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### MEMBER

## SOCIAL HISTORY

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# 1. The Lifeboat History of Worthing



The maritime history of Worthing reflects the heroism of the town's local fishermen and is a unique part of our heritage which surprisingly is not well known but which more than deserves recognition in this archive. There is a long tradition of fishing in the town and there were several early coastguard stations dating from circa 1809, but it is the bravery of the fisherman which really stands out and captures the imagination

Incredibly, the local fishermen performed the role of voluntary rescuers in the absence of a town Lifeboat Service. From 1832 to

1865 when the RNLi took over, the brave fishermen carried out many heroic rescues, going to sea in an open boat. The wives, families and volunteers often waited in dread when the lifeboat was launched, not knowing if their loved ones would return.

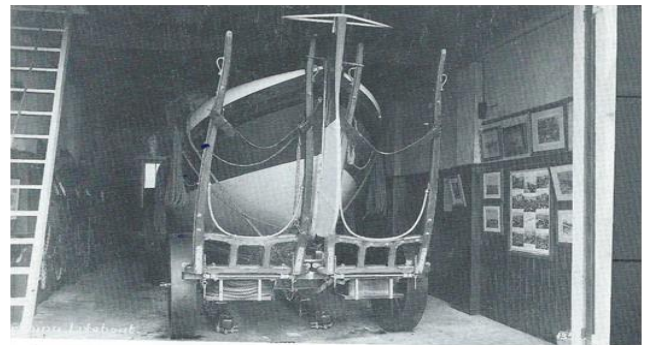
Their heroism is exemplified by the tragedy of the "Lallah Rookh" disaster of November 1850. It is perhaps Worthing's best known maritime tragedy. During a violent storm the barque "Lallah Rookh" was in severe distress. The fishermen launched an open boat from the beach but tragically before it could reach the crew of the stricken vessel the life boat capsized. All eleven crewmen perished. Most were family men and left widows with young children. A fund was set up by local dignitaries and raised £5000 for the families of these heroic men. There is a Memorial at St Mary's Church, Broadwater.



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The Richard Coleman funeral and crowd on the seafront road, and ready for action. Taken by Fry of Brighton for publication in the Navy and Army Illustrated, this photograph clearly shows the little Victorian lifeboat house, with its turret window open, nesting between two attractive four-storey 19th century terraced dwellings.



A glimpse through the open doors of Worthing's lifeboat house, exposing the Richard Coleman.



The Richard Coleman and his heavy transporting carriage on the sands, preparing to launch at low tide.

The launches were often attended by large crowds when news of a vessel in trouble circulated through the town. Reference material shows that the Worthing and West Sussex coastline experiences difficult currents and sudden shifts in the seabed resulting in shipwrecks and many similar incidents. This makes the heroism of these local fishermen and crews even more poignant. The lifeboats were taken to the launching site east of Worthing Pier by a team of six strong horses and launched from the beach.

A new boat was commissioned by the RNLI in 1887 and 1901, \* Various commemorations have been held to remember the "Lalla Rookh" disaster as well as the shipwrecks of the Ophir off the coast of East Worthing and the Capella. The India is remembered annually by a charity event where oranges and lemons are thrown in a friendly charitable competition. These fruits were the original cargo of the India.

The heroism of these early fishermen and lifeboat crews is a moving and important part of Worthing's maritime history which should be honoured and remembered.



Second Coxswain Bill Blann (left) and Coxswain Harry Marshall in the Worthing lifeboat Richard Coleman, 1902.

**DEDICATION OF NEW  
BEACH GARDEN AT  
SPLASH POINT TO  
WORTHING LIFEBOAT  
CREWS & FISHERMEN**

The final phase of the Splash Point Regeneration Project has now been completed with the opening of the new Beach Garden to the east of Splash Point.

The Worthing Society proposed that the garden be dedicated to the RNLI in recognition of their significant role in saving so many lives. The bravery and dedication of Worthing's lifeboat crews between 1850 and 1931 and the fishermen is remembered on a slate memorial in the garden.

