



SIDMOUTH LIFEBOAT

Spring Newsletter 2016

We cover the East Devon Coast from Seaton to Budleigh Salterton.

We work closely with, but receive NO money from, the RNLI.

Editorial Comment:

Welcome to the Spring 2016 edition of the Sidmouth Lifeboat Newsletter. I'm not sure how many of you have kept to your New Year's resolution, but our resolution to try and get more crew members seems to be working. Over the last couple of months, despite the wet and cold, we have seen our numbers swell, a healthy indication of the importance that the community view the work of the Lifeboat. But it is not only the crew, the Support Staff have also recruited some keen new members, and as one of them is my Father, I can say I'm doing my bit to encourage new people in!

Anyway – lots of good articles for you in this edition, so a big thank you to everyone who has contributed.

Ian Fletcher



Mark Roden, Sidmouth Lifeboat coxswain, finally hangs up his dry suit after 12 years of service.

Growing up and surfing on the north coast of Northern Ireland, Mark had often seen the Port Rush lifeboat put to sea and had long had the ambition to join a lifeboat crew. His move to Sidmouth enabled this to finally happen, and he joined Sidmouth Lifeboat in 2004.



dinghies caught out in a violent squall, to rescuing a man with serious pelvis injuries from Jacobs Ladder beach. Mark helmed the last shout of 2015 – a search for a missing boarder in large breaking seas – and was there again for the first one of 2016 – the recovery, safe and well,

Mark's natural ability saw him progress rapidly, and he qualified as a helm in late 2008, progressing to the level of coxswain soon after. During his time at the Lifeboat he has crewed or taken command of around 100 emergency callouts ranging from rescuing children in

of a dog which had gone over the cliff near Budleigh Salterton. It is not only Mark we would like to thank for showing such considerable dedication and commitment over the years, but also his family who will have had to put up with many hours of an absent husband/father. Mark, you will be missed.



Follow us on Facebook & Twitter for updates on callouts and news from the crew

Fundraising News:

Our Sidbury Choir sing for Sidmouth Lifeboat:

Sidmouth Boathouse was occupied by a different crew in Oct 2015 as 'Our Sidbury Choir' put on a medley of nautical themed songs as part of a fundraising evening for the Lifeboat, raising over £250. To get the 70 strong audience in a maritime mood, the evening was started with a traditional piccolo solo playing the Hornpipe and was then followed by a number of rousing sea shanties, led by the charismatic pianist and conductor Lynden Webb. Sidmouth Lifeboat would like to thank both the choir and all those who



supported the event which it plans to repeat in the near future.

Pub quiz at Upottery:

The Sidmouth Arms in Upottery held a quiz with entry fees donated to Sidmouth Lifeboat. Some of the crew cobbled a team together, winning the booby prize for last place but bringing back a cheque for £160.

Registered Charity Number: 1105914

www.sidmouthlifeboat.org.uk

Background and the latest update on the 'Mary Taylor' tractor

- By our Chairman, John Fowler

As you know, we identified a need to replace our Renault tractor, back in late 2014. During 2015 we did two things, more or less simultaneously: 1. We started a campaign to raise the necessary funds, and 2. We placed an order with Messrs J P Wilson, of Dalbeattie, for a new machine.

Thanks, in great part to the generosity of Mary Taylor (deceased) and her family, the fund raising rapidly achieved our target.

The tractor itself arrived in mid-summer and was put to immediate "on-call" status. Paul Bowler, our on-call engineer, and Mark Wearing, who is our senior tractor driver and expert electrician, have worked with Wilsons to ensure its readiness for action. This new Valtra-based tractor is proving very successful, with better power, speed and grip on the shingle, than its predecessor.

The old Renault was stored in my barn whilst we decided on its long term fate. It transpired that refurbishing it would be nearly as costly as purchasing another (marinised) tractor, and that it would be impractical to keep it near enough to the boathouse to be of use as a standby. We therefore sold it through Ron Greet who 'recycles' old tractors. With low scrap-metal prices, we only managed to get £1000 for the Renault, although I suppose that was not too bad considering the use we got out of her. That, as I write, brings you up to date.

Thank you for your continuing support for the dedication and bravery of our magnificent men and women in their Lifeboat machine.

