

Dartmouth RNLI Visitor Centre

Since 1 January 2015 the aim of the RNLI has broadened beyond "Saving lives at Sea" and now the overarching theme is known as "Community lifesaving". The RNLI plan to work together with local communities with its rescue services but also by using education, supervision and support to reduce deaths by drowning. It is this that is being piloted at the new Centre. The RNLI is trying to engage with the public and motivate them to be involved in a new way. In this Centre the story and aims of the RNLI will be told, as well as presenting the RNLI's safety messages to all ages in an interactive way.

Up to now RNLI Visitor Centres have been attached to lifeboat stations and have provided retail space as well as telling the story of the RNLI. They usually have related to the history of the attached station in particular. Many lifeboat stations are by their very nature not easily accessible to the public. The two pilot centres in Dartmouth and Barry Island in South Wales are at the same stage of development and are just about to begin the final design stage. The Barry Island centre, near Cardiff, is close to the beach and will be focussed on community safety

and education. Although the shop in Dartmouth will be small in relation to others it will still be of a good size. The most important aspect of the new emphasis relates to the number of people who come through the door and interact with the educational message. Ideas will be learnt from the two pilots and the concept can then be extended inland and in other coastal areas.

Why was Dartmouth chosen?

Following a carefully budgeted business plan a feasibility study was run. Dartmouth is a busy nautical area with strong support for the RNLI locally and there is also a strong cohort of local volunteers. There is an excellent footfall past the door and the new Visitor Centre will prove to be an added attraction to visitors to the town.

The interactive displays are anticipated to have local content. It may be possible to see local rescue footage as children climb onboard an adapted D class lifeboat, D633, Pride of London Foresters. She was launched on service at Southend

250 times between January 2005 and September 2014. To find out why Southend needs three lifeboats have a look at their station website.

On 2 April a first meeting for those volunteering to help in the Centre was held at Dartmouth Yacht Club and 17 people put their names forward to join those who had already expressed an interest. Basic training will cover all aspects of the different roles the volunteers in the Centre will play. Further training in more specialised educational



or retail roles will then be given.

The Centre is anticipated to open between 10am and 4pm 7 days a week during the busy periods of the year. It will be a wonderful resource for locals as well as for visitors. School visits will be encouraged but they will need to be off-peak and scheduled well in advance. There will also be fundraising events and educational talks.

The RNLI decided to conduct a significant amount of building work in order to fully utilise the space and to enable the Centre to fulfil its role. In the event more work was required to achieve this than was initially recognised and the opening date has unfortunately been pushed back.

R J Knapman and Sons are the local firm of builders involved and their work should have been completed by the end of April. The creative agency, The Edge Agency, will then begin their input.

The Agency has received ideas from various branches of the RNLI. The coastal safety team, education, philanthropy, lifeguards, Face2Face and retail have all put forward their suggestions, drawing on experiences from elsewhere and the



Photo by John Fenton

D633 was adapted at the RNLI Inshore Lifeboat Centre in East Cowes

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Lizzie Helyer, our new Dart fundraising branch treasurer



Photo by John Fenton

Having qualified as a Nurse and Midwife she worked in Midwifery for 24 years, the last ten as a District Midwife attached to 6 Practices in Sussex between Pulborough and Henfield. As a wife and mother of four she also kept rabbits, chickens and goats for milk in her large back garden in West Worthing as well as sailing across the Atlantic and passing her RYA Ocean Yachtmasters in her

Lizzie Helyer has just taken over from Ian McMaster as treasurer of the RNLI Dart Fundraising Branch. A sailor, singer and retired Nurse / Midwife she moved to Dartmouth 23 years ago. Born in Ashburton, she spent her first 6 months living at Dartington Hall where her Great Uncle looked after the shire horses on the farm and her Grandmother worked in the Hall.

The family on her Mother's side had served in the Royal Navy for centuries and as a child she wanted to follow in their footsteps. When the time came it was apparent that WRENS stayed ashore and this was not adventurous enough for Lizzie. Instead she turned to nursing and rowed through snow and rain from her home in West Hove to Brighton to get to the hospital where she was training.

spare time. She has only once had to be rescued by the RNLI and this was in Dartmouth in 2009 when she joined the crew of the cutter from HMS Victory and they had to be rescued in high winds during Dartmouth regatta.

