



A Brief History

The Portrush Lifeboat owes its existence to Laura, Countess of Antrim, who, in 1860, successfully petitioned the RNLi to site one of the three new lifeboats on the "iron-bound coast" of north Ireland. Financed by Lady Cotton Sheppard of Staffordshire, the new lifeboat was initially named "Zelinda" and arrived in December of that year. It was later titled "Laura, Countess of Antrim" and saved 27 lives.

In 1876, a new lifeboat arrived, the "John Whitaker", and during 13 years on the station saved a further 32 lives.



Coxswain Sam Cunningham

But, in November 1889 tragedy was to strike. Three Portrush crew members lost their lives off Portballintrae when the new lifeboat "Robert and Agnes Blair" capsized. The disaster cast a shadow over the town for many months, but did not weaken the resolve of the Portrush lifeboatmen. Within weeks, the boat was back on service and went on to save 12 lives. During this period, five Portrush crew members won RNLi Silver Medals.

The last "pulling and sailing" lifeboat at Portrush was the "Hopwood" which served from 1902 to 1924 and saved 23 lives, but the arrival, in July 1924, of the motor lifeboat, the "T.B.B.H.", marked the start of a much more active era for the Portrush station, as the area of operations increased.

Following a busy war period, "T.B.B.H." was launched on its 78th and last mission on February 26, 1949. The replacement was the "Lady Scott", fourth lifeboat from the Civil Service Lifeboat Fund.

Highlight of the Lady's eventful 32 years at Portrush was on an October night in 1960. In appalling conditions off Donegal, the Lifeboat rescued 14 men from the MV "Argo Delos". Coxswain Sam Cunningham was awarded the Silver Medal and second coxswain Robert McMullan the Bronze Medal.

"Lady Scott" launched 148 times on rescue missions and saved 73 lives, a superb record of service continued by the Arun class lifeboat "Richard Evans", named after the RNLi's greatest living hero, Richard Evans of Moelfre, who twice won the Institution's Gold Medal.



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"Katie Hannan"

The work of the lifeboat service at Portrush was enhanced in 1995 by the D class inshore lifeboat "Jonathan Simpson", named in memory of Rev Jonathan Simpson, honorary secretary from 1864 to 1894.

"Jonathan Simpson" has since been replaced by a more modern D class inshore lifeboat the "Ken & Mary" - named in honour of Ken and Mary Stansfield - which took up duties in the spring of 2002.

"Richard Evans" served at Portrush from February 1981, until June 2000, when it was replaced by the magnificent Severn class lifeboat "Katie Hannan", funded largely through the generosity of the late Mrs Katrina Hannan.

With power and potential undreamed of when the Lifeboat station was established in 1860, "Katie Hannan" nevertheless depends on a vital factor which has remained unchanged since 1860 - the courage of the Portrush crews and their determination to face the worst of sea conditions for the sake of those in peril on the sea.

Source URL: <http://portrushnli.com/history>

Links:

[1]
<http://gallery.portrushlifeboat.com/authenticate.tlx?username=03058e47dd3172f1d1368e363541bee9&password=03058e47dd3172f1d1368e363541bee9&pictureid=943153>