

STEPPER POINT NEWS

SUMMER 2009 - ISSUE 14

Patrons: Peter Prideaux-Brune and Rick Stein OBE



The NCI is Registered Charity No 1045645

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Station Report

It was a cold end to Winter up at Stepper Point Lookout and we got through quite a bit of gas trying to keep warm during watches. The double glazing really proved its worth keeping out the cold easterly wind! When Spring came it was warm and sunny, and made keeping watch over such a beautiful estuary a real pleasure.

It was not without its problems, however, as a herd of cattle had been turned out onto the 'Daymark' field and during one particularly cold gale they all took refuge behind the Lookout building and made the most terrible mess, knocked down the surrounding wall and uprooted the plants along the top.

There have been big changes in the management this year. Colin Davey (Station Manager), Derek Lindsey (Training Officer) and Sarah Thorneycroft (Secretary) have all stood down.

Colin Davey was Station Manager for 3 years and led the dedicated watchkeeper team with skill and imagination and fostered closer relations with our sister NCI Station up the coast at Boscastle, including a twice daily buddy call scheme to check that both stations are operational, and that all is well. Derek Lindsey masterminded the training of all new watchkeepers and as one of the founders of NCI Stepper Point, and a previous Auxiliary Coastguard, his knowledge and experience will be greatly missed. Sarah Thorneycroft has supported the Committee brilliantly as Secretary for many years and will also be greatly missed. We wish them all the best for the future.

We welcome John Battersby as the new Station Manager (see more on Page 5), Peter Chapman as Training Officer and Bill Rowe as our Committee Secretary.

Recent Incidents from the NCI Stepper Point Logbook

17Jan09 Windsurfer in trouble off Daymer Beach – drifting out to sea. NCI watchkeeper alerted Falmouth Coastguard that the casualty was being battered by very heavy seas and in need of help. Rock Inshore Lifeboat launched and casualty rescued close to Polzeath, a drift of almost a mile.

25Jan09 Kite Surfer in trouble off Hawkers Cove. NCI watchkeeper informed Falmouth Coastguard. NCI monitored situation – surfer reached Daymer Beach.

16May09 NCI watchkeeper informed Falmouth Coastguard that a yacht was outbound from Padstow in very rough seas, but did not appear to be in trouble. The watchkeeper was asked to monitor the situation. The Coastguard informed NCI that a 999 call reported yacht in difficulty and Port Isaac ILB and Helicopter 193 launched. NCI watchkeeper again informed Falmouth Coastguard that the yacht did not appear to be in trouble. Port Isaac ILB reached the yacht - 3 persons on board. Yacht did not need assistance and continued on course.

26May09 NCI watchkeeper informed Falmouth Coastguard at 1000 hrs that a Kite Surfer was in serious trouble off Greenaway. Rock ILB was launched and the casualty taken to Daymer Beach unharmed.

26May09 Falmouth Coastguard informed NCI at 1540 hrs that a windsurfer was reported to be in difficulty off Greenaway. The watchkeeper informed Coastguard that the windsurfer was safely on the rocks but his rig was not visible. Rock ILB was launched; the rig was located and returned to the surfer on Daymer Beach.

29May09 Walkers reported to NCI watchkeeper that a small dinghy, apparently with no-one on board, was upside down in the estuary. The dinghy was not visible from the lookout and the watchkeeper informed Falmouth Coastguard of the probable position of the dinghy. Rock ILB was launched and when the dinghy became visible from the lookout the watchkeeper informed the Rock Lifeboat of the approximate position. Coastguard Mobiles checked everyone on Polzeath and Daymer beached and eventually found the owners of the dinghy who confirmed that no person was on board at the time it was lost. The owners eventually reclaimed the dinghy from Rock Lifeboat station.

28Jun09 NCI watchkeeper saw a man in a dinghy waving his arms in distress. The dinghy appeared to be sinking. The watchkeeper informed Falmouth Coastguard of the situation and that the Rock ILB was currently on exercise in the area. The Rock ILB was immediately tasked to assist the casualty and was soon on scene. The man and the dinghy were taken in tow.

Activity Record

In the last 6 months of 2008 we logged a total of 3403 vessel movements and in the first 6 months of this year we recorded a total number of 5472 movements.

This is made up as follows:	Jul/Dec08	Jan/Jan09
Fishing Vessels (Commercial, Charter and Private)	1238	1601
RIB's	256	504
Vessels under Sail (Yachts, Dinghies, Crabbers, etc)	487	548
Vessels under Power (Private Speedboats, Dayboats, Cruisers, etc)	613	883
Jubilee Queen (Number of Trips)	89	188
Charter Speedboats trips (Jaws, Seafury, Cylcone, etc)	556	1422
Other Vessels (Kayaks, Canoes, RN, Survey, etc)	164	326

Doom Bar continues to live up to its name!

There have been a number of incidents recently on the Doom Bar which show that there are still real dangers if it is not treated with a great deal of respect. On Saturday 17 January 2009 a small boat with 5 persons on board was crossing the Bar when it broached (turned sideways) in the waves and threw them into the water. Very fortunately, a local fishing boat was close by and, seeing what had happened, immediately went to their aid. This and other incidents show that it is best to stay in the designated channel when crossing the Doom Bar.

