

# SHOUT OUT

August 2021

THE EXMOUTH LIFEBOAT SUPPORTERS NETWORK

## Exmouth Lifeboat Shouts:

See pages 2-5 for details of the busy summer the lifeboats have had.

## The Latest News from around the Station:

Light at the end of the tunnel / ramp. Is the end of this saga in sight? See page 5

## Personnel Changes

Some of the new additions and developments with our crew and management. See page 7-8

## Lifeboat Press Office:

Did you know that Exmouth Lifeboat Station is 6<sup>th</sup> in the league of all stations for their Social Media output. Read more about how you can help move us up the league. See page 8

## The Water Safety Team:

News from the team that help prevent the need for a lifeboat. See page 10

## RNLI Fundraising, Exmouth Lifeboat Shop, Visits Team

All the latest from these teams. See pages 9-11 for details.

**Obituaries** - see pages 11-13

**Anecdotes** - see pages 13-15

Welcome to the Summer edition of the newsletter for all our current and former supporters / helpers / crew / etc. of Exmouth Lifeboat Station

As we continue to adapt to our new environment, all our teams have developed the means to operate as fully as possible. It has been a fantastic year to see how all the parts of this operation have risen to the challenge of getting on with returning, as best as is appropriate, to offering all the elements of a successful Lifeboat Station. Shop, Tours, Fundraising, Water Safety, Events, Press, the Lifeboat crew, Shore crew, DLA's (Launching Authority Team), congratulations to all those involved. We have all coped remarkably well with the extremely busy beach this summer.

Do check out the Station Facebook page at

<https://www.facebook.com/ExmouthRNLI/> where there are many more reports on activity round the station and videos of exercises.



Exmouth RNLI crew and volunteers were saddened earlier this year to learn of the death of long-term Exmouth RNLI volunteer, Don Hodgkinson, on 12th June 2021, after a short illness. Don, 80, was a retired Herts Fire Brigade Officer, well known in Exmouth and a popular and respected volunteer at Exmouth RNLI, where he had performed exemplary service for over 24 years. Please turn to page 11 for the full obituary.

### *Ian Taylor*

#### *Exmouth Lifeboat Operations Manager*

First up, we have the narrative text that our DLA's (our Launching Authority team) write up following each "shout".

## EXMOUTH LIFEBOAT SHOUTS

01/05/2021 – 19:30

Requested to launch ILB by Solent Coastguard to distressed individual on Langstone Rock. Police talking to the man, Teignmouth CRT and Exmouth CRT at the scene. ILB launched and proceeded to Dawlish Warren.

11/05/2021 – 19:30

Lympstone Sailing Club safety boat crew reported a 38ft boat adrift in Exe estuary on a transit between Lympstone Sailing Club (LSC) and Starcross Yacht Club (SYC), assumed to be result of failed mooring tackle and with no one onboard. First report made went direct to Exmouth ALB known to be exercising. Duty Coxwain reported incident to NMOC and launched to take yacht under tow to alternative mooring. At approx 2000, ALB attended and took the craft undertow. The craft was subsequently secured on a Exeter City Council mooring and reported to Exeter Harbour Master the following morning.



21/05/2021 – 02:00

Coastguard requested D class launch to small motorboat aground on Shelly Bank. Information obtained from first respondent that one person a 70-years man was onboard, having gone to the boat in the early evening to secure it after it came off its mooring and stranded on the bank. Tide had risen and the man was now stuck on the boat, although he was not in immediate danger. Given time and prevailing conditions strong 30 kt wind and rain Coastguard requested we evacuate the stranded man. DLA authorised Immediate readiness page for ILB and ALB. Decision taken that given darkness and conditions in excess of normal operating conditions for ILB to take ALB to immediate readiness to be ready to support the ILB if necessary. ILB located the casualty vessel. Vessel hard aground in shallow water. Crew able to walk to vessel and evacuate the casualty uninjured but quite cold. Vessel secured to a nearby mooring.

30/05/2021 – 10:20

Casualty reported to the Coastguard that he had severed his big toe by dropping his sprayhood onto his toe. Requested help, he was singlehanded. ILB launched from station ramp and proceeded to casualty. Took boat under tow to dock entrance pontoon to hand casualty to ambulance crew and secure boat in marina before returning to station.



18/06/2021 – 12:07

Lifeboat requested to rescue crew of MV Angelena that had sunk 6 miles south of Budleigh Salterton at 12.07. The All-weather lifeboat was launched at 12.09 and made its way to the casualty. The Smit Cerne range boat was in the vicinity and also responded to the distress signal and was first on the scene. The single crew member was taken on board the Smit Cerne and then transferred to the Exmouth ALB when it arrived on scene at 12.50. There was no sign of the fishing boat seen except for

some debris and oil slicks on the surface. The ALB left the scene at 13.40 and arrived back at Exmouth marina with the casualty at 14.10. The casualty didn't need any medical treatment and made their own way ashore once back at the marina. The accident was described as caused by the boat taking unbalanced loads on board, becoming destabilised and toppling over.