- Mark Wearing, Senior Tractor Driver, adds:

The new tractor has now completed 8 call outs and approximately 36 training launches and recoveries. Training of drivers continues with Vikki Snowball being close to being signed off to launch on shouts. The other two new recruits (the two Andys), after a few practice runs, are also showing good potential. Well done to Ian on his first shout as tractor driver - the shout went like clockwork - very impressive.



AGM news in brief.....

The AGM of Sidmouth Lifeboat was held on the 17 March 2016. The Chairman thanked all those who attended, especially new members and also Mrs Betty Davis who had travelled from Cheltenham.

The Accounts were presented and accepted by the meeting. A copy of which is available from the Company Secretary. In summary, the overall financial position increased by some 16.5% compared to 2014, despite the purchase of the new tractor. This was largely due to the receipt of two substantial legacies. General donations were about 20% less than 2014, but investment income, thanks to the legacies, increased during a difficult trading year. Part of our reserves are designated as Equipment Replacement Fund, with the remainder held to ensure the sustainability of the organisation over future years.

The Trustees for 2016 were confirmed as: John Fowler (Chairman), Kitrina Bishop (Company Secretary), Phil Shepperd, Tom Griffiths, Naomi Cook, Roland Westlake and Keith Brodie.

Finally, Phil Marish (Senior Tractor Driver) and Mark Roden (Coxswain) have both retired from active service. Their valuable contributions to Sidmouth Lifeboat were acknowledged and they will be missed.

We would like to thank all Friends, Supporters and Members wherever and whoever you are for choosing to support Sidmouth Lifeboat.

Helicopter news...

Those lucky enough to be on the seafront on 21 March will have seen the 5 Sea King helicopters (escorted by a Merlin) of the Commando Helicopter Squadron conducting a flypast along the west coast before they finally retired at the end of March.



Affectionally known as 'Junglies' for the support they provided to the Marines in Borneo during the 60's, the aircraft have seen 36 years of active service and operated in some of the most dangerous parts of the world.



The stormy weather we have experienced over the winter months has prevented the Lifeboat from carrying out its planned exercises with Coastguard 106. However, with Spring finally with us and summer just around the corner, we can get back training with the helo and get the newer crew members to experience being winched up from the boat into the helicopter.

Callout Summary:

27/09/2015 15:05 Rescue

Sidmouth Lifeboat launched to a swimmer in difficulty off Sidmouth Beach. Lifeboat proceeded to launch site where the casualty had been recovered to the beach by another swimmer. Lifeboat crew provided first aid treatment to the casualty and recovered the life buoy used in the rescue before standing down.



31/12/2015 15:40 Search

Sidmouth lifeboat was launched in rough weather to search for a missing bodyboarder, last seen 30 minutes before the callout, who had been heading east from the beach at the eastern end of Sidmouth seafront. The lifeboat was launched and searched close inshore between Sidmouth Beach and Salcombe mouth. Sea conditions were very challenging, with breaking waves well over 15 feet in height. Following conversations with other water users, the attending coastguard teams from

Callout Summary cont...

Sidmouth and Beer were able to account for everyone. The Lifeboat and Search & Rescue helicopter 106 completed a final search of the area and were stood down at 16:45.

This was the last callout to be helmed by Mark Roden, who retired in March after 12 years service.

14/02/16 Rescue - Budleigh Salterton

Sidmouth Lifeboat's first Callout of the year comes on Valentine's Day when the Lifeboat was tasked to rescue a dog who had fallen from the cliff top near Otterton Ledge. Fortunately the dog had survived the fall and was running around at the foot of the cliff which is only accessible by sea. The crew launched and crewman Guy Russell proceeded to swim through breaking waves 75 metres into the shore from the boat to collect the dog and return it to its owner across the fast flowing mouth of the River Otter.

This was new helmsman Guy Bennett's first callout in command of the boat, and also Ian Fletcher's first shout on the launch tractor.

