

# Our History...

## 1869 to 1912

During its Victorian heyday, Sidmouth was home to an RNLI Station, situated across the road from the current Boathouse. The engraved keystone can still be seen today, having been incorporated into the new block of flats built on the site. From 1869 to 1912 the lifeboats 'Rimington', followed by the 'William & Francis' saved a total of 38 lives.

The first lifeboat, 'Rimington', was a 33 feet ten-oared lifeboat that was named after its donor, a Mrs Rimington of Streatham, and was purchased on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1869. The first call-out came on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1872 when it rescued men from the Guernsey brig, 'Frederick William'.

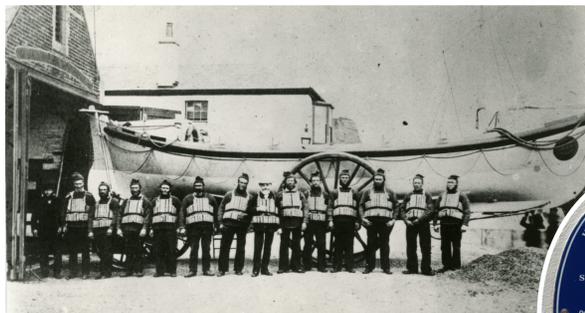
In 1881 the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh arrived off Sidmouth in 'HMS Lively' in order that His Royal Highness might land and inspect the Coastguard Station. Proceeding in a steam pinnacle towards the shore it was struck by a wave which nearly capsized it.

The lifeboat 'Rimington', which had been readied for inspection, was at once launched and proceeded alongside the pinnacle, where the Duke and Duchess were taken on board and landed safely ashore.

The lifeboat 'William & Francis' arrived in Sidmouth in 1885 and was here until the original RNLI Station closed in 1912. Despite only being launched once during that period, the day it was required, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1911, it saved six lives from the German schooner 'Maria of Geestemund'.

Like today, the launching and recovering of the lifeboat was a major operation. Getting these large wooden vessels over the soft shingle of Sidmouth beach took many hands from the town. Many of the local shop owners turned out to help the crew launch when a call went out.

The crews of both 'Rimington' and 'William & Francis' had never really been busy and, following a decline of general activities in and around Sidmouth, it was felt that the RNLI could no longer justify the Sidmouth Lifeboat Station. In 1912 the service was withdrawn. Following the departure of the RNLI from Sidmouth, lifeboat cover was provided by the RNLI lifeboats at Exmouth and Lyme Regis.



Above: Lifeboat 'Rimington' and crew pictured circa 1880.  
Right: The Blue Plaque marking the location of the original RNLI boathouse (1869-1912).



Lifeboat 'William & Francis' circa 1909  
The 'William & Francis' crew, listed from bow to stern: Tom Wooley (bowman), Toby Smith, Tuzzie-Harris, J Farrant, J Harris, F Bartlett, C Solomon, W Smallridge, R Cordey, B Harris, J Tapley, R Solomon (coxswain). The fishermen standing in front of the lifeboat are: Tranmer Carnell, Punch Wooley, R Tapley and Bill Ware. The eight coastguards with Captain Pearce in front are: Dicky Bird Syres, Stretch Churchill, Dodger Smith, Bob Bagwell, H Bartlett and T Beavis.



Lifeboat 'William & Francis' being recovered (above left) and Lifeboat 'Rimington' in Fore Street (above right). As the pictures show, recovering the lifeboats 'Rimington' and 'William & Francis' was a major operation. Many of the townfolk turned out to assist in launching and recovering the lifeboat.



Lifeboat 'Storm'  
Members of the Sidmouth Inshore Rescue Service pictured outside the Boathouse in 1982 with their new RIB 'Storm'.



Sid Ski - a new kind of craft  
2018 saw the delivery of a new kind of rescue craft - a Yamaha VX Delux Rescue Ski - which can be launched and recovered with just two crew.



'The Pride of Sidmouth' Arctic 24 pictured off Sidmouth in 2018.

1982  
'Sidmouth Inshore Rescue Service' became a declared rescue facility with the Coastguard and made available for call-outs 24/7.

1869 to 1912  
Standard protective equipment of the time consisted of oil skins, woollen jumpers and cork life jackets. The cork life jackets were to give the crews buoyancy and weather protection during rescues.

## 1960 to 1990

In the mid 1960s leisure activities were increasing in Sidmouth, resulting in more people using Sidmouth's beaches. In 1968 students from the local secondary school formed a Surf Life Saving Organisation which initially ran beach patrols covering Jacob's Ladder Beach during the weekends in summer time. The first HQ was located at the Clock Tower above Jacob's Ladder Beach.

In 1972 the level of cover provided was greatly increased following the purchase of a prototype 16 foot Atlantic Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) for running day time patrols and surf rescue. The lifeboat had a 40hp outboard engine and was used to cover both Sidmouth and Jacob's Ladder Beaches. The Coastguard then provided extra training and a radio so that they could liaise and contact the crew.

**AWARD: In 1972 crewman Neil Price received an award for bravery from the Royal Humane Society for his actions during the rescue of a family from a sinking vessel.**

In the late 1970s the level of cover was increased to include evenings and eventually, through the purchase of a pager system, to 24 hour cover.

In 1982 Sidmouth Inshore Rescue Service became a declared rescue facility with the Coastguard and made available for call-outs 24/7. The first dedicated lifeboat 'Storm' was purchased in 1985.

