



Ahoy!

National Coastwatch Institution
www.nci.org.uk

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

Issue 33 July 2025

From the Editor:

Before we get into the details of the 'In Focus individual' it would be appropriate to highlight the dedication of a wider band of our watchkeepers. In March we were hit with a bombshell from BCP Council preventing us from driving to the lookout, This meant that the number of available volunteers was reduced. Many have difficulty walking the distance and gradient of the access to the station. Some even bought mobility scooters from their own funds It is right to register our thanks to those who were able to keep the station manned through this difficult period. In effect, they have had to pick up the extra watches. Well done team - A big 'Thank You' to all of you for keeping HHNCI alive until our access issues are resolved, which we hope will now be in the near future. The management committee have asked for this formal acknowledgement to be published

Ken Male

In this issue:

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- **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
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In Focus

Name

Nick Leigh

Role Within the Station

Watchkeeper

When and why did you join NCI Hengistbury Head ?

I have always loved Hengistbury Head. As a teenager, at a local school we had to run across Hengistbury Head for cross country running. I hated running and normally bunked off and went to the Point House Cafe which is long gone now. I also sailed regularly in Christchurch Harbour from what was then the Marine Training Centre (soon to be reopened I'm delighted to see) and spent many happy hours staring at The Head and the harbour.

When I first saw an article in the Bournemouth Echo about the possibility of opening a watch station in the old coastguard hut I contacted NCI straight away.

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

The best thing, that's an easy question; it's the camaraderie, and being able to give-back to our community.

Worst thing ? Running out of chocolate biscuits during a watch.



Are you a sailor?

Yes, although I don't own a boat any more and don't get much opportunity nowadays. I have sailed all my life; and taught sailing professionally for 2 years in the 1980s as an RYA Instructor. I have sailed everything from an old Harry Poole AB to a 72' ketch; been across the English Channel more times than I can remember; and done a few quite reckless passages - the most memorable of which was from Poole Harbour to Yarmouth (Isle of Wight) in a 12' dinghy, staying overnight (in the boat) and then sailing back again - I was only 15 at the time.

Tell us a little about your career.

Having had a rough childhood I left school with almost no qualifications but always had a 'can do attitude'. I would stick two fingers up to "The System" and always grafted hard. In my teens and twenties I worked many different jobs and gradually learned how businesses worked, how to get and keep customers and what made it all tick. I sold Computerised Accounts Systems in the mid 1980s and learned how to do company accounts. From the early 1990s onwards, I started and ran my own businesses in all sorts of trades - computers; compensation and employment claims; laundry; property development; inventory management; and residential lettings. I bought, and sold a number of businesses and was very fortunate. With a little skill, and a bucket load luck, I was moderately successful along the way. I took early retirement in 2019 in order to enjoy my ambition to travel extensively with my wife.

Hobbies

I have always enjoyed DIY and totally refurbished the last 3 houses my family has lived in. I'm quite hands on and am happy to install a kitchen, do some plumbing, and do the decorating. Now that my eldest son and his partner have their own house nearby it's probably about time I helped them do some work too.

My main hobby however is travelling. We always enjoyed holidays with our children when they were growing up. Now that they have both left home my travel ambitions have progressed into a real passion for understanding the world around me. I love to see other cultures, experience different languages and people, try different foods, and explore as far and wide as possible. My wife and

I have just returned from a year travelling around the world and it was a truly unforgettable experience.

Cat? Dog? Stick Insect?

Unquestionably a dog. We had a lovely Cocker Spaniel until he died in 2021. I have plans to get another but not until we've finished our long-haul travels. Maybe just don't mention it to my wife!

Favourite tippie

To be honest I very rarely drink these days. I do like a good ale and occasionally a Guinness. A glass of red wine with a meal also goes down a treat. When I was younger my main tippie was Whisky but I've not had any for a long time. Jura was always my absolute favourite.

Favourite Book/Film

Favourite book is quite difficult as I'm not particularly adventurous with my reading. I very much enjoy legal thrillers and have a wide range of authors I read. I've recently finished a book by Rob Rinder which was a fascinating insight into the British legal system.

