

Maritime Rescue Institute
Coastal Notes – 23 August 2005

The weather was kind enough last Sunday for the Harbour Festival to be a resounding success, although there were a few moments during the morning set up when the wind threatened to turn the stalls into sails and take off. The £5,000 raised on the day will help support the Search and Rescue Team.

This year the demonstrations concentrated on showcasing the skills needed to carry out a successful rescue. MRI's team of rescue swimmers combined with the MRI 28 to deal with a simulated mass casualty incident; oranges and apples were thrown into the harbour with the apples representing seriously injured. The swimmers had to quickly assess the situation, decide which casualties had priority – the apples - and deal with them first. Meanwhile the MRI 28 had to manoeuvre close by to pick up casualties, but always be aware of others still in the water on all sides and ensure that the boat did not further injure them. Make haste slowly is the motto here. Swimmers are often necessary because of the nature of our coastline; a casualty may be inaccessible to both boats and helicopters.

Later MRI 42 was put through her paces, turning a full 360° on the spot, using her twin jet engines to hold stationary at each 90°, in spite of the strong wind blowing across the harbour. This kind of control is essential when working in close proximity to rocks and cliffs. When foreign lifeboat personnel come here for training, they spend the first two days learning slow handling. That's where the real skill lies – anyone can go flat out in the open sea.

Not to be outdone the MRI Youth Team showed that they haven't been idle since they formed last year. They carried out a full 'Abandon Ship' exercise, starting with the proper jump into the water, followed by a head count. To their consternation, one of them was missing; a rescue swimmer was dispatched to assist Mr Ropey. Then they all got into the liferaft – not easy, even in the quiet harbour – and closed the liferaft down ready for rescue. Mr Ropey and his companion Rory are characters used when MRI works with children.

The main demo of the afternoon followed a 999 call through from beginning to end. A 999 call was made to the Coastguard, who requested that MRI launch a lifeboat. When MRI reached the casualty, they relayed a request for an ambulance back to the Coastguard. While MRI dealt with the casualty on scene, the Coastguard had contacted the Ambulance Service to meet the lifeboat when it returned to harbour. MRI then confirmed to the Coastguard that they were back in harbour and that the casualty was away to hospital. The Coastguard always maintains command and control of every incident.

Other demos were boat handling by the Sea Cadets, 100 consecutive canoe rolls, and a rescue by the ever-popular Newfoundland dogs.

As always, this event could not happen without a huge amount of help and support. Thanks are due to the sponsors, volunteers, helpers, the various bodies who lent equipment, the demonstrators, those who took stalls and last, but by no means least, to the public who turned up in such numbers.

Visit www.maritime-rescue-institute.org to find out more about us.

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For further information or to get involved with MRI as a volunteer, please contact 01569 765768 or email hamish.mcdonald@btconnect.com.