16/06/2021 – 20:43

UK Coastguard paged Exmouth DLA with tasking request to aid immobilised 17ft sport boat with 3 persons on board. ILB launch authorised and ALB re-routed from exercise to SAR role. ILB was first on scene; no casualties or immediate risks to life identified. ALB arrived quickly thereafter and conducted tow.

18/06/2021 – 16:43

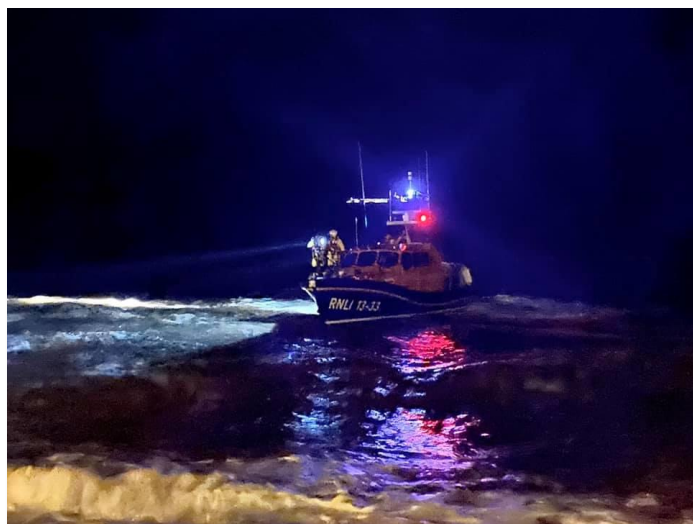
Lifeboat was tasked at 16:43 to attend to a Kite surfer that appeared in difficulty off Orcombe Point. The ILB was launched at 16:47 however the kite surfer was subsequently reported safe on shore before the ILB could reach the incident. The launch was cancelled at 16:57.

26/06/2021 – 21:56

Coastguard requested launch to a white dinghy drifting out to sea. It was pointed out that this had been reported to them by one of our crew who had told them that it was a Wayfarer dinghy which was frequently adrift and that it had no persons aboard. Coastguard continued to request the launch of ILB to be sure there were no persons aboard. Acceding to their request the ILB was launched, the dinghy secured and towed to shore.

27/06/21 – 09:57

UK Coastguard requested immediate launch of ILB to 2 kite surfers, in the water with control lines tied up on moored vessels and/or mooring buoys. ILB launched from ramp and arrived on scene to be advised other water users had recovered both kite surfers to the beach; one kite recovered and one remained wrapped around a moored yacht pulpit and guard rail. Advice given and ILB returned to station.



10/07/21 – 18:19

Two people and a dog trapped below cliffs beyond Orcombe Point. ILB launched and recovered casualties very quickly, returning them to Exmouth main beach.

17/07/2021 – 21:30

Coastguard request launch of ILB to broken down 3m RIB off Budleigh Salterton, assess the situation and take off any casualties who were unwell.

ILB launched and found one casualty, who was unable to sit or stand, barely conscious suffering from a heart condition and low pulse. The

casualty was taken aboard the ILB to be taken ashore to the beach at Budleigh Salterton. En route he was passing in and out of consciousness. An ambulance had been summoned by the Coastguard but for some reason was delayed for a long time, possibly as much as an hour. Fortunately, our HMO was walking along the beach and assumed responsibility for the casualty. Eventually the ambulance arrived, the correct degree of urgency had not been communicated to the ambulance service.

A tow for the casualty craft was arranged with another member of the lifeboat crew in his own boat.

18/07/2021

Exmouth ILB diverted from exercise to assist lifeguards and police with missing individual. Last reported location between Exmouth lifeboat station and Orcombe Point. Stood down after launch.

23/07/2021 – 23:30

Coastguard requested ILB to support Search and Rescue effort after the report of an ongoing evacuation of the Cafe on the Exe. ILB launched 2340. DLA outlined tasking request with Duty ALB Cox'n and agreed to launch ALB in support. Crew mustered but no ALB launch. Local reports taken to the effect that all staff and customers from the Cafe on the Exe were already landed at Exmouth Marina. This was not an emergency evacuation but reportedly routine disembarkation of customers and staff. Prevailing thundery squalls prompted passengers to wear lifejackets. 23:54 UK Coastguard cancelled launch.



24/07/2021 – 10:28

Coastguard requested immediate launch ILB to aid of swimmer reported by member of public to be in difficulty off beach at Dawlish Warren. ILB launched and quickly located swimmer - experienced open water swimmer found towing own inflatable marker. RNLI Lifeguards were aware of the swimmer but unaware of tasking. Advice given but no assistance provided. ILB then conducted local shore search to ensure no other swimmers were in difficulty before returning to station.

