



DART D'TALES PROVIDED NEWS OVER THE LAST TEN YEARS FROM THE RNLI LIFEBOAT TEAMS IN DARTMOUTH. SIMILAR NEWS ITEMS WILL NOW APPEAR REGULARLY IN BY THE DART MAGAZINE.

LATEST LAUNCHES

Traditionally, the early months of the year are quiet for the crew and the team concentrates on training especially as we have four new volunteers who have joined the lifeboat and shore crews. This year has been exceptional and they have been called out eight times already. Helping to free a humpback whale which has been feeding close inshore along the coast in Start Bay for several weeks must be a first for the RNLI, especially as they were called out not once but twice. The aim of the charity is to "Save Lives at Sea" and this includes providing safety cover and assisting if required, organisations such as British Divers Marine Life Rescue. Normally any rescue footage is taken by one of the crew wearing a helmet camera. On both these occasions the crew used the video facility on a hand held waterproof Pentax camera. Many will have seen clips from our films used by BBC Spotlight and ITV local news as well as other online news providers. The full films which are two to three minutes long, can be seen on the www.rnli.org.uk web site in the News Centre video section for 22 March and 01 April. There were 370,000 viewings of the first rescue on the first day alone.

SAVING LIVES AT SEA.

The BBC has commissioned a second series to appear this autumn. Each of the four programmes in 2016 was viewed by over three million people. It is planned to move this year's 12 part series to BBC 2 and to feature it at an earlier viewing time before 9pm. 'Blast Films' are producing the series and have already visited the Dart station and filmed in the Dartmouth area to give background to the whale launches and to the French trawlers that capsized in the harbour. The film company will use our video footage to make its own films. Torbay RNLI lifeboat which featured in the last series will be appearing again.

LIFE JACKET CLINIC

This year's clinic was much busier than in previous years and there was a line of seafarers queuing from 10am until after 3pm to have their jackets checked and inflated by the team from Ocean Safety in Plymouth.



The RNLI Dart Life Jacket clinic with the team from Ocean Safety

We will try and arrange things better next year to make any waiting period more interesting. John Yunnie, the RNLI Dart Sea Safety Officer who arranged the event, had put up many posters and Mark Cooper, the Dartmouth Harbour Master, arranged for information about it to be sent to all the Dartmouth Berth Holders. Over 180 life jackets were examined and 18 were condemned, mostly due to non-functioning or corroded cylinders. The RNLI have a slogan, "Useless unless worn" We could add another. "It is best not to rely on a non-functioning life jacket."

Repeated surveys have shown that many transferring from boat to shore in Dartmouth harbour are still not wearing life jackets or buoyancy aids. Plans are being put forward to have life jacket lockers installed on the quayside so that the bulky items do not have to be carried around town. This is one of the reasons given for not wearing them.

MARK STRUDWICK'S FIRST DAY.

On 1st April 2017 Mark took over the voluntary role of RNLI Dart Lifeboat Operations Manager from Rob Clements, who had held the post for the previous ten years. If Mark's first day was anything to go by he is in for a very busy time indeed. From early that morning the life jacket clinic was being set up in the lifeboat station. The inshore lifeboat was already on proactive



Mark Strudwick RNLI Dart Lifeboat Operations Manager.

patrol on the river when the first call from the Solent Coastguard was received. Immediately after that, the crew were tasked to attend a coxed four taking part in the Totnes to Dartmouth, Head of the River race. They had gone aground on the Flat Owers mud bank above Dittisham. A towing line was attached and with the help of one of the Race safety boats, it was pulled some 25 yards towards the water with the rowing crew still on board. The angle down to the water was such that the boat would have broken so the rowers were transferred to the lifeboat and onto the race safety boat before the boat was pulled free of the mud.

Whilst that rescue was taking place the third shout of the day was received to help rescue the humpback

whale for the second time. Full details of all these shouts, with maps, photos and videos, can be found on the local RNLI station web site at www.dartlifeboat.org.uk web site and on the station Facebook page at www.facebook.com/dartnllilifeboat

Meanwhile, back at the lifeboat station, a party with all the crew and their families was taking place to celebrate Rob Clements' retirement. Burgers were cooked and served whilst the presentations were delayed until the crew had returned from their whaling expedition. Jake Moores, Chairman of the RNLI Dart Lifeboat Management Group, presented Rob with an official certificate of thanks from the RNLI. Chris Tracey then presented him with a Bosun's whistle and an inscribed wrist watch on behalf of the crew and other members of the RNLI Dart team. Finally, he was given the RNLI flag that had been flying above the lifeboat station during his time of service.

Mark Strudwick.

Mark is a very knowledgeable boatman on the river Dart and is an owner of one of the Castle Ferries. He was a manager at Sandquay boatyard when it was owned by BAE. He comes from a local family and is well known in rowing circles in the town. He has coxed winning whalers in the Dartmouth regatta many times. He has been a member of the RNLI Dart team from its inception and has been and will continue to be the station mechanic.

**BERTHING
AND
BOATYARD
SERVICES**

For annual marina berths, river moorings and boatyard services call: 01803 83 9087 or visit premiermarinas.com

