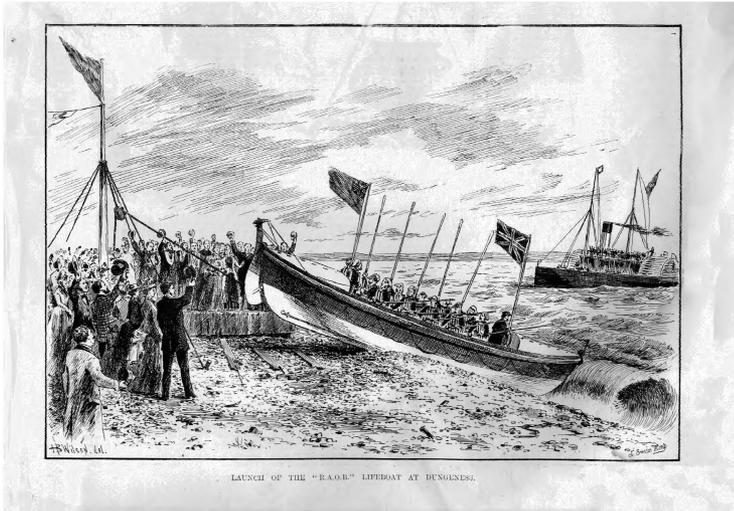


The Museum Collection

No.36

R.A.O.B. Lifeboats



A look into the part the R.A.O.B. played
in the funding of Lifeboats

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Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Grand Lodge of England

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Introduction



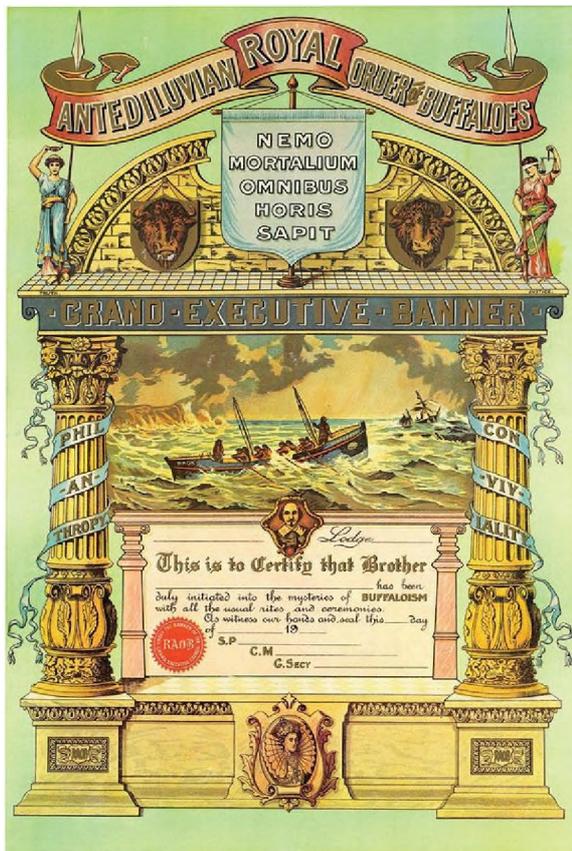
Much hype, and rightly so, surrounds the magnificent efforts of the Order in supplying ambulances and drivers during World War One and World War Two, but little is published about the efforts in fund raising for the supply of lifeboats to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

The following is an attempt to level the playing field (so to speak) in this direction and acknowledge the tremendous achievement of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes in raising funds during the latter part of the 1800's for the provision of much needed lifeboats to operate in the rough seas around the coastlines of The British Isles.

However, one must remember that Dungeness was not the only lifeboat station that benefited from R.A.O.B. donations, nor was it exclusively the Grand Lodge of England who participated in fund raising, many other 'Banners' were well represented in their activities to help the cause.

One Banner, the Grand Executive Banner, took the provision of lifeboats so much to heart that they incorporated an artists impression of the RAOB lifeboat going to the rescue of a ship in distress as part of the initiation ceremony emblem.

There were many other stations in the United Kingdom who received funds from the R.A.O.B. to further the efforts of the R.N.L.I.



The following is my version of the part played by the RAOB in assisting with the provision of lifeboats and in the rescuing of so many lives of those intrepid sailors who were brave enough to battle the very dangerous and temperamental weather conditions around the coast of the British Isles and of the courage of the men who manned the boats, many of whom were members of the Order, with very little regard for their own safety.

To enable the reader to fully grasp the enormity of the task these men faced it is necessary to

give a historical background into how the lifeboats came into existence and I make no apologies if it appears that some of the text is duplicated, because without the full text, that particular story would be meaningless.

The early history of the Dungeness station is complicated by the fact that there does not appear to have been any clear distinction made between Dungeness, Lydd, Littlestone and New Romney. There is no doubt however, that a lifeboat was placed at Dungeness by the Institution in 1826. It appears that the station lapsed between 1839 and 1854 but there is a continuous history since 1854. A No.2 station was established in 1892. Original No.1 station closed in 1939 when the former No.2 station became No.1.

Actually classified by the Meteorological Office as 'Britain's only Desert', due to its dryness and lack of vegetation,

Dungeness is situated on one of the largest expanses of shingle beach in Europe and lies at the southernmost point of the Romney Marsh, the easily identifiable large triangular section of land jutting out into the English Channel to the south west of Dover and Folkestone. Located a mere 27 miles from the French coast, Dungeness is in fact considerably closer to the French ports of Boulogne and Calais than it is to central London and on a fine day, many miles of the French coast can clearly be seen. With very strong tides and dangerous currents and very little shelter from the surrounding flat, treeless land, (which means that winds can whip up to 'gale force' in no time at all), Dungeness, with both its deepwater areas and its shallow, sandy beaches, has always been a very dangerous area for shipping and many, many ships have foundered here over the centuries.

Many thanks and acknowledgements are given to all those who have helped, in whatever way, in the production of this particular book, without their continued help and encouragement this book would never had made it into print.

Apologies are given for the clarity and sharpness of some of the graphics used in this particular publication, but it must be understood that some of the images are more than 100 years old.

Read and enjoy
Mick Walker
November 2021



Since men first took to sea in boats, shipwrecks have been a regular and tragic hazard. Major shipwrecks, with significant losses of life, became more common in the 19th century when shipping was the primary method for transporting goods and people over substantial distances. One notoriously dangerous place off the coast of England is the Isle of Man. This island lies between the east coast of England and Ireland, in the Irish Sea and is surrounded by hidden reefs that are a potential graveyard for ships.

In the early years of the 19th century, the Isle of Man was home to Sir William Hillary, a minor noble who had managed to squander the large fortune he had inherited. Consequently, he was on the island to avoid his creditors, as well as the family of his irate first wife. Born a Quaker, but now not a practicing one, it may nevertheless have been his Quaker sensibilities that affected him when, on the night of the 14th of December, 1822, the Royal Navy ship HMS Racehorse foundered on rocky reefs off the southeast coast of the island. Five intrepid local men from Castletown, then the capital, made four trips to the wreck to rescue sailors, but in the end, six men from the ship and three of the rescuers drowned.



Accounts vary as to whether Sir William actually took part in the rescue, or just heard accounts of it, but he was moved by the experience and decided to establish an organisation that would provide rescue services, not only on the Isle of Man but across Britain. In February of the following year, he published a pamphlet entitled *An Appeal To The British Navy On The Humanity And Policy Of Forming A National Institution For The Preservation Of Lives And Property From Shipwreck*.

Pamphleteering was a common way of drawing attention to an issue at the time – print a booklet that could be distributed widely to develop interest in a cause. In making his appeal, he presented persuasive arguments based on using the latest tools available to rescue sailors.

For distressed ships to signal for help, he suggested the use of rockets, recently developed by the inventor and military rocket pioneer, Sir William Congreve. To pull ships away from being blown on to reefs he proposed the two string kite system for which Charles Dansey has won a medal from the Royal School of Artillery, just the year before. Kites were also used to carry lines to shore, but William Hillary favoured for that the much more practical and successful Manby Mortar, a small cannon that fired a line from the shore, invented by George William Manby in 1808. Hillary also wanted to take advantage of the flag code recently developed for merchant shipping by the sailor and novelist, Captain Frederick Marryat. Marryat's Code (precursor of the International Code of Signals) was the standard system used throughout most of the 19th century.