In 1991 she had bought a Dutch Sailing barge and lived onboard full time whilst working as the matron of a private nursing home in Dawlish. She would row ashore to sing with the Britannia Choral society and also joined the Dartmouth Parish Choir. It was there that she met Chris Helyer and married him in South Africa in 2009. They now live at Eight Bells on Dartmouth South Embankment which they run as a Bed and Breakfast. If you would like to stay on the waterfront with the best B & B breakfast view of the river take a look in Contacts for the number.

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Cartoon by James Fenton

Looking back at our Launches

Dart inshore lifeboat launch times, from the moment the crew receive the 'Launch ILB' signal on their pagers to the time the boat is in the water, remain remarkably quick. On average, over 2013 and 2014, it was just under seven minutes. This was partly due to the fact that several of the lifeboat and shore crew live or work very close to the lifeboat station or the crew were already in the station for some other reason, such as during Dartmouth Regatta. Some calls were received when the boat was already on the water on exercise and the crew could respond immediately as their radio is permanently tuned to Channel 16, the emergency channel.

A different pager alert is sent for a 'crew assemble' when the same degree of urgency is not required. This was used for instance when the crew were asked to respond to a report that the Checkstone navigation buoy was missing. The Harbour Authority boats were not available at the time and the Coastguard did not wish to put out a 'warning to shipping notice' without being sure of their facts. It was found in its correct position but tethered two metres below the surface – a considerable hazard to shipping.

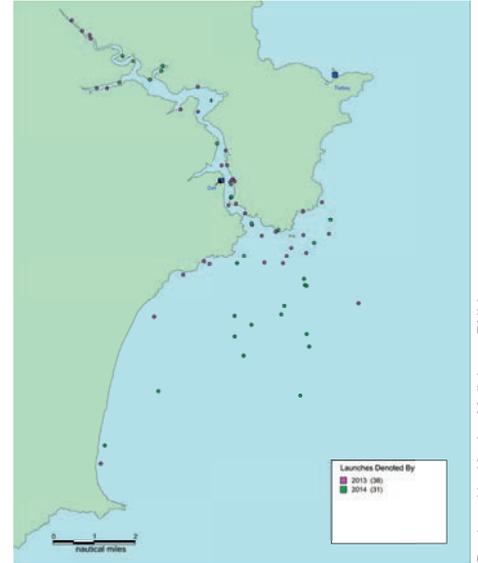
In the vast majority of cases the Coastguard, now in Falmouth, will initially contact the Lifeboat Operations Manager (LOM) or his deputy on duty (DLA) and they will discuss the need and advisability for the volunteers to launch. In cases where there are people reported to be in the water the Coastguard can issue an immediate 'Launch ILB' signal without going through the local RNLI Operations team. This occurred on two occasions in 2013 and the boat was launched in five and a half minutes.

Many rescues require close working with other agencies and good communications are essential. The overarching co-ordinating agency is the Coastguard but the local mobile Coastguard Search and Rescue teams, the RNLI lifeguards, the Fire, Police and Ambulance and occasionally the Royal Navy can all be involved. In a major search, when the lifeboat will be visually searching the river banks, foreshore or open water, the coastguard teams, backed up on occasions by dog teams from the police or Dartmoor search and rescue, will be searching the areas further

back from the water. At night the lifeboat crew will be using night vision equipment and a searchlight and on occasions the police or coastguard helicopters will be called in as they have heat seeking scanners on board. Over the last two years the crews were called to search for missing people on 8 occasions and spent 15 hours afloat.

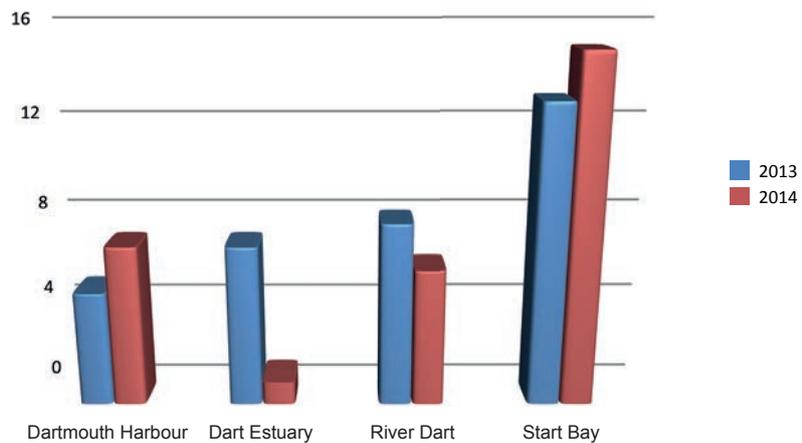
The maps show the distribution of the callouts over the last two years. 45.5% of all calls were to various locations in Start Bay, which was almost twice the number of calls compared to the next highest location which was the area of the River Dart upstream of the Higher Ferry. During this period the furthest distance they were called to was two and a half miles from the shore, although most were close to the shore, some perilously so. As far as distance travelled is concerned the distance to Hallsands and Beesands is considerably further.