10/08/2021 – 16:46

A mother had reported that her son had gone missing whilst out snorkelling off Sandy Bay in Exmouth. The Coast Guard requested the launch of the ILB to search for the missing snorkeler. The ILB was launched at 16.49 and arrived on scene at 17.00, contact was made with the life guard team at Sandy Bay. The boy was found safe with his other parent by the lifeguard team.

12/08/2021 - 12:41

A yacht in the river spotted two people in the water but it was not possible for them to pull them from the water safely so pressed the DSC button on the vhf radio to make a mayday call. Two boats responded straight away Tudor Rose and the Exmouth water taxi. The MOC requested the immediate launch of the ILB and it processed to the scene.



A man and his 12-year-old grand-daughter were transferring from a tender to their boat when the girl fell backwards off the boat, knocking her grandfather into the water and capsizing their boat. Both were wearing life jackets but were swept a considerable distance upstream. Crew onboard the water taxi had recovered both casualties onto their vessel by the time the ILB had arrived, it was decided they would take them to Starcross with the ILB crew helping with the transfer to the awaiting ambulance. The ILB returned to the capsized boat, up righted it, and made it safe.



24/08/2021 - 21:10

Exmouth ILB was tasked to reports of persons cut off by the tide between Sandy Bay and Orcombe Point. The ILB launched and proceeded to scene where a crew member was put ashore to contact the first informant at South Beach Cafe. It was determined that the persons cut off by the tide were fishermen and a shout with good intent.

26/08/2021 – 21:43

Coastguard reported overdue yacht with one individual on board routed from Exe estuary to Teignmouth and returning early evening. Yachtsman spouse had reported to sailing club and the club suggested the yacht may be visible on their webcam moored in Powderham Pull, opposite Fishing & Cruising Club. ILB launched to investigate.

ILB arrived at vessel and ascertained that yachtsman had dropped tender outboard into water and had no means of communication. Casualty well and safely delivered to Starcross Pier at approximately 22:10. Subsequent discussions indicate outboard recovered but unserviceable. Yachtsman attempted to row but was unable to make headway so returned to vessel.

## RAMP ISSUES

Having written in several newsletters now about the ongoing difficulties resulting from the unexpected sand loss across our beach. We can now report that the ramp extension is imminent. The local council have approved the plans drawn up by the RNLI team responsible for the design and build of all lifeboat stations and ramps around the country. They have also granted permission for building works to start as soon as the summer season is finished, i.e. early September. However, the final piece of the jigsaw is approval from the Marine Management Organisation. The government office with responsibility to protect and enhance the marine environment. This could be granted within some weeks and mean that the works on the ramp extension can start later this year.



The ramp extension will continue straight on from the existing ramp until it meets the bedrock base up to 2 metres below the sand. The ramp incline will be increased with this new section so that the length onwards is increased by only c.10 metres. This will all be within the working capabilities of our launching equipment, and means that the ramp will again be an integral part of the launching options available to us when we look to launch the lifeboats at any state of tide and sea condition. As has always been the case, at the time of a launch, the helm or coxswain review the launch conditions and decide where and how to launch the lifeboat.

We will keep and maintain the mooring near the marina entrance after the ramp extension is completed. We need to ensure that we have options for the boat's recovery in whatever sea conditions and tide height. If recovery back onto the ramp is required now these environmental conditions are battling us, we can temporarily put it on the mooring until a safer recovery can get the boat back into the boathouse. Therefore, the boarding boat, used to get to and from the Shannon that you may have seen in the marina, will be kept for these occasions. The result is that we will have increased flexibility in launching and recovery of the lifeboat, whatever the conditions. In the lowest spring tide, we will not be trapped in the river, and at the highest spring tide, with a southerly or easterly storm blowing, we can still safely operate and launch and recover whenever we are required, and whatever the beach level does in the future.

It will be a massive relief to us all that we can get our Shannon class lifeboat back into the boathouse between shouts and exercises. We are very proud of it, and the maintenance and care of it is considerably more difficult when it is afloat for long periods.

## BOAT MAINTENANCE

In preparation for the ramp being operational again our Tractor and Carriage (SLARS) equipment will be undergoing some maintenance. As one of the first of the SLARS to be built she has been performing well for us, but whilst there is the opportunity without the Lifeboat on the carriage, the SLARS equipment will have a good service, beyond the normal planned maintenance that continues every week.

We also expect to send our Shannon – 13-03 - “R & J Welburn” back to Poole for some TLC in the near future. Particularly in getting her bottom scrubbed and cleaned, ready for operating from the SLARS again and recovering back to the boathouse. We will be using one of the relief lifeboats during that time.