Excuse me, have you lost a child's rubber dinghy?

Not a casual question, but the essential task of Polzeath Auxiliary Coastguard team after a full scale emergency turnout of rescue services triggered by Stepper Point watchkeeper Paul Holden on 29 May 2009 in an excellent example of his watchkeeping skills. Paul had been showing a mother and her two very interested children round the lookout and explaining the watchkeeper's role. They left after signing the visitors book but came running back shortly afterwards to say that there was a yellow and blue child's rubber dinghy blowing out to sea in the SE Force 6 wind. It was under the cliff below the lookout and not visible to Paul at the time, but it soon came out into the open and with the powerful binoculars at the lookout Paul was able to see that it was empty. He immediately informed Falmouth Coastguard and gave its range as 1nm at a bearing of 330°, which is just to the West of Newlands Island. At 15.43hrs Falmouth Coastguard deployed Rock Lifeboat and advised them of the position before then issuing a group page at 16.10hrs to Polzeath Cliff Rescue Auxiliary Coastguard Team. Although the dinghy was empty, the concern was, of course, that there may have been a child in it who was now in the water. The Cliff Rescue Team was tasked with asking as many people as possible on Polzeath and Daymer beaches whether they had lost a dinghy and if they had children with them - were they safe? It is easy to imagine Mum and Dad with their children at the water's edge when their child's rubber dinghy is blown out into the waves and beyond reach. Dad thinks "Oh well, there goes the dinghy, I'm certainly not trying to swim after it in this off-shore wind", resigns himself to having lost a £15 beach item and thinks no more of it. Meanwhile, the search and rescue services have to take the empty boat report seriously lest there be a child swimming in the water and so a full scale alert is triggered. The lesson is that the beach lifeguard or coastguard should be told immediately if this sort of incident occurs, thus preventing a call-out of the rescue services. In this case all was well and the children were safe.



Watchkeeper Paul Holden



Polzeath beach

Padstow's Speedboats

Continuing our series of articles on boats seen from Stepper Point, we are in this issue covering the famous speedboats operating out of Padstow and seen regularly in the Camel estuary. Sea Fury, Jaws, Fireball and Thunder (re-named from Cyclone this year) operate out of the harbour and give rides in the Camel Estuary to the daring who want to feel the spray in their faces and the power of the straight six Ford Sabre or Ford Mermaid 300HP engines. Jaws is the oldest, being built in 1982 in Looe and Fireball the newest, built by John England in Padstow. The boats are licensed to a maximum speed of 25 knots with passengers in the estuary, but can actually reach 33 knots flat out. There is a rigorous safety inspection which must be carried out on each boat by a properly appointed boat inspector, and a further Marine and Coastguard Agency safety check at the beginning of every operating season. As the 'barker' on the quayside says, tongue in cheek, trying to get Padstow's visitors to take a ride, 'Pay on the boat, if you don't come back, you don't pay!'



Fireball at high speed seen from the Lookout

Visit of Duke of Kent to Padstow Lifeboat

As part of the good relations between NCI Stepper Point and Padstow lifeboat, it was natural for Padstow Lifeboat's cox, Alan Tarby, to ask for NCI help during this visit. All of the lifeboat crew were to be presented to the Duke and therefore unavailable to marshal the visitors, so Alan thought that NCI uniformed watchkeepers would have the requisite authority to carry out car park duties. Ken Stewart and Dave Helyar were happy to help and for security reasons were strictly instructed to only allow into the lifeboat station cars with the appropriate authorisation pass. Ken had to restrict even the driver of Devon and Cornwall's chief constable who was not allowed to park down on the lower concrete apron! The RNLi have said they were very grateful and a donation has been made to NCI Stepper Point funds.

New Station Manager

John Battersby took over as the new Station Manager from the end of June and has been a watchkeeper since March 2005. John is a boat owner and has been sailing for pleasure for many years. He took up watchkeeping to make a contribution to safety at sea. He says his mission is to maintain the high NCI standards existing in the organisation and to keep the Stepper Point Lookout flourishing. We wish him well in this new task.



NCI at the Royal Cornwall Show

Thanks are due to Peter Barrett for arranging the RCS stand and organising the daily duty roster for watchkeepers. We were again manning the stand in the Countryside marquee together with our colleagues at NCI Boscastle and the emphasis was on raising public awareness of NCI and its services to safety at sea. There was a lot of interest from passing visitors, as well as those, like Commander Tony King, the NCI head office radio training officer who had come specifically to support us and to chat. The stickers and goody bags of safety information were very popular with the children.



