

# LIFEBOAT



THE RNLI IS THE  
CHARITY THAT  
SAVES LIVES AT SEA

ISSUE 623 | SPRING 2018

## RESCUE:

- Irish Sea storm drama
- Caught in a rock fall

# 'WE HAVE A JOB TO DO'

What gets our lifesavers  
through their toughest moments?



# Welcome



## The best thing about this job is the people

While putting *Lifeboat* magazine together, we get to speak with some incredible people. They all say they're just regular folk, but we know they're achieving extraordinary things.

This spring, we asked our lifesavers to share the moment when 'I can't do it' becomes 'I can'. Sometimes the turnaround is due to teamwork, or training. And sometimes it's as simple as knowing that they're someone's last hope. You can read their stories from page 24.

It was also a treat to chat with TV star Dermot O'Leary, who told us he'd love to join a lifeboat crew but would need a lot of training. That's OK, Dermot – most of our volunteers join us with no professional seafaring experience. We're ready when you are. You can do it!

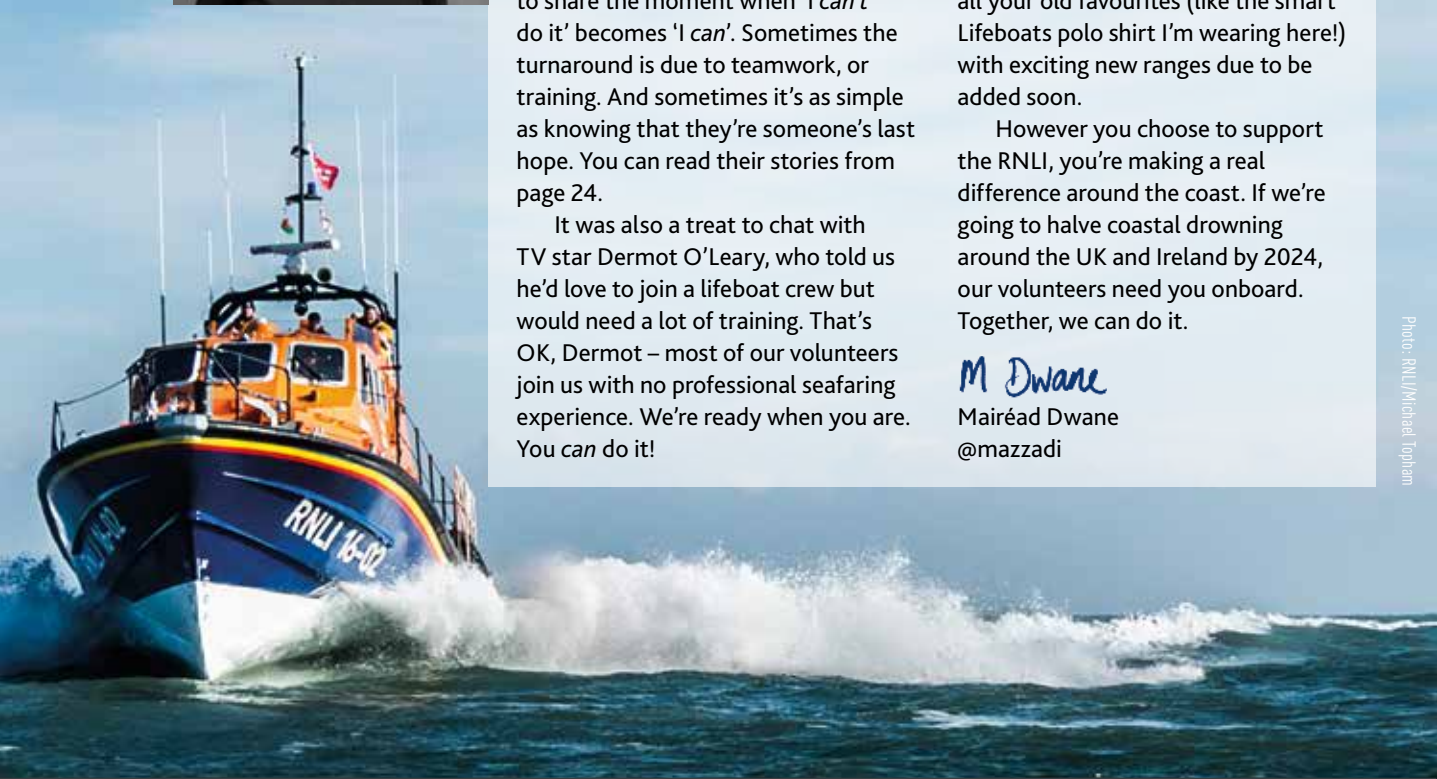
Finally, I know many of you will be pleased to hear that the RNLI's online shop is back up and running. Thank you for your patience while we worked on improving the service.

The all-new shop.RNLI.org has all your old favourites (like the smart Lifeboats polo shirt I'm wearing here!) with exciting new ranges due to be added soon.

However you choose to support the RNLI, you're making a real difference around the coast. If we're going to halve coastal drowning around the UK and Ireland by 2024, our volunteers need you onboard. Together, we can do it.

*M Dwane*  
Mairéad Dwane  
@mazzadi

Photo: RNLI/Michael Topham



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The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea. We do so by providing a rescue service, safety education, and supervision on beaches. We also influence other organisations, policy-makers and regulators. Our crews and lifeguards have saved over 142,200 lives since the RNLI was formed in 1824. We want to halve UK and Ireland coastal drowning by 2024 and reduce drowning around the world where it's a major risk. We are independent from government and rely on voluntary contributions and gifts in Wills for income. The RNLI is a charity registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736). Registered charity number 20003326 in the Republic of Ireland



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# News

Your guide to what's been going on in the world of the RNLI



Our superfit supporters raise thousands for the RNLI through running events. And at Christmas they were joined by a new team mate: the animated turkey Captain McStuffing.

Our feathered fundraiser took part in the PayPal Turkey Dash – a televised race with competitors from seven other charities.

The public were asked to make donations to support their favourite turkey. The more donations received, the better their turkey

would perform on the day. And thanks to his generous fanbase, Captain McStuffing was first across the finish line!

Thank you to everyone who supported the Captain. The total the RNLI received from the event was £35,500. You can watch the race at TurkeyDash.co.uk.

PS: Good luck to every RNLI runner taking part in the Virgin Money London Marathon and other races throughout the summer. We're with you all the way!



## Beach ready

RNLI lifeguards were back on selected UK beaches over Easter.

This spring, you'll see them on duty on some of our more popular beaches during half-term and weekends. More and more beaches will see lifeguards return as we approach the peak summer season.

You can find a full list of beaches, including lifeguard patrol dates, at [RNLI.org/beaches](http://RNLI.org/beaches).



In January 2017, the RNLI became a fully opted-in organisation. This means we can only contact you by post, email or telephone if you've given us permission to do so.

And this February, we achieved the milestone of 500,000 supporters opted in to receive communications from us. This is vital for us to be able to give our lifesavers everything they need to keep saving lives.

Thank you to everyone who has opted in so far. And if you know someone who supports the RNLI and may have lost touch with us, do ask them to visit [RNLI.org/OptIn](http://RNLI.org/OptIn) or call us using the contact details on the inside cover.

Words: Anna Burn, Mairéad Dwane

Photos: PayPal, RNLI/(Anna Burn, Nathan Williams)

## NEW YEAR HONOURS

Congratulations to our RNLI people recognised in HM The Queen's 2018 New Year Honours for their contribution to saving lives at sea:

### Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE):

**William Hopkins** became president of Port Talbot Lifeboat Station in 1990 and has overseen the fundraising for, and arrival of, three new lifeboats. He's been awarded an MBE for his services to the community, particularly maritime safety and children, in South Wales.

**David (Dai) Jenkins** from Aberystwyth Lifeboat Station has dedicated 55 years to the RNLI as crew member, lifeboat operations manager, fundraiser and treasurer.

**Chris Lewis** is the first RNLI lifeguard to be recognised with an MBE. One of our longest-serving lifeguards, Chris has given 52 years to the community of Poole and Bournemouth, performing hundreds of rescues through the years.

**David Steenvoorden** has served as an RNLI crew member for over 30 years. Joining Cleethorpes Lifeboat Station in 1987, he moved to the Humber crew 3 years later – where he now serves as coxswain. He also holds an RNLI Bronze Medal for Gallantry.

**Mike Tipton** has been recognised for his 10 years of dedication and research into beach lifeguard and crew fitness standards and, more recently, with the Respect the Water campaign.

### British Empire Medal (BEM)

**Richard Marriott** has raised close to £250,000 for the RNLI in 37 years and has been recognised for his dedication to the charity.

### Order of the British Empire (OBE)

**Thomas Burgess** has been recognised for his services to charity and business, including the RNLI. Thomas contributed towards a new D class lifeboat in Cleethorpes Lifeboat Station in 2012.

**Anthony (Tony) Delahunty**, Deputy Launching Authority and former crew from Selsey Lifeboat Station, has been honoured for his service to the fishing industry.

## AGM: SAVE THE DATE

Our Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held in Poole on 19 July. Booking is essential, so please visit [RNLI.org/AGM2018](http://RNLI.org/AGM2018) for more information.



Words: Anna Burn. Photos: Graham Renfrew, RNLI/(Jamie Marshall, Beccs Miller, Craig Turner)

Dunbar

MAKING WAVES IN DUNBAR

In January, a group of young surfers from the Wave Project – an organisation that helps young people reduce anxiety and increase confidence through its award-winning surf courses – paid a visit to Dunbar Lifeboat Station – and the crew made a lasting impression.

Layla (19) says: 'It was amazing to learn how volunteers have to have all the equipment on within a minute. It's a lot to get on and its pretty heavy! All the volunteers are so brave.'

Wave Project Coordinator Jamie Marshall says: 'The opportunity to not only learn more about ocean safety, but to meet the volunteer heroes who make the sea a safer place around the UK, was fantastic. I think the seeds for some future RNLI crew may have been planted!'

Find out more about the Wave Project, which has branches throughout the UK, at [waveproject.co.uk](http://waveproject.co.uk).



Welcome to your community news for Scotland. For all the latest from where you are, head to [RNLI.org/news](http://RNLI.org/news)

WATER SAFETY SCOTLAND LAUNCHES

Water Safety Scotland, a new drowning prevention initiative, aims to tackle accidental deaths by drowning and reduce water-related suicide. An average of 50 people drown in Scotland every year as the result of an accident and a further 29 lose their lives to suicide in and near water.

