



Prawle Point

No: 43

'eyes along the coast'

Autumn 2012

RESCUE BY SALCOMBE INSHORE LIFEBOAT AT SOAR MILL COVE

On August 17th, southerly force 5/6 winds and a confused swell had produced challenging surfing conditions in Soar Mill Cove, four miles west of Salcombe Harbour. Exciting sport, no doubt, but surfing in this small, rocky cove proved to be life threatening for a man who found himself seriously constrained by the rope uniting him with his body board as it tangled around his left arm.



YouTube screenshot of the rescue

Fortunately, that afternoon, others, who were enjoying the spectacular seas, soon realised his predicament and the alarm was raised.

At 4.33 that afternoon Brixham Coastguard requested Salcombe ILB *Joan Bate* to launch. From the time the alarm was first raised by someone in the cove, the Atlantic Class lifeboat took just 22 minutes to arrive on scene. On board were Sam Viles (Helm), Esther McLarty (Lifeboat Medical Advisor) and Matt Davies who all soon assessed the situation realising that reaching the casualty in two to three metres of swell with larger breaking waves close to shore, required their utmost skill and nerve.

Subsequent procedure is best described by Sam Viles, RNLI crew volunteer:-

“When we arrived it was obvious we weren’t going to be able to reach the casualty easily. I manoeuvred on the back of a large wave close to shore so we could get a clear view of the casualty, who was on the eastern side of the cove in breaking surf very close to the rocks. I then decided the best course of action was to keep the ILB with the bow facing head to sea into the breaking surf so we could proceed into the cove backwards. With one of us keeping a visual watch on the casualty and the other keeping a watch on the sea conditions breaking on the bow, we started to carefully edge astern towards the casualty. After a few attempts trying to get closer, we made contact with the casualty and it was clear he was tangled in his own body board leash so wasn’t able to move his arms and grab the ropes that we had thrown towards him to pull him closer to the lifeboat. At this point a few large sets

of waves came in and, to avoid the lifeboat flipping over, we had to make our way into the oncoming waves. In between the sets of waves it was possible for me to manoeuvre the lifeboat to get alongside the casualty and, with Esther and Matt back aft, we managed to pull him aboard along with his entangled body board and leash. We then had to get out of the cove through the breaking surf and this is when two massive walls of water met

the lifeboat, thrusting us vertical and then bringing us all crashing down”.

Footage of the manoeuvres on a bystander’s mobile phone, made public via YouTube, show the repeated attempts at rescue through such adverse conditions, not only demonstrating the tenacity, expertise and astonishing seamanship of the crew, but making one appreciate how difficult it is to focus on a partially submerged head while high waves repeatedly obscure the view. Cheers from the crowd when the man was grabbed on board and gasps when the boat was thrown vertical can be clearly heard all adding to this vividly dramatic viewing; relief when the boat reaches less confused water and turns eastwards is palpably felt.

Esther McLarty explained that the cold and exhausted surfer had been repeatedly bashed against rocks sustaining cuts and abrasions to legs, arms and head. With one arm round the casualty, the other tight around an inboard bollard, she managed to hold on to him although both would have been swept overboard, when the ILB soared vertically, had Matt not been firmly gripping her right leg. Taking the casualty ashore locally was obviously not an option so Esther began treatment en route, supplying oxygen, keeping him warm and ensuring a slower than normal speed was maintained to protect his spine from possible injury. Temporary difficulties with radio communication to Brixham Coastguard were picked up by watchkeepers at NCI Prawle Point who relayed the ILB’s request for an ambulance and helicopter to be awaiting their return. However the crew had already overcome this hitch by changing channel to that used by the

Salcombe Harbour Authority and both ambulance and coastguard team had duly arrived at Whitestrand on their return. As the casualty had been in the water for around forty minutes, protected only by a short wetsuit, coastguards decided he should be transferred by Landrover to North Sands for an airlift to a Plymouth Hospital.

Coxswain, Chris Winzar remarked, "It was an amazing piece of seamanship and control by helm and crew to be able to rescue the casualty in conditions that were at the upper limit of the lifeboat's capability while keeping themselves and the craft safe. The helm's decision to manoeuvre astern on to

the casualty was key to his success and then, after three attempts, turning sideways to be able to pick up the body boarder. His life was saved. It is for extremely difficult rescues such as this that we do all our training". Esther was keen to add that any three of the twenty volunteer crew could have effected this rescue as all are trained to a very professional standard. "We are all lucky to have received excellent training", she said.

The surfer was discharged from hospital the following day but his board awaits collection at the Lifeboat Store should he wish to be re-united with it!



'There's nothing more frustrating for a watchkeeper than to end up in the gutter with his wires in a twist'

Picture & caption by Neville Higgins

Mark Jennings was moving the rain gauge off the roof mast onto a pole beside the lookout. It was windy, he was trying to put cable ties around the cables so couldn't wear gloves and his hands were numb with cold. The cable cutters kept blowing along the roof gutter and the cable ties kept blowing away. His smile was therefore more of a grimace through gritted teeth.