Despite this list of innovations, Hillary's appeal fell on deaf ears at the Admiralty. Undeterred, he decided to seek private support. A meeting was held on the 4th of March, 1824, at The Tavern, on Bishopsgate Street in London. Besides Sir William, Thomas Wilson, MP for the City of London and George Hibbert, shipowner and chairman of the West Indies Dock Company were there. The West Indies Dock (today the site of Canary Wharf) was London's major merchant shipping port, so Hibbert's interest in marine safety had a practical aspect. Today Hibbert's image is tarnished by his support for slavery.

The three men agreed to form the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck. King George IV agreed to be a patron, and the society received a Royal Charter in 1860. In 1854 the name was changed to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. There were already existing lifeboats around the coast of the British Isles by that time, typically manned by volunteers drawn from local sailors. There were believed to be 39 such boats in 1824, but within one year the RNLI had added 13 more. It actively encouraged and assisted in the establishment of more stations, until by 1909 there were 280 RNLI boats, and only 17 independent boats, around the coast.

Of course to rescue sailors lifeboats are needed, able to operate in rough seas, and the first ship specially designed for this was an 'unimmegible' boat, designed and patented by Lionel Lukin in 1785. He modelled his ship on some earlier

French designs, and it had airtight compartments that kept it afloat even when completely full of water. Even though he was directly encouraged by King George IV, he too, like Hillary later, found his approaches to the Admiralty received no response.

His work floundered when he entrusted his boat to a captain in Ramsgate for testing, but the captain found it much more useful for smuggling than for rescuing sailors. The first functioning lifeboat using his design was built in 1786 and used at Bamburg Castle, Sharpe, Northumberland. In 1851 Algernon Percy, 4th Duke of Northumberland offered a prize of 100 guineas and attracted 280 entries for a lifeboat competition. The winning design was by James Beeching of Yarmouth, for his 'self-righting' boat.

The Conister Shoals and St Mary's Isle lie off the harbour of Douglas on the Isle of Man. This was another 'hot spot' for shipwrecks, and although Hillary may not have been there for the wreck



of HMS Racehorse, when he saw the packet steamer St. George being washed onto the Shoals on the stormy night of the 19th of November, 1830, he raced to the docks, put together a volunteer crew and set out in a lifeboat to rescue the ship. The lifeboat was almost swamped, and the 60 year old Sir William was washed overboard, but eventually, after a great effort, the crew of 22 and all the 18 on the lifeboat made it safely back into Douglas Harbour. In all, Sir William is credited with being personally involved in saving 300 lives at sea.



In its early years the Institution depended on private philanthropy, and when appeals by Sir William for government support were rejected as being 'a departure from the principle of private benevolence', the Institution went through a period of some decline. It was only when the Duke of Northumberland stepped in as President at the same time as he became First Lord of the

Admiralty, that funding from the Privy Council for Trade was secured. Although this annual support of £2,000 only lasted for 15 years, it was during that time that the Institution was able to establish itself on a firm footing based on endowments and donations. It has continued to support itself in that way, and the familiar collection boxes in shops can be seen all across the country, especially in coastal areas.

During WWI, volunteer boats of the RNLi carried out numerous rescues, although the single largest rescue was in 1907 when multiple crews from stations in Cornwall spend 16 hours rescuing 456 passengers from the ocean liner SS Suevic.

During WWII, lifeboats of the RNLi took part in the evacuation of soldiers from Dunkirk in 1940, as well as rescuing many downed pilots during the Battle of Britain.



The Royal Institute for the preservation of Life from Shipwreck was founded in March 1824. The RNIPLS provided lifeboats to local committees, the Coastguard and Harbour Authorities. The Duke of Northumberland financed a competition for a standard design of a lifeboat. The winner was William Plenty, of Newbury, Berkshire. These “pulling boats” (rowing) were between 18 and 26 feet in length and were powered by between 4 and 10 oars. They had cork in their hull and shaped air-cases fore and aft. Their double ended designs could operate a rudder from either end, so there was no need to turn.

During the early years the RNIPLS suffered from lack of funds and poor organization. Following the loss of the RNIPLS lifeboat Providence and 20 of her crew of 24 in the mouth of the river Tyne in December 1849, the need for reorganisation was recognised. Algernon Percy, 4th Duke of Northumberland,



then First Lord of the Admiralty, took control. Richard Lewis was appointed secretary. The RNIPLS was replaced by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. Plenty’s design was retired and a new design was introduced. These

were larger, self-righting boats. They had a narrow beam, were 34 or 35 feet long with higher end boxes containing the air cases and were tested to self-right when capsized.

Later lifeboats were increased in length and were optionally powered by sail. Motors were introduced in the early 1900’s. They had a greater range, facilitating the merging of lifeboat stations. Innovation in the design of lifeboats is continuous.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution was founded in 1854 to provide a coordinated system of stations around the coastline of the British Isles to rescue sailors from ships in peril. With 237 stations manned by volunteers, the Institution relies on endowments and donations through collection boxes for its activities. More than 140,000 lives have been saved since the

Institution was founded by Sir William Hillary, who lived on the Isle of Man. The Institution has Queen Elizabeth II as its current patron and has been instrumental in the development of lifeboats and safety vests to protect both professional and amateur sailors from the hazards of the sea.

Lifeboats occupy a particular place in people's hearts as unpaid volunteers regularly take to their boats, more often than not, in extremely adverse conditions to rescue others from the sea.

The stories that go with lifeboats and their crews are those of courage and sacrifice. No matter if one is on holiday by the coast, or living inland, we are always aware of the work these brave crews do, and also aware of the tremendous affection the RNLi has throughout the whole of the British Isles. An island race appreciates those who risk their lives continually to help those endangered at sea.



The RNLi has a system of Gold, Silver and Bronze medals awarded to its members for bravery in rescues. The youngest recipient was Frederick Carter, who was 11 years old at the time. Grace Darling was the daughter of a lighthouse keeper who rowed the boat she

and her father used to rescue nine people from the SS Forfarshire in 1838. She was praised for her heroism and awarded an RNLi Silver Medal for gallantry.

Brian Bevan MBE, former Coxswain at Humber Lifeboat Station, is the only crew member in the RNLi's long history to be presented with Bronze, Silver and Gold Medals for Gallantry at the same awards ceremony.

Coxswain Bevan and his crew launched to three medal rescues in just 7 weeks. Looking back at this extraordinary Winter on its 30th anniversary, Brian recalled: 'Spurn Point can



seem bleak at the best of times but we had the worst weather I've ever seen – we seemed to have weeks on end of strong easterly and north-easterly winds and snow.

'You don't often have to chip thick ice off a lifeboat and you could see waves coming at you like the side of a house. I've not experienced anything like that since.'



R.A.O.B. LIFEBOATS

Bro. John Wilson, R.O.H. (Grand Secretary), who is ever on the alert for matters of interest concerning the welfare and progress of the Order, under the Grand Lodge of England, could hardly have realized the delightful task, of absorbing interest, he set, when he intimated that particulars concerning the R.A.O.B. Lifeboats, which were stationed at Dungeness, would not only be useful but interesting to our members. Our Grand Secretary had noticed that the South East Kent Province had lost an esteemed Brother in the death of the late Bro. Clarke. Bro. Clarke was at one time "Bowman" of a famous R.A.O.B. Lifeboat. Many a yarn he told of her "Outings" on errands of mercy, and many an hour I have spent in tracing and checking particulars of the records of the two boats.

It was between the years 1883 and 1888 that a Lifeboat fund was formed and £500 was collected. The expenditure in propagating the fund was subscribed privately, leaving donations to the fund untouched. An extract from the original circular sent out to each Lodge in the whole of the Order estimated that a donation of 6d. per week from the 580 Lodges would bring in £14 10s.



It was pointed out how easily the scheme could be carried out if it had the co-operation of the whole of the Order. The circular was signed as follows

Sir J. Sargent, G.E.C. (Chairman).

Sir W. H. Roberts, G.L.E. (Vice-Chairman).

Sir F. Grey, G.S.B. (Hon. Secretary).