The new garden on the beach was designed by Len Sephton and created by Worthing Borough Council's Parks Department. The garden has been dedicated to the RNLI and the significant role the organisation has played in saving so many lives in our area.

On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2012 Sir Peter Bottomley MP dedicated the garden to the memory of the lifeboat crews and fishermen. Peter Huxtable MBE, Coxswain of the Shoreham Lifeboat from 1991 to 2011, replied on behalf of the RNLI.



**IN RECOGNITION OF THE  
BRAVERY OF THE  
WORTHING LIFEBOATMEN  
1853 - 1930**

**SIGNIFICANT RESCUES**

- 1868 Lifeboat saved the distressed brigantine *Hilena* and its 6 crew.
- 1883 Lifeboat saved 4 lives in the loss of the schooner *Theresa*
- 1888 Lifeboat saved 10 in the grounding of the brig *Albert H Locke*
- 1891 Double rescue saved 7 from schooner *Kang Karl* and 7 from barque *Caj*
- 1895 Lifeboat saved French captain from foundering brigantine *Hulcyon*
- 1896 2 Crew of *Ophir* rescued by breeches buoy, 5 saved from *Flora Emily*
- 1905 Swedish *Liburna* foundered - 2 lifeboats help.
- 1912 3 lifeboats + tug rescued 14 Italian sailors from *Andrac*
- 1915 Lifeboat capsized twice - crewman drowned
- 1920 2 lifeboat services, the last one to a big sailing ship and another to the motor-boat *Shamrock II* saving 2 lives
- 1928 Manpowered lifeboat rescued broken-down motor yacht saving 3 lives

**WORTHING LIFEBOAT COXSAINS**

1853 - 1866	George (Johnny) Tyler Parkes, Tom Blann
1866 - 1883	Alfred Dean
1883 - 1898	Charles Lee
1898 - 1919	Harry Marshall
1919 - 1930	William (Bill) Blann

**WORTHING'S SUCCESSION OF 4 LIFEBOATS (rowing & sailing)**

1 <sup>st</sup> boat	1853 - 1866	Unnamed boat (Supported by local subscript)
2 <sup>nd</sup> boat	1866 - 1880	<i>The Jane</i> (RNLI)
3 <sup>rd</sup> boat	1880 - 1887	Renamed <i>the Henry Harris</i> (RNLI)
3 <sup>rd</sup> boat	1887 - 1901	<i>The Henry Harris</i> (RNLI)
4 <sup>th</sup> boat	1901 - 1930	<i>The Richard Coleman</i> (RNLI)

**Go to Rob Blann's excellent web site (see link below), for the expanded TIMELINE of Worthing's brave lifeboatmen and their deeds in detail, and find comprehensive volumes on the town's close-knit maritime communities of the Victorian, Edwardian and Vintage eras :**

<http://www.worthing-lifeboat-town.com/>

and the following pages from Freddie Feest's Web Site on the History of Worthing :

[Shipwrecks](#)

[Heroes of the Sea](#)

**Susan Belton**

**Worthing Society Chairman**

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## 2. VILLAGE PUMPS of WORTHING

The Egyptians invented the shadoof (irrigation tool) to raise water, which dates from 2000 BC. They used a long suspended rod with a bucket at one end and a weight at the other. The main village pump today dates from 200 BC invented by the Greeks. There is evidence that a pump using a plunger or piston in a barrel or cylinder existed in Greece at this period.

These village pumps are hand operating water pumps, which come in all shapes and sizes. They were built over wells and other water sources to transfer water through a pipe or spout from its source to another location or container such as a trough or bucket. Romans had wooden pumps, but most of these are now gone.

Every place would have had a pump in the town square or on the village green. Towns had one in almost every street usually at the end and several shops had one in their yard. Some were in back gardens or in homes. As well as obtaining water from streams, ponds and wells, this was the only way, which people used to get their water before mains came. A number of village pumps were used for cattle and horses along old trackways. They had a trough below them.

