



# SIDMOUTH LIFEBOAT

## Spring Newsletter 2018

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

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

### Editorial Comment:

Although my time with the lifeboat has been relatively short (4 years in May), I think this winter, or rather spring, has been pretty extreme; seeing ice form on the trailer as we were washing it down after an evening training exercise, and then a couple of weeks later recovering the boat in blizzard-like conditions - in March? Is this a sign of things to come? Worst of all is the way the beach changed completely after an unprecedented extended period of Easterlies. The beach shingle was so 'soft' it took some extreme tractor driving by Graham Trude to get the boat and rig off the beach. Conditions like these remind me that we are at the mercy of the weather and our environment, and we should never take it for granted, on or off-shore.



*Ian Fletcher*

## Masquerade Ball Success

The Victoria Hotel once again hosted the charity for its much-anticipated Winter Ball. Swapping their dry suits for tuxedos and gowns, the crew, along with the support team, trustees, family and friends, took part in a fun and entertaining evening. As well as welcoming back members from the Rover P4 Guild Devon, the Sidmouth Lifeboat were also delighted to see representatives from the Middle Bar Singers and Sidmouth Sailing Club attending the evening's events.

Senior Coxswain Guy Russell, spoke passionately about the commitment of everyone involved in the Lifeboat over its 50 year history. As well as recounting how far the Sidmouth Lifeboat service had come since its humble origins, he also paid thanks to those who are instrumental in its success; including former crew and committee members. He also thanked, on behalf of the charity, the incredible generosity of the community and individuals in their donations and bequests which has allowed the charity to go from strength to strength.



Sidmouth Independent Lifeboat would like to extend their thanks and gratitude to the local businesses who supported the event with some amazing raffle prizes which helped raise over £1300 on the night.



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

## Call-out Summary:

**25/10/17** - Sidmouth Lifeboat Crew were paged by Solent Coastguard just after 7pm to assist the police and Coastguard with a suspected missing person. The crew were tasked to perform close inshore search from big picket rock to the Salcombe mouth area providing an extensive search of the sea and shoreline while the coastguard land teams and police searched on land. The Lifeboat Crew used flares, searchlights and night sights to search the area.

The person in question was later found safe and well and the Lifeboat was stood down shortly after 9pm.

**17/01/18** - Our first callout of 2018 saw Sidmouth Lifeboat Crew paged by Solent Coastguard to a person in difficulty in the water off Seaton beach at 3:30pm. Lyme Regis Lifeboat and Beer Coastguard also tasked, however as the Lifeboat was leaving the boathouse they were stood down by Solent Coastguard as the person had made it ashore and they were safe and well.

## Trustee update

### The Lifeboat's Annual General Meeting was held on 22nd March

There were three main items discussed at the meeting:-

#### **Presentation and acceptance of Accounts for the year end 31 December 2017**

The Accounts were presented and accepted at the meeting; an extract of the Accounts and the Directors Annual Report was made available to all who attended. 2017 was a most unusual year in terms of the number of bequests and donations received, one of which (from Peter Truesdale) will establish a Capital Equipment Fund. This has already been put to use, to pay the deposit on a new Arctic 24, which should be delivered in early 2019. The Trustees will be considering ways in which the substantial funds can be used to develop the service provided by the organisation.

#### **Resignation and appointment of Trustees**

Naomi Cook and Roland Westlake, having served their 3 years, resigned as Trustees. However, both were happy to stand again so were re-appointed. Nominations had been sought but none received.

We were sorry to report that Keith Brodie had died in January 2018; his wisdom and humour will be sadly missed. He had suggested that we ask Andrew Dean (a sailor, Sidmouth resident and member of the Sidmouth RNLI) to join us as a new Trustee in his place. Andrew agreed and the Trustees approved his appointment. Since Phil is now Chairman (as well as being Operations Manager), Ian

Fletcher had been asked to be the Crew representative on the Board. Ian's appointment was confirmed. The full list of Trustees is now: Phil Shepperd (Chairman), John Fowler, Tom Griffiths, Naomi Cook, Roland Westlake, Chris Young, Ian Fletcher, Andrew Dean, Kitrina Bishop (Company Secretary).

