

DART TALES


 Lifeboats

NEWS FROM THE RNLI LIFEBOAT TEAM IN DARTMOUTH

The RNLI crew at Dart will begin training in a B class Atlantic 75 Inshore Lifeboat in September 2018. This training will form the first phase of a two year trial to assess the capability and suitability of operating a B Class lifeboat from Dart Lifeboat Station alongside the existing D Class.

It is proposed that the Lifeboat used for the trial will be the Atlantic 75 that until recently served neighbouring Salcombe Lifeboat Station before it was replaced in January by their new Atlantic 85, Gladys Hilda Mustoe.

The Atlantic 75 will be berthed on an AquaDock on the river, which is a floating pontoon and has drive-on docking. The Aqua Dock was previously used by Loch Ness RNLI lifeboat and will come to the Dart for the duration of the trial. The first Loch Ness RNLI station opened shortly after the Dart station became operational in November 2007. They recently opened a new lifeboat station and, as in Salcombe, moved up from an Atlantic 75 to an Atlantic 85. Their new lifeboat was named in May this year. Dennis Tongue, who lived in Exeter, bequeathed money to purchase four B class lifeboats which also included the Atlantic 85 stationed in Looe.

In June, three of the Dart helmsmen travelled up for a day of intensive training at the RNLI College in Poole. Chris Tracey, Rich Eggleton and Kevin Murphy were met by Will Ellwood, their Divisional Assessor Trainer, for a briefing over breakfast before spending the day at sea in two Atlantic 75s from the relief fleet. Many of the proficiencies required on the D class lifeboat used by RNLI Dart are immediately transferable to the larger craft. Anchoring and setting up alongside and stern tows, however, are different as is the manoeuvre of veering where the lifeboat is anchored by the bow and reverses under power to a fixed point, usually to rescue a casualty from a rock or their stranded boat.

'It was a nice warm day although quite choppy at sea and it was a pleasure to learn how the boat handled



under the power of the two 75Hp outboards,' said Chris. 'We travelled for 10 minutes at 34 knots. If we had been in a D class we would have had to slow to 15 knots to protect the kneeling crew and taken twice the time.'

Tom Shanley, a probationer on the Dart lifeboat crew, has recently been on his Sea Survival course at Poole and was taught the capsizing drill on a D class and an Atlantic in the training pool at the RNLI College. The lifeboat, with the crew in their seats, is capsized using straps from a crane. Unlike being in a D class capsized the crew remain within the boat. Once all the crew are accounted for they go out, one at a time, and work their way to the stern of the boat. The two crew members then, holding onto a rope quoit, swim away from the boat. The helm releases a sea anchor so that the lifeboat remains in position and then pulls a toggle to activate the release of air to fill the inflation bag carried on the A frame over the stern. The helm swims away, also holding a rope, as the boat rights itself. There is a second canister to be released if, for any reason, the first does not work.

The crew climb back in over the stern beside the engines, reset the electrics which have been automatically disabled and restart the immersion proofed engines. The righting bag remains inflated and



the lifeboat is fully operational in that state.

Chris Tracey and Rich Eggleton are working towards being passed out as operationally proficient in July. This means that they will be able to assist with the training of the remaining

Dart crew with afloat training in the local area. Further training days for helms are scheduled at Poole in the lead up to September. Once enough of the helms and crew have been passed out as operationally proficient, the Atlantic 75 will be placed on operational service alongside the D Class.

Film taken by Tom Shanley of a B class righting assessment in the training pool, from above water and below, can be seen on the www.dartlifeboat.org.uk website where all descriptions of the station's launches and events can be found.

John Fenton, RNLI Dart Lifeboat Press Officer.

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