

Calshot Lifeboat

6th June 2013 - Roy Underdown Pavilion

Andy Headley, a volunteer crew member of Calshot Lifeboat, gave the Society a presentation about the history and work of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and Hamble's local RNLI lifeboat based at Calshot. He explained how the work of Calshot Lifeboat station fitted into context with the rest of the RNLI activities.

Andy started by showing a DVD of the wide range of rescues that the RNLI undertake. This included commercial ships out at sea (up to 100 miles offshore) and leisure boats along the coast, as well as people and animals close to the shore or on inland waters. The RNLI is a charity and 85% of the money it raises goes to saving lives on the water but he emphasised that safety education and accident prevention was very important part of its work. It receives no government funding.

The different types of lifeboats were described from the all weather self righting seagoing lifeboats, which can be used in all conditions, to the faster inshore boats. 90% of the crew have no maritime experience when they join and they have to be at least 17 years of age.

Elliot a new volunteer crew member of this age helped Andy demonstrate the equipment they use, including putting on the different types of lifeboat crew's clothing. Elliot does not yet have a licence to drive a car but Andy emphasised that when the crew are called out by a pager they keep to the road speed limit so as not cause another accident.

The lifesaving organisation started in 1824 and became known as the RNLI in 1854. In 1958 the first self righting lifeboat came into service and in 1963 the inshore inflatable lifeboat was introduced. Andy highlighted some important people in its history such as Grace Darling and Brian Bevan. He also mentioned some notable incidents, such as the major rescue operation during the 1979 Fastnet race and the 1981 Penlee Lifeboat disaster. In 2004 a new headquarters and training centre was built at Poole, where in the future it hopes to build all its own boats.

Calshot Lifeboat started in 1970 for an initial trial period of a year at Hampshire County Council's Activities Centre on Calshot Spit (a former military flying boat base). It continued and has had four seagoing lifeboats over the years. In 1976 three crew members received bronze medals for gallantry for a rescue at Ashlett Creek in force 9 winds and in sub zero temperatures. In 2001 it received a Chairman's letter of thanks for rescuing people off the Brambles Bank.

Calshot Lifeboat has approximately 100 call outs a year and is now served by two inshore inflatable lifeboats. The reason for the change is that the 35 knots inflatable boats are more suitable for use in the Solent. Andy explained how Calshot Lifeboat collaborates with other rescue services, such as a year ago when it undertook a rescue off Netley with the independent Hamble Lifeboat.

As well as some of the equipment that the crew use, Andy brought along pictures and models of Calshot lifeboats and photographs of its work over its history. He also had leaflets and some fund raising items.

The meeting was attended by ex Calshot Lifeboat crew and Hamble RNLI Ladies Guild who had items for sale to raise money for the charity. Some members commented that it was slightly disappointing that there was not a larger attendance, especially from Hamble's boating community.