## ONGOING ACTIVITY THROUGH THE SUMMER



We are very pleased with all our crews' efforts to develop and train our newer crew, and those older hands who progressed up the ladder. The work we put in earlier this year has meant that the busy summer season has gone well for us and we have coped with the large number of visitors to Exmouth.

The next step for lifeboat crew training is getting our shore teams back up to speed for the launch and recovery using the SLARS. The opportunities to train and develop new team members has been very limited whilst the beach level dropped away and prevented the launch of lifeboats from the ramp. We will be making specific efforts in this

area in the near future, to ensure we recover from any skill fade within the existing team, and to develop new shore crew as well.

Unfortunately, we were not able to hold our usual Open Day event this year. Although some stations around the coast have gone ahead with their events, and with some success. We had to weigh up the potential risks for us, as an operational station, with regards to what we could offer. The balance we considered was between the number of crew available at the proposed timing, given they also have their holidays planned throughout the summer. The ongoing risks of close contact with the public and its impact in requiring isolation for those having contact with a Covid infected individual. The fact that visits onto the Shannon class lifeboat would not be possible, and the on-going RNLI policy preventing public access to our boathouse. The nature of our typical Open Day event just didn't seem to work within these constraints. But we certainly plan to have a bigger and better Open Day next year – all being well.

**The volunteer crew of Exmouth RNLI All Weather Lifeboat put on a spectacular display for the RAF Red Arrows at Sidmouth.** (With

thanks to Morwenna Swan for images)



## PERSONNEL CHANGES

### RETURNING CREW

We are very pleased to welcome back to our crew member Tim Barnes. Earlier this year he took the difficult decision to stand down from the operational crew as his work commitments were proving too great and he felt he wasn't able to attend the ongoing training and be available for shouts as much as he would like. Fortunately he has resolved this and is back with us. All the crew are particularly pleased with this, given Tim runs the best Fish and Chip business in the country (officially), and (probably) the best in the world - **Krispies**

### MECHANIC / COXSWAIN

We have written a lot over several of these newsletters about the on-going maintenance and repair of both lifeboats, the SLARS, the vehicles and boarding boat used to get our crews to the launch and recovery sites. The building itself being maintained and operational. With the ramp out of action and the ALB on a mooring the workload had increased tremendously. The responsibility for all this is with Andy Stott our full time station mechanic. Despite the massively increased pressure on him to keep Exmouth Lifeboat Station fully operational, at all times, he has still found time to further develop as a volunteer crew and is now passed out as a coxswain. He joins the team of deputy coxswains supporting Steve Hockings Thompson as our station Coxswain. Well done to him, and also for making a bit of RNLI history. As his twin brother Roy is also a deputy coxswain. Twin brothers as coxswains, at the same station – they should make a film about it !

### NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE LIFEBOAT MANAGEMENT TEAM



In an appointment that was delayed by Covid-19, Ralf Pearson took on the role of Chair of Exmouth RNLI Lifeboat Management Group this week, taking over from Simon Davidson who had completed his three-year tenure.

The Lifeboat Management Group meets regularly to discuss all matters relating to the RNLI in Exmouth and comprises volunteers from Crew, Operations, Fundraising, Finance, Shop, Visits, Media, Sea Safety and Lifeguards. On handing over to Ralf, Simon said, “My 3 years as Chair has flown by so it is time for me to stand down. Covid meant that many of the fundraising activities that we had planned for last year, and now the current year, could not take place which was very disappointing for all concerned. I would like to thank everyone for everything that they do and I know that RNLI Exmouth will bounce back strongly. I am very pleased to be able to handover to Ralf as the new Chair and with his Marketing know-how – this will help develop and

maintain the high profile that the RNLI has in the local communities.”

Paying tribute to Simon's hard work during his period as Chair, Nigel Jones, RNLI Area Lifesaving Manager said, “Simon was an incredibly welcome addition to the team taking on the Chair role all that time ago, and I massively appreciated his input and the almost immediate positive impression he made with the team at Exmouth. The LMG has since gone from strength to strength under his guidance and

wise counsel, and I know the team has relished his Chairmanship. I would also thank Ralf for volunteering to take on this vital position and to wish him every success.”

Gemma Baker, RNLI Community Manager said, “I just want to thank Simon for all he has done for Exmouth RNLI over the last 3 years. The station, team and community engagement are in a fantastic position at the end of his time. We are looking forward to welcoming Ralf to the team and using his knowledge and passion to push Exmouth RNLI even further into the future.”

On taking on his new role, Ralf said, “I was inspired to join the team at Exmouth RNLI given my father’s lifetime in the merchant navy and his unwavering support for the cause.