The RNLI is part of this initiative, along with the Royal Life Saving Society UK, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland, and community representatives. We are working together to deliver an engaging education programme to secondary school pupils, teaching

them how to make dynamic risk assessments when in, on and near the water. Some of these students are also being trained as water safety ambassadors to visit local primary schools.

Gillian Barclay, mother of Cameron Lancaster who lost his life in Fife Quarry in 2014, says: 'The loss of Cameron is the saddest and most difficult challenge I have ever faced. I'm very grateful to Water Safety Scotland for allowing me to get involved from the perspective of someone who has lost a child in a drowning accident.'



Water Safety Scotland is teaching young people how to be safer in and near the water



Loch Ness



NEW LIFEBOAT FOR LOCH NESS

The team from Loch Ness Lifeboat Station took proud delivery of their new Atlantic 85 lifeboat in January.

Spirits were high as the *Sheila & Dennis Tongue IV* arrived at Loch Ness after its long journey from RNLI Headquarters in Poole, Dorset. The inshore lifeboat was lifted into Urquhart Harbour before being put on a carriage and winched into the new boathouse for the very first time.

The new vessel completes the story of Loch Ness Lifeboat Station's long-awaited new boathouse and volunteers are thrilled to finally be up and running with both.

Trossachs

BOWLING CLUB SCORES BIG

Causewayhead Bowling Club were recently presented with a Framed Certificate of Thanks for their continued fundraising. Since 2011, their annual lifeboat days in support of the Trossachs Branch have delivered an excellent £5,000 to help save lives at sea.



Gordon Williamson, Angie Doyle and Club President Craik Taylor with their certificate

WHAT'S ON

Details might have changed since going to print, so please check in advance to avoid disappointment. To find out what else is on near you, see [RNLI.org/events](http://RNLI.org/events).

MULL MUSIC FESTIVAL

19–23 April

Tobermory, Mull

A vibrant weekend of Scottish music, featuring folk-rock, fiddle, accordion and ceilidh bands.

MAYDAY FAMILY FUN DAY

6 May, 12–4pm

Deeside Activity Park, Dess by Aboyne

Rescue demonstrations, safety information and children's activities. Meet crew and other emergency lifesavers including the Coastguard and Mountain Rescue. For more information contact Anne Scott on [anne\\_scott@rnli.org.uk](mailto:anne_scott@rnli.org.uk).

30TH BURNMOUTH BRAE RACE

6 May, from midday

Burnmouth Brae, Ayton

Take on the notoriously steep Brae by foot or on bike for the RNLI. Multiple distances available, open to adults and children alike. Visit [rnli-burnmouth-brae-race.weebly.com](http://rnli-burnmouth-brae-race.weebly.com) or [burnmouthbraeraces@gmail.com](mailto:burnmouthbraeraces@gmail.com).

MAYDAY COASTAL CHALLENGE

12 May, 10.15am

Light Tower, Town Pier, North Queensferry

Choose your distance and join in a treasure hunt along the coast or a welly throwing competition at Silver Sands. Ends at Kinghorn Lifeboat Station with a tour and refreshments. Email [fundraisers@kinghorn.org.uk](mailto:fundraisers@kinghorn.org.uk) for details.

RNLI SCOTTISH AGM

6 June

Perth Concert Hall

The Scottish Annual General Meeting will take place in Perth. Contact 0300 300 9995 or email [events@rnli.org.uk](mailto:events@rnli.org.uk) if you would like to attend.

Send details of your events for the summer issue (mid-July onwards) to [CommunitySupportTeam@rnli.org.uk](mailto:CommunitySupportTeam@rnli.org.uk).



# RESCUE

Our lifeboat crews and lifeguards carry out thousands of rescues every year. Here are just some of those caught on camera, and see the list below for more reports:

**6 ROSSLARE HARBOUR | PAGE 10**

**7 LOCH NESS | PAGE 14**

**8 HARLYN BAY | PAGE 16**

You can also watch and read the latest rescues online at [RNLI.org/news](http://RNLI.org/news) or [facebook.com/RNLI](https://www.facebook.com/RNLI).

Words: Nikki McMullen  
 Photos: RNLI/(Dunmore East/Vince Jones/Andrew MacDonald/West Mersea),  
 Torbay Coastguard Team



**1 DOG HELPED TO SAFETY**  
**TORBAY | 18 DECEMBER 2017**

Torbay's inshore lifeboat crew teamed up with the local Coastguard to rescue a dog that had fallen off a cliff. The volunteer crew manoeuvred alongside the rocky shoreline at Berry Head Quarry, where the border collie cross was stranded – shaken but unharmed. They soothed the dog and passed her up to the coastguards using a special dog bag. At the top of the cliff, the dog was reunited with her very relieved owners.



**2 TANGLED KITESURFER**  
**WEST MERSEA | 7 JANUARY 2018**

A kitesurfer, tangled in his lines, was struggling off Mersea Island. A fellow kitesurfer heard his cries and headed to the beach to call for help. The West Mersea Atlantic 85 lifeboat launched and the volunteers soon spotted the casualty with his lines wrapped around his legs. He'd been in the water for an hour and a half, struggling to untangle himself from his kit. The volunteer crew plucked him to safety, recovered his gear and brought him back to the station to warm up.



**4 TRAWLER TOW**  
**DUNMORE EAST | 9 JANUARY 2018**

A 23m trawler with four crew members onboard had suffered engine trouble and was in danger of drifting onto rocks. The crew at Dunmore East launched their Trent class lifeboat and arrived within minutes. Despite the difficult sea conditions and high winds, the crew managed to get a line to the trawler and secure a tow. Dunmore East Lifeboat Operations Manager Ciaran O'Mullain says: 'Sea conditions made the rescue difficult but thankfully our highly trained crew were able to bring the trawler and its crew to the safety of Dunmore East Harbour.'



**3 LONE KAYAKER**  
**KYLE OF LOCHALSH | 16 DECEMBER 2017**

After a lone kayaker broke his paddle, he began drifting between the Crowlin and Longay islands. The Kyle of Lochalsh RNLI volunteers launched their B class lifeboat and made best speed towards the kayaker's last known position. Once on scene, the crew managed to make radio contact with the kayaker and started searching the area. Within 10 minutes, they had found him – uninjured but very cold. The volunteer crew brought him onboard and took him and his kayak back to Broadford.



**5 GROUND AND SINKING**  
**MOELFRE | 23 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Moelfre lifeboat volunteers were paged when a motor cruiser with three people onboard grounded off Porth Neigwl. The all-weather lifeboat powered to the scene and found the boat taking on water, with no engine or electrical power. Two crew members went aboard with emergency salvage pumps and quickly established a tow to pull the vessel out of danger. But it was taking on too much water, so the three occupants were evacuated while the crew continued to work. Thankfully, crews from Beaumaris and Llandudno arrived on scene with salvage pumps and the boat was safely beached.



# STORM DRAMA IN THE IRISH SEA

As a coastal community braces itself for Storm Ophelia, three sailors and eight lifeboat crew get into a race against time

Words: Rob Westcott Photos: RNLI/(Larry Dunne, Nigel Millard, Rosslare Harbour, Rob Westcott), Shutterstock



Satellite view of Storm Ophelia



'The storm was coming on so fast. I'd never seen anything like it'

Eamonn O'Rourke, Coxswain

Even before he's through the station door, Mechanic Michael Nicholas senses trouble. The passenger ferries are tied up in the adjacent ferry port, the loading bays are empty and the mercury in the station's Fitzroy barometer has plummeted.

Leisure-boat owners are down on the lagoon putting extra ropes on their vessels and battening down the hatches. Eamonn O'Rourke, Lifeboat Coxswain, is among them. 'The storm was coming on so fast,' he says. 'In just a couple of hours, the wind speed had increased by around 40mph. I'd never seen anything like it.'

It's 8am, the start of the day shift at Rosslare Harbour Lifeboat Station. 'I had some routine maintenance to do on the lifeboat,' recalls Michael. 'But because of the weather I planned to lock up and be off the lifeboat pontoon by mid-morning.'

Three yachtsmen are attempting to sail from Southampton to

Malahide, in north Dublin, to deliver a 10m yacht. On the open sea they're at the mercy of the wind. The skipper is fighting a desperate battle against the elements to reach land.

As the yacht sweeps past the sandbanks that guard the entrance to Wexford Harbour, a new danger looms. The wind, now building to storm force, is driving them towards Rusk Bank – an area of shallow water and breaking seas to the north. They need help, and fast.

## 'An uncomfortable ride'

Minutes after the mayday call, the Severn class all-weather lifeboat *Donald and Barbara Broadhead* had slipped its moorings and was powering out of the harbour. Even for a lifeboat crew with decades of seafaring experience among them, the ferocity of the wind took them by surprise.

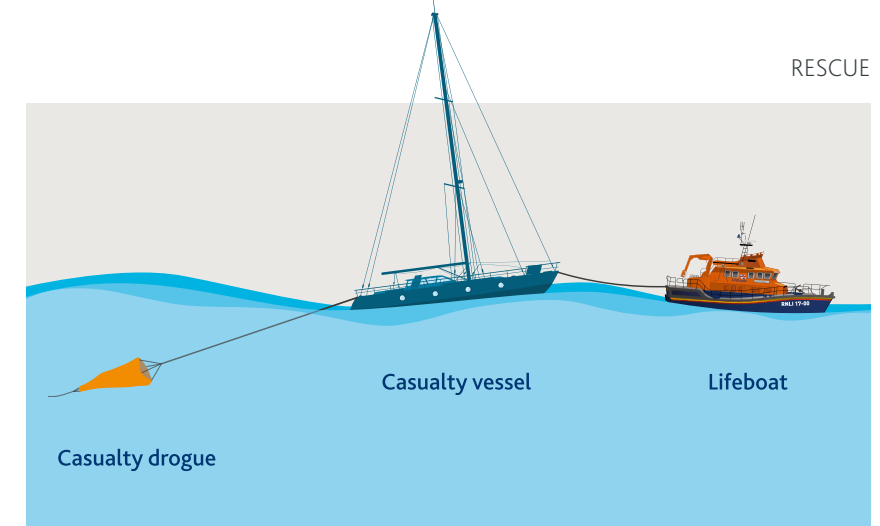




Above: The yacht is caught in the storm  
Below: The tow home



The lifeboat crew (left to right): Pairic Quirke, Micheál Ferguson, Richie Parish, Keith Morris, Eamonn O'Rourke, Art Sheil, Michael Nicholas and Stephen Breen



## THE DROGUE

A drogue – a small underwater parachute – can help stabilise a vessel sailing downwind. The drogue attaches to the stern and acts as an extra rudder to keep the boat going in a straight line. It also helps to slow the boat down.

