



National Coastwatch Institution
www.nci.org.uk

**The bi-monthly newsletter for Friends of
Hengistbury Head Lookout and its Watchkeepers**

Ahoy!

Issue 5 August 2020

Hello everyone!

As restrictions on our daily lives are lifted we trust that you and your family and friends are keeping well. Although not all of our regular features appear in this edition of *Ahoy!*, we hope that you nevertheless enjoy reading about relevant events over the past two months.

Since Monday 20th July the Station has reverted to being open seven days a week, up from six days at the end of June. Opening hours are now 08:00 to 19:00. Under Covid-19 directions from National NCI, a maximum of two people are allowed on Watch inside the building, both of whom must be wearing masks. There is frequently a third Watchkeeper on duty who does foot patrols and helps keep Watch from the balcony – this is a great help at busier times when the workload for two Watchkeepers can be very high. During Watches manned by three, the Watchkeepers take it in turns to be outside; this is most enjoyable in fine weather but will present its own challenges as the weather turns cooler and wetter! Unfortunately we are still not able to welcome visitors but will keep you informed should this change before the next edition of *Ahoy!*

In this issue:

- **Congratulations** – recently qualified Watchkeepers – a notable absence from this edition but news of “normal” times ahead.
- **In Focus** – a regular feature about our volunteers.
- **Life before NCI** – an interesting lockdown find!
- **Been there, done that...** – a summary of recent Station Incidents
- **Looking forward** – planned events – how to organise 2021!
- **Stay in touch** – essential contact details

Congratulations..... 😊😊😊???

Sadly, nothing to report here as we have not been able to undertake any assessments in the past two months, and Trainees have not been able to complete as many Watches as they need to fulfil their competencies.

On a positive note, we have begun a new round of recruitment, with those at the top of our waiting list having attended socially distanced “Meet the Managers” sessions last week. These potential Trainee Watchkeepers will attend carefully timetabled Observation Watches over the next couple of months in order to confirm their interest prior to officially commencing their training.



In Focus

Name

Adele Orr

Roles within Station

Watchkeeper
Social Secretary
Member of the Station's Bulletin editorial team
Administrator for Friends of Hengistbury Head Lookout



Wow! Busy lady! Tell us a little about what's involved in these roles

Having taken over the role of Social Secretary towards the end of last year, my first task was to organise our Station's Christmas dinner. I would normally also be involved in organising monthly social gatherings and our annual summer get together. However, sadly, COVID-19 has scuppered any plans for this year but I'm looking forward to assuming the mantle as soon as possible - especially as we're such a social and friendly group of Watchkeepers.

As part of the HHNCI editorial team, I collate content for the production our weekly internal 'Lookout' bulletin which keeps Watchkeepers abreast of any news, updates, announcements etc.

Having only recently taken over as Administrator for the Friends of Hengistbury Head Lookout scheme I'm still finding my feet a bit but am responding to emails and keeping a watching brief on any donations received. More information on the Friends of Hengistbury Head Lookout and how to become a member can be found on our website www.hhnci.org.uk

What did you do in your working life?

I was a secretary by trade, having worked for a national firm of accountants for 31 years prior to taking early retirement. For the last 17 years of my career I worked in the Professional Qualifications Team looking after the School Leaver and Graduate intakes. This included the induction process, booking courses for accountancy and tax qualifications, monitoring progress, exam entry and results. I was particularly involved in the L3 and L7 apprenticeship schemes. Liaising with the ICAEW, CIOT, various tuition providers and other Accountancy bodies as well as many (many) queries from students, managers and partners meant there was never a dull moment, especially as we had close to 1,000 students on our books.

How do you spend your leisure time - do you even have any leisure time?!

Well, I'm the Secretary for the RNLI Mundeford Lifeboat Guild and help with their fundraising events (my baking efforts have had some interesting results!) and I had started to become involved in the Dorset Enterprise Scheme going into secondary schools but, again, this has had to take a back seat due to COVID-19.

However, Tim (husband, fellow NCI Watchkeeper and very good mince pie baker) and I bought a boat - "Silver Orchid", an Arba 500 - just before moving to Christchurch in 2018, and so enjoy spending time either in Christchurch Harbour or along the River Stour. We haven't managed any further than a quick return trip to the Isle of Wight - yet.

I also enjoy reading and yoga.

When did you join HHNCI, and why?