The phenomenal work that volunteers at the Exmouth RNLI station do completely humbles me, from the frontline shop and tours teams, to fundraising, water safety and the operational crew, keeping our beaches safe, maintaining the boats, launching and going out to sea. The time given and level of commitment demonstrated by this team to keeping all those who venture to the beautiful coastline at Exmouth safe, is truly amazing.

As one of this 130 strong team, I look forward to being able to continue the great work that Simon has done, to grow Exmouth RNLI’s status as an integral member of the Exmouth community, while continuing to ensure we fulfill our primary mission of ‘Saving Lives at Sea’.

## LIFEBOAT PRESS OFFICE

At Exmouth RNLI we operate two separate social media provisions - a Facebook, Instagram and Twitter account for Exmouth RNLI Fundraising and similar accounts for Exmouth RNLI Operations. Few lifeboat stations have dedicated fundraising media like us, but most have social media for their operations side, and then often restricted to just Facebook.

Facebook, in particular, is equipped with algorithms that measure the success of its 'business' pages based on engagement with readers, quantity of posts, quality of articles and the number of readers who have expressed a special interest in the particular Facebook page, i.e. 'likes', 'shares' or 'follows'.

Of all social media types, Facebook is probably the best at providing insights into the performance of individual pages. As the majority of RNLI stations have dedicated Facebook pages as a means of publicity for their operations role, it's possible to view the activity of individual station accounts across the board to make direct comparison and judge success of similar Facebook pages performing like functions, e.g. RNLI Operations. This can be presented in the form of a league table based on page performance overall and these insights form part of my reports to the Lifeboat Management Group for each meeting.

When I first took on my role as Press Officer, we were 17th in the league table but, thanks to our Facebook page becoming more popular and providing regular, interesting and varied information, together with some great engagement from other volunteers at Exmouth and excellent images / video regularly provided by volunteers / crew for use on the site, we now stand at position 6. We would obviously like to overtake our colleagues at the higher-ranking stations, Swanage, Padstow, Newquay, Lizard, and Penlee, in a friendly manner!!

To further our success, I would ask anyone with a Facebook account to please 'like' our 'Exmouth RNLI' page and also to 'like' and 'share' each individual post with their colleagues, friends and family to increase our engagement. I aim to post one article a day on a variety of subjects from actual rescues, water safety, RNLI campaigns and promotions, photographs, videos, crew training and other items that I hope will provide anyone interested in the work of our volunteers here in Exmouth with a valuable source of current news and information.



Ensuring regular and meaningful social media publicity is just one part of a Lifeboat Press Officers Role to help raise awareness of the RNLI, both locally and nationally. This is effected through the promotion of lifesaving activity at the lifeboat station including newsworthy rescues carried out by the crew and other appropriate news and information.

## INTRODUCING OUR WATER SAFETY TEAM

Also operating from Exmouth Lifeboat Station is our Water Safety Team headed by Dave Littlefield and four Water Safety Advisors.

They work to advise all water users and the public who use our coastline on the important safety lessons that they should be considering when at coastal regions and open water. The Water Safety team are all First Aid Trained as well should the need arise.

Prevention is better than cure – the saying goes. So, the messages given out include the 'Float To Live' campaign, and the 'Respect The Water' work being carried out locally and nationally. Exmouth is our priority in improving Water Safety across all aspects of our use of the sea and river. Not just in promoting the message of using Lifeguarded Beaches.

The next event they are attending is on the 18th of September at Sidmouth Cricket Ground, it's a classic car display. There will be some 300-400 classic cars and the RNLI Volunteer Shop and the Water Safety team. Why not visit and see what we do and enjoy the vehicles of yesterday too.

## RNLI FUNDRAISING

The past 18 months have been very challenging for the Exmouth Fundraising and Events teams mainly due to the restrictions on gatherings during the COVID-19 situation but also with the loss of one of our stalwarts Don Hodgkinson in June 2021. Don was central to our fundraising activities for many years and he will be sadly missed by everyone.

A number of our key annual fundraising activities such as the RNLI Ball, the Exmouth Fireworks and the Open Day were cancelled which left a big hole in our fundraising income.

These have been difficult times but we have managed to deliver some marvellous achievements, with the most notable being Exmouth's Mayday activities.



During the month of May we held four fundraising activities that raised an amazing £6,081 and Exmouth were awarded with a commendation in the RNLI Mayday "Yellow Welly" awards for its contribution to the nationwide Mayday appeal.

On Saturday 15th crew members Dougie Wright & Geoff Scott ran a 72km Relay Run on the Exmouth seafront raising a fantastic sum of £4,163 between them.

On Sunday 23rd a number of staff from the Exmouth Tesco store ran a fun run on the Exmouth seafront and raised £380.