As for films I would say my two favourites are the original Italian Job with Michael Cain; and Monty Pythons' Life of Brian. I remember it being banned when it first came out at the cinema but I eventually saw it at the Odean Swiss Cottage with my older brother.

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

As I've already mentioned I love to explore far and wide. My absolute favourite place is Greece for the people, the food and the relaxed way of life. My wife and I both love some of the smaller islands but also the mainland especially in the north.

My youngest son lives in New Zealand and my wife and I love the South Island for its laid back vibes, stunning scenery and vast emptiness.

I did my first observation watch on 20 April 2018 when the team was only just being established, based temporarily in the beach office at Southbourne Beach. I joined immediately and was the first watchkeeper to take my final assessment from the (not yet quite open) lookout at the top of Warren Hill - now

Hengistbury Head NCI Station - in August 2018. I have been a regular watchkeeper ever since.

Training Update

Recent newly qualified Watchkeepers

Paul Barber, one of our most recent qualifiers is shown receiving his epaulettes from Steve Marks.



Successfully completing his Final Assessment, Phil Tolchard became the first Trainee to qualify from the March '25 group, He is pictured below receiving his epaulettes at the Lookout

Man Overboard!!!

The weather, the tides and the sea state all need to be right to allow for a safe man-overboard exercise to be run. Such were the conditions during early shift, Friday 8th August.

Chris Lloyd-Smith, and his crew of two, Steve Marks and Peter Czwartos (T), used Chris's boat, Sandpiper to hold such an exercise with Sue Wilkinson, John Grundy. Paul Barber (T), and Peter Ellis in the Lookout A big yellow fender played the part of the casualty.

Commencing at around 09.50 Sandpiper dropped "the MOB" overboard for the first time, at 148° from the Lookout. Sandpiper then headed a way off, ready to be conned back by the Lookout, to retrieve the casualty. This allowed not only for radio transmission practice, but also for perfecting the use of the clock method used to conn the rescue vessel to a casualty. A number of runs were completed, with the exercise terminating around 11.00 hrs.

This not only proved to be a very useful morning's exercise, but correctly documented, this also complies with part of our DFS (Designated Facility Status) annual appraisal.

Thank you....

A Big Thank you

HHNCI Presentations.

We have had a good period for Speaking engagements with £230 pounds raised for the Station funds from the following:

Rothsay Lodge, Highcliffe . £50.

Bournemouth Rotary . £100.

Bournemouth Probus . £70.

This is a good income stream for the station and the talk is very interesting, so please pass the word around to any group or association you are members of. Contact peter.ellis@nci.org.uk to arrange.

Been there, done that.....

Incidents since last 'Ahoy'

An "Incident" in NCI terms is a situation involving contact to, or from any of the emergency services where we are asked, or expected, to take part. At this time

of year, when things get busier, both on and off the water, the number of incidents often increases. 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
25/07/2025	MOP advised NCI their dog had gone over the cliff, and was stuck half way down. HMCG informed, and during call, it was reported the dog had reached the base of the cliff, and a passer by had , the uninjured dog under control. NFA.	No
12/07/2025	HMCG tasked ILB to report of person in inflatable waving for help. NCI observed a kayak in reported location, and informed CG that paddling action could be mistaken for waving. CG requested NCI , keep monitoring, but stood ILB down. NFA	No
12/07/2025	HMCG tasked ILB to look for a swimmer reported to be in difficulty. NCI called CG and were asked to search area, nothing seen. ILB reported an object - a buoy. Nothing found, assets stood down.	Yes
03/07/2025	MOP informed NCI of a missing paddle boarder, not returned on time. NCI started search, and identified likely sighting. HMCG advised, and asked NCI to monitor. Casualty then made it back to beach, CG updated.	No
20/06/2025	MOP reported to HMCG 3 paddle boarders possibly in trouble. NCI carried out search and saw them climbing onto a buoy, CG updated. casualties then left buoy and returned to shore, all safe.	No
19/06/2025	Police visited lookout re. a MISPER, and gave description. Location unknown. NCI advised HMCG of incident. NCI maintained search but nothing seen. NCI stood down, but incident ongoing.	No
17/06/2025	HMCG called NCI re. report from MOP of a RIB with engine trouble in harbour. ILB tasked by CG, and towed vessel and occupants back to LB station. All safe.	Yes
02/06/2025	NCI heard a call from yacht with a broken forestay, and informed HMCG they had visual, and were asked to monitor. vessel lowered foresail, and proceeded. NCI informed next NCI station. Vessel then , amended its passage plan, and was lost to view.	No

