

DART TALES

Lifeboats

NEWS FROM THE RNLI LIFEBOAT TEAM IN DARTMOUTH

THE RNLI VISITOR CENTRE

by Tracey Lucas,
RNLI Visitor Centre Manager.

'We have enjoyed the best year since we fully opened in 2015, both financially and through visitor experience.'

Although we are still unable to measure our actual footfall it has been clear that we have had more visitors coming through the doors and many are staying for longer. Often families will spend between 20 and 45 minutes enjoying our displays, using the interactive attractions and talking and listening to our volunteers.

Financially, our Visitor Centre (VC) had an exceptional year. Our sales have risen by 16%. Our donation figure – small amounts that are either given to the volunteers or put into the donation boxes in the VC has again topped the £5,000 figure, £5,270 a 3% rise on last year. 100% of this goes directly to the RNLI.

I have a team of around 30 volun-

teers which enables us to open seven days a week. However, a few vacancies have arisen as we start this year. I need one person for Wednesday afternoons from Easter and we need two people to cover Sunday mornings. We have started to advertise for new volunteers and in the meantime cover between us when we can.

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Our VC is in fairly good condition. The new interactive "dress the crew" game has proved very successful and popular with our visitors.

We were one of a few RNLI VCs to be given the new Helly Hanson crew gear for children. It is identical to the adult crew gear in every detail. Children love dressing up in it and

the team have been asked on many occasions if they can buy the jackets!

Our number one request will now be to replace the continuous film that we have running showing local rescues.

Thursday 17 October 2019 was the day for Key stage II children from local primary schools to attend various workshops in Dartmouth, arranged by the Dartmouth Food Festival.

For the first time the RNLI were invited to teach the children about staying safe by the water and 79 children in eight groups were seen at the RNLI Visitor Centre. The aim was to teach the children the RNLI's four key safety messages when on or near the water and the teaching was based around the D class lifeboat in the Centre.

The RNLI Visitor Centre is at 9 South Embankment, Dartmouth TQ6 9BH.

Opening times and the contact phone number are shown at the foot of our RNLI Station website; see below.

ABOUT LT. SOPHIE RENNIE

'By day I am the Cadet Liaison Officer at BRNC. I look after the visiting Combined Cadet Forces from schools in the South West. At weekends, and weather permitting, you might see me driving a picket boat full of cadets up and down the river.'

Being a diver means that I come into contact with the RNLI, generally for all the wrong reasons – such as when boats break down or divers get into difficulty. Whilst it has not happened to me personally, I have



always had the RNLI in the back of my mind and wished to give something back to the organisation.

Whilst my boating knowledge and qualifications are in my opinion pretty wide – they bear no relation to the expertise of the RNLI Dart team of helms. I have joined as a DLA – meaning Deputy Launch Authority. Who knew that the Helms and Crew have to have permission to go to sea! That's me on a duty day – which is about six days a month.

My job is to respond to the coastguard's alert and find out what the 'shout' is, then decide who and what to deploy from the RNLI Dart station.

Now that I have had my first shout, I have also taken on the role of joint LPO – meaning Lifeboat Press Officer. I love taking photos and write the odd article for SCUBA Magazine in my role as Diver Training Lead for the

British Sub Aqua Club, so this should help me to polish my basic skills a little more.

The role of an LPO is as wide as you wish to make it. All launches are written up for the station web site and hopefully get a mention on the station Facebook page.

If the launch is particularly memorable then a news release is sent to the local papers and to the News and Media centre at the RNLI HQ in Poole. From there it is picked up by the national press.

The lifeboat crew wear a Go Pro camera on their helmets, if they remember to grab it as they leave the station. We then edit the film locally, send it to the RNLI Press centre and, if suitable and assuming that there is no objection from those filmed, it is placed on the RNLI Media site and used by the national TV stations. Our film footage has been used twice by



the TV Company making the "Saving Lives at sea" series. Once, when we helped to cut a whale free and, in September 2017, when an elderly gentleman's life was saved when he fell into the harbour late at night. You never know what the day will bring when you volunteer for the RNLI.

Sophie Rennie. RNLI Dart Deputy launch Authority and Lifeboat Press officer.

News, details of launches, photographs and videos can be found on the Dart station website. www.dartlifeboat.org.uk or the station Facebook page www.facebook.com/dartnrlilifeboat



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