On Sunday 30th two young cousins; 3 year old Ivie Simkiss-Cowtan and 5 year old Isla Cowton ran a mile from the Boathouse to Orcombe Point and back and raised an incredible £1,102.

Throughout the month of May I ran at least one mile a day on the seafront and raised £436. Finally, at the end of July our collection in Exmouth raised more than £400.

We have had to be more creative in our fundraising and have introduced the cashless machines that now seem to be an accepted method of donating with so many people not carrying cash any longer.

We are very grateful to everyone who has been involved in all the Fundraising activities during this challenging period and we look forward with hope that the activities planned for the last few months of 2021 and during 2022 go ahead: -



- October - Beach Dog Walking
- November - Exmouth Fireworks
- December - Christmas Carol Service
- May - RNLI Ball
- August - Open Day
- Date TBC - RNLI Exmouth Exhibition

**Des White**  
**Chairman, Exmouth Fundraising Group**

## EXMOUTH LIFEBOAT SHOP

Hi, I'm Dave Britten and I took over as manager of the Exmouth RNLI shop from Pat Atkinson when we reopened after Covid lockdown on 12th April.

On reopening, we were very short of volunteers due to retirements and people self-isolating but following a concerted recruitment drive and easing of isolation restrictions, we are now up to full strength and recording record takings month on month.

We have recently embarked on a programme of streamlining the stock to maximise the sales of our most popular and best-selling items. This has also enabled us to zone the goods into specific areas which gives the customer a more enjoyable buying experience.

As the holiday season draws to a close and sales of beach items reduce, we are excited to see the sales of Christmas cards, diaries, calendars and gifts increasing to take their place.

There are plans to replace our shelving and generally spruce up the building in the near future, which will further improve the buying experience leading to increased sales.

My team and I are looking forward to the continuing success and future growth of our shop and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my team for their continued hard work and dedication. Without them none of this would be possible and I look forward to working with them in the future.

## EXMOUTH VISITS TEAM

The Visits Team we're allowed to take groups of up to 5 visitors into the boathouses from June 12th. These visitors were required to complete Track & Trace formalities and wear masks during their visit.

We also saw a resumption of bookings for group visits, with 4 school groups visiting in July. In September we have visiting groups from the Deaf Academy and Natural England Volunteering Support Team.

Our search for new volunteer guides has been successful and we have 3 joining the roster in September.

## EXMOUTH ANECDOTES

The following story was received from Brian Cole, who has a long association with the station and is a RNLI Life Governor:

"It will be 61 years ago, on 23rd August 1959, that I was 'rescued' by the Torbay Lifeboat. Together with three school friends we were celebrating leaving school to begin our careers by taking a caravan holiday at St, Mary's Bay Holiday camp. On the Sunday we were on the beach and needed to return to our caravan for lunch and my friends asked me which was the quickest way to get back, I replied, "up over the cliffs"! As I was the only person with cliff climbing experience (through membership of the Scouting movement as a Leader), I volunteered to see them safely to the top. They climbed ahead of me and arrived on the grass at the top of the cliff. I got to the top and touched the grass, at which time the cliff broke away and I fell just over 200 feet to land on my head on the rocks. The 'RNLI Princess Alexandra of Kent' launched from Torbay and picked me up from the rocks, transferring me to an Ambulance at Brixham; then taking me to Torbay hospital for an immediate operation. I had sustained a compressed fracture of the left-hand side of my skull – but apart from some other minor abrasions, I was unhurt!

Since that time, I have been a supporter of the RNLI holding many positions within the Exmouth Station. I arrived in Exmouth in 1976 and immediately became actively involved with the fundraising side. I was honoured by the RNLI at their last AGM to be held in The Barbican, London in 2015, with the award of the RNLI Gold Badge.

In May 2015 I was elected to the position of Exmouth Town Mayor and was subsequently re-elected to that position again in 2016. This necessitated me 'standing down' from my position as RNLI Speaker due to Civic Commitments. I really missed the opportunity to 'spread the RNLI story' but I will only accept jobs that I can give 100% commitment.

Normally, we would be visiting Torbay Station on or about 23rd August but I am afraid that this will not be possible this year. I have therefore decided to offer financial assistance to the Institution in recognition of my gratitude. I still maintain the Exmouth Lifeboat Station Records of activities and currently am entering items in volume 23 but have been unable to obtain access until the Station reopens. These are kept for public inspection on the first floor above the RNLI Shop."

Very best wishes

**Brian R. Cole**

**Life Governor, Membership Number 742381**

## Hedley's intrepid Adventure:

Eager to demonstrate to myself that I was still reasonably fit I decided long ago to reprise my sixtieth birthday triathlon for my seventieth birthday. I reasoned that the route had been improved (thanks to The Cabin Boy, Roger North, my good friend and race crew tactician) by completion of the award-winning River Exe Estuary Trail. Roger had built a bridge over the railway line at Powderham and completed the tarmac between Powderham Church and Turf Lock. This meant that I could use a road bike instead of my old mountain bike which I had to use in 2011 over the previously rough track. I also thought that I could add some funds to the Exmouth Lifeboat Station!