02/06/2025	HMCG called NCI re. call from MOP of wind surfer in trouble. Visual search requested - negative. MOP then reported to CG they thought it was a helium balloon. NFA.	No
31/05/2025	HMCG called NCI re. report from MOP of a wing foiler, out with a friend, causing concern. NCI had visual, and had been monitoring. One was in the water, and not making attempt to get back up. Fishing , charter called on Ch65 offering assistance. NCI advised ILB had been tasked, fishing boat took casualty on board, NCI conned ILB to casualty, and casualty was recovered to shore by ILB, and treated, ashore for hypothermia.	Yes
19/05/2025	MOP informed NI of a young person distressed and unresponsive to questioning. HMCG advised, and they said to get informant to ring 999, but they had already left, CG advised. CRT arrived at , lookout, asked for details of informant but they had refused to give them. Casualty could not be located, incident closed.	No
13/05/2025	MOP called NCI re missing person, who suffers from anxiety. HMCG informed. Caller details given to CG. MISPER later found safe and well after lookout closed.	No
10/05/2025	HMCG called NCI re. report of yacht aground from MOP. NCI spotted a motor vessel in the position given, CG advised. CRT tasked, AWLB requested, however vessel managed to refloat itself and carry on. , NFA. (See I/R 53317)	Yes
01/05/2025	HMCG called NCI re. spoken May Day heard. Asked if heard by NCI - negative. Message was repeated several times. Message downgraded to Pan Pan , then incident closed by CG, as no response.	No
30/04/2025	HMCG asked NCI to look for a paddle boarder reported missing. NCI search was negative. ILB and CRT tasked to search. It was then reported that the casualty was ashore in Yarmouth, and was safe.	Yes
26/04/2025	Local ferry called NCI re. 2 persons on a jetski in trouble. HMCG advised. casualties tried to win ashore. ILB tasked, recovered casualties, and recovered jets, which has started too sink. All safe.	Yes
26/04/2025	HMCG observed a jetski upturned on sandbar. NCI informed HMCG, monitoring requested. CRT tasked, and then ILB tasked also. Casualty was recovered and ILB followed jetski to safety of harbour.	Yes

21/04/2025	HMCG called NCI re. report of paddle boarder possibly in trouble. Search was negative, CG informed. HMCG decided casualty was ashore, NFA.	No
19/04/2025	HMCG requested NCI look for kite surfer reported to be in trouble by MOP. ILB tasked, nothing seen. Incident closed as casualty was then seen on beach. Assets stood down.	Yes
19/04/2025	HMCG asked NCI for visual of wind surfer reported to be in trouble. ILB tasked, NCI confirmed visual, casualty repeatedly falling off. ILB went to location, but casualty had self rescued. NFA.	Yes
13/04/2025	Pan Pan issued from sailing vessel with engine failure. HMCG asked NCI for visual - negative, but search continued. NCI established given position was inaccurate. New position given, NCI established, visual, CG informed, and casualty was sailing west. 2 vessels offered assistance, but casualty continued to sail west, incident closed.	No
06/04/2025	May Day issued re. 2 jetskis which had collided at harbour entrance. NCI informed HMCG they had visual. May Day then downgraded to Pan Pan, and all jet skis then managed to self rescue to quay.	No
04/04/2025	NCI observed 3 teenagers on sandbar, cut off by tide outside harbour entrance. To get ashore they would need to swim 50mtrs. HMCG informed, monitoring requested. casualties then swam ashore - okay	No
03/04/2025	HMCG called NCI re. report from MOP of paddle boarder continually falling off. Incident on edge of NCI visual range and nothing was seen by NCI.	No

Looking Ahead

For your diary

23/24th. September. HHNCI at Soton Boat Show – look us up.

19TH November. Station AGM. St Nicholas Church.

22nd Dec . Christchurch Living Advent Calendar.

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