



Ahoy!

National Coastwatch Institution
www.nci.org.uk

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

Issue 31 January 2025

From the Editor:

And before you know it 2025 is underway! Best wishes for the coming year and thanks for your ongoing support.

As the days grow longer, we expect the activities on the water to increase along with our interventions to help save those in distress. Sometimes you wonder at the behaviour of people but we are there to help whoever is in need without being judgemental of the reasons they got into trouble!

After such a stormy period the number of people on the water has been fewer and that is reflected in the number of incidents during this period.

We are anticipating the installation of a camera to support our team. It has been offered by the company that produces them as a donation to HHNCI. More on this under the 'Looking Ahead' Section. If successful it is our intention to investigate whether remote cameras can be used to give us 'eyes' in what are currently our blind spots under the Headland's cliffs.

Ken Male

In this issue:

- **In Focus** - a regular feature about one of our volunteers and any personnel highlights
- **Training update** – new recruits and developments
- **Thank you** - to Friends & supporters
- **Been there done that** - a summary of recent 'Incidents' and Station activities
- **Looking Ahead** – dates for your diary
- **Stay in touch** – essential contact details



In Focus

Name Colin Pelton

Role within the Station

Watchkeeper, Trainer and member of the Presentation Team.

When and why did you join NCI Hengistbury Head ?

My wife and I came across some very friendly NCI watchkeepers at St Alban's Head about 10 years ago. At the Southampton Boat Show in 2018 we visited the NCI stand and found out they were opening a station at Hengistbury Head so we decided to sign up for the training.



Five years later and we were both honoured to be presented with our service awards by our Patron, the Princess Royal, during her official visit to our station in February 2024.

What are the best and worst aspects of being part of NCI Hengistbury Head?

I love the team spirit and the opportunity to chat with members of the public: I've known this area since the 1960s and Hengistbury Head is a stunning working environment with wonderful wildlife and a view that changes by the minute. There is a dramatic contrast between the regular activities of running an efficient watch and the flurry of activity around an incident. It's a volunteering job that teaches you loads of new skills and keeps you on your toes. I can't think of any negatives unless you count the rare days when visibility is so poor you can't see the cliff edge.

Are you a sailor?

Yes - I learnt to sail a yacht in the Solent, although my wife and I prefer the more peaceful waters around Greece. We have never owned a boat ... other than a Topper dinghy and a variety of windsurfers.

Tell us a little about your career.

My background was in marine science and I spent around 15 years working in the laboratory and worldwide on Royal Research Ships such as RRS Discovery. The work involved mapping the seafloor by taking samples, using deep sea photography, and towing sophisticated acoustic systems capable of imaging an area of seafloor the size of Wales every day. Apart from visiting some amazing places and seeing wildlife such as whales, dolphins, sharks and seabirds, it gave me a good grounding in chartwork and navigation which are vital watchkeeping skills. Later I moved into marketing marine science and then managing information for a Research Council. We had laboratories all over the country and I feel privileged to have worked with many world-class scientists and engineers.

You must have had some real career highs and lows!

Highs and lows in marine science often follow the weather: so for every research cruise to a sunny part of the world, you might endure several weeks of winter storms in the North Atlantic. A severe gale warning for sea area Rockall was always a bad day at the office.

Hobbies

Many of my sports activities have been water based including SCUBA diving, windsurfing, sailing and kayaking. I played tennis and was a keen runner but have adopted more hip-friendly activities including cycling, sea swimming, birdwatching, photography (a lifelong hobby) and golf (or something resembling it). Music is also a passion: I play flute in a Concert Band and have been known to strum a guitar and sing in local choirs.

What, for you, is the best bit of being part of NCI Hengistbury Head?

I thoroughly enjoy my training role as NCI has such a wide-ranging group of volunteers – their breadth of complementary skills and knowledge always amazes me. You can see some of their marvellous photography in our 2025 Calendar.

And finally, where's your feel-good, favourite place?

Locally it has to be a morning swim from Friars Cliff beach when the sea is calm, the beach is empty, and there's coffee waiting on the shore.

Training Update

Training Team

One in

We are soon to start another round of Meet-the-Manager sessions for a new intake of would-be Watchkeepers.