A heaving line, as the name suggests, is a lightweight rope used to pull something heavy such as a tow rope or drogue from one vessel to another. It is thrown or fired onto the deck of the casualty boat. A straightforward procedure in calm weather, this is much more difficult in heavy seas.

'We had 50–55mph winds going around the end of the pier,' says Michael. 'I kept watching the gauges. From the time we left to the time we got back, the wind speed kept on climbing. I have never, ever seen that before.'

'We knew we were in for an uncomfortable ride,' says Eamonn. 'The swell just got bigger and bigger. And the further we went out, the higher and stronger it became.'

### A tricky manoeuvre

The two vessels were in radio contact and the casualties sounded tired. In the space of 30 minutes, the winds had pushed them 7 miles up the coast. The swell had built to a towering 8m, higher even than the lifeboat. Keeping a safe distance, Eamonn steered *Donald and Barbara Broadhead* carefully



'From the time we left to the time we got back, the wind speed kept on climbing'

Michael Nicholas, Station Mechanic

around the yacht to assess the situation.

'Taking the crew off was a last resort,' explains Eamonn. 'I'd have had to put a man onboard, but we couldn't

get close enough. I had to consider the safety of my crew.'

Getting a line to the yacht to rig up a tow wouldn't be easy. 'The yacht was out of control,' recalls Eamonn. 'It was moving very erratically. At one stage, the skipper reported sailing 17 knots down a wave, and a moment later falling back to 2 knots. We decided to try to stabilise it using a drogue. But first we had to get the drogue onboard.'

In deteriorating conditions, Eamonn manoeuvred the lifeboat skilfully into position. 'The wind made it extremely difficult. The fear was that if we tried to go alongside we'd fall down on top of them or they'd fall down on us.' With the lifeboat slightly upwind of the yacht, the crew managed to get the drogue's heaving line across, on the second attempt.

The drogue made a huge difference, enabling Eamonn to get the lifeboat close

'It was difficult; the fear was they'd fall on top of us'

enough for both crews to set up the tow. But they now faced another problem.

'We were still heading in the wrong direction,' he explains. 'We could go on up to Arklow or we could turn the yacht around, which would make the tow that much shorter. The fear was that if we carried on, and the tow came apart on the sandbanks, we'd never recover. The yacht would capsize and the lads would be in the water. We decided to turn, but there was no let-up in the waves so we couldn't choose our moment. We just had to go for it.'

Michael explains: 'Because it was on the end of a rope, the yacht had no choice but to follow us. The skipper

couldn't decide which wave to dodge. If he'd gone broadside to the waves, he could have rolled over.'

### Homeward bound

As the two boats started back they weren't yet out of danger. They were now sailing straight into the hurricane-force wind. 'The tow rope was attached to two small cleats on the yacht,' says Eamonn. 'The fear was that with seas so big, one or both of the cleats would give way. I'm absolutely amazed they held.' Pairic Quirke was on the lifeboat crew that day. 'The waves came at us from all angles,' he recalls. 'The main sea was from the south, but breaking seas were coming in from the east as well.'

As the boats inched their way towards Rosslare Harbour, businesses all over Wexford were closing early and sending their employees home.

The lifeboat crew had been out for nearly 4 hours, the yacht far longer. Coming around the harbour wall, they had one last hurdle to negotiate. 'You'd imagine a bit of shelter,' recalls Pairic, 'but it was pretty wild. The spray was coming off the water like steam.'

A large gathering was at the quayside when the lifeboat crew and the yachtsmen finally made it ashore. 'The yacht's crew felt like kissing the ground,' says Eamonn. 'The boat was in a bit of a mess. There was water everywhere. They were wading around in it. They'd endured a horrendous few hours at sea. If we'd got to them an hour later it would have been a very different story.'

'When we go out on a rescue, it's the people left ashore who do the worrying for us. It really hit home. In 32 years on the lifeboat, this was the first time I witnessed the sigh of relief from my wife and kids when I got back.'



# DISMASTED ON LOCH NESS



Two panicked families, a crew member's first shout, and a slowly cooking crumble. Life on Loch Ness is never dull when you wear RNLI yellow

For Linda Izquierdo-Ross, the call couldn't have been more badly timed. 'I was hosting a dinner party and I'd just put dessert – an apple and bramble crumble – in the oven,' she says, smiling. 'I can't repeat my first reaction!'

The party would wait; Linda was soon racing to Loch Ness Lifeboat Station. 'I've been on quite a few shouts, but my heart always starts pounding,' she confesses.

With Linda on the lifeboat that day were Helm Malcolm 'Malky' McNaught and newcomer David Ferguson, whom Malky had been training moments earlier.

At first, the shout seemed straightforward – if a little unusual.

'We saw this empty family boat drift across the bay until its anchor caught on something,' says Lifeboat Operations Manager Jo Stebbings. 'It hadn't been secured properly. The family had taken a dinghy to shore and cycled up to Urquhart Castle. Then they looked down, saw their boat drifting, and rushed down again!'

'We got to the boat before them,' says Linda. 'David boarded it. But as he did, a second shout came in, this time to "a dismasted yacht south west of Urquhart Castle". The first boat was

empty; no danger. So we called David back and headed out towards the yacht. The water was choppy. Wind was about force 4–5 and we bounced through the waves.

'Getting there, we saw half the mast in the water. Malky decided I had more experience of yachts, so I climbed aboard first.

'The yacht's skipper was an experienced sailor. When the mast broke, he got his family below deck to don extra safety gear, then called for help. He kept the engine off in case the propeller snagged. I had to cut the stays with bolt cutters. We couldn't

save the mast, so David and I sent it to Nessie.

'It was precarious, but it could have been a *lot* worse. Afterwards, the skipper's wife told me she'd been extremely frightened. Her daughter had been with her on deck. They were lucky they weren't hit by the mast or breaking wood. If they'd ended up in the water ...' Linda trails off. 'Well, Loch Ness is 6°C; a whole new world of cold water shock. Thankfully, the skipper did all the right things. Not every shout goes that way.

'We checked the yacht had propulsion, and escorted it towards a berthing point until we were stood down by Aberdeen Coastguard.

'After that, we went back to the first boat. The family were in it when we arrived. We checked their boat was safe and stood by as they pulled up the anchor and motored into the harbour. Then we returned to the station for a cuppa and debrief. By that point we were all very sweaty!'

'Loch Ness is like an inland sea,' reflects Jo. 'Every day here is a learning curve. We'd never had a dismasted yacht before. And you can't train to cut a stay wire. Otherwise, we'd have some very upset boat owners.'



'I was definitely glad to have my gear,' adds Linda. 'Whenever a rope – or a metal stay wire – under tension snaps, you don't know where it's going to go. So my visor was down. I like my eyes as they are!'

Asked what she learned that day, Linda says: 'That David Ferguson, who had never been on a shout before, was a good crew mate.'

And what of the crumble?

'Oh it was fine!' says Linda, breaking out into another grin. 'I even had time to shower before dessert and get rid of that sweaty smell!'

Words: Mark Scott

Photos: Nicholas Leach, RNLI/Loch Ness



**DAVID FERGUSON**  
CREW MEMBER | LOCH NESS

## 'Out of the frying pan – and onto the water!'

'It was surreal. I finish my fitness test, and seconds later I'm kitting back up for my first shout. Out of the frying pan – and onto the water!

'It's such an adrenaline rush. I was excited – but also nervous. I wondered: am I ready to be able to help people?

'At first it didn't sound too worrying. Then we heard about the yacht. The waves down the loch were so high; the yacht was getting battered. I couldn't help but feel sorry

for the family. Jumping aboard was daunting, but my training taught me to keep calm. I tried my best to comfort the casualties and also help Linda. Looking back, it's a bit of a blur.

'Afterwards, I was buzzing – helping those people was so rewarding. Occasionally one of the family comments to say well done on our Facebook page. They obviously appreciated our help, and that's really special for me.'



# CORNWALL ROCK FALL

Heading for the beach, Liz Clark was expecting sun, sand and family fun. Not a helicopter ride to hospital

Tuesday 20 June 2017. A warm, sunny day, with clear skies.

Liz Clark was on holiday, ready for a day at the beach with her husband, Martin, and children. They'd chosen a small sandy cove known as Cellars Bay, close to where they were staying in north Cornwall. A rock fall was the last thing on their minds.

At neighbouring Harlyn Bay, RNLI lifeguards were preparing for a busy day when a man approached, asking for help.

'We were going through our usual morning routine when we were alerted to a woman injured in a rock fall,' recalls Lifeguard Supervisor Leon Bennett, on duty that day with Ben Hardie and Dan Wickins.

Part of the cliff face had collapsed onto the beach below and Liz was trapped underneath the fallen rocks. Cellars Bay is not a lifeguarded beach, but Liz's family immediately raised the alert.

Liz had suffered multiple injuries. Lifeguard Dan says: 'When we reached Liz we tasked others at the scene to watch the cliff face for signs of further movement. It was important to make Liz as comfortable as possible and reassure her and her family. We gave her oxygen and tended her wounds while waiting for the paramedics.'

Cornwall Air Ambulance medics, the Fire Service, Padstow Coastguard Team and Devon and Cornwall Police soon arrived, with the specialist skills to free Liz from the rock fall and stabilise her to be airlifted to hospital.

Lifeguard Ben says: 'We manually lifted the rocks from Liz, with some having to be lifted by two people. We helped carry Liz on a spinal board and I kept her head stable, wading through water to get to neighbouring Boat Bay, where the air ambulance had landed.' Our lifeguards also helped keep onlookers at bay.

**'To say we are lucky is an understatement'**

Liz's daughter, Vicky Davey, says: 'Seeing multiple services working together to deliver a fast and safe rescue was astonishing. The professionalism and care delivered on the day definitely helped us move forward from such a traumatic event. To say we are lucky is an understatement.'

Liz spent the next 5 weeks in hospital and had to undergo a pelvic reconstruction.