Details of our last two hundred and twenty eight launches, recent and forthcoming events, a photo gallery as well



Produced by Katrina Mallaburn, RNLI

as updated details of the team members can be found on the local RNLI web site. Notices are also posted on the Notice Boards on the outside the Lifeboat Station and in front of the toilets on the North Embankment.



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USELESS UNLESS WORN USELESS UNLESS THEY WORK

The life jacket clinic at the RNLI Dart lifeboat station has been run for the last five years with expertise from the professional team from Ocean Safety, Plymouth, Chris Robinson from the Dartmouth Chandlery and John Yunnice, RNLI Dart Sea Safety Officer.

This year 78 life jackets were examined and only three were condemned. Two because corroded gas cylinders had damaged the fabric and one because the life jacket did not remain inflated. Cylinders can cause damage if the whole lifejacket is not dry and salt free before storage. It is recommended to clean life jackets (having removed any automatic firing cartridges) under a cold shower rather than by immersing them in a bath which can result in the Velcro tapes becoming soft and not adhering efficiently.

26 of the 78 life jackets examined required some parts replacing; that is 1 in 3. Some life jackets have a yellow Halkey Roberts bobbin containing salt which dissolves when the wearer falls in the water. This then releases a pin which

to test children's life jackets, more of these were brought this year. Children's life jackets are classed as being for babies, juniors or children. Chris Robinson from the Dartmouth Chandlery said, "It is essential to know the weight of the child when buying these."

Buoyancy aids provide personal safety for water-sports enthusiasts but are not guaranteed to turn the wearer onto their back if they are unconscious. The All Foam 100Newton life jackets lie between life jackets and buoyancy aids. They have an additional collar and will turn the wearer onto their back. The range is completed by air filled life jackets from 150Newtons to 275Newtons.

Chris had some additional advice for dinghy sailors wearing trapeze harnesses. "These should be worn under the buoyancy aid or life jacket in case the latter need to be removed, for example if the wearer is trapped under a capsized boat."

The aim of the RNLI is to reduce deaths by drowning by 50% over the next 10 years and a proportion of these occur in people who had no intention of entering the water.

It is strongly recommended that Anglers wear lifejackets, both on fresh and salt water, and statistics show that sea anglers fishing from rocks are in particular danger.

Ian Cook, leader of the Ocean Safety team commented. "I am delighted the number of condemned life jackets has fallen each year since we have been coming to Dartmouth. I am worried however about the far higher number of jackets stored on boats or at home which remain untested."

Life jackets can have a full, paid for, test by handing them into the Dartmouth Chandlery who will forward them to Ocean Safety.



Photo by RNLI

An historical footnote.

Recently, whilst on holiday in Florida, I photographed this magnificent Kapok tree, close to the Harry S Truman Little White House in Key West. The Kapok, or Silk-cotton tree, can grow 10 feet a year and reach 130 feet. Most commercial kapok comes from the island of Java in Indonesia. The foul smelling flowers only appear every five or ten years and are pollinated by bats. The kapok fibre comes from the hairs covering the seeds.

This fibre is light and was thought to be waterproof. It was used in life jackets in WW2 which were known as Mae Wests. Unfortunately the fibre would absorb water unless the jackets were stored dry and they would then become extremely heavy. The answer was to enclose the fibre stuffing in a waterproof envelope. Such life jackets were still in use in the late 60's.



Photo by John Fenton

Dart RNLI Lifejacket clinic, 11 April 2015

enters the CO2 cylinder and automatically inflates the jacket. Bobbins should be replaced annually or even six monthly if the life jacket is worn constantly. Other lifejackets have UM Mk V capsules as the firing mechanism which last about three years and have an expiry date stamped on the casing. 18 of these were time expired.