At the time of writing,, we have 19 confirmed hopefuls. The first 4 of whom are due to meet some of the Station Management Team at the Head, after the close of the last shift on the 18th March.

Watchkeeper Bob Luscombe has agreed to join the Training Team, effective immediately. Welcome to the Team, Bob.

One out

Unfortunately, Frank Willis has resigned from HH NCI. Frank has been a valued team member and an experienced trainer. He was one of the first intake of trainee Watchkeepers who joined the new HH group almost seven years ago.

Frank explained that he wanted to explore new volunteer opportunities. We wish him health and happiness in the future and thanks for the support he has given in the past.

More Long Service Awards

Steve Waters and Peter Lucas are seen here being presented with their 5 year service badge award and certificates by Peter Holway, Station Manager.



Thank you....

CLAC Event at The George

Thanks go to the team who attended the CLAC event before Christmas, an excellent turn out from the public and a healthy sum of monies received from raffle ticket sales (approximately £450) and £500 from The Primrose Trust Charity (pictured below). A tremendous result. Congratulations to John Griffith drawing the top prize and Paul Hebden receiving one of the hampers. Well done to both. Thanks also to Terry Spooner for taking the evening's photos



Thanks Probus.

Sue Grundy is pictured receiving a cheque from Carron Bower, the Treasurer for the Probus Ladies after our talk at The Freemasons Lodge recently. Talks to groups such as these are an increasingly important part of our fundraising activities. If you are a member of an organisation which you think would like such a presentation about the NCI please make contact. The general donation is usually a minimum of £50 and it may be added to with a raffle or other donations. We have a team of presenters who have volunteered for the task,



Been there, done that.....

Incidents since last 'Ahoy'

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 of supporting the Coastguard (CG) or other Search and Rescue (SAR) resource. Needless to say the number reduces at this time of year as fewer venture onto, or near, the water. Most recent Incidents appear at the top of this list.

CRT = Coastguard Rescue Team; MoP = Member of Public CG = Coastguard; ILB = Inshore Lifeboat; LB = Lifeboat; NFA = no further action; cas evac = casualty evacuation; FAWGI = False Alarm with Good Intent

| Date of Incident | Incident Summary | Lifeboat involved |
|-------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 23/01/2025 | Police informed NCI a missing MOP intended travelling to Hengistbury Head, and asked to call 999 if seen. HMCG were informed of incident, who knew nothing of it. On calling Police, NCI were informed, incident was closed. | No |
| 27/12/24 | NCI observed a paddle boarder in difficulty, trying to attract attention of fishing vessel. HMCG informed, and while on phone, F.V. went to assist casualty. Crew assisted casualty, with possible foil , problem, and then casualty was observed to return to shore. All safe and CG informed. | No |
| 21/12/24 | MOP reported to HMCG that a foil board was adrift, no sign of user. CG called NCI, who had visual. Boarder and equipment separately reached the shore, CG informed | No |
| 20/12/24 | HMCG called NCI re. report from MOP of windsurfer/paddle boarder in trouble. ILB and CRT tasked, search initiated. Casualty was then found on beach, assets stood down. | Yes |
| 28/11/24 | HMCG called NCI re. unattributed EPIRB signal, visual search requested. Nothing seen, ILB, CRT, and HELO tasked to search. Search continued until after lookout closed, and still nothing found. | Yes |

Looking Ahead

Especially..... Thanks Sirius

As mentioned above we are pleased to confirm that 'Sirius Insight ' have agreed to sponsor a CCTV camera at the Lookout. We will be trialling its effectiveness as a pilot for NCI. The plan is to give access to the Coastguard too so that they can actually see what we are looking at.

If the trial from The Lookout is successful we will investigate whether we can install one or two others to enable us to monitor areas that are currently our 'blind spots'.

Watch this space for more on this innovative development.

One for your diary

25th May – Blue Light Day

Stay in touch

Please let us know if any of your personal contact details change. Address all correspondence to our Friends Administrator Ken Male – ken.male@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
- Instagram @hengistburyheadnci

And, of course, by keeping up to date from our website.....

<https://hhnci.org.uk> NCI Hengistbury Head is one of 60 NCI Stations around the UK keeping "Eyes along the coast". Current Station opening hours 8.00am-7.00pm