**Video footage shows emergency services working together to get Liz to safety**



**Liz Clark and her husband Martin returned to thank the RNLI lifeguards and Padstow Coastguard Rescue Team**

'My mother's recovery has continued to amaze us, and the ongoing support and good wishes from the lifeguards and emergency services have been a big part of that,' says Vicky. 'After sustaining multiple injuries, the past 5 months haven't been the easiest. However, with positivity and determination Mum has learned to walk again and is no longer under any medical supervision.'

Liz's experience that day hasn't put her off Cornwall, or going to the beach. After 5 months, she and Martin returned to say thanks to the lifeguards and coastguards who helped her. They are planning a similar trip to visit the team at Cornwall Air Ambulance.

Vicky says: 'As a family we want to thank the RNLI for their contribution to my mother's rescue. We will be forever grateful for the lifeguards who were

involved that summer's morning and it reminds us that, even if you are very familiar with your surroundings, it is important to stay alert to the dangers that exist across our beaches.'

Words: Carrie Garrad

Photos: RNLI

## Know what to do

Cliff falls can happen without warning and are a risk to people on top of the cliffs or exploring the beach below. They are a natural part of coastal erosion, and don't just happen in bad weather. The RNLI's advice: Stay well away from cliff edges and bases.



**LEON BENNETT  
LIFEGUARD SUPERVISOR**

'Unfortunately rock falls can happen at any time. Liz was lucky the outcome wasn't worse given the extent of the fall.'

'RNLI lifeguards were just part of the team of people who responded quickly and professionally on the day to ensure that Liz got the care and treatment she needed before being airlifted to hospital.'

'It was great to see Liz back on her feet and we appreciate her and Martin coming back to see us. We wish her well with the rest of her recovery.'



# STRANDED ON CLIFF FACE

Flamborough RNLI volunteers were called upon when a dare went wrong

Acting on a dare from his mates, a man jumped from the cliff top into the sea at North Landing, near Flamborough. He cleared the rocks at the base of the cliff, and landed in deep water, thanks to the high tide.

It turned out that getting down was the easy part; getting back out proved trickier.

In a mass of confused seas at the bottom of the cliff, and in a swell of 1.5m, he couldn't swim to the shore. He struggled to reach the cliff to climb out. Undercurrents and backwash hampered his progress.

Thankfully, one of the group at the top of the cliff did have the sense to call 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

Flamborough RNLI Helm Stuart Cross had been planning a surfing session that afternoon. When he got the call, he knew it was serious: 'North Landing was facing into the swell coming from the north. We needed to get to him as quick as we could.'

Crew Member Tom Moate was already at the station. The next crew members to arrive were Rob Mitchell and Andria Donnison. They launched without delay. Help was also on its way in the form of the Coastguard rescue helicopter and the Bridlington Coastguard Rescue Team.

## 'It does get your heart beating'

Stuart recalls: 'As we launched and headed up to North Landing we had swells with the boat. On the left we could see waves breaking. It does get your heart beating. We thought the man was still in water at that point.'

Just before the lifeboat crew reached the scene, they were informed that the man was lodged in a cave up a cliff. The cliff rescue team guided them into the bay, over VHF radio.

Stuart assessed what he saw: 'He'd been in the water a good 10 minutes. We believe he'd jumped in off the cliff top,

tombstoning, dressed in football kit and socks. He'd fallen around 20m into confused seas. The water was about 12-13°C at best and there was a fresh northerly wind. He'd managed to scabble out of the water. Now he was stuck in the entrance to the cave, metres above the surging waterline. He had a few cuts to his legs.

'At one point we thought he was going to jump in from the cave,' Stuart says, 'If he had done, he could have been swept in against the rocks and in a position that we couldn't have got with a boat.' From the lifeboat, Tom gave the man clear hand signals to stay where he was.

Once the helicopter crew arrived, they decided it would be unsafe to drop the winchman down. Stuart cuts to the chase: 'The cliff's vertical with a hole in it. There was no foot holding.'

It was down to the Flamborough crew to save him.

### A matter of timing

Stuart and the crew knew the area well. They approached using the deep channel in the bay, anchored at the side of the channel and reversed towards the cliff.

'It was a matter of timing it right,' remembers Stuart. 'We had to watch the swells, but I was confident it was deep enough to power out of there with both engines if need be.'

'It took us a few attempts. At one point we had to pull right back because we saw a swell running.'

On the next attempt, the lifeboat got in closer and a swell lifted them to the base of cliff. Over the noise of the helicopter they shouted to the man and helped him into the lifeboat. They powered out to deep water. 'We decided to cut anchor as we didn't want to hang around longer than we needed to.'

### Tombstoning and safety

Tombstoning involves jumping or diving into water from a great height. It's extremely dangerous because water depth changes with the tide, and the water may be shallower than it looks. Submerged items may not be visible, and the shock of cold water may also make it difficult to swim.

If jumping off cliffs appeals to you, try coasteering with a registered provider with the necessary training and equipment to make the experience both safe and enjoyable. Find out more at [NationalCoasteeringCharter.org.uk](http://NationalCoasteeringCharter.org.uk).

The man was really pleased to see them. He fully admitted it was a stupid dare that had gone disastrously wrong. Not something he would be repeating.

On the way to shore, the crew kept him warm and checked he didn't have any serious injuries.

Despite missing out on an afternoon's surfing, Stuart was pleased everyone was home safe.

Words: Bethany Hope

Photos: John Michael Stevenson







Dermot wears RNLI yellow wellies in support of Mayday, our annual fundraising campaign. Get involved at [RNLI.org/mayday](http://RNLI.org/mayday)

## WHO IS DERMOT O'LEARY?

TV host, DJ and author Dermot O'Leary is perhaps best known as presenter of *The X Factor* on ITV. He's hosted the BRITs and Comic Relief, grilled politicians, been on *Blankety Blank* and introduced Michael Jackson's last ever public appearance.

'I'd love to be on the crew, but would have to do *lots* of training'



# The RNLI and me: Dermot O'Leary

The broadcaster and *X Factor* host talks about his affection for the coast, teamwork and a special little cat called Toto

### Why does the RNLI have the X Factor for you?

We're island nations, seafaring people, and I've got that in my blood. I was brought up on the east coast of England so the RNLI was a focal part of my growing up. I knew the stories, the unbelievable bravery of normal, everyday people, going out to help people in distress. My family are all from Wexford and are seafolk too. And that's another thing I love about the RNLI – it's one charity across the whole of the UK and Ireland.

### Do you get out on the water much?

Not as much as I'd like. I love angling, surfing, diving – and I'm addicted to jumping in whenever I can! If I lived by the coast I'd definitely go fishing more. Part of it's the contemplation; it's nice to get away from it all, isn't it? I have a few mates that I really enjoy fishing with. We fish off a boat and take a skipper. It's pretty chilled. We catch what we catch, and then eat what we catch.

### You asked guests to donate to RNLI Ramsgate when you married your wife Dee in 2012. Why did you choose the RNLI?

We wanted to support a charity that meant something to both of us. Dee grew up by the sea in Norway and moved to Broadstairs in her early teens so she also has the sea in her blood. Dee's family are long-time supporters of Ramsgate Lifeboat Station.

### Have you ever had a scary moment at sea?

No, I've been pretty lucky. But I did have a moment when I was a little kid, camping down

in Dorset. I fell in a river going after my fishing net. I was caught in a current but managed to cling on to some reeds. My dad, who is a keen open-water swimmer, came and got me. I still remember the look on his face.

### You've written a few books, most recently a children's book about a ninja cat.

We befriended a stray at our holiday home in Italy and Dee was midwife when she gave birth to four kittens. We kept two, Toto and Silver. Toto was born blind but she had incredible reactions so that gave me the inspiration to turn her into a ninja for the book.

### Our crews display values like courage, selflessness and trust. Can you talk about a moment where you've had to show courage?

Well I can't attribute those values to working on telly but great teamwork plays a massive part. I've always enjoyed working in a team and it's incredible what people can achieve together. What we do isn't important, like saving lives, but that level of camaraderie is probably the closest comparison I can make.

### Ever fancied being a crew member?

Oh I'd love to be! I don't know if I'd have the right attributes and would have to do lots of training. I do want to live by the sea again. I don't know if that's feasible right now but there's definitely a pull. If I was by the coast again, I'd definitely get involved with the local crew.

## MY FAVOURITE ...

### Coastal spot?

No two places are the same, that's what I love. From coastal walks with my parents in Ireland to the romance of Cornwall with its coves in the south, rollers in the north and incredible history of smugglers.

### X Factor artist?

James Arthur because he came in and did it his own way. He kind of ripped up the rule book and helped to bring us to where we are now.



# GIVE IT A GO: COASTAL BIRDWATCHING

As nesting season begins this month, RSPB Warden Paul Morrison shares some of the winged wonders along our coastlines

Words: Philly Byrde  
Photos: Gail Johnson/Shutterstock.com, Paul Morrison

Gannets at Bass Rock, Firth of Forth



No one sets foot on Coquet Island, just off the Northumberland coast, except a lucky team who live in the lighthouse and protect the birds through the breeding season. Paul Morrison – whose son is on the lifeboat crew at nearby Amble – has been looking after the island's inhabitants for 33 years. 'The only footprints on the beach are from the birds, so it's quite special,' he says. 'I don't consider myself a "twitcher" – I'm just making sure birds have a niche to be successful alongside us.' Here are Paul's tips to enjoy our coastal birdlife:

## Find your spot

'A boat trip brings you much closer to the action, since birds love islands for both the protection and fishing they offer, plus you might spot a bonus pod of dolphins. Any coastal town's tourist information will have day trips to recommend. For islands with a big intertidal range, I'd visit at high tide so you can get closer in.'

'A quick search online will show you what you can find where. I'm biased to the north of the UK, but we do have some smashers – Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth has the biggest gannet colony in the world. Coquet Island is now the only UK nesting place of the roseate tern, a very bonny bird. You'll also find two thriving colonies at Rockabill, Co Dublin, and Lady's Island Lake, Co Wexford.'

## Know what to look for

'Puffins return to our coastlines round about now. They're seriously endangered, but a great place to see them still is the Isle of Staffa, in the Inner Hebrides.'

'One of the joys of watching birds in their natural habitat is seeing special adaptations at play. Often around jetties you'll see cormorants with wings furred out like a phoenix, drying themselves out because their own waterproofing is a bit rubbish! It's an almost mythical sight.'