#### **Presentation of awards**

Long Service Awards (10 years) were awarded to Alan Hemingway and Keith Bartles.

Sadly we also had to report the death of Philip Churchill in December 2017. His valuable contribution to Sidmouth Lifeboat has been noted in the Annual Report. We also wanted to record our thanks to Mark Wearing for his time, skills and commitment to Sidmouth Lifeboat, particular as our 'on-call' and 'go-to' mechanic.

The Chairman closed the meeting by thanking all volunteer members for their commitment and dedication to Sidmouth Lifeboat. Informal discussion afterwards considered plans for the future, and communication within the teams. Chris Young offered to liaise between the groups of volunteers to ensure everyone's views are heard. It is also hoped that younger versions of Sid and Alma could be found as both were looking rather tired from their long years of service!

An abbreviated or full copy of the accounts and a copy of the Minutes can be obtained by applying to the Company Secretary.

## Phil Shepperd tells us about the role of Ops Manager and what keeps him awake at night



Every lifeboat station has a Lifeboat Ops Manager, usually shortened to LOM and pronounced "lom". The role of the LOM is to support the coxswain in maintaining the operational readiness of the station. While the Coxswain's focus is keeping the boat and her crew at immediate readiness for sea, the LOM is more concerned with the behind-the-scenes activities. So my role sees me as the principle point of contact between Sidmouth Lifeboat and the Coastguard Operations Room in Hampshire. I am also the key link between the Operations Department and the Board of Trustees, who essentially keep the wider organisation running and the finances managed. One of the more "hands on" aspects of my role is making sure that the boats, and station, are kept compliant with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency Code of Practice, and to organise regular inspections, either internally by the "Responsible Person" or externally by an MCA Inspector.



When I joined Sidmouth Lifeboat as a trainee crew member 17 years ago, our greatest challenge was financial. Things were very tight and just keeping operational was a huge challenge. We are now in a more secure position, and can look to how we might work to improve sea safety in Sidmouth. We also have other challenges, some of which relate to launching a 2 ton lifeboat over a steep shingle beach around a hundred times a year. Keeping on top of the operational status of the launch tractor, and the "workability" of the beach itself which can get very steep and loose at times, are continual pressures. But the principle challenge is crew numbers.



At weekends we ask all our crew to operate a rota system, which is never easy but the only way that has been found to work. During the week, many of our crew work out of town - the time from being paged to being at sea is around 10 minutes - and so it falls to those left behind to keep us on call, which often involves considerable sacrifice in terms of family life and also the ability to earn a living. We are continually trying to recruit to keep on top of this, but it's always a struggle and a continuous worry for the leadership team.

### Call-outs continued:

**13/02/18** - Sidmouth lifeboat was paged shortly before our routine training evening by Solent Coastguard which meant the boat and crew were on the water in a matter of minutes. The lifeboat was tasked to investigate what had been reported as a drifting boat approximately 1 mile South East of Sidmouth. Upon arrival on scene the crew identified the object as a large buoy which had come adrift. The crew were able to get it aboard the lifeboat and recover it to Sidmouth lifeboat station before continuing with routine training.

**25/02/18** - Sidmouth lifeboat was tasked alongside Beer Coastguard teams just after 2pm for two people detached from their kayaks in the water off Jacobs Ladder beach. The Lifeboat launched and was quickly able to ascertain that these were not kayaks but large pieces of driftwood. The lifeboat then undertook a thorough search of the area to ensure that no persons were in the water and with nothing found were stood down by Solent Coastguard. The logs were retrieved from the water to ensure they presented no danger to other vessels.