Strangely, some years ago I saw an advert for hearing aids which showed a Watchkeeper (wearing hearing aids is not a prerequisite of being a Watchkeeper!) and I remember thinking it must be interesting. Then, in 2016 when we were visiting Christchurch, we walked up to the Head and it was such a shame seeing the Coastguard Station was no longer manned. In 2018 Tim and I moved to Christchurch permanently, bought our boat and just happened to meet Peter Holway, our Station Manager, at Willow Way Marina, Tuckton, who mentioned that HHNCI were looking for volunteers. We thought it would be something that Tim and I could do together and so got in touch and joined a training course in 2019.

Most interesting Watch?

Definitely being interviewed by Richard Slee as part of a piece they were doing on our Station for Meridian Tonight. A bit nerve-racking but made for an interesting and different Watch.

What's the best thing about volunteering with HHNCI?

It might sound corny and cheesy but I've met so many interesting people and am learning a lot about the sea and sailing. And of course, what other 'office' would give you the views and scenery of ours? The camaraderie is great, the location is fantastic - who could want for more?

Thank you, Adele, for your commitment to NCIHH in so many roles – much appreciated by all!

Life before NCI

During one of those infamous lockdown clearout sessions, Watchkeeper Vince came across this article in a May 1982 edition of Yachting Monthly (YM), which was about 12 years before the inception of NCI. The article describes the changes in Her Majesty's Coastguard (HMCG)'s role when they were setting up the Marine Rescue Co-ordination Centres (MRCCs) and starting to close coastal Stations. We have kind permission from YM to publish the

article, at the same time advising that Yachting Monthly may be purchased for a special a YM subscription offer of 6 issues for £6; click here: <https://bit.ly/YM6for6>

You may wish to enlarge the font when reading this!

What Should a Coastguard be?

THE DEMANDS on the Coastguard have changed. Traffic Separation Schemes, pollution, offshore drilling, availability of radio, radar and air surveillance, mean that his 'patch' can now extend hundreds of miles out to sea. To do his job, to link with aircraft, ships and foreign counterparts, to co-ordinate a long-range rescue or handle an emergency, the modern Coastguard officer has to be a specialist and work in a thoroughly equipped centre.

Fortunately, in this country we now have this kind of service, and the four-year re-organisation of HM Coastguard will be complete when the sixth Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) opens in Swansea shortly.

These stations have the most up-to-date radio equipment, telephone and telex services, they have 'hot' lines to airfields, military centres, coast radio stations, and with their opposite numbers in neighbouring countries. The erection of eighty high point aerials, has provided a full Channel 16 coverage around the British Isles. There is a VHF Direction Finding facility along the South Coast, and this will shortly extend around the remainder of the country, while a satellite communication, the link of the future, is just around the corner.

It is a wondrous service, all right, but is it a coast guard? Is it still performing its original function? Or has it all become so sophisticated, so far-seeing, that it no longer sees what is going on under its feet? Because much of this new facility has been built on the sacrifice of the old cliff top look-out, the visual watch, the man or woman with the telescope.

According to a working committee, which investigated the Coastguard, these were wasteful. In 1977/78 cliff top look-outs, which in any event were not always permanently kept, accounted for only 4 per cent of all incident sightings, and 50 per cent of these were subsequently reported within five minutes by passing vessels or 999 calls from the public. Their arc of vision was frequently limited, their communication equipment often inadequate, while the loneliness and long periods of inactivity made it hard for staff to keep on their toes.

Well, maybe, but the closure of many cliff top look-outs will seem an unfortunate step in many people's eyes, and particularly holiday-makers, surfers, swimmers, divers, fishermen, walkers, climbers, dinghy sailors and coastal yachtsmen — those people outside the radio net. And what will happen to CG 66, the yacht passage scheme where progress was visually monitored and reported from station to station?

The Coastguard in the hut may not have had the world's most up-to-date equipment. He might even have been accused of abstract thought, taking his ballpen to pieces or X-raying his feet with the Aldis Lamp (once reported in the *Coastguard* magazine), but at least he was *there*. And like the policeman on the beat, he knew what was going on.

It does seem difficult to understand why, with over 9,000 auxiliary Coastguards, volunteers, yachtsmen and people living in high seaside flats who already keep a regular telephone contact, a proper coast watch cannot be organised.

It is surprising that in the early days of CG66 (pre-cursor of SafetyTrax) that, if you filed a passage plan, you were tracked from Station to Station. Imagine NCI Stations doing that these days!

Been there, done that....