A word from the Training Officer – Theo Burgess

From a training point of view it is always a challenge to maintain a balance of crew learning new skills and minimising the impact of skill fade across the existing crew. I've found it very rewarding seeing so many crew progressing through their relevant levels, and it is encouraging to see the more experienced crew providing the vital mentoring to those who are still learning the ropes. The external courses are of course a part of this ongoing training too and the organisation of these can be tricky as it requires our already very generous crew to donate more of their time to attend. We are fortunate enough to work with some fantastic external hosts such as Plymouth Sailing School, Total Safety Training, the RNLI College in Poole and many more.



The zenith of Lifeboat Crew training is attendance at the RNLI Search and Rescue Command Course. Three of our experienced crew; Theo Burgess, Guy Russell and Guy Bennett, give a little taster of what they went through...

The three of us set out for the RNLI college in Poole feeling relatively optimistic, with a flutter of uncertainty in there as well for good measure as we were very much going into the unknown, albeit with confidence as a trio. We arrived on the Sunday evening and were greeted by the immensely impressive building and organisation that is the RNLI training centre. Attending a course run by such a well known and highly respected organisation can appear slightly daunting to an Independent Lifeboat crew, especially as we had no idea what to expect or would be expected of us. Greeted at reception and briefed on the next day's activities there was just time for the three of us to share a meal and quick drink onsite before bed.



On waking the next day at 6am; standard for the 5 days of our course and a challenge to the students among us, we found that we were overlooking a beautiful harbour scene boasting numerous Lifeboats of all shapes and sizes, along with the other toys and props you would associate with training hundreds of crews each year for all manner of situations. It took something to not be overawed as we reported to our first briefing of the week - after a hearty breakfast of course. On entering our classroom we were greeted and welcomed

with open arms, and introduced to all of the RNLI training crews as the first independent station to attend the Search And Rescue Command course, SARCOM for short. Needless to say, the pressure was on!

Any feeling of apprehension or nerves however, was soon eradicated as we were made to feel so welcome by everyone we met. Independent or RNLI, we are all in the same business for the same reasons and the ethos of all members of both organizations is the same; a common unifying bond.



We learnt a great deal on the course, much of which is about command and leadership, not trying to do everything yourself but utilising your crew - your most valuable asset in an emergency. Our trainer, an experienced Helm named Dave, was a very useful

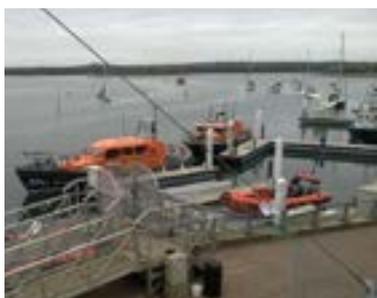
mentor throughout the training and took every opportunity to utilise his experience to enhance our learning and stretch our thinking.

We went through all manner of exercises from towing, veering down, pacing, helicopter exercises, night exercises and blind navigation in unfamiliar waters. We also completed a 'passout' exercise which the RNLI use to assess their helms prior to them being signed off. Although we have a similar setup at Sidmouth Lifeboat, it is naturally on a more local, informal scale.

The highlights of the week for the Sidmouth trio was definitely the time spent enhancing our skills as a crew and the confidence this gave us. The RNLI coaches and staff were excellent and the feedback they gave to us was of the highest regard. A true compliment to the training and calibre of crew here in Sidmouth.



Finally, on the last day of the week, three of our newer crew came to join the initial trio for a 'Capsize Drill' in the RNLI's indoor pool where they can simulate a capsize and the self righting procedure for the crew. The capsize simulation was at night (i.e. they turned the light out) and in a storm (including sound effects and waves). Despite this, the feedback from the assessors was simply 'To be fair guys, that's the best I have seen, well done'. A truly magical moment to end an incredibly inspiring week. The whole experience was enhanced by sharing stories and experiences with other crews from around the country, re-enforcing the reason why we do what we do.



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Here our new crew members tell us a little about themselves:

Andy Hardy - I am a retired Chartered Surveyor born in Derbyshire and have spent the last 33 years living and working in and around London. I have worked on projects including the rebuilding of Wembley Stadium and the 2012 Olympic Games venues in East London. I have been visiting East Devon with my family since 1987 and fell in love with the place. We've holidayed here every year since then.

Jim Brewster - I work remotely as a software engineer, writing animation systems for computer games. We moved down from Oxford about three years ago to be closer to my wife's family, to be closer to the sea and because it's a great environment to bring up our kids.