I asked a number of friends and colleagues if they would like to join me and eventually seven of us started from Shelley Beach on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. There was one rule – I would win!!

I had gathered three accomplished triathletes, two of whom had completed Ironman Triathlons (a 2.4-mile (3.86 km) swim, a 112-mile (180.25 km) bicycle ride and a marathon 26.22-mile (42.20 km) run) and a recent past Royal Navy/Royal Marines cycle sprint champion, my son and his girlfriend. One can understand why I had to have my one and only rule 😊



The course started with a swim from Shelley Beach to Dawlish Warren. In 2011 this was at high water neaps.

Unfortunately, this year it had to be at low water just before big spring tides. The currents were fierce! 34 minutes after low water there was about 5 minutes when the current was slack, outside those five minutes there was a danger of being



swept away. I therefore arranged for 5 kayaks and a RIB to accompany us. Unexpectedly Dave Preece popped out in his water taxi and 1303 R and J Welburn also came out to look after us, Thanks guys!

I was delighted to be the first to the beach in 8 minutes 42 seconds. It was the only time that I was genuinely first! Fortunately, only two swimmers needed assistance from the kayaks, and we all made it safely to the Warren.

The run along the Warren was expected to be relatively easy as it was just after low water. However, it wasn't long before Rob and I were left behind. After about half distance we climbed through yet another groyne to be greeted by a bunch of friendly grockles singing "Happy Birthday to You"! The leading runners had primed them that it was my birthday 😊. Much cheered we continued to the car park and the bikes kindly looked after by Caroline my wife.



Again, a long transition, this time because son Sandy and Emily had left their bikes elsewhere in the car park and were waiting for us at the exit whilst we

waited for them further into the car park. This doesn't happen at the Olympics either!

We arrived back at Shelley Beach in 1 hour 45 minutes, 3 minutes less than in 2011! The peloton had kindly looked after me all the way around and yes,





they let me win! Even the recent past cycle sprint champion allowed me to precede him onto the beach at Little Shelley.

After pictures and congratulations, mutual and from the adoring supporters, we retired to a local garden for tea and cake (some of the liquid refreshment was also fizzy 😊). A most enjoyable afternoon.



Many thanks to all our kayakers, RIB crew, David Preece and the ALB crew. Especial thanks to Caroline for taking 4 bikes to Dawlish Warren car park early enough to find a space and then waiting until our arrival (me a long way last). I'm delighted that my appeal raised £2,515 for our station.

**Hedley Saunders**  
RNLI Volunteer



## OBITUARIES

### PETER “SPUD” ROWSELL

1942-2021

One of Exmouth’s great characters - a skilled boatbuilder and sailor - has died after bravely fighting a degenerative disease.



Peter Nigel ‘Spud’ Rowsell was born in 1942. A war baby, he affectionately became Spud after his father remarked: “He’s very round - he looks like a potato.” The nickname stuck.

As a champion sailor Spud was invited to sail 16-foot skiffs in Australia, participated in Olympic selection trials in the Flying Dutchman class twice, in a Star boat once and in the Soling Class twice. Here he can be seen in the 1970’s winning the Merlin Rocket class race in Salcombe Week.

Spud was a member of the RNLI crew for 20 years and responded to many shouts. At the right here the picture shows Spud taken the day of the christening of City of Birmingham, with his crew from the earlier picture, Jon Turner.



As well as serving on the big boats he also became a helmsman of the Inshore Lifeboat. Operating with his brother Brian on the 29th of May 1966, the pair responded to a shout concerning swimmers in difficulty off Dawlish Warren. At the time the pair encountered heavy seas left over by an easterly gale and were thrown out of the IRB. Fortunately, they were able to haul themselves back in the boat and find three of the missing four swimmers who were returned to the paramedics on the beach. Setting out again to look for the fourth swimmer they were again struck by a big wave and tipped back into the sea. Another supreme effort was required to get back aboard following which they were stood down to recover. The RNLI recognised the bravery of the brothers and both were awarded a Vellum for courage and determination in completing their mission.

Spud's funeral was held on the 9th of July at Point in View Church. Prior to the service the cortege passed the new lifeboat station where the RNLI honoured the passing of a former crew member.

He will be sorely missed by his family and all those who knew him and shared his adventures.

## DON HODGKINSON 1941-2021

Exmouth RNLI crew and volunteers were saddened this week to learn of the death of long term Exmouth RNLI volunteer, Don Hodgkinson, on 12th June 2021, after a short illness.