NCI PRAWLE POINT: INCIDENTS TO DATE



05.08.12 Watchkeepers became involved when two incidents occurred in quick succession during the morning. A member of the public called in to report finding a grey rib floating in Horseley Cove which they pulled to safety above the high water mark. Contact was made with the Salcombe Harbour office and the rib was thus restored to its owner. Just a few minutes later, watchkeepers contacted Brixham Coastguard to inform them that a fishing vessel, reporting fuel problems, was visible from the Lookout. They then kept an eye on her and updated her position until Salcombe lifeboat arrived to take her in tow.

17.08.12 At 4.35pm Salcombe Inshore Lifeboat (ILB) was called out to rescue a surfboarder in difficulties at Soar Mill Cove to the west of Bolt Head. Having effected a successful, though difficult rescue through dangerous surf, the ILB returned towards Salcombe with the casualty. Prawle Point watchkeepers subsequently heard Salcombe ILB, calling up Brixham Coastguard on the radio requesting a helicopter and ambulance to be ready on their return. As no reply was heard the watchkeepers relayed the message to the Coastguard and reported that the ILB was rounding Bolt Head. An

ambulance was waiting when the ILB reached Salcombe.

20.08.12 At 18.42 yacht *Donegal Star* reported engine failure half a mile S of Prawle Point and requested a tow into Salcombe. A nearby yacht answered Brixham Coastguard's call for assistance from any vessel in the vicinity but this was not required as *Donegal Star* restarted her engine though with reduced power. Brixham accepted an offer from watchkeepers at Prawle Point to keep a visual check on the yacht's progress into Salcombe. At a maximum of two knots it was one hour before *Donegal Star* was inside the Bar.

03.11.12 At 11.07 watchkeepers heard a PanPan from yacht *Ashiki* reporting engine failure when about to cross the Bar into Salcombe Harbour; the wind was westerly force 6 and the swell moderate. Brixham Coastguard tasked a harbour launch to supply a tow by which time the watchkeepers had reported her visual and supplied details and position. Brixham asked for her to be monitored and proceedings relayed to them, this was undertaken until the yacht was safely under tow and entering harbour.



Friends Of Prawle Point

FOPP ladies displayed their superb organising skills yet again when they master-minded the sell-out evening on October 13th for Joe Stilgoe at Charleton Village Hall.

The audience was well entertained by this virtuoso master of the keyboard, singer and raconteur in all his different guises and everyone enjoyed, during the interval, a

substantial two course meal cooked and served by FOPP committee members. Their hard work before, during and after the event raised nearly £900 and was much appreciated by the Station.

Our new weather station in the lookout, costing £1218, was funded by FOPP.



Watchkeepers at Prawle Point are happy to receive visitors and this one turned up late one Saturday afternoon.

Luckily watchkeeper, Malcolm Goodard had his camera handy.

BRIXHAM HERITAGE FLEET

Today around fifty beam trawlers work out of Brixham Harbour but, between the 1880s and 1920s, it was home to one of the world's largest fleet of wooden, gaff rigged sailing trawlers, three hundred of which were built in local yards.

Just six remain thanks to the hard work and dedication of The Trinity Sailing Foundation, a trust which restores, maintains and keeps four of these impressively beautiful vessels sailing around our coasts, often passing Prawle Point much to the delight of those on watch. They are Leader, Provident, Golden Vanity and Spirit of Britannia. Vigilance is privately owned by a group of individuals and Pilgrim is run by the Pilgrim Trust. At the time of writing this article, all were snugly alongside or on well sheltered moorings as volunteers and local craftsmen worked with good humour and obvious enthusiasm for the traditional ways of sail.

Leader, the oldest and biggest of the fleet, 105 feet overall length, was built in 1892 at Galmpton on the Dart from where she departed to begin her fishing career off Lowestoft until 1907 being later altered and employed as a general cargo vessel around the coast of Sweden. In the 1950s she was re-rigged and served, under the Swedish Cruising Club flag, as a sail training ship for thirty years until transferring to Scotland where she became known as Lorne Leader, the well-known charter ketch providing glorious cruising around lochs and islands until returning to her home port in 1999 care of the Trinity Sailing Foundation. Her black and red livery makes her easily identifiable. New spruce decks have been fitted and spacious accommodation below allows the full compliment of nineteen to dine together at an enormous saloon table and sleep cosily in well appointed bunks.

Built in 1924 also at Galmpton Creek, Provident, BM 28 with her distinctive doghouse and still sporting her Island Cruising Club green topsides, is seventy feet in length and known as a 'mule' class trawler. During her original fishing days she was crewed by just three men and a boy but by 1930 she had been sold privately and converted as a yacht with accommodation for 16. She became the ICC flagship in the 1960s until joining the Heritage Fleet in 1999.