Peter Barrett (Stepper Point) & John Davis (Boscastle) on the NCI Stand

Visit to RNAS Culdrose (by Peter Thorpe)

It was a cold January afternoon at the lookout during a quiet watch with only a few walkers, when a couple stopped at the lookout and asked to come in. I did my usual 'sales' talk and then asked the man if he could, for example, estimate the distance of a fishing vessel which was just beyond Newland Island. The lady turned to me and said 'he ought to be able to as he is senior helicopter pilot at RNAS Culdrose'. He said 'and she ought to be able to as she is helicopter operations manager there!' Well you can imagine that the conversation changed after that and they spent the next half an hour telling me about their jobs and the role of Sea King helicopters in Search and Rescue. In particular, Claire had organised the helicopter part of the major incident exercise, in which some NCI watchkeepers were involved, on the Jubilee Queen in September 2008. She said that the BBC filming team was with them all summer and that they had seen some of the footage which will be used in the forthcoming series of Seaside Rescue. Afterwards I thought that they might like a copy of our NCI newsletter with the Jubilee Queen article so I sent this to RNAS Culdrose (they had signed the visitors book). I was delighted to hear back that a private visit for 4 could be arranged to look round the search and rescue helicopters and so Colin Davey, Derek Lindsey, Richard Wilson and I drove down to the Lizard on 5 May 2009 and were given a warm welcome by Claire Connor.



From LtoR: Derek Lindsey, Peter Thorpe, Claire Connor, Colin Davey & Richard Wilson

Claire handed us over to Cags Lacey who is a very experience pilot and paramedic and he gave us a briefing before showing us round a Sea King Helicopter. RNAS Culdrose 771 Naval Air Squadron has three roles. Firstly to serve the Fleet Air Arm's front line Sea King and Merlin helicopter squadrons, secondly to provide a Search and Rescue service for the South West Region, and thirdly to operate as training specialists for The Royal Navy. The base is a Second World War airfield and began as a Naval Fighting School,

seeing trials of the Navy's first jets, training of Airborne Early Warning crews, and was home base for carrier based aircraft. It is one of Europe's largest helicopter bases and also specialises in Anti-submarine Warfare, Anti-surface Warfare and Airborne Surveillance and Control. With call sign Rescue 193, the squadron's Sea King helicopters cover Search and Rescue operations over the length of Cornwall and Isles of Scilly and the Western Approaches to the English Channel with a range of 200nm. Nimrods from RAF Kinloss cover long range drops of, for example, life rafts and survival equipment until the arrival of rescue vessels. The squadron also provides services for South West Ambulance Services Trust and, for example, they had just completed an urgent SWAST medical transfer to London, landing the casualty in Regents Park where they were then grounded by bad weather for 3 hours before being able to set off to return to base. Whilst they have to keep generally to recognised air lanes, (and a deviation of only 50 metres would require an air traffic enquiry), the Rescue 193 call sign allows direct flight to the destination. Culdrose must provide a Sea King on immediate readiness for duty at all times, and a standby helicopter on the adjacent apron in case of problems with the first aircraft. Cags explained that he was on duty at the time of the great Boscastle flood which he said was co-ordinated by RAF Kinloss, and that in his Sea King, the horizontal rain was so fierce that it drove in to the open side of the helicopter during the main rescue and they lost the local intercom, meaning that hand signals only could be given and relayed by the winchman to the pilot. He said that a number of medals were awarded that day and thoroughly deserved. We were taken out on to the apron and shown round the very impressive flight deck of a Sea King as well as the medical facilities and the winching equipment. They promised to give us a wave when they were flying over the lookout in future.



Sea King Helicopter of 771 Naval Air Sqn at RNAS Culdrose

Friends of Stepper Point - Application Form 2009

I/We would like to join the Friends of Stepper Point.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

E-mail: _____

I enclose _____ annual subscription of £15.00 (Adults)

and/or _____ annual subscription of £10.00 (Under 16's)

I would like to make an additional donation of £_____.

[] I would like a receipt from NCI Stepper Point.

Please forward this form & your subscription to **Hon Treasurer, Pegasus, Porthcothan Bay, Padstow, Cornwall PL28 8LR** (*Cheques payable to 'NCI Stepper Point'*).

Subscribers will receive our newsletter on a twice yearly basis.

If you would like to donate regularly by Standing Order, please complete the form below.

If you would like to receive the newsletter by email (saving us time and postage) please delete as applicable: YES / NO

Gift Aid

I certify I am a taxpayer in the UK and wish my contribution to be claimed in accordance with the rules applying to gift aid to charities.

I understand that I can cancel my contributions without any obligation at any time, by informing my bank and the Treasurer of NCI Stepper Point in writing.

Signature..... Dated

Standing Order Authority

1. Your Details:
 Full Name:.....Telephone No:.....
 Your Banks Details:
 Bank & Branch Name:.....
 Banks Address & Post Code:.....
 Sort Code:.....Account Number.....

2. Please credit Account Name 'NCI Stepper Point' at Lloyds TSB, Wadebridge,
 Account No: 1332782 Sort Code: 30-98-98

With the Sum of £..... (Payment amount in words)

First payment date and debit my/our* account accordingly.

Payments to be taken: Monthly / Quarterly / Half yearly / Yearly*

I authorise you to debit my/our* account in accordance with the details in Section 2 above.

I understand that should I wish to do so, I can cancel my Standing Order at any time without further notice.

Your Signature (s):..... Date:.....

* Delete where necessary

When complete please detach this form and forward to your Bank