## Beer Divers Training

Lifeboat crew need to be able to deal with a range of emergencies – from stricken vessels, swimmers in difficulty, to stranded animals. It is therefore important that the crew's training covers every eventually. One area where it is vital to understand the correct actions to take is in a diving incident. To help the crew gain an understanding of this complex area and how to rescue divers in difficulty, Tim Stevens from the local dive company Beer Dive and Guns, gave a fascinating insight into the sort of emergency scenarios that a Lifeboat crew might be called to involving divers. As well as learning the medical conditions that can result from diving and the best way to treat them, the crew were also shown the different types of diving equipment and how it is used.



## Former Chairman, John Fowler, shares his vision of the future of the lifeboat under new chairmanship

When I was initially made Chairman, there were valiant efforts being made to raise the public profile of Sidmouth Lifeboat. The finances were in sound order thanks to Philip Churchill, and in Simon Sparrow we had a senior cox'n who aspired to high standards of training and service.

At that time the most limiting factor was funding. Incoming monies were only just keeping up with running expenses, and reserve funds would have met less than half the cost of replacing all our equipment.

By implementing Philip's policies, the situation gradually improved; to the point today where, thanks mostly to the generosity of donors, and indeed the sterling efforts of the Support Crew in the shop, we are in a far healthier position. We are now able to project running costs in the future as well as having a dedicated equipment fund in order to keep up-to-date. This allows us the opportunity to re-examine our aims and objectives, and look at how we make best use of our resources.

Our primary objective is obviously to provide sea rescue. Where we could perhaps improve is on promoting sea safety and general public awareness.

I feel the time is now right to hand over the reins of Chairman to Phil Shepperd - a man with the experience of being an 'ex' senior coxswain, young enough to bring great enthusiasm, energy, and ideas

to the task; and old enough, through his understanding of business activities, to keep everyone's feet on the ground.

In addition, we have a well-run, enthusiastic Support Crew, a dedicated and disciplined board of Trustees; and last but by no means least, in Kitrina Bishop, an energetic, hard-working Company Secretary. I leave it to Phil and Guy Russell to propose the extension of our activities and I wish Sidmouth lifeboat a brilliant future.

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## Waitrose 'Green Money' scheme

A big thanks to all the Waitrose customers who chose Sidmouth Lifeboat as their beneficiary of the 'Green Money' token scheme at their sidmouth store in Jan this year. A fantastic £666 was donated, which will go towards essential kit.

Waitrose staff presented the cheque to the lifeboat crew at training.



## Phil Shepperd takes on the Chairman of the Trustees role

Three weeks ago I took over from John Fowler as Chair of the Trustees. John was "at the helm" for a decade, and I would like to thank him for the tremendous support he gave to me during my time as Coxswain, and more recently as LOM. As a former Launch Tractor driver John understood in detail what we do and how we do it, and was always on hand with valuable thoughts and a listening ear. I hope I can be as supportive to our present Coxswain, Guy Russell.

The main role of the Board of Trustees is to ensure that Sidmouth Lifeboat is correctly run. Much of that is delegated to the operations and support teams, but the buck stops with the Trustees and as a result our bi-monthly meetings usually run on late into the night. The Trustees are also responsible for overseeing the finances. Our financial situation improved greatly under John's stewardship - he would say that is by coincidence, but that's not the case - and it is my objective to make sure that that security remains



while at the same time continuing to see how we can maintain and improve our service to the residents and visitors of East Devon. John balanced these aims perfectly, so I have a tough act to follow. As I keep saying, "Watch this space". Looking at the make-up of the Board, I am confident that we have the right mix of front-line lifeboat, business and life experiences and we are in safe hands. Special mention has to go to our Company Secretary Kitrina Bishop, who is the person who really does keep us running. As LOM I have daily conversations and email exchanges with her, always a pleasure and always getting the job done and this excellent working relationship will of course continue with my new hat on.



## Simon Vacher, one of our trainee boat crew, updates us on his power level 2 boat training

A number of trainee crew members including myself and our youngest crew member, Maddie Todd, recently attended an RYA Powerboat 2 course at Plymouth Sailing School.