'Watching gannets dive is another wonder. They have binocular vision (piercing blue eyes at the front of their heads) to help them spot fish, beautiful long beaks, and at the last second they'll fold in their wings to drive themselves deep underwater.'

**'A cormorant, with wings furred out like a phoenix, is an almost mythical sight'**

## Kit yourself out

'You don't need a telephoto lens as long as your arm – you can get a decent pair of binoculars for £50. Take an extra layer for any boat trips, and watch out for sunburn disguised by the windchill. The most important kit – especially near a big colony – is a soft hat to protect you from pecks on the head, or other undesirable gifts from above. The lighthouse keepers here used to wear a mop down the back of their jumpers to create a decoy head!'

## Protect what you see

'Nesting season really kicks off between now and June. When on foot, stick to paths and keep dogs on a lead to protect ground-nesting birds. If you do find a bird washed up, leave it to rest and warm up – but if there's a mass washup of birds or one is covered in oil, that's more serious and you should contact the RSPCA.'

With thanks to the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds). Visit [RSPB.org.uk](http://RSPB.org.uk).



# 'I CAN DO THIS'

RNLI crew around the UK and Ireland are often called heroes for their acts of incredible bravery. But they are as human as the rest of us



'You're the ones with RNLI written all over you. You're the people who are there to help,' says Elissa Thursfield, Trainee Helm at Abersoch and Flood Rescue volunteer. 'Rescuees don't recognise your face or know your name – what they see is a logo they can trust. You've got to uphold that and get on with it.'

Like Elissa, RNLI crew around the UK and Ireland are often called heroes for their

acts of incredible bravery. But they are as human as the rest of us. And – under pressure – even the most courageous can question themselves.

When one wrong move could mean the difference between life and death, how do lifesavers switch from human into hero? How do they get from 'I can't do this' to 'I can do this'?

## 'Every move you make'

FATHER TOM DALTON – COURTTOWN  
Crew Member



'It's like automatic pilot,' says Courttown crew member of 5 years Father Tom Dalton. 'But that's the training coming out. It's part of us. We're all so used to training together, we almost know how each other thinks.'

'Once a month, we do scenarios, making them as realistic as possible so we're used to working together at that level. And we train every week.'

But in August last year, when Courttown crew were called out to a 13-year-old girl with suspected spinal injuries, the pressure to perform perfectly was tested to its limit. Knowing that every decision, every movement you make matters, is an enormous responsibility. And one Tom remembers vividly: 'She didn't have feeling in her legs,' he recalls. 'I shudder to think of that family trying to bring her in on their own. It could have resulted in life-changing injuries.'

'All three of us are calm by nature,' he adds, referring to Helm Peter Browne and fellow Crew Member Fergus Slevin, who took the lead in the water. 'At least we give that impression. But it's like the swan – gliding gracefully on the surface, feet working furiously underneath!'

'We didn't know what the outcome was going to be, but we could all put our hands on our hearts and say we'd done the best we could do. Yes, it was a worrying situation but we worked as a unit and it was textbook.'

'This is why we train. This is why we put in the long hours. This is why we do what we do. This,' Tom says finally, 'makes it all worthwhile.'



The girl's neck is held by a crew member as a brace is fitted

## 'What if?'

VICKI REID – FIFE  
Lifeguard

'We were at the far side of the beach when we heard an engine revving. We both turned around just in time to see a car flying off the pier about 250m away.'

According to Lifeguard Vicki Reid, the beach at Burntisland is normally quite safe. So when she and her sister, Senior Lifeguard Kayleigh, saw a car plummet into the water on a sunny afternoon in July 2016, it was quite a shock.

The sisters immediately sprang into action. 'I didn't think at that point,' Vicki remembers. 'I just grabbed the rescue board and started paddling. My sister

swam over, radioing the Coastguard as she went. Five minutes later, the car was completely underwater.'

As Vicki paddled over, the seriousness of the situation began to sink in. She recalled the Buncrana Pier tragedy in Donegal earlier that year, in which five people had drowned in similar circumstances. 'I could see the car going down fast and I remember thinking: "I need to paddle faster,"' she says.

'That's when the what ifs started racing through my head: "What if someone's stuck inside? What if there are children in the car? What if I can't get there in time? What if I can't get everyone out of the water alive?" But that thought snaps you into action and your training kicks in.'



Burntisland Beach, Fife

'This was my first proper rescue and I'm glad everyone made it out safely. A sinking car was quite an unusual scenario! But we're trained to adapt our skills to whatever comes up.'



## 'Another human being'

**DAVE SHELDON – BLYTH**  
Trainee Helm



'The whole of my family react to the pager when it goes off. My wife gets anxious. The kids know what I'm getting into. Even the dog leads the way to the door. And when the pager went that day, I knew it was going to be a big one.'

Crew Member Dave Sheldon works as a trucker – a job not without its risks. And in his 2 years on the Blyth crew he's seen some challenging conditions. But rescuing an angler trapped at the end of a crumbling pier during a 'weather bomb' is not something he'd pictured when he signed up.

'We decided we'd try to get a man on there,' Dave recalls. 'I leaned over our Helm Graham's shoulder and said: "Get me over there and I'll go."

Despite high winds and wild seas, he carefully picked his way across the rotten and slippery boards with focus and determination. 'Once you're committed to going,' he says, 'you just go.'

On the way back it was a different story. 'I thought: "I can't do this. I'm



alright looking after myself but can I actually bring this guy home too?" That's when I questioned it.'

'But then,' he continues, 'you go – snap. I'm there to do the job, I know what tools I've got and I've got the support, so you just get on. I'm not just looking after myself, this is another person with family and friends – another human being.'

## 'Are we all in this?'

**ELISSA THURSFIELD – ABERSOCH**  
Trainee Helm

'It's really eerie. The fields are pitch black in all directions. Water's washing over the road in waves. You feel it getting faster and more relentless, and you think: "I can't do this."

Abersoch Crew Member and RNLI Flood Rescue Volunteer Elissa Thursfield recalls her 4-day deployment to Cumbria during floods in 2015 as the most challenging thing she's ever done.

'At first you think: "We're getting in that?!" Because you don't know what's under the surface. But hearing our team leader say: "Are we all in this?" with such confidence, well that was it. I went from thinking: "I can't do this" to: "There's somebody out there waiting for me who's way more scared than I am. I can do this."

Elissa recounts the rescue of a family from a remote bungalow in Levens, near Kendal: 'The water was up to the



Elissa Thursfield and fellow Flood Rescue Volunteer Guy Williams with Cumbria rescueses Sebastian and Jacob

sills and rising so fast they'd considered breaking through the ceiling to get on the roof. That's when our teamwork and training kick in. We have a job to do.'

A crew member for 13 years, Elissa hopes to qualify as Abersoch's first female helm later this year. 'I've asked myself: "Can I do this? Am I ready to be that person at the front who can give everybody else confidence?" And I know the answer is yes. Cumbria showed me that.'



## 'You know how they feel'

**RICHARD TALBERT – ARBROATH**  
Crew Member

'I had it in my head to join the lifeboats since I left school,' says Arbroath Crew Member Richard Talbert. 'But I wasn't used to swimming in the open sea – I had a fear of it. I guess it's a survival instinct that makes you stop and think: "I'm not getting in that!"'

Fear of the water might seem an insurmountable obstacle for a new lifeboat recruit but for Richard – who joined the crew in 2015 – and his Assessor Trainer Alex Purves, quitting wasn't an option.

'Conditions can look quite calm from the surface,' Richard explains, 'but when you're in it, everything's amplified. You realise you're just a little person in the water.'

During his course at the RNLI Sea Survival Centre in Poole, Dorset, Richard was the last to jump into the wave tank where real-life conditions – including darkness, thunder, lightning and rain – are simulated.

'I just thought: "No, I can't do this." I had to go home feeling as though I couldn't do it. It was back home that Alex took me aside and spent a bit of time with me, just jumping in and out of the water. He said: "Look, if I can do it ... " and I knew what he was saying. So I took a leap of faith, and now,' Richard laughs, 'you can't keep me out of the water.'

'Having a moment like that, when you've been shaken up and overcome it, really brings it home to you. You get a sense of what it's like for a casualty who hasn't got the gear and the training. You know how they feel. And I think that helps.'

Ironically, the very thing that causes our lifesavers to question themselves is also what brings them back – their humanity.



Above: Richard onboard the lifeboat  
Right: A crew member drops into the water at the RNLI Sea Survival Centre

'At the end of the day,' says Richard, 'that adrenaline and urge to save a life kicks in. So you search in your toolbox for what will help: Have I got the right gear? Check. The training? Check. The best support? Check. And then you're away.'

**This spring we're fundraising to give our lifesavers everything they need – that's kit, training and lifeboats as well as behind-the-scenes operational support – so they can return home safely. To make a donation to support these ordinary people doing extraordinary things, visit [RNLI.org/spring18](http://RNLI.org/spring18).**

Photos: RNLI/(Blair Durno, Danielle Rush, Nathan Williams), Roy Henderson/Shutterstock.com





# REMEMBERING PRINCESS VICTORIA

31 January 1953. A storm is building that will cause one of the UK's worst natural disasters. Despite the gale warnings, at 7.45am the British Railways ferry *Princess Victoria* begins her regular passage across the Irish Sea. She will never make land again



Survivors in a lifeboat shelter in the lee of a tanker

With 177 people onboard, and 44 tonnes of cargo, the *Princess Victoria* steamed out of Stranraer. This was a 20-mile route she had plied since 1947, taking passengers from the London train to connecting services in Larne.

As the ferry rounded into the open sea from the relative shelter of Loch Ryan, she was hit by the full force of the storm. Waves battered the stern, driving water into the 1.5m rear doors and fatally damaging them. Wave after wave sent water flooding onto the car deck.

As the *Princess Victoria* began to list to starboard, Captain Ferguson decided to return to the shelter of Loch Ryan. But in the howling winds and building waves, the crew were unable to alter the rudder to turn back. The captain had no choice but to set a course for Northern Ireland that would protect the stern as much as possible.

### A desperate rescue effort

In the signal room, Radio Officer David Broadfoot had been sending a steady stream of updates on the ferry's position to Portpatrick Radio Station. The first SOS went out at 10.32am, prompting the launch of Portpatrick lifeboat. Broadfoot would stay at his post as the ship went down, and posthumously earn the George Cross for his bravery.