It was not until 1887, however, that funds were available to build a Lifeboat. A boat, costing £440, was built out of this fund, and was stationed at Lydd, in Kent. (In 1892 this station was re-named Dungeness No.1).

“THOSE IN PERIL ON THE SEA”

The records are well marked with instances when the members of the Order have responded with generosity to appeals for purposes outside the Order, and for that reason I wondered what happened to them on that day in January 1923 when they turned down an appeal to subscribe to the cost of a Lifeboat to be presented to the National Society and to bear the name of the late Bro. Lionel Jacobs.

We have examples of benevolent urge well calculated to give rise to hope in the mind of anyone contemplating such an appeal, Ambulances 1914/18; St. Dunstan's; Senghenydd; Lynmouth; Ambulance and War Charities 1939/45; Malta; etc., etc., and one might be forgiven for assuming that Buffaloes of any generation would have made a generous response to an appeal in respect to this age old service maintained “for those in peril on the sea”.

Come with me and look at the record: Grand Lodge meeting, January 27th, 1923, and listen in retrospect as Bro. Albert Ingle speaking to the delegates, moved: “That a fund be inaugurated on a voluntary basis for the purpose of providing and presenting a lifeboat to the National Association in the name of the R.A.O.B., G.L.E.”. He asked permission to add the words, “to be called the Lionel Jacobs”. He said they had attended that day a memorial service to one of the finest men in the Order. He wanted that Grand Lodge and the country to show their sympathy in a practical manner. It would not be the first time that the Order had given a lifeboat. Between the years 1883 and 1888 a fund was organised by M. V. F. Grey and it reached £500. A boat was purchased, named “The R.A.O.B.” in 1887 and remained at Lydd, Dungeness, till 1894, when it was withdrawn because a new type of boat was wanted. The new boat was also named the R.A.O.B. and remained until 1912.

Thus for 25 years the Order was conspicuously recognised by having a boat named the R.A.O.B. it was launched on 64 occasions and rescued 55 persons. Lifeboats now cost £2,000 to upwards of £18,000.

With a membership like theirs and reckoning on a basis of 6d. per head, it could be done.

Bro. W. H. Rickards seconded.

Bro. Innes said he sympathised with the object, but the members had not got the money.

The motion was lost”.

What had all the other appeals got that was lacking in the case of the Lifeboat appeal?

You have noted that not a single solitary soul spoke against the principle and that the only speaker other than the mover and seconder, expressed sympathy with the idea and gave poverty as the only reason for failure to respond. You will also know, if you have studied the records, that his plea of poverty was nonsense, for at that time we were reaching the peak of our strength in numbers and a penny levy on registration for three months would have provided the minimum cost of a boat complete with a spot of grog for those who manned her. In point of fact, if our leadership really believed we had a membership in the region of the figures they were in the habit of using, a single penny registration for two nights would have provided the top sum of £18,000.

There was also the added incentive that it was intended to link the gift with the name of a brother who came from a famous Naval Port and who had served Grand Lodge with ability for many years. But even this did not make the cause sufficiently attractive to move the delegates to action, and the Lifeboat Service and Grand Lodge of England are the poorer as a result.

It may even be that had Manchester, for whom Bro. Ingle was speaking, suggested that the boat should recapture the old “R.A.O.B.” name, the decision might have been different, for Bro. Lionel, if my analysis of the period is correct, inspired both respect and admiration, but did not, at least to the same degree, inspire affection, except in his immediate associates.

There is also one other factor, all our successful “outside rule” appeals have been made when the emotional urge for the good cause was at its highest, and without doubt this fact contributed to success.

Sorry about the Lifeboat all the same!

Fortunately we are able to pay due homage to the brethren of the 1880’s by reproducing the following account, taken from

the official journal of the National Lifeboat Institution, of two R.A.O.B. Lifeboats, presented by members of the Order in response to appeals.

It will be seen from this that our lifeboats were even more successful than Bro. Ingle thought.

Lifeboats

Following a discussion on the unsuccessful Warwickshire Motion of September 1972 in reference to the provision of a lifeboat as an “outside project”, the members of the Fearnought Lodge 6369 of New Romney, South East Kent P.G.L., have sent along a print of a larger picture which hangs in their Lodge room. This in itself is a reproduction of an original which is exhibited in the Lifeboat house.

The picture in the Lodge invariably attracts the interest of visiting members, many of whom have wanted further information. With the object of being able to supply this information, the Fearnought wrote to the Secretary of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, who sent along the following documentary record of the history of the association of the R.A.O.B. with them in the past.

With the approval of the R.N.L.I., this is published in full as received:

RECORD OF THE LIFEBOATS PRESENTED TO THE INSTITUTION BY THE ROYAL ANTEDILUVIAN ORDER OF BUFFALOES.

Between the years 1883 and 1888 an R.A.O.B. Life Boat Fund was formed by Mr. F. Grey and the sum of £500 was collected. In 1887 a Lifeboat costing £440 was built out of this Fund, and was stationed at Lydd in Kent. (In 1883 this station was re-named Dungeness No.1).

The following is an account of the Inaugural Ceremony on the 24th September 1887, which appears in the Institution’s Journal:-

“One of the new 34 feet 10 oared Lifeboats been sent to Lydd, Dungeness, to take the place of a Lifeboat stationed there many

years since. The cost of the new boat has been presented to the Institution by the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, and the boat is named the R.A.O.B., which is the short title of the Order. The public launch of the boat took place at Dungeness on the 24th September, under the superintendence of Mr. C. E. F. Cunninghame Graham, District Inspector of Lifeboats to the Institution.

There was a very large company of spectators, who had arrived by special trains from London, and some of the neighbouring coast towns. A large party of the members of the Order of Buffaloes from London and elsewhere were present, attired in their peculiar dress. On their behalf Mr. J. Sargent formally



handed over the boat to the National Lifeboat Institution, and in doing so specially referred to the services of Mr. F. Grey, the Founder and Honorary Secretary of this Lifeboat Fund.

The gift was acknowledged by the Chairman of the Branch, Alured Denne, Esq., D.L., and by the District Inspector of Lifeboats.

A short and appropriate service was performed by the Rev. F. Day, Vicar of Lydd, and the boat which had been manned by

a crew fully equipped, was then launched by Lady Whittaker Ells, from a platform which had been temporarily erected for the purpose.

Previous to the launching, Lady Ells named the boat by breaking a bottle of wine over the bows”.

This boat served this Station until 1894. She was launched on service 11 times, and rescued 20 lives.

The following is an account of one of her services, carried out on the 24th November 1890:-

“The Coastguard having reported that a vessel was making signals of distress by burning flares and firing rockets abreast of Dungeness Point, the crew of the Lifeboat were immediately summoned and the Boat was got out.

At daylight the S.S. “Calypso”, of Bristol, laden with a general cargo, which had been lying at anchor and had been in collision with another steamer, appeared to be sinking.

The Lifeboat at once went to her, and at the master’s request remained by her. A steam tug which had arrived now took the “Calypso” in tow, eight of her crew being taken into the Lifeboat, which was towed astern of the vessel. When off Sandgate the “Calypso” sunk, the Lifeboat having just time to take off the remainder of her crew, six in number. The tug then towed the boat to Folkestone, where the shipwrecked crew were landed. Expense of service, £23 13 0”.

On the 11th November 1891, the Brigantine “Acolus”, of Arundal, stranded off the Grey Stone point during a heavy gale from the S.W., with squalls, and a very rough sea. She was soon partially dismasted, and was driven along the shore to St. Mary’s, where her anchors held. An attempt to launch the New Romney Lifeboat was made, but it proved utterly impossible to get her afloat owing to the heavy sea and the fury of the wind. Communication with the vessel was then established by means of the Rocket Apparatus, but the line parted. Another and successful effort was then made to get the New Romney Lifeboat off, and she rescued the vessel’s crew of eight men.

The Lydd Lifeboat was also launched to the help of the “Acolus”, but unfortunately she capsized. Being a boat of the self-righting type, she righted herself, but unfortunately two of

the crew lost their lives. The Institution awarded its Silver Medal to Mr. James Lupus, the Coxswain, for his gallantry on this occasion. It also voted £600 in aid of the local subscription for the relief of the widows and children of the two men who had lost their lives.