On our first day we learnt slow handling boat manoeuvres around a pontoon, then moved out to Plymouth Sound later in the day for faster course planning and MOB (Man Overboard) practice.



The second day of our course spectacularly coincided with 'The Beast from the East', which made training conditions on Plymouth Sound all the more realistic! We experienced a biting cold easterly wind and snow blizzards which drove visibility down to just a few hundred metres. Our dry-suits and woolly bears, which we'd borrowed from the boathouse back home, really made a difference and goes to show just how important decent sea-going kit and crew training is in our line of duty.



## Training update - by Theo Burgess

There has been a huge amount of training undertaken since I last wrote, both in external training courses and internal training with some interesting scenario-based sessions. The external courses were mostly undertaken through Plymouth Sailing School with whom we have an excellent and longstanding relationship.

New crew member Maddie Todd attended her Sea Survival course in November which involves learning techniques to ensure personal safety and ability in the event of an emergency at sea, as well as how to deploy life rafts and work as a team in the water to look after a casualty. This course is really beneficial for our crew because not only do they learn the techniques, but also an understanding of the training other sea-faring users would undertake. This gives us an insight to how they might then behave in an emergency.

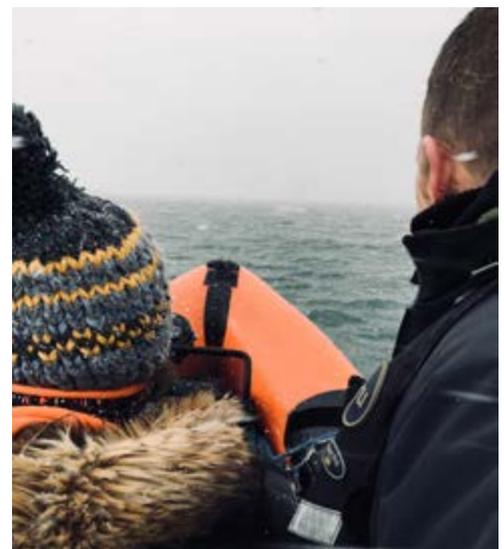
Maddy also undertook her VHF radio training, which involved practising her radio communications and learning the correct processes for sending messages such as a Mayday.

Other training also included a Powerboat level 2 course with both Maddie and Simon Vacher attending (in freezing conditions it must be said!). Operating in and around Plymouth Sound they learnt boat handling skills, leadership and team work - all keys skills for being a part of our organisation.

Alongside these training courses Maddie has also been able to progress through her Shore Crew training and onto her Boat Crew Modules. A great result in such a short period of time!

The internal training scenarios we have completed include numerous activities for swimming line rescues and casualty recoveries from the beach. As an example - we sent the boat out on a routine training exercise, and then surprised the crew by informing them that there is a 'for exercise purposes only' scenario that they need to come and deal with. This has been really beneficial in the upkeep of skills for the crew and also for the training of some of our newer helms and trainee crews.

Throughout the summer we will be completing more exercises and training scenarios and will aim to use some equipment from our local friends to bring in some kit which we don't always get to see and train with.



To find out more about becoming a Sidmouth lifeboat crew member, contact Guy Russell on [gjvrussell@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gjvrussell@yahoo.co.uk)

## Good bye and Good luck

Lisa-Marie Cooke joined the Lifeboat in June 2014 having recently moved into the area. Leaving a successful but hectic career stage managing in Ireland, Lisa decided to change career completely and re-train as a physiotherapist. One of the few female crew members, her enthusiasm and positive attitude has made a lasting impression on all of us. To her credit, she has organised some of the most successful social events the lifeboat has seen. She has also been instrumental in ensuring the Charity has embedded Safeguarding into its day to day activities. We wish Lisa all the best of luck for her future move to Gloucester.