A host of other vessels, including naval and merchant boats, were rushing to their aid. HMS *Contest* ran close by the *Princess Victoria* before she sank, but visibility in the wintry squalls was so poor they passed unseen.

A full gale from the north was building to a hurricane by the time Portpatrick's lifeboat crew arrived at the position given in the SOS. They found nothing – the ferry had drifted further south.

As rescuers struggled to find a fix on the ferry's position, terrified passengers

gathered on deck. Reports suggest a group of women and children made it onto a lifeboat, only for it to be smashed into the side of the ship.

It would be mid-afternoon before Portpatrick's volunteers finally spotted wreckage and rescued two men from liferafts in the water. They continued to search before being guided in to Donaghadee by Cloughey lifeboat later that evening.

Meanwhile, Donaghadee lifeboat crew members had returned home from a rugby match to the terrible news unfolding. They launched at 1.40pm. After a confusion of signals, the crew heard from SS *Orchy* that she was standing by near a group of survivors, unable to get them aboard without drawing the ship's lifeboats into the propellers. Coxswain Hugh Nelson altered course, and at 3.15pm the lifeboat reached the scene of the disaster.

The crew rescued 33 people, thanks to Nelson's careful manoeuvring in wild seas. They searched on until 5pm, but found no other survivors and made for Donaghadee.

### Counting the cost

There were just 44 survivors. British Pathé newsreel (available on YouTube) shows some of them standing in line by the water, bandaged heads and blanketed shoulders, smiling shakily at the camera.

At home for just 4 hours, a revised crew relaunched the Donaghadee lifeboat at 9.45pm to collect one more survivor from the trawler *Eastcotes*, along with six people who had perished and seven bags of mail recovered from the sea. On 1 February they put to sea again at 7am, scouring the sea for over 12 hours for more survivors. They brought home 12 more bodies to be laid to rest.

One hundred and thirty-three people died in the disaster, including all



'We are very proud of the crew who went before us'

Philip McNamara,  
Coxswain, Donaghadee



the *Princess Victoria's* crew. Not a single woman or child survived.

Years on, stories of bravery and sacrifice continue to emerge. As part of a BBC Radio Ulster documentary marking the 60th anniversary of the disaster, Margaret Njonjo talked about her mother Nansy Bryson:

'She was one of the bravest women onboard. She whispered words of comfort to other passengers and led them in singing a hymn ... She also tried to help a 3-year-old child into one of the [ship's] lifeboats but failed to do so, going under herself in the process.'

The coxswains of the Donaghadee and Portpatrick lifeboats, Hugh Nelson and William McConnell, were awarded RNLI Bronze Medals for Gallantry and British Empire Medals. Mechanics James Armstrong and James Mitchell received the Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum. Their crews, along with those from Cloughey and Newcastle, were also thanked for their assistance.

The Prime Minister of Northern Ireland said in a broadcast: 'One cannot speak too highly of the assistance given by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. In the teeth of the gale the lifeboat crews ... searched the sea for



Clockwise from above: The coxswain and crew onboard the Donaghadee lifeboat; Coxswain Nelson and Coxswain McConnell reunited; current Donaghadee Crew Member Rebecca McCarthy lays a wreath in memory of those lost

survivors and brought to land as many as could be found.'

#### Time to remember

Families on both sides of the Irish Sea lost loved ones – no one in Stranraer or Larne was left untouched by the tragedy. To mark the 65th anniversary this January, RNLI crews from Donaghadee, Portpatrick and Larne laid wreaths at the wreck site.

Coxswain Philip McNamara says: 'To look out and see three lifeboats from Northern Ireland and Scotland was an incredible sight. We in Donaghadee are very proud of the lifeboat crew who went before us, who rescued 33 survivors in what must have been horrific conditions.'

The disaster is largely forgotten in wider history, eclipsed perhaps by the unprecedented flooding that hit Britain the following day. But these communities remember, and so will we.



With local council support, funds are being raised to restore Donaghadee's lifeboat, *Sir Samuel Kelly*. And thanks to research by historian Liam Kelly, the names of two 'forgotten men' have been added to the Larne memorial.

Two further reminders of a loss that many thought impossible, on so short a journey.

Words: Philly Byrde  
Photos: Planet News, RNLI/(David Branigan, Niamh Stephenson), Roger M Smith, Trinity Mirror/Mirror Pix/Alamy

## Around the RNLI

During the storm, lifeboats across the RNLI went to sea in horrendous conditions to see if they could be of service.

On 30 January, hurricane-force winds and 18m waves had hit the trawler *Michael Griffith* – which filled with water and began drifting without power in the Outer Hebrides. Two crew members onboard the Islay lifeboat collapsed and died in the engine room during the search for the 13-strong crew. The fishermen were never found.

As night fell on 31 January, a storm surge bought devastating floods to the east of England.

The RNLI volunteers at Southend-on-Sea launched seven times and spent more than 26 hours rescuing people. Clacton-on-Sea lifeboat crew saved six adults, two children, two dogs and a cat from the roof of a bungalow, greeting them onboard with biscuits and hot soup.

Many showed great bravery in protecting or saving lives – six men unconnected to the RNLI received the Thanks of the Institution Inscribed on Vellum. These included Misters Smith, Ellender and Jay, who rowed their 4m flat-bottomed boat out of Wells harbour and into a gale, to rescue a coastguard officer marooned on the beach.

Sixteen lifeboat stations in England and Scotland suffered damage – Wells, Sheringham and Cromer all saw their station doors washed away. All lifeboats were back up and running by the evening of 2 February except Cromer No. 1, which was set right by lunchtime the following day.



7.45am

The *Princess Victoria* leaves Stranraer with 179 people onboard.

9am

A wave bursts through the ferry's stern doors.

9.46am

First signal sent by Morse code: 'Hove to off mouth Loch Ryan. Vessel not under command. Urgent assistance of tug required.'

10.32am

SOS call made: 'Car deck flooded.'

11am

Portpatrick lifeboat *Jeanie Speirs* launches.

12.52pm

Messages report that the starboard engine room is flooded and the ferry's position critical.

1.15pm

Message: 'We are preparing to abandon ship.'

1.40pm

Passengers are ordered on-deck. Donaghadee lifeboat *Sir Samuel Kelly* launches into a full gale.

1.58pm

Radio Officer David Broadfoot sends his last message.

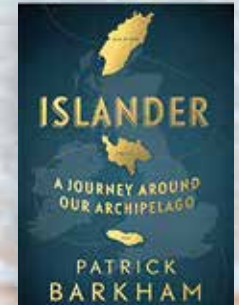
2pm

The ferry's list is so bad that lifeboats can't be lowered from her starboard side. She sinks shortly afterwards.



# Book reviews

Survival skills, intrepid explorations and coastal cruises – get ready for an adventure this spring



## ***The Cape Horners Club: Tales of Triumph and Disaster at the World's Most Feared Cape***

by Adrian Flanagan

Inspired by Sir Francis Chichester's round-the-world voyage, British sailor Adrian Flanagan dreamed of the day he would take on the challenge of Cape Horn.

In this faithful narrative, you'll be taken on a thrilling voyage of discovery, reliving the triumphs and disasters, perils and adventures of 20 brave men and women who have joined the Cape Horners Club against overwhelming odds.

These stories have motivated many experienced sailors to set sail and take on the adventure of a lifetime. Are you ready to join them?

Published by Bloomsbury  
ISBN 9781472912527  
Price (hardback): £18.99

## ***The Frozen Frontier: Polar Bound Through the Northwest Passage***

by Jane Maufe

Jane Maufe takes us on a journey through the treacherous Northwest Passage, following the footsteps of her famous ancestor. She's the great-great-great-niece of Sir John Franklin, an Arctic explorer who died trying to find the Northwest Passage in 1847.

Jane travels with an old flame, David Scott Cowper, who was the first man to sail solo around the world in both directions. You're sure to be enchanted by her detailed account of the voyage, highlighting the highs and lows of two accomplished sailors in some of the most unforgiving waters in the world.

Published by Bloomsbury  
ISBN 9781472935717  
Price: £18.99

## ***Ships: The History and Specifications of 300 World-famous Ships***

by Chris Bishop

Military historian Chris Bishop's new book takes us on a voyage of world-famous vessels from 2500 BC to the 21st century. This small, portable volume begins with a brief history of ship development over the centuries. It then becomes an encyclopaedia featuring warships, submarines, hovercraft and everything in between. Each of the 300 vessels comes with an illustration, specifications and service history.

It's ideal for both the fresh-faced powder monkey and the sea-hardened quartermaster, read in the comfort of your favourite armchair or taken on your next nautical adventure.

Published by Amber Books  
ISBN 9781845093037  
Price: £9.99

## ***How to Stay Alive***

by Bear Grylls

Looking to boost your survival skills? RNLI ambassador Bear Grylls's latest offering covers everything from learning how to collect water with the unlikeliest of items to flying planes in emergencies and escaping from angry sharks. This isn't a book for the faint-hearted.

Don't be put off by the outlandish tips on the back cover – this book is a fantastic guide to lifesaving techniques, including CPR, escaping a burning building, and dressing broken bones. You never know when they might come in useful.

Published by Bantam Press  
ISBN 9780593071076  
Price: £20

Buy these books online via [RNLI.org/amazon](http://RNLI.org/amazon) and Amazon will donate a minimum of 5% of the value to the RNLI.

## ***How to Read Water: Clues and Patterns from Puddles to the Sea***

by Tristan Gooley

Over 1,000 years ago, Persian sailor Captain Abharah travelled to China seven times when nobody else could make one trip without mishap. During a voyage in typhoon season, his uncanny ability to read signs in the moon, tides, winds and water saved a vessel he'd boarded. On the return journey, he even helped its crew recover the anchor they'd lost to stay afloat.

Fascinated with Abharah, the author explores and chronicles this near-mythical skill. *How to Read Water* is the practical, surprisingly scientific and utterly fascinating result.

Published by Sceptre  
ISBN 9781473615205  
Price (hardback): £20

Recommended retail prices may vary from the time of writing. Post and packaging costs may apply to online orders.

## ***Islander: A Journey Around Our Archipelago***

by Patrick Barkham

In *Islander*, Patrick Barkham explores 11 of our islands, from the uninhabited Ray Island in Essex to the Isle of Man, a self-governing nation with its own language and a population of 85,000. Throughout his beautifully described travels, Patrick meets a variety of natives – from puffins to nuns to local legends. If you've always wondered what lies beyond your closest patch of coastline, this is a book you'll treasure. It may even inspire you to do your own exploring!