The second R.A.O.B. Lifeboat replaced the first in 1894. She was built at a cost of £287. The following account appeared in the Institution's Journal in February 1895:- "The smaller Lifeboat of this Station (No.1) has recently been replaced, at the request of the crew, by a new self-righting boat of a fresh type, which has been specially built by the Institution from the designs of its Assistant Surveyor of Lifeboats, Mr. Felix Rubie. This boat is a very light one, only weighing 1 ton 17 cwt. without gear.

She is 34 feet long, 8 feet wide, and rows 10 oars double banked. Her harbour trial in London was in every way satisfactory, and since she has been on her station she has been out on service in a strong wind and rough sea, and was reported to have behaved 'very well indeed'. Like her predecessor this Boat is named the R.A.O.B. in acknowledgment of the gift to the Institution of a fully equipped Lifeboat together with some funds towards her maintenance, from members of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes".

This Boat served at Dungeness until 1912, being launched on service 53 times, and rescuing 35 lives. She was the smaller of two Boats stationed at Dungeness, the other being a large sailing Lifeboat 44 feet long, also of the self-righting type, which had been stationed there in 1898. It had been decided to place this larger Lifeboat at Dungeness following on the capsizing of the first "R.A.O.B."

The following is an account from the Lifeboat Journal for May 1908, of the service on which the second "R.A.O.B." saved the largest number of lives:- "R.A.O.B. Lifeboat. At 4.55 a.m. the Coastguard reported that a vessel was ashore on the Newcombe Bar making signals of distress. With great promptness the No.1 Lifeboat was launched, and in the prevailing S.S.W. gale made for the distressed vessel. With considerable difficulty and risk, owing to the rough sea, the crew of eleven hands were rescued, the Lifeboat being

considerably damaged. The vessel was the steam trawler 'Perseverance', of Boulogne; she became a total wreck. Expense of service, £48:6:0."

The second "R.A.O.B." was also capsized on service. On the 20th November 1893, in a "frightfully heavy sea", when she went out to the help of a vessel called "Johanne Marie". The Lifeboat righted herself at once, and all of her crew got on board again, except the second Coxswain and one other man. The other man reached the shore alive, but the Second Coxswain was drowned.

After coming to the end of her active service in 1912, the second "R.A.O.B." was at London as a demonstration boat until 1922, when she was transferred to Walton-on-the-Naze, in Essex, as a boarding boat to the Motor Lifeboat which lies afloat. She was sold out of service, February 1932.

Altogether the two "R.A.O.B." Lifeboats were launched on service 64 times, and rescued 65 lives, a credit to the organizers of one of the earliest of the R.A.O.B. charities, and to the pluck and devotion to duty of our brother Buffs who invariably manned the boats.



R.A.O.B. LIFEBOATS AT DUNGENESS

Today's Dungeness lifeboat is called "Pride and Spirit" but two of the early R.N.L.I. Lifeboats at Dungeness were called the R.A.O.B.1 and R.A.O.B. 2.

The first was stationed there on the 19th September 1887. The cost of £440 was a gift from the R.A.O.B. and at a ceremony held on the 24th September 1887, Lady Whittaker Ells christened the Boat "RAOB" The boat rowed 10 oars and measured 34 foot x 7 foot 6 inch's.

During a difficult launch through the surf in a storm in November of 1893, the "RAOB" lifeboat capsized and the 2nd Coxswain Mr. J. Jarratt was drowned. The lifeboat was beached and the crew all volunteered to go out again.

A second boat named "RAOB" was sent to Dungeness in November 1894 to replace the old boat. This new lifeboat was designed by Felix Rubie and weighed only 1.75 tons to facilitate launching off a shingle beach, as at Dungeness. The "RAOB 2" stayed on station until 1912.

The RAOB 1 launched 11 times saving 20 lives. The second lifeboat RAOB 2 launched 53 times saving 35 lives.

One of the interesting facts of The Dungeness Lifeboats is that it was the last R.N.L.I. lifeboat station that used women to haul the lifeboat back up the beach. This work by local ladies only finished in 1952.



The Ladies that hauled the lifeboats up the beach in 1908

THIS IS THE TRUE STORY of a HERO
&
THE BIRTH of BUFFALOISM at DUNGENESS

In 1887 the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes donated a lifeboat to the Royal national Lifeboat Institution. They placed that lifeboat on a station at Dungeness in Kent. This was to be the first of two Lifeboats at this station bearing the name "R.A.O.B."

On the night of the 6th February 1889, during a furious gale from the Southeast, accompanied by a blinding snow storm, distress signals were seen off No.2 Battery, Dungeness, which proved to be from the schooner "Elizabeth Alice" from Barrow-in-Furness, bound for Maryport with a cargo of copper ore and cement.

The Dungeness Lifeboat "R.A.O.B.", under the command of Coxswain Lucas, was successfully launched and made out to the vessel which had become stranded on the sand bank. Owing to the anchor dragging and unsuccessful attempts to get a line aboard the schooner, the lifeboat was swept past the stricken vessel. It was impossible in those angry seas to row back again to the schooner and the lifeboat was beached some distance leeward. The master of the "Elizabeth Alice" decided therefore to launch his own lifeboat off of the Elizabeth Alice in the hope of saving his crew, but this boat was quickly overwhelmed by the very heavy seas and the ships mate. Maurice Street was drowned.

Again stress signals from the stricken ship were seen back on the beach and it was soon decided to make another gallant attempt. This time they were to use the coastguard "galley" manned by six coastguards. (all volunteers) They were led by the second Coxswain of the "R.A.O.B." Lifeboat, Charles Taylor. Mr. Taylor's five crew members were John Ranson, William Atkins, William Carter, George Hamlin and Samuel Edmonds. Taylor and Hamlin had been members in the crew of the lifeboat "R.A.O.B." used in the first attempt.

It was certainly no easy task for this second attempt, weather conditions were still appalling, an angry sea, with freezing rain

and sleet beating down in gusting squalls. Somehow they managed to get afloat and with sub human hard work at the oars, they reached the schooner without mishap. Hearts began to rise as the rescue seemed within reach. With great seamanship they endeavoured to clear the stricken ships lifeboat which obstructed their best course for the rescue. They were almost clear when they were struck by a heavy sea which washed out Coastguard George Laddick Hamlin. While the crew tried to retrieve him, yet another sea bore down upon them, this time washing everything out of the galley with the exception of one oar, ropes were quickly thrown from the "Elizabeth Alice" and the very wet and cold coastguards were pulled aboard the schooner with the exception of the unfortunate Mr. Hamlin and sadly there was no sign of him.

The galley with one remaining oar, unmanageable and helpless, drifted ashore, the wonder being that instead of the one life being lost, the whole of that heroic crew were not drowned as well. Mr. Hamlin's body was recovered an hour or so later, but all efforts to revive him failed. George Laddick Hamlin left a widow and six children to mourn him.

This Tragic event became known Nation Wide and a fund was immediately started for the family of the deceased. Because of the Buffaloes association with Dungeness and the "R.A.O.B." lifeboat there, a great number of R.A.O.B. Lodges throughout the British Isles sent in very generous donations. It was soon decided to open a Lodge at Dungeness and call that Lodge the "HAMLIN LODGE".

The day arrived, Whit Monday 1889. A special Train from London brought some two - hundred or more members of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes down to Dungeness. They Initiated ALL the lifeboat crew members into the



Order, to form this new Lodge in memory of the late gallant Coastguard George Laddick Hamlin.

The Lifeboat House was used as a temporary Lodge, and it was decorated in true Buffalo style. In all, twenty three members were admitted that night and the new HAMLIN LODGE was formed. Buffaloism was born in Dungeness from the tragic events of the 6th February 1889.

The tribute paid to Mr. Hamlin in Lydd Church (Nr Dungeness) by the Curate of the Coast, The Rev. Joseph Castle, was as follows:-

“Mr. Hamlin was one of a lifeboat crew, he was in his place when the first attempt at rescue was made. When the Coastguard Galley was about to be launched Hamlin was among the first to volunteer his services. Not being a strong and having gone through great fatigue in the first attempt at rescue, he was recommended by the Officer to give up his place to another man, but worn out as he was, he refused to do so and so went to his death, as grand and noble a death as a man ever yet died. He was a quiet, unassuming, God fearing man, always at his post. He was ever ready to do a kind action for anybody. WELL MAY WE HONOUR HIS MEMORY”.