Golden Vanity, built at Galmpton in 1908 with LOA of 53 feet conforms to the smallest class of sailing trawlers known as 'mumble bees'. Locals who found her in Brixham in an advanced state of deterioration, founded the Golden Vanity Trust and re-launched her as a sail training vessel in 1988 to

be run by Trinity Sailing. Carrying skipper, mate and six crew she is particularly well suited for RYA and Duke of Edinburgh courses.

The three above vessels are judged to be of pre-eminent regional and national significance that make up the National Historic Fleet. That status ranks them alongside the likes of HMS Victory and Cutty Sark. Their importance stems from the maritime and industrial significance of their type of vessel, the sailing trawler which, in the nineteenth century, changed the nature of deep-sea fishing.

Pilgrim, is currently undergoing such extensive restoration (aided by a Heritage Lottery grant, the South Devon Coastal Action Group and many individual donors), that she needed re-classing as a new vessel but will not be finished and in commission until 2016. Craftsmen and volunteers work as closely as possible to the original design so she has traditional rigging and red sails and is fitted out with oak blocks and top rails and teak companion ways while down below she has cream panelling, aged teak woodworking and brass detailing.

By way of an historical aside, it is interesting to learn that red ochre was once mined around Brixham. When boiled with tar, tallow and oak bark it was painted on canvas to protect from seawater. A special paint using ochre was invented in Brixham in 1845 and was the first substance in the world to be used for protecting cast iron from rusting.

Maintenance and refits are carried out from early November until the end of March by eight full-time employees and willing volunteers whose commitment is greatly valued. Once the sailing season begins, boats are in commission seven days a week with bookings from charter groups of adults or young people with team leaders from local schools, colleges and scout or sea ranger cadet groups.

They cruise some of the UK and Europe's most beautiful coasts from Scandinavia to the Bay of Biscay.

Typical voyages may include Brittany, Normandy and the Channel Islands, Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly or the west coast of Scotland. The boats provide "an ideal environment for personal development courses for young people, based on offshore training and experienced, professional staff ensure that each group member is able to play a full part. There are no passengers; everybody is a member of the crew. Learning to manage a traditional sailing vessel at sea and in all conditions, tests the innate abilities of

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each individual to the limit. Few young people ever have the opportunity of finding out just what they are capable of in such a way".

Leader, for instance, takes skipper, mate, cook, bosun, a fifth hand training as future crew, twelve young people and two leaders. They learn how to run a traditional ship in ways of traditional seamanship keeping old skills and methods alive. Steering by the stars and trailing a Walker log line demand basic, fundamental navigation and log-keeping methods, no modern winches are in sight but an hydraulic windlass for the anchor chain is a slight concession to modernity. They

learn also to cook, sail on and off moorings, scandalize the main, heave-to and spin the ship under sail. As part of being away from home, mobile phones and plug-in devices are not on scene although, on spotting very modern looking speakers either side of the steering position on Provident, it was explained that in times of doldrum, sea sickness or tedious tasks such as washing-up, favourite popular music tracks can lift young spirits most positively and shanties can seriously help with hoisting those heavy gaffs and sails!

Although not in evidence, radar, GPS and all necessary modern safety equipment are carried at all times as, belonging to Category 1 within European sailing



Youngsters learn the correct way of stowing the sails

waters, the Trust has a policy to be at least one step ahead of MCA legal safety requirements.

Races for Brixham registered sailing trawlers have been held in Torbay from the early 1800s until 1939. These were revived by enthusiasts in 1997 under organisation by the Heritage Sailing Committee, hosted by Brixham Yacht Club and are traditionally held on the Friday and Saturday of May Bank Holiday. Next year pilot cutters will be encouraged to participate under the leadership of well known Jolie Brise and there will be a parade of sail and fireworks. What better way could there be to enjoy the spectacle of magnificent craft under sail?

SOME COMMON WORDS OF A NAUTICAL ORIGIN

<i>Larking around</i>	During quiet periods young sailors would race each other up the rigging to the topmast and back. This became known as larking or skylarking from the Old English word for play, <i>lac</i> .
<i>Square meal</i>	Plates were just square pieces of wood cut from a plank with small wooden strips nailed around the edges called 'fiddles' to help contain the food.
<i>On the fiddle</i>	A term used about a sailor who enlarged his plate.
<i>Loafing around</i>	A crew member sent to collect bread for the mess would be tempted, on a cold day, to linger at the warm bakery.
<i>Round robin</i>	Those wishing to sign a protest, for delivery to an officer, would do so on a circular band of cloth or ribbon (<i>ruban</i> in French) so no man's name appeared at the top as ring-leader.



Please help us to maintain this valuable service by making a donation and becoming a supporter of NCI Prawl Point or becoming a watchkeeper.

Please contact: The Secretary, PO Box 58, Kingsbridge TQ7 2QZ

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