Published by Granta  
ISBN 9781783781881  
Price: £20

Words: Lydia Bessant, Megan Howden, Joe Forrest, Charlotte Shearing, Mark Scott, Nikki McMullen



# Friends of the RNLI

These companies offer discounts to you and fundraising benefits for our charity



### Amazon

The RNLI receives at least 5% of your order value only via [RNLI.org/amazon](http://RNLI.org/amazon).

### Furness Building Society

This mutual has launched an affinity savings account with the RNLI. Please go to [furnessbs.co.uk/community/affinity-accounts](http://furnessbs.co.uk/community/affinity-accounts).



### Coastal Spring

Look out for the Coastal Spring range of Cornish bottled water in your local shops, bars and restaurants. 1p per bottle will go to the RNLI.



### Giveacar

Giveacar is a not-for-profit social enterprise that can turn your old car into cash for the RNLI. They will arrange free collection, then either sell your car at auction or scrap it, with 70% of all recycling or auction revenue being paid in support of the RNLI. To find out more call 020 7736 4242 or email [support@giveacar.co.uk](mailto:support@giveacar.co.uk).



## A safe Haven for everyone

The RNLI is working with Haven Holidays to make the coast a safer place for the whole family.

Together, we'll share safety messages with even more people, inspire guests with stories of the RNLI's lifesaving work and raise money with fundraising activities. We want to create a happy, safe haven for your holidays.

Now that it's springtime, why not book that perfect seaside escape?

### BOOK YOUR BREAK

Haven are now offering RNLI supporters up to 10% off their holidays. You can book or find out more by calling **0333 202 5423** or **+44 1442 286302** (if you're outside the UK) and quoting **CH\_RNLI**, or visiting [haven.com/RNLI](http://haven.com/RNLI).

### Puzzle time

#### Quick wordsearch:

Something's lurking in the deep. Can you find the following 12 mythical beasts?

C K D Z M S S Y S M O J O G Y  
 F U O O S E V I E T M G S O T  
 S C T I F F D L R E V D A D G  
 P K Q I T B U N I E D R T Z J  
 B S E K Y S A K E V N F Q I U  
 J D H R I S L E D K F G S L J  
 J L A N U E J Q J G A S O L X  
 Y H E T S B A V I P X R G A Q  
 C S C V G F W N S P P X K X I  
 B G A L I F S H P Y L U V E J  
 B P A K L A S U R S C X Y I D  
 U H X J W V T H Y D R A F S V  
 N A H X D O B H A R C H U S V  
 S J G E Y G E U A Z W N S E S  
 I I Z F H G W O J N A T V N A

CHARYBDIS  
 DOBHAR CHU  
 HYDRA  
 GODZILLA  
 JAWS  
 KRAKEN  
 LEVIATHAN  
 MELUSINE  
 NESSIE  
 RUSALKA  
 SELKIE  
 SIREN



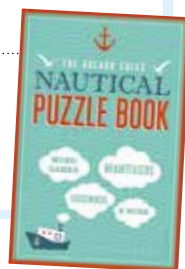
### Word amidships

Find a word to put in the brackets that will make two new terms with the words on the left and the right:

WATER (?) POINT



From *The Adlard Coles Nautical Puzzle Book* published by Bloomsbury and reproduced with their kind permission.





# Unsung Heroes

## Hamish Steven

A Caithness fundraiser tells us what it's like to be part of the RNLI family

### What do you do?

I'm deputy chairman of the Wick RNLI Fundraising Branch. I've been involved for over a decade.

### Wick's quite a small community. Is it difficult finding support?

No, we generally bring in £35,000-£40,000 a year. There are about 20 of us on the committee and we're always looking for new members. We have a fantastic rapport with local people and businesses. I don't think I've ever come across anybody who has refused anything reasonable we've asked of them. If I went to a local contractor right now and asked to borrow staging and barriers for an event, it wouldn't be a problem.

### What exciting events do you organise?

Harbour Day is one of the biggest events in our calendar. It attracts around 5,500 people and a lot of work goes on behind the scenes. We have a massive barbecue that's always popular because the smell wafts along the quay!

A couple of years ago some ladies on our committee did something a little different. They spent 3 days stranded on the Isle of Stroma. It's exposed and uninhabited, apart from a few sheep. The ladies just about got blown off the face of the earth completing sponsored activities there and raised almost £10,000. Our problem is always how to top the last event.

### How much time do you give up?

Officially, I'm at the station once a month for meetings but I come in most days to see what's going on. Plus, the coffee's good.

### What does volunteering for the RNLI mean to you?

It gives me purpose. When I get up in the morning my wife asks: 'Where are you going to today?' and it's automatic: 'the lifeboat station'. I like seeing the boats and chatting with the crew. It keeps me going. When you're a member of the RNLI family it doesn't matter where you are, you'll always get a wave or a chat.

Photo: RNLI/Nathan Williams

There are fundraising groups in coastal and inland communities throughout the UK and Ireland. Find your place in our family at [RNLI.org/volunteer](https://www.rnli.org/volunteer).



# LIFEBOAT LAUNCHES

Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard

We're very sorry, but at the time of going to print, we were having technical difficulties with gathering the list of launches. This means we are unable to print the list in the usual way this time. We're very sorry for any inconvenience.

We are aiming to publish launch listings for 1 October–31 December 2017 online at [RNLI.org/listings](https://www.rnli.org/listings). We'll also include the missing launches in the summer issue of *Lifeboat*, so there will be 6 months' worth of listings for you next time.

Thank you for your support and patience.



# SPECIAL DELIVERY

## HISTORIC LIFEBOATS

In the winter issue, we listed some places to see historic lifeboats. There are a lot of them out there, and we couldn't mention them all, but some of you wrote in with further recommendations:

**Tina Gilbert writes:**

I was very interested in the article A New Lease of Life in the winter issue, though disappointed not to see the *Alfred Corry* Museum at Southwold (Suffolk) listed as a place to see old lifeboats.

The *Alfred Corry* was Southwold Lifeboat No 1 from 1893 to 1918, saving 47 lives.

The lifeboat returned to Southwold in 1996 and since then has been lovingly restored by a team of dedicated volunteers.

The museum is fully accessible and manned by friendly, knowledgeable volunteers.

If you're in the area, please visit – you won't be disappointed. Visit [AlfredCorry.co.uk](http://AlfredCorry.co.uk).

**Jonathan Hunt from the museum adds:**

In 1976, Captain John Cragie rescued the *Alfred Corry*, which was then being used as a houseboat in Maldon, Essex. John is the great grandson of another John Cragie, who was the lifeboat's first coxswain.

Call in on a Wednesday and you may well meet him!



Above: *Alfred Corry* in her lifesaving heyday  
Below: The restored *Alfred Corry*



**Martin Upton writes:**

One place you forgot to mention was the Maritime Centre in Newbiggin-on-Sea (Northumberland), where people can see the lifeboat *Mary Joicey*.

The lifeboat was completely restored and painted by crew members here in Newbiggin. I hope readers of *Lifeboat* will go and see her.



## NAME THAT CREW MEMBER

**Keith Wheeler writes:**

I would like to find out more about the character featured in this sketch of a lifeboat crew member from Dungeness in 1947.

My late father, like many Brummies, was a huge fan of the RNLI. Almost the first thing we did on holidays in the 1950s was visit whichever lifeboat station was nearest.

My father's first wife was a very accomplished artist and I am fortunate

to have a couple of her pieces. When they went on holiday, my Dad would take his sketch pad with him and sit and keep her company while she drew or painted.

I recently came across this in one of his sketch books. I wonder if any of the *Lifeboat* family would have any recollection of this man, his occupation, his service record and what his name was. Any RNLI sleuths out there?

## HARRY IN IRELAND

RNLI superfan Harry Mascall (10) is on a mission to visit all 238 of our lifeboat stations. He told us in January that his 2018 resolution was to get to some stations in Ireland. And, unlike many of us, Harry has stuck to his new-year goal:



Help Harry raise funds:  
[justgiving.com/fundraising/harrymascall](http://justgiving.com/fundraising/harrymascall).



'Huge thanks to all the crew at RNLI Dun Laoghaire for a lovely welcome and a fantastic tour of the station. You are my 163rd RNLI lifeboat station.'



'Having a great time in Ireland. I visited Clogher Head RNLI, which is my 161st lifeboat station.'

## Write to us

Were you moved by a rescue story? Do you want to know more about something you've read? We love hearing your thoughts and ideas. Get in touch using the contact details at the bottom of page 2.

Word amidships solution (page 34): WATER (WAY) POINT

Share your stories at [twitter.com/RNLI](https://twitter.com/RNLI)



Connect with us on [facebook.com/RNLI](https://facebook.com/RNLI)





# RNLI FAMILY: THE LIFE OF THE CHARITY

Celebrating the RNLI family, past and present

## ALL GROWN UP

The Tobermory kids in 2012



Back in 2012, photographer Nigel Millard took a picture of the children of Tobermory's crew trying on their parents' kit. Almost 5 years later, the station recreated the iconic shot.

Here they are, 5 years later



Alexander Anderson (second from right), son of former Station Mechanic Jock Anderson, is now a member of the crew, having joined last year aged 17.

## WELCOME TO THE WORLD!



Congratulations to Conwy Helm Leon Kynaston, who become the very proud father of Ayla Michelle Kynaston in October.

Ayla was photographed in her dad's RNLI helmet at the lifeboat station.

Leon says: 'The support we have received from everyone at Conwy RNLI is fantastic. Family is very important to us volunteers, as no matter what time of the day or night our pagers sound, they support us in our roles. Although now it's not only my pager that wakes me up in the middle of the night!'

## Ron Cannon MBE

Tributes have been paid to Ron Cannon, who served as a crew member for 37 years at Ramsgate Lifeboat Station.



Ron joined the crew in 1964 and became the station's youngest coxswain/mechanic in 1976 – a post he held for 25 years.

He was awarded two Silver Medals for Gallantry; one for a rescue on Boxing Day 1985, when Ramsgate RNLI saved the crew of a French trawler. In 2017, Ron was awarded the MBE for his services to the RNLI.

Ron's legacy lives on, as his son Ian is now the coxswain at Ramsgate, and his granddaughter Becky is on the crew too. Ron will be greatly missed by his family, his friends, and the whole community of Ramsgate.