CHARLES TAYLOR Naval Veteran and Lifeboat Coxswain

A naval veteran with a splendid record, including a Royal decoration for life saving, Mr. Charles Taylor of 43 York Street, Cowes, was found dead in an outhouse at his home on Saturday, having passed away suddenly. He was 80 and a veteran of the sea with 36 years' service in the Royal Navy and Coastguards to his credit. When in the Coastguard service Mr. Taylor had a thrilling experience at Dungeness. In those days the Coastguards helped to man the lifeboats, which were of the old fashioned rowing and sailing type, calling for high qualities of seamanship. Taylor was the coxswain of the Dungeness boat and for saving life on the occasion of the wreck in 1891 of the

Scandinavian ship *Aeolus*, when the lifeboat crew had a particularly hazardous task; deceased was decorated by King Oscar II with the Oscar silver medal for gallantry. On another occasion Taylor miraculously escaped losing his life. The Dungeness lifeboat put out to sea in very stormy conditions and was capsized with the loss of two of the crew and when the boat was washed up on the shore, Taylor was recovered from it in a state of exhaustion. After that thrilling experience Taylor retired from the post as coxswain of the Dungeness lifeboat, was promoted to the rank of chief boatman and transferred to the East Cowes Coastguards. On leaving the service he was for a number of years boatswain at the Columbine Yard and later entered the service of Messrs. J. S. White and Co., by whom he was employed for about 20 years. In recognition of their services at the wreck of the *Aeolus*, Taylor and the other members of the Dungeness lifeboat crew were in 1894, made honorary members of the Hamlin Lodge of the R.A.O.B. Four years later, on deceased's removal to East Cowes, he was made a primo of the Royal Sovereign lodge, which then met at East Cowes. It is thought that Taylor was about the oldest Buffalo in the Island.

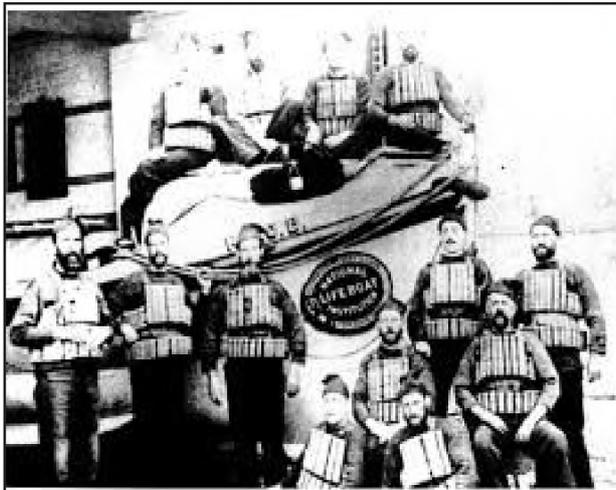
He leaves a widow and four sons and five daughters living out of a family of 12. Few families have a better record of patriotic service. The eldest son died in Scotland whilst serving in the Royal Navy. All five of the other sons served in the Forces during the Great War and one of them (Percy) was in the R. A. and made the supreme sacrifice. The funeral took place on Wednesday, the first part of the service being held in the Wesleyan Church, the Rev. Frank Rowley officiating. The mourners were the widow, Messrs. William A. Walter and R. Taylor (sons), Mesdames Abbott, Hayles, Press, Woodmore, and Bevand (daughters), Mr. C. Abbott and Miss I. Press (grandchildren), Messrs. L. Hayles, T. Bevand, A. Woodmore and J. H. Press (sons in-law), and A. Wakeford. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution was represented by Capt. E. D. Drury (Chief Inspector) and Mr. E. E. Wills (Resident Inspector). Others represented included Messrs J. H. Harnett and W. and D. Hayles. Six brethren of the RAOB acted as bearers. Primo P. Ingram P.P.G.P. and a number of brethren from the Royal Sovereign and Prince of Wales Lodges also attended. Among the many floral tributes was one from the Royal Sovereign Lodge R.A.O.B.

Lifeboats stationed at Dungeness RNLI Lifeboat station
since 1861

After the *Providence* was moved to New Romney in 1861 there were several shipwrecks. These were mostly dealt with by the lifeboats of Rye and Romney. In 1873 a dreadful collision occurred just off Dungeness, when the ship 'Northfleet' was lost. The public attention which this tragedy attracted because of the heavy loss of life resulted in the reopening of the Dungeness Lifeboat Station in 1874.

The lifeboat '*David Hullet*' came on station in that year. During its period of service, it was launched fifteen times, saving twenty seven lives. It was decided to replace the '*David Hullet*', and in 1887 a new self-righting lifeboat, *The 'R.A.O.B. 130'* arrived at Dungeness.

Because of the number of shipwrecks in the vicinity of Dungeness,



the R.N.L.I. decided to send one of its largest self-righting lifeboats to be kept moored afloat to supplement the services of *The 'R.A.O.B.'*. This was done in 1892 and was called the 'Number 2' boat. The new boat was called '*Thomas Simcox*'.

(R.N.L.B. R.A.O.B. crew which took the Sandal Magna when the R.A.O.B. capsized - 1891)

The 'R.A.O.B.' was replaced in 1912 by the '*Mary Teresa Boileau*'. The replacement for the number two lifeboat, '*Thomas Simcox*', in 1915, had been the '*David Barclay*'. It was decided in 1929 to close the number one lifeboat station, which left the number two lifeboat, '*David Barclay*', to become known as Dungeness Lifeboat Station.

The *'David Barclay'* was succeeded by the *'Charles Cooper Henderson'* in 1933. Altogether the *'Charles Cooper Henderson'* was launched one hundred and seventy-one times and saved sixty-three lives.

The *'Charles Cooper Henderson'* was replaced in 1957 by the *'Mabel E. Holland'*. In 1977 the *'Rother Class'* lifeboat, *'Alice Upjohn'* arrived at Dungeness/

She was replaced by *'Mersey Class'* lifeboat, *'Pride and Spirit'* in 1992 which was a generous gift from Eric and Jean Cass of Virginia Water, Surrey, and cost £658,000 to build and equip. During her 22 years on service at Dungeness she rescued 388 people and saved 34 Lives. In February 2014 She was replaced by the current Shannon class lifeboat "*The Morrell*" Funded by the legacy of Mrs Barbara Morrell and a cost of around £3 Million for the lifeboat and launch and recovery system



Shannon Class Lifeboat



THE SERVICE RECORD of
The RAOB DUNGENESS LIFEBOATS

R.N.L.B. R.A.O.B. (1st) 1886-1894.

- 10th February 1889* - Elizabeth Alice, swept past vessel.
29th November 1889 - Schooner Minnie Elkin of Carnarvan, saved vessel (6).
11th November 1890 - Aeolus Lifeboat capsized, 2 of crew lost.
11th November 1890 - Barque Erwin Rickniers of Geesterminde, rendered assistance.
24th November 1890 - S.S. Calypso of Bristol (14).
17th November 1893 - Johanne Marie Lifeboat capsized, 1 of crew lost.
24th February 1894 - Barque Kelton of Glasgow, rendered assistance.

R.N.L.B. R.A.O.B. (2nd) 1894-1912.

- 15th February 1895* - Schooner Ben Aigen of Hull (4).
2nd August 1895 - Ketch Appledram of Poole (2).
2nd November 1898 - Schooner Queen of the Seas of Gravesend (7).
29th November 1898 - Schooner Meerenti of Riga, assisted to save vessel.
31st December 1898 - Ship Glenard of Glasgow, rendered assistance.
12th January 1899 - S.S. Elaine of Liverpool, stood by vessel.
11th April 1900 - Barque Capella of Bremen, stood by vessel.
8th January 1901 - S.S. Dragon of Falmouth, stood by vessel.
6th April 1901 - S.S. Alcinous of Liverpool, stood by vessel.
25th November 1902 - Barque Crown of India of Liverpool, rendered assistance.
19th February 1904 - S.S. Lake Michigan of Liverpool, stood by vessel.
20th February 1904 - S.S. Lake Michigan of Liverpool, landed 46 persons from Tug.