Crutch straps are an essential but often ignored part of the harness. Not only do they stop the life jacket riding up over the wearer's head but they keep the life jacket on the chest so that the wearer is turned onto their back with their head up and wind pipe clear when they enter the water.

Possibly as a result of the Dart RNLI Education team highlighting the need

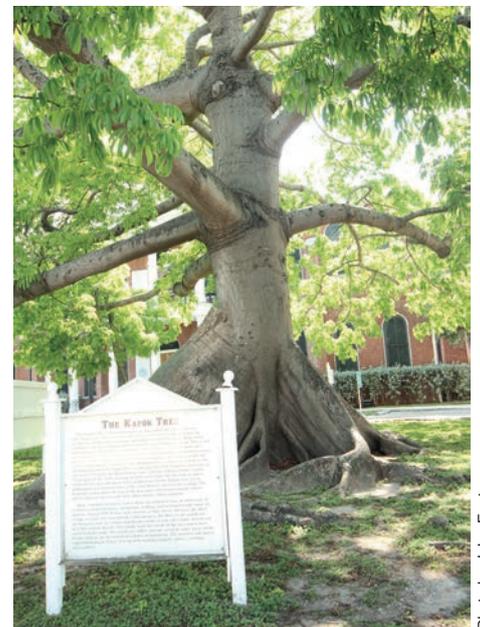


Photo by John Fenton

A Message from the Chairman, Ed Featherstone, to all Friends of the RNLI Dart Lifeboat



Photo by John Fenton

I am taking this opportunity to remind "Friends" and to inform potential new "Friends" of the purpose of this local membership of the RNLI Dart Lifeboat Fundraising Branch.

First of all, it is not the same as the national system of membership of the RNLI, which is administered from Poole and covers all aspects of the Institution's activities in UK, Ireland and worldwide.

By subscribing to Friends you are helping the

local Fundraising Branch to cover the costs of providing Dart D'Tales, our glossy local magazine which tells almost everyone in Dartmouth, Kingswear and surrounding villages, as well as National RNLI members further afield who are interested in our station, about the operational activities of "Spirit of the Dart" and of our fundraising activities to support the Ops Team. It also raises public awareness of our Lifeboat. Without local support we would find it hard to recruit the crew and support team and we would find it hard to raise the money to pay for it. Your donation of £5 per annum (more if you wish) acts as the seed corn money to enable us to do so much more.

As a Friend you will receive Dart D'Tales, and monthly updates by email if you have requested them, covering our operational activities and news from the Dart fundraising Branch. With your permission, your contact details will be kept securely on our database, so we can easily keep you informed and from time to time, ask for your help in our activities. To reduce costs and the administrative burden we have standardised the membership year from 1 May to 30 April. We are also hoping that as many Friends as possible will switch to Standing Order payment. The fee to cover our costs will remain a minimum of £5 per year but you may make a further donation if you wish. We would be delighted to hear from you about other ideas for fundraising and if you want

to be more involved, we always welcome new members on the fundraising committee.

If you want further information contact me, Ed Featherstone on 07889 953974 or Events Secretary, Alan Makepeace on 07950 369341.

Please cut out the form on the reverse of this page to make your donation or to update us with any of your requests or details that we hold. Those who have already filled out a form need take no action unless your details have changed.

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Photo by RNLI

RNLI Lifeguard cover in the South Hams

In 2015 the RNLI lifeguards, along with local RNLI Educational volunteers, have given Beach safety talks to all our local schools. In South Hams. We will have spoken to 2506 pupils in over 22 Schools.

RNLI Lifeguard cover on local beaches in summer 2015		
Full Season	2 May - 27 Sept	Bantham and Sedgewell Cove
Main Season	16 May - 27 Sept	Challaborough
Peak Season	4 July - 6 Sept	Burgh Island, Thurlstone, Hope Cove, Blackpool Sands and Slapton Sands

Rip currents continue to be a common cause of rescues and last year saw the winter storms alter the topography of many beaches. To stay safe we urge anybody visiting the beach to choose a lifeguarded beach and go in the water between the correct flags – red and yellow for swimming and bodyboarding and black and white for surf and other craft.

If there is no flag there is no lifeguard cover.