## 1991 to 2000

1991 saw the arrival of a bigger and more capable lifeboat. 'Spirit of Sidmouth' was a 5 metre Humber lifeboat that hosted a number of improvements over its predecessor. It was powered by twin 40hp Mariner engines, had GPS navigation, fixed-base radio and a comprehensive first aid kit.

1960s  
Leisure activities were increasing in Sidmouth resulting in more people using Sidmouth's beaches. In 1968 Students from the local secondary school formed a Surf Life Saving organisation, that was to become the Sidmouth Lifeboat service of today.

**AWARD: In April 1996 the 'Spirit of Sidmouth' with crew members Alan Stevenson, Ian Weedon and Sue Cooper rescued four people cut off by the tide at night in worsening conditions. For the daring nature of this rescue, the Royal Lifesaving Society awarded the crew a Commendation.**

In 1999, after a fundraising appeal, the Atlantic 21 lifeboat 'Sidmouth Herald' was introduced to the service. The new lifeboat necessitated the building of a new Lifeboat Station and the design and construction of a new drive-on/drive-off launching system. A heavily ballasted and marinised Renault tractor, complete with launching trailer, was designed and constructed by then crew member Barrie Whittock.

Lifeboat 'Sidmouth Herald' was powered by twin 60hp Mariner engines, giving a range of 90nm/2.5hr at top speed. Other features included self-righting capability, GPS chartplotter for improved navigation and night vision equipment.

## 2000 to Present

**AWARD: On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2004 'Sidmouth Herald' with crew members Simon Sparrow, Chris Bass, Phil Shepperd and Mike Vittles assisted in the rescue of a person that had fallen 150m down cliffs at Peak Hill. Using night vision equipment, flares and searchlights, the crew located the person trapped on the cliffs and guided Beer CRT to the casualty's location. The person was winched up the cliff face and flown to hospital by the Coastguard helicopter. The crew received a Meritorious Commendation from H.M.Coastguard for their involvement in this rescue.**

2000s  
In 2004 there was a further upgrade of the lifeboat from an Atlantic 21 to the Arctic 24 - a military design that improved speed and seaworthiness. Sidmouth Lifeboat Station also saw the delivery of 'Speedy Sid' - a smaller two man RIB and, in 2018, 'SidSki' - a Rescue Ski. Both craft can be launched in addition to the Arctic, or instead of the larger vessel depending on crew availability and weather conditions.

2014  
Seven members of the crew cycled over 2,000 miles around the UK. Their efforts raised money to purchase a second back-up lifeboat named 'Speedy Sid' by local children.

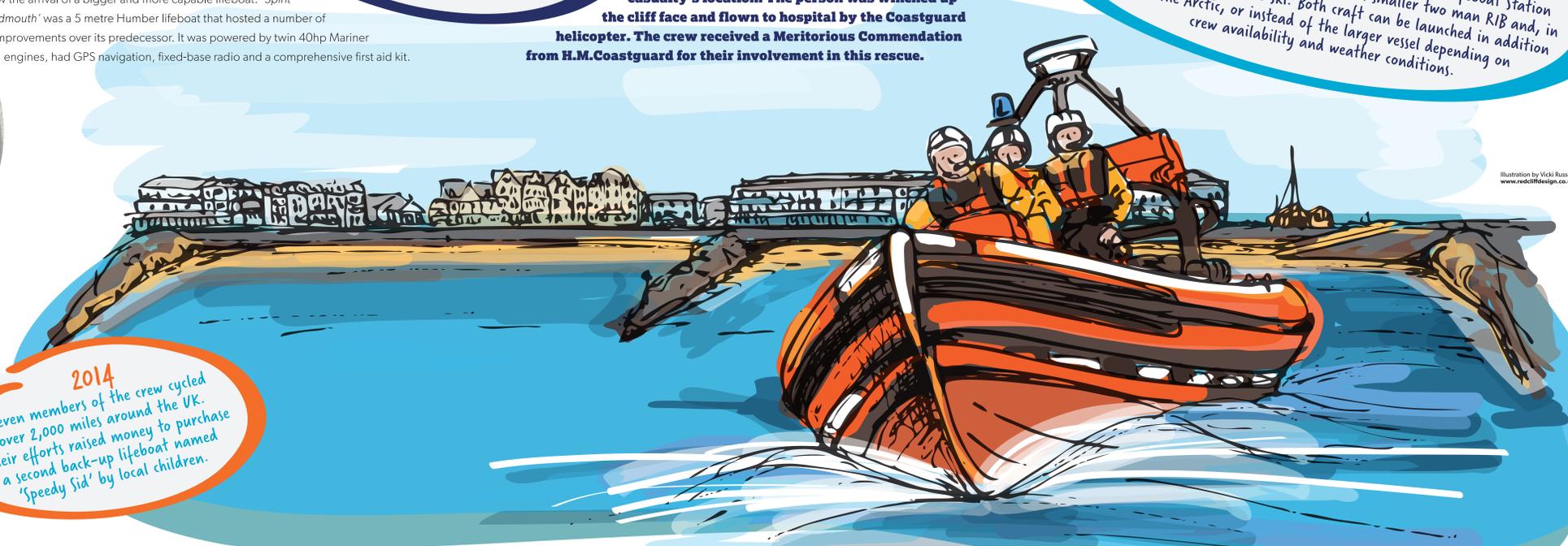


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