Incidents since the last Friends Newsletter

Since the lifting of some lockdown restrictions, walking and water sports have become increasingly popular with the nation, and no less so in our local area. Maritime and safety and rescue agencies report an increasing number of requests for help with a greater number of people than usual choosing to stay along the beautiful British coastline during the summer holidays.

An “Incident” in NCI terms is a situation concerning the safety of life or property, during which an NCI Station has observed, or had any involvement in supporting the Coastguard (CG) or other Search and Rescue (SAR) resource. This year alone, including a period of nine weeks when the Station was closed, NCI Hengistbury Head has been involved in 37 Incidents, four of which occurred in just one day! This consolidates the importance of our presence on the Head. Most recent Incidents appear at the top of this list. CRT = Coastguard Rescue Team; MoP = Member of Public CG = Coastguard; ILB = Inshore Lifeboat; nfa = no further action; case vac = casualty evacuation.

Incidents:

Date	Incident Summary	Lifeboat Involved
20/08/2020	Provided initial emergency care and reported to CG re collapsed lady in vicinity. CRT and ambulance attended to remove to hospital.	No
18/08/2020	Provided CG position of yacht with engine failure and sick crew. Monitored and updated when crewman was heli-lifted off and ILB towed target in..	Yes
11/08/2020	Relayed call from kayak concerning disabled FV without radio to CG.	No
11/08/2020	Reported suspicious persons landing to CG.	No
09/08/2020	Co-ordinated with CG and LB to recover disabled yacht. LB attended to tow in.	Yes

09/08/2020	LB requested monitoring of disabled dory until it was clear to attend. Updated when LB towed it in.	Yes
09/08/2020	In contact with CG while monitoring recovery of drifting dinghy by LB.	Yes
09/08/2020	Liaised with CG to assist disabled yacht.	No
07/08/2020	CG requested visual search for swimmers being swept out. Area scanned in hazy weather but no sighting. They were later reported safe.	No
30/07/2020	Requested ambulance assistance for injured intoxicated lady with husband. Casualty removed to hospital.	No
17/07/2020	CG requested any sighting of reportedly capsized vessel. LB attended and area searched but no sighting. FAWGI?	Yes
17/07/2020	CG requested any visual of reportedly capsized vessel. Area searched together with LB but no sighting. FAWGI?	Yes
13/07/2020	CG requested any sighting of paddle boarder reportedly 'in difficulty'. Search carried out but no casualty sighted. nfa FAWGI?	No
11/07/2020	In contact with CG over received MoB Alert. No sighting. CG assessed it as a test alert. nfa	No
26/06/2020	CG requested lookout for missing speedboat. No sighting before Station closed. Boat later found in Poole Harbour. nfa	No

Looking ahead → → → →

2021 NCIHH Calendars

We are delighted to announce that our very own calendars for 2021 are now available! The photographs in the calendars are of our beautiful surrounding areas and all were taken by members of the Watchkeepers' Photography Interest Group (aka The PIGs). All feedback from last year's inaugural calendar was taken into account in producing the 2021 edition, which all discerning NCIHH supporters need to adorn their walls and to organise their busy lives!

The calendars are available to Friends, Watchkeepers, and their families and friends, at a special price of £6 each; they are already on sale in a number of local retail outlets, where the recommended price is £7.50.



If you would like a calendar (or more!) please contact our Friends Administrator Adele Orr Adele.Orr@nci.org.uk.

We have a limited stock so please order early before they sell out! Please note that the calendars are NOT on sale from the Lookout.

Calendars will be despatched / arrangements made for collection or delivery to local areas on receipt of full payment. Please make cheques payable to “NCI Hengistbury Head”. Please include the cost of postage and packing should you require this:

one calendar p&p	first class = £2	second class £1.75
two calendars p&p to same address	£2.50	and £2.25 respectively
more calendars p&p	prices on application	

Stay in touch

Please let us know if any of your personal contact details change. Please address all correspondence to our Friends Administrator Adele Orr Adele.Orr@nci.org.uk. who will also be happy to provide details of how to become a Friend should you know of anyone interested.

You can keep up to date with our activities via various social media:

- Facebook Hengistbury Head NCI
- Twitter [@NCIHengistburyH](https://twitter.com/NCIHengistburyH)
- Instagram @hengistburyheadnci

NCI Hengistbury Head is one of 56 NCI Stations around the UK keeping “eyes along the coast”.

Current opening hours are 8am – 7pm. As the days draw shorter we will close at dusk and reduce our hours to 8am – 5pm when the clocks change in October.