The main reason for the decline of the village pump was the cholera epidemics of the 1850s. The most famous case was the Broad Street pump in Soho, London. A cholera epidemic occurred in Soho in 1854 and the pump in Broad Street (now Broadwick Street) was taken out of action. Dr John Snow took the handle off the pump, which stopped the cholera. A red granite kerbstone outside the John Snow pub with a plaque marks its site. There is an information board in the pub.

The vast majority of the village pumps in Britain today are the cast iron pumps dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the village pumps are in their original position, but a number are not. A lot of them around today are ones, which people bought as a collector's item and some are modern, which can be bought in garden centres. The author has three old village pumps. Many are still to be seen today on village greens, under shelters, over wells, in streets, gardens and outside pubs. Good examples in Sussex are in Lewes, Newick, Birdham, South Harting and Ringmer.

A few existed in Worthing. A stone pump was erected over a well in South Street in 1809. This was removed in 1854 and the site is now outside Beales. Another was at the end of the High Street near the Colonnade and the existing village pump in Warwick Lane is not in its original position. There are a few in the Worthing area at Broadwater, West Tarring, Ferring, Findon and Lancing. The village pump photographs below were taken by author.



Worthing.



West Tarring.



Ferring.



Findon.



Broadwater.



Lancing.

**Alex Vincent**  
**Worthing Society Member**

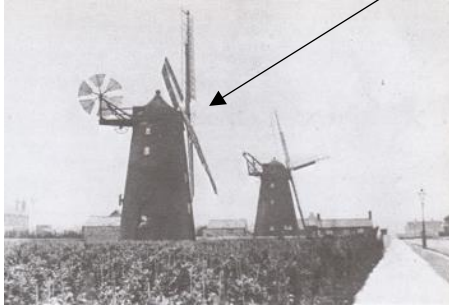
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### 3. NAVARINO ROAD WORTHING -- What's in a name?

(N.B. Click on images to enlarge)



Between 1808 & 1813 an octagonal red brick tower windmill (known as a Smock mill) was built for Richard Hyde on a site to the west of Ham road, the Millers cottage still stands in Ham road.



A second mill was built for local millwright James Shepherd between 1827 & 1831 and was a 5 storied tower, a modern design for those times.

In 1850 the mills were purchased by local merchant George Newlands and they passed to his son Robert upon his death in 1863.

In 1887 the mills together with business premises at 37 High street passed to William Barker who continued to operate the mills until his death in 1896.

The windmills fell into disrepair and were eventually demolished between 1909 & 1911.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> mill mentioned above was named Navarino Mill, after the battle of Navarino which took place on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1827. Eventually both mills adopted the name.

The battle was fought during the Greek war of Independence between a combined British, French & Greek fleet commanded by Admiral Sir Edward Codrington in which the Turkish and Egyptian fleets were destroyed off the bay of Navarino in Greece.

Admiral Sir Edward Codrington who also fought at the battle of Trafalgar was relieved of command in 1828 and lived for some time in Western road Brighton, and a Brighton Society blue plaque celebrates this.

Once the windmills were demolished the whole area which included additional mills and a brickworks were gradually sold off and the layout we see today was created.

Church walk which connects Ham road to St Georges church was built and Navarino road was constructed on the site of a footpath which gave access to the market gardens that existed around the mills.



Church Walk in 1895



Church Walk today



Navarino Rd in 1910



Navarino Rd. in 1944

Navarino road first appears on the Ordnance Survey map of 1896 and house building commenced at the turn of the century.

**David Pateman**

**Worthing Society Member**

#### References:

Windmills of Sussex by Martin Brunnarius published in 1979 WLS 62145 - The Windmill picture WLS P 004312

History of the County of Sussex Volume 6 part 1 by Bramber Rape pp109-114 published 1980. [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk)

National Maritime Museum Archive.

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