



## SAVING LIVES AT SEA – PAST & PRESENT

### RNLI 200 Bicentenary

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution proudly celebrates its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024. Sir William Hillary's vision for a service dedicated to saving lives at sea became a reality in Bishopsgate's trendy London Tavern on 4 March 1824.

Originally called the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck, its name changed to the National Lifeboat Institution in 1854 until it was granted a Royal Charter in 1860 when it became the RNLI.

Grace Darling became a national heroine after risking her life to save the stranded survivors of the wrecked steamship *Forfarshire* in 1838.

RNLI Inspector, Captain Ward, broke new ground in lifesaving in 1854 with his new design of cork lifejacket.

During World War 11, despite having to contend with extremely dangerous conditions, RNLI lifeboat crews saved 6,376 lives between 1939 and 1945.

Based in Poole, it has 238 lifeboat stations and operates 444 lifeboats. Covering many thousands of miles around the often treacherous coasts of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man, as well as some inland waterways.

From 2001, RNLI lifeguards started patrolling beaches, now an essential part of the seamless rescue service from the beach to the open sea, with lifeguards watching over 242 beaches.

The Institution also operates Flood Rescue Teams nationally and internationally, prepared to travel to emergencies overseas at short notice.

Considerable effort is put into training and education by the Institution, particularly for young people; more than 6,000 children a week are spoken to by education volunteers about sea and beach safety, and over 800 children a week receive training.

More than 144,000 lives have been saved since 1824, at a cost of more than 600 lives lost in service.

Worthing's lifeboat powered by sail and oars was superseded when Shoreham's motor lifeboat took over, and Worthing lifeboat station closed in 1930. The town's RNLI fund-raising branch, a successful contributor towards central funding, continued into the 1990s before it disbanded. Worthing crews and the fund-raising branch were both held in high esteem by the Institution. The Worthing station often being selected for special trials and occasions.

As a permanent tribute, Worthing's heroic lifeboatmen are listed on the information board in their dedicated small memorial garden on the beach near Splash Point.

To this day, the RNLI has never received any government funding whatsoever, the charity relies entirely upon the generosity of the public.

Rob Blann