8th September 1905 - Fishing Lugger St. Louis of Boulogne, assisted to save vessel (8).

15th August 1907 - Fishing Vessel Mizpah of Dungeness, saved boat (1).

6th September 1907 - S.S. Canibrie of Hull, assisted to save vessel.

10th November 1907 - S.S. Bayard of Christama, stood by vessel.

3rd December 1907 - S.S. Perserverance of Boulogne, assisted vessel (11).

3rd November 1908 - S.S. Orlando of Sundsvall, stood by vessel.

3rd March 1909 - Barque Josephine of London, assisted vessel (2).

19th June 1909 - H.M.S. Sappho, stood by vessel and landed (64).



In a church situated quite near the lifeboat house there is a cross that was made from a broken skid from the station. These 'Skids' were made from solid oak and when they were wet, which was most of the time, made them very heavy and difficult to handle.

The Sanctuary & The William Fagg Lodge

Bro. Jim Campbell ROH.

A unique building set just back from the beach at Dungeness and almost in the shadow of the lighthouse. This was originally built during WWII as a P.L.U.T.O. building (Pipeline Under The Ocean) pumping fuel to France for the war effort. After WWII it was used as a community centre for the residents of Dungeness and also contained a small chapel. The William Fagg Lodge met there for 35 years and the chapel was still in use until recently.



When I joined The William Fagg Lodge towards the end of 2005 there was a South East

Kent Provincial Grand Lodge website. This was full of interesting historical information about both the RAOB and the lifeboat in Dungeness. That website has now gone but, thanks to Bro. Harry Reid ROH PG Sec., the information from it has been made available to me so I can use it on this website I have constructed for The William Fagg Lodge.

All information on the following pages was apparently from Mr. Edward Carpenter of Lydd, Kent and is well worth a read for its historical value. I have merely taken the liberty of tidying up the spelling/grammar etc. plus a couple of edits for updating purposes.

Everything on all pages except these next three is my responsibility and I welcome any suggestions, corrections or additions from anybody.

Bro. Jim Campbell ROH.

Dungeness Lodges

The Hamlin Lodge was the first Lodge at Dungeness but, just prior to the Second World War, there was just one lodge open in the area and that was a Lodge in nearby Lydd called the Fearnought Lodge No.6369. That Lodge was kept going all through the war by a few Brothers who were in the main fisherman from Lydd and Dungeness, but one other Brother was Bro. William (Bill) Fagg. Brother Bill was a printer by trade and ran his business in Lydd called "Lydd Printing Services". It is said that Bill would often register Brothers in the Lodge who were away fighting on the battle fronts during the war, just to keep the numbers up in the Lodge to keep it going. After the war he worked hard to rebuild the Fearnought Lodge to once again be a good strong Lodge, and his printing service was often used to promote The Order in the area.

In 1970 a second Lodge was opened in Lydd and it was named the Lyddite Lodge No.9728. This Lodge did very well for a number of years but in 1981 it started to falter and, at the end of 1981, the Lyddite Lodge amalgamated with the Fearnought Lodge and was renamed the Fearnought Lyddite Lodge.

On the 6th May 1973 Brother William Fagg ROH sadly passed away and this stalwart of the area was not around anymore, but his memory was. He was one of those Brothers who you never ever heard a bad word said about, but everyone who knew him, was proud to have been a friend, a mate, a Brother.

On the 14th December 1974 the inevitable happened and the William Fagg Lodge No.9986 was born to Bro. Bill Fagg's memory. It was opened in The Sanctuary at Dungeness. A good number of the brothers and the new initiates worked for, or were connected to, the Dungeness Power Station that was being built at that time and some of the other members were fisherman or lifeboat men. The William Fagg Lodge was to be a good strong Lodge, full of fun and life, a credit to the memory of Bro. William Fagg ROH.

However, in later years the Power station was completed and Brothers moved away. The fishing fleet here has been depleted and sadly some Brothers have passed away. The area is not

vastly populated and this meant that both the Fearnought Lyddite and the William Fagg Lodges started to struggle.

It became evident that amalgamation was the only way to survive. On the 1st September 2000 that amalgamation came about and the Lodge was renamed the W. Fagg of Lydd Lodge No.9986. (For technical reasons connected with the displaying of the name on regalia this was later changed to William Fagg Lodge No.9986).

The name of the late Brother William Fagg ROH still lives on, his regalia still hangs in The Sanctuary. He will always be remembered as he was in life, a true Buff who loved the area he lived in, and loved the Order.

There is always a true and warm welcome at the W. Fagg of Lydd Lodge. So if you are ever in the area, come down to Dungeness and visit us. Just head towards the Dungeness Lighthouse, you will pass the Life boat on your left, and we are another 150 yards on the right hand side. It is signed The Sanctuary, R.A.O.B. You cannot miss us and if you do, you will soon know, as you will get your feet wet! (As stated elsewhere on this site, the meetings are now held elsewhere).



In the early days the lifeboat was manned by a mixture of Coastguard officers and fishermen. Later on, it was manned solely by the fishermen and because so few men were available when an emergency went up for a lifeboat launch, it fell to the fishermen's wives and daughters to launch and recover the boat.



A very important part of our station's history belongs to an amazing group of ladies, known as 'The Dungeness Lady Launchers'.

These ladies were a tough breed indeed, not only did they have to pull the extremely heavy 'woods' made from solid oak (also known as 'skids') into position beneath the lifeboat's keel in order to launch and recover the boat but furthermore, upon launching from off the shingle beach in typical 'Dungeness severely adverse weather conditions', they gave piggy-backs to their men



onto the lifeboat, in order to prevent them from getting wet and themselves suffering from hypothermia before they even reached the casualty vessel. All this, and no protective or waterproof clothing for the ladies, other than their own greatcoats and scarves!

The tradition of Lady Launchers continued at Dungeness for over one hundred years and only ended in 1979 when the station operated its first lifeboat launched from a carriage (RNLB 'Alice Upjohn') and operations moved to the station's current location on the beach.

Dungeness was the last station where women helped to launch the lifeboat. Two women launchers, Miss Madge Tart and her sister-in-law, Mrs Ellen Tart, members of a family whose men folk and women folk have helped to man and launch the Dungeness lifeboat for more than a century were each awarded the Institutions Gold Badge in 1953. In 1979 Mrs Tart's daughter Doris, and Mrs Joan Bates, were each awarded Gold Badges in recognition of 44 years' and 37 years' service respectively as shore helpers.

Dungeness has always been (and to some extent – still is), a very remote place, open to the elements and with just a scattering of fishermen's houses and converted railway carriages spread out liberally across the shingle beach. In fact, it was well into the twentieth century before a proper road was built connecting the inhabitants with the nearest town of Lydd. With no proper roads, the favoured way of inhabitants crossing this great expanse of bone-jarring shingle was by wearing 'Backstays' (pronounced Baxters) on their feet. These were flat wooden boards with a leather strap across to hold them on. They may still be seen occasionally, today.



Today, across the UK and Ireland, a fleet of over 400 lifeboats are waiting for the call to rescue. Powered by our brave volunteers and your support, these lifeboats have saved countless lives across the years.



The Crew and Lady Launchers of the Dungeness Lifeboat Station



One of the problems when writing the history of the RAOB is that when the author thinks he has exhausted all research channels and the book is ready for print along comes a further item of interest, an item which really cannot be left out.

Such has happened to me on several occasions during the production of the Museum Collections and I have had no trouble in incorporating said item into the book. Problem with this particular book is that to try and meld the item into the core story is proving difficult as it throws the rest of the text into confusion so I hope, (because I think it is important), you will forgive me if I just add it to the end of this particular publication.

The item in the form of a report/flyer, was sent to me by a very good friend who is a member of Grand Council and a fellow historian, the origin of the piece is unknown.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th, 1887
Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes
Report of the Launch of the "R.A.O.B." Lifeboat

On Saturday afternoon, Sept. 4th, 1887, at Dungeness Point. on the dangerous coast of Sussex, Lady Whittaker Ellis christened the magnificent new Lifeboat, presented to their country by the Members of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (at a cost of £600), a Society well known for their works of philanthropy towards those in distress both far and near.

