ring of safety in place for all three events. The Olympics have not always been such a lavish affair: the 1948 London games were very much a case of making the best of it in the face of austerity and post-war rationing. There were no new venues built, no

Olympic village and the relay track was created using cinders from domestic coal fires.

That said, the sailing hosted in Torbay was described at the time as the 'biggest international event in all the 175 years of yacht racing history' and local lifeboat volunteers certainly played their part. One evening a sudden gale whipped up, causing trouble for two training ships anchored just outside the racing courses. Torbay lifeboat *George Shee* launched into rough seas and heavy rain to help. On the way, the RNLI crew found the yacht *Jinty* on fire, following an explosion. Fortunately her crew of nine were on deck at the time and were taken to safety. The lifeboat then continued to the training ships, ferrying officers and cadets between ship and shore, keeping watch until the storm abated in the small hours.

At the time of writing our crews and lifeguards were covering the Paralympics, an event that originated in post-war Britain. We feel proud of the passion and determination shown by our athletes and that of our RNLI family, pulling together to support us all.

Words: Jon Jones  
Photos: RNLI/Colin Bewes



Top: Lifeguard Supervisor Chris Rigby was one of our lifeguards on the Serpentine

Above: RNLI crews watch over Annalise Murphy and other Olympic sailors at Weymouth in 2012

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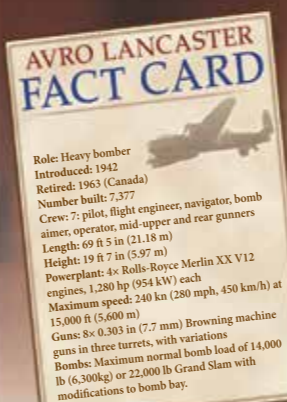


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