Adam was one of the longest standing members of the crew, having been with the organisation over 12 years. As well as passing on his experience and skills to new boat crew members, he has been invaluable as our in-house paramedic, often providing exceptional care and first aid on the many shouts he has attended. Unfortunately for us, but fortunately for the pizza loving members of the region, Adam has devoted more and more time to his pizza business and hopes to move out of the valley and into a new home with his wife Tory. Adam, you will be sorely missed and we wish you good luck in your new venture.

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## Tractor News - by Mark Wearing

Since the start of the year the tractor has had several maintenance issues which has frustratingly caused it to come off service, something we always try and avoid if at all possible. Issues have included a leaking radiator, and a failure in the four-wheel drive. We only discovered this latter fault on a Tuesday evening practice when the tractor embedded itself into the shingle. It was through the unorthodox driving skills of Grahame Trude (not sure bunny-hopping is a recognised driving style) that we managed to get it off the beach at all! Fortunately Paul Bowler (our specialist mechanic) was able to rectify the problem and, after a call-out to recover a suspiciously kayak-looking log, the tractor was again put through its paces to ensure it was fully operational.

Despite the niggling issues with the tractor, it does perform extremely well and copes with our difficult launch site. We do put it through a very tough time and, as a Swedish tractor designed for logging operations, operating in semi-submersed sea conditions mechanical issues are to be expected.



## A personal perspective from our Senior Coxswain Guy Russell:

I have always felt that the best calling in life is to help someone, which is precisely why I joined up as crew nearly 10 years ago. I thought that my skill set, experience, fitness and knowledge of the sea would suit the role of a lifeboat volunteer.

It has been, and still is, the most rewarding part of my life and I am honoured to be part of such an awesome organisation and team.

I am very passionate about not only being a crew member - on call to rush out to sea when someone is in trouble - but also to educate people about the dangers of the sea. I hope to increase the number of talks and station visitors, to promote water safety but also encourage people to use the sea more.

We live in a beautiful part of the world and the sea is the best playground, it's definitely what shaped my life and made me who I am today. I'm very proud to be part of a lifeboat crew and I think all lifeboats and their volunteers, whether on the boat or on the shore, do an amazing job.

Thank you from me as senior coxswain to all the crew and support team for all their hard work and commitment.

## A new Crew member; Maddie Todd

I joined Sidmouth Lifeboat so I could spend more time out on the sea; I've always wanted to be outdoors as much as possible. As busy as my week days are I always try to give as much of my spare time as possible and now always carry my pager when I'm in the valley! My first few months of boat training have been intense, learning loads of new stuff about the boat and the role Sidmouth lifeboat plays in the community. I've really enjoyed going on courses around the county, seeing and learning how others cope with the day to day commitment that the lifeboat requires. I'm so pleased and proud to be a part of the lifeboat family and to give back to the town.



## We are always delighted to have more Support Team join the Lifeboat - Gaenor Wearing gives her view

I joined the Support Team last August. My husband Mark and I moved to Sidmouth nine years ago - Mark had just retired and he had approached the lifeboat team to see whether he could join as a crew member. Ever since then, he's been a tractor driver and mechanic at the station. I loved listening to his stories of lifeboat shouts and was envious of the passion and pride he had in being part of the lifeboat crew.

So, when it was my turn to retire last year, I headed straight down to the station to ask whether they needed any more support team volunteers. To my delight I was welcomed with open arms. I opted to be on the reserve team which means that I don't have a regular slot in the lifeboat shop but am available to cover sickness/holidays or any other absences for those who do. This leaves me free to deal with my other commitments at the moment.

When people retire, they almost all seem to miss being useful and the social interaction with work colleagues and I was no exception. I started my career in the Diplomatic Service and travelled the world and I love to socialise and talk! Being a Lifeboat Support Team member fulfils these gaps because you most certainly feel useful - the boat crew regularly express their appreciation of how much they depend on the money raised in the shop - and you get to meet people from all over the country, and indeed the world, when they come in to browse, chat

and make a purchase or two. Friends and other Support Team members also pop by so whether you're basking in the sunshine or shivering in the cold, there's nearly always someone to chat to. I feel hugely proud to wear the Sidmouth Lifeboat Support Team uniform and to be part of such an important and much-loved organisation in Sidmouth.