Lady Whittaker Ellis, accompanied by Mrs. Edgell, Sir Whittaker, and Members of the Committee, travelled from Charing Cross to Dungeness Point, and on alighting, her ladyship was presented by Mrs. Edgell, on behalf of the Order, with a magnificent bouquet, composed exclusively of rare flowers the colours of the Lifeboat, viz., red, white and pale blue, the same being looped with ribbons of like colour.

Some 300 Members of the Order attended to witness the launch, and the party was here joined by the Mayors of Rye and Lydd, and after a wearying tramp of nearly a mile over a very loose shingle, the lifeboat house was reached. From the

roof to the shore was displayed a profusion of bunting, and here was a pretty group of coast Guardsmen in the favorite picturesque dress of the blue jacket, with their wives and children also a cluster of artillerymen from the Lydd camp, who had only that afternoon buried their unfortunate comrade, who was accidentally shot while marking at the butts last week.

On that wild expanse of Sussex shore, where thousands of thousands of broad acres of beach, entirely void of vegetation or trees, is all that there is to be seen, stand three or four little wooden huts, made for the most part of shipwrecked vessels, and these are the abodes of those gallant "salts" who have volunteered to man the new lifeboat.

Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes.

REPORT OF THE LAUNCH OF THE "R.A.O.B." LIFEBOAT,

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On Saturday afternoon, Sept. 4th, 1887, at Dungeness Point, on the dangerous coast of Sussex, Lady Whittaker Ellis christened the magnificent new Lifeboat, presented to their country by the Members of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (at a cost of £2000), a Society well known for their works of philanthropy towards those in distress both far and near.

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Some 500 Members of the Order attended to witness the launch, and the party was here joined by the Mayors of Rye and Lydd, and after a merry tramp of nearly a mile over a very loose shingle, the lifeboat-house was reached. From the roof to the shore was displayed a profusion of bunting, and here was a pretty group of coast Guardsmen in the favorite picturesque dress of the blue jacket, with their wives and children; also a cluster of artillerymen from the Lydd camp, who had only that afternoon buried their unfortunate comrade, who was accidentally shot while marking at the butts last week. On that wild expanse of Sussex shore, where thousands of thousands of broad acres of beach, entirely void of vegetation or trees, is all that there is to be seen, stand three or four little wooden huts, made for the most part of shipwrecked vessels, and these are the abodes of those gallant "salts" who have volunteered to man the new lifeboat.

A temporary stage, covered with bunting, was erected on the shore, along side of which lay the beautiful vessel, ready at the given signal to glide gracefully as a swan on to the mighty ocean, for the saving of the lives of the shipwrecked.

Mr. Denne, J.P., received the party on the shore, and on Lady Ellis ascending the stage cheer after cheer rang out heartily from the assembled crowd, which was answered back again from the crew of a neighbouring lifeboat, who had sailed round to welcome and bid God speed to their new sister vessel and its gallant crew in their great and heroic work of mercy.

Sir John Sergeant, Chairman of the R.A.O.B. Lifeboat Committee, then formally presented the boat, on behalf of the Order, to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and the magnificent gift was accepted in touching and suitable terms by Lieut. C. Graham, R.N., who congratulated the brethren on the consummation of their desire to effect a crowning act of philanthropy for their country as a thank-

offering to God for His mercies in sparing our beloved Queen to rule over this favoured land for so many, many years. After this Lieut. Graham, on behalf of the National Life Boat Institution, requested the local committee at Dungeness, to take charge of the boat for them, that it might always be in readiness to fulfil its mission when required.

The local Secretary, in eloquent terms, accepted the trust, stating with much emotion that the Buffs, might be sure that, with a crew so brave and fearless as the Dungeness crew, no efforts would ever be spared by them to respond to the call of duty.

The Mayor of Lydd then offered his congratulations to the assembled Buffs, on their giving effect to their principles of philanthropy in so substantial and valuable a manner, and thanked the gallant crew in anticipation for the devoted services he knew they were prepared to and would render in the saving of life at sea.

The Chairman of the local committee then thanked Lady Ellis for so graciously attending on the committee's occasion to launch the boat, after which the beautiful and touching "Hymn for those at sea" was sung by all present, to the accompaniment of the roaring waves, which incessantly broke upon the shore. The Vicar of Lydd then invoked God's blessing on the boat and its gallant crew, after which, Lady Ellis took a bottle of wine in her hand, broke it over the bows of the beautiful vessel and christened her "R.A.O.B.," saying at the same time, "May God prosper this life boat!" Immediately the lashings were slackened, and the noble vessel, with all her crew fully equipped, accompanied by Lieut. Graham, at the helm, slid gracefully into the sea amidst singing cheers, the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, eye, and indeed with many a tear falling from the eyes of Members of the Order, in gratitude and joy, that at least their poor efforts to do some good in the world had that day been productive of a benefit to their fellow men.

When the boat was fairly out to sea many of the Order were introduced to Sir Whittaker and Lady Ellis, and for all there was a kind and encouraging word and a hearty shake of the hand, and Sir Whittaker, in most kind language, concluding with the words, "After what I have witnessed to-day, Edgell, I am proud that I belong to the Order."

When the boat returned to shore, after an hour's cruise, she was photographed with her crew, and another photograph was taken of the Buffs, in full regalia and jewels. Then "all hands" were busy in hauling her up into the boat house, and after bidding God speed to the crew, the whole party returned to their several destinations.

The proceeds of the sale of the above Report (after deducting necessary cost of printing only) will be handed over to the Committee of the R.A.O.B. Lifeboat Fund.

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The proceeds of the sale of the above Report (after deducting necessary cost of printing only) will be handed over to the Committee of the RAOB Lifeboat Fund. You will note that the original report was sold to raise money for the R.A.O.B. Lifeboat Fund. We feel this is a fine tradition well worth carrying on and we therefore thank you for kindly paying the purchase price of 30 pence which will be donated in full to the RAOB Club Museum Fund.

Fund raising didn't just stop there however, many more ideas and functions were held to raise funds for this worthy cause including the famous Lledo die cast models.

Pictured below are just two of the models I have in my collection of memorabilia but more designs are still available via the internet and sold by various people to raise funds for different charities.



Although this book is primarily about the lifeboats and fund raising at Dungeness, it would be remiss of me not to include the story of the Penlee lifeboat disaster wherein the Order lost members of the lifeboat crew.

On 19 December 1981, the crew of the Penlee lifeboat Solomon Browne were lost attempting to rescue the crew and passengers on board a stricken coaster.

On a stormy December evening, the Penlee lifeboat Solomon Browne battled heavy seas and hurricane force winds to reach the Union Star, a stricken coaster being swept towards the coast of Cornwall.

After several attempts to get alongside the coaster, the lifeboat crew rescued four of the eight people on board. But rather than turn back to shore, they made a final heroic rescue attempt and all radio contact was lost.

The Union Star was on her maiden voyage, sailing from Holland to Ireland with a cargo of fertilisers. She carried a crew of four, as well as Captain Henry Morton, his wife and two teenage stepdaughters, who had been picked up on a stop so that they could be together for the holidays.

At 6pm on 19 December 1981, disaster struck. The Falmouth Coastguard received a call from the Union Star: her engines had failed and would not restart. There was a fierce storm underway and the rough seas and powerful winds were blowing the coaster towards the treacherous Cornish coastline.

In Mousehole (a tiny fishing village in West Cornwall), word spread that the lifeboat may be needed and Penlee's Solomon Browne was put on standby. A dozen men answered the call for crew, but only eight were needed. A rescue under such severe conditions would be difficult and Coxswain William Trevelyan Richards chose the best crew for the task:

Second Coxswain and Mechanic James Madron
Assistant Mechanic Nigel Brockman
Emergency Mechanic John Blewett
Crew Member Charles Greenhaugh
Crew Member Kevin Smith
Crew Member Barrie Torrie
Crew Member Gary Wallis

One of the Union Star's fuel tanks had filled with water, making an engine restart impossible. The coaster was drifting dangerously close to the shore, so the Coastguard called in an RNAS (The Royal Naval Air Service) Sea King helicopter to rescue the crew.



The coaster was rolling and pitching on the wild seas, so violently that her mast threatened to collide with the helicopter overhead.