Anthony Martin - I am a Chiropodist and have lived in Sidmouth for 12 years, but recently moved back last year from university. Previously I was very into rugby and played for Sidmouth for several years. However, due to the number of injuries I was getting, I thought it was time to call it a day. That meant I had more time to do other things, and the Lifeboat seemed the ideal thing to get involved in.

Registered Charity Number: 1105914

The Person Behind the Drysuit...

As with previous newsletters, we try and find out a little more about what makes our crew members tick. Here Will Smithson reveals all.....



1. How long have you been with the Lifeboat?

About 2 1/2 years.

2. What job do you do with the Lifeboat?

Senior Crew.

3. What is your day-to-day job?

Head Gardener.

4. What is your favourite place in Sidmouth and why?

The beach! I just love being by the sea, it's why we moved here.

5. Where did you last go on holiday?

Crackington Haven, Cornwall.

6. What are you currently reading? Do you prefer Paper or Kindle?

Planting: A New Perspective. Definitely prefer paper!

7. What would be your ideal meal - starter, main & desert?

A good old Sunday Roast followed by Rhubarb or Gooseberry Crumble.

Adam Davis, the Lifeboat's paramedic, has been out and about in the community promoting First Aid...



Over the past 18 months I have been working with a town councillor with the view of Sidmouth, as a town, getting a community defibrillator. This has recently come to fruition with Sidmouth now having a public access defibrillator, which is located in the Market Place. By having this equipment it is bringing Sidmouth in to line with numerous places over the UK, such as train and bus stations, shopping centres and many towns/villages who also have public access defibrillators.

I shall soon be starting training sessions for people to attend so that they will feel better equipped to use the defibrillator should the need arise.

And one good turn leads to another...

During the process of helping to set up the community defibrillator I was approached to train members of Sidmouth Tennis, Cricket and Croquet club. They were donated a defibrillator by a local family after a family member suffered a cardiac arrest in the town. This person was lucky and was successfully resuscitated by members of the public and ambulance crew before being transferred to Royal Devon and Exeter Wonford Hospital. Now members of Sidmouth's TCCC will have the confidence and ability to deal with someone suffering a cardiac arrest.

Since June 2015 I have completed training sessions for these members, with around 35 people trained up to use their own defibrillator. During these sessions the club and their members gave me donations, which I have given to the lifeboat in turn. During 2015 these members have raised £260, which is going to be used to sponsor a lifejacket of a crew member of Sidmouth Lifeboat.



The Lifeboat is indebted to both crew and support team members. Roland Westlake has done a great job of coralling new Support Team members who dedicate considerable time raising money for the Lifeboat by manning the small but profitable shop. On the following pages a few new members explain why they decided to volunteer....

Chris Young



We moved to Sidmouth from Nottingham in July 2013 after I had retired from teaching and my role as Deputy Head Teacher in a Catholic Comprehensive School. I was also working as a School Inspector. My husband Mark had retired earlier and it was the right time for us to move. We had always wanted to live by the sea and had visited Sidmouth on many occasions for holidays and day trips; after all, Nottingham is about as far from the sea as you can get in England!! We admired the beauty of Sidmouth, its special charm as well as the Jurassic coastline but never thought we would ever be so lucky as to live here. I decided to volunteer as a Lifeboat Support Team member because I wanted to become involved in the local community and wanted to support the wonderful work they do. One day as we walked past the Lifeboat Station my son saw a notice asking for people to volunteer for the support team. It was his enthusiasm that made me follow up the plea for help. I had about three sessions training and here I am! I have worked here for just over a year and enjoy every time I am on duty. It's great fun working in the shop and boathouse, meeting visitors, locals and holidaymakers. The support team has many interesting members and is fabulous to work with. The crew-members are so brave and dedicated; they are a great group of young people. My husband Mark also volunteers at the Lifeboat helping with the collection boxes.

Brian Diffey

I joined the Support Team in February 2014 after speaking with a neighbour who was already a volunteer. Because of other commitments, I chose to support the regulars by filling in as and when required rather than take on a weekly slot. This can involve anything from several weeks without a 'call' to two duties in one week.

