

Hamble Lifeboat Service

21st September 2004 - Roy Underdown Pavilion

At our meeting in October, Colin Olden and John Campbell told us about the Hamble Lifeboat Service, and an interesting and often vivid account it was. In the late 1960's lives were being lost in waters around Hamble, and it was decided that a patrol boat was needed. The RNLI were low on resources, so a group of local people formed a fund and ordered a 17 ft Dory. In 1969 this helped in 60 rescue operations. Since then there have been continual efforts to raise funds for better boats, to keep up with technology, and to comply with regulations. Now they can offer a 24 hour, 7 days a week service, and respond to emergencies within 10 minutes. We asked about those 'emergencies.' They include people stuck in the mud, others jumping off the Itchen Bridge, boats running out of fuel, fires on board, and even windsurfers in trouble. There is a seasonal influence too, with more fires in the summer, and more jumpers around Christmas. During Cowes Week anything could happen! We asked which was their most memorable experience, and they thought for a while, then both said, "The 1979 Fastnet Race." The sea was so rough that the lifeboat sailed over one wave, and plunged straight through the next. We began to wonder why anyone would volunteer to serve in such conditions, but we're glad that they do!