8 March 2024

**Portishead RNLI celebrates its female lifesavers**

**On International Women’s Day, the crew at Portishead station reflect on the remarkable legacy of women who have been an integral part of the RNLI’s 200-year history of saving lives at sea.**

As part of the RNLI’s 200th anniversary celebrations, the charity takes pride in acknowledging the invaluable contribution of all its volunteers, with a special focus on the vital role that women have played as lifesavers, fundraisers, and trailblazers throughout its rich history.

Portishead RNLI is proud of its volunteer female boat crew, shore crew and the wider station team, and in September 2023 the station achieved a historic milestone with the appointment of Susan Beaton as Portishead RNLI’s very first female Helm.

Speaking at the time, Susan said “At every step of this journey I have pushed myself to meet the high standard the RNLI expects of its Helms, and throughout this process I have been supported by the fantastic crew around me. It’s a privilege and an honour to be the first female Helm at the station.”

As the RNLI commemorates its 200th anniversary, Susan shares the importance of her role, stating, “Being the station’s first female helm is a moment in history that I get to claim, which is fantastic, but we are also paying our respects to all those women who came before me, who opened the doors in the RNLI and the maritime sector.”

Lu Shepherd, volunteer Boat Crew, echoes Susan’s sentiments, emphasising the significance of commemorating the legacy of females in the RNLI.   
  
Lu says, “It’s really important that we commemorate those that came before us, particularly the women. Culturally women weren’t able to go to sea, but with the RNLI now we are and I think that’s something to really celebrate.”

Helen Lazenby, Lifeboat Press Officer says “I have been with the Portishead crew for 17 years, first as a fundraiser and now as Press Officer. It is great to see more women volunteering on the crew. We have always been here, just in different roles supporting what the crew do. Here in Portishead we are lucky to have a number of women volunteering and supporting us to save lives at sea. We are now in our 200th year, which is very humbling, and we are hoping to inspire even more women to come and join us. We do plan to still be here in another 200 years.”

As the RNLI continues to uphold its mission of saving lives at sea, it will continue to inspire the future generations of female lifesavers to join and excel in RNLI command roles for the next 200 years.

**Notes to editors**

* Photo of Susan Beaton, Helm
* Photo of Lu Shepherd, Volunteer Boat Crew
* Photo of Helen Lazenby, Lifeboat Press Officer
* Photo of Susan Beaton, Lu Shepherd, and Emma Tilke

**RNLI media contacts**

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**RNLI online**

For more information on the RNLI please visit [rnli.org](http://www.rnli.org.uk/). News releases and other media resources, including RSS feeds, downloadable photos and video, are available at the RNLI News Centre [rnli.org/news-and-media](file:///C:\Users\chloe_burden\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\3NO7WZ0T\rnli.org\news-and-media).

**Key facts about the RNLI**

The RNLI charity saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates over 238 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and more than 240 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK and Channel Islands. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 142,200 lives.