Words: Nikki McMullen

Photos: Along Came Harri Photography, RNLI/(Sam Jones, Nigel Millard, John Ray)

## Celebrating life

Join us in remembering our RNLI Family members who have recently passed away.

### Graham Anderson – September 2017

Former Mechanic at Lochinver Lifeboat Station

### Stephen Baker – January 2018

Former Fundraising Development Manager

### Tom Beattie – December 2017

Engineer, closely involved in the RNLI's building projects

### Les Beck – December 2017

Volunteer at Workington Lifeboat Station

### John Buchan – May 2017

Former Coxswain/Mechanic at Peterhead Lifeboat Station

### Brian Buxton – November 2017

President of the Porthleven and District Branch

### Ron Cannon MBE – January 2018

Former Coxswain/Mechanic at Ramsgate Lifeboat Station

### Ian Chatten – January 2018

President of the Welling, Eltham and Sidcup Branch

### Gary Cross – October 2017

Volunteer at Northwich Branch

### Sally Fearn – January 2018

Fundraiser at Salcombe Branch

### Commander Peter Gladwin – August 2017

Former Superintendent of the Inshore Lifeboat Centre at Cowes

### Robert Gray – October 2017

Former Crew Member at Weymouth Lifeboat Station

### Isabella Hill – November 2017

Former Fundraising Coordinator

### Peter Inglis – November 2017

Press Officer at Workington Lifeboat Station

### Doris Lloyd – January 2018

President of the Wroxham and District Branch

### Willie Melville – November 2017

Volunteer at Oban Lifeboat Station

### Archer Metcalfe – December 2017

Volunteer at Lytham St Annes Lifeboat Station

### Tommy Ralston – December 2017

Former Coxswain/Mechanic at Mallaig Lifeboat Station

### Peter Shaw – October 2017

Former Chairman at Cambridge Fundraising Branch

### Matthew Thompson – January 2018

Crew Member at Workington Lifeboat Station

### Jackie Tull – October 2017

Former Events Coordinator at the RNLI College

### Helen Whitehill – October 2017

Chairwoman of the Southport Branch

### Keith Willacy – January 2018

Volunteer at Morecambe Lifeboat Station

### John Williams MBE – December 2017

Volunteer at Porthcawl Lifeboat Station

### Bob Wooldridge – December 2017

Founding member of the Knowle and Dorridge Branch



**Ben Thomson, Broughty Ferry**

Ben joined the crew 6 months after being rescued with his friend Gavin by the RNLI. 'My little girl and Gavin's little boy sing a song to each other where they say: "Love you lots like jelly tots." We were singing it to each other while waiting for rescue because we had to get home to the kids.'



**Martyn Brock, Angle**

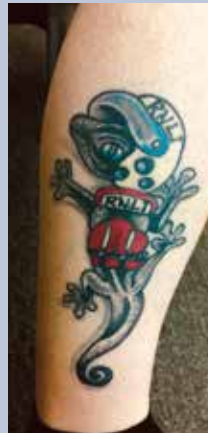
'Being a part of the lifeboat is a big chapter in my life, so I wanted a tattoo to show it. Everyone likes it apart from my nan – she hates all my tattoos!'



**Peter Uprichard, Newcastle**



'I had always wanted to get a tattoo to symbolise the reward I get from volunteering. I just didn't know what to get. Then one day I while cleaning my PPE (personal protective equipment) I had the idea of the gecko in the helmet and lifejacket.'



**Andrew Hairstens, Wexford**



'I added the helicopter to the tattoo in memory of the crew of *Rescue 116*, the Coast Guard helicopter that crashed last year. We had done a lot of work with the pilot, Dara Fitzpatrick.'

# THE MARK OF A LIFESAVER

**Our volunteers give up their time and energy to save lives at sea. And many of them give up a body part too – showing their commitment to the RNLI with a tattoo**

**Matt Steeden, Swanage**

'My grandad and also my father were coxswain. This is a sign of my commitment to lifesaving and a way of remembering what my family have given the RNLI.'



# LIFEBOAT LOTTERY

## WINTER 2017 RESULTS

Congratulations to Mrs DM Elvin from Oxfordshire who won our first prize of £5,000 cash.

**OUR OTHER WINNERS WERE:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>2ND PRIZE: £2,000</b><br>Mrs PA Andrew, Cheshire     | <b>AND 5 PRIZES of £100 EACH</b><br>Mr P Burchell, Surrey |
| <b>3RD PRIZE: £500</b><br>Mr Al Lewcock, Oxfordshire    | Mr ARJ Mann, Cambridgeshire                               |
| <b>4TH PRIZE: £250</b><br>Mr D Abraham, Nottinghamshire | Ms H Lewis, London  |
|   | Mr J Whiteley, Merseyside                                 |
|   | Mrs LAD Turl, Midlothian                                  |

We'll report the winners of the spring Lifeboat Lottery in our summer 2018 issue. The summer Lifeboat Lottery will mail on 20 April 2018. The closing date is 15 June 2018 and the draw date is 29 June 2018.

To take part, please call **0300 300 9990** or email your details to [lottery@rnli.org.uk](mailto:lottery@rnli.org.uk) and request a lottery mailing.

Phone lines are open Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm.

Please note that, due to tax and gaming laws, Lifeboat Lottery tickets are only available in England, Scotland and Wales. Entrants must be aged 16 or over. For full details (including terms and conditions), please go to [RNLI.org/lottery](http://RNLI.org/lottery) or see your lottery letter.

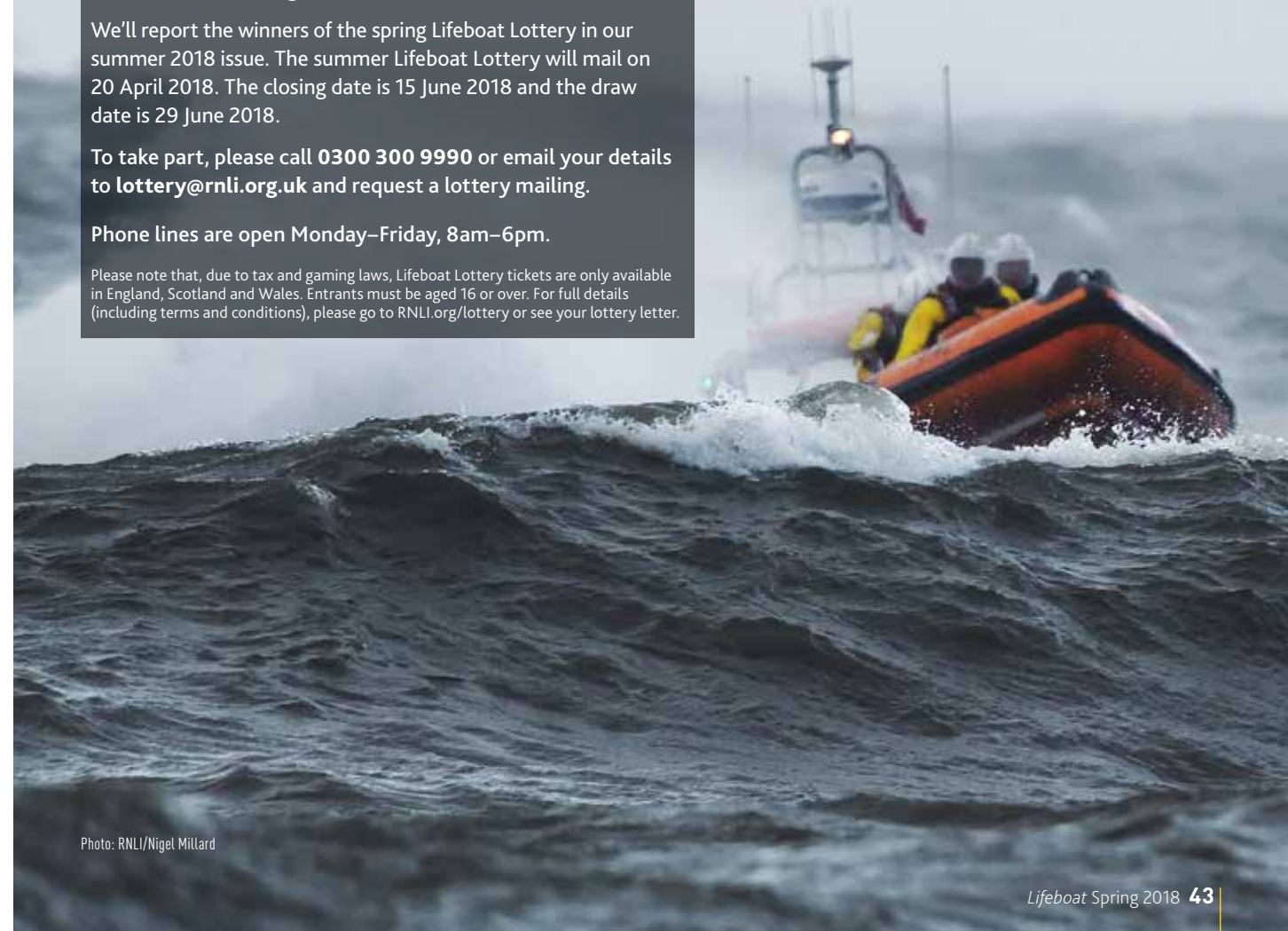


Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard





# THIS MAYDAY

Help raise money for the vital kit our crews rely upon

When our brave volunteer crews answer the call for help, they don't know what they'll be facing. Huge waves, storms, darkness ... They need to be prepared for anything.

Having the right kit can be the difference between life and death – for them and the people they rescue.

That's why, this Mayday, we're asking you to get your yellow on – like our crews do every day to save lives. From yellow-themed dress-down days to whipping up lemon tarts for a bake sale, every penny you raise will go to kitting out our crew.

Sign up for your free fundraising pack at [RNLI.org/MaydayLBM](https://RNLI.org/MaydayLBM)

**#MaydayEveryDay**



## HELMET

Helmets protect our crews' heads in rough conditions.

## LIFEJACKET

Lifejackets help make sure crews stay safe and afloat.

## JACKET AND TROUSERS

This hard-wearing, waterproof gear keeps our crews warm and dry.

## WELLIES

Welly boots keep our crews' feet dry and stop them from slipping.

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a charity registered in England and Wales (209603) and Scotland (SC037736). Registered charity number 20003326 in the Republic of Ireland