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DART TALES


Lifeboats

NEWS FROM THE RNLI LIFEBOAT TEAM IN DARTMOUTH

RNLI DART FEATURED IN THE BBC2 SERIES 'SAVING LIVES AT SEA'

In March this year, a 20ft humpback whale, more commonly seen off the coast of New England, followed the herring shoals and came in close to the South Devon shore. She continued feeding for over two weeks but became tangled in whelk pot lines a quarter of a mile off Blackpool Sands on two separate occasions.

Two divers from the British Divers Marine Life Rescue organisation came to the beach and the RNLI Dart D class lifeboat and the RNLI Salcombe Tamar class lifeboat launched to assist them in releasing the whale. Dart lifeboat crewmen, Yorkie Lomas and Mark Conroy, filmed the incidents in HD using a waterproof Pentax camera, usually used for still photographs. These were edited to make the videos which can be seen on Launches 281 and 284 on the www.dartlifeboat.org.uk web site. The entire footage was then given to Blast Films! to make the feature in Episode 5 of the current BBC2 series 'Saving Lives at Sea' showing the whale's rescues.

The whole RNLI Dart Operations team gathered in the lifeboat station to watch the episode on TV and this was followed by a live interview on Facebook with the crews involved. Two RNLI Press officers from Poole and Saltash fielded the questions as they came in.

The crew members interviewed, from left to right, were; Katy Locke, Waitress, Kevin Murphy, Carpenter, Jamie Mathys, Consulting Engineer, Chris Tracey, small boat skipper.



What motivates you? CT. It is a privilege. You work with a great bunch of guys. There is the camaraderie, not just at our station but between all the stations.

JM. It is an honour. If you have a certain skill set it is nice to help when people need you.

What was your most dangerous shout? CT. It involved a cow!

Has the weather ever been too bad to launch?

KM. Not yet. It is safer in the harbour and up river.

JM. On Sunday night at 10.30pm we were doing a shoreline search in poor visibility and rough seas. We were approaching the limits of our operational capabilities. It makes you realise how much you rely on your training.

What does a whale sound like? JM. I'm not doing an impression but she sounded distressed. It was noticeable that it got worse and more frequent during the shout.

Who is on call tonight? KM. We have a duty helm. We are all on call. If there is a shout we all turn up. Only on special occasions like Christmas and Regatta do we have a duty crew.

Have you been called out on Christmas day? KM. Three times. I was involved on one. We went to rescue a spaniel. It is to stop the owners putting themselves at risk.

What made you join? KM. I've always admired the RNLI. When the chance came I jumped at it.

What would you say to get others to volunteer? KL. Go for it! Come on down. See what it's all about. Go training.

To see the entire Facebook video go to www.rnli.org.uk and choose the home page. Scroll to the bottom and click Facebook. Choose Videos from the left side list. Go to all videos and find Dart. P.S. We do not have a "Whoopee Siren" when there is a shout, even though it was heard on the film!



EDUCATION WORKS!

Educating children about water safety is fundamental to saving lives at sea and a core part of our prevention work. The more young people we can reach with our water safety messages, the more lives we can save now and in the future.

In the South Hams the beach safety presentations are divided between the RNLI Beach Lifeguards and the RNLI Education volunteers. The lifeguards usually visit schools in late April, after they have been trained but before they start their beach patrols. The RNLI Dart education team usually visits in the gap after SATS, for the schools that take them and before the May half term. In the past all the Primary schools in Dartmouth, the surrounding villages and Totnes town have been visited; over 500 children in all.



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The comment below came into Supporter Care from Nicky Sheppard:

“I just wanted to say a big thank you to the RNLI. Through your education programmes you have ensured my children were safe. One evening last week they both (16 and 11 years old) got caught in a rip current at Bigbury beach. We live near Bigbury and are aware of where the rip is and where it is safe to swim etc. They both were only waist deep in water near the lifeguard station at Bigbury but several big waves suddenly swept them off their feet, out and into the rip; they were nowhere near the usual location of the rip. They both were out of their depth and kept going under the water within seconds.

Fortunately, as parents, we have spoken at length to them about rip currents, water safety and also the RNLI have been into their schools talking to the children so they knew not to panic, get their bearings and then swim across the current. They did exactly this and swam to safety onto the beach. They were both in shock and exhausted. They had to tread water for a long time and waves kept forcing them under the water. They were swept out near to the island but they managed to get to safety!

I cannot thank you for all your efforts in schools and with educating people; it works so please keep it up. It also shows that even when you know a beach really well and swim in a safe area the unexpected can still happen.

Thank you again and keep up the good work!”
Nicky Sheppard



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