Don, 80, was a retired Herts Fire Brigade Officer, well known in Exmouth and a popular and respected volunteer at Exmouth RNLI, where he had performed exemplary service for over 24 years.

He started as a volunteer Box Secretary in June 1998, Deputy Launch Authority and Sea Safety Advisor from June 2003 until May 2011, Exmouth RNLI Boathouse Manager from 2011 to the present and became Chair of the Fundraising Team in 2007 – continuing for 11 years.



In 2018 he received his RNLI Badge and Certificate for completing 20 years exemplary service with the Lifesaving Charity from the then Chairman of the RNLI, Charles Hunter-Pease, “in recognition of his invaluable and loyal support to the Exmouth Lifeboat Fundraising Team. His dedicated volunteering and fundraising efforts as Chair, will help the RNLI to continue to save lives at sea.”

Past and present volunteers at Exmouth Lifeboat Station paid their respects to Don.

Past Exmouth RNLI Lifeboat Operations Manager, Kevin Riley, said, “There are many things and lots of individual things to say about Don and his dedication to the RNLI, which went way beyond the roles he carried out with dedication, compassion and understanding, but his love for the RNLI and ‘His Crew’ was second to none.”

August 2021

“Don was the quiet (well sometimes!) fundraiser, but many people will not know the other roles he carried out, taking him past the realms of just being a volunteer. How many crew members, fundraisers and supporters knew that he served the RNLI as a Box Collector, Sea Safety Advisor, Station Manager and very important to me as the Ops Manager served as a Deputy Launching Authority.”

“They were the Official roles, but in his spare time he was not slow in coming forward in the very mundane menial tasks around the station. From keeping the galley, to the toilets and many other jobs around the station in keeping it pristine for the public, crew, visitors and RNLI inspections.”

“He was able to speak his mind when required and could also steer everyone in the station onto the right course by his example and dedication, thus we all had to admit, begrudgingly at times, that he led the way by lessons learned and experience. This made him undoubtably the best fundraiser the station has known, not just as the ‘Box Collector’ as he must have raised tens of thousands of pounds in that role alone.”

“His efforts in the fundraising appeal for what was to be the new Lifeboat Station were an example to many locally, but he had contacts, donors and supporters both nationally and internationally. It still has me puzzled to this day how he reached so many and raised so much for the station.”

“Finally, I will say this, generally the public and supporters recognise the crew as the ‘Hero’s’ who save lives and risk their own. But Don was a hero to us. Exmouth RNLI and Exmouth and its thousands of visitors will, I am sure, acknowledge Don as the very quiet and unrecognised Hero of Exmouth in his own right. With all that he has done to leave a legacy unknown to many for silently raising the funds that allow the crew to ‘Save Lives at Sea.’”

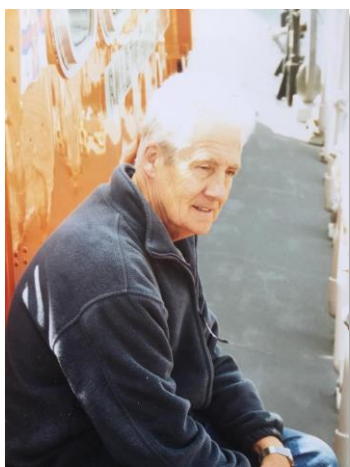
“Rest in Peace Don as your Legacy lives on and will be cherished by many.”

Current Lifeboat Operations Manager, Ian Taylor, said “Don was always the friendly face at the station, welcoming newcomers, and tirelessly working away at the fundraising to keep the station operational. He would be the one you could go to with just about any query you had and he would say ‘leave it with me – I’ll sort it out.’”

“Don and Sue, his late partner, were very regularly selling jams and cakes at every opportunity on top of his numerous fundraising activities. He was even getting new collection boxes placed from his sick bed in the last few weeks. They will be best remembered in many of the crew’s minds and stomachs for the copious quantities of the best homemade sausage rolls you could find, and these were donated to many a lifeboat exercise.”

“He will be sorely missed by all the crew and all he came into contact within the wider RNLI team, and also the wives, husbands and partners of us all who were given the welcome cheer.”

“To the grandfather of Exmouth Lifeboat Station – Thank you and Rest in Peace.”



Deputy Coxswain and Full Time Exmouth RNLI Mechanic, Andy Stott, said “In my 24 years at station I’ve never come across a person that is more dedicated to the RNLI than Don, over the years he has held many roles from Chair of Fundraising, Box Collector, Deputy Launch Authority and Boathouse Manager.”

“Over the last 4 years since I took on the role as station mechanic Don has always been there in the background making sure the station is fully stocked with food, cakes, drinks and his renowned sausage rolls so that when we got back from a shout the crew were looked after.”

“Don is going to be missed by so many. Fair winds and following seas my friend, I’m going to miss you.”