Location	People Aided during 2014			
	Rescued	Assisted	Major Casualty Care	Minor First Aid
Bantham	62	28	10	284
Blackpool Sands	4	14	2	14
Burgh Island	1	4	2	33
Challaborough	1	12	2	49
Hope Cove	5	8	1	27
Sedgewell Cove	38	16	9	208
Slapton	1	1	1	7
Thurlstone	0	6	3	5

Local Dart RNLI contacts

President

Robin Shiffner. Tel 01803 835853

Chairman Lifeboat Management Group

Jake Moores Tel 01803 833036

Lifeboat Operations Manager

Rob Clements. Mobile 07917 514 948

Treasurer Operations Team

Paul Weedon. Tel 01803 833812

Sea Safety Officer

John Yunnie. Mobile 07768 007 365

Chairman Fundraising Branch

Ed Featherstone

01803 835328. Mobile 07889 953974

Email ed.featherstone@btinternet.com

Vice Chairman & Visitor Centre Manager

Tracey Lucas. Mobile 07850 578127

Secretary Fundraising Branch

Clare Thorp. Tel 01803 832123

Box Secretary

Gordon Pepperell. Mobile 07791 448391

Treasurer Fundraising Branch

Changed to Lizzie Helyer Mob 07813 803472

Events Secretary

Alan Makepeace 01803 770775

Local Membership Secretary

Changed to Anne Walton Tel 01803 833362

Boathouse Manager

Bob Thomas. Mobile 07980 099 932

Administrator, Press Officer & Education Volunteer.

Editor Dart D'Tales and web site.

John Fenton. Tel 01803 770761

Lifeboat Visits Officer

Kevin Murphy. Mob 07890 809106

or by the "Contact us" link on the web site

Dart Lifeboat Station

Coronation Park, North Embankment,
DARTMOUTH, TQ6 9RR. 01803 839224

Please do not ring this number if you think
a launch is in progress.

Please send your views to John
Fenton using the 'Contact Us' facility
on the web site.

Future Events

Tues 5 May

RNLI Coffee Morning

10am – 12pm

Entry £5. Souvenirs on sale

Royal Castle Hotel

Sat 9 May

Dartmouth Leisure Centre

Open Day in aid of Dart RNLI

10.30am -2.30pm

Roller Blading, Junior circuits,

Bouncy castle & Face painting

Inshore lifeboat and crew (Ops

permitting)

Sun 21 June

Louisiana-style Street Party

12pm – 4pm

Live jazz & long-table dining

Contact Bob Hattersley at

louisianastreetparty@gmail.com

Dart RNLI Lifeboat "Week"

31 July to 9 August

Friday 31 July

Dartmouth RNLI Flag day

If you can help please contact

Ed Featherstone 01803 835328

Sunday 9 August

Annual RNLI Charity Angling Championship

on Outlaw of Dartmouth & Saltwind

of Dart with proceeds donated to

RNLI Dart. Contact Owen Mallia for

details & booking information

on 01803 832897 or 07891 498023

or owen@outlawcharters.co.uk

Thursday 6 August

RNLI Fete in Royal Avenue Gardens

10am to 4pm

Featuring Bottle Stall, Cake Stall,

Live Music, Splat the Rat, Coconut

shy, Book Stall, Plant Stall,

local celebrities in the stocks, Tea

and Cakes, Lifeboat and crew

If you can help in any way please

contact Ed Featherstone 835328

He needs Cakes, Books & DVDs

But not Bric a Brac

Sunday 16 August

RNLI Car Rally

10am to 4pm

Coronation Park, Dartmouth

Vintage cars, tractors, MCs

Steam Fairground organ. Details

will be on Posters and our web site

Entry forms from Simon Amphlett

07597 180799

Dartmouth Regatta

Thurs 27, Fri. 28 & Sat. 29 August.

Lifeboat Station open on Coronation Park.

See the lifeboat and station 10am
to 4pm.

RNLI Dartmouth Visitor Centre
Dartmouth South Embankment
Expected to be open throughout
Regatta Educational interactive
experience and RNL shop

Further information on all these
future events and reports of past
events can be found on the Events
section of the station web site.

continued from page 1

messages they wish to highlight. Nothing will be fixed and the emphasis between the various aspects can be changed over time.

Tracey Lucas, who also sits on the committee of the Dart Fundraising Branch, will be the local manger of the Centre and will work with Amanda Woods, RNLI Visitor Experience Manager. As Tracey explained, "There is still the opportunity to join the other volunteers. You do not have to commit to a fixed time or even have a fixed role in the Centre. Do come and join in."



Amanda Woods was interviewed by John Fenton for this article

Contributed by Amanda Woods