Apart from knowing that along with many other volunteers I am supporting a much-valued local service, I do enjoy the opportunity to meet and chat with visitors to Sidmouth not only from the UK but also from countries as far away as Australia. Sometimes it feels as if I'm working for the tourist information office when I get asked where to go for a good walk or where to get the best cream tea.

Whilst the primary purpose of the shop is to raise revenue that supports the running of the lifeboat, the fact that we are open all through the year sends out a message to tourists and locals alike that we are a vibrant service. That local people see the boathouse open every day is, I believe, an important factor in encouraging donations and legacies. During the winter months, it can sometimes be very quiet along the promenade and business can be slow, but being by the sea surrounded by beautiful countryside is never dull. A time to be reminded of the words of William Henry Davies:

*"What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare."*



The Person behind the Drysuit (cont)...

8. What do you do to get 'me time'?

Visit other gardens to get inspiration, watch the football or go for a run.

9. What is your pet hate?

Politicians.

10. What is your greatest extravagance?

My Ferrari...I don't think that I have any?!

11. What music do you like and what's your favourite band?

Fairly eclectic mix from Hip-Hop to Rock couldn't give you a real favourite.

12. If your ship was sinking, what famous/historical figures would you like to share a lifeboat with?

Captain James Cook and Joseph Banks.

Ever wondered how much is received in collection boxes placed on shop counters?

We now have 52 boxes in various locations in and around Sidmouth. The total raised through these boxes in 2015 was over £3500, with Roly's Fudge the star collector bringing in nearly £860. We are grateful to all the businesses which support us in this way.

Dates for the Diary:

**Sidmouth Sea Fest 2016 -
Saturday 7th May, 11am
to 5pm**

Highlights will include:

The Fish Kitchen with demonstrations from our local fish experts

Creativity On The Coast – arts and crafts inspired by the sea. Including gyotaku t-shirt and bag printing.

The Fish Hunt, The Fish Stocks, games, Workshops, and Storytelling. Jurassic Paddle Sports, Sidmouth Science Festival and The Gig Club will also be there!



**Folk Week - 30th Jul to
6th Aug**

Usual fun packed week - look out for details on our facebook page.

**Flag Day - Saturday 3rd
September**

Pride of Sidmouth will be on display in the Market Square to raise funds.

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Ron Fletcher

I have been a member of the Sidmouth Lifeboat Support Team for approximately 4 months. Having my son as a member of the crew I considered it a great way to support a worthwhile charity (whilst keeping an eye on my son to make sure he behaves!). My wife Lesley and I moved to Sidmouth in June 2015 having visited our son and family every few months over a period of 4 years. The attractions of Sidmouth and the surrounding area was an ideal place to live in retirement.



Previous to moving to Sidmouth and retirement I ran and owned a travel company in Medway, Kent for nearly 50 years. Whilst I enjoyed my time, and the perks of travel, the pace of building development and traffic conditions where we used to live was depressing. As all our family had moved away, as they inevitably do, we decided to follow the one that lived in the nicest area – Sidmouth, it was (excuse the Americanism), a 'No Brainer'.

Reading this and thinking of joining...this is what new crew member Jim Brewster has to say:

Don't be afraid to give it a go, you don't need to be super strong or super fit or the brain of Britain that's for sure. (*Editor - speak for yourself Jim!*) If you want to help out, want to learn a lot of new skills and you want to work with a great bunch of people give it a go.

I would like to become a Friend of Sidmouth Lifeboat.

I wish to pay £____ per month/year (£15 pa minimum) (delete as appropriate)
Tick here __ if you are a UK taxpayer and would like us to reclaim tax through Gift Aid (this costs you nothing)

To the Manager (Bank or Building Society): _____

Address: _____

Name of Account holder: _____

Account No.: _____ Sort Code: ____-____-____

Please pay Sidmouth Lifeboat direct debits from the account detailed here.

My address: _____ Postcode: _____

Email: _____ Phone number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Once completed, please return form to: Company Secretary - Kitrina Bishop c/o Sidmouth Lifeboat Station, The Esplanade, Sidmouth EX10 8BE or phone 01395 597263 for information.

Patron: Judi Spiers