The aircrew decided it had become too dangerous to continue the rescue mission, the Union Star's mast was too close and their line wasn't long enough to reach the deck from further away. The coaster had drifted to just 2 miles from the perilous coastline, so the *Solomon Browne* was finally launched, 2 hours after the first alert.

The helicopter stood by as Penlee's 14m Watson class wooden lifeboat launched into the hurricane force 12 gale, fighting against 90 knot winds and 18m waves. The powerless Union



Star had already lost one anchor, but was desperately trying to hold her position as the lifeboat fought the harsh breaking seas to come alongside it. The *Solomon Browne* struck against the side of the coaster and the lifeboat crew stood against the railings, throwing lines across to pull themselves alongside. The lifeboat

valiantly battled to come alongside the coaster for half an hour.

From the helicopter, Lieutenant Commander Russell Smith saw dark shadows of people in fluorescent orange lifejackets run across the deck from the wheelhouse to the lifeboat, where the crew were waiting to catch them as they jumped. The *Solomon Browne* radioed back to the Coastguard: 'we've got four off' and the helicopter turned back to base, assuming

the lifeboat would head to shore. But the lifeboat decided to make a final rescue attempt, and after that point, all radio contact was lost.

The Coastguard radioed back to the lifeboat, but there was no response. Ten minutes later, the lights of the Solomon Browne disappeared.

The helicopter refuelled and launched once more. Lifeboats from Sennen Cove, The Lizard and St Mary's were also sent to help their colleagues, but their searches were unsuccessful.

At daybreak, the Union Star was found capsized on the rocks by Tater Du Lighthouse and wreck debris from the lifeboat began to wash ashore

Coxswain Trevelyan Richards was posthumously awarded the RNLI's Gold Medal for Gallantry and the rest of the crew were awarded Bronze Medals. The names of the eight Penlee crew members who valiantly fought to save those on board the Union Star are inscribed on the RNLI Memorial in Poole.

The disaster inspired a public appeal for the village of Mousehole, which raised over £3 million – the equivalent of £10 million by today's standards.

Lieutenant Commander Russell Smith, the pilot of the Sea King helicopter, recounted: 'The greatest act of courage that I have ever seen, and am ever likely to see, was the penultimate courage and dedication shown by the Penlee crew. 'They were truly the bravest eight men I've ever seen, who were also totally dedicated to upholding the highest standards of the RNLI'.

Every year on 19th December, the Christmas lights at Mousehole are dimmed between 8 and 9pm in memory of the 16 people who lost their lives, leaving just the Cross and Angels shining down across the village and out to sea.

Bro. Nigel Brockman was the only Member of the RAOB on the Soloman Brown on that Fateful night, his younger son Neil also a Member of the Crew was turned away as the Coxswain would only allow one Member from a Family



to go. Bro. Andrew Perry ROH Secretary of the Penlee Lodge was the slipsman on that night.

Sadly the Penlee Lodge amalgamated with the Golden Acre Lodge in 2020, they meet in the RAOB Club in Penzance. There is one Brother who is serving on the current lifeboat Bro. Kevin Brockman ROH who is the Son of Bro. Nigel Brockman who died in the disaster.



For those of you who purchased the RAOB GLE Centenary Jewel (1866-1966) and have yet to study it carefully, there is reference to the presentation of lifeboats, 1887/1894.

The designer of the jewel Bro. W. A. Mackay, K.O.M. gives his reason for the inclusion of this piece of history as follows:- After a survey of The History of the Order, I have endeavoured to span the last hundred years and to include in the space of a single Jewel the outstanding achievements of which the Order can be justly proud, and of which I find many members are unaware.

The ribbon is composed of the colours of our Four Degrees: 1st Degree: Centre of ribbon 2nd Degree: Superimposed on this 3rd and 4th Degrees: Right and left borders. It is hung from the usual carrier, Buffalo Horns with sash, Blue panel and the word "Centenary".



The ribbon carries a bar, bearing dates 1866-1966 and having a red and gold "C" suspended from it. The Jewel is carried by four links of a chain denoting the link of Brotherhood and completing the circle of one hundred years.

The Jewel is based on one of the original Primo's Jewels. (This is as far as I can ascertain; the Jewel I examined was presented to a Brother fifty years ago.) As centre piece I chose the medallion of the Order, and on this I superimposed the shield of the Order, but without chargers.

The field of the shield is divided into quarters by means of the Cross of St. George. (This I coloured yellow to obviate hurting some Brothers' national susceptibilities). The four quarters bear "achievements" denoting those most outstanding in our history:

1. The presentation of lifeboats, 1887/1894.
2. The presentation of ambulances, 1914/1918 and 1939/1945, and also to commemorate the Brothers who died during these years.
3. The Orphanage Scheme and Convalescent Homes.
4. The Benevolent Funds and War Annuities.



This book would not seem complete if I did not include the words to what has become “The Sailor’s Hymn” and by that I mean that old classic “Eternal Father, Strong to Save”. This particular hymn has been part of the Absent Brethren Toast in many coastal areas around the British Isles that have a sea going connection.

It has been part of many RAOB ceremonies including the presentation of the Roll of Honour emblem (The Galleon of State encircled by her left arm represents the seagoing character of our Nation which enabled her to exercise the principle of benevolence towards her many subjects). and has been used in a lot of our services where we celebrate specific occasions such as the memorial service to the Airship R101 in 1930 and the Bull Nose Ceremony in Hull.

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who biddest the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy Word,
Who walked on the foaming deep,
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Trinity of love and power!
Our family shield in danger’s hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect us wheresoever we go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

The Grand Council have as their Absent Brethren Hymn an adapted version of this hymn as follows.

The R.A.O.B. Lifeboat

The reason for the R.A.O.B. Grand Council sing “For those in peril on the sea” as can be seen from the attached article dating from 4th September 1887 is the connection between the R.A.O.B. and lifeboats.

As is clear from the article the R.A.O.B. donated a lifeboat known as “The R.A.O.B.” and it is to commemorate this connection that the hymn is sung.

You will note that the original report was sold to raise money for the R.A.O.B. Lifeboat Fund.

We feel this is a fine tradition well worth carrying on and we therefore thank you for kindly paying the purchase price of 30 pence which will be donated in full to the R.A.O.B. Club Museum Fund.

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bid'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Trinity of love and power!
Our Brethren shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them whereso'er they go;
And ever let there rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.



Items of historical and photographic interest



Not quite sure what this picture represents, certainly not 100 years of the RAOB Lifeboat as it is well documented that the first RAOB Lifeboat was purchased in 1887. It could be 100 years of fund raising for the provision of Lifeboats.



Lifeboat Crew and Mascot



R.N.L.B. MARY THERESA BOILEAU 1907

Seated left to right:- George (Wener) Tart (George Tart's father), Jack Brignall, Alfred Tart, John Pope, Charles Williams, Douglas Oiller.

Standing front row left to right:- Charles (Browzells) Oiller, Charles Oiller, William (Beefers) Thomas, Old Jack Oiller, Jack (Chockum) Oiller, Tom Richard Tart.

Standing back row 3rd from left, William Tart, 5th, 6th & 7th from left, Fred & Bill Tart, Peter Oiller.



Lauching the Lifeboat



Aunt Mable at work - 1960



Christening and launch of R.N.L.B. Mary Theresa Boileau at Dungeness - 1912



Coastguards still continuing with fundraising at Lifeboat Day in Folkestone - 1906

Also available in the Museum Collection series

- No.1 General Laws of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes.
- No.2 Minutes and Proceedings of the Finance Committee August 1895.
- No.3 Culshaws Story of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes.
- No.4 Claims and Fantasy Part One.
- No.5 Minutes of the first meeting of the Grand Primo Lodge of England.
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- No.12 The Royal Lights.
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- No.19 Peter the Hermit.
- No.20 Light.
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- No.22 Mystic Buffaloism.
- No.23 Symbology.
- No.24 The Airship R101.
- No.25 The Seal of the R.A.O.B. G.L.E.
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- No.35 A Token of Esteem and Respect.
- No.36 Lifeboats.

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Compiled & Edited by Bro. M. Walker
Published by the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Grand Lodge of England
Harrogate, North Yorkshire 2020