

FREE

A wee bit of maritime history... 27



RNLI Portaferry

The Ards Peninsula's outer shore has many rocks and pladdies. In the days of sailing vessels there was a particular risk of shipwreck in an onshore wind.

Lighthouses, light vessels and navigational technology all made the outer coast safer and the introduction of engine power meant that vessels could now avoid being blown onto the rocks.

Lifeboats that were effective on the outer shore were too big for the shallower waters of Strangford Lough and were not fast enough to get out against a rapid (up to 8 knots/15 kph/9 mph) incoming tide in the Narrows.

The development of smaller, high-speed lifeboats changed things at a time when the number of leisure boats on the Lough had increased substantially. Their shallow draught meant that they could get within wading distance of the many islands and pladdies in the Lough. Their speed meant that they could also answer calls from beyond the mouth of the lough in minutes.

This all meant that Portaferry was now the best place to open a new station. Its service area covers all of Strangford Lough as well as the inshore waters of the Irish Sea from Burr Point at Ballyhalbert in the north to St John's Point in the south. (above)



- 1979** Zodiac single-engined 'C' class lifeboat supplied by the RNLI for evaluation.
- 1980** New twin-engined (each 40hp) 'D' class 17.5ft Zodiac delivered by RNLI. Daytime operation only. Withdrawn for winter at end of season.

First Portaferry station officially opened.

- 1981** Cloughey/Portavogie station closed.
- 1982** Portaferry Station upgraded to 24-hour call and allowed to operate all year round.
- 1986** Lifeboat replaced with a new Atlantic 21 (B-569) *Blue Peter V* presented by Caron Keating and the team from the BBC programme, Blue Peter.
- 1987** First purpose-built lifeboat boathouse opened.
- 1994** Lifeboat replaced and another new craft was presented by Blue Peter, an Atlantic 75 (B-706) also named *Blue Peter V*.
- 2010** Lifeboat replaced with 8.4m (27.7ft) RIB (rigid inflatable boat) *Blue Peter V*, an Atlantic 85 (B-833) powered by twin 115hp out boards capable of 35 knots (40 mph) donated by Blue Peter



2010 - A newly built and enlarged replacement lifeboat boathouse opened.



One shout (callout) in which famous motorcycle aces were rescued:-

14 passengers and crew were aboard the *Tornamona* which went aground and later sank in the early hours of Sunday 26th May 1985. They had been on their way from Portaferry to the Isle of Man when the vessel struck St. Patrick's Rock near Killard Point at the entrance to Strangford Lough.

Two of those on board were world famous motor cycle champion **Joey Dunlop** and his brother **Robert**. The vessel was also carrying eight motorbikes for use in the Isle of Man TT races.

As the *Tornamona* began to sink, Portaferry Lifeboat arrived and, with the help of another boat, *Cuan Shore*, rescued all passengers and crew.

The next day the motorcycles were retrieved.

LIST OF SERVICES RENDERED BY THE PORTAFERRY LIFEBOAT Of The ROYAL NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION		
1879	D-Class inflatable: under training.	
Oct. 7	18' F/V. 2 lost on Bar.	
1880	D-Class Inflatable: C506	
June 11	Cat. LE CHAT QUI RIT. Engine failure. Towed in.	2
June 20	Zodiac. Engine failure. Towed in.	8
July 21	Sailing Dinghy. Capsize at Ballyhalbert. Gave help.	
Aug. 17	A/Y KISS. Steering failure. 10m E off Bar. Gave help.	
Sept. 10	A/Y WILLUM. Stranded. Long Sheelagh. Stood by. Towed in.	
Sept. 20	Derelict barge. Off Station. Towed in.	
1881		
May 17	M/Y TEMPLE QUEEN. In danger. Off Bar. Crew put on board.	3
June 12	M/Y GINA II. Engine failure. 10m off. Towed in.	1
June 20	Yacht Leisure 17. On Limestone. Child & parent landed.	2
June 28	Motor Yacht. Out of fuel. 15m off. Long search.	
July 8	Stolen Rowing Boat. In danger. Towed in.	2
July 23	M/Y MANETA. Engine failure. Towed in.	3
Aug. 21	M/Y NYMROD. Engine failure. In danger. Towed in.	
Sept. 1	F/V LOBELLA. Engine failure. 1m off. Gave help.	
Sept. 6	Yacht SCOTCH MIST. Lost in fog. Towed in.	
Sept. 6	Yacht. Stranded. Gave help.	
Oct. 12	Yacht. Overdue. Towed in.	4
1882		
June 1	Club launch. Missing. 6 hour search in fog.	
July 20	Stolen punt. Crew in water.	2
Aug. 9	Yacht WILD GOOSE. Stranded. Gave help.	
Aug. 14	M/Y TAMORA. Stranded. Gave help.	
Aug. 25	M/V SEA VENTURER. Stranded. Gave help.	
Aug. 26	M/V COLEENA. In difficulties. Gave help.	
Aug. 26	Yacht. Stranded. Gave help.	
Dec. 19	Yacht FRIEDA. Missing in bad conditions. Found on Jane's Rock.	1
	One crew rescued, one missing.	
Dec. 20	Search for missing crew. Found by CG.	
1883 June 3	F/V VOERTREKKER. Sinking in fog off Ardglass. Search & rescue.	4
Sept. 11	A/Y CAPELLA. Engine failure. Towed in.	2
Sept. 27	M/Y HELLO SAILOR. Out of fuel. Towed in.	
Oct. 8	Duck hunters. Stranded. Foul night. Brought ashore.	2
Oct. 7	Sailboarder in danger. Rescued.	1
Nov. 9	A/Y APPIN MIST. Stranded & leaking. Gave help.	
1884		
Mar. 11	A/Y BONNY FIONA. Stranded. Attended & victualled.	
Apr. 23	M/Y AMIGO. Adrift. Awakened crew.	
May 24	A/Y PADAMICO. Engine failure. Towed in.	
June 2	Yachts FINGAL and LAZY DAYS. In difficulties. Gave help.	
June 3	Yacht RAMPART. Lost rudder. Towed in.	
June 12	F/V TAI. Diver in difficulties. Gave help.	
July 1	A/Y DRASCOM LUGGER. Out of fuel.	2
July 1	Yacht SKYLARK. Stranded. Gave help.	
July 8	M/V MAJOR B. Engine failure.	4
July 21	Yacht WHISKEN. Stranded. Stood by.	
July 21	Stolen punt. Sank at Routen Wheels (Excellent service).	2
Aug. 11	Punt overdue. Towed in.	
1885		
May 20	M/V TORNAMONA. Struck Rock Patrick & sank (Joey Dunlop).	14
June 22	A/Y WARRIOR III. In difficulties. Search Pladdy area	
July 19	14' open boat. Engine failure. Towed in.	3
July 20	Sail dinghy. Capsized. Gave help.	2
Aug. 2	26' Cat. Broken mast. Towed in.	1
Aug. 19	F/V DERONA. Engine failure. Gave help.	1

* DENOTES NIGHT SERVICE * DENOTES AWARDS

BLACK DOTTED

Shouts (callouts) 6 July 2017 - 17 Mar 2024

In this period there were 158 shouts which helped 185 people and saved 11 lives with no fatalities.

Portaferry & District Lifeboat Guild

For donations, any fund raising enquiries or if you would like us to attend your event—please contact Portaferry & District Lifeboat Guild at:

guild@portaferrylifeboat.com

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