When I was on duty one morning during the recent snow, I debated whether it would be worth opening the shop as it was so bitterly cold. However, my conscience got the better of me so I decided to traipse down to the station, open the shop and see whether I got any customers. There appeared to be nobody about but as I stood there shivering and thinking of my nice warm house, a couple all the way from South Africa appeared. We had an interesting chat before they made purchases worth £30 - the most I have ever taken in one transaction! Feeling buoyant and that it had definitely been worth opening, I was standing in the entrance to the station in the sun when some friends stopped by to chat. Suddenly a large dollop of snow slid off the station roof and landed on my head! Seeing my friends laughing hysterically made it worth it - almost!



## 'Meet the Team' - One of the more senior crew on the Lifeboat, Guy Bennett takes the interview challenge



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

Go surfing, fishing and biking!

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

Into my trance music, especially Above and Beyond. Check them out if you haven't heard of them!

**1. How long have you been with the Lifeboat?**

8 years

**2. What job do you do with the Lifeboat?**

2nd Coxswain, Tractor Driver

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

Landscape Gardener

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

The seafront and Salcombe hill where I can watch the sun set.

**5. Where did you last go on holiday?**

Kefalonia in Greece last year!

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

Don't do enough reading but love reading a Lee Child - Jack Reacher book!

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

Calamari starter, pizza with anchovies, followed by chocolate mousse.

**10. What is your greatest extravagance?**

Buying another surfboard when I already own 5!

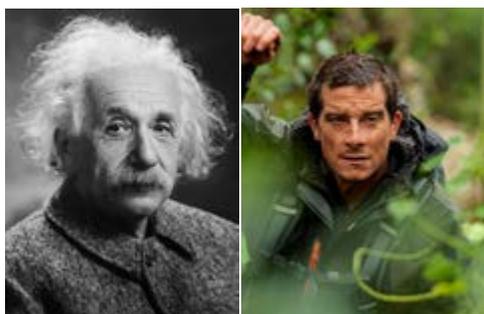


**11. What is your pet hate?**

Rainy days!!!

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

Einstein and Bear Grylls!



## Dates for the diary:

**Sat May 12th** - SeaFest on the Ham.

**Sun May 13th** - Sunday Service. Sidmouth Parish Church will be conducting a special 'Sea Farers' service to coincide with SeaFest. Sidmouth Lifeboat will be featured in the Service, as well as providing a display at the back of church afterwards to allow people to come and ask questions. Please come along and support this one-off event.

**Wed Sept 5th** - Flag Day. The boat will be in the Market Square all day (unless there is a shout which happened during our last Flag Day!) and the Support Team will cover other strategic points around town.

## A final farewell

It was with great sadness that we learned of the recent death of Philip Churchill. Philip was a man to whom the lifeboat owed a great deal and was held in great affection by all who knew him.

Philip joined the Board of Trustees in the winter of 2003 as Company Secretary and Treasurer. Using his extensive experience as a businessman, he applied his tried



and tested principles: to develop policies that are still applicable today and will aid us in planning for the future. He successfully achieved this by using his considerable charm and common sense.

During his tenure, a new lifeboat was purchased and commissioned, a launch tractor was installed, and the boathouse substantially extended and refurbished. By the time he retired, Sidmouth Lifeboat was on a sound financial footing thanks to Phil's steady hand on the helm.

We, Sidmouth Lifeboat, salute you Philip, your legacy and were honoured to provide the guard of honour at your funeral.

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: (CAPITALS) \_\_\_\_\_

Account No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Sort Code: \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_

Please make regular Standing Order payments to Sidmouth Lifeboat from this account as indicated.

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. Phone 01395 597263 or email [kitrina.bishop@live.com](mailto:kitrina.bishop@live.com) for information.